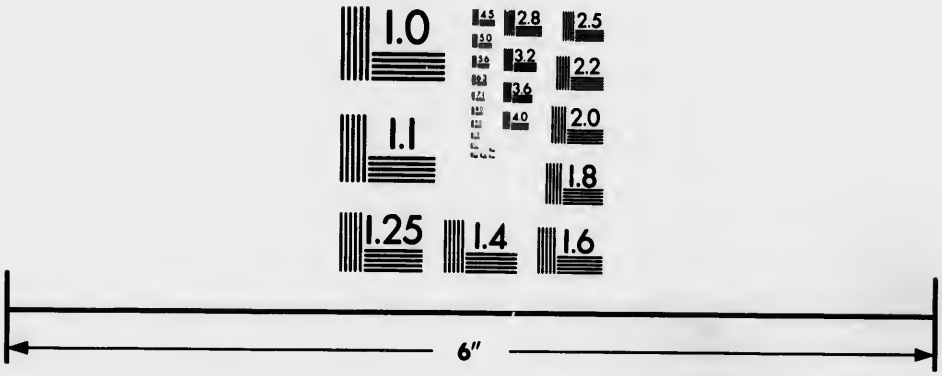
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- [x] Coloured covers/ Couverture de couleur
- [ ] Covers damaged/ Couverture endommagée
- [ ] Covers restored and/or laminated/ Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- [ ] Cover title missing/ Le titre de couverture manque
- [ ] Coloured maps/ Cartes géographiques en couleur
- [ ] Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/ Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- [x] Coloured plates and/or illustrations/ Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- [ ] Bound with other material/ Relié avec d'autres documents
- [x] Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin/ La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure
- [ ] Blank leaves added during restoration may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming/ Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.

- [ ] Coloured pages/ Pages de couleur
- [ ] Pages damaged/ Pages endommagées
- [ ] Pages restored and/or laminated/ Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- [x] Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/ Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- [ ] Pages detached/ Pages détachées
- [x] Showthrough/ Transparence
- [x] Quality of print varies/ Qualité inégale de l'impression
- [ ] Continuous pagination/ Pagination continue
- [ ] Includes index(es)/ Comprend un (des) index

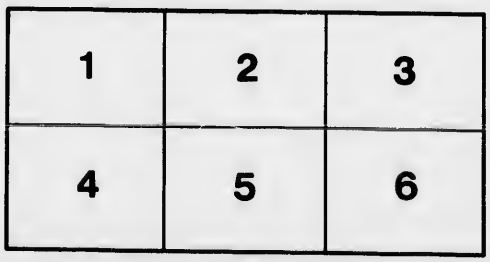
Title on header taken from:/ Le titre de l'en-tête provient:

- [ ] Title page of issue/ Page de titre de la livraison
- [ ] Caption of issue/ Titre de départ de la livraison
- [ ] Masthead/ Générique (périodiques) de la livraison

- [ ] Additional comments:/ Commentaires supplémentaires:

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below/
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10X 12X 14X 16X 18X 20X 22X 24X 26X 28X 30X 32X



20

NEW YEAR

ADDRESSES TO THE YOUNG.

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER TOPP, D.D.,

KNOX CHURCH, TORONTO.

TORONTO:
JAMES BAIN & SON, 46 KING STREET EAST.

PRESBYTERIAN PRINTING HOUSE,
5 JORDAN ST., TORONTO.

INTRODUCTION.

It is not necessary to say much by way of introduction to the discourses in this volume. They are the memorial of a long ministry which is still fragrant in the memory of many on both sides of the Atlantic. The sudden death of the lamented author, after a pastorate of twenty-one years in this city, has left a blank in the community and in the Church which will not soon be filled, and has led many to desire some permanent memorial of his labours. To meet this demand the following discourses are given to the public.

The volume contains twenty-one New Year Addresses to the young people of Knox Church, Toronto. Dr. Topp desired that he and his flock should begin each year with God; and it was his custom to meet with his congregation on the morning of each successive New Year's day for divine worship. These gatherings were always looked forward to with pleasure, and at the close of the service, the young, who were uniformly present in large numbers, received from him a copy of the Pastor's New Year's Address. These addresses, extending over the entire period of Dr. Topp's ministry in Toronto, are collected in this volume. To the members of the congregation which now mourns his loss, they will have a peculiar interest. They are linked with each year in the faithful pastorate of a be-

loved minister who now rests from his labours Many who in their youthful days received from his hand the earlier addresses in this collection saw their children receive from him the same gift.

It is believed, however, that these discourses will be acceptable and profitable to a much wider circle of readers. All who knew the author will expect to find in them sound doctrine, judicious counsel, and the earnest and faithful presentation of Gospel truth, but they may not look for qualities which these addresses display. We have been informed that in the earlier years of his ministry, Dr. Topp was peculiarly popular as a preacher to the young. His ordinary services, in later years, had not many of the characteristics which we usually associate with special success in this important department of ministerial usefulness. But those who read these discourses, and mark how they abound with apt Scripture illustration and appropriate anecdote, will easily understand how such a reputation was obtained No one can peruse them without observing that they are in every way fitted to interest the young, and to impress divine truth upon their minds. And it may be added, that, like many sermons prepared specially for the young, they will be found more likely to interest and profit persons of riper years than many of those designed expressly for them.

The volume closes appropriately with a sermon on "The Perpetuity of the Reign of Christ," the last Dr. Topp was permitted to preach. The theme, had it been designedly chosen, could scarcely have been more suitable for the close

of such a ministry, for Christ Jesus and Him crucified was ever its central subject. This sermon was delivered in Elgin, during his last visit to Scotland. It was preached, not in the same building, but to the same congregation, among whom, nearly forty-two years before, he had commenced his ministry. It was thus ordered, in the Providence of God, that the people who first enjoyed his ministrations should be the last to hear the Gospel from his lips. He returned again to Canada and ended his days in the land of his adoption, but he was never again able to enter the pulpit. His work was finished, and the Master called him to higher service. But when a good man's labours are ended, the results do not pass away. They abide forever. The souls which he has led to Christ bear the impress of his labours through eternity. And in this world his power continues to be felt. His influence mingles with that of other Christian workers, and goes to swell that great stream of beneficence which flows through the living Church to bless the world.

This Memorial Volume is sent forth in the hope that it may not only help to keep fresh the memory of one who was loved and honoured in the Church, but that it may also aid in perpetuating his influence for good in the world.

WM. McL.

TORONTO, *31st January, 1880.*

2

CONTENTS.

ADDRESS.

My Dear Young Friends,—

If the question were put to you, "How does God speak to us?" you would give as the answer, "He speaks to us in his Word." This is indeed true. God speaks to us principally in his word. Every time you take the Bible into your hands to read it; every time you hear any of its precious truths, it is as if you heard the voice of God, telling you of his infinite love in delivering up his own dear Son to the death for sinners, and inviting you to come to Christ and be saved. But God speaks to you, and to all, in his providence as well as in his word. When He gives you health, or kind friends, or any temporal comforts, it is as if He were saying—These are all my gifts—I might leave you without them, but I freely bestow them upon you—give me, then, your hearts, and return to my service When He lays you upon a bed of sickness, or sends death into your dwellings, taking away from your sight a father or mother, or sister, or brother, or other beloved friend, He wishes to remind you that you too will soon die—that you need to be washed in the blood of Jesus—to have eternal life within you, and thus to be safe in the hour of death, and in the

day of judgment. So, also, at this season, when you are permitted to see the close of the year that is now gone, and to enter upon the beginning of another, God comes, as it were, before you, stopping you in your path, and solemnly addressing you, says, "My child, remember, it is I who have spared you hitherto; I have caused multitudes as young as you to return to the dust of the earth, and the grave has now closed over their lifeless bodies, till the morning of the resurrection dawns; but you are still in the land of the living. What are you doing with the life which I have continued to you? Are you spending it for Me? What are you? A child of God? or yet a child of Satan? Whither are you going? Are you in the way to heaven, or in the broad road that leadeth to destruction?

These, my young friends, are very solemn questions. Read them over again, and search your hearts, to see what reply you can make. It is with God you have to do. He cannot be deceived. He knows whether you have given Him your hearts and are serving Him, or whether you are still unsaved, loving sin, and caring not for Jesus and his love. You remember what Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews—"I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." He needed not that they should tell him. He knew it well. And so he marks those of you who love him not—who despise his word, and delight in the ways of sin. How wretched is your state? He looks upon you as his enemies; and, should you die in this condition, you must have your portion with the devil and his angels in the place of everlasting torment. But, oh! it is a

blessed thing if any of you can say with Peter, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Jesus is well acquainted with all his flock. He takes delight in them. "He feeds his flock like a shepherd, He gathers the lambs in his arms." He defends them against the power and malice of Satan —He protects them all from evil—He bestows upon them all that is good in this life, and at death He takes them to be forever with Himself in heaven. I recollect when a young girl, on her death-bed, was asked, "Are you afraid to die?"—"No," was her answer; "I am not afraid, for the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. I have been a great sinner; but I trust He has enabled me to wash in that fountain, and He will take them that do so to heaven." "How do you know that?" "Because He hath said—'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also.'"

I am sure, my dear young friends, that you would all wish to go to heaven when you die. There is not a boy or girl who reads this address—there is not a man or woman who would not desire to be in heaven; for heaven is a place of perfect happiness. All like to be happy—every man will say, as Balaam did, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his." But Balaam was a wicked man; he did not live a holy life, and therefore his wish was vain. It does not matter, then, though you may be saying, "I would like to go to heaven." The great

question is—are you taking Jesus as your Saviour? Are you going to Him as a perishing sinner? Are you forsaking the ways of sin? Are you seeking to be holy, that is, like Christ? It is recorded of heaven, in God's word, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Let me then entreat you—

I. Give yourselves to Christ. It is his own command—"My son, give Me thine heart." This is the only way of happiness and safety. When He says to you, "Give me your hearts," He asks nothing for His own benefit; for He is God, perfectly happy, and nothing which you do can profit Him. But He wishes you to be happy; He wants to bestow upon you grace here, and glory hereafter, if you will only come to Him; and they alone who come to Christ are happy. You are born sinners. David says, in the 51st Psalm, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." This is true of every one, by nature. You go astray as soon as you be born—speaking lies, and committing sin. Now God is angry with the wicked every day. Sinners shall not stand in his presence. He hateth all the workers of iniquity. How, then can you be really happy, if God's wrath burns against you, to pursue you in this life, and to consume you throughout eternity? My dear children, those only are blessed whose sins are taken away—who are reconciled to God—who have heaven secured to them through the blood of Jesus. Jesus wants to do this for you, and he alone can do it. He will take away all your sins,

however many and great. He will bring you nigh to God, so that God the Father will be always well pleased with you for his Son's sake. Surely, then, we ask you to do that which will make you blessed and safe when we beseech you to give yourself to Christ. And again, Jesus infinitely deserves that you should give Him your hearts. Though He was dwelling from all eternity on his throne in heaven, surrounded by myriads of adoring angels, yet He humbled Himself to come down to this earth in the form of a servant. He suffered shame, and reproach, and poverty, aud bitter persecution for you. You recollect his own words, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air, have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And, on another occasion, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." This was his death upon the cross.

> "He longs to be baptized with blood,
> He pants to reach the cross."

And all this was that He might save sinners. Who has ever done so much, or who could have ever done so much for you? Is He not, then, worthy of your hearts? Oh! yes, dear children, infinitely worthy. And will you be so ungrateful as to refuse his request, after all that He has done to win them? Be not so foolish and unwise. You thus bring death and destruction upon your souls. I remember reading of a heathen, who, when he heard of the love of Jesus, came to a missionary, and said, "I have a flower, a precious flower,

to present as an offering, but I have found none worthy to receive it. Now that I have heard of the love of Christ, I will offer my flower to Him, for He is worthy to receive it." This flower was his heart. Jesus accepted it, and, after a time, transplanted it to his own garden, in the Paradise above. So will it be with all who give themselves to Him. He takes them, at death, to be forever with Himself.

II. Be earnest in prayer that you may be made willing to give your hearts to Jesus, and to follow Him. He Himself said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." If God were to leave you to yourselves, you would remain the servants of sin—you would reject every warning—you would despise the commands of Christ, and go on with careless steps, as many around you do, in the way to hell. You have evil hearts of unbelief, which lead you to depart from the living God. And all the instructions and exhortations of your parents and teachers will be slighted, if God does not, by his Spirit, change your hearts, and draw you to Christ. God has given you the gracious promise, "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the hard and stony heart out of your flesh, and give you an heart of flesh." But then He says, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel." It is to those who are earnest and believing in prayer that God fulfils his promise. If, therefore, when you read this, your conscience tells you that you never pray to God, or that you do not pray with the heart, you need not

wonder that you are yet in love with sin that you take no delight in doing the will of Jesus. Prayerless children are the children of Satan, and God will fulfil to them, not his promises, but his threatenings. He will pour out his wrath upon them that call not on his name. Oh! beware, lest, by neglecting prayer, this should be your wretched case. Jesus, though He was God as well as man, often spent whole nights in prayer, on the cold mountain, making supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save. Should you not, like Him, be fervent and persevering at the throne of grace? Let not any day pass over your heads, without finding you on your bended knees at the footstool of mercy, imploring the Spirit to take of the things that are Christ's, and to show them to your souls. "If you seek God in prayer He will be found of you; but, if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever." A minister once said to a little child, "What do you do so often going into your room?" "I go to pray, sir" 'To whom do you pray?" 'To Christ." "What do you ask from Christ?" "I ask for grace." To another young boy, he said, "I hear you often pray; what do you pray for?" "I say, Lord Jesus, here lies a poor sinful child at thy feet; Lord be gracious to me, and give me grace, and thy Holy Spirit; forgive me all my sins." Both of them soon got what they prayed for—hearts to love and follow Jesus.

III. Read the word of God daily, and take delight in it The Bible is the best of books. It tells you of God—of Jesus Christ—of the Holy Spirit—of

heaven and of hell. It sets forth a most precious treasure—the pearl of great price—even Jesus who shed his heart's blood to save your souls. If a man were told that in a field which belonged to him there was a mine of gold or silver, or any valuable metal, he would dig, and labour day after day in digging, till he found it. So, if you are wise and anxious to be rich for eternity, you will search the Bible day by day, with earnest prayer that God would open your eyes by his Spirit, till you find Christ. The word of God is the field, and Jesus is the treasure hid in it. "Search the Scriptures daily, for in them are contained the words of eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ." It will abundantly repay all your labour and diligence. No man ever regretted that he loved the Bible, and made it his constant study. Many a one has had cause to be sorry that he delighted in other books and neglected the Bible; but the love of God's word is never a cause of sorrow. All the true children of God delight in the Bible. It supplies food to their souls—it shews them the way in which they ought to walk—it enables them to resist the temptations of Satan, and the counsels of the wicked; it is the source of happiness and peace to them—it points them to everlasting glory as the end. David says in the 119th Psalm, "Oh! how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day. It is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." Good King Josiah, while he was yet young (he became a king when he was eight years old), began to seek after the God of David his father. When he found a copy of God's word he was very much affected, and made a

covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes with all his heart, and with all his soul; to perform the words of the covenant, which are written in this book. And you remember that it is said of Timothy, "From a child he knew the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ." So, my young friends, if you neglect the Bible you will walk in the way of sinners, but if you love the word of God and meditate upon it, and pray God to write it on your hearts, you will find life and peace, and be eternally blessed. May the Lord grant this to each of you for his Son's sake.

IV. Forsake the company of the wicked and choose the Lord's people as your friends. You would surely like to be with those who have the Lord's presence. And who are they that have the Lord's gracious presence? They are his own chosen ones, who hate sin and keep his commandments. If you would dwell with them forever in glory, you must walk with them on earth. David says that his delight was with "the saints, the excellent of the earth." Wicked boys and girls who despise the word of God, who profane the Lord's day, who take pleasure in breaking the laws of God and man, have not the blessing of God. His curse rests upon them; and, therefore, his command to you is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will be a God unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." There is great

danger in disobeying this command. If you make the prayerless and ungodly your companions, you will be drawn into their sins—you will be partakers of their plagues. Some time ago a young boy, who had formerly attended a Sabbath school, and was thought to be well-disposed, was enticed by some wicked associates to go a-fishing on the Lord's day. Though it rained very hard, and he was desired not to go, yet bent on pursuing his own course, he went notwithstanding. They came to the river where they agreed to stop and they began their unhallowed amusement, and continued for some time, not thinking of any danger, when this boy, wishing to obtain a better place. tried to jump from the spot where he stood to another In doing so, his foot slipped, he struck his head against a boat and fell into the river; and after being sought for some time, was found and taken out a lifeless corpse. Dear children, take warning by this boy's unhappy end. The way of transgressors is hard. Resolve with David, "Depart from me all ye evil-doers; I will keep the commandments of my God." Remember it is written in Scripture, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

V. Live always as in God's presence, remembering that his all-seeing eye is upon you. He is now your ever present witness. There is no place whither his eyes do not penetrate. The night and the day, the darkness and the light are all alike to Him. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Your words, your actions, your very thoughts, He knoweth well. It is impos-

sible to conceal the imaginations of the heart from Him. You may hide much that you think, and speak, and do, from your fellow creatures, but you cannot hide anything from God. He treasures up all in the book of his remembrance; and there is a day coming when everything, good and bad, shall be brought to light, and men shall receive a reward according to that which they have done, whether it be good or evil. You may now profane the Lord's day; you may neglect prayer and the word of God; you may utter oaths and curses, and take God's name in vain; you may tell falsehoods and commit other kinds of wickedness in secret; and because your parents or teachers, or others whom you respect, do not know all that, you may think that you have nothing to fear. Ah! my dear children, this is a ruinous delusion; a device of Satan to destroy your souls. God will reckon with you for all that you have done, or thought, or spoken. He will bring you into judgment for everything; and should you not then be afraid to sin? If you continue in a wicked, unbelieving course of life, and die in your sins you will indeed rise from your graves, but it will be to be banished forever from the presence of the Lord. But if you forsake your unrighteous thoughts and evil ways and turn to the Lord, you shall rise to the resurrection of life and glory. Oh! let this truth be ever present to your minds, "Thou God seest me." When you are tempted to sin, say with Joseph: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And with David, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me." Living as in God's

presence, delighting in Jesus as your Saviour, and walking in his ways, He will be ever with you, to comfort, and support and deliver you from evil; He will sustain you in the hour of death, and throughout all eternity, will make you happy and blessed.

These things have been written to you, my dear young friends, from a heart-felt anxiety that you may know and choose the way of life. You cannot do so too early. Your time upon the earth is uncertain. It may be very short. *This year thou mayest die.* It is very probable that some of you *will die;* but who can tell which of you shall be laid in the grave before the termination of this year? God can take away whomsoever He pleaseth. Do not foolishly say that because you are young, and healthy, and strong, that *you shall have* many years to live. Go to any church-yard, and you will see many graves of an infant's length. And have you not seen some as full of health as you now are, soon cut down by death, and borne away to the cold and narrow house appointed for all living? Do not then delay, lest the angel of death come, and carry you into eternity, unsaved. "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him whilst He is near." Jesus, when He was but twelve years of age, said to his mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" When He thus spoke, his language is fitted to teach you, and all young persons, that you have an important work to engage in, and that you cannot begin too soon. You are all sinners—you require to be washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus—you have wicked hearts by nature, and these

must be changed by the Spirit of God. You have heaven to attain and hell to avoid: and oh! when you consider what it is to be consigned to the agonies of the second death, why should any of you refuse to listen to the entreaties that are made to you to flee to the Saviour? Why should you be concerned about your bodies and careless of your souls? God the Father waits to be gracious — Jesus waits to receive you — the Holy Spirit waits to bless you. Choose then *now* the good part which shall never be taken from you; and all that is good will be yours, both in this life and in the life that is to come.

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, incline and enable you all to do this, is the fervent and daily prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *January, 1859.*

MOSES' PRAYER.

My Dear Young Friends,

You have, in the mercy of God, been spared to enter on another year. The grave has not swallowed *you* up, as it has many much younger than any of you. To God be the praise! It is He who has kept you in health, or raised you up from a bed of sickness, or preserved you in the midst of danger. Give thanks then to God. Pray that He would give you hearts to praise Him.

Some of you have been saying, one to another, "I wish you a Happy New Year." But perhaps you have thoughtlessly used these words, because it is common amongst people at this season to do so. Have you considered what it is that can make you happy? It is not health, or riches, or kind friends, or long life, or any earthly thing that will bring happiness. You may have all that most people think good things, and yet not be happy. The way of happiness you will find pointed out in the following verse, from which I am going to address you in these pages; for with all my heart, I desire that you may be truly happy. May the Spirit of Christ lead you to see your

need of mercy, and enable you to offer up this prayer day after day :

"O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may be glad and rejoice all our days."—Psalm xc., 14.

This is a most suitable prayer for you. You know who it was that wrote most of the Psalms. It was David, the man after God's own heart. It was not at one time, but at different times throughout his life, from youth to old age, that he wrote them. He loved God, and walked with God, and made God his chiefest joy. And sometimes, when he was in trouble, and sometimes when he was in joy; and again, when he felt his need of mercy, to pardon his sins, and of grace to enable him to do God's will, and to overcome his spiritual enemies, he would write one of those Psalms, telling God what he felt, and what he needed for his soul.

For this reason, all good people take pleasure in the Psalms. And if you have hearts to love God, you will delight in them too, for they are just the words of a godly man's heart, speaking with God.

But this is not one of David's Psalms. It was written long before the time of David—about 400 years before he was born. Moses was the writer of it. He wrote it at a very remarkable time, and in very interesting circumstances. God had promised to bring the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, to drive out the inhabitants for their wickedness, and to give it to them as their possession. According to his promise, He brought them in safety through the

wilderness, though they had often sinned against Him; and when they came to the promised land, Moses sent out twelve men, one of each tribe, to spy out the land, and to bring back a report regarding it. They all, except two of them, Caleb and Joshua, brought back an evil report, to discourage the people. They said that, though it was a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, yet the inhabitants were men of great stature—giants, whom they would not be able to overcome, and that if they were to attempt to seize the land, they would be destroyed. Then all the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron, and the whole congregation said unto them, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Would God that we had died in the wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey?" This was unbelief. It was the same as if they had said at once, that God was not able to give them the land—that He could not fulfil his word; and therefore God's wrath was kindled against them, and He threatened to smite them all with a pestilence. But Moses prayed for them, and his prayer was heard. The Lord said unto him, "I have pardoned according to thy word." But in order to punish them for their unbelief, He told Moses that none of them above twenty years of age, except Caleb and Joshua, should enter into the land. He would make them wander for forty years in the wilderness, because they were a rebellious generation, till they all died, and then their children would enter in and possess the land.

You thus learn, my dear young friends, how God will punish them that do not believe his word. The Israelites were kept out of Canaan, because of unbelief, and so all that have not faith—all who do not believe the Gospel and follow Christ fully, will be kept out of heaven. No unbelievers shall enter that holy place.

Moses, as you may suppose, was very much affected by this awful sentence pronounced against them; and then he wrote this psalm as a prayer to be used by them. They knew that they were to die in the wilderness, because of their sins; and he here teaches them to ask forgiveness of God, and grace to enable them so to improve God's dealings with them, and to count their days, that they might apply their hearts to wisdom and not die eternally. And the verse from which we are now to address you may be considered as a prayer to be offered up by the young amongst them, that they might learn from the sins and punishment of their fathers, to seek God's favour and mercy above everything, and thus to live in the enjoyment of happiness and peace. "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may be glad and rejoice all our days."

You can easily conceive how earnestly the children of the Israelites would offer up this prayer. When they saw their parents dying, one after another, some in one place, and some in another, as they wandered about in the wilderness, each succeeding death would be a warning to them not to sin against God—it would make them very anxious that God would visit them with mercy, and grant them his

favour, that they might be blessed, and enabled to serve Him.

God is the same God still. He hateth sin; He is angry with the wicked every day. And the close of every year telling you that time is passing away, and every instance of death around you, should make you concerned that you may have the mercy of God, and thus be glad and rejoice. I remember reading of a little boy who had this prayer fulfilled to him. He had been taken very ill; and one morning he prayed especially for his father and mother, and brothers and sisters, that they might all meet in heaven. When he was told that death was near, he said—"I am prepared; Jesus hath prepared me. I do love Jesus. I trust in Jesus Christ. Oh! let me not miss the pathway to heaven." Then, closing his eyes, he breathed out—"Even so: come Lord Jesus; come quickly!" That evening, he called for his brothers and sisters, that he might speak to them for the last time; and when they came to his bedside he earnestly besought them, saying—"O, pray that God would change your hearts, and then you will be happy. I made this my constant prayer—'O, satisfy me early with thy mercy, that I may be glad and rejoice all my days.' And God heard and answered me. He forgave all my sins; He washed me in the blood of Jesus; He gave me a heart to love and serve Him; and now I am glad, and can rejoice in the prospect of death. Make that your prayer, and you will enjoy the same blessedness."

Let me explain this prayer to you. And (I.) I shall tell you what is meant by "mercy," which you are to ask; (II.) When you are to seek mercy—"early;" and

(III.) The benefit of obtaining it, "that we may be glad and rejoice all our days."

I. It is mercy you are to ask—"O, satisfy us early with thy mercy." What is meant by the term "mercy?" It means anything that is good bestowed upon you when you do not deserve it. You may have heard of some wicked man who had killed another, or who had broken into a house at midnight, and robbed it. He was discovered, and brought before the judges to be tried for his crime. He was found guilty, and condemned, either to die or to be sent out of the country all his life. Suppose the sovereign of the country to hear of his case—to take pity upon him, and to send to him a message, as he lay in the prison, expecting the sentence to be executed, that he was pardoned and might go free. This would be mercy shewn to him. He did not deserve it. He had broken the law and was justly condemned, so that he had no right to expect a pardon. It was a gift freely bestowed upon him, It may be that some of you have been disobedient to your parents (you are bound to obey them, for the command of God is, "Honour thy father and thy mother")—you may have disobeyed your father—you may have done something wrong—something which he forbade you to do. He threatened to punish you. But suppose that some person went and made intercession with your father, and satisfied him for your fault. He listened to the request made to him, and pardoned you. That is mercy—you deserved to be punished; but your father's goodness, at the request of another, saved you from punish-

ment—you received mercy, and were restored to his favour.

Now, dear children, we have all disobeyed God; you and I, and all upon the earth have broken the laws of God. We have sinned against Him and brought upon ourselves the curse of heaven. God is justly displeased with those that sin against Him. He created us; He preserves us; He gives us life and all that we have, and therefore we are bound to obey Him. But all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. If you say that you have not sinned, you make God a liar, and the truth is not in you; for his word and your own consciences tell you, that you have often offended Him in thought, in word, and in deed. Now, what doth every sin deserve? You could all answer, as in the Shorter Catechism—"Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come." Death is the punishment which you and all have merited—not only the death of the body, but the death of the soul—to be separated from the love of God in this life, and to have your place with the devil in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

This is a fearful doom. It would be righteous in God to give it to every sinner. But oh! it is glad tidings—it is good news to be told that God is merciful in Jesus Christ—that He willeth not the death of sinners, but rather that they should come to repentance and live. You have read these precious words of Scripture—"God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here, my young friends, is infinite mercy—here is boundless love. What are the guilty children of men that God should have dealt so kindly with them? When angels sinned—higher and more exalted beings than man—God shewed no mercy to them. He cast them down, to be reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. But, when man sinned, He said—"Let him not go down to the pit, I have found a ransom." And what a wonderful ransom! His own Son, equal, eternal, almighty as Himself. And Jesus willingly, cheerfully, came to be the ransom. "I lay down my life," He said, "that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He died to satisfy divine justice—to make reconciliation for iniquity—to bring in an everlasting righteousness. And now God is waiting to bestow mercy on all that believe in Jesus Christ, and love Him. "He that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

None will be without mercy who come to Jesus. Many children have been known to love the Saviour, to rest on Him, and to die in peace and joy. I have known such, and I have read of such. I will mention one instance. She was a dear little child, and for some time before she was taken sick she felt that she was a sinner, and that she needed the Saviour for a friend. Day after day would she go to her little room and kneel down, and pray, with tears, that God would forgive her sins, and not take her out of the world

before her new heart had come to her. When she became ill, she was told that she soon must die. She begged her father not to weep, for she was going to her dear Redeemer. She heard the Scriptures read; she heard her father pray; and with a pleasant smile, she stretched out her little hands to bid her father farewell, and closed her bright eyes in death, singing that beautiful hymn—

"Jesus can make a dying bed,
Soft as downy pillows are."

Her body was left, but her glorious spirit went up to God.

This little girl had mercy, and so may you—each one of you—if you believe in Jesus, and pray to God, for Jesus' sake, to be merciful to you. There is nothing you more need: if you have not mercy from God, you are lost for ever. You have nothing to offer to God for His goodness—you deserve nothing that is good from Him. Your prayer, and that of every one who enters heaven, must be this prayer, uttered with the heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Some people have very proud hearts and think they have no need of mercy; but God resisteth the proud—they shall have nothing at his hands but everlasting destruction. They who cry for mercy will receive all that is good: God gives grace to the humble.

If you seek mercy, my young friends, you will receive—

1. *The pardon of all your sins.* There are many sins written against you in the book of God's remembrance. You have been sinning day after day. Look into your

own hearts—think of your past lives, short as they may yet have been, and you cannot but feel that you have many a time indulged evil thoughts; and many a time spoken bad words; and many a time told lies; and many a time profaned the Sabbath, and cared not for all the kind words and counsels which your parents and teachers have addressed to you. Remember how often you have laid aside your Bible, because you loved it not, and had no desire to hear the voice of God—how many days you have spent without prayer—how many profane oaths some of you have uttered—how great and frequent has been your disobedience to your parents. All these things God has marked and recorded against you. And what can you expect, if your sins are not forgiven? What but death? I am sure you would all shrink from this. Then seek mercy, that you may be cleansed from your sins in the blood of Jesus. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." God will cast all your transgressions into the depth of the sea, so that you will have nothing to fear. You will enjoy God's favour. There will be nothing to make Him hide his face from you. I remember a good man saying on his death-bed, as he took hold of his minister's hand—"Now I can, with as much pleasure, take hold of death by its cold hand. You may wonder at this, for I see and believe myself to be most unworthy; but, at the same time I see Christ to be my great sacrifice for sin; and faith in his blood gives me comfort. I see myself to be all vile and polluted; but I see Christ as the fountain opened, and faith in Him supports me under a sense of my vileness."

2. When God bestows mercy, *He gives a heart to*

love and serve Him. This is a great blessing, for God is a holy God, and heaven is a holy place, and nothing that is unholy can enter into his presence. The Bible says, "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." Now, you do not naturally love holy things—you delight in doing that which is sinful, and why? Because you have wicked hearts by nature—you were born sinners. You cannot make your hearts good—you cannot keep them good. God alone can do it by his Spirit; and He has given the promise, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a right spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." This means that if you go and ask for mercy, God will change your heart, and make you delight in that which is good. A minister was once visiting a little girl, about ten years of age, when she was apparently dying. She asked him to read the conversation between Christ and Nicodemus about the new birth. He was much struck at her feeble voice asking him to read such an important passage from the Bible. He then inquired if she knew what was meant by being born again.—"Sir," she said, "it is to get a new heart." "And who can give you a new heart? is it man?" "No." "Is it angels?" "No; it is the Spirit of God only who can give it." "Now, my child," the minister asked, "are you afraid of death?" "Oh! no," she answered. "Why?" "The

blood of Christ takes away from me the fear of death." "And do you think that you shall go to heaven when you die?" "I do," she said. "And what makes you think that?" "Because Jesus hath said, 'in my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.'"

3. When God gives mercy, He bestows *eternal life.*—Is not this, too, a great blessing? What is this life compared with life in heaven? Dear children, you, and I, and all must die, because we are sinners. We must all go down into the grave, for it is written—"Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." The king and the beggar, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, all must die. But Christ will raise the dead again; not all, however, in the same state. You remember the story in the history of Joseph, about the chief butler and the chief baker. They were taken out of prison at the same time, but the one to be honoured, and the other to be hanged. So Christ says, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming when they that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Would you not wish to be raised to the resurrection of life? Then seek the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for they only who are Christ's shall rise to eternal life. "I am," He says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he

live.' When a little girl was dying, her sister said to her—"To all appearance, my dear, your body must soon return to the dust, and your spirit to God who gave it." She answered "Oh! yes, I know they must." Her sister asked, "Does that thought trouble you?" She inquired, "What thought?" "That your body must soon be mingling with the dust." She answered, "Oh! no, not at all, for you know that the grave is the place appointed for us all. Dust we are, and unto dust we must return. I can lay down my body in the hope of a joyful resurrection." Hearing her grandmother say, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?" she added, "Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The last day she spent on earth was a day of hard struggling with death, but it was a day of heavenly enjoyment to her soul. In the morning it was thought she would not speak again, when suddenly she exclaimed, "Angels are come for me. Jesus is with me. Jesus is precious." Here her voice failed. Presently she cried, "Jesus is precious.

'My Jesus to know, and feel his blood flow
'Tis life everlasting, 'tis heaven below.'

O I am happy, happy." She expired immediately without a struggle or a sigh.

You see then, my young friends, how precious a benefit mercy from God is, and what blessings are contained in it. Let me now say to you—

II. That you ought to seek this "*early*." Moses taught the young Israelites to pray. "O satisfy us

early with thy mercy." And so should you pray.—You are all sinners by nature—you all need mercy, and you cannot ask it too soon. Does not Jesus say, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." Perhaps some of you may be saying, "I will seek mercy—I will attend to the concerns of my soul at some more convenient season." But how do you know that this convenient season will ever come to you? When the time shall come at which you propose to seek mercy, are you sure that you will be alive? Do not the young die as well as the old? One beautiful morning in summer, a little boy was playing on the green, at his father's door. The dew, which had fallen thick, was hanging in large drops upon the long grass, and on the flowers, and shining like little globes of pearl in the sun. The boy was greatly delighted with the drops of dew. He was called into the house; on coming out the dew was dried up and gone. He asked his father whither it had gone? His father told him that the sun had chased it away. "Father," said the little boy, "was the sun angry with the dew-drops?" "No," replied the father. Shortly after, there was a cloud, and a rainbow was seen reflected from its dark bosom. "My dear child," said the father, "you see yon rainbow? In that glorious bow are the drops which you admired. There they shine, the jewels of the sky, and the foot of man shall not trample on them more. Now learn, my child, that what withers on earth may bloom in heaven." The father was soon called to put his lesson into practice, for his little child sickened and died, and like an early dew-drop, was drawn up by the Sun of Righteousness to heaven.

Be warned, then, my young friends, that you may die soon. Let me ask you, where are some of those who began the race of life with you last year? They are gone. They have left this earth. Disease came upon them—their friends were anxious about them—they did all they could to keep them alive; but God had otherwise determined, and his will must be done. They pined away, and withered, and died.—And if you were to go to the churchyard, you would find the grass growing upon their graves. Perhaps some of you may be taken away by death during this year on which you have now entered. Which of you it may be, is uncertain, but God knoweth, and regarding one or more of you, He may have said, "This year thou shalt die." O! do not delay to cry for mercy. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Be earnest now in seeking the salvation of your souls—give your hearts to Jesus—perseveringly ask Him to make them good, and then you will not be afraid to die but will rejoice that you are going to be for ever with the Lord.

III. Let me remind you, lastly, of the benefit arising from receiving mercy at the hands of God. "O, satisfy us early with thy mercy, *that we may be glad and rejoice all our days.*"

The mercy of God in Jesus Christ is satisfying to the soul. You have read what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, whom He met at Jacob's well—"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give

him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The world cannot satisfy the soul. You may have wealth, and possessions, and all things that the natural heart desires; but all of them combined cannot fill the mind of man with real satisfaction and delight. The one grand thing is wanting—the favour of God. If you have *that*, sin is taken away —Satan has no power to condemn you. If you have *that*, God is at peace with you; and is not that enough for you? If you have his mercy in Christ, He will make all things work together for your good. He will satisfy all your desires; and though you may have afflictions and adversity, and meet with unkindness in the world, God will be your friend, and nothing will come to you but what is for your good. "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

"You will be glad and rejoice all your days." Many people think themselves happy because they have earthly pleasures and comforts around them; but if they have not the mercy of God—if their sins are not forgiven—if their hearts are not made holy, their mirth is foolish—it will end in eternal misery. None are truly happy but they who can look up to heaven, and say, "The God that dwelleth there is mine in covenant. Jesus who sits upon the throne is my Saviour." That will sweeten every trial, and lighten every burden, and ease the mind under every trouble. You have read the 23rd Psalm, how David could sing —"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in in the paths of righteousness, for

his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Why could David use these words? It was because he had been satisfied with the mercy of God. And so may you sing the same words with the heart, if you make this your constant prayer—"Oh! satisfy us early with thy mercy." Then, whether you are taken away in youth, or live to old age, you will be glad and rejoice all your days.

May God, in his infinite mercy, grant this to each of you, for Jesus' sake—is the earnest prayer of

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1866.*

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

My Dear Young Friends,—

I wish you many happy years. I mean, years spent in the service of Christ; for that is true happiness. If you continue in sin, loving sin, and committing it, you cannot be happy. "God is angry with the wicked every day." "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

I want to set before you at the commencement of this new year, an example for your imitation. It is the best example which you can follow—the example of Jesus Christ. You read of Him in his early days, "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."

You were born sinners, but Jesus Christ was free from sin. He was a holy child. There were no evil dispositions in his heart. He loved God his Father supremely. He had no desire after sin. He never indulged one evil thought. He never spoke one bad word. He never committed one act of iniquity. Which of you can say that you have never sinned? If I were to go and speak to the youngest child that reads these pages, I would tell that child that he is a

sinner—he has, by nature, a wicked heart—he is inclined to evil; and if God does not change that child's heart, he will grow up in the love and the practice of sin, preparing for a place in the abodes of darkness and misery. But God has promised to change your hearts, if you ask Him, and then you will be like Christ. It is a blessed thing for young people when this can be said of them. God will be their Father. He will watch over them, and protect them, and do them good continually. He will love them and delight to bless them, and when He takes them out of this world, He will make them eternally happy in the enjoyment of his presence in heaven.

Through the mercy of God sparing you, you have been brought to see the beginning of another year. And I cannot tell (but God and your own consciences know) whether you are yet wicked and rebellious against Him, or whether you have given yourselves to the service of Jesus. But surely it is painful to see young people, as they grow up, instead of becoming more concerned about salvation, only remaining neglecters of their souls, hardened and daring in sin. This is painful to their parents, painful to good people around them, and what is worse than all, it is bringing ruin and destruction upon themselves. Suppose I were to take you into a garden in the time of summer, when the flowers are springing up in all their beauty and freshness, or out into the fields when the crops are upon the ground, and if I were to ask you how these flowers and these crops grew, you would tell me that it was because God caused the sun to shine upon them, and the rain to descend and water them. In

like manner, it is God who makes you grow up, by his mercy sparing you, and the bounties of his providence sustaining you. He gives *you* life and health, and strength, while He is taking away *others* as young as you; and is it not right that you should spend your lives for Him and in obedience to his will? You may be saying, "It is time enough yet, I will wait till I am older." This was the frequent reply of a young girl, of whom I have read, when her friends, who loved her, pressed her to attend to divine things as the best preparation for eternity. She did not object to religion as altogether unnecessary. She admitted that a time would come when it would be of the greatest importance to her, but that time was never present—she always regarded it as at a distance. Thus Satan deceives many a young person, and leads them on till it is too late, and they perish forever. The hand of disease fell upon this young female—she was laid upon a bed of sickness—her friends thought it was a good opportunity of renewing their warning to her. The value of salvation was stated, its blessedness described, and she was urged to seek it from Christ—still she replied, "It is time enough yet, and I think I shall not die at this time." Was this not very ungrateful to God? It was as if she had said, "If I were sure I could not serve Satan any longer, I would offer myself to Him." The hour of death drew near. Her friends saw with deep distress his rapid progress. He had marked her for his prey. Sensible of her state, and alarmed for her safety, they entreated her in the most earnest manner, by the nearness and solemnities of eternity, to pray for divine mercy. She became

anxious and concerned; she spoke; hear, ye who remain careless, her last reply, "Oh! I cannot pray?" and immediately expired. Be reminded, my young friends, that it is never too soon to give yourselves to God, and be persuaded to reject, as a temptation of Satan, every desire to delay the work of salvation. And let the aged be warned that God has nowhere promised that there shall be always found a place for repentance.—Prov. i., 24-31.

