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THE CHRISTIAN GLEANER.

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No. 7.

“ PROVE ALL THINGS, HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.”

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CHRISTIANITY is the perfection of that divine philanthropy which was gradually developing itself for four thousand years. It is the bright effulgence of every divine attribute, mingling and harmonising, as the different colours in the rainbow in the bright shining after rain, into one complete system of perfections—the perfection of GLORY to God in the highest heaven, the perfection of PEACE on earth, and the perfection of GOOD-WILL among men.

The eyes of patriarchs and prophets, of saints and martyrs, from Adam to John the Baptist, with longing expectation, were looking forward to some glorious age, indistinctly apprehended, but ardently desired. Each messenger sent from heaven, fraught with the communications of the Divine Spirit, to illuminate, to reprove, and to correct the patriarchs and the house of Israel, was brightening the prospect and chastening the views of the people concerning the glory of the COMING AGE. The “FOUNDER OF THE FUTURE AGE,” as one of Israel’s prophets styles the Messiah, was exhibited, in the emblems of the prophetic style, as arising, expanding, and brightening to view; from the glistening “*Star of Jacob*,” to the radiating “*Sun of Righteousness*,” with salutiferous and vivifying rays.

The person, character, and reign of Messiah the Prince, exhausted all the beauties of language, all the grandeur and resplendencies of creation, to give some faint resemblance of them. In adumbrating Emmanuel and his realm, “*Nature mingles colours not her own.*” She mingles the brighter splendours of things celestial with things terrestrial, and kindly suits the picture to our impaired faculties. She brings the rose of Sharon and the lily of the vales—the mild lustre of the richest gems, and the brightest radiance of the choicest metals. She makes the stars of heaven sparkle in his hand, and the brightness of the sun shine in his face. She causes the mountains to flow down at his presence; his advent to gladden the solitary place;

before him, "*deserts to rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*" To the desert, at his approach, he gives the glory of Lebanon, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.

Under his peaceful banner and gracious sceptre, the wolf dwells with the lamb; the leopard lies down with the kid; the calf, the young lion, and the fatling, in harmony follow the mandates of a child; the cow and the bear feed together; their young ones lie down in concord; and the lion eats straw like an ox. The sucking child plays on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child puts its hand on the cockatrice's den. Under this munificent government the wilderness becomes a fruitful field; and the field once esteemed fruitful is counted for a forest. He makes the eyes of the blind to see; the ears of the deaf to hear; and the tongue of the dumb to speak. The stammerer becomes eloquent, and the wise men of other times become as babes. He brings the captive from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. His people march forth with joy; they are led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands.

"He shall judge the poor of the people; he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear him as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and the needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. There shall be, in his day, a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." Psalm lxxii. 4—17. Such were the glorious things spoken of Zion and her King by holy kings and ancient seers, fired with prophetic impulse. These are but a taste of the sweetness which flows in the stream of prophecy, which revived, cheered, and animated the drooping, disconsolate, and afflicted hearts of the righteous ancients. Such things they uttered who saw his glory and spake of him. These prospective views of Messiah and his institution prepare us to expect the brightest exhibition of glory in himself, and the highest degree of moral excellence and felicity in the subjects of his reign.

The fulness of time is come. Messiah appears. But lo ! he has no form nor comeliness. He comes forth as a languishing shoot from a dry and sterile soil. He comes to his own, and his own receive him not. He comes to the people who had the visions of the Almighty, and who heard the prophecies of the Spirit concerning him ; yet they reject him as an impostor. They recognise no charms in his person—no glory in his purposed reign. Their hearts are infatuated with wordly notions, and they view him with a prejudiced eye. They see no diadem upon his head—no sceptre in his hand. They see no gorgeous apparel upon his person—no nobles nor princes in his train. They hear no sound of the trumpet—no confused sound of mighty warriors preparing for battle. They see no garments rolled in blood, nor captives led in chains. They are offended at the meanness of his parentage ; at the humble birth and character of his attendants ; and at his own insignificant appearance. His glories, and their views of glory, correspond in no one instance. His glory was that of unparalleled condescension, incomparable humility, meekness, and love. The most resplendant gems in his crown were his abject poverty, his patient endurance of the grossest indignities, and the unreserved devotion of his whole soul, as the righteous servant of Jehovah. His victories were not those of a mighty chieftain at the head of many thousands, marching through opposing ranks, demolishing citadels, devastating countries, causing iron gates to open at his approach, and leading bound to his triumphal chariot his captive enemies. No ! his victories were the conquest of all temptations, of death, and of him that had the power of death. He triumphed over all principalities and powers of darkness, error, and death. In his death and resurrection he gained the greatest conquest ever won : he vanquished death and the grave ; he obtained eternal redemption : he opened the gates of Paradise, and procured an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, for all them that look for deliverance. Such were the personal achievements of the *Captain of our Salvation*.

The precepts of his institution correspond with his appearance and deportment among men. He inculcates a morality pure as himself, and such as must render his disciples superior to all the world besides. He gives no scope to any malignant passions, and checks every principle that would lead to war, oppression, or cruelty. His precepts respect not merely the overt act, but the principles from which all overt acts of wickedness proceed. Ambition, pride, avarice, lust, malevolence, are denounced, as really criminal, as the actions to which they give rise. His precepts are no dry, lifeless system of morality, to be forced upon his disciples, or to be worn as an outside garment ; but they are inculcated by arguments and considerations which, when apprehended, engrave them upon the heart, and render them of easy practice. The reason, the nature, and the import of his death, afford to those who understand it an argument that gives life and vigour to all his precepts, and that makes his yoke easy and his burthen light.

When we turn our attention to the character and exploits of his first disciples, his *ambassadors to the world*, what an illustrious exhibition of the excellency of his doctrine, and of the purity of his morals do they afford! In them how conspicuous faith, hope, and love! What zeal, what patience, what self-denial, what deadness to the world! How gladly they spend and are spent in the good work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope! They glory in reproaches, in privations, in stripes, in imprisonments, in all manner of sufferings; yea, in death itself, for the Son of Man's sake. How freely, how cheerfully, how laboriously they performed the ministry which they had received! They look for no applause, for no stipend, no fixed salary, no lucrative office, no honourable title among men. They have continually in their eye the example of their Chief, "looking off from the ancients to Jesus the Captain and Finisher of the Faith, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down on the right hand of God." Amidst their enemies and false friends, how calm, how meek, how prudent, how resolute, how persevering! They exhibit virtues, in comparison of which, the virtues of all other religionists appear either as splendid sins, or as meagre empty names. Such was the character of the ambassadors and subordinate ministers of the New Institution.

The societies called Churches, constituted and set in order by those ministers of the New Testament, were of such as received and acknowledged Jesus as Lord Messiah, Saviour of the World, and had put themselves under his guidance. The ONLY BOND OF UNION among them was faith in him and submission to his will. No subscription to abstract propositions framed by synods; no decrees of councils sanctioned by kings; no rules of practice commanded by ecclesiastical courts were imposed on them as terms of admission into, or of continuance in, this *holy brotherhood*. In the "apostles' doctrine" and in the apostles' commandments" they steadfastly continued. Their fraternity was a fraternity of love, peace, gratitude, cheerfulness, joy, charity, and universal benevolence. Their religion did not manifest itself in public fasts nor carnivals. They had no festivals—no great and solemn meetings. Their meeting on the first day of the week was at all times *alike* solemn, joyful, and interesting. Their religion was not of that elastic and porous kind, which at one time is compressed into some cold formalities, and at another expanded into prodigious zeal and warmth. No—their piety did not at one time rise to paroxysms, and their zeal to effervescence, and, by-and-bye, languish into frigid ceremony and lifeless form. It was the pure, clear, and swelling current of love to God, of love to man, expressed in all the variety of doing good.

The *order* of their assemblies was uniformly the same. It did not vary with *moons* and *seasons*. It did not change as dress, nor fluctuate as the manners of the times. Their devotion did not diversity itself into the endless forms of modern times. They had no monthly concerts of prayer; no solemn convocations; no great fasts, nor

preparation, nor thanksgiving days. Their Churches were not fractured into missionary societies, Bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organising such in the world. The head of a believing household was not in those days a president or manager of a board of foreign missions; his wife, the president of some female education society; his eldest son, the recording secretary of some domestic Bible society; his eldest daughter, the corresponding secretary of a mite society; his servant maid, the vice-president of a rag society; and his little daughter, a tutoress of a Sunday school. They knew nothing of the *hobbies* of modern times. *In their Church capacity alone they moved.* They neither transformed themselves into any other kind of association, nor did they fracture and sever themselves into divers societies. They viewed the Church of Jesus Christ as the scheme of Heaven to ameliorate the world; as members of it, they considered themselves bound to do all they could for the glory of God and the good of men. They dare not transfer to a missionary society, or Bible society, or education society, *a cent or a prayer*, lest in so doing they should rob the Church of its glory, and exalt the inventions of men above the wisdom of God. *In their Church capacity alone they moved.* The Church they considered "the pillar and ground of the truth;" they viewed it as the temple of the Holy Spirit—as the house of the living God. They considered, if they did all they could in this capacity, they had nothing left for any other object of a religious nature. In this capacity, wide as its sphere extended, they exhibited the truth in *word and deed*. Their good works, which accompanied salvation, were the labours of love, in ministering to the necessities of saints—to the poor of the brotherhood. They did good to *all men*, but especially to the household of faith. They practised that pure and undefiled religion, which, in overt acts, consists in "taking care of orphans and widows in their affliction, and in keeping one's self unspotted by (the vices of) the world."

In their Church capacity they attended upon every thing that was of a social character, that did not belong to the closet or fire-side. In the Church, in all their meetings, they offered up their joint petitions for all things lawful, commanded or promised. They left nothing for a missionary prayer meeting, for seasons of unusual solemnity or interest. They did not at one time abate their zeal, their devotion, their gratitude, or their liberality, that they might have an opportunity of showing forth to advantage or of doing something of great consequence at another. Such things they condemned in Jews and Pagans. No, gentle reader, in the primitive Church they had no Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving Monday, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, nor Preparation Saturday. All days were alike good—alike preparation.—alike thanksgiving. As soon as some Pharisees that believed began to observe days, and months, and times, and years, so soon did the Apostle begin to stand in doubt of them.

Having taken a cursory view of some of the leading features of the Christian religion, exhibited in *prospective*, and in actual existence at its first institution, we shall in the last place advert to its present appearance. But, alas! "how is the fine gold become dim!" Instead of the Apostles' doctrine, simply and plainly exhibited in the New Testament, we have got the sublime science of Theology, subdivided into scholastic, polemic, dogmatic, and practical Divinity. Instead of the *form* of sound words given by the Spirit to be held fast, we have countless creeds, composed of terms and phrases, dogmas and speculations, invented by whimsical metaphysicians, Christian philosophers, rabbinical doctors, and enthusiastic preachers. Instead of the divinely established order of bishops and deacons, or as they are sometimes called, elders and deacons, which remained when the age of "spiritual gifts" and "spiritual men" passed away, we have popes, cardinals, archbishops, metropolitan bishops, rectors, prebendaries, deans, priests, archdeacons, presiding elders, ruling elders, circuit preachers, local preachers, licentiates, class leaders, abbots, monks, friars, &c. &c.

Our devotion often exhibits itself in prayers, in the set phrase of pompous oratory; in singing choirs; in long sermons, modelled after Grecian and Roman orations, logical themes and metaphysical essays; and in raising large sums of money by every way that ingenuity can devise, for promoting the interest of our religious party.

Our zeal burns brightest in contending for orthodox tenets, and a sort of technical language rendered sacred and of imposing influence by long prescription: "Such as the *covenant of works*; the *covenant of grace*; the *active and passive obedience of Christ*; *legal repentance*; the *terms and conditions of the gospel*, the *gospel offer*; the *holy sacraments*; *ministerial, sacramental, and Catholic communion*; the *mediatorial kingdom of Christ*; the *millennium*; *historic faith*, *temporary faith*, the *faith of miracles*, *justifying faith*, the *faith of devils*, the *faith of assurance*, and the *assurance of faith*! the *direct act of faith*, the *reflex act of faith*; *baptismal vows*; *hirk sessions*; *fencing the tables*; *metallic tokens*, &c. &c. Thus to speak in clerical dignity, analogically, more than half the language of Ashdod is mingled with less than half the language of Canaan; and the people are generally zealous about such confounding, misleading, and arrogant distinctions, which all result in divesting Christianity of its glorious simplicity, which adapts it to boys and girls as well as to philosophers, and which distort it into a mystery, fit to employ linguists, philosophers, doctors of divinity, all their leisure hours, at a handsome sum per annum, in studying, and then in giving publicity to their own discoveries, or in retailing those of others.