I. First, then, my young friends, let me remind you, that if you would be like Jesus Christ, *you must be growing in wisdom and understanding.* You read of Him, "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom." So you should be getting more knowledge of divine things as you grow older. When you go and plant a tree in your garden, you do not expect it to bear fruit for some time, but as it grows larger, and spreads forth its branches, you expect that it will produce, year after year, a more abundant crop. In like manner, it is expected that you should grow in wisdom as years pass away. I do not so much refer to the knowledge which you may receive at school on week days; you should be diligent there and acquire knowledge, that you may be fitted for the duties of the station which you will have to occupy in life, if God spare you; but I mean chiefly the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, "whom to know, and in whom to believe is life eternal." What is any man without heavenly wisdom? He is far from God, and dead in sin—a child of Satan—a slave of the devil. He may have much human learning, and he may have great

riches—he may have many honours, and much land—but what are all these to the possession of that knowledge which will save the soul? I recollect reading somewhere, that at a Sabbath school, the teacher was urging those in his class, to seek above all things the knowledge of salvation, and having said to them that he who buys the truth makes a good bargain, he inquired if any scholar recollected an instance in Scripture of a bad bargain. "I do," replied a boy; "Esau made a bad bargain, when he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage." A second boy said, "Judas made a bad bargain, when he sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver." A third said, "The Lord tells us that he makes a bad bargain, who, to gain the whole world, loses his own soul." This boy knew what was right; and, I hope, was enabled to follow it. You also know the same truth, and I trust, my dear young friends, you will never forget it, but will seek salvation with all your hearts. Solomon, the wise king of Israel, said, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding. Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father."

This wisdom is to be obtained from the Bible, that most precious of all books. God hath given it to you that you may know his will, and be guided in the way of life. It tells you how you may flee from hell and rise to heaven. The man or the child who does not know and love the Bible, is ignorant of all that can make him really happy, and give peace to his soul. If there are any such among you, you are to be pitied;

and I hope others who value Christ and his salvation, will pray for you, that God may give you light and understanding to see your sinful and dangerous state. All good people love the Bible, and esteem the knowledge of it more precious than all the riches of the earth. You remember that when Solomon became king of Israel, God requested him to choose anything that he pleased, and he would give it to him. What was the choice Solomon made? Some of you could answer at once. He asked wisdom and knowledge, and God said to him, "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, or the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life, but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people over whom I have made thee king, wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee, and I will give thee riches, and honour, and wealth, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like." Here was God rewarding him even in this life for the choice, the good choice that he made. David his father says in the 119th Psalm, "Oh! how I love thy law, it is my mediation all the day. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." And you all know what Paul said of Timothy, that, "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus."

Now, let me ask you, my young friends, are you, as you become older, gaining true wisdom? Have you a greater knowledge of the Scriptures, and are

you praying God to bless that knowledge to you? Many of you, I trust, have parents who make it their constant endeavour to press upon your attention the truths of God's Word; but if they do not, they are very guilty, and God will reckon with them for their conduct in the great day of judgment. Many of you, too, come to the Sabbath school, and have the means of instruction there. What improvement are you making of these means? Do you take more delight in hearing about Christ, in knowing about Him, in doing his will? It may be that you are able to tell more of the things that are related in the Bible, but the question is. Are you doing them. This is true wisdom. "If you know these things," said Jesus, "happy are ye if ye do them." Happiness is to be got not in knowing what the Bible reveals, but in doing it; and it is a very solemn thought, my dear young friends, that if you are not made better by the knowledge you are receiving, more free from sin, more anxious to fear God, and keep his commandments, more holy than other children who have not the same knowledge, it will only be the means of condemning you, and of tormenting your conscience at last. Jesus said to the Jews, as He says to all who hear the gospel, "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin."

II. If you would be like Jesus, seek that *the grace of God may be in your hearts.* You are told regarding Him, when He was young, "The grace of God was upon Him." This means that the Holy Spirit dwelt

in Him. Now, children who are like Christ, have the Holy Spirit in their hearts, and there is no greater blessing you can ask for yourselves, or any can ask for you, than this. Without the grace of God, you are still dead in his sight—you have hearts full of wickedness, and God cannot dwell in them. Would you like to have souls in which God is not? Would you wish to have hearts, like the ungodly, in whose thoughts God is not? Surely none of you would wish this to be your state. But let me say to you, because God says it, whether you believe it or not, that this is your state, till the Spirit of God takes away the hard and stony heart out of your flesh, and gives you hearts of flesh. You cannot be the children of God till your hearts are changed by the Spirit—you cannot call God your Father—you cannot receive any spiritual blessing. And, oh! remember that He is as willing to give you the Spirit, as you can be to ask Him. Be earnest, then, in prayer for new hearts. "I would rather," said a little girl, "have the love of God, and the grace of God in my heart, than all the riches of the earth."

There is nothing more beautiful in a child, or any other person, than grace. Some are proud of their beauty, but it will soon fade. Grace will never fade. Others are proud of their health, but it may be soon taken away. God may soon lay them on the bed of sickness or of death, but He will never take away his grace—it will only shine more brightly in affliction, and make you happy when your body is in trouble. You may be proud of riches, but you may soon lose them, and become poor. Job was a rich man, but in

one day God took away all that he had; but you can never lose grace. It will remain with you, and prepare you for heaven, for grace always ends in glory, and there can be no glory without it.

Let me entreat you, then, in conclusion, my dear young friends, to seek wisdom and grace above every other thing. God is doing much for you to bring you into his family. He has given you the Bible to teach you the way of everlasting life. He has in infinite love sent his Son to die for you. Will you trample on such love? Oh! think of Jesus shedding his blood upon the cross, to open up a fountain in which you may be washed and made clean. Will you not wash in it and have all your sins taken away? He offers you a spotless robe of righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ. Will you not take it, that you may be accepted of God, and become his dear children? He promises his Spirit, to give you new hearts. Will you not pray earnestly for his Spirit? Jesus comes to you and knocks at the door of your hearts. Will you open the door to sin, and not to Jesus? Oh! how wicked and ungrateful are you, if you do so! He has given you parents, who, I hope, every day entreat you to love God, and pray for you. He puts it into the hearts of kind teachers to employ their time on Sabbath evenings to give you knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, and shew you the good and the right way. Will you grieve and discourage them, after all their kindness, by slighting their instruction, by giving yourselves to sin and folly? God warns you, too, by every instance of death among your young acquaintances, that you also may be soon removed by death.

And if you are not his children by faith in Jesus Christ, how wretched must you be after death! Be wise then, and with this, the commencement of a new year, begin now, if you have not already done so, to seek and serve the Lord. May God give you grace to do this—may He keep you from evil, and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom—is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Yours affectionately in the Gospel of Christ,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *January 1, 1861.*

th in Jesus
death! Be
nt of a new
done so, to
you grace to
preserve you
prayer of,

Christ,

ER TOPP.

LITTLE SAMUEL;

OR,

THE MINISTERING CHILD.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

This is the first day of another year, and you have been taking your brothers and sisters and companions by the hand, and saying to each of them, "I wish you a happy new year." Now, though I cannot take all of you by the hand and say these words to you, yet I sincerely wish you a happy year, and that you may be spared many years, if it is God's will, to love Him and serve Him. In his service alone can you be really happy.

You are all thankful, I am sure, that you are the living before God this day. He has preserved your eyes from tears, your feet from falling, and your souls from death. You have known some boys or girls as young as yourselves — some who went to the same school, and with whom you were accustomed to play —seized by the cold hand of death, and carried away to the place whence they shall not return. Their parents and friends wept for them, and you may have been sorry too, but their time had come, and while

their bodies were laid in the dark and silent grave, their spirits returned to God who gave them. You will see them no more till the morning of the resurrection dawns. Why has not the same happened to you? We cannot tell. It is God's good pleasure to keep you alive. Perhaps some of you who read this may have been very ill during the past year. Your friends were afraid that you would not recover, and you may have thought so too. But God has removed the trouble, and you are again in health and strength. Give praise to God for his goodness. And let all of you who have been in health give thanks to God. It is He who casts down and raises up—who kills and makes alive—who wounds and heals, and there is none that can deliver out of his hands.

I want you to consider for what end God spares you. It is not that you may seek your own pleasure, but that you may learn to serve Him and do his will. You have all read the parable of Jesus Christ about the fig-tree: "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard: and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree and find none. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it. And if it bear fruit, well, and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."—Luke xiii. 6-9. We are here taught that, in answer to the intercession of Jesus Christ, God spares us, but we cannot tell how long, that we may bring forth fruit to Him. He surrounds us with many blessings, and

with the means of grace, that we may be drawn away from the service of sin into his own holy and blessed service.

Now you cannot begin too early to pursue the great end of your being. If I were to ask you, What is the chief end of man? You would all answer, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

The subject of my present address to you will be about one of whom you have often read, and who began very early to serve God. "Samuel ministered before the Lord being a child." And I write to you with the earnest desire and prayer that you may be taught and enabled by the Holy Spirit to follow his example.

Before proceeding to tell you what he did, there is something which I wish to say to you about him. He was given to his parents in answer to prayer. His mother, whose name was Hannah, was a very pious woman, one who feared the Lord, and because the Lord heard her prayer, she came up with her husband Elkanah to the yearly feast at the tabernacle in Shiloh, and consecrated her son to the service of God. "For this child," she says, "I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore, also, have I lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord." Samuel, then, was given to the Lord from his birth. It is a great blessing when mothers dedicate their children to the Lord, from whom they receive them; when they pray with and for them, and labour to bring them up from their infancy in the fear of God. Timothy, from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith that is in

Christ Jesus. The prayers and godly instructions of his mother were largely blessed to him, so that he grew up, knowing the truth, and serving the Lord. Many who have lived happily in the enjoyment of Christ as their portion, and have at last died in the Lord, have had to thank their mothers for the prayerful diligence and the faithfulness with which they sought to instruct them in the way of life. Surely the example of Hannah should teach parents, and especially mothers the duty of seeking to bring their children to Christ in their infancy, and of imploring Him to bless them, and make them his own. He Himself gives them every encouragement to do this when He says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." And does He not teach us the deep interest He feels in the young when He said to Peter, just as He was about to ascend to his throne in heaven, "Feed my lambs," meaning the young and tender ones of his flock. I remember the affecting language of a good man, when he was very old and just going to die: "When I was a little child," he says, "my mother used to bid me kneel beside her, and placed her hand upon my head while she prayed. Before I was old enough to know her worth she died, and I was left very much to my own guidance. Like others, I was inclined to evil passions, but often felt myself checked and drawn back by the soft hand upon my head. When I was a young man, I travelled in foreign lands, and was exposed to many temptations, but when I would have yielded, the same hand was upon my head, and I was saved. I seemed to feel its pres-

sure, as in the days of my happy infancy, and sometimes there came a voice with it in my heart,—a voice that must be obeyed,—'Oh! do not this wickedness and sin against God.'" If mothers would always act thus, how blessed would their children be! God will answer their prayers in his own way and time. They may be left for a time as though He heard them not —their children may reject their counsels and live on in forgetfulness of God, but their prayers are remembered before the throne on high, and never shall the earnest believing prayer go without its answer. A pious mother, about sixty years since, had a prodigal son. He was very wicked, and notwithstanding all her prayers and efforts, he continued to follow the bent of his own evil inclinations. He was about to leave her home, for he was determined to go to sea, thinking that thus he would have more freedom to be wicked. As a last resource, she put a Bible in his chest, offering up at the same time a prayer to God for his blessing on it. Year after year passed away and nothing was heard of the wandering sailor. But the eye of his mother's God was upon him, for she continued to pray for him. A long time after, a clergyman was called to visit a dying sailor. He found him penitent and prepared to die. He had in his possession a Bible, which he said had been given him by a dying shipmate, who, departing out of this life, in the hope of glory, gave it to him with his parting blessing. On the blank leaf of the Bible was written the name of John Marshall, the pious mother's prodigal son. He was the brother of Mrs. Isabella Graham, who writes some beautiful excellent books. Let parents be en-

couraged from this to persevere in praying for their children, however wicked they may be, for He is the hearer and the answerer of prayer, and He can humble and subdue any heart by the power of his Word and Spirit.

Samuel, as I have said, was a child of prayer, and we read about him that "he ministered before the Lord being a child." His father belonged to the tribe of Levi. This tribe was set apart for the service of the sanctuary. They were the priests—the ministers of the Lord. And when it is written that Samuel ministered before the Lord, the meaning, is that he was employed in some way or other in the service of the tabernacle where God was worshipped. The high priest's name at that time was Eli. He was a good old man, but he had two sons who were very wicked. "They made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Eli should have warned and corrected them—he should have told them of the guilt and danger of their conduct. Perhaps he did so. But he should have done more. He should have commanded them, and used his authority to keep them in the right way. He was very wrong in allowing them to go on in their profane and ungodly habits, especially when they were engaged about the service of the sanctuary. But God is a jealous God. He would not permit them to continue to defile his service. You know the dreadful punishment he inflicted upon them for their profanity. The Philistines came up to war against Israel, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, went forth with the children of Israel to battle. They impiously took with them the ark of God, thinking that

if they had the ark they would be safe and sure of victory. But they had no right to take the ark without the command of God, and He was so displeased that He allowed the Philistines to prevail. Israel was smitten, and the ark was taken, and both the sons of Eli were slain. It is written in the Bible, and you should never forget it, that the enemies of God, all who do wickedly, shall perish. They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

"Samuel ministered before the Lord." He was employed in the tabernacle under the directions of Eli, the father of these two wicked young men, but he did not join with them in their evil doings. They would, no doubt, tempt him, and try to lead him astray, but the child Samuel feared the Lord. He would not sin with them.

My young friends, you have in the conduct of Samuel an example for your imitation. You may be, at times, in places where you see people committing sin, profaning the Lord's day, or taking God's name in vain, or despising his ordinances, or doing such like wicked things, and you may be tempted to take part with them in their ungodly ways, for your hearts are, by nature inclined to sin, but you should remember that the ways of sin lead down to the chambers of death, and you will pray to God to keep you by his Holy Spirit, to deliver you when you are tempted. You will say with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Those who do not care about their souls, thoughtless people, will be easily taken in the snare of the devil, but if you wish to have the

favour of God, and to be happy, both here and hereafter, you will beware of ungodly companions. You will turn away from them. David, who served the Lord from his youth, says in one of his Psalms, "Depart from me, all ye evil-doers. I will keep the commandments of my God." It was the advice of an aged good man, who rose to be a judge in the country, to a young lad of sixteen, who once came to see him, to beware of being led astray by the example or persuasions of others, for he said, "If I had listened to the advice of some who called themselves my friends, when I was young, instead of being a judge, I would have been a criminal in prison." And I remember reading of a little boy, who was one day going to the Sabbath school. He met one of his companions, who endeavoured to persuade him not to go, but to come and amuse himself in the fields. The boy put away the temptation and went to school. When this came to be known by his teacher, and the boy was asked why he did not yield to the urgent entreaties of his companions, he answered, Because I have read in my Bible, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Here was a boy who not only read his Bible, and remembered what he read, but who sought to obey it. And I hope it will be so with all of you.

Samuel, then, was not like the wicked sons of Eli. He must have observed their wickedness, but he did not follow their ways. He had been taught by his mother the knowledge of God, and having had a new heart given to him, he resisted all temptations, and ministered before the Lord. And so, if you would be like Samuel, and I hope you love to imitate good ex-

ample, you will remember the pious instructions which you receive from your parents and others. You will attend to what the Bible commands you, and praying that God would change your hearts and enable you to believe in Christ and obey Him, you will delight in the service of God too. You may not be employed in the same way as Samuel, but you may have the spirit of Samuel. You may be serving God as truly as he did. Do you ask, "In what way?" I will try to tell you.

I. If you would be like Samuel you will delight in the house and worship of God. It is very painful to notice how careless some young people, and even grown-up people, are about attending the public worship of God. They will stay away from church for the most trifling excuses, and often without any excuse whatever. This is a sure evidence that they do not love God, and Jesus Christ, the Saviour, and is not that a fearful state to be in? Paul, the apostle, says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha," *i.e.*, accursed when the Lord cometh to judge the world. If you love any one, will you not take pleasure in going to his house, and speaking with him, and trying to please him? So, if you really love God, you will delight in serving Him, and holding fellowship with Him in his house of prayer. David says in the 84th Psalm, in these words, which you car repeat:—

How lovely is thy dwelling place!
O Lord of hosts to me,
The tabernacles of thy grace,
How pleasant, Lord, they be.

For in thy courts one day excels
A thousand, rather in
My God's house will I keep a door
Than dwell in tents of sin.

God has promised to bless those who wait upon Him in his ordinances, and I could tell you many instances of the happiness and benefit of attending the worship of God. I will just relate one that I have heard. A little girl, who had found much pleasure and advantage in going regularly to the house of God once said to a gentleman who seldom or never went to church, "Sir, why do you not go to church? I am sure that such as you need food as well as myself." "Pray, who feeds you?" he replied; "and what kind of food do you receive at church?" She answered, "Sir, it is God who feeds me there, and his word is the food that I am supplied with, and I assure you that though my mother, being very poor, is sometimes scarcely able to give me food to eat, yet fed as I am every Sabbath by the bread of life, I never know what the pangs of hunger are." The gentleman, astonished at what he heard from the little girl, resolved from that time to attend the service of the sanctuary, and adhered to his determination, feeling and confessing the great pleasure and profit arising from a constant attendance on the means of grace. Here was a little girl not only ministering before the Lord herself, but blessed to be the means of bringing another, much older, to do the same.

II. If you would be like Samuel, ministering before the Lord, you will delight in the Word of God. I be-

lieve that he sought and loved to know God, else he would have had no pleasure in the service which he had to perform. Now, you have the Bible in your possession. Who gave it you? Was it not God? And for what purpose has He given it? It is that you may learn about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation through Him, and if you do not love the Bible it is a sign that you do not care about the salvation of your souls. It is the Bible alone that can direct little children, or any one, to heaven, and point the way to the land of promise. You read that David, when he was young, as well as when he was old, delighted in reading and meditating upon the word of God. "Oh! how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. It is more precious than gold, yea much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb." You are told also that Josiah, though he was a king, and very young when he came to the throne, rejoiced that part of the Bible was found, and then wept when it was read in his hearing. Why did he weep? It was because the Bible told him of his own sins, and of the sins of his people. He was sorry that he had offended God, and he cried for grief. But though the Bible tells you of your sins, it informs you also how your sins may be taken away. Jesus died to atone for sin. He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and if you believe in Him and obey Him, his blood will cleanse you from all your sins.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
  Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
  Lose all their guilty stains.

Timothy, I have already reminded you, knew the Scriptures from a child. A young King of England, when he had been crowned, and presented with three crowns, to signify that he was king of three countries, said, "I want one sword yet, and when asked what that one was, he replied, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." A master called together four of his workmen on a New Year's day that he might present them with a gift. It is customary for people to bestow gifts on that day, and you all like to receive them. When they came he informed them that he had provided for them ten shillings, or if they preferred it, a Bible. He at the same time strongly recommended the Bible. "The money," he said, "is of little consequence—you will soon have spent it—but the Word of God will always remain with you, and you will find in it consolation and the best advice." The eldest of the four said, "As for me, I would very much like the Word of God, but it would be of no use to me as I cannot read; so, if you please, I shall take the ten shillings." "Oh," he replied, "if you prefer the money, here it is." The next two also, on some ground or other, chose the money. The master, then addressing himself to the youngest, advised him to take the Bible. "I would rather have it," he said, "and will read a chapter every day to my mother." He then gave him one of the four Bibles, and on opening it, he found four times as much money as each of the others had received. You see how he was rewarded even here for making a good choice. And this will remind you of Solomon's choice, when the Lord said unto him, "Ask what I shall give thee." This was a large offer.

And many would have asked very different things from those which Solomon made the subject of his request. Some might have asked riches, and others might have asked power. Some might have sought pleasure, and others again long life. But Solomon was better guided. He asked wisdom and knowledge—the best things that he could possess. And then God said unto him, "Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life, but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king, wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee, and I will give thee riches and wealth and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like."

III. If you would be like Samuel, ministering before the Lord, you will take delight in prayer. God loves to hear the prayers of little children. "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." You should seek God early and pray to Him, because He is the fountain of all good, and He alone can give you the blessings which you need. You have all many sins against God to be forgiven, else these sins will crush you down to hell, and He alone can pardon you for his Son's sake. You have all by nature hard and stony hearts, and these hearts must be changed, else you will never see the face of God in kindness and in love. Now, He alone can give you new hearts and right spirits. You have all many temp-

tations to resist. You are surrounded by evil on all sides, and you have much evil within you. God alone can keep you from the evil. Therefore, be earnest in prayer. He knows what you need, but He wants you to ash Him that He may do it for you; and if you do not ask, you cannot receive. God knew well what Solomon needed, but He said unto him, "Ask what I shall give thee." Jesus knew well that blind Bartimeus needed his sight, yet He said unto him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" So, though God has promised to give you all good, and his Holy Spirit to teach you, and make you good, yet He says, "For all this will I be inquired of to do it for them." Pray then for every blessing, and especially for the Holy Spirit to change and sanctify your hearts. You know that the seed which is sown in the ground will not spring up and grow, except the rain and the dew descend, and the sun shine upon it—so there will nothing good grow up in your hearts, except the grace of God descend to plant and water it, and warm it, and make it grow. I hope, then, that you will be much in prayer, not only in the morning and evening, but frequently. If you are prayerless children, you will never get grace to serve God upon the earth, you will never attain to his glory in heaven.

IV. If you would be like Samuel, ministering before the Lord, you will love the commandments of God, and delight in keeping them. This is the best and surest evidence that you are really ministering children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. If we know what is right and pleasing to God, and

yet are not endeavouring to do it, we are all the more guilty, and will have no excuse for our guilt in the day of judgment. Jesus died not only to take away your sins, but to make you holy. It is to turn men from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, that we preach the gospel. It is to make you good and obedient to the will of God; hating sin and loving holiness, that your parents instruct you in the knowledge of the Bible at home, and that kind teachers devote themselves to your instruction at the Sabbath school. When this effect is produced—when you are brought to forsake the ways of iniquity, and to take pleasure in doing what God commands—then only will you be really ministering before the Lord. A bad boy may hear, and may not forget; but it is the distinguishing mark of good boys and girls that they are anxious to do God's will. You will recollect in the parable of our Lord that two sons were commanded by their father to go and work in his vineyard; the one did not refuse to go like the other. He said, "I go, sir," but he went not. So it is not those who learn and know the will of God,—not those who keep it in memory,—but those who do, and love to do, what pleases God, that will reach heaven at last. They minister before Him on earth, and they shall minister before Him in heaven.

Now, my dear young friends, God calls you to begin to minister before Him from your earliest days. You know that He called Samuel. One night in the temple Eli had lain down in his place, his eyes being dim that he could not see. Samuel also had lain down to sleep. Before the morning, while it was yet dark, the Lord called Samuel, and he answered "Here am I." He

thought it was Eli who had spoken to him. But when he ran to him to learn what he wanted, Eli said to him, "I called not, lie down again." A second time the child hears a voice, "Samuel." He arose, and went to Eli, and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." But he answered, "I called not, my son, lie down again." A third time there was the same voice calling out; "Samuel." The child rose once more and went to tell Eli. Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore, he said unto Samuel, "Go lie down; and it shall be if He call thee that thou shalt say, 'Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, "Samuel, Samuel." Then Samuel answered, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

Now, dear children, though you may not hear the voice of God, as when at midnight He spoke to Samuel in the Temple, yet He is calling you as truly as He called him. He is doing so in many ways and at many times. You have often been called already. Every time you read his word He is saying to you, "Son, daughter, give me thine heart." Whenever you see the funeral of any little boy or girl, He is calling you, and bidding you remember that though you are young, you may die too. Why then will you not give Him your heart, and be prepared? Every time you are invited by ministers, or your teachers, or your parrents, or good people to choose the good and the right way, it is the voice of God calling you to do so. And Jesus, who loves little children, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," tells you, "Behold I stand at

the door and knock." He is knocking at the door of your hearts now, whilst you read this, and conscience says, you ought to open your hearts to Him, and the Holy Spirit bids you come to Him. And He is knock- at your hearts this day, at the beginning of this New Year, and calling upon you to consider that time is passing away, and that before the end of this year your bodies may lie mouldering in the grave. Oh! then hear his voice now, and say to Him, "Here am I, for Thou didst call me. Take away my sinful heart, and give me a heart to love Thee supremely—wash me from all my sins in thy blood—make me a ministering child before Thee—then, whether I live, I shall live unto the Lord, or whether I die, I shall die unto the Lord—whether living or dying I shall be thine."

May the Holy Spirit incline, and persuade, and enable you thus to choose, without delay, Christ and his service, is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

GOD: OUR FATHER AND GUIDE.

My Dear Young Friends,—

I am glad to speak to you all again in this way. It is New Year's day; and I wish you all many happy years, if it be God's will to spare you. You are expecting an address from me, as usual at this season, and I shall take these words as the subject of it:

"Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, my Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?"—Jeremiah iii. 4.

This verse, you will observe, is a question. Do you know who asks it? It is God Himself; He asked it first of the Jews, and now He is putting the same question to every boy and girl—to every young person to whom his word has come. It is very kind and condescending in God thus to speak to sinners, and to offer Himself as the Father and the Guide of the young. They are the only wise and happy who accept this offer. He will defend them from all evil on this earth. He will bless them throughout eternity. A lady, whose husband was captain of a vessel, heard of the wreck of the vessel. She was in great distress fearing that he and all the crew had perished. She

had two little children, a boy and a girl, whom she had carefully endeavoured to instruct in the principles of religion. Among other things, she had told them that they ought never to be overmuch grieved under losses while our Heavenly Father liveth. The little boy seeing his mother weep most bitterly, looked earnestly at her, and asked with great emotion, "O mother, why do you weep so much? Is God dead?" "No, no," she said, but clasping both her children in her arms, exclaimed, "Your father is dead." "I thought," replied the child, "that God had been dead, for you have often told us not to cry whilst our Father in Heaven liveth." She felt the reproof—she received the consolation, and often told her friends that all the kind and sympathizing counsels she had received from her minister and pious acquaintances and relatives had not produced so strong an effect on her mind as the sensible and pointed admonition of her child.

This little boy was learning from his earliest days to cry unto God, "My Father," and a happy thing it was for him. He had lost his earthly father, but you know that David says, as all the children of God can say, "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up." God would be a guide and support and counsellor to him, far better than any other friend. You may have kind earthly parents, who seek to do you good, and to lead you in the right way, and you ought to be thankful for so great a blessing; but God is above all, and the best of all fathers, and if you have not hearts to love God and serve Him, and be guided by Him, you will be unhappy in this world, and miserable for ever

when you die. No one upon the earth, however anxious he may be for your welfare, can save your souls from hell—no one upon the earth can deliver you from the power of Satan, and guide you in the way to heaven. God alone can do so. And whether you have earthly parents spared to you, or whether they have been taken from you by death, you have all need to take God as your Father, and you will be happy children indeed, if you cry, each of you, from this time henceforth, "My Father, Thou wilt be the guide of my youth."

I. You should choose God as your Father. 1st. Because He is your Creator. One of the first questions that little children are taught is this, Who made you? You know the answer. You would all reply, "God." But have you ever sincerely thought of this? Or do you give the answer just because you have been taught by your parents or teachers to say so? If you made anything yourselves, would you not call it your own property, and claim it as what you had a right to? Certainly you would. So if God has made you, and given you life, does He not claim you as his own, and should you not look to Him as your Father, yielding Him all honour and reverence and obedience? If you always remembered this, it would tend to keep you from much sin which your own wicked hearts and bad companions lead you to commit. When you are tempted to live wickedly, without thinking of God at all, you should recollect that the very life which you are mis-spending is God's. He gave it to you, and He can take it away in a moment. When you are tempted to say bad words, you should remember it

was God who enabled you to speak, and you should never employ your tongues in casting dishonour on God. When you are tempted to go in the paths of iniquity, you should remember that it was God who gave you power to walk, and you should never employ that power in running to commit evil. Man's chief end, you know, is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever; but if you do not take God as your Father, and try to learn from his Word the way in which you are to please Him, you are not answering the great end of your creation, and instead of enjoying Him, you will be banished from his presence for ever, and how miserable will you then be!

2nd. You should choose God as your father because He preserves and sustains you. Perhaps you have at some time been laid on a bed of sickness. You have felt pain and your parents have been anxiously watching around your bed, and trying to relieve your pain. Your sickness has worn away, and you have again become healthy and strong. And why has it been so with you? Is it not because God has strengthened you? Why are you still in the land of the living, whilst many children who seemed as strong and healthy, and were as young as you, have been smitten by the stroke of death, and laid in their black coffins, and carried away to the silent grave? Is it not that you might live as the children of God? Neither you nor any deserve to be spared. All are sinners, and deserve to die. And if God still keeps you in life, it is that you may have opportunity of turning from the ways of iniquity, and giving your hearts to Him. Do not forget this, and when you are tempted to sin, you

should say—God spares me not that I should commit sin, but that I may love Him more, and do good to all around me. You go into a garden in summer, or in autumn, the time of fruit—you see some trees loaded with fruit, and bringing forth abundantly—you see others withered and bare, or if they have leaves, without any fruit upon them. You are ready to say—There is no use of these trees, they should be cut down. So might God say of many who are not serving Him, but walking in the ways of sin—cut them down, why cumber they the ground? But he spares them in mercy, to give them space and opportunity for repentance. He willeth not the death of any sinner, but rather that all should turn to Him and live. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Thus He speaks to you, and follows you with his beseeching voice. Surely then you ought all to turn to Him, and say, "My Father, thou wilt be the guide of my youth."

3d. God deserves to be called by you "My Father," and to be honoured and obeyed by you as such, because of what He hath done for you in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ. When God created this earth, He made it, and all things that are in it very good. He provided everything for the welfare and happiness of man, who was to be the inhabitant of it. But though God was thus good, man was unthankful. He rebelled against God, and brought misery and death upon himself and all his posterity by disobeying the command of God. God made the heart of man good, but now it is full of evil and rebellion against God. All are sinners, and have no inclination by nature to do the will of God, but rather hate Him and his law. This

is your state by nature. David says "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "We go astray from the womb as soon as we be born, speaking lies." Now God might justly have left all mankind to perish in this state, and go down to the pit of destruction. But He loved man though he had sinned, and devised a way of deliverance. "God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Was not this most amazing love? Many people who have reason and understanding think little about it. But I remember seeing some lines which were found written in a lunatic asylum by one who was there confined, and which ought to put to shame others who have the use of reason and judgment.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
  And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
  And every man a scribe by trade.

To write the love of God above,
  Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
  Though stretched from sky to sky.

And I remember reading an account that was given by a missionary of the manner in which some heathens to whom he was preaching, heard of the love of God in Jesus Christ. He was preaching from the 3rd chapter of John, and had read the 16th verse, when one of them who had been listening with joy to the

words, interrupted him and said, "What words were those you read? What words were those I heard? Let me hear them again." The missionary again read the verse, "God so loved the world," &c., when the native arose from his seat, and said, "Is that true? Can it be true? God love the world when the world not love Him? God so love the world as to give his Son to die, that men might not die. Can that be true?" Mr. Nott again read the verse, "God so loved the world," &c., told him that it was true, and that it was the message God had sent to them, and that whosoever believed in Him would not perish, but be happy after death. The overwhelming feelings of the wondering native were too powerful for expression or restraint. He burst into tears, and as they chased each other down his cheeks, he retired to meditate on the amazing love of God, which had this day touched his soul, and there is every reason to believe that he was afterwards raised to enjoy the peace and happiness resulting from the love of God shed abroad in his heart.

Now, when you thus think what God is, and what He hath done for you, how He is your Creator, how He preserves you, and gives you all that you have, and how He is waiting to take you into the bosom of his love, if you believe in Jesus, have you not much reason to cry unto Him, "My Father?" If you do so with your heart, seeking to love and serve Him, He will be better to you than all earthly parents, kind as they may be, and though they should be removed from you by death, God will take you up and bless you. A poor child that had a very bad father, but it is hoped,

a good mother, was, by the providence of God brought to a godly friend of mine, who upon the first sight of the child had a great pity for him, and took an affection for him, and had a mind to bring him up for Christ. It was not long before the Lord was pleased to strike in with the spiritual exhortations of this good man, so that the child was brought to think about the things of God. He would ask very excellent questions, and discourse about heavenly things, and seemed mightily concerned about what would become of his soul when he should die, so that his discourses made some Christians even stand astonished. He was greatly taken with the kindness of Christ in dying for sinful men, and would be in tears at the mention of it. It came to pass that his mother died. After her death, he would often repeat some of the promises that are made to fatherless children, especially that in Exodus, chap. xxii. 22: "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or the fatherless child, if thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry." He would often say, with tears in his eyes, "I am fatherless and motherless upon earth, but if any wrong me, I have a Father in heaven, who will take my part —to Him I commit myself, and in Him is all my trust. He continued in a course of holy duties, living in the fear of God, and shewing wonderful grace for a little boy, till he died in the faith of the Redeemer. He cried unto God, "My Father, Thou wilt be the guide of my youth."

II. Having shewn you why you should call God your Father, and honour Him as such, I go on to re-

mind you that you need a guide, and that God alone can guide you.

1st. You are naturally very ignorant, and know not what is for your good. Had you nothing but your own hearts to guide you, you would choose the evil rather than the good—you would choose only that which would hurt your souls, and ruin them for ever. I have seen children going out to the woods, to pluck and eat berries which looked very nice, and tasted very sweet. But the berries are poisonous, and if they were to eat them they would die. Even so, young people, were they to follow their own natural desires, would choose and do those things which would injure their souls, and make them die the second death in everlasting misery. Sin looks very pleasant; you think not that the wages of sin is death—that God is angry with the wicked every day, and therefore you take pleasure in acts of Sabbath-breaking, in lying, in swearing, in disobedience to parents. These and many other wicked ways you would choose, if you were left to yourselves. But God has given you the Bible to instruct you. It is his own blessed Book. It reveals his will. It tells you of his character as a holy God—it tells you of sin as that which He abhorreth, and which if loved and practised by you will cause you to be banished from his presence into eternal misery. It tells you of his love in Jesus Christ, and of his willingness to receive you, and teach you the way to happiness and glory, if you give your hearts to Jesus. You may read many other books, and delight in them, but the Bible is the best of books. It was given you by God to save your souls, and if you do not love it and read

it, and pray God to teach you out of it, it is the same as if you were to say that you will not have God for your guide—that you are determined to remain in ignorance, and go on in the ways of sin.

I hope none of you, my young friends, will be so foolish, so cruel to your own souls as to act thus. "This," said the Saviour, "is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Take delight then in the Bible. Be thankful that God hath put it into your hands. Multitudes of young persons in heathen lands have never heard of it. Look upon it as the most valuable book you possess. Read it every day, and let your earnest prayer be that of David, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may see wondrous things out of thy law." Then will God be the guide of your youth. He will keep you from the paths in which destroyers go, and you shall have far more peace and joy than all the wicked have in sinful enjoyments. A little blind boy about twelve years of age, became very desirous to learn to read the Bible with raised letters prepared for the use of the blind, and in a very short time he learned to run his fingers along the page, and to read easily and correctly. The object of his utmost wishes seemed now to be to possess a complete copy of the Bible for the blind, which consists of several large volumes. His parents were unable to buy one, but his minister obtained one from a society for him. Not long after the little boy received the volumes, his mother saw him retire to the room, where they were kept, and she stepped softly to the door, to see what he would do. And why do you think the

blind boy went alone to his room? His mother saw him kneeling by the side of these precious volumes, and lifting up his little hands in prayer to return thanks to God for this blessed gift of his holy word. He then rose from his knees, and taking up one of the volumes, kissed it, and having laid it on one side proceeded to the next, and so on, till be had in this simple, but beautiful and expressive manner, signified his love for that blessed book which by means of touch, had opened up to his mind the wonders and glories of God's revelation to man. What a beautiful illustration is this of the words of David in the 19th Psalm, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb!"

2nd. You have, by nature, wicked hearts, inclining you to the ways of sin, and these must be changed in order that you may be guided in the right way. Am I not speaking the truth when I say, that even when you know what is right and good, you are not of yourselves disposed to follow it? I have known young people, and I have known old people too, well acquainted with the Bible, able to tell you about most of the things therein contained—about God and his people, and his ways—about Jesus Christ, and his work and sufferings and death, and yet walking in the ways of iniquity, taking pleasure in sinful words and deeds. These persons are sinning against light, and against their own consciences, and they will have a fearful account to render at last, if they repent not, and turn with their hearts to the Lord. It

is not knowledge alone that will make you good, and lead you into the way of life. You may know much that is revealed in the Scriptures—you may be able to repeat chapters or verses, and yet not be taking God as your Father and the Guide of your youth. It is written in the Bible, "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." You may know this, and yet tell falsehoods, refusing to tell the truth. I have known boys, who could repeat the third commandment—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," etc., and yet in the company of other boys, they would utter oaths, and curses, and profane language. Some little girl reading this has often repeated the words, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right," and yet she has become sulky and disobedient, when her parents told her to do what she does not like, or when she does not get what she wants.

Now, what is the cause of all this? It is plainly because of your naturally corrupt and deceitful hearts, and thus will it continue with you until your evil hearts are changed, and you become new creatures in Jesus Christ. This is the work of God alone. And in the case of all whose desires are turned to Him, and who cry earnestly, "Thou wilt be the Guide of my youth," He will take away the hard and stony heart out of their flesh, and give them hearts of flesh. "Mother," said a little girl once, "it is so hard to do right, and so easy to do wrong." "That is quite true my child," she answered, "and how do you account for that?" "I don't know, indeed," said Elizabeth. "Simply, my dear, because our hearts are naturally

sinful, or, as the Scripture says, they are evil, only evil, and evil continually." "Oh!" said she, "that is the very truth, and the reason why I am so often disobedient and unkind. But will my heart never be better?" "Not, till it is made better by the Holy Spirit. Then it will be an humble, affectionate and obedient heart, delighting in everything good, instead of being proud and passionate and ungrateful as you feel it to be at present." Elizabeth thought a while, and then said, "This is what is meant by a change of heart. I never understood it so well before. But does God change everybody's heart that asks Him?" The mother assured her little girl that God would change her heart, if she sincerely desired it. "O, that I do, mother," said Elizabeth, "for then, you know, I shall be always good and happy." "Not perfectly good nor happy at once," said the mother, "whilst we are in this world, we shall still have to contend with sin. The good spirit will have to strive against the evil spirit that is within us, but if our hearts are right with God, He will at last give us the victory over all our evil passions, and take us to that world, where sin and sorrow shall be for ever done away." "Thank you, my dear mother, for answering my question." The truth was impressed upon her heart with saving power. She cried unto God for a new heart, and that He would be the guide of her youth. God fulfilled his promise. She received a heart to love and serve and obey God—to forsake sin and follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

3rd. You need to have God as the guide of your

youth, because of the dangers by which you are surrounded, and from which you would never be able to protect yourselves. Satan, you know, is the grand enemy of God, and the destroyer of souls. He tempted our first parents in the garden. He drew them away from their obedience to God, and thus brought death upon them, and all their posterity. It is still his work to deceive and blind the minds of men. He is ever watching to put evil thoughts and desires into your hearts—to tempt you into the paths of sin. He goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Then there are the riches, and the follies and vanities and pleasures of the world, ever trying to draw away your affections from God and the things of God. Many young people are so much taken up with play and amusement and dress and vanity that they have no time to think about their souls, and care not to do so. Your own wicked hearts too, as I have said, are always ready to lead you into sin, and then you are in danger also from evil companions. They will try to seduce you from the good way, and make you run into the same wickedness as themselves. They will reproach you for seeking to please God. You cannot move a step or go anywhere, but you are in danger from enemies on every side. You are weak and defenceless in yourselves, and when you think of your many sins, you may be cast down and afraid, but if you look up to God as your Father and Guide, and to Jesus as your Saviour and Friend, continually, you will have nothing to fear. A little boy went to sea with his father to learn to be a sailor. One day his father said to him, "Come, my boy, you will never be a sailor if

you don't learn to climb; let me see if you can get up the mast." The boy, who was a nimble little fellow, soon scrambled up; but when he got to the top and saw what a height he was, he began to be frightened, and called out, "Oh! father, I shall fall; I am sure I shall fall; what am I to do?" "Look up, look up, my boy," said his father. "If you look down you will get giddy; but if you keep looking up to the flag at the top of the mast, you will descend safely." The boy followed his father's advice, and reached the deck with ease.