But into how diverse and opposite extremes and absurdities have many run in their wild, superstitious, and chimerical views of the Christian religion. Inquisitive reader, turn your eyes to yonder monastery, built in that solitary desert, filled with a religious order of monks, and an abbot at their head. Why have they shut themselves

out from the world in that solitary recluse? Is it for the purpose of becoming more abstemious, more devout, more devoted to the study of mystic theology? Hear them contending whether the Solitaires, the Cœnabites, or the Sarzbaites have chosen the course most congenial to the gospel. See these poor, gloomy, lazy set of mortals, habited in their awful black, their innocent white, or their spiritual grey, according to their order, forsaking all the business and enjoyments of society, spending their days in penury and affliction for the sake of sublimer contemplations of God and of the heavenly world; and say, have they ever seen a Bible! Again, see this sacred gloom, this holy melancholy, this pious indolence, becoming so popular as to affect all the seminaries of Christendom for a time! See it command the respect of the highest dignitaries of the Church; and hear them call those haunts of gloom and superstition, as some of the reformed orders of modern times call our colleges, "*fountains and streams that make glad the city of God,*" by qualifying pious divines! Yes, these monasteries became so famous for piety and solemnity, that the Church looked to them for her most useful ministers.

Next, consider for a moment, yon sobbing anchorite, with his amulet round his neck, his beads solemnly moving through his fingers, bent upon his naked knees in yon miserable cell, muttering his "*Ave Maria,*" and invoking St. Andrew to intercede in his behalf; and say, has he a Bible? O yes! It lies moulding and moth-eaten on his shelves!

From this scene of infatuation turn your eyes to yonder dismal edifice, with iron gates and massy bars. Within its merciless apartments view the "*minister of religion,*" the "*ambassador of Christ,*" attired in his sacred robes, with holy aspect and flaming zeal for the "*divine honour*" and that of his Church, exhorting the vile heretic on pain of the most excruciating torments here, and eternal damnation hereafter, to abjure his heresy. As an argument to enforce his pious exhortations, observe the red hot pincers in hand, pointing to the boiling lead, the piles of faggots, the torturing wheels and all the various engines of horrid vengeance. Do you ask who is he? I answer, it is the *Reverend* Inquisitor. On the most solemn AUTO DA FE, see this incorrigible heretic brought forward, arrayed in his *santo benito*, or sleeveless yellow coat, flowered to the border with the resemblance of flames, of red serge, decorated with his own picture, surrounded with devils, as doomed to destruction for the good of his soul. Then declare of what use is reason or revelation to many called Christians!

But leaving the dungeon and that quarter of the globe, visit the group of reformed Christians, and see an order of "*teachers of the Christian faith,*" "*ministers of religion,*" having prepared themselves by the study of Grecian and Roman languages, laws, history, fables, gods, goddesses, debaucheries, wars, and suicides; having studied triangles, squares, circles, and ellipses, algebra and fluxions, the me-

chanical powers, chemistry, natural philosophy, &c. &c., for the purpose of becoming teachers of the Christian religion; and then going forth with their saddlebags full of scholastic divinity in quest of a call to some eligible living; then ask again, where is the Bible?

And, stranger still, see that Christian general, with his ten thousand soldiers and his chaplain at his elbow, preaching, as he says, the gospel of good will among men; and hear him exhort his generals and his Christian warriors to go forth with the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other, to fight the battles of God and their country; praying that the Lord will cause them to fight valiantly, and render their efforts successful in making as many widows and orphans as will afford sufficient opportunity for others to manifest the purity of their religion by taking care of them! If any thing is wanting to finish a picture of the most glaring inconsistencies, add to this those Christians who are daily extolling the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and at the same time, by a system of the most cruel oppression, separating the wife from the embraces of her husband, and the mother from her tender offspring; violating every principle, and rending every tie that unites life and reconciles man to his lot; and that, forsooth, because "*might gives right*," and a man is held guilty because his skin is a shade darker than the standard colour of the times. Adverting to these signs of the times, and many others to which these reflections necessarily lead, will you not say that this prophecy is now fulfilled? — 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4, "There will be a time when they will not endure wholesome teaching; but having itching ears, they will, according to their own lusts, heap up to themselves teachers. And from the truth, indeed, they will turn aside to fables." Chap. iii. 1—5, "This also know, that in *latter days* perilous times *will* come. For men, will be *self-lovers, money-lovers, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, without natural affection, covenant-breakers, slanderers—having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it. NOW FROM THESE TURN AWAY.*" Christian reader, remember this command—and "*from such turn away.*"

From the Religious Literary Journal.

EFFECTS PRODUCED BY READING THE NEW TESTAMENT.

"My word shall not return unto me void."

A poor student at the University of Leipsic, having occasion to undertake a journey to his distant friends, was in want of the necessary money for that purpose. He therefore was induced to go to a learned Jew, to pawn his Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament. The

latter contained the Greek and German text in opposite columns. The learned Jew, little as he valued this book, was however prevailed upon to give the student half a rix dollar for it. During the absence of the student, he undertook to read it through, with a view to confirm his mind in enmity against Jesus, to ridicule his person in the synagogue, and to be better prepared to testify his zeal for the Jewish faith. His wife and children were not permitted to see the book; he was determined to read it alone as a sworn enemy of Jesus, and to discover the falsehood of the Christian religion in all its parts. As the student was absent for about seven weeks, the Jew had sufficient leisure to perform his task. But as he proceeded to read, his surprise increased, and a sacred awe pervaded him. In reading some impressive passages he could scarcely refrain from exclaiming, Ah, that Jesus were my Saviour!—Having completed the reading, He was astonished at himself, and exceedingly perplexed that, in spite of his earnest desire to find fuel in the New Testament for the increase of his burning enmity against Jesus, he had discovered nothing deserving of hatred, but on the contrary much that was great, sublime, heavenly and divine. At length he charged himself with silly simplicity and blind folly, and resolved to open the book no more. In this resolution he persisted some days. But the consolatory and heavenly instructions he had read, and which had left an indelible impression upon his mind, and the glorious prospect of life eternal which had opened before him, did not suffer him to rest either day or night; and he resolved to read the New Testament a second time fully determined to be more careful in ascertaining that Jesus and his apostles had justly deserved the hatred of all Jews, in all ages. Again, however, he was unable to discover any thing that was absurd, or which bore the stamp of falsehood, but much wisdom, inexpressible comfort for an afflicted mind, and a hope of immortality which seemed to rescue him from that dreadful anxiety with which the thoughts of futurity had often filled him. Still he could not divest himself of his prejudices, but read the New Testament a third time with the following resolution; If I discover nothing the third time why Jesus and his Apostles, and their doctrine, should be hated by the Jews, I will become a Christian; but if my wish in first opening the book is now gratified, I will forever detest the Christian religion." During the third reading of the history of Jesus, his doctrines and promises, he could not refrain from tears, his soul was affected in a manner which no pen can describe. Now he was quite overcome, the love of the most holy and the most lovely of the children of men filled his very soul. Being fully determined to become a Christian, he went without delay and made his desire known to a Christian Minister. The student returned from his journey, and brought the borrowed money with interest to redeem his two books. The Jew asked him if he would sell the New Testament. The student was unwilling to part with it, but after some persuasion yielded.—What do you demand for it? asked the Jew. A rix