Now, my young friends, learn from this to look more to Jesus, and less to yourselves. Remember the language of the Psalmist, "I will look unto God most high, to God, who performeth all things for me." And again, "I will lift mine eyes to the hills, whence cometh mine aid." If you look to yourselves for guidance and strength, you will just be like the boy, when he looked down from the height at which he was. But if you look above to the Lord, you will be like the same boy, when he kept his eye upon the flag at the top of the mast, and thus was safe.

Look up, ye young, and as ye gaze,
Forget all earthly things;
Look up, and sing the Saviour's praise,
And crown Him King of kings.

And now I close this address by reminding you that it is God himself who puts the question to you, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, my Father, Thou t the guide of my youth?" So far is God from being ar willing to be your Father and your Guide, that He

offers to take you as his children, and entreats you to pray unto Him for that end. And oh! my dear young friends, did you know the danger you are in without the favour and guidance of God, you would gladly accept his offer, and ask Him earnestly to make you his children. Were you to die out of the family of God, how dreadful must be your condition! But if you cry to God as He bids you, He will take you into his family—He will, for Jesus' sake, pardon all your sins, so that you shall not be condemned. He will give you hearts to love Him. He will teach you by his Spirit the good way of life. You will thus be happy yourselves, and the means of giving happiness to others.

And remember, you cannot do this too early. "Wilt thou not *from this time* cry unto Me?" This day you are commencing a new year. You don't know whether you shall see the end of it. Therefore, this day, this hour, say to God with all sincerity and determination, "My Father, Thou art the Guide of my youth." Then whatever comes to you in this world, you will have nothing to fear. Whether you live, you will live unto the Lord, or whether you die, you will die unto the Lord.

That God of his infinite mercy and grace, may give you all a place in his house and family, through Jesus Christ, is the fervent prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *January 1st, 1863.*

BOYS AND GIRLS PLAYING

IN THE

STREETS OF THE CITY.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

You have now been brought to the first day of another year; and I hope that your thanksgivings have already been offered to God, the Preserver of your lives. He has mercifully spared you, whilst some whom you knew have, during the past year, been taken away by death, and are now lying in their graves till the morning of the resurrection. You have all reason to say, as you look forward, "Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I put my trust."

I take the opportunity, at the beginning of a new year, to put this Address into your hands, as a token of my best wishes, and anxiety for your good. My sincere prayer is that you may all have many years of happiness and usefulness, if it be the Lord's will—that He may be to you a sun and a shield, giving you grace and glory, and withholding no good thing from you.

The subject of my Address will be specially applicable to young people like you.

"And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."—Zechariah viii.,.5.

This passage presents a picture of happiness and peace among the young. We like to look upon boys and girls engaged at proper times in healthful play, and cheerful exercise. It is a sight pleasing to all who take an interest in the young and love them. You should not indeed be always thinking of play. You have other and more important things to attend to. Your early days ought to be employed in acquiring useful knowledge at school, and, above all, in seeking to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. But the young require recreation. It is a sign that you are in health and joy—that you are free from sickness and trouble, when you are found joining together in play, and without any angry feelings, enjoying lively exercise one with another. If you are fearing God, and keeping his commandments, obedient to your parents, lovers of God's Word, and of the Lord's Day —if you are diligent and anxious to make progress in knowledge, and to store your minds with useful learning, no one would forbid you to seek active exercise and play. On the contrary, your parents and grown-up people will feel pleasure in seeing you engaged in peaceful, harmless amusement.

I am not, however, going to address you on this subject. I have only said these things to shew you the import of the words which I have quoted. They were spoken by God Himself as a sign of peace, and

security, and happiness. He mentions the fact as one of the marks of a prosperous and happy city. And what city is it that would be so prosperous and happy that the children would be playing in the streets of it without fear? If you read the chapter, you will find that it is the City of Jerusalem which is so described. This was the chief town of the country of the Jews—the city where David reigned and Solomon his son, and where the kings of Judah all dwelt and had their throne. It was the city on which was Mount Zion, and the temple where the people worshipped God, and the priests offered sacrifices, and God had promised to meet with and bless his children—the temple into which Jesus was brought by his parents when He was eight days old, to be dedicated to the Lord, and where He was afterwards found by Joseph and his mother on a certain occasion when He was twelve years of age, sitting with the Doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. Jerusalem was the city which the Jews loved above all other cities. Their hearts were bound up in it. They had reason to love it, for God had chosen the Mount Zion, with its temple, to record his name there, and to reveal his glory to his believing people. And three times a year, at the great feasts, all the males in Judea went up to Jerusalem to worship God, and to present their offerings and sacrifices to Him in the temple. It was a highly-favoured city, but its inhabitants had become very wicked and forgetful of God, so that in order to punish them for their iniquities, He allowed Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, to come with a large army to plunder and destroy the city, and to carry away the people as

captives to his own land. When they had been seventy years in captivity, and had been humbled for their sins, God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to grant them permission to return to their own country, and to rebuild Jerusalem. It was when they had returned, and were engaged in the work of building the city and temple again, that Zechariah the prophet was commanded to tell them for their encouragement, that God would be gracious to them yet, and so guard their city that they would live in peace and security—they would have so great abundance and so much happiness that old men and old women at a great age would be found going about in it cheerfully, and many boys and girls would be joyfully playing in the streets thereof.

You will naturally say to yourselves, Oh! that would be a happy city. And certainly it would, because God had promised to return to it, and to dwell in the midst of it. Wherever God says that He will come and take up his dwelling, He brings along with Him all that is good, and puts away all that is evil. If He were to say, I will come and dwell in this city, in Toronto, I will stay in the midst of it, and bless it, it would be a happy place—there would be no more delight in sin—no more Sabbath-breaking—no more strife—no more drunkenness—no more lying—no more stealing—no more profanity—no more of that which ruins the soul, and only prepares it for hell. All would be peace and holiness and love. All the families would be praying families, and all, both old and young, would be lovers of God's Word and House and Day, and everything that belongs to Him.

Now, there is a city in which God has promised to dwell, and to bless all who are in it; and often when you read of Jerusalem in the Bible, it is intended to point out that city. The Jews were called God's own people, and Jerusalem God's own city; but they have now no longer that name. God has another city, and another people, and this city is his Church, and the inhabitants of it are all who believe in Jesus Christ, and have given their hearts to Him—all who love God and hate sin—all who are servants of God, and not servants of the devil. This city is not altogether in Canada, or in England, or Scotland, or Ireland, or America; but part of it is here, and part of it is there —all over the earth, from one end of it to the other. It has not walls round it, built of stone and lime by the hands of man, for these might be broken down, and enemies might come in and destroy the people who are in it. God Himself is the wall around it, and this makes it safe and secure, for no enemy can prevail against God. He is stronger than all, and has said that He will keep and defend his city by day and by night. He slumbers not, nor sleeps. He is the Shepherd of Israel, and they who dwell in it have nothing to fear. You would all wish, I am sure, to have a place in that city, which is thus blessed and protected by God, for none are truly happy but they who are in it. I shall try to shew you this, and I would urge you to go into it, that you may be safe from every evil thing now, and be happy throughout eternity.

You may be asking, what like is this city? and what is the character of the people who inhabit it?

We have in the chapter a description of it. If you look at the third verse you will see that it is called *a City of Truth.* This may mean :—

1. That it is a city governed by the truth, and where the people love the truth above all things. You know that *the truth* means the Bible, the Word of God. And surely in God's own City, the Bible ought to be the rule and guide to them that are in it. It is the best of books. You may have many excellent books, full of good advice and of much valuable learning, but were all the books in the world, all the good books to be brought together, they would not be of so much worth as the Bible. Other books may instruct you as to the things of this life, but the Bible tells you how your souls may be saved for ever. Now, there are many people who do not care for the Word of God. They neither read it, nor try to understand it, nor pray God to teach them out of it ; and how can they live according to the truth? Such persons do not belong to the City of Truth. And there are others again, who, though they know much of the Bible, having been taught it by their parents, or at the Sabbath school, or hearing it from the pulpit, or reading it themselves, yet do not seek to live as the Word of God bids them do. They do not believe in Jesus Christ. They love the ways of sin, and their knowledge of the Bible will but make them all the more miserable in the place of outer darkness.

My young friends, none belong to the City of God but they who love the Bible, and make it their delight to obey the truth. All God's people, whether old or young, are distinguished by this. I have read about

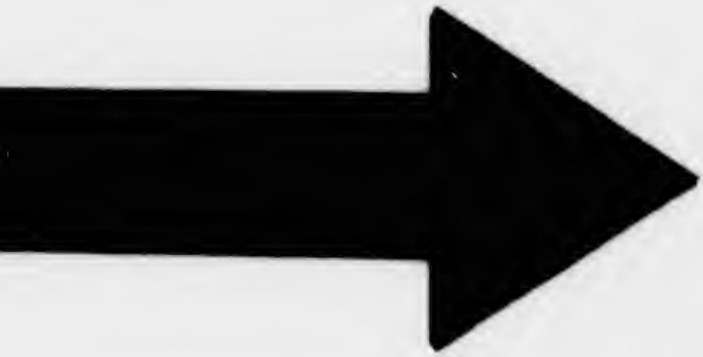
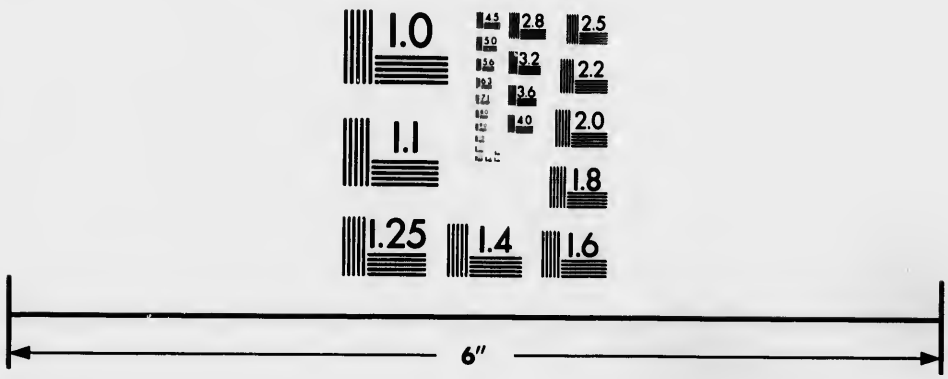


IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503


1.0
1.1
2.8
2.5
3.2
2.2
3.6
2.0
4.0
1.8
4.5
1.6

a young boy, who loved the Word of God, and shewed by his conduct that he had learned to make God his portion and guardian. The story is told by a chaplain on board one of the ships which sailed to the West Indies, at a meeting of a Bible Society, and was to the following effect :—

"The ship in which we were," he says, "was a good one, but at one time we feared that she was on her last voyage. We were but a few days out from the harbour when a severe storm of five days' continuance overtook us. There was a little boy on board as an apprentice. He was literally a boy, and far better fitted for reading his spelling-book than for furling sails in a storm. But his mother was poor, and where could the boy earn a living for himself and his mother better than at sea? The ship was rolling fearfully. Some of the rigging got entangled at the main-mast, and it was necessary that some one should go up and put it right. It was a very dangerous task. I was standing near the mate, and heard him order that boy to do it. He lifted his cap and glanced at the swinging mast, the boiling, angry seas, and at the steady, determined countenance of the mate. He hesitated in silence for a moment, then rushing across the deck, he went into the forecastle. Perhaps he had gone two minutes, when he returned, laid hold of the ladder of rope, and went up with a will. My eyes followed him till my head was dizzy, when I turned and remonstrated with the mate for sending the boy aloft. He could not come down alive; why did you send him? 'I did it,' said the mate, 'to save life; we've

sometimes lost men overboard, but never a boy. See how he holds like a squirrel. He is more careful. He will come down safe, I hope.'

"Again I looked till tears dimmed my eyes, and I was compelled to turn away, expecting every moment to catch a glimpse of his last fall. In about fifteen or twenty minutes he came down, and, straightening himself, with the consciousness of having performed a manly feat, he walked away with a smile on his countenance.

"In the course of the day I took occasion to speak to him, and asked him why he hesitated when ordered aloft. 'I went, sir,' said the boy, 'to pray.' 'Do you pray?' 'Yes sir; I thought that I might not come down alive, and I went to commit myself to God.' 'Where did you learn to pray?' 'At home; my mother wanted me to go to Sabbath school, and my teacher urged me to pray to God to keep me, and I do.' 'What was that you had in your jacket?' 'My Bible, which my teacher gave me. I thought that if I did perish, I would like to have the Word of God close to my heart.'"

Good, noble boy! He shewed that in feeling his need of God's protection, in praying to Him, and committing himself to his keeping, he had the Word of God not only close to his heart, but in his heart; and, my dear young friends, if you have been thus taught to love the Word of God, and to pray to Him, and seek his guidance and protection, that will prove that you have been taken by Jesus into his own Church, that you are the lambs of his flock, and that you are

of the number of those whose is the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly City!

2. When Jerusalem, or the Church of God, is called the City of Truth, the meaning may be, that all who belong to it worship God in truth and serve Him in sincerity. You could all repeat a verse in the Bible which says:—"God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." There is a great deal of deceit in the world. Many pretend to be what they are not. You may say that you love a person, that you are anxious to please him and do his will, when you very well know that you have no such feeling towards him, and that, if he could read your heart, he would find that there was no love to him there. You may profess to be obedient to your parents, and yet, as soon as you are out of their sight, and you think that they would not know it, you may be found doing the very opposite of what you said you were willing to do, and giving yourselves to all disobedience and neglect of your parents' commands. Now this is dealing very deceitfully. You may impose upon them, and hide your dishonesty from them and from others, because they cannot tell what is in your hearts; but the All-Seeing Eye of God you cannot deceive. "He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins." He knows every thought that arises in your hearts, and every word that you speak, and every action that you perform. Nothing is hid from God. And yet there are people who deal with much deceit in the worship and service of God. Some will come to the Lord's table, as you have seen on a day of Communion, and call themselves by the name of

Christ, saying that they belong to his Church; but notwithstanding this, they will go away, and very soon afterwards may be found in a state of drunkenness, or uttering profane language, or breaking the Sabbath, or doing other things that are contrary to the Word of God. Would you say that persons who act in this way are really the people of God? No, indeed, they are not. You remember how it is said in one of the Psalms, "The bloody and deceitful man is abhorred by Thee." Or, perhaps the consciences of some boys and girls will tell them that, though they know the Word of God and profess to reverence it—though they come to Church and to the Sabbath school—and will say there that they love God and his commandments, yet will go away and be very careless about the things of God, taking no delight in prayer and in reading the Word, being obstinate and stubborn in their dispositions, and disobedient to the law and ordinances of God. Now, such young people cannot belong to the Church of God. "He requireth truth in the heart and purity in the inward parts." God looks not so much to what you profess as to what you really are, and if you do not give Him your hearts, and seek to serve Him in truth, it matters not what you may say with your lips, for it is only they who walk uprightly and speak the truth in their hearts who will dwell in the City of God. You could repeat part of the 24th Psalm:—

"Who is the man that shall ascend
Into the hill of God,
Or who within his holy place
Shall have a firm abode.

"Whose hands are clean, whose heart is pure,
And unto vanity,
Who hath not lifted up his soul,
Nor sworn deceitfully."

3. When Jerusalem or the Church of God is called the City of Truth, the meaning may be that they who dwell in it are persons who hate falsehood, and love to speak the truth. What do you read about Jesus in the Bible? Was it not said of Him, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips." Now, all who love Jesus and obey Him will try to be like Him in this and in every other respect. They will put away all lying and guile—they will be careful always to speak the truth. There are many boys and girls who think nothing of telling a falsehood. But if any of you act in this way, you cannot be the children of God, for He is the God of Truth. Two boys were going along one Sabbath morning in very earnest conversation, when one said to the other, "It is no use to tell a lie." No, indeed, my little boy, you were quite right in thinking and saying that, and I hope you will never allow any one to make you say a false word.

You may have read in the Bible about Elisha the prophet, and Gehazi, his servant. The latter, for the sake of some money, told a lie, imagining that his master would not find it out; but Gehazi forgot that God knew every evil thought that was in his heart. Did Gehazi find afterwards that it was any use to tell a lie? No; for after having tried to deceive his master by saying, "Thy servant went nowhither," God punished him, and though he gained the money of Naaman, he had with it a dreadful affliction. "He went

out from his master's presence a leper as white as snow." There is nothing gained here or hereafter by lying. "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." One of the laws which the Lord gave by Moses to the children of Israel was, "Lie not one to another." And the Apostle Paul says in the New Testament, "Put away lying, and speak every man truth with his neighbour." In the Book of Proverbs there are seven things mentioned as hateful in the sight of God, and the second of them is "a lying tongue." In John's Gospel, the Saviour tells the people who love falsehood, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do, for he is a liar and the father of it." In the Acts of the Apostles, you read that Ananias and Sapphira his wife were struck dead for telling a lie.

There are just two ways before you for your choice —the way of truth and the way of lying. Whether of them will you choose? May God enable you to choose the way of truth. To tell lies is a dreadful sin. "Whatsoever worketh abomination and maketh a lie shall in nowise enter the Heavenly Jerusalem." Then let me entreat you to ask God, as David did, to remove far from you the way of lying, and I do hope that you can also say with him, "I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love. I have chosen the way of truth."

II. There is another description of this city given here. It is not only the City of Truth; in the same verse, you will observe, that it is called "*The Holy Mountain.*" The meaning of this is that it is a holy city, and that

the people who dwell in it are holy. And this is just what we may expect it to be. It is God's city, and He is a holy God. "Nothing that defileth shall enter into his presence." David says in the fifth psalm, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." God hates sin. He cannot but hate it, for it is opposed to his very nature and character. And all that He has done shews this. When sin entered into Heaven, and the spirit of rebellion appeared among the angels of God, they were immediately thrust out of that holy place, and cast down to be reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day. When Adam sinned and ate of the forbidden fruit, he was put out of the garden, and brought death upon himself and all his posterity. The serpent was doomed to go upon his belly, and to eat dust. Even the ground became cursed, bringing forth briers and thorns and thistles; and all the pain which you feel, all disease, every pestilence, every form of misery, is the consequence of sin. When all mankind had corrupted their ways on the earth, God destroyed them all by a flood, and only righteous Noah and his family were saved. Many instances of God's wrath against sin you meet with, as you read your Bibles; but the greatest proof of all, that God cannot bear sin, and that He loves holiness, was the death of his own Son. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He went about continually doing good; yet He was a great sufferer. He was a man of poverty—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Wicked men reviled Him, and persecuted Him, and at length

nailed Him to the Cross. When He was in the garden of Gethsemane, "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." When He was seized by the armed band, with Judas at their head, all his disciples forsook Him and fled. And then, even the Father hid his face from Him, as He hung upon the Cross, so that He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And why was all this? Had Jesus sinned Himself? No; but He stood in the room of sinners. He suffered, the just for the unjust; and God is so holy that when He comes to punish sin, his sword of justice falls with such weight, that if his own Son takes the place of sinners, He is smitten and put to death. How much Jesus suffered, we cannot tell, but that his agony was inexpressibly great, we learn from his own words, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me—nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

You see from this, how holy God is, and how impossible it is for Him to have communion with any but those who hate sin and love holiness. This is the character of all his people, and except your hearts are changed and turned from the love and practice of sin to the love and practice of all holiness, you can have no place in his happy city. "Charles," said a Christian mother one day to her little boy when conversing with him, "do you wish to go to heaven?" With much thoughtful solemnity, and serious deliberation, he answered, "No, mother." She, of course, was not a little surprised, and after assuring herself that she was not misunderstood, she asked his reasons. "*Why* do you not wish to go to heaven?" The little fellow, as

his eyes filled with tears, replied, "I have been such a wicked boy, that I am afraid to see God." Now do not suppose that this child was wicked in the way of using bad language, or being quarrelsome, or otherwise outwardly ungodly. The reverse of this was true. All but himself would have called him a lovely, excellent child. But his conscience had been enlightened —he had been taught that God's law was exceeding broad, that the *thought* of foolishness is sin, and that much sin may be committed by the indulgence of wrong feelings, even when not made known to others by words and actions. He knew that God is holy—that He requires holiness in his children, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

III. In the Church or City of God, just as in all cities, there are young people as well as old. The presence of buoyant youth enlivens any scene, and so it is pleasant to behold, and God is anxious to see boys and girls in his own City.

There are many instances of persons brought into the City of God in their early days. Jeremiah the Prophet was sanctified from his birth, and consecrated to the service of God. Samuel ministered to the Lord when a child. Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth. Timothy, from his childhood, knew the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. The sweet singer of Israel says in the 8th Psalm, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength." Matthew Henry, who wrote the valuable

Commentary on the Bible, was a remarkable example of early piety. When he was three years old, he could read the Bible distinctly, and as he grew in years, he grew in grace. "The thoughtful boy," we are told, "was often remarkably solemnized under his father's preaching, and when the services of the Sanctuary were over, would hasten to his little chamber to weep and pray, and could scarcely be prevailed on to come down and share the family meals."

Many other examples might be given. Indeed, it is evident from the history of the Church that most of those who have been eminent and useful in the service of God were converted to God in early life. Jesus Christ loves to receive the hearts of the young, and you have the promise that if you seek Him *early*, you *shall* find Him.

IV. They who belong to the City of Truth, and dwell in it, are happy people. It is said that "the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." This shows that they are happy. And so the young who are the children of God are truly happy. Boys and girls sometimes think that if they have fine houses to live in, and much money, and many costly earthly things, they would be happy. But the Bible says, "A man's life [or a man's happiness] consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." These things you may soon lose, and, at any rate, you must part with them at death. And all experience goes to prove that they cannot make any one happy. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

If you are in the City of Truth—God's own City—you will have God for your Father, and He will delight to do you good. God is angry with the wicked every day. He both can and will punish them for ever, except they repent. But his own children He delights to bless with all his heart. He rejoices over them with singing. And this is surely happiness.

Then, again, if you belong to the City of Truth, you will have Jesus as your Saviour and Friend. You have many sins for which you deserve to be banished from God's presence; but He will wash them all away in the fountain of his blood. You have no righteousness of your own, but He will clothe you in the beautiful, perfect robe of his own righteousness. You have hearts by nature unholy; but He will take away the hard and stony heart, and give you hearts of flesh. And further it is said of Him, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom." It is real happiness to belong to the flock of Jesus Christ.

You have no security of life. You may die soon. But if Jesus is your Friend and Shepherd, you have nothing to fear. He will send his angels to carry you home to his heavenly kingdom. Then you shall see Him face to face, and shine in eternal blessedness and glory. And your bodies will sleep quietly in the graves till the morning of the resurrection, when they shall be raised and fashioned like to his glorious body.

Suppose you live. What is there worth in this world but the favour of God, which is life, and his loving-kindness, which is better than life?

I have seen boys and girls chasing butterflies over the field. Often, just as they thought they had them away they fly. But look, a boy has caught one. He opens his hand, and looks into it. How great his disappointment? It is no more the beautiful object it appeared to be. It is crushed—a loathsome thing. Such is this world, with all its bright and alluring prospects.

But if you love and serve God, and choose the things of God as your portion, you will never be disappointed. He will take care of you and preserve you from all evil. He will do you good continually. He will be with you in all trials. He will make all things work together for your good. And then He will take away the sting of death when you come to die.

A Sabbath school girl was once visited by a lady when she was very ill, and near her end. The lady asked her, "My child, what do you most of all things desire?" She replied, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." "Have you no fear of death?" She answered, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "And are you not afraid," the lady continued, "that some of your sins are yet unpardoned?" Her reply was, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

This little story shews you, first, the importance of knowing the Scriptures in your early days, and secondly, the value of faith in a dying hour.

That you all may have this faith, and that you may thus be dwellers in the City of God, and happy there, is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1864.*

JESUS OUR EXAMPLE.

My Dear Young Friends,—

I have the pleasure of addressing you again at the commencement of another year. I would be glad to take each of you by the hand and say to you, "I wish you a happy new year!" But I cannot do that, and therefore I can only assure you in this way, that I sincerely pray for you all that you may have many years of usefulness and happiness, if God is pleased to spare you.

You have all reason to be thankful that God has preserved you from danger, and kept your souls from death during the past year. I suppose you can remember some boys and girls who were quite well, and as likely as any of you to see this day, on whom sickness and death have come, and now they are lying silent in their graves. Little did they think, when they began last year, that they would never see its end. And so, none of you can tell whether you will live through this year on which you have now entered.

This year you may die! I do not say this to make you unhappy, or to damp the joy which you naturally feel at the present season, but to lead you to consider the necessity of being prepared for whatever may

happen to you. And how are you to be prepared either for life or for death? By giving your hearts to Christ, and thus getting grace to do the will of God.

If I were to ask you whom you would wish most to be like, I am sure that those of you who have any desire to be prepared for heaven, and to be happy with God at last, would tell me that you would wish to be like Jesus. There is not a boy or girl, acquainted with the Bible, who would not desire to be in heaven at length, for heaven is a place of happiness, and all would wish to be happy when they die. All would say with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." But Balaam was a wicked man—he did not live a holy life, and therefore his wish was vain. It matters not though you should be saying, I would wish to go to heaven—the great question is, do you wish and pray and labour to be like Christ—holy as He was holy, and pure as He was pure? Can you say in truth these words, part of a beautiful hymn which I am sure you could all repeat—

"I long to be like Jesus
Meek, lowly, loving, mild,
I long to be like Jesus
The Father's holy child."

Hoping that this is your desire, I want to take as the subject of my address to you now, something that Jesus said when He was only twelve years of age, like some of yourselves.

Most of you will have read the story of Jesus

Christ in the temple, when He was a boy. You will remember that at a certain time of the year, his parents went up to Jerusalem as they were enjoined, and as all the people were enjoined, to keep the feasts, and to worship God there. They lived a long way off—many miles from Jerusalem—but notwithstanding the distance, they went, because they loved the service of God, and delighted in his house. God has promised to give great blessings to those who take pleasure in his ordinances, and seek Him in the Sanctuary. None can expect to know Him, and receive Salvation to their souls, who do not come and worship Him in his house. All good people delight in the worship of God. Samuel, when he was a child, ministered before the Lord in the temple. And you could repeat what David says in one of his Psalms—

> "How lovely is thy dwelling place,
> O Lord of hosts to me,
> The tabernacles of thy grace,
> How pleasant, Lord, they be!"

The parents of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, though it was a great distance that they had to go, went up to worship God at Jerusalem. But they did not go alone. They took Jesus with them, though He was only a little boy. Does not this teach parents that they should take their children with them to church, and that young people should, after the example of Christ, be willing to go with them? You should be anxious to take every opportunity of coming to the house of God, that you may learn about God and Jesus Christ, and the way by which you may be

saved, and made blessed for ever. A little boy, about four years of age, who was regularly taken by his parents on the Lord's day to the house of God, was one morning left at home, on account of the state of the weather. When his father returned, he said to him, "Father, it has been Sabbath-day to you, but not to me, or my mother, for we have not been at church to-day." If you feel like this boy, you will be sorry to be absent from the worship of God—you will love the habitation of God's house and the place where his honour dwelleth. Jesus says, "Suffer the little children to come to me." Come then, all of you, to meet with Christ. He will take you up in his arms. He will lay his hands upon you and bless you.

But I must proceed to tell you more of this interesting story about Jesus. When the worship was over, and the feast had been ended, his parents set out from Jerusalem, to return to Nazareth, their own city. You might think that they would have taken the little boy by the hand, and led Him with them, as they went away, to be sure that no evil would happen to Him. But perhaps they were occupied in thinking about what they had been doing and hearing in the temple, or they were busy in conversation with some of the people about the services in which they had been taking part. However that may be, they neglected to look after Jesus. They had gone a whole day's journey before they missed Him. When they did miss Him, they began, as you may suppose, to inquire after Him—they would no doubt go amongst the people, and ask if any one had seen

Him. When they found Him not, and could get no tidings of Him, they became alarmed for his safety. What then did they do? They returned to Jerusalem and after three days' search, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. They were astonished to find Him thus employed, and then his mother began to chide with Him for causing them so much trouble and anxiety. She said to Him, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Jesus then answered, "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

This, my young friends, was a remarkable answer, and I wish you to think much about it. Had you seen the young boy sitting in the midst of the learned men, the teachers of the law, and filling them with amazement at the wisdom which He displayed, you would have wondered at the sight. But you should recollect that Jesus came into the world to teach sinners the character of God, to reveal the way of life, as well as to die for them upon the cross; and even at this early period of his life, He was beginning to shew his anxiety to be employed in that work. His meat was to do the will of his Father who sent Him. And when Christ thus early devoted Himself to his Father's business, He would teach you, and all young people, that you have an important work to do, and that you cannot commence too soon to do it. You have souls to be saved—you have hell to avoid—you have heaven to gain. And oh! when you think what it is to be miserable throughout eternity, why should any of you refuse to hear and obey the voice that

summons you to seek the Lord whilst He is to be found, and to call upon Him whilst He is near? The promise is, "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me."

The business which your Heavenly Father has given you to do is—

I. To seek the salvation of your souls. You read in your Bible that all are sinners, that the wrath of God lies upon all, young as well as old, by reason of sin. And surely it is a fearful thing to have the wrath of Heaven resting upon you, and to have nothing before you but the place of everlasting woe. You may not believe that this is true—you may think little about it, and if only you have present enjoyment you may not care about your souls. But this is great folly. You may sometimes have seen a man deprived of his reason. He may have thought himself a king, or some great person, and that he had large possessions. But you did not believe him—you knew that he was mistaken. Just in the same way, many people, young as well as old, imagine themselves safe, though they are in great danger.

My young friends, we must hear what God says in his Word. That Word is the truth. And what does it say? You remember these words: "The Son of man (*i.e.*, Jesus Christ) is come to seek and to save that which was lost." We are all by nature lost sinners, and in danger of being eternally lost—banished from heaven, from the presence of God and cast down to the abodes of hell for ever. What a blessed thing it is to be saved from this state, to be delivered from the wrath to come, and to be made heirs of heaven!

Once there was a boy in Liverpool, who went into the water to bathe, and he was carried out by the tide. Though he struggled long and hard, he was not able to swim against the ebbing tide, and was taken out to sea. He was picked up by a boat belonging to a vessel bound for Dublin. The poor little boy was almost lost. The sailors were all very kind to him when he was taken into the vessel. One gave him a cap, another a jacket, another a pair of shoes, and so on.

But that evening, a gentleman, who was walking near the place where the little boy had gone into the water, found his clothes lying upon the shore. He searched, and made inquiries; but no tidings were to be heard of the poor little boy. He found a piece of paper in the pocket of the boy's coat, by which he discovered who it was to whom the clothes belonged. The kind man went with a sad and heavy heart to break the news to his parents. He said, "I am very sorry to tell you that I found these clothes on the shore, and could not find the lad to whom they belonged; I almost fear he has been drowned." The father could hardly speak for grief. The mother was wild with sorrow. They caused every inquiry to be made, but no account was to be heard of their dear boy. The house was sad; the little children missed their playfellow; mourning was ordered; the mother spent her time crying; and the father's heart was heavy. He said little but he felt much.

The lad was taken back in a vessel bound for Liverpool, and arrived on the day the mourning was to be brought home. As soon as he reached Liverpool, he set off towards his father's house. He did not like

be be seen in the strange cap and jacket and shoes he had on; so he went by the lanes, where he would not meet those who knew him. At last he came to the hall door. He knocked. When the servant opened it, and saw who it was, she screamed with joy, and said "Here is Master Tom." His father rushed out, and, bursting into tears, embraced him. His mother fainted. "There was no more spirit in her." What a happy evening they all, parents and children, spent! They did not want the mourning. The father could say with Jacob "It is enough; my son is yet alive."

But what do you think will be the rejoicing in heaven, when those who were in danger of being lost forever, arrive safely on that happy shore? How will the angels rejoice, and the family of heaven be glad! Perhaps when some of you will hereafter go to heaven, your fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters will welcome you and say, "I am delighted to see you safe. Welcome! welcome!" You will not go there like that boy, with a cap and clothes of which he was ashamed, but with garments of Salvation, white as snow, with crowns of glory that do not fade away. And what must you do, to be ready to enter heaven when you die? There is only one who can save you from being lost forever, and that is Jesus Christ. He died upon the cross, though He was Lord of all, that you might live—and now from his throne in heaven He is saying, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." If you come to Him (*i.e.*, believe in Him), and love Him, and obey Him, He will wash away all your sins in his blood—He will clothe you in his glorious robe of righteousness—He will put his Spirit within

you, to make you holy, and all that is good will be your portion for time and for eternity.

II. The business which your Heavenly Father hath given you to do, and which you cannot begin too early is to serve Him as his children (*i.e.*, to seek to please Him), to do his will, and to obey his commands. If you love your parents, you will make it your great object to attend to their directions, to do what they bid you, and in all things to hearken to, and follow their advice. Even so, if you are the children of God, and therefore like Christ, it will be your chief anxiety, that you may be taught and enabled to do in every respect what will be pleasing in his sight. And this is the only way by which you can prove to others that you are about your father's business. You may say that you are the children of God; but if your hearts are not given to God—if you love sin, and practise sin with the wicked, all that you may say will only prove that you are false in heart, that you are serving Satan, the wicked one, doing his will, and working his work. And oh! surely it would be a sad thing for any of you to be growing up in the family of Satan, and thus preparing not only for unhappiness on this earth, but for the regions of the lost throughout eternity.

But I would hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. I hope that you all feel the danger of sinning against God, and the necessity of striving to please God in everything. And not only so, but I hope that you are seeking grace from God to enable you to do his will. By this test, it will be known whether you belong to Jesus Christ or not; for, says He, "Ye are my

friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." You may live in a Christian land—you may read good books—you may respect the Sabbath-day—you may be taught at the Sabbath school—you may have pious friends; but it will all be in vain unless you learn to do the will of God. You remember, I suppose, that parable of our Saviour, of the two young men whom their father sent to work in his vineyard. The one refused not to go, as the other did, but replied, "I go, sir," yet he went not. Not the mere hearers of truth —not the learners, not even those who keep it in their memories will at last reach heaven; but those who do and love to do what pleases God.

Pray to God that you may learn, keep, and do all that is good. Ask for the help of his Holy Spirit to cleanse your sinful heart, and seek to be united by faith to Christ, that you may be saved by his blood, and become like your Lord.

III. Another part of the business which your Heavenly Father hath given you to do, is, to seek to do all the good you can—to try to bring others along with you in the way of life. The first great work of every one is to see that he is saved himself, and then to try to be the instrument of saving others. You may say that it is little you can do, but let it be only a little, yet you should do it, and if you look up to God for his blessing, He will grant it.

Remember the great multitude of heathen children, who have never heard a word about heaven, and who do not know that there is any Saviour for lost men. Suppose you had seen the Liverpool boy, whom I have mentioned, carried out to sea by the tide. How

you would have pitied him! Then suppose you had seen the water full of boys, all drifting out beyond the reach of human help. How would your spirit have died within you! When you should have turned away, and gone home, how sad you would have felt! No "pleasant bread" could you have eaten that night. But all the children in heathen lands are drifting hopelessly onwards—can you tell whither? Oh! try to do something to send the Gospel to them. Be missionaries for Christ.

Again, when you see any of your companions going on in a sinful course, you can warn them of their danger—you can invite them to come to Jesus—you can tell them of the love of Christ, and of his willingness to save—you can invite them to pray with you, and if you do this in the spirit of love and kindness, your labour will not be in vain.

Be loving and kind to one another and to all. Two boys were going along the street, the elder about six, and the younger about four years old. The elder one seemed very anxious in urging his little brother to quicken his pace, by taking hold of him roughly, and saying in an unkind manner, "Come along."

The little one held back by the fences, and made a whining noise, as though he was tired and dissatisfied, and appeared unwilling to heed the rough command of his persevering brother.

They were told that brothers should be very kind, one to another, that they should try to speak gently, and it would help them to be happy. "Speak very gently to your little brother, take his hand kindly, and say to him, 'Come, Willie, and let us go home.' Perhaps he would go then."

He took the little boy's hand, and in a sweet child-like voice, repeated the words, "Come, Willie, and let us go home."

The child, with a pleasant look, trotted along by his side, encouraged by the repetition of "Come, Willie, and let us go home," and thus they went lovingly along.

It was a lovely sight to see these brothers going hand in hand to their earthly home. But would it not be lovelier still to see little children joining hands, and saying, "Let us go home—to our heavenly home." Ah! if they did, how surely would the Lord Jesus join them, taking them by the hand, and leading them and feeding them by living fountains of water.

Dear young friends, be always kind, one to another —love one another and truly you will be blessed. Jesus Christ was very loving and kind when He was upon this earth. He called the little ones to Him, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. And now, though you cannot see Him, yet if you strive to be like Him, He will bless you likewise in all that you do or say.

You are not too young to be engaged in your Father's business. Begin early, and make much of life. Begin with this New Year to seek, and serve the Lord more earnestly. It is the diligent child who makes the useful man—it is the believing child that makes the aged saint.

May God, by his grace, guide, protect and bless you all continually, is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *January 1, 1865.*

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

My Dear Young Friends,—

As I cannot go to each one of you, and speak to you, I take this way of saying, as I do with earnestness and truth, "I wish you a happy new year!" God has mercifully kept and preserved you. Some of you may have had good health all the past year; others of you have been laid on beds of sickness, and yet raised up again. There may have been boys and girls whom you knew that are now lying in their graves; or, perhaps, the angel of death has come into your own dwellings and taken away a father or a mother, or a brother or a sister, or some near relative and friend. But you are yet the living on this earth. To God be the praise of your preservation. My sincere wish is, that you may be wiser and better during this year than you have been, and then you will be certainly happier.

With this view, I purpose on the present occasion, when you expect an address, to write to you about the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and to entreat you to come to Him, and follow Him, that you may form part of his blessed flock. The Prophet Isaiah, who prophesied much of Christ, says of Him:

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom."—Isa. xl. 11.

I. I shall tell you of Jesus as a Shepherd:

You know that in the Bible He is sometimes called a King. He may well be called so, for He is the Lord of heaven and earth. When you hear of a king or queen, you think of some person possessed of great power, sitting upon a throne, and wearing a crown, surrounded by much splendour, and governing the people who are his subjects. Now, Jesus is the King of kings. He sits upon the throne of heaven. He wears a crown, the jewels of which are his own believing people, whom He hath saved and subdued to Himself. He has all power at his command. He governs and protects his people. And He will make them all kings, to sit down with Him on his throne in heaven. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."

Sometimes Jesus Christ is called a Master, and they who believe in Him and obey Him are his servants. They delight in doing his commands. And just as a kind and righteous master rewards those who serve him, so will Jesus reward his servants with all the happiness of heaven.

But Jesus is here spoken of as a Shepherd—yea, He so speaks of Himself: "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

You read in the Bible of many great and good men, who were Shepherds. Abel, whom wicked Cain, his brother, slew in the field, was "a keeper of sheep." Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, was a shepherd, for he had great flocks and herds. Jacob

kept the flocks of his uncle, Laban. His sons, the twelve patriarchs, were shepherds. You will remember that when Joseph, their brother, whom they had sold as a slave into Egypt, and who afterwards became a great man there, had brought down his father and his brethren to that land, he said to Pharaoh, the King, regarding them, "The men are shepherds, for their trade has been to feed cattle, and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have." Moses, too, was a shepherd in the land of Midian. He there kept the flocks of Jethro his father-in-law. And you will all recollect a king of Israel, who had been a shepherd, viz., David. He was brought from feeding his father's sheep to be anointed king of the land. But there is no Shepherd like Jesus. He is the good Shepherd.

You are not accustomed here to see great numbers of sheep under one shepherd. But in Eastern countries, in Judea, were Christ lived whilst He was upon earth, and in the countries around Judea, the shepherds generally have numerous flocks of sheep to tend. They cannot have houses or folds large enough to contain them. They are therefore obliged to remain with their flocks upon the mountains, and to watch over them both during the night and during the day. Thus when the angels came down from heaven to announce the glad tidings that Jesus was born into the world, they found the shepherds watching their flocks by night on the plains of Bethlehem. In this way having to be out constantly upon the mountains, the shepherds are exposed to the severity of the weather along with the sheep. They have to bear the rough winds and stormy tempests, the cold, and frost, and

snows of winter, as well as the scorching heat of the summer sun during the day. Jacob, who, I have just told you, was a shepherd, says about his keeping the flocks of Laban, "Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and sleep departed from mine eyes."

The shepherds, too, in that country have often to encounter wolves, and lions, and bears, and other ravenous beasts, which prey upon sheep.—They have to drive them away, so that they are themselves liable to be torn in pieces by these fierce animals. David once, when he was a young man, was in great danger in this way. You will remember that when he came forward to fight Goliath, the great giant of the Philistines, Saul, the king, looked at him with some kind of contempt, as if he was not likely to be any match for the giant. "Thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."—But David said unto Saul, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went after him, and smote him, and slew him, and delivered it out of his mouth, and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and the Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

Now, Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, was exposed to much suffering, and endured many hardships, and death itself. Though he was infinitely happy and glorious in heaven, yet so great was his love to sinners of mankind, that He came down to this earth, and lived a life of poverty and persecution, and then died to

save them. When He was an infant in his mother's arms, Herod, the cruel king, sought to slay Him; —when He grew up, men reviled Him, and hated and persecuted Him, though He went about continually doing good. Jesus had no certain dwelling place, no house which He could call his own, for shelter and repose. "The foxes," He said, "have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." The wicked and ungrateful Jews conspired to take away his life, and at length they crucified Him on the accursed tree. He might easily have rescued himself out of their hands, for He had millions of angels, and all creatures under his control. But He wanted to save perishing sinners, to deliver them from hell, and to bring them to heaven, and He knew that if He did not thus die, not one of us could be saved. Oh! my young friends, was not this amazing love, and may not Jesus well be called the Good Shepherd, when He laid down his life for the sheep?

II. Now I shall go on to tell you about the flock of Christ. He could not be a Shepherd without a flock. But He has a flock. God gave Him a flock, and He died for them, that He might claim them as his own.

You will ask, perhaps, where are the sheep of Christ's flock? They are not all in one place, neither are they all upon the earth at one time. He has had sheep and lambs in every age—old and young—all good people, and all good children that have ever been on this earth. He has watched over them, and fed them all their life here; and then, when they died, He translated them to his fold in heaven. There He leads

them to rich pastures, and living fountains of waters, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

But as to the sheep of Christ now upon the earth, they are not all in one place. There are some in one country, and some in another; some of one colour, and some of another; some in one church, and some in another. I trust there are many of Christ's flock among you. But I cannot, and no one can tell accurately who they are. Jesus, however, knows them all and if He were to go round among you, as you were assembled in any place, He could, without any mistake, pick out every boy and girl that really loves Him, and say to each of them, "You belong to me." Would there be many of you?—I hope there would. Yea, I pray that all of you may belong to Him. For if any of you do not love Christ, but walk in sin, you will perish everlastingly.

But whether there are many among you or not, Jesus Christ has a large flock. And when they are all gathered together, they will form a multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue. Long before they were born, God the Father saw what He could make of them, if He dressed them all in Christ's robe of righteousness, and put the Spirit of Christ in them. He saw what a holy, happy company He could make out of them, though He knew He would find them sinners. And so He gave them to Christ; yea, He gave all that great multitude, young men and maidens, old men and children. And Christ said He would willingly suffer and die for these many souls—He would be their ransom.

It was Jesus, then, who saved them all. You wonder

at this; but it shews what a heart of love Jesus had, when He died for his enemies. Once there was a deaf and dumb boy who was taught his lessons by a kind friend. This kind lady could speak to him only by signs and pictures. She drew upon a piece of paper a picture of a great crowd of people, old and young, standing near a wide, deep pit, out of which smoke and flames were issuing. She then drew the figure of One who came down from heaven, and this was to represent Jesus, the son of God. She explained to the boy that when this person came, He said to God that He would consent to be nailed to a cross for these people, if that would save them from the pit, and how, as soon as He bowed his head on the cross and died, the pit was shut up, and they were saved. The deaf and dumb boy wondered much, but he made signs that the person who died upon the cross was but one, and the crowd very many. "How could God be content to take one for so many?" The lady took off her gold ring, and then put beside it a great heap of withered leaves of flowers, and asked the boy, "which was the best—the one gold ring or the many, many dry leaves?" The boy clapped his hands with delight, and spelt the word, "One! One!" And then, to shew that he knew what was meant, and that Jesus was the One who was worth all the rest, he ran and got his letters, and spelt the words, "Good, good One!" He had learned that day that Jesus alone had saved them all—all that great flock, and he stood, wondering at his love.

III. Now, in the third place, I will try and explain to you what Jesus will do for his flock.

1st. He will seek them out and bring them into his fold. The sheep is a very silly creature. It will often stray into the wilderness, where it is in danger of falling down the steep sides of mountains, or of being devoured by beasts of prey; and often the shepherd has to travel a long distance in search of the lost sheep, and, when he finds it, perhaps it is wearied, or wounded, or nearly dead. He will then kindly take it up in his arms and lay it on his shoulders, and as he carries it back to the fold, his heart will rejoice that he has found the sheep that was lost. Now, so it is with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Those whom He takes into his fold are naturally very wild. They are lost sheep. They have wandered far away from God. They are doing the will of Satan, and if they are left in this state, they will have their portion with the devil and his angels. But Jesus walks about on the cold mountains of this world, seeking his lost sheep, calling upon them to return to God. His sweet but powerful voice you may now hear calling upon you, and if you feel that you are lost, He will take you out of the grasp of sin and Satan, and make you the lambs of his own flock.

Do you know what it is to be lost? How would you feel if you had strayed away from your father's house, and were lost in a forest in a dark night, and heard the bears growling, and the wolves howling all around you? A good man was travelling through a wood, in a dark night, many years ago. The frightful howl of the wolf, and the terrible yell of the catamount, every now and then, broke the silent stillness of the dark night. As he rode slowly along, he heard a soft and gentle cry. He thought it was a child. He

stopped and listened. It seemed a great way off. He said to himself, "What shall I do? It may be a catamount, for this creature sometimes imitates the cry of a person in distress, to draw people to it, that it may devour them; or, it may be a robber, who seeks to lure me out of my path, and get my money. If it is really a child, it is so dark, I am afraid that I cannot find it." He listened again, and still heard the cry, as of a child. He was a kind-hearted, resolute man. He said to himself again, "It may be a child, I will go its relief, though I may risk my own life." So he got off his horse, and tied him to a tree, and went into the woods in the direction where he heard the cry. After going some distance, he heard it, as he thought, still farther off in a different direction. Still he followed on. After going for some time, he stopped to listen, and felt a little hand pulling his clothes. He stooped down to see what it was, for he did not know but it might be a black snake winding itself around him; but he heard a low sweet voice say, "Papa, is it you?"

The gentleman took up the little boy, who was about four years of age. But now he was in danger of being lost himself, for he did not know how he should find his way back in the dark to his horse. However, God directed his feet, and he came out in the right place. He got on his horse, with the boy in his arms, and rode on till he came to a house, when he got off and went in, and lo! it was the house of the boy's father.

And there was joy in that house. The father and mother fainted, when they saw their little son, for they thought he was dead. The children jumped and clapped their hands, and cried "Henry's come, Henry's come." Poor little fellow! he had been from his

father's house almost three days. He was pale, and almost starved. O, how glad he was to get home! And they were all glad and rejoiced, for they were mourning for him, thinking he was dead. He had been lost and was found.

My young friends, you were all like this little boy —lost. God is your Father, but you have wandered away from Him, and are now groping your way in the dark. If you go on still in this way you will be lost for ever. But, like this good man, Jesus saw you, had pity on you, and came down from heaven to save you. He not only risked his life among his deadly enemies, but He freely gave up his life for us. He suffered, and bled, and died upon the cross, that He might take you back to your Father's home. And when one poor sinner returns to God there is joy in heaven, as there was in that house when the good man brought the little boy home. But if you refuse to follow the Saviour, you will not only be very ungrateful to Him, but you will be for ever lost, for He will not save you unless you come to Him. He now calls you, and says that He came to seek and save the lost. He has come to you and is waiting to save you. Will you not follow Him, then, and be saved?

2nd. Jesus Christ will feed his flock. Just as a shepherd leads his sheep to the green pastures and the refreshing streams, so does Christ nourish the souls of his people with the truths of his holy Word. As David says in the 23rd Psalm—

"The Lord's my Shepherd; I'll not want—
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green. He leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

You know that the soul requires food as well as the body, and it is the Truth of Christ that feeds the soul. When your parents instruct you at home, and when kind and pious teachers come to instruct you at the Sabbath school, it is the hand of Jesus, the good Shepherd, providing that which will nourish your souls unto life eternal. And all good people love the Word of God, and feed upon it. "Oh! how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day."

But there are lambs in every flock, and so in the flock of Christ. Who, then, are they? They are those who have lately become Christians, or are young in years, like yourselves. Now Jesus takes special care of them. He was kind to little children when He was upon the earth. He is as kind still, though He is now in heaven. He will do them all that is good, as it is said in the text: "He will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom."

3rd.—Jesus Christ will watch over and defend his flock. He says: "My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." You are of yourselves weak and defenceless. Satan goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He would tear you in pieces, if he were allowed. Wicked men, and bad companions would do you harm by enticing you to evil. They will laugh at you for paying attention to divine things, and they will try to make you join with them in the ways of sin. This is very dangerous to you, for your hearts are naturally inclined to all evil.—And if the Lord Jesus does not stretch forth his arm to protect you, you would fall a prey to their wicked devices. But

What a comfort is it to know that you have a Shepherd, who is everywhere present, who regards you as the lambs of his flock, who knows every one of you by name, however poor and young, and who is engaged to defend you by his almighty power.

"Thy foot He'll not let slide, nor will
He slumber that thee keeps,
Behold He that keeps Israel
He slumbers not nor sleeps.

The Lord shall keep thy soul; He shall
Preserve thee from all ill;
Henceforth thy going out and in
God keep for ever will."

Don't be afraid then to trust in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, to keep you. In a Christian family near Amoy, in China, a little boy, the youngest of three children, on asking his father to allow him to make a profession of his faith, was told that he was too young, that he might fall back, if he made a profession, when he was only a little boy. To this he made the touching reply:—"Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in his arms. As I am only a little boy, it will be easier for Jesus to carry me." This pleading was too much for the father. He at once consented. The whole family, of which this child is the youngest member—the father, mother, and three sons—are all members of the Mission Church at Amoy.

4th.—Jesus Christ will comfort his flock in sickness and trouble, for He is the great Physician of soul and body. He knows what they need, and will

provide accordingly. We are told that on one occasion there was a great multitude of people about Him, afflicted with various diseases, and there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all. He always sympathized with those who came to Him in suffering, and He has the same heart still.

> "In every pang that rends the heart
> The Man of Sorrows had a part;
> He sympathizes with our grief,
> And to the sufferer sends relief."

And if you are the lambs of his flock, He will support you in death. You know that the young die as well as the old. You have seen a great many funerals, and when you thought of your own death, perhaps, you were afraid. It is a natural fear. You do not like that your bodies should become cold and lifeless, and be laid in the dark, gloomy grave. But, however, you may regard death, it will come sooner or later, and you cannot tell when. If you had your sins forgiven, and were thus at peace with God, you would have nothing to fear. It is the consciousness of guilt that makes you afraid. Now, if you are in the flock of Christ, your sins are all washed away in his blood; you get new hearts to love Him, and serve Him, so that whether you live or whether you die, you are the Lord's. "I will fear no evil, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, for thou art with me; thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me."

It was so with a young girl from among yourselves, whom God was pleased, about three weeks ago, to take away, I hope, to be forever with Himself. She had for several years attended the Sabbath school

regularly — loved it very much, and in every way gave her teacher the greatest satisfaction. The missionary cause had a great attraction to her, and she was principally concerned in getting up a bazaar, which was held in her house some time since, for the purpose of raising money to send the Gospel to the heathen. But what was better still, her heart seemed to be gradually more and more drawn to the Saviour. Her mother and father told me that during last summer she had one day been praying for two hours, and that then she thought she saw a bright light shining around her. From that time she had been happy, rejoicing in the Lord. As she had not been very strong for some time, her mother said to her, when she knew her complaint, that she might die at any time. She replied that, though she would like to remain and be with her for some time, yet she was ready, if it were the Lord's will, "for," she added, "I trust in my Saviour." Jesus had revealed Himself in her heart, and made her one of the lambs of his flock.

My young friends, Jesus Christ is thus speaking to you in his Providence. Hear his voice; give your hearts to Him, and then when you die, whether in youth or old age, or when grown up, you shall live with Him forever in heaven.

IV. I shall now tell you in a few words what Jesus expects from his flock.

1. He expects them to love Him supremely. If you saw any kind shepherd defending his sheep from danger, and exposing his own life to be taken away for their safety, would you not think him very good, and would not the sheep love him for it? So, surely,

you should value Christ above all, and love Him above all, because He suffered so much and laid down his life for you. A young heathen boy, who had long tried to overcome his sins, but was not able, because he knew not the way of salvation, came to a missionary, and said to him, "I have a flower, a precious flower, to present as an offering, but as yet I have found none worthy to receive it." Hearing of the love of Christ, he said, "I will offer my flower to Christ, who is worthy to receive it." This flower was his heart. Jesus accepted it. He refuses no heart that is offered to Him. He made him one of the lambs of his flock.

2. Jesus expects of his flock that they hear his voice and follow Him. These are his own words: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. The shepherd calleth his sheep by name and leadeth them out." A traveller in the East tells us that, when he was there, he asked a man whether it was usual to give names to the sheep. He informed him that it was, and that the sheep obeyed the shepherd when he called them by their names. One morning he had an opportunity of seeing this. Passing a flock of sheep, he asked the shepherd the same question, and received the same answer. He then bade him call one of his sheep. He did so, and it instantly left its companions, and came up to the hand of the shepherd with signs of pleasure, and a ready obedience, which he had not observed in any other animal. It is also true in that country, that the sheep will not hear the voice of a stranger. "They will not follow him; they will flee from him, for they know not the voice of a stranger." The son of a prince put on the dress of a shepherd to try them.

He then called his sheep by name, but they would not obey. They knew it was not the voice of their own shepherd, though it was his dress, and they would not go near him. So it is with the sheep of Christ, and this is the way by which you may know them. They will not obey sin, or Satan, or wicked people. They follow Christ, and do his will. They know his voice, and obey it.

I remember that one day in the north of Italy, I saw a shepherd with a large flock of sheep coming along the road. They had to cross a deep, rapid stream, over which there was only a rough plank. I wondered what they would do! how they could get across. But as soon as the shepherd put his foot upon the narrow bridge, and spoke to them, and went before them, they all followed, one after another. They had no fear, because the shepherd went before them, and told them to come after him. And thus all Christ's sheep and lambs will do. They will listen to his voice and obey it. They will do what He bids them without delay. They will follow whithersoever He leadeth.

3. Jesus expects of his flock that they be all like Him; that they bear his image. Your daily prayer, if you are His, will be—

"I long to be like Jesus,
Meek lowly, loving, mild,
I long to be like Jesus,
The Father's holy child."

In this way the flock of Christ are known, and distinguished from others. They have all got a new heart, and this makes them like Christ. They are gentle to one another, and to all. They are ever ready to do good, whether to the bodies, or to the

souls of those around them. They are haters of all sin, of falsehood and dishonesty, and Sabbath breaking, and intemperance, and vice in every form. They love all that is just and pure, and lovely, and of good report. They think much of Christ; they honour Him in their hearts, and they extol Him by their lives. "I have not done enough for Jesus," said a little girl, when she was dying. She had felt the worth of a Saviour, and how much she owed to Him, and she grieved that she had done so little for His sake.

Now, let me ask you, have you done enough for Jesus? You know what He has done for you. What have you done for Him? He likes to see you growing up holy, and just, and true, in favour with God and man, as He did. Then He likes to see you trying to bring others to Him. Thus you will be known as the lambs of his flock. Always feel that you have not done enough for Him, and strive to do more.

Let this ever be your earnest prayer and effort. Seek daily at the throne of grace the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Begin from this day to be earnest and true in the love and service of Jesus Christ. And then, so long as God spares you, from year to year, you will not only enjoy the special care of the Good Shepherd, but you will be growing in usefulness and piety, and in all that will enable you to answer the great end of your being.

This is the daily fervent petition, for each one of you, my dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *January 1, 1866.*

THE FEAR OF THE LORD;

OR,

THE GREAT LESSON FOR THE YOUNG.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

I am glad to meet you all again on this the first day of a new year, and to be able to address you as usual on this occasion.

But first let me say to each one of you, "I wish you a happy year." May God put his Holy Spirit within you, to make you good and to keep you good. Then you will be really happy, and be enabled to look up to God from day to day, saying, "My Father, Thou wilt be the guide of my youth."

The subject of my address to you at this time is one which is intended especially for young people.

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord."—Psalm xxxiv. 11.

You know who wrote this Psalm, and most of the other Psalms in the Bible. It was David, the king of Israel. When he was a little boy he was employed in keeping his father's sheep. But God, who chooses any according to his pleasure, and makes them what

He pleases, chose David, and took him from feeding the ewes, to make him a great king over his own people. And though David as a king had much to think of, and many things to do—though he had large armies, and was obliged to fight against his enemies, and defend his country, and manage all the affairs of his kingdom—he did not neglect the young, he sought to do them good. No doubt he had many advices and counsels to give to grown-up people, and this Psalm is full of instruction to them. He asks them to come and taste that the Lord is good. David knew that himself, and he wanted that others should know it too. But, you observe, he does not forget the young. He calls upon them to come to him also, and he would teach them the way to be good and happy.

This was true kindness to them. All who know God, and love God, godly parents, and ministers, and teachers, and others, will be anxious that the young may be taught the fear of the Lord. You may receive many gifts—you may think much of these; you may have a great deal of knowledge imparted to you; but if you are not taught the fear of the Lord, you cannot enjoy the favour of God, you will have no real happiness in this world, you will be shut out of heaven when you die. A minister who had his congregation near a very lofty mountain, was one morning taking a walk at a little distance from his house, when he met a shepherd, whom he knew to be a regular attendant at church. He had his plaid closely wrapped about him, and had evidently something in it, that he was carrying with unusual care. After some friendly words between them, the minister said to him, "What is that you have got in your plaid?" He answered, "It is a

poor forsaken lamb. When I was going my rounds this morning, I found it lying on the cold ground. Its mother had left it, and it would soon have died. I took it up, wrapped it in my warm plaid, and am now carrying it home to my cottage." "And what," the minister asked, "do you intend to do with it?" "I will feed it," said the kind shepherd, "and it will soon be one of the flock." He did so. The poor forsaken lamb revived, grew, and became one of the liveliest and strongest sheep of the flock. Had this kind friend not taken compassion on it, it must have pined and died. Now the young are just like this forsaken lamb. They will die in their sins if they are not brought to Jesus, and taught the fear of the Lord. Jesus came down from heaven, and walked over the cold mountains of this world, to seek and to save that which is lost. He is going about the hills, seeking for the wanderers of his flock. His sweet, though loud voice, you may hear crying unto you, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? If you hear that voice and obey it, instead of being dying lambs, you will become living members of Christ's little flock. He will take you up in his arms —He will carry you in his bosom—He will bring you to his own fold—He will feed you with the pure milk of the Word, with the finest of the wheat—He will make you blessed in heaven at length. Which of you would not wish that? "Come then, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

I. Those who are here spoken to are young people. God has a word in the Bible to you, as well as to others. You have souls to be saved. You were born with sin-

ful hearts, and you have often done sinful things, all of you; and your sins need to be forgiven, and washed away in the blood of Christ, else the wrath of God will rest upon you, and destroy you forever. Your naturally wicked and deceitful hearts require to be taken away, and new hearts given to you, else you can never see the face of God in kindness or in love. You are by nature ignorant of God, and of the things of God; you need to be taught the good and the right way.

Now God wants to do all this for you. He knows what you require, and is anxious to bestow it upon you. You may remember, as recorded in the Old Testament, that when God had given to Moses the laws which He would have the Israelites listen to and obey, He bade him to say to them, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently *unto thy children*, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." And in one of the Psalms, it is said, "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, *that they should make them known to their children*. That the generation to come might know them, even *the children* which should be born, who should arise and declare them *to their children*, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments, and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation—a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." You

learn from these passages, how careful God was that the young should not be forgotten, but should be diligently and prayerfully instructed. In the New Testament the apostle Paul says by command of God to parents, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Remember always that God cares for you and wishes your good. Let parents be warned to care for the best interests of their children, and let children be admonished to attend to the good instructions of their parents, because it is the will of God.

It is also a sign that God is mindful of children, and seeks their happiness, when He puts it into the hearts of those who love Him and keep his word, to come and teach you at the Sabbath school. It is He who inclines his own people to do this, and you should not only be thankful for it, but every time you come to the Sabbath school, you ought to recollect that God loves you, and you should earnestly pray that you may be brought to love Him too.

And how did Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners, who came down from heaven to earth to die for us, how did He treat the young? Did He overlook them as if they could not understand Him, or as if they could receive no benefit from Him? No; He was always very kind and condescending to the young, He was ready to heal them when they were sick, and to do them all manner of good. When a heathen woman came to Him, entreating Him to have mercy upon her child, who was grievously tormented with a devil, and when she pressed Him again and again, He said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith. Be it

unto thee even as thou wilt." And her child was made whole from that very hour.

There was once a certain father, whose child was very ill. He was much concerned about her, for what father or mother would not be concerned about any of their children, if they were sick and likely to die? He came to Jesus, and fell down at his feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, "My daughter lieth at the point of death, I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed, and she shall live." If you had been present at that time, and looking on, you would have seen Jesus kindly consenting to go away with the anxious father, and proceeding to the house. When they arrived near the door, there came one, and said to the ruler, "Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?" But Jesus said unto him, "Be not afraid, only believe." And they went into the house, where the people were weeping and wailing for the death of the girl. Jesus went to the bed-side, where her body was lying cold and dead, and took her by the hand, and said, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." And straightway she arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years. Did not this shew the interest that Jesus had in the young?

On another occasion, when He was employed in teaching the people, some mothers brought their children to Him, that He might touch them. His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

You have every encouragement then to seek after

Jesus, to go to Him, and ask his blessing. He wil not put you away. He will gladly receive you, and make you his own. And there are many passages throughout the Bible, in which God speaks to the young, and promises them a special blessing, if they give their hearts to Him. For example, "I love them that love Me, and those who seek Me early, shall find Me." I have read of a very celebrated man, who when he was a boy, was accustomed to hear an excellent preacher, with whom he was so much pleased, that, in returning home from church, he would walk behind him, and try to tread in his footsteps. The minister did not know him, but one day he noticed the little boy trotting after him, and said, "Well, my child, God hath said, 'I love them that love Me, and those who seek Me early shall find Me.'" He said no more, but the little boy pondered these words in his mind, and asked himself, "What does he mean by 'those who seek Me early?' I rise early, and my first work is prayer. Is that what he means? No, I think it is those who seek God in early life—when they are young. Then thus I seek, and thus I will seek the Lord. The minister said also, 'They *shall* find me.' Others may perhaps seek, and not find; but God says to the young, *They shall find.*" This thought gave him great encouragement, and led him earnestly to seek the Lord; and experience has often proved that the true light which, coming into the world, lighteth every man, often shines with great power into children's hearts.

You will thus know, from what you have been reading, the care which God takes of you, and how desirous he is that you should be taught what is good for

you, and will save you forever. What then are you to be taught?

II. This is the second thing I am to tell you, and what it implies. It is the fear of the Lord. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you *the fear of the Lord.*"

There are many people who don't like to think about God. It makes them uneasy, and they would rather put away all thoughts of God from their minds. Are there any of you of whom this is true? If there are any of you who have wicked hearts, who delight in wickedness, it is so with you. There are boys who will not care sometimes to profane the Sabbath, who will rather spend that day in play, and amusement, or it may be in a worse way, than go to church with their parents—who will not hesitate to stay from the Sabbath school with bad companions at times. I am sure they will not like to think about God. There are boys too, who, when they get angry with others will curse, and swear, and take the name of God in vain—who often say things that are false, and care not for the word of God, and for prayer. I am sure they will be afraid, when they think of God.—And there are girls, who can be very disobedient to their parents, and very unconcerned about their souls, when any one speaks to them regarding divine things, and the wonderful love of Jesus Christ. I am sure they will have no pleasure in the thought of God—they will be afraid to think of Him.

And why is this? It is because conscience tells you that you are sinners, that you have made God angry with you by your sins, that you do not love Him, or

his day, or his word, or his laws—and you know that God is able to punish you, and to cast you away from his presence into the place of everlasting burnings. "God is angry with the wicked every day." It is this that makes all unconverted sinners afraid of God. They know that He can punish them, and that He will punish them at last. Hence they tremble and fear before Him.

But this is not the fear which is spoken of, and which you should have. Bad people, wicked boys and girls do not require to be taught that. They feel it in spite of themselves. They cannot help it. Conscience speaks to them of many sins committed against God, and of his anger and power, which they cannot resist. And so long as any of you continue to love sin, and to commit sin, and to hate God and his law, so long will you be unhappy and afraid to think of God.

"The fear of the Lord," which the Bible teaches you, is that fear which springs from love. If you love God, you will fear to offend Him, you will seek to turn away from everything that would make Him angry with you. You will try to do everything that would please Him. A boy was once tempted by his companions to pluck some ripe cherries from a tree, which his father had forbidden him to touch. "You need not be afraid," said they, "for if your father should find out that you had taken them, he is so kind that he will not hurt you." "For that very reason," replied the boy, "I ought not to touch them, for though my father would not hurt me, my disobedience would hurt my father." Now, why did this little boy so act? It was not because he was afraid of his father as one who would punish him, but because he loved his father,

and revered his father so much, that he would not do anything which would offend his father, and make him displeased.

This will explain to you what is meant by the fear of the Lord. It is such love to Him, that you fear to disobey his law, and that you delight to do what would be pleasing to Him. You love your parents, I hope. You have good reason to do so. Your mothers have watched over you, and taken care of you, and have shewn you kindness in every way. Your fathers have laboured to provide for you, and it is a pleasure to them to see you happy and comfortable. They have often pardoned you when you have done wrong, and treated you with as much kindness as ever. Oh! who can think of a parent's love without loving in return, and treating them with all respect and affection? You must have hearts full of ingratitude if you do not love your parents and seek to obey and please them.

And have you not much more reason to love God? Who has done so much for you as God? He created you. He preserves you. He supplies all your wants, and continually upholds you. He sent his Son into this world to suffer and die for you. And now, if you believe in Jesus Christ, He will blot out all your sins. He will give you new hearts. He will deliver you from the power of Satan. He will take you to heaven when you die, to be for ever with Himself. Is not this most wonderful love? Think of God parting with his own Son, and making Him die upon the cross, that you might be saved from hell. Think of God, willing to pardon all your sins, and give you a spotless robe of righteousness, that you

may shine brighter than the angels in heaven. Think of God, ready to make you his own children, to defend you from all evil, and to allow nothing to hurt you, till He bring you to heavenly mansions, perfectly happy, perfectly holy.

Now if you love Him, and pray for his spirit to make your hearts good, and to keep them good, you will take pleasure in obeying his word, you will remember that God is near to you, seeing you at all times, and you will endeavour to do everything that He commands you. "My dear child," said a teacher to one of his Sabbath scholars under alarming illness, "have you any reason to suppose that you love the Saviour?" "I hope I can say, sir, that I do love Him," was the reply. "And what makes you say so?" added the teacher. "Why," said the little girl, "because I love his word, I love his house, I love his people, I love to pray to Him, I do not like to offend Him, and I believe that He loves me." That is just the fear of the Lord. Can you say as much? If you can, then you are blessed indeed. May God, by his grace, keep you in this state, and then you need not fear any evil. He will do you good continually. You may say from day to day, "This God is my God for ever and ever. He will be my guide even unto death."

But in order to teach you more particularly what is meant by the fear of the Lord, I shall tell you what I have read about a little boy, who feared the Lord, and served Him, and then shew you from his example some marks and evidences of those who possess this character.

After an absence of some years, a minister returned for a Sabbath to the place where he had formerly

preached the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. When the services of the day were over, a widow knocked at the vestry door, and requested an interview. "Do you not remember me, sir?" said the woman. "Not at this moment," was the reply. "Do you not remember John Reynolds?" "No." "Why, he was at your Sabbath school." "That may be, but I cannot promise to remember every boy that has been in the school." "But, sir," said the widow very earnestly, "my John was the best John in all the world." "That may be, too, still I cannot say that I remember him." "But I am sure that my John is the best John in all the world, and you will say so too, when you have heard what has happened since you left us some years ago." And then the poor widow gave the minister the following account of her John:—

"After you left us, sir, my husband died, and we became very poor; indeed, we were almost starving. And one day my John said to me, 'Mother, dear, we cannot starve, and there is no work to be got, let me go to sea for a time, and try to earn some money for you.' I was very loth to part from him, but times were bad; and as he seemed so anxious about it, I gave him a parting kiss, and he went to the nearest port, about seven miles distant, to seek for a berth in a merchant vessel. John tried in many quarters, but he could not succeed for some days; and he was almost going to give up in despair, when he saw the master of a ship passing by. 'Do you want a boy, sir,' said John. 'Why, that is the very thing I am looking for,' said the captain. 'Do then, sir, take me.' 'Well, where is your character?' 'Sir, nobody knows me here; but in my own parish, I could easily get a

character, but I am a stranger in this town.' 'I cannot take you without a character.' 'But I will be very obedient; I will do all that you tell me.' 'That is fine talking, my boy, but I tell you I must have a character, or I cannot take you with me.' John looked thoughtful and sad for a moment, and then he bethought himself of his pocket bible, which had been given to him as a reward in the Sabbath school. Opening the bible, where the inscription was written, before the captain, 'Will that do, sir, for a character?' The captain read the following:—

PRESENTED TO

JOHN REYNOLDS,

FOR HIS GOOD BEHAVIOUR IN

————————Sabbath School.

————————Date.

"'Ay, ay, my boy, I will take you on this recommendation. Come along with me.'

"John was accordingly shipped in a merchant vessel for St. Petersburg. A few days after, a storm arose, and the wind blew a hurricane, and the waves dashed over the ship, and the danger became frightfully great. John took his pocket Bible, and read in a loud and solemn voice the fifty-first Psalm. On his bended knee did that young sailor boy cry to that God who alone can appease the raging storm. And one by one, one after another, did the sailors, and the mate, and the captain kneel down by that sailor boy,

when he read the Psalm at the top of his voice. And it pleased God to hear their united supplication. The storm abated, and the ship pursued her voyage in safety. The captain used to say to John in the after-part of the voyage, 'It was a good day for me, my boy, when I shipped you; your prayers saved my ship; when we get to St. Petersburg, you shall have a holiday.'

"When they arrived at St. Petersburg, according to the captain's promise, John had the holiday. Boy-like, he must needs go to the Emperor's palace, to see all the great people go to court. There he stood, gazing on the novel scene; and as carriage after carriage passed by, something dropped from one of them at his feet. It was a bracelet which had fallen from some lady's hand. John picked it up, and called aloud to the coachman to stop; but in vain; the crowd and the noise prevented John from being noticed, and he returned to the captain with the bracelet. 'You are a lucky boy,' said the captain, 'these are diamonds.' 'But they are not mine.' 'How did you come by them?' 'I picked them up, and I called to the driver to stop, but he drove on and did not hear me. 'You did, then, all that you could do under the circumstances,' said the captain, 'and they are clearly yours.' 'No, captain, they are not mine.' John was too honest and simple-minded to be caught by the captain's guile. 'Why, you foolish boy, let me have the diamonds, and when I get to London, I will sell them for you; they will fetch lots of money,' 'That may be, captain, but they are not mine; and, captain, suppose that we should have a storm as we go home, what then?' 'Ay, Jack, I never thought of that;

however, let us try and find out the lady to whom the bracelet belongs.'

"The owner was soon discovered, and the lost property was safely restored. John Reynolds received from the lady, as a reward of his honesty, the sum of one hundred and seventy-five dollars, and this, under the captain's advice, was laid out in skins and hides; and when John left his good ship at the end of his voyage, he had, buttoned up snugly in his pocket, the sum of four hundred dollars.

"Thus enriched, and with a heart bounding with happiness, he set off as fast as possible to his native village, and very soon he found himself at the wicket gate of the well-known cottage. But here, what a scene presented itself! The narrow pathway to the cottage door was all covered with grass and weeds; the windows were all closed; then there was an appearance of desolation all around; and burning grief soon withered all John's hopes. He felt sure that his dear mother was dead. He stood before the desolate cottage, and gazed upon it; he could not weep, nor speak. Alas! how cutting, how grievous his disappointment!

"Just at this moment a woman came out of a neighbouring cottage. 'Is that you, John?' John did not reply. The woman instantly saw what was passing in his mind. 'Your mother is not dead, John.' 'Is not she, is not she?' and the big tears flowed plentifully. Where is she?' 'She's in the Union workhouse.' 'Is that all?' said John, and he brushed the tears away, and with a throbbing bosom, set off for the Union house. There he knocked at the door in fine style; and the master came running out, think-

ing that it was the chairman of the board, or some great man on important, and pressing business. 'What do you want?' said the master, in a gruff, disappointed voice. 'I want my mother.' 'Your mother! Who is your mother?' 'Mary Reynolds.' 'What do you want with your mother?' 'Support her, to be sure.' 'You support her! that is very likely.' 'I am a merchant,' said John. 'I have got lots of money, and I will have my mother.' 'You must get an order from a magistrate first.' 'Order! do not talk to me about orders; I must—I will have my mother.'"

And John succeeded. He carried off his mother in triumph, rejoicing in the prospect of being able to minister to her comfort. We do not wonder at her saying, "My John is the best John in the world." She concluded her touching and true story by affirming, "*All this, sir, was through the Bible.*" Yes, it was the blessed Word of God which had changed his heart, and taught him to fear the Lord. "The entrance of thy words giveth light—it giveth understanding to the simple." It was this that made him an honest boy, and a dutiful and affectionate son.

Now observe—1. This boy loved his mother, and wanted to provide for her. God had been pleased to take away his father, and that his mother might not be in want, he would do what he could for her support. This was just acting out the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." It was the fear of the Lord that taught him to obey this commandment, for he who fears the Lord will try to keep them all, not one of them, but *every* one of them.

2. This little boy loved the Bible. You read that when he left his mother's house to go to sea, he carried his Bible in his pocket. There are many grown up people, and many boys and girls too, who will never think of their Bibles but on the Sabbath morning, when they may be going to church, and then they will take them to church with them, more for the sake of decency than anything else. Such persons cannot be said to love the Bible. If you love anything, you will like often to look at it, and have it in your hands—and so if you love the Bible, you will delight to have it in your hands, to be reading it, and praying that God would open your eyes to see and understand, and your hearts to feel the things that are written therein. For the Bible is the book of God. It is the best of books. It tells you the will of God, and the character of God, and what He has done for guilty sinners on the earth. It tells you of the love of Jesus Christ and what He suffered for you, and how anxious He is to save you, and make you happy. And, therefore, if you love God in your hearts, you will love to converse with Him in the Bible, and know what He would have you to do. This little boy betook himself to his Bible, and read it when the storm was raging and the ship was in danger. And so in danger, in trial, in temptation, in sickness, and in death, at all times if you are taught the fear of the Lord, you will delight in the Bible, and ask counsel and direction from it. "He that followeth Me," saith Christ, "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

3. This little boy had gone to the Sabbath school, and no doubt attended church regularly, and through the grace of God, he received a saving benefit. He

had got a reward for his good conduct at the school. This shewed that he had been diligent and attentive, and well-behaved when there. And so, if you love the Lord, and fear the Lord, you will be like him. You will delight to go there also, and not only be grateful to your kind teachers, but you will listen to their instructions with the earnest prayer that God would bless them to you. And it may be, that like this little boy, you will receive a lasting benefit for time and for eternity.

4. This boy was a praying boy. He feared the Lord, and prayed to Him, knowing that He alone could keep him in safety in the storm. And he was at peace and happy when all the rest were afraid. If you were out at sea in a storm, I suppose you would be very much frightened when you looked out upon the foaming waves, and the raging sea, whilst the ship was heaving up and down and rolling about, as if it would be swallowed up every moment in the deep. I am sure that sinners, such as do not serve God, would be afraid. But this boy was not afraid. He took his Bible and read it. He prayed to God, and God heard his prayer for himself, and for the others, and saved the ship, and all who were in it. So if you pray to God, and delight in prayer, He will keep you from all evil. He will defend you from danger, and bring you in safety to heaven at last.

5. This little boy feared God in his conduct. Some boys and girls if they had found anything lying in the street, would have called it their own and put themselves to no trouble to find out to whom it belonged. But it was not so with this boy. He might have kept the bracelet, which was of great value; and had he

taken the captain's advice, he would have done so. But he feared the Lord, and though nobody might have found him out, he remembered that God saw it, and knew it, and therefore he could not be at peace in keeping what was not his own. And so, if you fear the Lord, you will remember that He sees and knows and hears all that you think, and do, and speak, and accordingly you will endeavour, by night and by day, in the darkness as well as in the light, at all times to obey the will of God. "Thou, God, seest me." Never forget that, wherever you are, or wherever you go. Fear the Lord, depart from evil and do good. So will God be to you a sun and a shield continually.