dollar will satisfy me, was the reply. The Jew opened a chest, and laid down one hundred louis d'ors. Take that, said he; gladly will I pay more if you desire it. And if at any time I can be of use to you, only apply to me, and I will be your friend to the utmost of my power. The student was surprised, and supposed that the Jew made sport of him. But the latter related to him what change of mind had been wrought in him by reading the New Testament; upbraided him with setting so little value on that precious book, and said, "never will I part with this book, and you will oblige me by accepting of the money." From that time he became a sincere Christian.

JUDGE HALE ON FAITH.

The following are the sentiments of the excellent Lord Chief Justice Hale, on this subject, extracted from the English New Baptist Magazine and Evangelical Repository.

"As touching the act of faith," he remarks, "it is no other than a sound, real, and firm belief of sacred truth; and therefore it seems that they that perplex the notion of faith with other intricate and abstruse definitions, either render it very difficult or scarcely intelligible, or else take into the definition or description those things that are but the consequences and effects of it. He that hath this firm persuasion will most certainly repent of his sins past, will most certainly endeavour obedience to the will of God, which is thus believed by him to be holy, just and good, and upon the obedience or disobedience whereof depends his eternal happiness or misery, will certainly depend upon the promises of God for this life and that to come: for those are as natural effects of such a firm persuasion, as it is for the belief of a danger to put a man upon means to avoid it, or for the belief of a benefit to put a man upon means to attain it. Some things are of such a nature that the belief or knowledge of them goes no further, but it rests in itself as the belief of bare speculative truths: but some things are of such a nature, as being once truly and firmly believed or known, carry a man out to action, and such are especially the knowledge or belief of such things as are the objects of our fears or of our hopes; the belief of such objects do naturally and with a kind of moral necessity, carry a man out to action, to the avoiding of such fears, and the attaining of such hopes. And therefore faith or belief in reference thereunto comes often in the Scriptures under the names of hope and fear, as being the proper effects of it. Instances we have of both, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. 'For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. . . Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord we persuade men.' 1 John iii. 2, 3 — 'But we know that when he shall appear, we shall

be like him, for we shall see him as he is : and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.'

“Therefore we need not be so solicitous touching the nature of faith, what kind of faith it is that must save us : certainly if it be a true and real assent of the mind to these great truths of God, it must be operative, according to the nature of the things believed which are in order to working ; and therefore if it have not that effect, it is not faith or assent : if it have it but weak and imperfectly, it is evident that the assent is weak and fluctuating : if it have that effect at sometimes but not at others, it is evident that the assent is suspended or intermitted, and not actually exercised at these intermissions. If a man were really and fully persuaded that if he took such a journey to-morrow, he should certainly break his leg, he would as certainly not go. Or if he were under a certain persuasion that if he took such a drink, he should certainly recover his lost health, it were as certain he would drink it : and if a man were actually and fully persuaded that if he used such a means he should attain everlasting happiness ; or if he should commit such a sin, he should certainly lose it, it were scarce morally possible that a reasonable man in his wits would omit the one, or commit the other.

“And to say, this is but an historical faith, and that the devils have as much, they believe and tremble, and they do as fully assent to Divine truth as any can do, yet it avails them not, concludes nothing ; the reason is evident, because the salvation to be attained, the faith which is the instrument to attain it, concerns them not, neither are they in a state to be advantaged by it ; but it is otherwise with man. If I should acquaint a stranger that if my son doth such a thing I will give my son five pounds, though the stranger believe it is really true as any thing in the world, yet it puts him not upon the action, because he is not concerned in the reward, so he is not concerned in the means ; but according to the belief that my son hath, it will or will not put him on the action. If he believe me not, he will not do it all ; if he believe it faintly and doubtingly, he will perform the action accordingly ; but if he believe it truly and fully, and set any value upon the reward, he will perform it cheerfully ; for he is concerned in the reward, and in the means to attain it.”

“Faith therefore is a firm assent to the sacred truths, whether the truths relate to things past, as that God made the world, that Christ the Messiah is come in the flesh, &c. &c. or to things present, as that Almighty God beholds all I do, and knows all I think, or that he is a reconciled Father unto me in Jesus Christ ; or things to come, which principally excite those two great movers of the soul, hope and fear, in relation to the future life of rewards and punishments.”

MOURNING APPAREL.

We invite the attention of the public, to the following extracts on this subject, which we have made, from the Boston Christian Watchman, with a view to incite them to act in this matter from rational, benevolent, and christian motives, rather than from the tyranny of a mere custom, which has not one good reason to sanction its continuance, and many to induce to its abandonment.

The color of our garments, must of course, in itself, be morally a matter of no importance ;—But to make it essential, to wear black, or (as is done in some other countries) white ; whenever a death occurs in a family, must in all cases be useless—may in many be morally injurious—and in some be often sinful and unjust. Who does not know within his own experience, of such cases as are referred to in these extracts ? where respectable families of limited means (to say nothing of the poorer classes) have been stinted of the necessaries of life to enable them to conform to this custom, and not to appear singular—where the house of mourning has been turned into a house of dress making and idle talk—where the apparel deemed so essential has been procured at the expence of debts contracted, which it was found afterwards difficult or impossible to discharge.

If these things are so ! are christians not called upon to act in this matter according to the broad and benevolent principle involved in the Apostle's resolve :—

“ Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

EDITOR.

It is an unfortunate circumstance that the custom of wearing this external token of sorrow, is carried to such an extent as it is in many places.—It has sometimes been a very burdensome tax on the poor, and not only induced needy families to expend the money with which they ought to have purchased the means of subsistence, but inclined them to contract debts for conforming to this custom, which afterwards they found difficult to discharge. We believe that the excellent Deacon Bolles, who lately died at Hartford, Ct. requested his wife and children to wear no mourning at his funeral. And we learn too, that at a recent meeting of the Baptist Church in Hartford, it was resolved, that in their opinion, the custom of wearing mourning apparel for deceased friends affords no real evidence of grief, and is productive of no good, they therefore recommended that it be discontinued.—*Christian Watchman*, Vol. 11. p. 34.

An article from the New York Daily Advertiser, on the subject of mourning dresses, was copied into the Courant of the 3d inst. and an editorial article approving it, saying, “We are glad to hear a voice raised against the efforts which are making to abolish the custom of wearing mourning apparel, on the death of friends.” It seems right to offer a few observations upon this subject with which I have

long been familiar; yet not before now having any knowledge that it was before the public.

“A mourning garb gives public notice of the situation of those who are in affliction from the loss of friends, informing others that they wish to commune with their own hearts, without being disturbed by the frivolities of the world around them.”—*New-York article.*

Here are two distinct views of the subject.—Such a garb does indeed give public notice of the death of a relative, if seen by the public; but it does not give the public any assurance of sorrow, or of mourning; for we may judge from what has transpired within our knowledge, that in general it is not *proof*, but a doubtful *evidence* of sincerity. And further, I cannot admit that a consciousness of this “public notice” affords any real, or religious consolation to the person that wears the garb. To our friends and neighbors, whose sympathy and condolence we may need and desire, notice is useless; and they can better judge than the public, whether we mourn or rejoice; indeed, strangers feel no interest in it.

As every view we take of human life, in connexion with death, and the solemn concerns of the soul, should be tested by the criterion of religious principle, I will on this ground offer my ideas of the latter part of the last quotation, in order to show that the “mourning garb” does not furnish any evidence of a “wish to commune with their own hearts.”

I have personally witnessed, and through a longer life than falls to the common lot of man, the practice of families on the death of a member; and in this respect, generally of one character, though of different grades. As soon as convenient, after the corpse is in its winding sheet, the shops are searched for *fashionable mourning*; the milliner and mantuamaker called upon, and the neighboring women employed, more or less, in fitting out the family in a fashionable manner. From this to the time of the burial, the bereaved relatives, especially the female part, have but little leisure “for communion with their own hearts;” and from being so occupied, their minds are sorrowfully disqualified for serious meditation upon death, and the awful scenes that follow it. But they are now fitted for six months, and then a half mourning must be prepared for the next six, which will complete the mourning period!!!

I would here propose an appeal to any or every intelligent person, that has passed through such a course, and inquire; to which was it most conducive, to *sorrow*, or to *pride*? If to the former, my views are erroneous—if to the latter, can we consistently withhold our assent to the abolition of the custom?

Can it truly be said, that this practice is adopted as a guard against the “frivolity of the world around them?” If it were against their own, they could find a rational argument for it. But the *Christian a'mon* sustains the soul in humble confidence in the Everlasting

Power, though it be through deep trials and conflicts. How do these appear in contrast, as a defence against the frivolities of the world!

“ Those who may wish to shut out all serious reflection, who desire to forget their friends, and never to think of death, and its consequences, may naturally enough fall into the practice of not wearing mourning apparel.—*N. Y. article.*”

It is an unquestionable truth, that should be remembered, that mourning apparel is adapted to the gaze of other people; that this is the primary object; and that improvement in the concerns of the soul of the individual wearing it, is but a secondary consideration, if this is even thought of. Shallow indeed must the impressions have been made, if the remembrance of a departed friend is dependent upon external marks. If the reconciliation of endearing associations, and of the heart-rending scene when these were dissolved by the stroke of death, can only be revived by the presentation of a piece of black cloth to the outward vision, I am lost in a labyrinth of forgetfulness; and the many precious seasons when such recollections have softened the soul, even into the sweetness of weeping, unobserved by mortal eye, have been mere illusions. And such has been the conditions of thousands, who, against the dictates of their own judgment, have worn the outward “symbols” of mourning.

Does the omission of mourning apparel shut out all serious reflection? Can we admit that in seasons the best adapted to it, seasons of stillness and retirement, the mind is a blank, as it relates to serious reflection? That it is so with many of those who adopt the custom I have no doubt.

If one has been removed from us, to whom we were bound by the strongest bonds of natural and of heavenly love, and whose release from the pains and conflicts of human nature we welcomed, and even rejoice in the full assurance that the departed spirit was prepared for the mansions of glory; the tyrant, *custom*, would make us seem to mourn, or say, that all the finer feelings of the human heart are absent from us. What? mourn because a dearly beloved friend has exchanged a world of sin, of sorrow, and of pain, for the heavenly world, and the society of saints and angels!!!

In the death of one to whose spirit heaven would be an irksome place, there is just cause for mourning: but this has not been adverted to, as a plea for “mourning apparel;” and yet, all other causes dwindle into insignificance in the comparison. The solemn, the awful consideration of a departure to a state of endless suffering, fills the Christian mind with a silent melancholy, that does not obtrude itself upon public notice.

The death of a friend is peculiarly adapted to solemnize the consideration of the retribution that follows, and to lead us into close self examination in the view of that approaching period. If it is too

much to have the whole soul absorbed in the contemplation of this infinite and boundless subject—then offer it the toys of fallen nature for its diversion, nor let it stop to inquire, DOES GOD APPROVE THEM?

It is evident to me, that the assignable reasons for dispensing with the outward, and often deceptive, evidence of mourning, are *broader* and *deeper* than people are aware of.—*C. Watchman*, vol. 12. p. 197.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY:

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

THE believer is taught by the Scriptures to look to his Saviour in every circumstance of life: in doing this he is greatly assisted by Paul, who repeatedly points out how each relationship in society shadows forth, under some view or other, Christ the Head of all things visible. This fundamental idea, which so directly leads us to “grow up into him in all things,” gives to our various social ties a sacred, almost a sacramental character; and to none more so than to the most intimate union between human creatures—that of HUSBAND and WIFE.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord: for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” Eph. v. 22—24. This subjection of the wife is not to be merely that of weakness to strength; nor is it simply enjoined as an absolute command of God; but it is meant to be a holy counterpart of the Church’s relationship and submission to the Lord Jesus himself. In this view, there is nothing in it degrading; every self-denying act which is thereby entailed upon the woman, becomes an act of religion, well-pleasing to her supreme Head in the skies, who will in due time enrich her everlastingly with “the recompence of the reward.”