You cannot begin too soon to fear the Lord. You remember that in the parable of the father and his two sons, God is represented as saying to each one of us, "Son, go work *to-day* in my vineyard." To-day, not to-morrow. *Now* is the accepted time. Begin *now* in early life to seek, and serve, and fear the Lord. Most of those who have been known as eminent Christians in after life, gave their hearts to the Lord in the days of their youth. You have many examples of this in Scripture too. Obadiah says of himself, "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth." Samuel when a child ministered to the Lord. Timothy from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, which made him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ. If you are like them, God will bless you, and make you useful in the days to come.

You have no security against the stroke of death at any time. Have you not seen during the past year, funerals passing along the streets, of boys and girls as

young as any of you? Which of you can say that you will be spared to the end of this year? Oh! be earnest in prayer for the Holy Spirit to dwell in your hearts, to teach you the fear of the Lord. And then, whether you live, or whether you die, you will be the Lord's.

Consider how your time is fleeing away. You are all this day a year older than you were on the first day of last year. And whether you have been doing good or doing evil during the past year, you cannot recall it. It has gone up to God, to witness either for you, or against you. How have you spent it? What had been your great anxiety? Has it been to love God more, and serve Him more faithfully? or have you been altogether careless about the things of salvation?

If by your own carelessness you have lost anything on which your hearts were set, you blame yourselves for it—you feel that it is all your own fault. And if you misspend your time, and neglect your opportunities, you will accuse yourselves forever, as the cause of your own ruin. Be wise then in your early life. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him whilst He is near. Be careful to redeem the present time, for it will never return.

A child, beside a running stream
  Sat carelessly at play—
Her hands were filled with pretty flowers
  Which made her young heart gay.
She gazed upon them with delight
They were so beautiful and bright.

And ever and anon a flower
  Into the stream she cast,
Then clapped her hands, and smiled to see
  How swift it glided past.
And thus she threw them one by one,
Till all her pretty flowers were gone.

Then when she found no more were left,
  The little maiden wept,
And wished, but wished in vain, that she
  Her pretty flowers had kept.
The stream refused to hear her cry—
"Give back my flowers!"—it glided by.

And yet again her little plaint
  Fell sadly on my ear;
It pained me much to see her grief,
  Her useless cry to hear;
For only echo caught the strain,
"Give back my pretty flowers again!"

And thus have children oft the loss
  Of golden hours to mourn—
The opportunities they lose
  Will never more return.
Dear little ones! seek Christ to-day,
For days of grace soon pass away.

The stream of time is flowing past,
  Oh! see that you improve
The precious season you enjoy,
  To serve the God of love;
Else soon your bitter cry must be,
"Give back, give back, my flowers to me!"

Your very affectionate pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1867.*

SEEKING GOD EARLY;

OR,

THE BEST CHOICE OF THE YOUNG.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

We have now, in the good providence of God, been permitted to see the beginning of another year. And, as I have been in the habit of doing, I desire to put a short letter or address into your hands this day, with the earnest prayer that when you read it, it may be with the Lord's blessing, and therefore with benefit to all of you.

I might address you about many things that would be profitable. I might speak to you about improving your time in gaining useful knowledge and information, to fit you for your place in life, if God spare you. I might tell you to take advantage of all the opportunities which you have for this end. I might write to you about obedience and dutifulness to your parents. I might exhort you to be truthful in all things, to be honest in all your dealings with others, to be kind and gentle, and to do good to all as you have the means and the power. But there is one thing over and above all, which I wish to urge upon you, and that is, to see that you are learning to re-

member your Creator in the days of your youth, because, if you are seeking and serving God in the way of his own appointment, through Jesus Christ his Son, this will enable you, and *this alone* will enable you to do everything else that is well and pleasing in his sight—*this; and this alone*, will make you grow in wisdom, and in favour with God and man. My subject, therefore, will be :—

"Early will I seek Thee."—Psalm lxiii. 1.

You know who wrote these words; it was David the King of Israel. He wrote most of those beautiful psalms, which are in the Bible, which good people in every age have loved, and which have given them so much instruction and comfort. When David was a little boy, like any of you, he sought God, and loved and served Him. God had loved him, and when He wanted to set up a king over Israel, to what house do you think that God went to choose a king? You might suppose that He would have gone to some of the great people of the country, those who had large possessions—wealthy and powerful, and taken a king from among them. But God does not take these things into account in carrying out his purposes. You remember a verse in the Bible, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." He did not, therefore, go to the families of the rich and the powerful, and choose a king from among them. But He sent his prophet to the House of David's father, and though David was the youngest son in the family, and was employed in feeding the flocks of his father, yet the prophet sent for him from the fields, and by

God's appointment anointed him king. You will be wondering perhaps why God chose him rather than any of his brothers. We cannot tell the reason. He giveth account of his doings unto none. He chooseth whomsoever He will, of his own good pleasure. But this we do know, that David loved God, and sought to please Him and do his will. God always delights in and honours those who love Him and keep his commandments, whether they are old or young, whether they are rich or poor. And if you would wish to enjoy God's favour, if you would have God for your God, if you would be truly happy, you cannot be so except you seek and find God. "Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

There are many things in this world that are considered valuable, and for which people will expose themselves to hardships and difficulties, and trials. For example, some will go to far-off places across the ocean to seek gold. When gold mines are discovered in any place, many will flock to them in search of treasure. Just now, in the eastern parts of this Province, they say they have found gold in the rocks, and some are in great excitement about it, and prepared to dig for this gold as for hidden treasure. But there is something far better than all the gold in the world, and that is, to seek God. "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Why is it so much better to seek and find God?

1. Nobody can take Him away from you. I have read that a Mexican man dug up a gold nugget worth

three hundred dollars. An Indian digger snatched it from him, hid it in his bosom, and took to his heels. The Mexican drew his knife, ran after him, caught him, stabbed him, and leaving him half-dead, went off with the gold. That night, the Indian's brother murdered the Mexican, and stole the nugget. He soon lost it in a drunken brawl. It was picked up by a white man, who went and locked it up in an iron safe at Sacramento. The safe was robbed. The nugget was next seen at a gaming table, and bought by a jeweller. The jeweller put it in his shop window. A thief stole it, and sold it to an assay office, whence it came into the possession of its present owners. The sad history of this nugget shews how men prize gold. That nugget was terribly dear, for it cost two murders, and four robberies. And then how uncertain is the possession of it! But if you seek and find God, no one can rob you of that portion. Neither can fire burn it, nor can water drown it Bad times cannot damage its value, nor can bad partners gamble it away. You may sail round the world and not leave it behind. You may be shipwrecked and not lose it. You may be put in prison, and carry it with you. It is not too rich for a cottage, nor too poor for a palace. Sickness does not cheapen the worth of it, or health add to it. Nothing robs it of its value. Times and seasons, which alter everything else, make no alteration in this. *It ever endures.*

2. To seek and find God is to have a treasure *far more profitable than all else.* People ask about anything in this world, "Does it pay?" Now does the Bible say that it is *profitable* to seek God? Certainly. It distinctly tells us that "Godliness is profitable unto

all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It says, that in keeping God's commandments, there is a great reward. Gold may buy multitudes of things, but it cannot procure spiritual blessings. Can it buy the pardon of sin? Can it get you peace and happiness? Can it secure to you room in heaven? No, gold cannot purchase these. And they are the very things you want most. I remember a well-known man who had acquired large property, and was called the richest man in the country. "I wish," he said, "I could go back to be a poor boy, and make it all over again." The possession of it did not make him happy. *It did not satisfy.*

You recollect the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man had everything which money could buy —houses and lands, and plenty of all kinds. These took up his attention, so that he neglected his soul; he laid up nothing for the world to come. A poor creature was laid at his gate, who begged for the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. He was both sick and poor, and had none of the comforts which gold can buy. Some pitied him, and some may have scorned him, as they hurried past. But how many, on looking up to the rich man's house, envied *him.* The two died, and then what a change in their condition! In the other world, the rich man was poor, and more than poor. The poor man was rich in heaven. Why? Because, while on earth, he sought, and, to his everlasting happiness, found God. The rich man was not shut out of heaven *on account* of his riches, nor was the poor man welcomed *on account* of his poverty—it is not our situation in life here which determines our situation hereafter, but it is our having or not the pearl of great

price, the true riches, the current coin of heaven, which rewards its possessor with everlasting peace and joy. Therefore let yours be the determination of David, this day and onwards, "Early will I seek thee."

I. I shall try to tell you why you should seek God. You should do this:—

1. Because He hath created you. One of the first questions which little children are taught is, "Who made you?" You know the answer; you would reply "God." But have you ever seriously thought of this, or do you give the answer just because you have been taught by your parents or teachers to say so? If you made anything yourselves, would you not call it your own property, and claim it as what you had a right to? I am sure you would. So if God has made you, and given you life, does He not claim you as his own, and should you not seek Him as God your Creator, whom you are bound to love and obey? He made everything for his glory. And you know that man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. But if you do not seek God, and try to learn from your Bible the way in which you are to please Him, you are not answering the great end of your being, and He who made you will have no mercy upon you.

2. You should seek God, because He is your daily Preserver—because He sustains you continually. You are still in the land of the living, whilst many who seemed as strong and healthy, and were as young as you, have been smitten by the stroke of death, and carried away in coffins, and laid in the silent churchyard. During the last year I have seen several young infants thus seized by the grasp of death. One engag-

ing little girl of eight years of age, and a promising boy of fifteen years, were very suddenly summoned away. They both regularly attended the Sabbath school, and there is reason to believe that they knew and loved Jesus Christ. Why are you kept in life, whilst others, as likely to live as you, have been taken away? Is it not that you might seek God, and serve Him more than you have ever done? Neither you, nor I, nor any one deserves to be spared. You go into a garden at the time of fruit, you see some trees loaded with fruit, and bringing forth abundantly. You see others withered and bare, or, if they have leaves, without any fruit upon them. You would say, these trees are of no use; they should be cut down. So might God say of many, who are not bearing good fruit, who are not serving God, but rather sin, and the world—cut them down, they cumber the ground! But Christ prays for you, that you may be spared for some time, to see whether you will repent and believe, and obey Him. If not, then you shall be cut down. Oh! what cause of thankfulness have you to Jesus, the great Intercessor, that you are still alive; and should you not resolve with David, "Early will I seek thee"?

3. You should seek God, because of what He hath done, in order to redeem you from hell, and raise you up to heaven. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And Jesus, the Son of God, loved you so much, that though He was infinitely happy, and glorious in heaven, yet He came down from heaven and became a man, and lived in poverty, and shame, and persecution, and then died a painful death upon the cross, that He

might deliver you from Satan, and make you happy in his presence. You will remember that, when David was a shepherd, there came a lion out of the woods, and seized one of the poor innocent lambs of the flock, and carried it away. But David boldly followed the lion, and attacked him, and slew him, and delivered the lamb out of his mouth. You will say that David's conduct was very generous and kind. Jesus, however, did something far more wonderful than this. He not only went into the way of danger, but He actually laid down his life for you. "I am the good shepherd," He says; "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." If you were in great danger at any time, would you not very much love the person who risked his own life, or who lost it, in attempting to save you from destruction? A house in a village caught fire in the night, and was burnt down. The family who lived in the house were alarmed, but most of them were got safely out, when the father remembered that his dear child was in bed upstairs in the house that was burning. This was a painful thought. He could not bear to think that the infant should be burnt to death. Yet it was dangerous for anyone to go into the house, because it was on fire; and he knew that if he went up into the house he might be burnt to death himself. However, he loved his child so much, that he determined, if he could, to save her life. So he ventured, and ran upstairs through the fire and smoke. He searched about for his dear child, but she was not to be found. Some other one had taken care of her and carried her out safe. But how shall the good man get out of the house himself? He went back to the top of the stairs, but now the fire raged

violently. The stairs were burnt, and had tumbled down, and there was no way for him to get out. You will be sorry to hear that this kind, tender-hearted father was burnt to death.

Now, must not this father have loved his child very much, before he would have rushed into the flames and lost his own life in order to secure hers? And surely this child must have had a very strong affection for so very kind a father during all her life. But Jesus has done far more for you than any earthly parent could do. For though He was the maker of all things, yet He descended from heaven, and endured for you the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross. And though He has gone back to heaven, and reigns on a glorious throne, yet He has the same heart still, and is as much concerned for your happiness. And there is not a boy or girl among you whom Jesus does not want to come to Him. He is now looking down upon each of you, and saying—Will you not love Me, and take Me as your Saviour, and give your heart to Me that I may introduce you to my Father, and that you may see his face, as your Father and Almighty Friend? Now, what is your reply? Are any of you saying "No; I will not give my heart to Christ—it would take me away from sin, from evil companions, from many pleasures and amusements. I would rather continue in sin." If any of you speak thus, and act thus, your conduct will be very ungrateful to Him; very foolish and dangerous for yourselves. Consider what will then become of you at last. You will be put on the left hand of the Judge, and He will say to you, "Depart from Me, I know you not." I am sure none of you would like to receive this sentence.

Oh! then, seek God through Jesus Christ, pray that you may be reconciled to the Father through Him. He is willing to do this for you, and then yours will be the joyful invitation, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

II. There are very great and important blessings which flow from seeking God.

1. You will receive the forgiveness of all your sins —you will be at peace with God. By nature, all have corrupt, wicked hearts—all have done many sinful things. What does the Bible say about this? "We go astray as soon as we are born, speaking lies." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." There is no one who can say, I have never sinned against God. Have you not spoken your own words, and thought your own thoughts, and done your own works, on God's holy day? Have you not often done things which you knew to be wrong? "Your own hearts do condemn you, and God is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things."

Now what do you deserve on account of your sins? You know that "Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come." This must be the portion of all whose sins are unpardoned, and is it not a dreadful portion? How are you to be saved from it? It is by believing in Jesus—seeking and returning to God by Him. So long as your sins are unforgiven, you cannot be at peace with God. Nothing can take away sin but Christ's blood. And it is our comfort to know that

the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. He who is washed therein has no ground of controversy between God and Him. All guilt is removed. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ." I once read of a remarkable thought of a dumb boy of some eight or ten years of age. He was called "Poor Jack," and appeared to be destitute of all animation and intelligence. A Christian lady took up the case of this boy, and resolved to devote herself to the noble work of instructing him. It was difficult work, but after a time, the boy's mind broke its prison, and looked around on every object as though never before beheld. By a gradual and interesting process, he was led into the recognition of a Supreme Being, and into the reception of the Gospel. As his mental faculties developed, he became animated and happy, and would come to his teacher every morning with a budget of new thoughts. Some of these were expressed in a way at once beautiful and original—such as the idea of the lightning, that it was produced by a sudden opening and shutting of God's eye—and the rainbow, that it was the reflection of God's smile.

The most remarkable of these conceptions was perhaps the following. He said that when he had lain a good while in the grave, God would call aloud, "Jack," and he would start and say, "Yes, me Jack." Then he would rise and see multitudes standing together, and God sitting on a cloud, with a very large book in his hand—he called it "Bible-book,"—and would beckon him to stand before him, while He opened the book, and looked at the top of the page, till he came to the name of John B—.

In that page, he said, God had written all his bads,

all the sins he had ever committed, and the page was full. So God would look and strive to read it, and hold it to the sun for light, but it was all "No, no, nothing, none;" for when he had first given his heart to Jesus Christ, He had taken the book out of God's hand and found that page, and pulling from his palm something which filled up the hole made by the nail, had allowed the wound to bleed, and passed his hand down the page, so that God could see none of Jack's bads, only Jesus Christ's blood. Nothing being thus found against him, God would shut the book, and then he would remain standing before Him till the Lord Jesus came, and saying to God "My Jack," would put his arms around him and bid him stand with the angels till the rest were judged.

And is it not written, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." "I, even I, am He, who blotteth out thy transgressions."

During his last illness he frequently recurred to this idea, and would say to his friends with a look of infinite satisfaction, "Good red hand." His view of Christ's all-sufficiency was realizing, and it was quite evident that the Gospel was his sole and solid support.

2. Another blessing which God will give to them who truly seek Him is a new heart, holiness within, and thus a fitness for his service here, and for the enjoyment of Himself in heaven. When your sins are washed away in the fountain of Christ's blood, He gives you at the same time a spotless robe of righteousness to cover you, and thus to enable you to stand accepted in the presence of God. But something more is needed—you must be made clean and holy in

your hearts. Remember what the Lord said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." God is a holy God, heaven is a holy place, and nothing that defileth shall enter into his presence. Now you do not naturally love holy things—you choose evil rather than good, and why? Because your hearts are by nature deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. You cannot make them good. You cannot keep them good. God alone can do it by his Spirit. And this is his promise to them that seek Him. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

There are many who hope to get to heaven who will be disappointed. They do not possess the state of heart which would fit them to be happy there, even if they could be admitted. A deaf man can have no pleasure in music—he does not hear it. A blind man can derive no pleasure from pictures—he does not see them. These persons cannot be gratified, because they have not the faculty to derive pleasure from such things. So a bad man, a bad boy or girl, could find no pleasure in heaven. When Uzziah, the King of Judah, became a leper in the temple for his profanity, he was not only thrust out, but he himself hastened to go out, so unfit did he feel himself to be for that holy place, as smitten with the leprosy. In

like manner, whosoever is unhealed of the leprosy of sin has no fitness for the holiness of heaven. If you would reach that blessed place at last, you must be prepared for it by a life of faith in the Son of God—a life of obedience to the Word of God; you must be taught by his Holy Spirit to love what is good, to hate what is evil, and to struggle against your pride and selfishness, and self-will, and vanity. Let, then, your daily prayer be, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Thus will you be enabled to serve God in faith and love, and prepared at length to dwell with Him for evermore.

3. And this brings me to notice another blessing which flows from seeking God, viz.:—Eternal life in the Kingdom above. "Blessed is the man that seeketh me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life," spiritual life here, and everlasting life beyond the grave. You know that your continuance upon the earth is very uncertain. Death will soon snatch us away, whether we are ready or not. And hence Jesus says to all of you, "Be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." It was on a lovely summer day that a lively girl stood in a half-opened window, full of joy and hope. Her eyes looked bright, and a smile played on her lips. "I am going home," she said; "I shall see my dear father and mother, and my little brothers and sisters. How happy we shall all be together! I am going home. I fancy I can see my father's house, half-hid among the trees, and hear the birds singing sweet songs. I wish I could fly like them, for then I would soon be at home."

It was a calm evening in autumn, and the rays of the setting sun shone into the sick-chamber. On a low couch lay a pale and dying girl. The bloom of her cheek and the brightness of her eye had faded away. Who could fancy her to be the same girl who rejoiced at the thought of going home? Pain and sickness had brought her low; yet there was an expression of peacefulness on her face that shewed happiness within. She was calm, for she was one of the lambs of Christ's flock.

"I am going home," she gently said. "I am going to my Saviour, to be with Him forever. In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Life, indeed, has many attractions, but I can leave them all, for perfect happiness will soon be mine. I am going home. In my Father's house are many mansions. There will be no sin, no grief there. I shall sing the new song, and tune the golden harp to the praise of my Redeemer. Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest."

What a blessed thing, if you could, each of you, through divine grace, look up to heaven and say, "That is my home, and God is my Father. I am striving to seek Him day by day. I am striving to do his will in everything, in the strength which his Spirit gives me, that so I may be with Him in the enjoyment of his presence forever."

III. Let me now speak to you about the time when you are to seek God, "*Early* will I seek Thee." In the days of your youth, in your early years, you ought to enter on this necessary work. It is of the highest

importance as regards your spiritual welfare. Indeed nothing is of so much consequence to you either in this world or in the next.

If you do not seek and find God through Jesus Christ, you cannot be in a state of safety. God alone is the author and giver of all good. God alone is possessed of all power to protect you, and keep you from evil. God alone can deliver you from the snares and devices of Satan, who wants to make you his forever. Now, if God is not your God and portion—if you have not become his children by faith in Christ, and thus engaged in serving Him from day to day, you have no defence against the evil one, you are an open prey to all that would injure and destroy your souls—you have no shelter from the storms of divine wrath against sin. Of every one who gives his heart to Him, God says, "Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon Me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation."

If you do not seek and find God through Jesus Christ, you cannot be happy. You believe, I am sure, that the Bible speaks the truth. And does it not tell you that "Happiness consisteth not in the abundance of the things which a man possesseth?" Does it not say, "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered?" Does it not declare, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom?" Does not Jesus tell his disciples, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them?" You thus see

that real happiness is connected with true religion. Therefore, to seek God early, is to be early happy. And oh! what cause of thankfulness will you have, if from this time henceforth you are able to say in humble confidence, "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid."

If you speak to any of God's people, any that are striving to serve Him in a right spirit, and to do good to others, they will all urge you to seek God early, as knowing that religion alone can make you truly happy. Your parents, I hope, encourage you to this—at any rate, if they are right-minded, and would be free from the blood of your souls, they will press it upon you from day to day. And I know that your Sabbath school teachers, to whom you are so much indebted, and to whom the church is under such obligations, encourage you also to this duty, and pray for you that you may be enabled to do it. But above all, you have encouragement from Jesus Christ. He says, "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early *shall find* Me." He does not promise that they *may* find Him, but that they *shall* find Him. It is a special promise to the young. *The aged may* find Him. The door is not shut against them. But the young *shall* find, if they seek Him early.

Think of this, and begin now, if you have not already done so, to seek to know and glorify God. You cannot begin too soon to do it. Young as you are, death may come to you at any time. It spares neither old nor young, neither minister nor people, neither teacher nor scholars, when God sends it forth with his commission. During the last year, it was sent not only, as I mentioned already, to some of the

scholars of the Sabbath school, but also to one of the teachers. She was a young lady, who, I believe, loved Jesus Christ and his work. She took a great interest in the Sabbath school, and for several years taught a class in it. But God saw fit to call her away from the Church on earth. His hand was laid upon her in trouble. She was advised to go to Britain for the sake of her health. But after crossing the ocean, and travelling on to her friend's house, to which she intended to go, God said to her, "Come up hither." May the Lord comfort sorrowing friends, and sanctify to both teachers and scholars these successive breaches in our midst!

You know not who may be called away from amongst us during this year which is now beginning. Therefore, neglect prayer no longer—neglect the Word of God no longer—remember that every invitation in that Holy Book is addressed to you, as if you saw and read your own names written there, and by that Book you shall be judged in the last day.

A little girl was working by the light of a candle. It was burnt down almost to the socket. She was plying her needle very fast, and at length she said to herself, "I must be very industrious, for this is the only candle I have, and it is almost gone."

What a lesson there is in the words of this child! Surely we may learn wisdom from them. Life is but a short candle; it is almost gone, and there is none other. How earnestly engaged, then, should you be in every duty of life! Whilst you have the light of life, how careful should you be to seek God, to perform everything enjoined by your heavenly Master! How ought you to use every talent for the glory of God,

and the kingdom of Christ, working the work of Him that sent us, while it is day, because the night cometh in which no man can work!

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

May God by his Spirit teach and enable you all to seek Him early—to make this your early, only choice—is the earnest and sincere prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1868.*

THE BEST KNOWLEDGE.

My Dear Young Friends,—

I am glad to meet you again in these circumstances on the first morning of a new year. God has been pleased in his mercy to preserve us in safety through all the days of the year that is now past. To Him let our hearts be lifted up in thanksgiving. Many younger than any of you who may read this, have been laid in their little coffins, and carried to the graves, from which they will never rise till the morning of the resurrection. But you are all here, the living before God. And I hope the earnest desire of each one of you is that you may seek God more devotedly than ever, and thus be fulfilling the great end of your being.

For this purpose I avail myself of the opportunity, as usual at this season, of addressing you specially, that I may entreat you in the name of Jesus Christ, and for your own peace and happiness, both here and hereafter, to learn wisdom in your early days, and to choose, like Mary, that good part, which will never be taken from you. I know that you have souls as precious as those of people much older than you. I know that one thing is needful for you as well as for them—even the salvation of your souls. I know that

Jesus is just as ready to receive you as He is to receive any others, and that God is willing to make you his children. I read in the Bible that thus only can you be made truly blessed, and therefore I rejoice in being permitted thus to write to you a few words of affectionate counsel and instruction. They shall be founded on that verse which I am sure many of you could repeat,

"And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Tim. iii. 15.

These words were written by Paul to Timothy. Timothy was a young minister of Christ, when this epistle was sent to him. Paul had a great affection for him. He calls him his dearly beloved son; and he entreats him to continue in the things which he had learned, for from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Now, perhaps, some of you would wish to know how it was that he knew the Holy Scriptures from his childhood. You will be wondering whether he had any to teach him when he was a little boy, and who it was that taught him. Yes; Timothy had a teacher. I don't suppose that he had any school to go to, and kind persons, who take an interest in the young, to instruct him, as many of you have. But he had what was of the highest importance to him. His mother was an excellent, godly woman; and so was his grandmother, too; and I believe it was his mother who taught him out of the Scriptures, and who instructed him in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. She knew

Jesus as the Saviour of her own soul. She loved Christ because of what He had done for her, and she was anxious that her child, Timothy, should know and love Jesus also. She felt assured that this would be better for him than all other knowledge—that it would give him greater joy than to possess all the riches of the earth—and perhaps she would take him quietly beside her, and speaking gently and affectionately, would tell him of the love of Jesus Christ, and of all that He had suffered for perishing sinners. She would tell him that Jesus, though He had a glory far above all in heaven, or on earth, and though He had dwelt from all eternity in the bosom of his Father, yet laid it all aside, and came down to this earth, and suffered, and died upon the cross, that He might save the souls of lost and fallen men. She would speak to him about the kindness of Jesus to little children —how He took them in his arms, and blessed them, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." She would entreat him to give his heart to Christ, and I have no doubt she would pray with and for him, that the Holy Spirit would bless her instructions, and touch the heart of her young child, Timothy. God heard her prayers, and Timothy, though a child, began to feel an interest in what his mother taught him. He would then think much about these things. He would ask his mother to tell him more than she had done, and to repeat the same things over and over again, trying to remember them. Thus, his tender heart would be impressed with the story of Jesus' love. And I believe that when Timothy was able to read, he would take the Bible and delight in studying

it; and then he would come to his mother and ask her to explain to him what he could not rightly understand, and he would pray to God to teach him, and make him wise unto salvation. God always hears the prayers of those who really cry unto Him. And when Timothy prayed earnestly, God listened to his prayers, for He loves to hear the petitions of the young. He fulfilled his promise: "I will take away the hard and stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

It was in this way, I think, that Timothy, when a child, knew the Holy Scriptures, and was brought into a saving acquaintance with Jesus Christ. And was it not a great blessing to him that he had such a mother? I do not know if you have mothers who thus take pains to give you the knowledge of Christ, and who pray with you and for you, that you may be taught by the Spirit, and made willing in the day of Christ's power. But this I know, that if they are not anxious about your salvation, they are very guilty, and they should remember that the blood of souls may be required at their hands.

But if you have mothers, or fathers, or teachers who desire to bring you to Christ, and yet you do not care for all that they tell you from God's Word, *you* are very guilty, and will bring death and condemnation upon yourselves, if you refuse to come to Christ, to love and obey Him.

Do not then despise the instructions that your parents or teachers give you from the Bible. You see what a benefit Timothy got by listening to the lessons of his pious mother. Samuel had a good mother, Hannah by name. He was attentive to her instruc-

tions, and you read that he ministered unto the Lord, when a child. David had a godly mother. He profited by her labours for him, so that he could sing, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." I could tell you of many others, who had reason to bless God that He inclined their hearts to hearken to, and receive the counsels of their pious parents.

But I could also tell you of the danger of despising instruction, and forsaking the law of your mother. I once read of a missionary in India, who said that he frequently visited a British soldier, who was under sentence of death for having, when half intoxicated, wantonly shot another man. When he visited the gaol, a number of the other prisoners came and sat down with this man, to listen to a word of exhortation. On one occasion, he spoke to them about the importance of studying the Bible. "Have any of you a Bible?" he inquired. They answered, "No." "Have any of you ever possessed a Bible?" They said nothing At last the murderer broke silence, and amidst sobs and tears confessed that he once had a Bible. "But, Oh!" said he, "I sold it for drink. It was the companion of my youth. I brought it with me from my native land, and have now sold it. Oh! if I had listened to my Bible, I would not have been here.'

I. You should seek to be made wise unto salvation. This is the greatest of all blessings. For—

1st. It secures the forgiveness of all your sins. You are told in the Bible that all are sinners—and there are none of you who have not many sins to answer for to God. You know that you are sinners. Your hearts do condemn you—and if you were to

say that you had not sinned, you make God a liar, and his word is not in you. If any of you care not to profane the Sabbath—if there are any of you who feel in your consciences that you have often said things that were not true—if there are any of you who take God's name in vain—who are disobedient to your parents—who do not love the Word of God, He marks all your sins, and you know that every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come.

It is a fearful thing to be lying under the displeasure of God. When a man comes to feel that he is burdened with a load of guilt which is sufficient to crush him down to hell, when he comes to feel that God is angry with him, he can take no rest in his mind, because of God's anger—he would give anything for relief to his soul. You remember that when God denounced his wrath against Cain, who slew his brother Abel, Cain said that his iniquity, or the punishment of his iniquity, was greater than he could bear. You have read, too, that many of the Jews who crucified Christ, when they had been awakened by the preaching of Peter, and felt their heinous sin, were cut to the heart, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The gaoler, at Phillipi, too, when he saw himself to be a sinner, came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "What must I do to be saved?"

These persons knew that it was a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It was this that made them so deeply concerned. Now every one who has not been made wise unto salvation is exposed to the divine displeasure, whether he feels it or not.

There are many who live in sin all their days under the wrath and curse of God, and who will at last go down to the pit of everlasting burnings. But they who are taught by the Word and Spirit of God—who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, are freed from the punishment of sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." It takes away all the sins of believers, however many or great. There is no condemnation against them. Satan has no power to condemn them.

You have read of the cities of refuge in the land of Canaan—seven cities which God appointed in different parts of the land. When any man had killed another unwittingly, or by mistake, if he fled to any of those cities, he was safe, so long as he remained within the walls of it. The avenger of blood could not enter to hurt him. Even so, Jesus is our city of refuge, and to Him we may flee with all our sins; and if we do so, Satan—the great deceiver and destroyer of souls—cannot touch us. Jesus bears the burden of all our iniquities.

There is no blessing like this,—to have all your sins forgiven, to be freed from the power of Satan, the great enemy. There is nothing, then to separate between God and you. He becomes your Friend and Father in Jesus Christ. You may have done many wicked things—you may have been very guilty—but Jesus will answer the Father for you. He will say, "These are my children, who know my voice, and love Me. I have suffered for them upon the cross; therefore let them go free." A little converted Namacqua girl, when asked if she loved Christ, answered, "Yes, I do, and I desire to love Him more." When asked why she loved Him, since she had never seen Him,

she answered, "He *first* loved me, and died for my sins on the cross, that I might live forever. And why should not I love Him with all my heart?"

2nd. Another reason why you should seek to be made wise unto salvation, is, because it secures to you the favour of God, and all spiritual blessings in this life. You would think it a great honour, if you had the favour of some great person, who loved you, and delighted to do you good; but how much greater an honour is it to have the favour of God? David, who was a king himself, says, "Thy favour is life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life." And why is God's favour so valuable? It is because He is the fountain of all good. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He alone can deliver you from hell. He alone can bless you on this earth, and bring you to eternal life and glory beyond the grave. And are not these the best things that you can have?

There are many who think that if they had great riches and honour, and were surrounded by all earthly comforts which their hearts desire, they would be happy. But these things, even all the things in the world, if you had them, could never give happiness to a man. It is only when he has his sins forgiven, and is reconciled to God, that he can have true peace and joy. And this is the case with all who have been made wise, through the saving knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

You know that a father loves his children, and will delight to bestow upon them all that would be for their good. But many fathers have not the power to

do for their children what they would like, and often they may be mistaken as to what would be for their benefit. God can never be in any mistake as to what would be best for his children, for He is infinite in wisdom; and He can do everything for them, for He has all power. Then his promise stands sure that He will watch over and defend all the members of his family, old and young, that He will make all things work together for their good. If He sends affliction upon you—if He lays you on a sick bed—if He takes away from you your father or your mother, or any of your brothers or sisters—it is because it will be for your good, and you will be able to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." He will give you hearts to love Him, and to serve Him faithfully wherever you are, and wherever you go; and though you may find it hard sometimes to do what is right—what Jesus commands, and what your own consciences tell you to be according to his Word—yet God will strengthen all who look to Him for help. You have many spiritual enemies, but He will protect you against them all, so that they shall have no power to injure you. "Mark that text," said a good old man to his grandson—a little boy, who was reading to him the thirty-second Psalm—"mark that text, 'He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about;' I read it in my youth, and believed it; and now I read it in my old age, and thank God that it is true." "Oh!" he said to the little boy, "it is a blessed thing, in the midst of the joys and the sorrows of the world, to trust in the Lord, and to enjoy his salvation."

3rd. Another reason why you should seek to be made wise unto salvation, is, because it will take away

the fear of death, and secure you an entrance into the kingdom of heaven when you die. You know that, however long any one may live upon the earth, it is appointed unto all men to die, and that after death cometh the judgment. You have all often seen the signs and remembrances of death. Scarcely a day but you see them somewhere, if you have never seen them in your own dwellings. You are going along the street, or you are amusing yourselves in play;—you observe a hearse coming, and stopping at some door; and then, perhaps, other carriages drawn up behind, and a number of people, draped in mourning, gathered around. What is all this for? It is because some one has died in that house, and is to be carried away now in a coffin, amidst the tears and lamentations of friends. Their hearts are grieved by the separation that has taken place; and they will never again in this world behold the face of those whom death has thus cut down.

The grave all must inhabit. It is the narrow house appointed for all living—for the young and for the old, for the rich and for the poor, for the learned and for the unlearned. There the prisoners rest together. There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. The small and the great—all are there. Some are enabled to go down to the grave without fear. They have felt perfectly happy, because they have had Jesus for their Friend. They can sing, with David, in the twenty-third Psalm:

> "Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
> Yet will I fear none ill;
> For Thou art with me; and thy rod
> And staff me comfort still."

I told you before of a young lady—one of your teachers—who, during the year before last, died in the Lord, whilst on a visit to Britain. She had been advised to go for the benefit of her health. But it was the will of God to call her to Himself, leaving behind her the record of a Christian life. Now, during the past year, God has again visited us in the same way, and called away another young lady, who for several years was a devoted teacher in the Sabbath school. She always took a deep interest in it, and in every good work, for she loved Jesus. This was the pervading principle in her heart; and she attained, on her death-bed, such faith and joy in the Lord as few are privileged to have. Her death was loss to her friends, but gain to herself. She had no fear of death. But many are afraid to meet with death, and to go to the grave. Why? Because they have not Jesus as their Friend. They have never gone to Jesus to get their sins forgiven. They have never given their hearts to Him. They feel that God is angry with them, and they fear to go and stand before Him in judgment. May you, my young friends, have Jesus as your Companion and Protector, when you are called to go down to death.

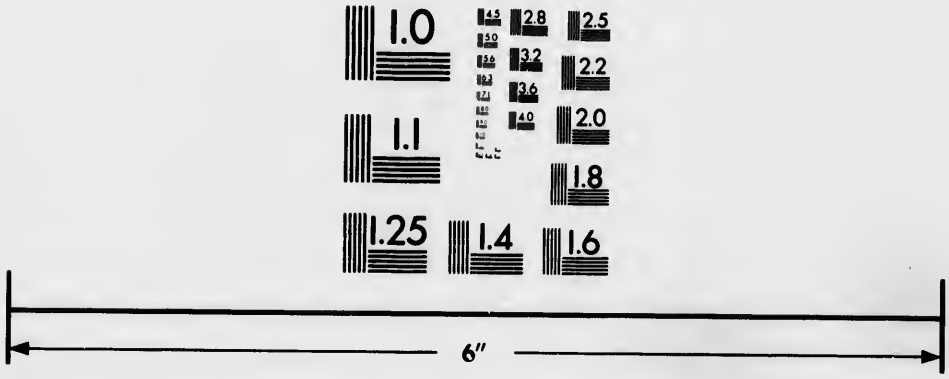
Some little boy or girl reading this, may say to himself,—shall I die? shall I have to go down to the dark and dreary abode? Yes—whenever the messenger is sent to summon you. But you may be thinking, "It will be a long time before he will come to me, I am so young." Look at the Necropolis, or any of our church-yards. You will find little graves there—graves of boys and girls as young as you, and perhaps of some with whom you have spoken, and played, and gone to school. It is not many weeks ago since I was

at the funeral of a little girl, whose name was Lydia. God had been pleased to give her a very weakly body, so that she was often ill. But I hope she knew and trusted in Jesus, as the great Physician of soul and body. She was able to attend the Sabbath school for some time. Her age was only eleven years. She died rather suddenly. And so the messenger may be sent to you at any time, and you must obey, whether you are afraid or not—whether you are prepared or not. I saw, very lately, a fine little boy, of only five years of age, unexpectedly cut down, to the great grief of his parents. He had been running about quite well, and was taken with severe trouble. In three days he was in his grave.

Never forget this: that the young die as well as the old. But if you are looking to Jesus, and seeking to be made partakers of his salvation, you shall have nothing to fear. He once died, and entered the grave, and rose again, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. You are not too young to seek his face—you are not too young to die. And in the grave you will lie till the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world; and then, if you have loved Him, and been saved by Him, He will raise you from your bed, and to take you to the blessedness and glory of heaven for ever. "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

II. How are you to be made wise unto Salvation?

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

It is by knowing the Holy Scriptures, and through faith in Jesus Christ. There is much knowledge in the world, and you may be anxious to gain that. It is right, too, that you should be diligent in acquiring that knowledge which will fit you for the business of life, in whatever sphere God in his providence may place you. But then let me tell you that if you have not the knowledge of salvation, you want that which is of most importance to you—you want that which will carry your souls to heaven when you die. Many a man who has toiled all his days that he might be wise in the learning of this world, and who has been praised as a learned man, would on his death-bed give it all, and everything else he has in the world, for that knowledge which Timothy had when he was a child, and which maketh wise unto salvation.

You know that the Bible is the best of books. There is no book in the world like it. It makes known to us the will of God—all that is necessary for us to know—that we may please God.

It tells us of the creation of all things by God; and last of all, of man in the image of Himself. It tells about the fall of our first parents in the garden—how by eating the forbidden fruit, and thus sinning against God, they brought misery and death upon themselves and their posterity. It tells us what God did to keep up the knowledge of Himself, and of his will, and of his worship upon the earth, by separating the Jews from the rest of the nations; and above all, it tells us about Jesus Christ, who came into the world in the fulness of the time, to suffer and die for sinners, that whosoever believeth in Him may have his sins pardoned, and be taken to heaven when he dies.

This is surely good news; and it is our mercy that we have the Bible in our hands, and thus the means of salvation.

"The Bible is a blessed book,
In love and mercy given;
Sent, by the mercy of our God,
To guide our souls to Heaven."

Whoever loves the Bible, and takes it as his guide, and lives according to its laws, will be made wise unto salvation. By the Holy Spirit applying its truth, it can change your heart, or the heart of any man, or woman, or child, however wicked, and make you delight in doing the will of God. There was an aged chief in South Africa, who, a few years before he died, did not know God who made him. He was found, in his last illness, sitting upon the ground. He was about ninety years of age, and quite blind. When a missionary entered his hut, and told his name, he burst into tears, took hold of his hands, and thanked God for the visit that was paid him. Scraping up some of the dust with his hand, he said: "In a little tmie, I must mingle with this dust, but in my flesh I shall see God. I am now blind. I see not the light of day; but, by the light of faith, I see Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive my soul." What had made the change in this old man's heart? It was the blessing of God on the reading of the Bible. He could not read it himself. It was a little child who read it to him every day. By this means he was lead to believe in Jesus as the Saviour of his soul.