Whoever would ascertain the proper deportment of a wife, must meditate on that which the church owes to the Lord of all. This scriptural type of wedded union teaches the woman to rely upon her Lord for all needful supplies; to administer to his family what she receives from him; and to pour out into his sympathising ear the wants and sorrows both of herself and her children; she is to yield him her strongest affection, to seek her highest enjoyment in his society, and to adopt his will (if not opposed to God’s,) in every thing.

Those whose hearts are thus knit unto their husbands, are bound to praise God for having poured that blessing into the cup of their wedded life; but let each wife still remember, that as submission is enjoined, not as a pleasure, but a duty, the arch-tempter will as-

surely watch his opportunity to make her rebel against it, or to render it reluctantly.

There is a peculiar lot, which this very temptation renders one of sore trial; namely, where God by his word has implanted in the woman's breast a principle of divine life, a new and holy end to be attained in all her ways, while her husband remains uninfluenced by the truths of christianity.

For females so situated, guidance is provided by the word of God. They are not to suffer their hearts to grow alienated; they must not manifest indifference, still less sullenness; the Apostle instructs them how to conduct themselves: "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they may *without the word* be won by the conversation (not the talk, but the *deportment*,) of their wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear (of God). Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel; but the hidden man of the *heart*, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." 1 Pet. iii. 1-4.

According to these inspired directions, the believing wife is not to depend on her powers of *preaching*, for the conversion of her husband. Indeed, great caution and reserve are proper in attempting to enlighten his mind, lest she appear to her husband to set herself up as his teacher; and this would not win, but disgust him; it would be too much like a usurpation of dignity and authority over him, and so a subversion of Christ's ordinance, which, by the subjection of the woman, shadows forth His Church in entire subordination to Him. The blessing to her husband through her means is not promised to her instructions, but to her example *without the word*, to her chaste, and prudent deportment, to her depth of principle manifesting itself in all things, to her invariable fear of God, to her deadness to finery and fashion in dress, to her meek and quiet spirit, which is of great price before God and man. *These are the powerful arms with which the wife is to strive for her husband's salvation; and while they are calculated to be the most prevailing with him, they are assuredly the most beneficial to herself and all around her.*

Our Heavenly Father indicates the only path by which women may win their husbands unto Christ; it is "to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus ii. 1-5.)

If it be his divine will to change her husband's heart, that consumption will be far better forwarded by her humble and Christian deportment, than by eloquent reasoning, or even than by endearing entreaties. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee; commit thy way unto Him, and He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm lv. 22; xxxvii. 5.)

The apostolical injunction to wives, to be "*keepers at home*," is extremely seasonable in the present dissipated state of general society. It will appear with the stronger force, when we consider how totally unknown, in the apostle's time, were those promiscuous assemblies at night so common in our time. If such a caution was requisite to Christian mistresses of families, in an age and country when females lived so secluded, what would the Holy Spirit have indited as a caution in *modern* times?

The Bible is not less urgent in pressing the duties of *husbands*, than those of wives. The apostle enjoins Christian men to "*love their wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh: this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and his church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*" (Ephes. v. 25—33.) Husbands are here exhorted to look to Christ's relationship to the church, as the great exemplar of their own conduct towards their wives. Jesus watches over the church with unceasing solicitude; He counts the wrongs done to her as offered to himself; He provides for all her necessities; He directs her by his counsel, supports her in every difficulty, lends an ear to all her complaints, sympathises with all her weaknesses, shares in all her sorrows; and pardons, through love, all her faults and offences.

In a connexion so intimate as marriage, nothing is more essential to harmonious co-operation, than a clear knowledge of the true *grounds of that authority lodged with one party*. It is expressly revealed, that in the management of the family, the husband stands in a situation analogous to that of Christ over the church; the wife is informed, not by her husband, but by God himself, that as Jesus Christ is governor, in the church, so is her husband in the family. His authority there, however, like the Saviour's over the church which He bought with his own blood, has its origin in love, and is meant to be wholly directed by love for their common benefit. What a situation full of high responsibility! In return for the trust committed to him, and for the honour put upon him, God binds him to the fulfilment of corresponding duties and to abound in every act of real affection. And the model placed before him, by which to regulate his kindness, gentleness, forbearance, long-suffering, patience, pity, and goodness towards the weaker vessel, is nothing less than Christ himself in the work of redemption! The appointment of such a pattern says more than a thousand precepts against tyranny, injustice, harsh language, or bitterness of spirit. If any imaginable command laid upon husbands could secure the welfare of their wives, it is precisely that of acting towards them in all things as Jesus has acted and still acts, and ever will act, towards his church. The provision made for conjugal happiness in scripture cannot be mended. Only obedient hearts to the divine directions are needed in both husband and wife,

to realize the utmost degree of happiness attainable in this life of vanity and trial.

In conclusion, it is highly pleasing to observe that in our country, whose institutions have always recognized Christianity as 'part and parcel of the common law' of the land, the laws affecting the marriage state do most accurately picture forth the relative offices of the Saviour and the church of his redeemed ones. The wife, upon her marriage, loses her paternal name, by its being absorbed into that of her husband; so the church is loosed from the paternity of the first Adam, her father according to the flesh, and is made one with the second Adam, Jesus Christ. The wife, however mean her condition by birth, becomes equal in rank to her husband, even to be, by marriage with a prince, partner of a throne she was not born to inherit: so the poor, mortal, degraded, dying church shall sit with Christ upon his throne, and be, as He is, a sovereign. The wife, whatever the amount of her debts either before or after marriage, is not answerable for: the husband must defray them all: in like manner the church, who was utterly ruined, and hath nothing wherewith to pay, has had every obligation discharged by the wealth of Jesus; and still, from day to day, her daily accumulating sins are all laid to the account of her heavenly bridegroom.

LORD'S SUPPER.

SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS, that the commemorative ordinance of the *Lord's death*, usually called the *Lord's Supper*, is a divinely instituted part of the worship, and edification of all Christian churches on every Lord's-day—The day which commemorates the Lord's resurrection.

Argument 1st is derived from the nature, importance and design of the ordinance. The Lord's supper is a positive institution. It is entirely founded on the authority of Christ. The sole obligation to observe this ordinance arises out of its appointment by Christ.—It would have been our duty gratefully and devoutly to have remembered our Saviour's dying love, though no express command had been given to that effect, but it would not have been our duty to have expressed this grateful and devout recollection by the eating bread and drinking wine, had not Jesus Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of me."—The ordinance then embodies in it, Christ's claim on the implicit obedience of his followers, and holds him forth as their lawgiver as well as their Saviour.