And so, my young friends, ministers and teachers,

and others who take an interest in your welfare, want to lead you to Jesus. I hope many of you have a knowledge of your Bibles. But this knowledge will be of no avail to you, if it does not guide you to give your hearts to Christ. The great message of the Bible is, "Be ye reconciled to God." "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." He is the spiritual ark of safety for sinners, and we enter that ark, when we believe in Him. Believing in Him is just taking and trusting in Him as the only Saviour. You have, perhaps, heard of the boy who fell from a high scaffold, but caught a rope as he was falling, and so hung swinging in the air. He must soon have fallen, and perished. But a kind, strong man ran, and stood under, and cried, "Do not be frightened. Let go the rope, and drop into my arms. I will catch you. Never fear." He believed the man. He dropped into his arms, and was saved. Thus we must fall into the arms of Jesus, by faith; and doing so, we shall never perish.

And do not delay to do this. Look at that boat on the river above the falls. The stream moves slowly —the man might easily row ashore. But the boat goes down the stream and now runs more swiftly. It would take more labour now to reach the bank—still the boat floats down. The water moves more swiftly now, and just below, it sweeps down the rocks, and forms the great falls of Niagara. It would be very hard to bring it to the shore now. But see! it is in the sweep of the fall. The man is alarmed. With all his strength, he pulls with the oar. Oh! will he

be drowned? Ah! the oar breaks. The boat is gone and the cries of the drowning man mingle with the noise of the falls. He is lost!

This is a picture of what we may often see in another way. By delay it becomes hard to you to give your heart to Jesus Christ. He who will not leave sin in his youthful days finds it hard to do so in manhood. In middle age, sin is yet stronger. In old age it is hard, indeed, to call the man away from sin and the world, though, by God's grace, nothing is too hard.

Beware then of delay in this all-important matter. Another year is gone never to return. A new year is begun. But none can tell whether we shall see its close. Therefore, "seek the Lord, while He is to be found, call upon Him whilst He is near." "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

May God, in his infinite love and mercy, give you all a saving knowledge of his truth—a blessed acquaintance with Jesus Christ—a life of holiness on earth, and an eternity of glory in heaven, is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *January 1, 1869.*

GOD'S CALL TO THE YOUNG

TO

ENTER INTO HIS SERVICE.

My Dear Young Friends,—

When Samuel as a young boy ministered unto the Lord, in the days of Eli the High Priest, the Lord one night called to him three separate times by name, "Samuel." He thought it was Eli who spoke, and accordingly he went each time to him. Eli said that he did not call. And when Samuel came the third time, Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. So when the voice was heard again, Samuel answered, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

I hope that all of you will shew the same willing spirit—the same ready obedience to the voice of God. When God calls, every one should reverently hearken and cheerfully obey.

"Let earth and all that live therein
With reverence fear the Lord;
Let all the world's inhabitants
Dread Him with one accord."

To receive and act out the will of God is to secure our happiness here, and eternal life hereafter. To re-

fuse to hearken and obey is to bring upon ourselves unhappiness now, and everlasting death beyond the grave. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against Me, wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate Me love death."

Thus spake Jesus Christ the wisdom of God, and he that keepeth his sayings shall never see death.

I have been accustomed, as this season comes round, to address you in this way, with regard to your best, your highest interests. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to me to do so. And now that we have been mercifully spared to enter upon a new year, and while we render thanks to Him to whom alone praise is due, let us manifest the sincerity of our gratitude by seeking to know and to follow out what God would have us to do. It is not enough to say to a friend who has rescued us from danger or done us some great service, that we are thankful to him for his kindness. The best proof of our true feelings of gratitude is to do what is pleasing to him, what he wants us to do.

God tells us plainly in his Word what He would have us do. And the call of God which I design to make the subject of my present address is that contained in one of the parables of Jesus Christ:

"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."—Matt. xxi. 28.

I. Let me explain some things in this command.

1. It is God who calls you. I need not say that if you knew any boys or girls who disobey the reasonable and lawful commands of a parent, you would look

upon them as very ungrateful and wicked. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." This is the language of the spirit of God, regarding the perverse disobedience of children to parental authority. It shews how abhorrent such conduct is in the sight of the Almighty, and how it will lead to the ruin of such as practise it. The boy that is rebellious in his father's or his mother's house is not the boy that will be obedient to the voice of God. They who hearken to the will of God and seek to do it, will not fail to honour the injunctions of their parents, when these are according to the word of God.

But God's authority is above all. In his hand is the life of everything, and the breath of all mankind. He spake, and it was done. He commanded, and all things stood fast. And by his providential care they continue this day according to his ordinances, for they are all his servants. "Whatsoever pleased the Lord, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places." He made the sun and the moon stand still in the valley of Ajalon. He turned the sea into dry land as a way for his ransomed to pass over. He has power over all creatures. The lions' mouths were shut by Him, so that they sought not to hurt Daniel in their den. The three Hebrew youths, in the furnace heated seven times more than usual, were preserved, so that not a hair of their heads was singed, and the smell of fire came not on their garments. God has power to kill and to make alive, to wound and to heal, to save and to destroy. You are dependent on Him for everything. Without his upholding hand

you could not live for a single day. He is your Maker, your Preserver, and He will finally be your Judge, to assign to each one of you, your everlasting portion. And, therefore, He has the right to demand your obedience, whilst it is your interest to hearken and obey.

Then further, He is the God of love. He saw this world fallen and apostate. He beheld man alienated from Himself, the slave of Satan, ruined by sin, lost and helpless. "He so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, his command is that you believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. There is no love like the love of God in Jesus Christ. It passeth knowledge. The angels desire to look into it. On the ground of what Christ hath done and suffered, He is willing to take you back into his family, however much you may have sinned against Him.

Surely then the call of God should come to each one of you as the call of sovereign authority, and of matchless love. It is our imperative obligation to hear his voice, to honour his truth, to submit to his law. Many a one now alive on the earth has no greater cause of joy then that he was constrained to comply with the call of God. Many a one now in heaven is employed in singing praises to God, and to the Lamb that was slain, for the work of sovereign grace, whereby he was taught and enabled to enter into the service of God, to fight the good fight of faith, to persevere to the end, and finally to overcome every enemy. And on the other hand, many a one in the future world is a witness of the melancholy truth that disobedience of

God is the source of misery in time, and that the wages thereof is eternal death.

2. The vineyard into which God calls us to go is his Church upon the earth. This does not mean any particular church in Canada, or in America, or in Britain, or in any other country, but the Church of the redeemed, the general assembly and Church of the first-born, that are written in heaven. You may form part of a Christian society amongst men, you may belong to a congregation of professed worshippers of God, and yet you may never have belonged to the Church of the living God. The true Church of God is made up of all who have given their hearts to Jesus Christ, and have thus come into the family of God, having Christ as their elder brother, possessed of the same spirit, and transformed into the same image. Now when you do so, you are united to the people of God, wherever they are, you form part of the innumerable company who shall stand at last around the throne arrayed with white robes, and palms in their hands. Judas Iscariot was professedly in the Church as one of Christ's disciples, but he had never joined the company. Simon Magus confessed Christ, and yet he was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Demas was once a fellow-worker with Paul, and professed to belong to Christ, but he forsook Paul, having loved this present world. Many of Jesus' disciples or followers, when He spoke some truths which they did not like, went back and walked no more with Him. Thus it has been in every age. "They went out *from* us," says the apostle John, "because they were not *of us;* for if they had been *of us*, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out from us,

that it might be made manifest that they were not all *of us.*"

Do not then deceive yourselves; you are only in the vineyard of God when you believe in Jesus Christ, and truly yield yourselves up to love and serve Him supremely. Then you become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. "To as many as received Him (*i.e.*, Christ), to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

3. God calls the Church "*My vineyard,*" because it is his own property. "The sea is his, for He made it, and his hands formed the dry land." "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." So the Church is his, because He chose it out from amongst our fallen race, He gave it to Christ to be ransomed by his blood, He called it by his word and spirit. He has determined to keep it as his special possession upon the earth. "A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it. I do water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I do keep it night and day."

You remember how Jesus says in the 15th chapter of John's Gospel, "I am the true vine, and *my Father is the husbandman.*" The husbandman owns the vineyard, and so God owns the Church. The fruit of the vineyard is for the benefit of the husbandman, and thus God has the Church, that it may be to his praise and glory throughout eternity. The redeemed shall all cast their crowns before Him, and when the last stone of the spiritual temple shall be laid, and the whole completed, it will be with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it!"

4. The Church is called God's vineyard, because it

is precious in his sight. Vineyards in Judea and in the East were very much esteemed. Great care was bestowed upon them. Their owners placed a high value upon them.

God's vineyard is very precious to Him. It is so, *because of the price that was paid for it.* We cannot estimate the greatness of the price, for He by whose blood the Church was ransomed is the infinite God, and who can measure infinity? I remember reading of a deaf and dumb boy who was taught by a kind friend. This kind lady could speak to him only by signs and pictures. She drew upon a paper a picture of a great crowd of people, old and young, standing near a wide, deep pit, out of which smoke and flames were issuing. She then drew the picture of One who came down from heaven; and this was to represent Jesus, the Son of God. She explained to the boy that when this person came, He asked God not to throw the people into the pit, if He Himself agreed to be nailed to a cross for them, and how as soon as He bowed his head on the cross and died, the pit was shut up and the people saved! The deaf and dumb boy wondered much, but he made signs that the person who died upon the cross was but *one*, and the crowd very many. How could God be content to take *one* for *so many?* The lady took off her gold ring, and then put beside it a heap of withered leaves of flowers, and asked the boy which was the best—the *one* gold ring, or the *many, many* dry leaves? The boy clasped his hands with delight, and spelt the word, *One! One!* And then to shew that he knew what was meant, and that Jesus was the *One* who was worth all the rest, he ran and got his letters, and, looking up, spelt the words, *Good,*

good One! How dear then must the Church be to God, when He gave up his Son, the eternal Son, to be made flesh, and to suffer and die for it!

Then the Church is precious to God because it contains all that are good and holy upon the earth. In a certain sense there are none good; only One is good, *i.e.*, God. But we mean by the good and holy, all who are advancing to the perfect holiness of heaven—all who shall be with God forever. It does not matter how great things a man may do on this earth, if he is not one of God's people. These things will not save his soul and bring him to heaven. He may be a great general, or a renowned statesman, or a learned man, or possessed of much wealth; yet he will not be saved for that. God respects no man's person because of any earthly distinction. They who are precious in his sight are such as believe in Jesus Christ, and love Him, and serve Him, and do all the good they can in his spirit, whether they are young or old, rich or poor, high or low. God calls them his jewels—beloved in his sight. He watches over them, guards them continually, bestows upon them all that is good, forgives their sins, gives them new hearts, preserves them from becoming the prey of Satan, and keeps them unto eternal life. "He that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye." Would it not be a great honour and blessing for each of you to belong to the family of God? He sets open the door, and bids you enter in. "I am," says Christ, "I am the door; by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture."

God has always had his Church among men, but before the coming of Jesus Christ, it was for the most part confined to one people; I mean one nation. The

Gospel of Christ broke down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and opened the door for all of every nation, and kindred, and people and tongue. Every one now may enter in, and that without money or price.

The Church of Jesus Christ was at first very small, but thus it is with everything both in the kingdom of nature, and in the kingdom of grace. We were once, all of us, little children, not knowing our right hand from our left, not able to move about, or understand anything; but we have grown up by the goodness of God, and been made able to speak, and to think, and to understand, and discharge the duties to which we are called. You are young, and not so strong in body or mind as you hope to be. If God spares you, however, you will grow up, and, very soon, have to occupy the places which other people now hold, when they have been taken away out of this world. You lift up a little seed, which you can hold between your finger and your thumb, you put it into the ground, and in a few years it will grow up, and become a large tree, under the shadow of which a great many people may sit down and rest. Or look at any of our very large rivers—for example, the Mississippi, of which you have heard, and which runs through almost the whole continent of North America. At first, far away North, it is a very little stream, over which you could leap, but as it goes on, it becomes greater and greater, and other streams and rivers flow into it, so that it grows into a very large river, on which steam-vessels sail for thousands of miles down to the ocean.

Just so. The Church of Jesus Christ was very small at the beginning. He called only twelve Apostles,

And He had very few other followers. When He rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, there were but one hundred and twenty disciples or followers of Christ assembled in Jerusalem, in the large upper room, to pray for the coming of the Holy Ghost to enlighten their minds, to sanctify their hearts, to fit them for their work, and to convert sinners to the Lord. But Jesus Christ said that He would be with his disciples, when they went forth to preach, and you will remember that at the first sermon which Peter preached at Jerusalem, after the ascension of Christ, about three thousand souls were converted. Then they wrought miracles, healing the sick, making the blind to see, and the lame to walk, so that it was plain that the power of the Lord was with them, and thus others were led to embrace the Gospel, and receive Jesus Christ. The chief Priests and Scribes and Pharisees were very angry at this; they hated Jesus Christ, and consequently they hated his people and his cause. They began to oppose and persecute his followers in Jerusalem. They put Stephen to death, because he proclaimed the Gospel, and others were driven away from the city, lest they also should be put to death. Wherever these Christians went, they made known the glad tidings of salvation, and called on those to whom they spoke to come to Christ, and be saved. And though Jews and Gentiles, though kings and rulers did all they could against the Church of Christ, and against those who sought to advance it, making them suffer the loss of all things, and even death itself in multitudes of instances, yet the truth spread by the power of God, and many in different countries became obedient to the faith.

And so for the last eighteen hundred years and more, since Jesus Christ went up to heaven to sit upon his mediatorial throne, and to receive the never-ending praises of the heavenly hosts for his wondrous love in dying to save fallen sinners on the earth, He has been making his Church extend gradually from one place to another, and from one country to another, till now there is scarcely any part of the world where the name of Jesus has not been proclaimed and there are not hearts to love Him and serve Him. Sometimes, in certain countries, thousands have been persecuted to the death for maintaining the truth of Christ—wicked men have tried hard to put down his cause; but, notwithstanding all, it has never ceased to grow, because it is the cause of heaven, and Jesus Christ hath said, "I build My Church upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

And this will go on and increase till the Church shall fill the whole earth. The kingdoms of this world shall all yet become the kingdom of Christ. There are millions now who love the Lord with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and with all their mind—who would suffer anything for Him; and the time is coming, when no man shall require to say to his brother, "Know the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest."

It is a glorious thing to belong to the kingdom of Jesus Christ—that kingdom which is destined to fill the whole earth, and to endure for ever. We rejoice in being the subjects of a great empire on the earth; but what is the honour of being a Briton compared with the honour of being Christians saved by the blood and righteousness of Christ, and made heirs of God—

kings and priests unto God? What are all earthly privileges to the privilege of belonging to Christ? All of us will one day feel this, whatever our lives may have been. Therefore, let us all covet it above everything else. And remember how, for your encouragement, Jesus hath said, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

The Church is thus built up through the instrumentality of its members. God honours them to be fellow-workers with Him in subduing the world to Himself. All true believers should regard themselves as not their own, but his. They should be full of life and energy and devotedness in the work of the Lord. They should form a living, active body, animated by the spirit of Christ, and working for Christ, good soldiers of his striving to bring all into subjection to his government and laws.

II. Now, you may think, my young friends, that you have nothing to do with the work of God, that you are too young and ignorant and feeble to have anything to do with it. But this is a mistake. You remember that when Jesus, just before his crucifixion, had come into the temple at Jerusalem, and the crowd of people were crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David, glory to God in the highest, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," some of the children present joined in the shouts of praise also. The Scribes and Pharisees who heard it were sore displeased, and said to Him, "Hearest thou what they say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?"

Then you can be in no doubt that Jesus invites you and wants you to shew forth his praise, to engage in his work. And in those words which we have quoted, He assures you that He will take your part, and encourage you in all that you do in a right spirit for Him.

1. You have a work to do in your own heart; or rather I should say, you have to give your heart to Jesus, that He may work his own work in it. The heart is by nature "wicked, desperately wicked." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." If we say that we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and make God a liar. There is not a boy or girl who can say in truth, "I have never sinned against God," and if any of you think you can say so, you are very ignorant. If your hearts were right with God, you would always love Him more than any other one, or than anything else in the world; you would always delight to praise Him and to obey Him; you would never indulge a wish to do anything that would be offensive to Him; you would be always dutiful and affectionate to your parents, and kind to every one. But there is not an individual on earth, young or old, who has always done these things as he ought to have done.

Some people will tell you that they have good hearts, though they often do wickedly and commit sin. But if the Spirit of God opens your eyes and lets you see yourselves, you will know that your hearts are very sinful, or as the Bible says, desperately wicked. A minister relates that at one time, when his congregation were in an unusual manner interested in solemn considerations from the Word of God, he was requested to visit a family where a little girl was very sick. He

found her lying in bed very ill, but quite sensible. On seeing him, she burst into tears and said, "Oh! Sir, what must I do?" He asked her what distressed her. She looked earnestly at him and said, "Sin, sin, and this wicked heart of mine." He asked her why she was in trouble. She answered, "Because I am a sinner." "How do you know that you are a sinner?" "Because I do not love God and never did." He asked her again, "Why do you not love God and repent? He says He will pardon you for the sake of Jesus Christ, if you believe in his name." "I know He does, and I know He will forgive me, if I believe and repent, but my heart is so hard and wicked." "But, Elizabeth," the minister said, "What do you mean by saying that your heart is hard and wicked?" "Why, I am wicked, and perverse, and I have loved to be so, and have not loved God. Oh! what will I do?" He told her to plead this promise with God: "A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you." She did so with earnestness till she obtained it, and then she served the Lord till the day of her death. What she felt herself to be, you all are by nature—your hearts are wicked, and must be changed, if ever you would work for God, and get to heaven. You remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus about that: "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

You may be saying to yourself, "How am I to get a new heart?" God promises it. He alone can give it. No one but God can take away the hard and stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. Your parents may do much for you—they may try to instruct you, and pray with and for you. Your

teachers and ministers may try to give you the knowledge of the Bible, but they cannot make your heart good. It is the work of the Spirit of God. Do you then say, "Will God work this change in me?" Yes, God has said He will do it in every one that will but seek it from Him. If an earthly parent gives good gifts unto his children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

In order then to get new hearts—hearts to love and obey God supremely, your first work is to believe in Jesus Christ, to pray for the Holy Ghost, and then you will keep his commandments, you will be transformed after his image, you will love what God loves, and you will hate what He hates, you will be at one with God in will, in affection, in spirit, in aim.

2. Now when you have entered into the vineyard, and got new hearts, you will have work to do for God in your families. There is your mother who bore you, who nursed you in her arms, who bent over your cradle in tenderest love, and watched you with the greatest care, as you grew up. There is your father, daily toiling for your support and comfort. These are to be loved and reverenced and obeyed. "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." There are your brothers and sisters to be loved and kindly treated; you are to be patterns of love and kindness; you are to try to be sources of light and peace and joy in your respective homes. You are so to act in your dwellings and wherever you go as to constrain people to feel and say that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him.

3. You have work to do for Christ in regard to others. He went about doing good, and so ought you to be always doing good. You are to be true and honest and good, avoiding falsehood, and deceit, and all evil ways. But you are also to try to be kind to all whom you can help, to comfort the distressed, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to bring careless boys and girls to think about their souls, to guide them to the way of life, to try to lead them to Jesus. The more you thus act the happier you will be.

4. You have missionary work to do for God. "Go work to-day in my vineyard."

There are many in darkness throughout the earth. They do not worship God. They do not know Jesus. They bow down to stocks and stones. They are cruel, debased, miserable. We hear about them from the missionaries who have gone to the Indians in the far West and to Africa, and to the East Indies and China, and the South Sea Islands. Now nothing will really benefit them but the Gospel.

You may think that you can do little good. And even your parents generally think the same. You can be kind and affectionate. All will admit this. But few think you are old enough to do anything for the salvation of the world. But this is a great error.

Can you do as much as an insect? "Yes," you would all exclaim, "and more too." Let us see. Suppose that you and I were all sailing in a vessel in the South Seas. We are carried along beautifully on the surface of the ocean. But what is that yonder, rising above the waves, like a painted high land? Now it appears like a rock of silver; and then it assumes various colours, changing in the rays of the sun—red,

golden, silver colours, are all blended together. Nearer and nearer we come to this attractive object, when lo! we discover that it is the splendid work of insects so small that we cannot see them with the naked eye. Yes, the little coral insect threw up these many-coloured reefs, a little at a time, till we have this magnificent sight. And just over there, beyond that line of reefs, you see that little island covered with tall palm trees, so green and slender. The foundation of that island, now a fit habitation for man, was laid by that same coral insect. Myriads of them worked away, year after year, until a huge bed of coral became the foundation of that island. Then the soil accumulated, and the trees grew, as they are now seen.

This is what some insects do towards making this world a habitation for mankind. They make islands. God did not create them to be useless in this world, where so much is to be done. Their work amounts to something.

Would you not be useful as this little coral insect? You cannot build islands. But you can help the people who live in them, and those who dwell in other parts of the earth. You may not be able to give much—any of you; but many littles make a large sum. And what you do give, give cheerfully as to the Lord. And then a blessing will go with it.

I rejoice that you take pleasure in giving regularly at the Sabbath school for missionary purposes. And I trust that as you grow up, you will continue to manifest the same spirit, and to take a deeper interest in the work of the Lord at home and abroad.

Resolve to engage earnestly in it. Give your hearts to Christ, that they may be made good. Then endea-

vour to get all the good, and do all the good you can, by the grace of God, and He will bless you abundantly.

5. God's call to you is immediate. He does not say, Go at some future time, go next year, or next month, but go, work *to-day* in my vineyard.

Young people are sometimes ashamed or afraid to have it known that they are thinking seriously on religious subjects, even when they really feel their need of instruction as to the way. But this is a dangerous fear. Banish it immediately. If God has awakened your minds—If He has made you anxious about your souls and divine things, go and speak to your pious parents, or to your minister, or to your Sabbath school teacher, or to some pious friend. They will be ready to sympathize with you, to instruct you, to pray with you. And above all, go to Jesus Christ; tell Him all you feel and all you need, and He will not reject you; He will speak kindly to you, and give you all you require. Go *now*, seek the favour and forgiveness of God. *Now* is the accepted time. *Now* is the day of salvation.

Don't delay. You have seen a bright and sunny morning in summer suddenly changed into darkness and clouds, and instead of long hours of sunshine and joy, the sun at mid-day disappears among the dark clouds and is gone. Many a pleasant excursion has been hindered, or the merry play suddenly ended, and boys and girls sent hurriedly in-doors for shelter from the storm and rain. And so, many bright mornings of promise are thus overcast otherwise than in the beautiful world around. Health and beauty and strength and youth may soon go down before the approach of death.

Let me then urge you to give yourself to the Lord at once. I know that the natural heart is very ready to say, I will do it at some future time; I will give my heart to Jesus at another period; I know that it is best to be religious, and that the only way of salvation is in Christ, but I would rather delay thinking about it for a while. Oh! how foolish! how sinful! You cannot tell whether you shall have the opportunity of seeking Christ. God says, Go work *to-day* in my vineyard. The morrow is not yet ours.

May God by his Holy Spirit incline and enable you to comply with his call, that you may be workers, all of you, in his vineyard, is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1870.*

"I WILL ARISE AND GO TO MY FATHER."

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

I have the privilege of again wishing you all "A Happy New Year." God has been pleased in mercy to spare us whilst others have been removed. To Him our thanks are due. And as He is saying to each of us, specially at this season, "Seek ye my face," let our hearts reply, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

I am glad to be permitted to put this address into your hands. God the Father is waiting to receive each one of you, and give you a place in his family, would you but return to Him. I hope there are among you not a few who rejoice to know, and love and serve God as your Father. May his Holy Spirit, the author of all grace, make you all willing to give your hearts to God, that you may be truly his children by faith in Jesus Christ. This is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1871.*

"I will arise and go to my Father."—Luke xv. 18.

A little boy, attending one of the mission schools in India, was obliged to go with his parents to a village not far from his home. He took with him his lesson-books and a few tracts. These he read to the natives who came to see him, and who were idolaters.

One day he went out in the heat of the sun to the river side. There he complained of his head. He was immediately brought home and laid on a bed from which he never rose. For two days he was insensible, and said nothing. On the third day he asked for his books. His parents refused to give them to him. They thought that this sickness was inflicted by one of their gods, because he had been taught out of these books. He was disappointed. But he did not remain silent. He spoke, and that very solemnly: "You must not worship idols," he said to his surrounding friends; "The worship of idols is a great sin in the sight of God. I have a Father in heaven, who sent his own Son into this world to die for us, and to bring us back to his family. I will now arise and go to Him." After this, he stretched himself on his bed, and in doing so, sent many thanks to his teachers. Immediately after, he fell asleep in Jesus.

These words, "I will arise and go to my Father," are the words I am going to address you from, and were spoken by this little boy with reference to his death—his departure out of this world, to be with God the Father, in heaven, in eternal glory. But before he could have spoken so confidently about his future happiness and glory he must have acted upon these words in their proper meaning—he must have for-

saken his idols and his sins, and given his heart to God by believing in Jesus Christ—thus becoming a member of his family and an heir of his kingdom. None but they who are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, will get to heaven when they die. And my earnest prayer, my young friends is, that all of you who read this, may truly go to your Heavenly Father, and serve Him continually as his sons and daughters. Then will this year, and every year you are in life, be a happy year to you, and when you die, you will go to your Father's home in heaven.

In addressing you, I notice:

I. Who is it that is here said to have used these words in the chapter, "I will arise and go to my Father"?

You could all tell me if I were to request an answer from you. This verse is part of that parable of our Lord, which goes by the name of "The Prodigal Son." It is one of the most interesting and instructive of all the parables delivered by our Lord. Many a time has it been blessed to be the means of awakening and convincing and converting sinners from the error of their ways.

I shall tell you, first, how Jesus was led to deliver this parable.

You know that He came down to this world to redeem perishing sinners from destruction—to do them good—to seek and save the lost. And, accordingly, whilst He lived upon the earth, you find Him constantly speaking words of kindness and love and peace, and doing acts of benevolence and compassion and mercy. He told the people who listened to Him how

they could be saved from hell and raised to heaven. He healed the sick; He opened the eyes of the blind; He cast out devils; He bade the winds be still; He made the storm a calm; He made the lame to walk, and gave life to the dead. Wherever He was He was doing good. You might have seen Him, if you had lived at that time, surrounded by crowds of people, sick and diseased, looking eagerly to Him for help; and there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all. Oh! what a great Physician! and how willing He was at all times to remove trouble and sickness!

He never refused to receive any who came to Him. However wicked and depraved they were, if they were only willing to take his salvation, He did not send them away unblessed. Mary Magdalene had seven devils, yet He did not decline to notice her. He cast them out, and she became a follower of his. Zaccheus was an unjust, fraudulent man, the chief among the publicans, who were reckoned degraded and vile; yet, Jesus, when He saw him up in a sycamore tree, said to him: "This day is salvation come to this house." There was a woman in the city who was known as a sinner. People pointed to her as such and looked down upon her, as if she were not fit to be spoken to and taken into their company. Yet, when under a sense of her unworthiness and guilt, and assured of the love and willingness of Christ to save, she came one day into his presence, washing his feet with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head, in token of her gratitude and affection, He did not spurn her away, but graciously said to her: "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. Go in peace: thy faith hath saved thee."

Now, the Scribes and Pharisees — self-righteous

people—did-not like all this. They affirmed that He could not be a prophet, a man of God, else He would not have allowed such persons, notorious sinners, to come near Him. They said in scorn: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." They found fault with Him for speaking to, or conferring any benefit upon, those whom they deemed unworthy of the least attention, yea, as beyond the reach of mercy!

But Jesus delighted in this work. He did not care for their complaints. He came to save: He loved and laboured to save sinners.

And not only so. He took occasion to deliver several parables, in order to shew how anxious and concerned God is about the salvation of lost sinners. There is first the parable of the lost piece of money, and then that of the lost sheep. If any of you had ten pieces, silver pieces, of money, and if some day one of them were missing, you would at once search through all the house for it; you would look into this corner and into that corner, and under this and the other thing, not satisfied till you found it; and then, should you find it, you would have more joy at getting it back into your hand again, than in the possession of the other nine pieces which were safe.

So, we are all by nature lost—lost to God, lost to happiness and to heaven. God sent his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to this cold and rebellious world, to suffer and die for our sins—to search out and bring back the wanderers; and as soon as any of you are found by Jesus Christ, and made willing to give up sin, and return to God, He rejoices over you more than over those—the angels in heaven—who have never sinned. He rejoices over you, as ransomed from death

—rescued from the power of Satan, and destined to dwell with Himself forever in heavenly bliss.

He then spake the parable of the Prodigal Son, to teach us that however far any one may stray from God—however low he may sink in the mire of iniquity, and however wretched he may be, yet, if he is only desirous of returning to God, God will welcome him back, and receive him graciously, and bestow upon him the choicest tokens of his love. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he turn from the error of his ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel."

In this parable Jesus tells us of a man who had two sons. He had brought them up with great kindness, providing for their comfort and welfare in every way. Those of you who have kind, considerate, loving parents, have reason to be thankful for this great blessing. You have constant reason to love them in return, and to try to repay all their devotedness to your good, by your love and cheerful obedience to all their wishes.

This was what these two sons were bound to do. The father did all he could to bring them up well—to educate and train them for usefulness—to minister to their comfort and happiness. It was clearly their duty in return to shew that they had a happy home, by seeking to please him and to do his will in everything.

But with one of them this was not the case. Sometimes the younger has been the better son. You will remember the case of Jacob and Esau. Esau was the elder; but Jacob got the blessing. Joseph was a younger son of Jacob; but he served God, whilst some

of his elder brethren were wayward and disobedient. Here, however, it was the younger son who acted the prodigal.

II. I notice, therefore, secondly, *his sin, and folly, and misery.*

Though he was treated most kindly by his father, though he had abundant supplies of everything that would be for his good, and though his home was happy and agreeable, yet he began to get discontented and sullen. Perhaps he did not like the restraints of his father's house. He would wish to wander about with bad companions, and to engage in evil practices. No doubt, also, he thought that if he were away from under his father's eye and his father's control, he would have greater freedom, and might live as he pleased.

This is often the way with young boys and girls. Their naturally wicked and deceitful hearts run out after evil. They feel that they cannot get their desires gratified under the parental roof. They would wish to be out at night, to frequent places of amusement and pleasure, and to go with the multitude to do evil. But they cannot very well accomplish this, because their parents are opposed to it—and hence they begin to imagine that if they could only get away from under the inspection of their father or mother, they might give a loose rein to their passions, and take their fill of their own selfish desires.

We have accordingly often known and heard of young people, like this prodigal son, forsaking all the comforts and plenty of their own homes, ungratefully turning their backs upon all the kindness and love of their parents, and going forth, as they say, to do for

themselves; but really that they may be at liberty to walk without any hindrance in the ways of sin. Some I have known run away to sea—and others from lovable country homes to go to great cities, and there to plunge into vice and ruin. No one ever yet so acted to parents without having reason to regret it, and that bitterly, either here or hereafter "The way of transgressors is hard."

The younger son no doubt acted with the feelings which we have mentioned. He wanted liberty to go with wicked associates, and to revel in all the sinful pleasures that his heart lusted after. He therefore went one day to his father, and said to him, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." The father doubtless would reason with him about it, but it was of no use. He insisted on the right that the law gave him, at that time in eastern countries, to have his portion, "and the father," we are told, "divided to them his living."

Gathering together then all his property, all his money and his goods, and thinking himself now in posssession of all that he required for his happiness, this young man set out from the home of his childhood and parental care, and proceeded to a far country. He goes a long distance off—to some city or town where he might be as far away as possible from friends and relatives, and from all their influence. There his money gathers around him the wicked young men of the place, and as they flatter him with their tongues, he spends and spends on what he has, in riotous living, till, in a short time, he finds himself destitute and penniless.

Now his trials begin. A famine breaks out in that

land. There is a scarcity of food. Everything is very dear. His companions, seeing that they can get no further use of him for their own purposes, desert him. He has none to help him. What can he do? He is compelled to hire himself out to labour for his support; and as he has learned no business or trade, he has to submit to the most degrading occupation, that of herding swine in the fields.

And what is worse, he is starving. His employer gives him nothing till he has done his work. "He would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; but no man gave unto him." He is wasted and worn, and tattered—a miserable wretch—yet "no man gave unto him." What a change from his former state in his father's house, with love, and comfort and abundance about him!

Yet this is the sure result of a course of waywardness and disobedience and sin. The boy or girl begins by indulging sinful desires, then goes a certain length, and from one step to another till the floodgates are fully opened, and then degradation, misery and ruin follow, if the grace of God does not prevent.

"Oh! what a nice place to sail our little ship in," exclaimed a little boy to his sister. "Alice, if you just push it off from the bank, I'll stand here on the rock and keep it from going too far."

"It may be we had better wait for George," she replied. "Remember what mother said about the danger of the ships being carried away in the falls."

"Oh! never fear that. I'll take care. We are not quite so silly as mother thinks we are; and I don't believe George will come at all this afternoon."

"Well, it will not do to go home without seeing our

ship sail: so you get ready to catch it. Shall I push it right off here or over there?"

"Push it from where you stand. That is the best place."

The little vessel glided gracefully into the water, to the great delight of the children, who clapped their hands and almost screamed for joy. The little boy caught it as it sailed up to the rock, which he called a wharf, and launched it back to Alice. Thus they played a good while, sending it back and forward to each other. It kept a straight course, and did not seem in any danger, until the last time, when he pushed it a little too far out. It drifted into the current, and soon trembled on the brink of the waterfall.

"Don't, brother, don't, mother said you must not venture into danger," cried out Alice, raising her arm to hold her brother, who, heedless of the deep water, was preparing to wade in, to rescue his frail ship. But before she had finished, a second wave carried the little vessel over the falls into the foaming stream below, where it lay on its beam-ends, and no way to prevent its becoming a total wreck

Alice burst into tears, and her little brother almost forgot his own loss in trying to console her.

They went round to the stream below the falls, and looked long and anxiously for some fragments of the wreck of their dear little ship, but all in vain.

The disappointed adventurers walked slowly home, and met their mother near the gate.

"You look as if you had been crying," she at once said to them. "What is the matter? Where is your little ship?" With tears they owned their folly, and pleaded that they thought there was no danger. But

the truth was, they were too confident in their own skill, and imagined they could do without any one's assistance, and one consequence of their self-sufficiency was the loss of their ship.

It is a common case. How many young persons, instead of asking (or if they ask, instead of following) the advice and warnings of their friends, who are wiser and older than they, rush headlong into folly, and think there is no danger until they find themselves plunged into ruin! Others proceed slowly, but no less surely—a little farther, and a little farther. First, they disobey their parents, and play truant. They think that because they are not immediately detected and punished, they can always do so safely. So they grow up and become worse and worse, till, like the little ship, they are gone forever.

My dear young friends, learn the lesson. Resist the beginnings of evil. Once on the wrong road—a little farther, yet a little farther, will be the devil's temptation. But if farther from duty, and farther from God, you cannot but be nearer punishment, and nearer destruction. "Take heed, watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak."

III. I notice now, in the third place, the wise resolution of the prodigal son, and his carrying out of the same.

My young friends, I am sure that when you have done wrong, and you are disgraced, or suffering for it, you often reproach yourselves for having so acted. You wish that you had not done so foolishly.

Now I suppose it was so with this young man. As

he walked about in the fields, herding the swine, and was almost perishing with hunger and cold, an outcast from others, and nobody caring for him, he began to reflect on all his wicked and ungrateful conduct, which had brought him into this condition. He could not but feel that he had sinned most heinously—that he had himself alone to blame—that he was the cause of his own misery. He thought on all the comforts and joys and love of the parental home, which formerly he had despised, and that now he was worse off than the lowest about his father's household. His pride had been thoroughly subdued, his spirit was humbled, and coming to himself, exercising his reason and judgment aright, he forms the resolution, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

And he did act out the resolution. He arose and proceeded to his father's house. No doubt his feelings would be terribly agitated as he went on, and approached nearer and nearer. He would be ashamed, and ready to sink into the dust, not lifting up his eyes, lest they should meet those of any friend or former acquaintance. He would be in doubt as to the reception which his father would give him. Still his circumstances compelled him, and moreover his heart was really sorry, and grieved for all that he had done against his father's love and kindness.

At length after a painful and bitter journey, he draws near the scenes of his early childhood and of his growing years. His father had been out about the doors, probably bowed down and grieving at the

time on account of the folly and guilt of his son, when all at once (for parents are very quick-sighted as to anything which affects their children) he happened to look in a certain direction, and "Can it be?" he says to himself, "is this my long-lost son? do mine eyes deceive me? No, it is surely himself." And in a moment his heart was filled with compassion and love, or rather I should say, it was filled before, and always, but now it overflowed with compassion and love. "He ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Now, this is just intended to teach us how full of pity and love God the Father is to all who, though they have departed from Him, are willing to return in true repentance and faith. What ruins sinners—young people, or grown up, or old people, who go on madly in sin—is not that God is not willing to receive them back again into the arms of his love, but that they are not willing to part with their sins, and give their hearts to Him. Christ said to the Jews, when He was upon the earth, "Ye will not come to Me that ye may have life;" and so may the same be said to all impenitent sinners still. The language of God is, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still; my bowels are turned toward him; my

repentings are kindled together." "Return to Me, ye backsliding children; I will heal your backslidings; I will love you freely." "I, even I am. He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will remember thy sins no more." "Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The turning point in this young man's course, from sin and shame and misery, to comfort and obedience and happiness, was his forming and acting out the resolution of the text. Had he simply reflected on his state; had he not come to his right mind; had he not said, "I will arise, and go to my father;" or had he shrunk from doing that—had he delayed, or had he corresponded with his father—he might have perished. *It was his arising and going to his father* that conducted him to pardon, to peace, and honour, to his father's embrace, the fatted calf, the best robe, the ring, the shoes on his feet.

And so, if you would attain to holiness, and peace, and the service of God, and eternal blessedness in heaven, you must arise and go to your Father. When God, by his grace, opens our eyes, and lets us see our guilt and our danger, our degradation and our misery, let us flee to Himself in Jesus Christ as our only refuge, and He will not reject us. He will give us a spotless raiment, even the robe of Christ's righteousness. He will wash us in the fountain of Christ's blood. He will receive us into his family. He will put his Spirit within us, to make us holy, and invest us with all the privileges of his house.

There are few people who have not sometimes serious thoughts about themselves, even those who are living in sin and delighting in it; and these are sent by God into the heart, awakened by the working of his own Holy Spirit, just that they may remember and turn to the Lord. It is singular how some persons are aroused from carelessness and sin, and led to God.

There was a young man who was not what he should be. He had been highly educated, nourished, and brought up for God. He had the counsels and prayers of godly parents, and, strange to say, his own tastes seemed to incline him to what was internally religious. He taught in a Sabbath school, had none but Christian companions, attended and spoke at missionary meetings. All this rendered his case more hopeless. He was in the midst of what was good, and yet was secretly led captive by Satan, at his will. Sermons passed over him, Sabbath after Sabbath, but no arrow pierced his heart. He was hardened, to all appearance, against the Gospel. He was spending a night in the country. At bedtime they put a candle into his hand and directed him to his bedroom. As he entered the apartment, his eye fixed on a picture of the prodigal son. *There* he was, burying his face on that loving bosom which he had so grieved, but which still was travailing with tenderest compassion towards him. As he looked at it, a voice within seemed to say, "Thou art the man"—and he stood, as it were, before God. He felt that God was in that place, and he knelt and bowed himself to the earth—and when he left the room in the morning, he was a new creature. He used to say, "God laid wait for me in that

most unlikely of all spots—brought my sins to remembrance, and enabled me to arise and go to my Father."

God can use any means He pleases to awaken you to a sense of your need. But in whatever way you are brought to feel that all is not right with you—that you require a Saviour—that you are away from your Father in heaven, look upon it as his voice, saying unto you, "Return unto Me."

During the past year, God has frequently thus spoken to you. He has done so every time you have read his Word. He has done so from the pulpit, and through your Sabbath school teachers every Sabbath day, and in all the godly exhortations of your parents. He has spoken to you in every illness you have had, and He has done so in the death of every boy and girl whom any of you have known. He has then been saying to you, "Be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." "Return unto Me."

What treatment are you giving to his voice of entreaty? Oh! do not delay. Say not, "I will arise and go to my Father at some future time." That is a very dangerous way of speaking. The future is not yours. *Now* is God's time.

A boy came once or twice during the winter to borrow John's skates. Who was he?—a fine looking boy. He went to the same school. That was the most John knew of him. Afterwards John's mother saw him in the porch of the church door, and invited him to come to the Sabbath school.

"Not now," he said, "but I'll think of it."

A few Sabbaths after the lady met him again, and again asked him to join her class in the Sabbath school. He held back. "Not just now," he said.

She went into her pew, but could not sit still. Her heart went out to the boy, and she got up, and followed her heart, and went and found him. There he was in the porch door. She begged him to come with her. She stopped and told him about the good which boys had found at the Sabbath school, in studying the Word of God. She urged him with almost a mother's tenderness to come. He still held back. "Not now," he said.

Six weeks after this, a store in the village was broken open and robbed. The robbery was traced to this boy. He was arrested and thrown into jail. His mother set off and visited him. On her return, overcome by fatigue and grief, she was taken sick, and died within a week, broken-hearted.

Though less favoured than others, God did not leave that boy, nor does He leave anyone without calls of mercy. He sent to him again and again a faithful Sabbath school teacher, with this message: "Return to me; learn of me; come now."

"Not now," said the boy.

"Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation," said God.

"Not now," persisted the boy.

My young friends, take the lesson. God's time is *now*, and He knows best. Your whole future course may be bound up in the decision of *now*. Often it is *now* or *never*.

Jesus spoke this parable that you may know the love and willingness of God to receive you. May the Holy Spirit make you willing to return, so that there may be many amongst you *willing* and *resolved*, and *acting out the resolution*, "I will arise and go to my Father."

THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID

OF

THE LAND OF ISRAEL.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

I rejoice to be permitted to speak to you all again in this way, and to express my earnest wish for each one of you, that you may have, in the best sense of the words, "A Happy New Year."

You have been mercifully kept by God's good hand upon you during another year. When you began the last year, you thought it a long time to look forward to the end of it, and that it would never be done. But now it has gone by, and not one hour of it can you recall. Whether you have spent it in God's love and fear, or not, it has gone up with all its record to the judgment seat of Christ, and it will testify either for you or against you, when you are summoned to stand there, and to render your account. Your own consciences will accuse you of many things which you have said and done wrong, and for which the Most High might justly put forth his wrath against you. But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and if you believe in Him, and cast yourselves upon

his mercy, He will pardon all your sins—He will receive you graciously, and love you freely.

I can wish or pray for nothing better for any of you than that this may be the case with each of you—I mean that you begin from this time, if you have not already done so, to choose Christ, and his service, as your highest happiness; and that you resolve that wherever you are, and wherever you go, you may be faithful in holding forth the word of life, and thus be instrumental in extolling the name of Jesus, and in trying to bring perishing sinners to Him.

I am, my dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1872.*

"And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid: and she waited on Naaman's wife.

"And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."—2 Kings v. 2, 3.

A few years ago, a little boy one Sabbath morning said to his pious mother, "Mamma, isn't grandpapa going to church?" And then again, some weeks after, on another Sabbath morning, "Mamma, why does not grandpapa go to church like other folks?" On both occasions, these artless questions were asked in the

hearing of an aged man, who was very careless and ungodly, and who had seen the inside of a church but a few times for twenty years. And what was the result? The old man, then about seventy-five, was soon found reading in the most devout and solemn manner, the Bible, and some well-known books which were intended to explain and enforce the truths of the Bible. This continued for months, before he would consent to appea: in the house of God. But at length he did appear there, humble, penitent, and broken-hearted. By the grace of God he was brought in at the eleventh hour. He found peace in believing in Jesus, and now, unless absolutely prevented in the providence of God, he goes to church, not merely like other folks, but like other Christians, because he loves to go there.

Were the questions of that little boy little things? They might be so in themselves, and they were uttered by a little boy; but God made them great by employing them to awaken a thoughtless sinner, and to bring him to the Word of God, there to find Jesus Christ, for the salvation of his soul.

Hannah More records an instance of a gay lady returning from a midnight party at cards, and finding her maid-servant reading a religious book,—"Poor melancholy thing," said she, "what pleasure can you have in poring over such a book?" But even in her own careless glance upon it there was one word that met her eye, and followed her to her retirement, and at length filled her with so much distress that her maid came to her in anxiety to know what it was that troubled her. She burst into a flood of tears, exclaiming, "Oh! it was one word in your book that has taken hold of me, and that one word is *Eternity*."

And by God's grace it led to an earnest preparation for eternity.

Thus, in the mysterious providence of God, do little things often become great. In more senses than one, God often chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.

It is about such a weak thing, in the estimation of many, that I am going to tell you—a young person, whom God strengthened to bear testimony to his name and to his truth, in circumstances of great trial and adversity. He made use of her for the purpose of rendering his name great in Syria, and thus probably of saving souls.

This is to be the subject of my address to you at the commencement of this year. And if it be the means of leading any of you not only to know and serve the Lord yourselves, but to direct others to the only way of life and salvation, even to the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing will be to me, or to those who wish you well, greater cause of joy or of thankfulness to the Giver of all grace.

I. Who is the young person spoken of in the verses from which I am to write to you?

We do not know her name, though we would have been pleased to know it. The Spirit of God has not thought fit to record it. But it is a greater honour than the record of her name that has been conferred upon her. She was honoured, though a little girl, to extol the name of Israel's God, to speak of his marvellous love, and grace, and power, and thus to be the means of leading him of whom she spoke as her lord, to apply to God's servant, and to obtain, not only bodily, but spiritual life and health.

She is called *a little captive maid of the land of Israel.* She belonged to those who were the ancient people of God—whom He had chosen from among the nations of the earth to be a peculiar people to Himself. They alone, of all other kingdoms, had the knowledge and worship of the true God. He had said of them, "Ye shall be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation unto me."

It is a good thing to be among the people of God—to be born and brought up in a family that fears God, and in which is heard the voice of joy and salvation. If any of you have this privilege—if you have godly parents or Christian friends, or Sabbath school teachers who take an interest in you, and try to do you good, be thankful for it, and seek to improve that privilege, so that, through the blessing of God, you may be taught to love and serve Him supremely. For remember, "To whomsoever much is given, of them much will be required."

This little Hebrew maid had been instructed in the knowledge of God, and of the things of God. She knew, and delighted to hear of all the wonderful things that He had done for her land and for her people; how He had taken them out of bondage in Egypt, and carried them safely through the Red Sea, and guided them through the wilderness, and settled them in the promised land. She knew about the prophets or servants of God, who were attending to his worship, and instructing the people throughout the land; and what was more, she was an intelligent hearer of all this. She did not hear and then forget; she took a deep interest in it—she believed in the power which God had conferred upon his prophets—she knew of the

miracles which Elisha had wrought; perhaps she remembered how he had smitten the waters of Jordan to make a passage for himself through them; and how he had raised to life the Shunamite's son; and she had the conviction that, if he were applied to, he could work as great wonders as these, through the power of God.

II. Let us look at the circumstances in which this Hebrew girl was now placed.

Her parents probably had their dwelling near by the borders of the land. They were living with their family in peace and security, cultivating the land, or engaged in some other lawful calling. Their children were, no doubt, happy and cheerful under their father's roof, like any of yourselves, not thinking of any evil as about to come upon them.

It so happened, however, that at this period there was variance between the Israelites and the Syrians, who dwelt across the border. The neighbouring tribes, in times of hostility, were always ready to invade the land, when they could do so, and to carry off cattle or flocks of sheep, or any goods or persons that they could lay their hands on.

And accordingly, one day a band of Syrians came for this purpose, sweeping across the plains where the family of this little maid dwelt, and seizing her either by herself, as they found her in the fields, or along with some others, they carried off all that they could take, and her amongst the rest, to their own country. Her cries and tears had no influence to soften their hearts and make them relent. They cruelly turned a deaf ear to all her entreaties, and

just like Joseph, who was sold as a slave into the house of Potiphar, in Egypt, so was she handed over as a young slave to one of the great men of the land of Syria, and we are told, "she waited on Naaman's wife."

III. Let us consider now her character and conduct in that situation. It would have been only natural for her in these circumstances to hate her oppressors, and to do all she could to shew her sense of the injury which had been done to her. For she was stolen out of her own land, she had been dragged away from parents, and kindred, and home, to be entirely in subjection to others, to strangers and enemies. They might treat her with kindness or not; still she had been deeply injured and ill-treated.

But she did not manifest any feelings of revenge. I suppose that just as Joseph in similar circumstances conducted himself in the fear of God, so she behaved justly and conscientiously before God, doing what she had to do in a right spirit, and as well as she could for the interests of her master. That is the spirit of the religion of Jesus Christ. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to God who judgeth righteously."

It is likely that thus she acted, waiting for the time when God would avenge her righteous cause, and open up the way for her deliverance, and restoration to her own land, and to her parental home.

And not only so. You recollect the command that Jesus Christ gave to his disciples, "Love your enemies: bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you, and

persecute you." In the spirit of this precept did this young Hebrew captive act.

As she observed her master, and what was going on in the house—for young people are generally very sharp and observant—she saw that her master was greatly afflicted. Naaman was a great man in the land of Syria. He was the commander of the armies of the country, and held in high esteem by his sovereign, and by the people. The nation honoured him as a successful warrior. He was a man of large influence, and power, and wealth. But all this could not keep off trouble, or sickness, or death. The rich and the poor, the great and the mean, are all alike liable to the stroke of disease.

Naaman was an example of this. You read that he "was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria." But he was a leper.

The little captive had heard about the leprosy in her own land. It was a terrible disease. The Jews regarded it as a direct punishment for sin, and such as could only be removed by the immediate interposition of God Himself. It was a disease sometimes covering the whole body, and sometimes only a part of it, eating away the skin, and into the flesh—and so loathsome, that the person affected with it was, by divine appointment, separated from the rest of the people, and from the sanctuary, and from all social and religious privileges, till he was healed. Thus you will remember that Miriam, though the sister of Moses, when she had the leprosy, was removed from the camp to a tent by herself, and the children of Israel journeyed not till she returned to the camp.

And so also Uzziah, though he was the king, yet when he became a leper, was taken to a separate house, and lived there till the day of his death.

There can be no doubt that Naaman had tried all the medical skill that was to be found in his own country. He had sought one and another remedy, he had applied to physician after physician; but all in vain. The disease still held him fast. And I suppose he would have given all that he possessed for the enjoyment of health and strength again.

The little maid of the land of Israel, as she saw her master moving feebly about, or carried by others, or driven along slowly in his chariot, from day to day, was moved with pity and compassion for him. It is pleasing to see young people feeling concern, and expressing concern for such as are under the chastening hand of God. You like to be kindly dealt with yourselves, when you are ill. And so it becomes you to manifest the same feelings towards others. It is a sign of good—a token of grace in the heart, to shew real pity and sympathy for such as are in distress. "Inasmuch," says Christ, "as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my children, ye did it unto Me."

Naaman's Hebrew servant thought much about him. Her heart was deeply grieved on his account, and no doubt she often wished that she could do something to help and relieve him. But what could she do herself? She had no skill to deal with the trouble. She could do nothing by her own hand. But she could pray for him. She could commend him to God for healing. And perhaps she did so. At last a thought occurred to her, and I believe that God put it into her mind for his own glory, to shew his

power, and to make a way for the acknowledgment of Himself as the true God. She remembered the miracles which Elisha had wrought. They had been spoken about and extolled in her father's house, and among her friends. She had been no inattentive or careless listener. All had been treasured up in her memory—in her heart, and had been the means, along with the lessons of her earlier days, of making her what she was—a young, devoted child of God, giving her heart to Him, and seeking to promote the honour of his truth.

The thought arose in her mind that if her master would but apply to Elisha, the prophet in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy. He who had been privileged, in answer to prayer, to raise a dead boy to life, might be able also, by the power of God, to remove this disease from Naaman. Thus she reasoned in her own mind. She did not venture to say so to himself; but she took courage one day to say to her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

She may have thought this a great liberty for her to take. It may have been after a good deal of hesitation that she did so. But she was very anxious to do good to her master. She had faith in God, whom she had been taught to love and serve, and she had confidence in Elisha as a prophet of God, and therefore with a full, and truthful, and humble heart, she gave forth these words.

My young friends, be never ashamed or afraid at any time, when your hearts prompt you, to speak for Jesus, and to act for Jesus, and to seek the good

of others. Do it like this little girl, in humility and faith, and God will bless your words or your deeds.

It is not said whether it was his wife, or some other one, who had heard the utterance of the little servant-maid, that went in and told it to Naaman. But he was immediately informed of it. In the providence of God it laid hold of his mind. Probably in other circumstances he would have thought lightly of any advice from the little stranger in his house. "What can she do to direct me?" he would have said. But affliction brings down high looks. And what will not any one try for healing and recovery? or whither will a man not go for restoration and health?

It was so with Naaman. These words of the Hebrew maid were the means of leading him to apply to Elisha. He did so through a letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel. He went down to Samaria with large presents, and attended by a gorgeous retinue of servants and horses, and stood at the door of the prophet's house. Elisha did not go out to meet him; but simply sent him a message,—"Go and wash seven times in Jordan, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done

it? how much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean. Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

The result of this was, that his heart was so impressed by the grace of God with this miraculous cure, that he acknowledged the God of Israel as the only true God. He thus not only found bodily health, but, it is to be hoped, spiritual life and health. God was thus magnified in him, and, through him, in the whole land of Syria; for who would not hear of the remarkable recovery which had been granted to Naaman? And how did all this originate? It was by the instrumentality of the simple words of this little Hebrew captive maid.

I have thus told you the story of this little maid of the land of Israel. God has honoured her by giving her a place in the Sacred Record, so that she will be known and remembered as long as the Word of God lasts, and that will be for ever.

And now let us notice the lessons which her history teaches us.

1. *Seek to have a large acquaintance with the Word of God—to be well instructed in the truth of God.* It is there you learn what God is, what God hath done, and what, in his sovereign love and power, He can do, and is willing to do for you, and for all who come to Him in his appointed way. Had this little girl not been taught, had she not attended to what she was taught, she would never have known the truth for her own salvation, neither could she have directed any other one to the God of Israel. And so, if you

do not take delight in the Scriptures, and treasure up the word in your memory, and in your heart, you will be ignorant of that which alone can guide you in safety through all the snares and temptations of life, enabling you to serve, and glorify, and enjoy God as your portion. The more you know of the Bible and of Jesus Christ, who is the sum and substance both of the Old and of the New Testaments, so much the more will you be made like to God. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord."

You are taught by your parents, I trust—you are taught by pious Sabbath school teachers, you have the Bible in your possession that you may read it for yourselves—and if you neglect all this, and care not for the things of God, you will have nothing to answer why sentence should not be pronounced against you—you will be speechless and self-condemned. Many of those who have been brought up in heathenism, value the Bible as their greatest treasure. I read lately of a venerable missionary in the South Sea Islands, who relates that one day, in returning from his Bible class, he found a number of people on the verandah, all anxious for the sacred Scriptures. He had no copy left, but the one he used himself. Among the group was a fine, intelligent-looking young chief, who had come from an island, two hundred miles off, to obtain a copy of the Scriptures. He stepped forward from the rest, and said to the missionary, "O our teacher, may you be saved, come give me the Word of God." It was with much regret he had to say, "The Word is gone! the Word is gone!" Then, looking

wistfully, the young man exclaimed, "Alas! alas!" The missionary went into his study, and put his Tahitian Bible on the table. He had not remained long, when he heard some one entering—a man's hand was stretched towards the table and the Bible was gone. He looked up, and there was the young chief in the room. Throwing down two dollars (which in English money is eight shillings), he said to the missionary, "This is your money, and this is my Bible," whilst he pressed the Bible to his bosom, as if he valued it so much. Being told by the missionary that it was the only Bible he had to read, to refer to, or to preach from, he said, "But you can do better without the Word of God than I can—and if you cannot do otherwise, you can borrow one." Then he continued with great emphasis, "Send the money to Britain, and tell the Christians of Britain to send out many more Bibles,—we will buy them all, for the Word of God is the most precious thing we can possess."

2. *Have faith in God. Have faith in his Word.* The little Hebrew maid, of whom I have been telling you, did not hear with indifference of all that God had done for his people, and of the labours of Elisha, his prophet, in her native land. So far from that, she took a deep interest in what she heard—she received it in faith and love—she treasured it up in her heart, and carried it about with her, so as to influence her thoughts and mould her life. Faith in God and in his truth made her what she was—patient, kind, compassionate, and devoted to the cause of true religion.

And so will it be with all of you, if you in the same manner, take the word into your hearts, and receive

it in faith, as the word of God. In honouring God's word you honour Him, and, accordingly, He will honour you. The Holy Spirit will apply the truth to your consciences, convincing you of sin, as contrary to God, and ruinous to your souls, shewing you what a precious Saviour Christ is—how He died for sinners—how his blood cleanseth from all sin—and how He makes his people like to Himself, creating them anew, after the divine image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. When the truth as it is in Jesus is thus known and believed by you, you will think much about it from day to day—you will delight to speak of divine things, and the more you meditate on the word, and allow it to reign in your hearts, so much the more will you be made conformable to the same—more free from sin—more anxious to shew forth an example of all that is good.

3. *Be careful to carry your religion with you wherever you go.* Let there be no mistake in that matter. Let it be manifest that you are lovers of God, lovers of Jesus Christ, and determined to live according to his Word. In your own homes, let love, and kindness, and filial obedience, and regard to everything that is peaceful, and true, and holy, mark your behaviour. In the company of others, like yourselves, whether in school or at play, let not anger, or pride, or deceit, or fraud, or bad words, or injustice, or unkindness be found in any of you. Let the same mind be in you that was also in Christ, so that those who know you may have reason to say, "This is a boy or girl who fears God, and delights in the truth."

When you are unjustly treated, do not return evil for evil. Bear even that which is wrong in the way

that the Hebrew maid did. Her desire was to do good, if she could, to those who oppressed her, and, at any rate, she bore her hard condition, so far as we read, without murmuring. Paul and Silas sang praises in the dungeon, when they were thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. During the war, at the beginning of the present century, as a British vessel of the navy was running close to the coast of Barbary, the officers on deck heard some one singing: In a moment they were convinced that he was singing the Old Hundredth Psalm tune. They immediately conjectured that the singer was a Christian captive, and determined to attempt his rescue. Twenty stout sailors, armed with pistols and cutlasses, manned the ship's boat, and approached the shore. Directed by the voice of a singing prayer; they soon reached the abode of the Christian captive. It was a little hut at the bottom of his master's garden, on the mouth of a small river. They burst open the door, and took him from his knees, and in a few minutes he was on the deck of the vessel, frantic with joy. The account he gave of himself was, that his name was McDonald, that he was a native of Scotland, and had been a captive eighteen years. He had obtained the confidence of his master, was chief gardener, and had the privilege of living by himself. He said he was not at all surprised when they burst open the door, for the Turks had often done so, and whipped him while on his knees. But he carried his religion and the truth of God with him, and hence he sang praises, and prayed to the Lord. The Lord heard his cry, remembered him in mercy, and set him at liberty.

He was not ashamed to acknowledge God in his

captivity, and amongst those who contemned his religion. So, even in the presence of those who cared not for God and his Word, be not ashamed to own Him as your God. Be not partakers of the sins of others. Give no countenance to that which is evil. Speak with all kindness to those of whose conduct you have reason to complain. Shew, in the spirit of meekness, your abhorrence of unholy words or sinful behaviour, of everything that dishonours God.

When sickness, or trouble, or calamity comes, be patient under the hand of God; for He orders all your trials, and He will make all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.

4. *Seek to make your religion, your saving knowledge of God and his truth, profitable to others.* You know that it is for this end that any are chosen to salvation, that they may shew forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. If you truly love Jesus, you cannot help making this known to others, although you do not tell it in so many words. Your lovely, amiable, benevolent, holy character, will let them see who is the master whom you serve, even Jesus, the Saviour and the friend of man.

But you are to exert yourselves for the good of others, and for spreading abroad the influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You read of the little Hebrew maid, that both in compassion for her suffering master, and for the honour of her God, she hesitated not to say that God's prophet would cure him, if he would only make application to him. And so, you will be ready to speak to those around you, who are

diseased with the leprosy of sin and who are living in ungodliness and vice, about the great Physician who has the balm of Gilead to heal the souls, as well as the bodies of men. If you have a brother, or a sister, or a companion, dear to you, laid down by a dangerous fever, and if you knew of a physician who had skill to deal with that fever or disease, you would at once invite them to send for him. In like manner you will speak to those who are living in sin, and going along the broad road which leadeth to destruction, about Jesus Christ and his love. Would that they would come to Him, and He would heal them in time and for eternity! Thus would you speak to them, and pray for them. Oh! how little do young people and even grown-up people think of this, their duty and privilege, as having freely received, and therefore called upon freely to give!

A young girl was rapidly sinking under severe trouble. Only a few months before, had she, like the prodigal, come to herself, discovering her sinfulness and her danger. By the grace of God she was led to seek forgiveness, and to find peace in Jesus. Soon after this, her health failed—she grew worse and worse—and it was clear that she would shortly die. One thing especially troubled her mind. When asked what it was, she answered, "I have not done enough for Jesus." Poor girl! she had felt the worth of a Saviour, and how much she owed to Him, and she grieved that she had done so little for his sake.

Let me ask you all who read this, *Have you done enough for Jesus?* Your answer will be, if you know yourselves aright, that you have not. You never can do too much. You never can do enough. Think of

what He has done for you. And now, with the commencement of this new year, seek to have the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that you may, from this day, resolve to do what you can by the grace of God, that others may be benefited, and not made worse by you.

Not only seek for yourselves to be just, and true, and holy, but try to bring others to Jesus Christ. Tell them of the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness. Instruct, as you can, the ignorant. Speak to those who are living without hope, and without God in the world, about their guilt and danger. Pray for them, and urge them to flee from the wrath to come. Take a deep interest in the missionary cause—in sending the tidings of the Gospel to every heathen land. Give and pray, and entreat others to give and pray, for this most noble and glorious of all purposes.

Never think you have done enough for Jesus, and strive to do more.

Remember, too, that time is short, even to you. Do not defer any good work. During the past year, some young persons, as young as you, and with whom you were acquainted, have been called away by death. And who can tell what may be the case with any of you during this year? In regard to some of you the sentence may have been recorded, "This year thou shalt die." "Therefore, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

JOSIAH, THE GOOD YOUNG KING OF JUDAH:

AN

EXAMPLE OF EARLY SEEKING AND SERVING GOD.

My Dear Young Friends,—

It is of God's mercy that we have been spared to enter on another year. He has been our daily Guardian and Preserver. To Him in Jesus Christ be all the praise.

I have the pleasure and privilege of again addressing you in this way, and of wishing you many happy years —years spent in the love and service of Jesus Christ, who died for sinners. The subject of my address is, as on a similar occasion last year, an example of youthful piety, taken from the Bible.

May the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, make it the means of spiritual benefit to all of you, that so you may be of the number of those who seek and find God in the days of their youth, is the earnest prayer of

Your very affectionate Pastor,

Alexander Topp.

Toronto, *1st January, 1873.*

"Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years.

"And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father; and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.

"For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images."—2 Chronicles, xxxiv. 1, 2, 3.

Josiah, mentioned in this passage, and whose character I am going to set before you in this address, became King of Judah when he was a very young boy. He was only eight years of age. Some of you who read this, may perhaps not be much older, and many of you may be several years older; I hope, therefore, that you will take an interest in what God tells us in his Word about this young king. For he was good, and loved and served God, and God was pleased with him, as He will be with all who honour Him supremely, whether they are old or young.

I suppose some of you will be saying to yourselves, Was not Josiah very young to be a king? Yes, he was very young indeed to be a king. And as kings have great power and riches, and many things of which our naturally evil hearts are fond, he had strong temptations to love these things, and to forget God, who gave them all. His father too, and his grandfather, were kings in Judah, and they were as wicked kings as ever reigned in that country. But God can make children who have bad parents good, and He taught Josiah, though he was young, to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord.

Those of you who have any acquaintance with the history of England, will remember to have read of one, who became king of that country at a very early age. He was only nine years old. Two of his ministers once asked him to allow something to be done in his palace, which would have been very dishonouring to God. They made this request in order to oblige a powerful Emperor, who reigned in another country. But Edward VI. (for that was the name of this young king to whom I refer) feared God, and would not do anything which he knew would displease Him, and was forbidden in the Bible. He therefore told them that he could not permit what they wanted, and when they still continued to urge him to do it, he burst into tears and wept much, saying to them "that he was determined to lose his life, and all that he had, rather than agree to do that which his conscience told him to be against the truth." Was not this a noble resolution? He would rather lose his kingdom, and all the honours and riches which belonged to him, than offend God. Surely that was a sign that he loved his Saviour, and that he had made up his mind to do the will of God, and to maintain his truth. To the great grief of the nation God called him away, and took him to Himself, before he had reached the age of seventeen years.

In the same way as Edward, will you act, if you would please God and enjoy his favour. When you are asked or tempted to do any wicked thing, even though they who ask you should be angry when you refuse, you should answer with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Jesus died to save you from sin, and you cannot belong to

his kingdom, if you love sin and commit it. God keeps a book of remembrance, in which He writes down every sin of which you are guilty. He sees in the darkness as well as in the light, in the night as well as in the day, and if you die impenitent and unbelieving, He will unfold them all, to your shame and confusion, when you stand before his throne on the Judgment Day.

But I proceed to tell you about Josiah. If you look at the 3rd verse, you will find it said, that in the eighth year of his reign (*i.e.*, in the sixteenth year of his age), while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father. All of you, I doubt not, have heard and read of David. He was first a shepherd boy, keeping his father's flocks. But God took him from amongst all his brothers, though he was the youngest, and made him king of the country of which Josiah was king. He is called "the man after God's own heart." It was he, too, who wrote most of those beautiful psalms which you have in the Bible, and which you delight to sing; and so much did he delight in God's favour, that in one of them he says, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee? My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Some of you perhaps would like to know why God is called the God of David. I will tell you. It was because David loved and trusted in Him, because he served and obeyed Him, and God was his friend, and watched over him, and protected him in danger. You recollect that when both a lion and a bear came to seize and devour some of his flock, God gave him strength to prevail against them, and to slay them.

So also God enabled him to smite to the ground, with a sling and a small stone out of the brook, Goliath the Philistine giant, who proudly defied the armies of the living God. But was he the God of none else? Yes; He was also the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, of Moses and Samuel, and all the saints who have ever lived upon the earth. He was the God of Josiah; He is the God of your parents, if they are his people; if you love and serve Him, He will be your God too. He will guide you, and protect you, and preserve you from every evil way. Do you not feel confidence in the midst of danger, when your father stands between you and it, and says, "My dear child, it shall not hurt you." With your father beside you, you will go out in the dark, you will go into the waves of the sea, you will pass through a herd of fierce-looking animals; you think yourselves secure under his protection. But God's protection is a thousand-fold better than that of the tenderest father For He is omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise and is engaged to keep all his people in safety. He will guide them all by the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to the city of habitation at last.

I. Josiah sought the Lord when he was very young, and this is the first thing that I would observe about him. I wish you at this season, the beginning of a new year, which God has spared you to see, particularly to remember this, and to act out the lesson that it teaches you. For why are we told that Josiah sought the Lord when he was young? Is it not that you, who are also young, may be induced to do so too? You cannot be happy till you seek and find God.

Your hearts are by nature wicked, and rebellious against God. As long as they are unchanged, you cannot be in friendship with God. "God is angry with the wicked every day." He is a holy God, and nothing that defileth can enter into his presence. And had we been all left to ourselves, not one of the human race, as ruined by the fall of our first parents, could have been saved. But God looked upon us, when we were enemies, and gave up his own Son to the death for us. He hath thus opened up a way by which you can come unto his throne, and it is Jesus who will speak to Him for you, and for all who believe in Him. It was wondrous love thus to provide a Saviour, and a way of escape for us. Paul could only say of it, "It passeth knowledge." You will recollect that Jacob was very unwilling to part with his beloved son, Benjamin. But God spared not his only begotten Son, who, from all eternity, had dwelt in his bosom. He delivered Him up to taste of the bitterness of death; to be a sacrifice for our sins, that they might not stand between God and us. Jesus himself came cheerfully He pitied, and came to save, saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart. I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death."

(*a*) God is to be sought through Jesus Christ. He himself said when He was on earth, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." You would love and seek to know any one who had saved you from some danger to which you were exposed; you would be very ungrateful if you did not. Surely, then, if you think

that Jesus died to save you from everlasting pain and misery, you cannot but desire to know Him and to love Him. And for your encouragement, He says, "*I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.*" Some of you may perhaps be saying, I know that I have an evil heart; that I indulge many bad thoughts, and utter bad words, and do wicked actions. I know that I need such a Saviour as Jesus, all-powerful and loving, able and willing to save to the uttermost. I would like to know Him, and to enjoy his love, but I will wait till I am older, and some time before I die I will seek Him earnestly.

And do you, then, intend to do without Christ in the meantime? Are you resolved to have nothing to do with Him in the meantime? Surely this is base ingratitude, as well as the greatest folly and madness. Did he shew any unwillingness to come and suffer and die for you? Did He not come freely, and of his own will? Did he not steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, to be nailed to the cross for you? And is it thus that you will treat such astonishing love? You would look upon the boy or the girl as destitute of all right feeling, who shewed ingratitude to kind and indulgent parents. Be not then ungrateful to God, who seeks to save you by the blood of his own Son. Let not Jesus have to say of you, as He said to some of the Jews to whom He was speaking in the days of his flesh, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you."

Besides, though you may not yet have reached the age of Josiah, when it is said that he began to seek the God of his father David, have you ever reflected that you may never arrive at the age of sixteen? I have

seen many die in Toronto before they came to that age. During the last summer, a fine little boy, not quite eight years old, who used to attend the Sabbath school, was taken away after a short illness. In the time of his trouble he was not able to converse much, for he was unconscious several days before his death. But his mother told me that he used to take great pleasure in repeating the verses of Scripture that he learned at the Sabbath school, and delighted to speak about Jesus and his love. It might have been thought that he would have many years before him, but God willed it otherwise. And so, none of you know but you may be cut off before the time when you propose to seek Christ. A little girl once heard her minister preaching about the righteousness of Christ, as a pure and spotless robe. She listened with great interest and attention. He happened to see her next day, when she said she wished to be clothed in that robe of righteousness, that she might see God in peace. The conversation was altogether such as to convince him that she felt the vast importance of being found in Christ. He had scarcely reached home, when a messenger arrived to tell him that this good child had been found dead by her parents in the garden. There is reason to believe that she had received the robe of which she was desirous. But if this little girl had said, I will seek this robe when I am old, or next year, or at some future time, what must have become of her soul, when she was thus suddenly snatched away? And what will become of you, if you delay to apply to Christ, whilst now you have the opportunity? You may die before you have time to think of Christ, or you may put off from season to season, from year

to year, till you become more and more wicked, and joining with wicked companions, you will have no inclination—no desire to seek Jesus.

Do it *now*, we beseech you. Seek, like Josiah, to know and to love God. If you were out in the fields in one of these stormy days at this season of the year, you would feel your need of shelter from the storm. If you had fallen into any deep water, as we hear of some falling through the ice into the lake, you would feel your need of some one to help you to escape from being drowned. So the Bible, God's own Word, tells you that you have need of shelter from the wrath of God, from the storm which will beat against the wicked and overwhelm them. Now Jesus is He who alone can save you, and He will do it, if you believe in Him and give your hearts to Him. He will deliver you from the fearful pit. He will wash you from all your sins in his blood. He will send his Spirit to make you holy, to make you love the good and hate all that is evil. A little Chinese girl was asked, "Were you sure of dying to-morrow, what would you do to-day?" She was one of a class. The first who replied said she would be getting her grave ready, which is a very important business among the Chinese; but this dear child answered, with a resolute countenance, "I would believe strongly in Jesus."

(*b*) God is to be sought through Jesus Christ in earnest prayer. This is his own word: "Then shall ye find Me, when ye seek Me with all your heart." If you really want anything, you will be full of anxiety about it—your thoughts will be occupied about it — you will continue to ask for it from the person who is able to give it to you. In like

manner, if you truly wish to know God *as your God*, you will seek unto Him with persevering urgency. He knows, indeed, very well what you need—that you need to be taught his will—that you need mercy and grace—that you need a new heart. He knows this as well as you do yourselves, but He commands you to pray to Him, and says, "For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

There are many persons, it is to be feared, much older than you, who never pray, though they have houses and families of their own; and it may be that some of you who read this, never think of prayer. But God says, "I will pour out my fury upon the families that call not upon my name." You know that Jesus, when He was upon the earth, always answered the prayers which were made to Him, and now He still hears at the right hand of the Father, and never fails to hearken to the earnest prayer. You cannot expect to be kept from evil without prayer. You have read about Daniel being cast into the lion's den. It was in answer to prayer that the mouths of the lions were stopped, so that they could not hurt him. It was by prayer that Samson, the strong man, though they had put out his eyes and shorn him of the source of his strength, cast down the temple of the Philistines, and destroyed all the mighty men—the idolaters who were in it. It was by prayer that Peter was delivered from prison, when he had been thrown into the dungeon for preaching Christ. And it is only by prayer that any one, old or young, can be preserved from the power and the wiles of Satan, who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

If you would truly seek God, so as to find Him, you will not only pray in the morning, when you rise from your beds, and in the evening, before you lie down; but you will always be in the spirit of prayer, and you will often ask Him for the blessings which you need. I have read of a very young girl, who felt the necessity of seeking God in prayer. She was playing one day with her companions, when she took them by the hand, and led them to a shed near where they were, and bade them kneel down, as she was going to pray to God; "But don't tell my mamma," she said, "for she never prays, and would not be pleased, if she knew that I do so." Well, instead of keeping the secret, one of her companions went immediately and told the little girl's mother. She was very much struck, but said nothing in the meantime. When the girl went home, however, her mother asked her what she had been doing in the yard. She hesitated to tell; but when her mother promised not to be angry, she replied, "I have been praying to God." "But why do you pray to Him?" "Because I know He hears me, and I love to pray to Him." "But how do you know He hears you?" This was a difficult question, but mark the answer she gave Putting her little hand to her heart, she said, "Oh! I know He does, for there is something here, which tells me that He hears me." The reply pierced her mother's heart, who had been a stranger to prayer, and she wept bitterly. This little girl was not only honouring and seeking God herself, but she was the means of leading her mother to know the value of the exercise of prayer.

(*c*) God is to be sought by reading his Word, and

by hearing it preached. The Bible is the Book of God. It tells us of Him, of Christ, of heaven, of hell, of what He would have us believe and what He would have us do. You remember what Paul says to Timothy, that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Jesus Christ. Every boy and girl that is anxious to find Christ, will read and study the Bible. I will tell you in a little how Josiah acted when the book of God's law was found in the temple. But now I observe that you ought to attend to his Word, when it is preached, as well as to read it in your homes. Some young people never think of going to church at all, and others, when they do go, are very inattentive, sometimes sleeping or looking about them, not listening at all to what the minister says. With such careless ones, God cannot be pleased. But there are some who are very attentive and anxious to know about Jesus Christ and his love to sinners, and thus find peace, and joy and happiness. A little girl was hearing a minister preach from the text, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs in his arms." And when asked about the sermon, she said she was wishing all the time he had been preaching that she was one of Christ's lambs. What a blessed thing if all young people who hear the Word would truly desire the same.

I hope that what we have thus written will be the means of impressing your hearts with a sense of the necessity of seeking God, and shew you how you are to seek Him. I now come again to the history of Josiah, and bid you notice,

II. That Josiah not only sought God, but did everything in his power to please Him and promote his glory. He began to seek God, and to strive to be good, and to get good, and not like some who are led away by sinful pleasures to forget God, he continued in the right path, for if you look again at the text, you will read in the third verse that in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. This was four years after he began to seek God. He was always growing better and loving God more So, if you are really in earnest in the things of God and his service, you will not only shew that you desire to seek God when you are under the parental roof or attending the Sabbath school, or when you are very young, but you will continue to do so when you enter upon any profession or lawful calling, or when you go away from your own home to enter upon the business of life.

The good king here spoken of, when he was only in the twentieth year of his age, shewed how much he loved God by purging Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, etc. It was very ungrateful and wicked in the people of that country, who had been so bountifully and graciously treated by the Almighty, to do anything which He had expressly forbidden. All of you, I have no doubt, could repeat the second commandment—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in earth beneath," etc. You know that God delivered the ten commandments to the children of Israel, in the midst of thunderings and lightnings, and fire, and the voice of a trumpet, so

that all the people trembled. You would think that the appearance of God in such a terrible manner would have awed the Israelites, and prevented them from any open act of disobedience. But so rebellious were they in their hearts, that very soon after this they forgot the Lord, and made a calf of gold, before which they fell down and worshipped, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." No wonder that the Most High looked upon such conduct as most dishonouring to his name and character. The heathen, and the children of the heathen, those who have not the Bible, and therefore know not God—bow down before stocks and stones, the work of their own hands, and pray to these as their gods. But you know that such things are no gods. They neither see, nor hear, nor taste, nor smell. The Israelites were aware of this too, as well as you. Therefore, God was displeased with them, and would have destroyed them all. But Moses prayed for them, and God's anger ceased. Yet, as a punishment to them, the calf of gold was ordered to be ground into powder, and cast upon the water which they were to drink.

Notwithstanding this, you will learn, if you read the Bible carefully, that they were often guilty of the sin of idolatry: and when they had bad kings, like Josiah's father and grandfather, they encouraged the people in it, and made them sin more and more against the Lord.

This was the state of the kingdom when Josiah came to the throne. And as he was one who sought God, he was anxious that all the people should, like himself, know God also, and accordingly he proceeded

to destroy their images and to pull down their groves. This was the best way of getting rid of idolatrous worship in the land. I never read of any occasion but one on which the idols served any good purpose. It was the following :—

Dr. Judson, the famous missionary, was once a captive at Rangoon, the capital of Burmah, and was most cruelly treated by the hard-hearted Burmans. His heroic wife contrived to lengthen his life, by getting food and drink to his cell, until the English army took the city, and set the poor prisoners free. Havelock was then a lieutenant in the English army, and *a praying* lieutenant, as he afterwards was a praying general.

No sooner was the city taken than he sought out a fit place for a prayer meeting. Where did he find one? There was a famous heathen temple in a retired grove, devoted to the service of Boodh. He secured one of the chambers in it, a large room filled with images of idol gods, sitting all around with their legs crossed and arms folded on their laps.

One day an officer, strolling round the temple, thought he heard the sound of English singing. He stopped and hearkened. A strange sound here, he thought; but it certainly was the sound of psalm-singing, in good old English style. What did it mean? How could it be accounted for? He determined to follow the sound, and behold it led him to an upper chamber, where Havelock, with his Bible and hymn-book before him, surrounded by more than a hundred of his soldiers, was holding a prayer-meeting. The room was dark, but every idol had a lamp in its lap, shedding more light than any idol had ever done before.