The Lord's Supper contains in it, an emblematic confirmation, as well as an emblematic exhibition of christian doctrine. It presents to us not only the truth, but its evidence. There can be no reasonable doubt of the reality of any event which is of such a nature, as that men's senses can clearly and fully judge of it; which took place publicly, and in commemoration of which public institutions were

immediately appointed, and have continued to be observed with uninterrupted succession till the present time. The facts of our Lord's death, and resurrection, are facts, to which these characters belong. They were events of the reality of which, men in the exercises of the senses common to the species, could clearly and fully judge.—They took place publicly. In the institutions of the *Lord's Supper*, and the *Lord's-day*, institutions closely connected in the Scriptures, we have public observances instituted in commemoration of these events, and which we know from the most indubitable evidence, have been uninterruptedly observed from the period of their institution down to our own times. It is impossible for the ingenuity of infidelity, to account satisfactorily for these facts on any principle, which does not involve in it the truth of Christianity, and it does not seem possible, to conceive of a more simple yet more effectual method of transmitting unimpaired, the principal evidences of the truth of Christianity, in the miraculous events accompanying the Saviour's death and resurrection, than by wrapping them up, if the expression may be used, in the two kindred positive institutions of the Lord's supper, and the Lord's day.

When the disciples meet on the Lord's day, around the Lord's table they preach the truth, and exhibit its evidence 'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures'; and that he rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures; that he is their lawgiver as well as Saviour—they are furnished with renewed arguments against sin—and with renewed incentives to love him, who has thus loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Hence from what the Scriptures generally teach of the nature, and importance, and design of the ordinance, may be deduced (even without more direct evidence,) sufficient evidence to convince christians that it is as consistent with revelation, as with reason, that on every Lord's day, the disciples should come together, and in their worship, and for their edification, stately shew forth the Lord's death till he come.

Argument 2d. It is express matter of revelation that this ordinance was as stated a part of worship as any other. That the first Christian Church that met in Jerusalem, and which was constituted by the Apostles of our Lord, did as stately attend upon the breaking of bread, as they did upon any part of the Christian worship. So Luke records, Acts ii. 42—"They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Ought we not, then, to continue as stedfast in the breaking of bread, as in the apostles teaching—fellowship and prayers?

Argument 3rd. The Lord commanded the apostles to teach the disciples, all things, whatsoever he had commanded them. Matt. xxviii. 20. Whatever then the churches did by the appointment, or concurrence of the apostles, they did by the commandment of the Lord Jesus, and whatever acts of worship, the apostles taught or sanctioned in one church, they taught and sanctioned in all churches, because all under the same government of one and the same King,

But we have in Acts xx. 7. a scriptural example recorded that upon the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread.—The Apostle tarrying at Troas seven days to meet the disciples when they come together, and departing immediately after on the Monday, strengthens the evidence, that the first day of the week was the fixed day when the disciples came together to observe this ordinance. Other corroborating evidences, that the first day of the week was the stated day for the disciples to come together for religious worship, are found in the fact, that Paul says, he had given orders to all the churches in Galatia as well as in Corinth, to attend to the fellowship, or the laying up in store as God had prospered them for the poor Saints, on the first day of every week—as Macknight justly renders “*Kata mian sabbaton*” “the first day of every week,” (I. Cor. xvi. 2.) For every linguist will admit that “*Kath emeron*,” means every day or daily—“*Kata etos*”—(Luke ii. 41,) “every year.”—“*Kata polin*”—“in every city”—(Tit. i. 5.)—And therefore in the same usage—“*Kata mian sabbaton*,” means the first day of every week. But not only do we learn from the word of inspiration, that the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread, but also,

Argument 4th. That the Church at Corinth also met every first day of the week, and that a chief purpose of their coming together into one place was also to eat the Lord's supper—(I. Cor. xvi. 2. xi. 20.)—Keeping in mind that Paul commanded the church at Corinth to lay by in store their contributions on every first day of the week, and that this is agreed on all hands to prove the weekly meeting of the saints—with this concession in mind we have only to notice what is said—(Chap. xi. 20.)—“*When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.*” To eat thus, as is alluded to (in verse 21) is not to fulfil properly the purpose of your coming together, thereby declaring that this was a chief object of their meeting. As when a teacher reproveth his pupils for wasting time, and not attending to their lessons, which they have come together on purpose to attend to; he cannot remind them more forcibly of the object of their coming to school, nor reprove them with more point than to say “when you act thus, this is not to assemble to learn.” This is the exact import of the apostles address, “when you come together into one place on the first day of the week, and act as you do, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.”—We have incidental evidence then, from the Epistle to the Corinthians—that that church met for religious purposes every first day of the week, and that when they came together it was to eat the Lord's Supper; a declaration of the practice of the primitive churches, and of the commands of the apostles, as explicit as could incidentally be given—differing only from a direct command, in the form in which it is expressed, (and the Apostles only censuring their improper manner in doing it—while in verse 1. 2. he praises them for keeping the ordi-

nances as he delivered them,) is alone as high authority as we could require, to come together on the first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper.

In a word then, without any speculation, or conjecture, scriptural reasons for this practice may be clearly learned,

1st. From what the New Testament reveals of the nature, design and connection, of the only two positive *commemorative* institutions of christianity—the Lord's Day, and the Lord's Supper—exhibiting the truth, and proof, of his death, and resurrection—the foundation of the peace, and hope of christians.

2ndly.—From the fact, which the Bible teaches, that every divine commemorative ordinance of God had a fixed time pointed out for their observance.—From the one to be observed weekly as a commemoration of the end of creation, to those which record the death and resurrection of Jesus when the work of redemption was finished.

3dly.—From the fact, that if the Scriptures do not point out a fixed period for the observance of this commemorative institution,—its observance at *any one time*, could not be enforced, as being according to the revealed will of God.

4thly.—From the fact, that the New Testament expressly reveals, that the breaking of bread, was as stated an ordinance of worship as any other—*it is written*, that the Disciples “continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship *and in breaking of bread*, and in prayers.”—Acts ii. 42.

5thly.—From the Scriptural example divinely recorded respecting the Church of Christ at Troas, that “upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow.”—Acts xx. 7.

6thly.—From the fact, that the same practice is revealed (though incidentally) respecting the Church at Corinth; they came together every first day of the week. (I. Cor. xvi. 1.) Though *reproved for the manner*, yet they were praised that they “kept the ordinances as the Apostles delivered them.” (Ch. xi. 1.) Under these circumstances it is written respecting them—“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken.”—Ch. xi. 20.

Comparing and adding together then, what the Scriptures teach on this subject, with the particular references made to Acts ii. 42. xx. 7. I. Cor. xvi. 1. Ch. xi. 1. 2. and verses 20. 21. Christians have an amount of scriptural evidence, that this was a stated observance for their worship, and for their edification, on every Lord's-day, which they will not find more direct, or exceeded, in favor of any other. And that therefore it is according to the will of Christ, and in obedience to him, and acting under the influence of Apostolic

practice and teaching—that they come together, on every Lord's-day to eat the Lord's supper—and as oft as they do it, to do it in remembrance of him, who to each partaker, seems renewedly to say—

“ This is my body broke for sin,
 “ Receive, and eat the living food ;
 “ I take the cup, and bless the wine,
 “ 'Tis the new covenant in my blood.
 “ Do this, my friends till time shall end,
 “ In memory of your dying friend—
 “ Meet at my table, and record
 “ The love of your departed Lord.
 “ For when my feast you celebrate,
 “ You shew my death, you sing my name,
 “ Till I return, when you shall eat,
 “ The marriage supper of the Lamb.”

APOSTACY.

[*From the Millennial Harbinger, Vol. II.*]

Few, if any, of the great transitions in human life or character are instantaneous. In the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms the changes are gradual and progressive. Few of them are perceptible to the most discriminating eye, except at considerable intervals. In universal nature all things are progressive. From the first opening of the eyelids of the morning; from the first dawning of the day to the blushing beauties of the rising sun; from the awakening of the balmy zephyrs of the Spring to the solstitial warmth of a Midsummer noon; from the first buddings to the mellow fruits of Autumn, how imperceptible, but how progressive is the change as it advances, and how manifest at the expiration of these intervals!

In the animal kingdom the same progress appears in every thing, and in nothing more than in the human family. The infant in passing on to manhood exhibits in every month some new development, which the ever watchful attention of a mother's eye can discern only at considerable intervals. But this is the order of the universe. It was so in creation; it is so in providence; it was, and is, and will be so in redemption.

This progress appears not only onward and upward towards perfection, but onward and downward towards destruction in all the kingdoms of nature. The grass withers, the blossom fades, the fruit decays, the ripe vegetable and animal gradually vanish away. The full blown rose drops its leaves one by one till all are gone. The full grown tree drops its leaves, then its branches, finally its trunk. The progress out of life is as gradual as the progress into life and through life.

In religion the same progress is apparent. Repentance itself is a ceasing to do evil and a learning to do well. Men grow in virtue and in vice. Faith, hope, and love are progressive. Habit is the offspring of repeated and progressive acts. No man becomes a profligate in a day, nor is the Christian character attained by a few efforts. Hence the means of moral life, health, and perfection; are as abundant and as necessary as the means of animal and vegetable life and growth.

Christians may grow in favour, in moral courage, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and universal good will, as they grow in stature. But this growth is not attained by wishing, but by abounding in the work of faith, the labour of love, and in the patience of hope.

Apostacy is not the work of a moment—it is not an instantaneous change. As, in ascending a lofty eminence, so in descending, we make but one step at a time. He that is condemned to death for taking away the life of his fellow man, in retracing his steps can often discover the first covetous thought or revengeful feeling in the long progress of crime which terminated in the most enormous of all acts of wickedness against his brother man. Thoughts precede words, and both generally precede actions. Murder, adultery, theft, and every immoral or unrighteous act, first exist in thought: “Lust when it has conceived brings forth sin, and sin when it is perfected brings forth death.” He that hates his brother is a murderer, because murder is found in the fruits which grow from hatred.

The numerous cautions found in the New Testament intimate the danger of apostacy. Where there is no danger no caution is necessary; but cautions always denote danger. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” We have sometimes marked the course of apostates, and heard the mournful narratives of others who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Sometimes the mournful tale begins with, “I did not as constantly read the good Book as I had been accustomed to do. Then I did not find so much delight in secret prayer as I found before. Occasionally a day has passed without ever meditating on any of the communications of God to man, and without calling upon the name of the Lord. This led to a greater remissness in other duties. I did not guard my lips nor keep my heart as formerly. I repented and reformed; but found it more easy to become remiss a second time than before. I used to meet thrice every Lord’s Day with the brethren. But, after having once or twice fallen off from my former zeal and devotion, I made twice a-day suffice. A little indisposition, a head-ache, or some slight domestic inconvenience, soon become a good excuse for going but once on the Lord’s Day to unite with the brethren in the praises of the Lord. But my interest in the disciples began to diminish as my zeal began to cool. I could now see more flaws in

them than formerly, and less difference between them and others. I could then find some very good companions among the non-professors, and began to think them almost as good Christians as my brethren. If I found myself fatigued, or the least indisposed towards the close of the week, I made it a point to *rest* at home on Sunday, or to take medicine on that day, so that I might not lose my time from work; or, if I had any business abroad, I was sure to start on Saturday or Sunday, so that I might gain one day in the week to my business, and would flatter myself that I could very profitably spend the day in meditation as I travelled along.

“Thus matters progressed, until I could absent myself two, and sometimes three, Lord’s Days in succession.—When any of my brethren would inquire why I was absent, I made some excuse, and told them to look to themselves. I soon felt displeas’d with them for their exhortations and admonitions and would sometimes ask who made it their business to watch over me. I began to censure both them and their profession, and would ask them if they were the only true church of Christ in the world. At this time I had given up all secret prayer, and in my family I only prayed occasionally. This soon became a dry sort of business, and I finally left it off altogether.

“I found good company in the people I used to call the people of the world, and soon preferred their friendship to that of my brethren, who became displeas’d with me, and at length excluded me from their society. I then threw off all restraint, and for many years have never seriously bow’d my knee to God. I am now often tormented with the recollections of the past and the anticipation of the future; yet I have no desire to return, and, indeed, I am literally without God and without hope in the world.

Such narratives, with some slight variations, may be frequently heard, if persons who have apostatized from the faith can be induced to communicate the full history of their apostacy. “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” And let all remember, that, immediately after Paul admonishes the Christians not to neglect the assembling of themselves together, he next speaks of final apostacy from the truth. It is better never to have known the holy commandment, than having known it to turn aside from the way of righteousness. A Scotch proverb says, that “apostacy begins at the closet door.”

MULTUM IN PARVO.

A Christian on being urged to write in an Album, “if it were but *two lines*,” inscribed this distich—

Can “two lines” teach a lesson from above?

—Yes, *one* shall speak a volume—

GOD IS LOVE!