Josiah could not make use of the idols in his kingdom in that manner; and therefore, in order that the people might not have the opportunity of using them in worship, he resolved to demolish them all. He could not change the hearts of the people, but he sought to do what he could to turn them from their idolatrous practices; and this shewed that he was really in earnest in seeking God. He wanted to honour God and to bring over others to honour Him too.

You will perhaps be ready to say, that this was very good in Josiah, but how are *we* to be like him? How can *we, boys and girls,* serve the Lord like Josiah who was a king? I will try to tell you how you can do so. When the woman of Samaria, who came to the well to draw water, was made acquainted with Christ, she ran back to the city, and told the inhabitants that she had found Christ, and invited them to come and see Him and believe for themselves. When Bartimeus, the blind man at Jericho, had received sight, he followed Jesus, we are told, glorifying God, and telling how gracious He had been to him. These and other cases which we might notice, are set before us in Scripture, as examples for our imitation. If we love Jesus ourselves—if we delight to honour his name—to pray to Him, and to do his will, we will wish to bring others to do the same. Now, are there not boys and girls, whom you know, who are careless about their souls and divine things, who are guilty of cursing and swearing, or falsehood, or profaning the Sabbath day, who scruple not to disobey their parents and to treat them with ingratitude? Could you not shew that you love God, and are anxious that others should honour Him, by turning away from keeping

company with such young people? Could you not tell them, in all kindness and affection, that these things are sinful, and therefore displeasing to God? Could you not pray for grace to touch their hearts, and entreat them, for Jesus' sake, to forsake such evil practices—to give their hearts to Him who died for them? If thus you serve God as much as you can, in the place which God gives you, you are just following the example of Josiah, and striving to promote the honour and glory of God. And I hope that for this end you will offer this prayer daily:—

O heavenly Father, give me thy Holy Spirit now, to make me thy loving and obedient child; teach me to feel that I am a great sinner, and to look to Jesus as my Almighty Saviour; enable me to honour my parents and teachers, and to walk willingly in the right way; make me like what Jesus was when He was a child; help me to serve Thee while I am young and to go on serving Thee all my days; give thy grace also to my companions, and send a great revival among the young, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

III. There is a very interesting incident in the future history of Josiah, which I wish to tell you for your instruction. You know from what has been said already, that the Jews were very wicked and rebellious, when Josiah came to be king. God had given them a law to guide them in his worship and service, and He commanded every king to make a copy of it for himself. But the kings who were before Josiah neglected this, so that no copy of God's Word was to be seen in the land. However, when Josiah had ordered his officers and captains to repair

the temple of the Lord which had fallen into ruins, they found amongst the rubbish a copy of the law, and brought it to Josiah. We read in the chapter from which our text is taken, that when he heard the words of it, he rent his clothes, and wept before the Lord. He was so affected by it, that he called the people together, and read it to them also.

You may ask, why did Josiah, who was a good king, weep, when he heard the Word of God? I will try to tell you. The best men, boys, and girls often do things which are displeasing to God. They cannot serve God perfectly here, their evil hearts frequently betray them into sin, when they would wish to do otherwise. And so it is likely that Josiah was put in mind, by the Word of God, of some things which he had done wrong, and therefore he wept, but more particularly because of the great sins of which his people were guilty.

One great design of the Bible is to bring your sins to your remembrance, and to make you sorry for them. There was once a wicked boy, who would leave his father's home, and go to sea. The kind father tried to persuade him not to go, but he was determined and would go to sea. The reason was this. He thought he might be wicked when he got away from his father, and that there would be no one to reprove him. His weeping father gave him a Bible, as he went away, and begged him to read it. The boy went away, and became very wicked and profane. But God saw him. There was a great storm on the ocean. The ship could not stand against it. She struck upon the rocks in the darkness of the night. It was a time of great distress, and for a few moments the cries of

the sailors and passengers, who expected to be drowned, mingled with the howling of the storm. Then this wicked boy wished himself at home. But he had only a few moments, for a great wave came, and lifted the ship on high, and then it fell on another rock, and was broken in a thousand pieces. Every one on board was drowned, except this same wicked boy. Through the mercy of God, he was carried by the waves upon a great rock, so that he could creep up, though much bruised and almost dead. In the morning he was seen sitting on the rock with a book in his hand. It was his Bible, the only thing saved from the wreck. He opened it; and there on the first leaf was the handwriting of his father, and he thought of the goodness of that father, of his own ingratitude, and then he wept. Again he opened the book, and in every page was the writing of his heavenly Father, and then he wept at the remembrance of his sins against God. His heart was broken. He was truly penitent; and from that hour to this he has lived a Christian.

And happy, my young friends, will you be, if, when you read or hear the Gospel of Jesus, you are convinced of your ingratitude to Him, and led to seek forgiveness in the spirit of penitence and faith. God was well pleased with Josiah, as he humbled himself and wept. So will He be pleased with you, if you are truly sorry for your sins. He will give you grace to serve Him better in time to come. He will guide you by his Spirit here, and afterward carry you into his own presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

The history of Josiah presents one of the most interesting examples of early piety, and zeal for God's

cause, to be found anywhere in the sacred volume. To seek God is our first obligation; to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and to be in his kingdom, is our highest dignity—to serve Him supremely, and to consecrate ourselves to the advancement of his cause, is our greatest honour. For our encouragement to seek Him, it is written, "He hath never said to any of the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain." He is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. And to stimulate us in his service, Jesus says to us, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve Me, him will my Father honour."

Do not then, by thoughtlessness or open sin, deprive yourselves of this high honour, and bring misery and ruin upon your own heads. You have been spared to see the beginning of another year, but who can say with certainty that he will see its end? The youngest is not secure against the approach of death for a single day. Terrible will death be to those who are not in the love and service of God. They shall receive the awful sentence, "depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Will any of you expose yourselves to this dreadful doom? May God in his mercy save you from it. Seek Christ whilst now He is willing to receive you, to pardon and save you forever. His face will smile upon you in love as you grow up, and wherever you go. He will bless you in life; and when your bodies are laid in the silent grave, whether that may be sooner or later, He will receive you into those mansions of bliss which He hath gone before to prepare for his own people.

OBADIAH, WHO FEARED THE LORD FROM HIS YOUTH.

My Dear Young Friends,—

It gives me much pleasure to be again permitted, at the commencement of a new year, to speak to you in this way. God has mercifully spared you, and you have all reason to praise Him for his goodness. Whilst, then, you are full of joy at this season, do not forget to give thanks to Him, and to begin this year by giving yourselves to God, and to His service, saying in truth, "My Father, Thou wilt be the guide of my youth."

You will thus have happy years so long as God is pleased to spare you. His promises in Jesus Christ will be all sure to you. He will send his Spirit to teach you, and keep you from evil. He will guide you by his counsels, and afterward receive you to glory. That this may be so, is the fervent prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

Alexander Topp.

Toronto, *1st January, 1874.*

"But I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth."—1 Kings, xviii. 12.

"Mamma," cried Charlie Gordon, "I never saw a fellow like that Frank McLean. He is so awfully lucky. Everything he does goes quite right; everything he tries, turns out as he wants it."

"I would not call that awfully lucky," Mrs. Gordon said, smiling, "there is nothing in it to make you feel full of awe, is there?"

"Oh! well, you know what I mean. But I never did see a fellow get on so well. He is not so clever as a good many of the others, yet he is always at the top of his class."

"Perhaps he is more diligent than any of you," Mrs. Gordon suggested.

"But it is quite the same with other things," Charlie said. "You know he is poorer than any of us, a great deal poorer. His clothes are often so shabby and so patched, no one would take him for a gentleman's son, if it were not for his looks. He has no fine bats and balls, and bows and arrows like Mark Grant; and he never makes up fine pleasure parties like George Greig, and yet there is not a fellow in the school so much made of, or so much liked."

"If he is poor in money, then," said Mrs. Gordon, "he must be rich in something better."

"Rich in knowing how to keep right and straight with everybody, with masters, and us all. I never saw anyone like him for keeping out of scrapes, and for knowing how to go just right straight on. I was told a thing about him the other day. It happened about three years ago, before I went to school. A set of the big fellows had brought in some gunpowder,

which the masters had forbidden, and it had gone off, somehow, and blown out ever so many panes of glass in the school-room window. A set of the younger boys, all our class, I think, were playing under the window at the time, and saw what happened, and heard the others consulting together as to how they could hide it. So the little boys did not know what to do. They knew there would be a great work about it, and asking of questions, and all that. They did not want to be telling tales, and getting themselves into hot water with these old ones; and yet they did not want to bring themselves into trouble with the masters. Frank McLean never said a word while the others were speaking, but looked as if he knew quite what he was going to do. In a few minutes out came the big fellows, and saw the others standing under the window.

"'I say, Frank,' cries one of them, a big bully, Saunders was his name, 'how long have you little rascals been here?'

"'Half an hour,' said Frank, looking him so full in the face, that Saunders turned quite red all in a minute.

"'You know what happened, then,' said he; 'what do you mean to do?'

"'I don't want to do anything,' said Frank, 'but if I am questioned I cannot tell a lie. And if the servants, or any innocent people are suspected, I'll tell the whole truth to free them.'

"'You'll tell the whole truth,' says the bully. 'We'll soon teach you another story.'

"'You can't do that,' says Frank, as quiet and as steady as if he had been a grown-up man, 'for I can't tell a lie; I can't, and there's an end of it.'

"The other boys got round him. He was very fond of some of them. They had been very kind to him; and they tried to coax and beg him for their sakes, and the others tried to frighten him. But neither did any good. He always said the same thing; 'I can't tell a lie, I can't; it is that I really can't.'

"And he stood so firm to it, and made the other little fellows so firm too, that at last they saw it was no use trying. So they went in a body straight to the masters, and told them themselves what had happened; and they were so pleased with their frankness that they let them off almost free, with only some easy impositions that were not worth speaking about."

"He must be a noble fellow," said Mrs. Gordon. "I am glad you have him for a friend, Charles. I wish you would write and ask him to pay us a visit in the holidays."

"I am afraid he can't come," said Charlie, very much pleased with the proposal, "because of that same lucky thing that has happened to him, and that I was going to tell you about. His mother is a widow, and very poor, and Frank has been wishing and wishing all this year to make enough money to send his little brother to school He is only a day-scholar, you know, and he wanted to get something to do in the evenings, to make a little money. There's a rich old man in the town—very rich, but very odd in his ways. He wanted a young man to go to him for three hours every evening to read the papers to him, and sometimes to write letters and copy accounts. Frank heard of it, and went straight and asked the gentleman if he would try him. Frank writes a beautiful

hand, and reads aloud uncommonly well; and, besides, he has such a bright kind of a face that the old gentleman took quite a fancy to it, and at once engaged him on a month's trial. And then Frank did so exactly well, was so punctual to a minute every day, and took so much pains to do everything quite right, that the old gentleman was perfectly delighted. He is a curious old man, and when he takes a fancy he does it with a will, and so he has with Frank. He says that he is sure he will turn out a great and good man, and that he'll take care that he does not want the means. He has taken him as a clerk into his counting-house, pays for a first-rate master to bring him on in his studies in the evenings, and says that if Frank goes on as he is doing he'll make him his partner as soon as he knows enough. But I am afraid he can't leave that old gentleman just now to come out here."

"Write and ask him at any rate," said Mrs. Gordon, "there will be no harm in that."

And Charlie did write; and Frank's kind master gave him leave to accept the invitation. Mrs. Gordon liked Frank McLean as much as she had expected. He was, indeed, a bright, pleasant boy, but she soon found out that he was something more, even a true child of God.

"Charlie," she said to her son, the day Frank left them, "you must never again call Frank McLean poor; he is one of the the richest boys I ever knew. The fear of the Lord is his treasure."

Charlie looked as if he did not quite understand, and his mother explained.

"I asked him one day," she said, "if he, such a

lively, merry fellow as he is, and so fond of fun, did not sometimes find it hard to study so diligently, as he must do to keep always at the head of his class. And he answered me, very modestly, that he could not help studying hard, because he knew that the Lord, whom he loved, saw exactly at every moment what he was doing and how he did it, and that he would not be pleased if he were idle."

"Yes, mother," said Charlie, thoughtfully, "I see how that works."

"Then," pursued Mrs. Gordon, "this same fear of displeasing the Lord makes it perfectly impossible for him to tell a lie, or to do anything mean or deceitful. And you know yourself how right and straight that has kept him through all his school life, and how his perfect truthfulness has won for him the respect and confidence of all your masters."

"And how about his luck with the old gentleman?"

"Luck had nothing in the world to do with it; I asked him how he had contrived to please such a very particular old gentleman, and he said, in that modest, artless way of his, 'Indeed ma'am, I don't know myself. He seemed to wonder that I was always so exact to the minute, and always took so much pains. But you know ma'am, I really could not help all that, for I knew that God would be displeased if I did not do everything I had engaged to do as well as ever I could.' So you see, Charlie, that in this matter also of his worldly prosperity the fear of God has been his treasure."

Charlie was silent and thoughtful for a little, and then said, "Yes, mamma, I see. And I see, too,

mamma, how the fear of the Lord has brought to Frank a treasure of earthly love and kindness. We do all so love him and so trust in him. You can hardly think how we love him. But I see now that this is because the fear of the Lord has made him just the most generous, the most unselfish, the most loving and gentle fellow that ever lived. To be sure, the fear of the Lord is to Frank a rich, a glorious treasure."

Now this little boy was just learning to do what is recorded of the person about whom I am going to tell you. "I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth." It was Obadiah who said this. He was the Governor of the house of Ahab, the King of Israel. There are some of you who will read this, so well acquainted with your Bibles, I know, that you could tell at once, if you were asked, the character of Ahab. He was one of the most wicked kings that ever reigned over that land. Indeed, we read regarding him that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before Him." And, no doubt, being inclined to evil himself, and bent on doing evil, he would have persons about him in his court of the same mind, and therefore ready to go along with him, and further his schemes of idolatry and wickedness. Wicked people will search out and draw around them wicked companions. But the Psalmist says, and so will every good man, "My delight is in the saints, the excellent of the earth."

You will wonder, then, to find such a man as Obadiah in the court of this wicked king, and holding the high office of the Governor of his house. It was not because there was any sympathy between Ahab and Obadiah in their sentiments on the cause and worship

of God, but because Ahab felt the benefit of having such a good man as Obadiah managing all the affairs of his palace. You will remember, in the story I have told you, that the old gentleman saw the goodness and truth, and diligence and integrity of the little boy; and, therefore, though he did not apparently care for his religion, he took a liking to him and kept him in his employment, because he felt that he could trust him.

So, I have no doubt, it was with the king of Israel. He had seen Obadiah's honesty, uprightness and truth, and prudent management of all matters committed to him, and hence he felt that it would be wise in him to have such a man at the head of his house—one whom he could depend upon as faithful and true.

There is something in real goodness, in true religion, that commends itself to the consciences of the ungodly, and makes them feel that they who have it will make the best servants, and will conduct themselves most faithfully in whatever situation they are placed.

You will never, my young friends, be losers, but rather gainers, by fearing the Lord, by walking in his ways. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Ahab did not care for Obadiah's religion; but he found that Obadiah's fear of the Lord made him a faithful, trustworthy man, and, therefore, he was glad to have him in the situation of the Governor of his house.

I. You may be ready to ask, What is meant by the fear of the Lord? Let me speak to you a little about it.

1. Suppose you knew a man who was very strong and powerful, and able to hurt you if he pleased; suppose he was a gruff-hearted, tyrannical man, and ready to do you some injury if he could lay his hands upon you, you would be afraid of him, you would get out of his way if you could. You would fear him, but you would have no love to him at all, you would do nothing for him because you liked to please him. That is not the fear that I am speaking about.

Or suppose you had a master at school who was very harsh to you and ever ready to punish you, though you were trying all you could to attend to the rules of the school, and to have your lessons, you would fear that master because he had the power over you. But you would not love him, you would not try to please him from the principle of love. Now, neither is that the fear spoken of in the text.

2. The fear of the Lord that you read of in the Bible, and which is called the beginning of wisdom, springs from love. If you love God you will fear to offend Him; you will seek to turn away from everything that would make Him angry with you, you will try to do everything that would please Him. A little girl often followed her father round when he came into the house, with this question, "Father, what can I do for you?" and never was she happier than when he gave her something to do for him. Once he said, perhaps tired with her asking, "Child, why do you ask that question so much?" "O, father," she answered, with the tears swelling in her eyes, "because I can't help it." It was love that put the question, and her readiness to undertake whatever he set her about was proof of the genuineness of her

love—she wanted always to be doing something for her father.

People sometimes are in doubt whether they love God or not, or, at least, they speak as if they were so. You can easily find out whether your heart is going out to God or not—whether your thoughts and affections are supremely centred in God. Are you often asking your Heavenly Father the same question this little child was asking her earthly father? Is it one of your first thoughts, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And do you keep on asking because you can't help it? It so fills your heart that it must come out. And you not only ask, but are on the outlook all the time to hear what He says and to do what He bids, and to forsake what He prohibits. This is the way to know whether you love God or not. And if we love Him, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, we will keep his commandments, *i.e.*, do what He says. This is the proof of the sincerity of our love, and of our fear to offend Him. My young friends, try yourselves by this test, anxiety to please God.

Take another example of fear to offend God. Little Nellie was five years old. Her mother had taken great pains to instil into her mind principles of right and truth. One day she stood at the door of the dining-room, looking with great earnestness at a basket of fine peaches that was on the table. Nellie knew she should not touch them without leave, but temptation was strong. Soon her mother, who was watching her from another room, saw her bow her head and cover her face with her little hands. "What ails you, Nellie?" she said. The child started, not knowing that she was watched. "O, mother," she exclaimed,

"I wanted so much to take one of those peaches, but first I thought I would ask God if He had any objections."

That was a little girl who was right-minded. What a path of honour and integrity will be hers through life if in all her conduct she seeks to know her Heavenly Father's will, and to do no action on which she cannot ask his blessing.

This will explain to you what is meant by the fear of the Lord. It is such love to Him that you fear to disobey his law, and at the same time delight to do what would be pleasing to Him. You love your parents, I hope, and you have good reason to do so. Your mothers have watched over you and taken care of you, and shewn you kindness in every way. Your father's have laboured to provide for you, and it is pleasure to them to see you happy and to make you comfortable. They have often pardoned you when you have done wrong, and treated you with as much kindness as ever. O! who can think of a parent's love without loving in return, and treating him with all respect and affection? You must have hearts full of ingratitude if you do not love your parents, and seek to obey and please them.

And have you not much more reason to love God? Who has done so much for you as God? He created you. He preserves you. He sent his Son into this world to suffer and to die for you. And now, if you believe in Jesus Christ He hath promised to blot out all your sins, to give you new hearts, to deliver you from the power of Satan, and to take you to heaven when you die, to be forever with Himself. Is not this most wonderful love? Now, if you love Him for

all this, and pray for his Spirit to make your hearts good and to keep them good, you will take pleasure in obeying his Word; you will remember that God is near to you, and seeing you at all times, you will tremble at his Word, you will be afraid to do anything contrary to it, and you will strive to do everything that He commands you.

That is just *the fear of the Lord.* Can you say that you have it? If you can you are happy indeed. May God keep you in this state, and then you need not fear any evil. He will do you good continually. "I will not," said a little boy, stoutly, as I passed along one day. The tone of his voice struck me. "What won't you do?" I stopped and asked. "That boy wants me *to make believe* something to my mother, *and I won't,*" he answered, in the same stout tone.

That little boy is on the right track. It is just one of those things with regard to which he ought to say "*I won't.*" I hope he will always stick to it.

II. Having told you about the fear of the Lord, what it means, I come to notice what is said further of Obadiah, that he not only feared the Lord, but did so in the days when he was young. "I, thy servant, fear the Lord *from my youth.*"

1. He began to fear the Lord in his early days. Every one should begin early to do that which is good. Nothing bad should be begun early; indeed, should never be begun at all. But everything good cannot be too soon commenced. If you want to be industrious, or diligent, or active, begin early to acquire habits of industry, and diligence, and activity. If you wish to learn anything well, any business or pro-

fession, to become master of it, and to be able to turn it to account, set yourself in early life to learn it.

So with regard to religion and the fear of the Lord. You cannot adopt and cultivate that too early. God demands the opening of your life as well as your maturity and old age, if you are spared to see it. He seeks the best of your thoughts, and feelings, and affections, and desires. He wants to have you thoroughly his from your first days. And who has a better title to your services? Has He not given you life? Does He not keep you alive? Do you not depend on Him for everything? And does He not often call away the young as well as the aged, to give an account of themselves to Him?

In the Old Testament, when God had his chosen people principally among the Jews, whom He had separated from all others, to be a peculiar nation to Himself, you will remember that in the revelation of his will, which He made to them, it was expressly enjoined upon them that they should take special care to instruct their children in the laws and ways of God, and to train them up in the knowledge and obedience of his ordinances, and statutes, and judgments. They were commanded to tell them about the passover, what it implied, and about the great deliverance from Egyptian bondage which it commemorated, as also about circumcision, and the sacrifices and other observances of divine appointment, so that they might know the claims of Jehovah upon them. "And these words," it was said to them, "which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when

thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates." In the book of Proverbs, written by Solomon, the wisdom of God (*i.e.*, Christ) is represented as saying, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

In the New Testament you find that parents are exhorted "to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." You know that Jesus, when He was upon the earth, said of the young, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." He Himself, when young, was subject to his parents (*i.e.*, obedient and submissive to them), and when only twelve years of age was found in the temple, astonishing the doctors and teachers there with his questions and his knowledge, "He grew in wisdom and in stature," we are told, "and in favour with God and man." When He had gone up to Jerusalem at the time when He was to be crucified, the people were following Him with loud acclamations of joy, and even the young people, who are generally disposed to join in any crowd, for they are anxious to know what is going on, were taking part with the rest, and crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David." When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children thus praising Him, they were sore displeased, and said unto Him, "Hearest thou what these say?" And Jesus saith unto them, "Yea, have ye never read, out of the

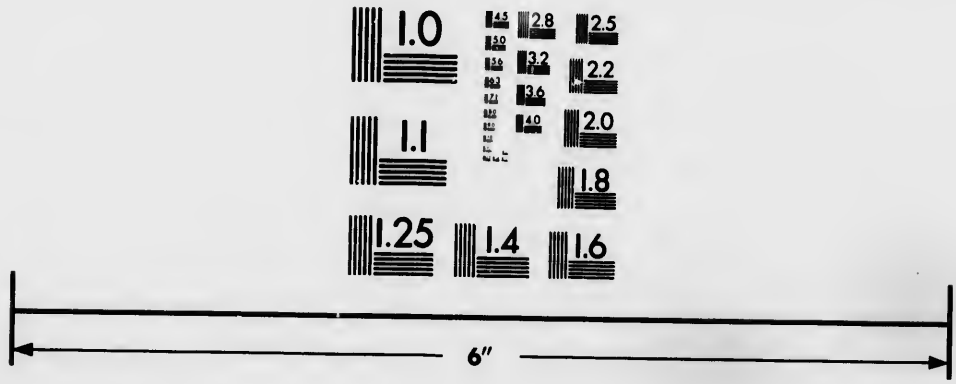
mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."

God wants the young to enter into his service, to fear Him and to love Him, and you cannot do this too early. I don't know if you have ever noticed, but it is interesting to observe how intimately usefulness and distinguished names are in the Bible connected with early piety. Abel, the first martyr for the truth was young when by faith he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord to survive the deluge and become the parent of a second world, was young when first he walked with God.

Joseph was but a youth when he began to fear the Lord, to resist temptation, and to disapprove the evil doings of his brothers. Moses was young when he refused any longer to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Joshua, the successor of Moses, was but a young man when he departed not out of the tabernacle.

Samuel, you know, was but a little child when he ministered before the Lord in the temple, girt with a linen ephod, and when he heard the call of the Lord, "Samuel, Samuel," though he supposed at first that it was the voice of the aged Eli. David, the king, was but a young man, a stripling, when he went forth against the giant Goliath, and prevailed over him, smiting him to the ground with a sling and a small stone out of the brook. He says in the 71st Psalm, "Thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my Trust *from my youth.* Cast me not off in the time of old

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503


2.8
2.5
3.2
3.6
2.2
2.0
1.8
1.6
1.1
1.0

age, forsake me not when my strength faileth." Josiah, who repaired the house of God, and brought back the people to his worship, was young when he began to seek after the God of David, his father.

Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the prophets, were young when they were called to predict the glorious things of the kingdom of Christ. Daniel, when God put his arm around him and stopped the mouths of the lions, so that they did him no harm, was young at the time. He would not violate his conscience, he would not depart from the truth of God, and on that account, as you will remember, he was cast into a den of lions with the expectation that they would soon kill and devour him. But God, who can control the most savage of beasts, as well as the wildest and most furious men, took care of his servant, and suffered them not to come near him to injure him. Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, three Hebrew youths, who were, for the same reason, because they would not bow down to an idol and worship it, cast into the burning, fiery furnace, heated seven times more than usual. The fire was so strong in the furnace that when the doors of it were opened to cast them in, the flames issuing out, slew the men who were employed to thrust them into it. But the fire had no power upon the bodies of the three Hebrew youths. The Son of God appeared walking with them in the furnace, and they were taken out of it uninjured. "Not a hair of their heads was singed, neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them." They were in danger for serving Him, and God shielded them in his Almighty arms.

Timothy was a child when he began to know the Holy

Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith that is in Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth.

You thus see, my young friends, from the Bible, that those who are generally most useful and honoured in their lives, began to fear the Lord in the days of their youth. And many instances to the same effect might be given from the records of the Church in every age. Indeed, you will learn from all that you read of Church history, and of the annals of the good and pious, that they who have been eminent for their usefulness in the cause of Christ, who have left their spiritual mark upon the world, and have exerted the greatest influence upon others, are, with rare exceptions, such as have been brought to the saving knowledge of the truth, and thus to fear the Lord from their early days.

Let me, then, urge you all to this—to follow the example of such, and to choose the one thing needful without delay. I know that the natural heart is ready to say, I will do it at some future time, I will give my heart to Jesus at another period; I know it is best to have a saving interest in Christ, because the only way of salvation is in Him, but I would rather delay thinking about it for a while. O, how foolish and sinful, too! You cannot tell whether you shall have the opportunity of seeking Christ. Death may come to you at any moment. It spares not the young any more than others. And it may seize you before you have given yourselves to the Lord.

A noble ship, while on a voyage recently from Boston to San Francisco, was overtaken by a severe storm. For several days there was reason to fear

that the crew would never see land again. Among them was a little boy, who had left a home in which God was honoured, and where he had been taught that a life of sin and neglect of the Saviour of sinners was not one which could prepare the soul to meet that Saviour in peace. One of the sailors, sitting near, in a sheltered place, when waiting for orders from the captain, remarked to him impatiently and thoughtlessly, "I wish the old ship would go down and be done with it." "I don't," was the reply of the boy, and in a half serious, half careless way, he added, "I am not prepared." The next moment the order came for the boy to go aloft. He went bravely up the frozen rigging, and out on one of the icy yards. Here his benumbed and stiffening fingers refused their office, he lost his hold and fell into the sea, while the ship drifted swiftly away before the storm. Nothing could be done to save him. He was not seen again; and thus but a few moments after the sad announcement, "I am not prepared," that sailor boy was hurried into the presence of his Maker and his Judge. How many bright and promising boys would shrink and tremble before the question, "Are you prepared?"

Remember, my dear young friends, that the icy yard-arm of a ship in a howling winter's storm, is not the only place from which one may go in a moment into another world. Is it well with your souls? Have you a home beyond the tide? How true is it that there is but a step betwixt us and death! But if you commit your all to Jesus, and if your daily trust is in Him, if now you begin to fear the Lord, you are prepared either for a long life of usefulness and honour, which I pray, may be the lot of many of

you, or to answer an early summons to the grave, should that be the will of God.

2. Obadiah continued to fear the Lord. He not only began in his youth, but he went on fearing the Lord. This is just the fulfilment of God's word, that when once He hath begun a good work in the soul, He will carry it on to perfection. The Lord will not forsake the work of his own hands. When you fear God in your youth, and are decided in resisting evil and in obeying his voice, He will carry you on in the good way and give you grace to be faithful and true in whatever circumstances you may be.

No doubt it is more difficult to stand up for Jesus and his Word in some situations than in others. Some boys and girls, and some grown up men and women are exposed to stronger temptation than others, but divine grace can keep them in the fear of the Lord if they ask it, however sinners may entice and ungodly companions and friends may tempt them to sin. It was thus with Obadiah. He was in very unfavourable circumstances for serving and obeying God Ahab was a very wicked king, as I have said, and probably most of those who were about him were wicked and profane, too. Perhaps they would mock Obadiah and call him names for his religion, and try to make him suffer for it. But he feared the Lord from his youth. He began to fear God when he was a boy, and God fulfilled his own promise to him, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." He strengthened him to persevere in what was right, and to maintain his steadfastness in the truth and love of God without any fear of the consequences.

There is an instance of that mentioned in this chapter. Ahab was a very bad king; but his wife, Jezebel, the queen, was, if possible, still worse. She had been a heathen woman, and brought her idolatry with her to Israel, making the people worship Baal, the god of her nation. She was so bent on this that she made an attempt to kill all the prophets of the Lord. She succeeded in slaying many of them. But Obadiah, though he was living in the palace of the king, was not afraid to do what he could to save the servants of the Lord, and we are told that he took one hundred of them and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them and sustained them there till they could go forth again in safety.

That was an evidence of his sincerity. It shewed that he truly loved and feared God, when he exposed his own life to danger in order to protect the cause and servants of the Lord.

And so, my young friends, let me say in conclusion to you, never be afraid to do what is right when you are clearly called upon by your own consciences and the Word of God to do it, and God will reward you for it. "Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, but rather fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell." "Blessed is the man that feareth always."

RHODA, THE YOUNG DAMSEL OF JERUSALEM:

AN

EXAMPLE OF FAITH AND PRAYER.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

In putting this address into your hands, it is my privilege thus to shake hands with you and to wish you "A Happy New Year." I have much pleasure in thus writing to you at the commencement of another year, as well as in speaking to you frequently in church, and at the Sabbath school. May the Lord Himself, by his Spirit, write his law and his gospel on all your hearts!

God has brought you all in safety through the year that is past. In his mercy He hath spared you. His goodness hath sustained you. His power hath preserved your lives. Give Him the praise. Render to Him the homage that is due.

You speak about a happy new year. But there is no happiness out of the service of Christ. He invites you to give your hearts to Him, and to enter into it. Then and only then will you answer the great end

of your being, viz., to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

The Grace of God be with you all in Jesus Christ.

I am, my dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1875.*

"And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

"And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

"And they said unto her, thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, it is his angel."—Acts xii. 13-15.

Rhoda is not a very common name. Perhaps you have never known any who had that name. There is only one in the Bible; she was a young girl or damsel, as the word is translated in Scripture. There is not much said about her. But what is written is sufficient to teach us that there was much in her character to admire, and to imitate.

As God has been pleased in his mercy to spare us to see the commencement of another year, and as I am again permitted to address you, as usual at this season, my purpose is to make what is told us regarding her, the subject of my address now. And this I do, in the hope, that by the divine blessing, the same may not

only be interesting and instructive, but profitable to all of you both for time and for eternity.

I have written to you before, in former years, of *Samuel*, who ministered to the Lord, being a child; of *Josiah*, the good young king of Judah; of *Obadiah*, who feared the Lord from his youth; of the *little captive Hebrew maid*, who was the means of directing Naaman, her master, the Syrian commander, to Elisha for the cure of his leprosy; of *Timothy*, who knew the Scriptures from his childhood; and of *Jesus Christ* Himself, who increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour both with God and with man. And now I shall direct your attention to the history and character of Rhoda, so far as we have it recorded to us.

She lived in Jerusalem, the city of the great king. Though there must have been many young women of godly character, who sought the Lord in their early days, and who also belonged to the city, the capital of the country, yet of all the young people who dwelt in it, she alone is honoured to have her name recorded in the Bible, and thus handed down from age to age, as one of the favoured of the Lord, and worthy to hold a prominent place in the inspired annals of the Church and people of God. How many who had inherited, or acquired great wealth, or who had attained high honour and fame in the world; or who had possessed other attractions amongst their fellowmen, have passed away unheard of and unknown! But this young damsel, the spirit of Christ hath seen meet to honour with a place in the sacred narrative, and to record what she did, and how she acted in certain circumstances. All the disciples of Christ have not this honour, though she had it. But of all the Lord's people

in every place, and of you if you stand by the truth and serve Christ, and follow on to know Him, it shall be found true, that whilst the memory of the wicked shall perish, the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance.

The damsel named Rhoda is mentioned in connection with Peter's deliverance out of prison In those early days of the Church, when it was first planted, and for ages after, it was scarcely possible to be a Christian without suffering open persecution. Jesus warned his disciples of this. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." Saul, who afterwards became Paul the Apostle, was the great persecutor of the Church soon after the ascension of Christ. In his days of enmity to Jesus, and to the truth, Stephen was put to death. He was the first martyr for the cause of Christ.

In the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, James the brother of John, one of the twelve fell a victim to the bitter hatred and cruelty of Herod. Finding that this murderous act was agreeable to the Jews, he proceeded to take steps for putting Peter also to death. With this view, as it was the time of the Passover, he simply put him in prison in the meantime, intending to present him to the people, when the feast was over, that they might put forth their malice against him. But the Lord Himself mercifully interposed for his deliverance.

The Christians in the city met together and prayed God in behalf of Peter, that he might be released from the hands of Herod. God was pleased to answer

their prayers in a very signal manner. On the very night before the day when Herod was to bring him out to the people, and whilst Peter was quietly sleeping between two soldiers, and bound to them by two chains, one on each side, the angel of the Lord appeared, and awakening him out of sleep, bade him rise up quickly. His chains at once loosed, and he stood up on his feet. At the further command of the angel, he put on his sandals and cast his garment about him, following the angel through all the doors and prison gates, till they came to the street. Then after a little while, the angel left him, and Peter, though it was dark, recognized where he was, and that it was no vision that he had seen. He went on to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the Evangelist. It was there no doubt that the Christians had been accustomed to meet for divine worship, and of course he wanted to let his friends know of his wonderful release. It is very likely that he did not know of their being at this time assembled for prayer in his behalf.

When he had come to the door and knocked at the gate, a damsel, named Rhoda, having heard the knocking, ran at once to hearken. Before opening she would take the precaution of listening, so as to find out, if possible, who was there, and what was wanted. You are to bear in mind that it was in the middle of the night, and also that the disciples were aware of the hostile feelings of the Jews towards them. Rhoda, therefore, would not open the door at once, lest she might let in any spies or informers, or, it may be, soldiers to apprehend some of them. But as Peter spoke she immediately knew his voice, and in the ecstasy of her

joy, instead of opening the door, she ran in hastily to tell the meeting that Peter was without. They would not believe her, though they had been asking God for his deliverance. They told her that she was mad, or out of her mind. But, though they all united in saying that it must be his angel, she still persisted in her affirmation. And it was found true. For when they had opened the door he came in, and declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison, and given him his liberty from the hands of his deadly enemies. He then departed and went into another place.

Now, in this story of Peter's release from prison, we have all that is known of this damsel who was at the prayer meeting of the church in Jerusalem; yet there is enough to present to us the possession of a heart and character, on her part, which it becometh you all to value and seek after.

I. We gather a good deal regarding her from *her name*, Rhoda. Rhoda means a rose, and it is probable that this name may have been given to her, not originally, but afterwards, as the custom often was in those times, on account of her disposition and character.

A rose is one of the most beautiful and sweet smelling of flowers. There are none of you who do not know this. You all like to look at roses in a garden during the season of summer, when they are in full bloom. And if you are allowed to pluck one, or if it is given to you, you are very glad and think much of it. This flower has in all ages, and in all countries where it grows, been highly prized. And it

is customary to compare to a rose any one who has superior attractions or usefulness, or beauty of form, or of character, either mental, or moral, or spiritual. Our Lord, the God-man, possessed of every excellence in perfection, says of Himself, "I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley."

Now, the name of Rhoda, by which this young damsel in Jerusalem was known, implies,

1. That she must have been possessed of an amiable, attractive, beautiful character. Whatever personal beauty she may have had outwardly, there can be no doubt that she was one, who, from what we read of her, and from the place where she was found that night, had given her heart to Christ, and, therefore, had been changed and renewed by divine grace. It is this that produces the beauties of holiness, the fruits of the Spirit, and consequently adorns the character in the eyes of all, even the ungodly themselves. You may have many mental attainments—you may have personal beauty, to be admired by others—you may have riches, and everything in this world to please yourselves and to draw others around you, but nothing will really make you lovely and truly amiable but divine grace implanted in the heart. All other excellence will wither and fade away, and will soon disappear altogether from your grasp. But grace never will. It is inextinguishable and undecaying. It dwells in and sanctifies your spirit, it subdues all evil, it implants all good, and makes it flourish and grow, till itself is changed in the moment of dissolution into glory in the heavenly kingdom.

Oh! seek this above everything else. Jesus Christ gives it to them that come to Him. Without it, you

are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, unlovely in the sight of God, and angels, and holy beings. With it you are precious in the sight of God, clothed in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, your sins are all forgiven, your hearts are filled with love to God, and love to Christ, and love to all his people, and glowing with anxiety for the welfare of all around you. It was said of our Lord in his younger days, "The Grace of God was upon Him." So will it be with you if you would be like Him. Let your daily prayer therefore be, "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me."

2. The name Rhoda implies that she was one who sought to be useful, and to exhibit the preciousness of the truth to others.

Take a rose, and put it into a room, or go into a garden, where there is a bed of roses, and you at once discern their presence by the sweet-scented odour they emit. So young people, who know the truth, and love Christ, and delight to obey the commandments of Christ, will be known, wherever they go. They will carry about with them the savour of the knowledge of Christ, so that others will immediately perceive their character, and, recognize them as the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. If this be so with you, you will be obedient to your parents, for that was the marked feature of the boyhood of Jesus—the Rose of Sharon—you will be kind to your brothers and sisters and companions—no rude conduct, no rough, unseemly words will mark your intercourse with them, you will love the law, and the Word, and the cause, and the day, and the ordinances of Christ—you will try to

warn any of your young friends whom you know, or whom you suspect to be careless, of their evil ways—you will speak to them about their need of salvation in Christ, and you will so act at all times, as to make others feel, though you do not say a word in favour of yourselves, that you have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him. "The king's daughter is all glorious within." The child of God, born of his Spirit, and brought into his family again, has clothing of wrought gold. "Her garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia out of the ivory palaces," containing the precious things of salvation, and which alone can impart fragrance, as well as spiritual beauty to the character and conduct of any.

II. I observe, secondly, that though Rhoda was young, yet she joined herself to the Lord's people—the disciples of Christ. Her delight was with the saints, the excellent of the earth.

There is nothing mentioned regarding her parents, not even their names, or of how she had been brought up, or whether they had embraced the faith of Christ. Perhaps she may herself have seen or heard Jesus Christ, when she was a very little girl, as He went about in Jerusalem, and spoke to the public in the temple or in the streets, and wrought miracles of mercy; for this incident about Peter occurred only about seven years after his crucifixion. Or her parents, if they formed part of the hundred and twenty disciples, who assembled in the large upper room after his ascension, may have taught her the truth as it is in Jesus, and spoken to her of his works of mercy and love, and of all his sufferings and cruel death upon

the cross, to atone for the sins of men, and reconcile them to God. However that may be, whatever meant had been made effectual by the Holy Spirit, her hears had been drawn to the Saviour. She had heard of his matchless love to mankind, and what He had submitted to for her salvation—she had thought of it, till her heart was melted and subdued, and she had been brought to say with Peter, "Lord, to whom can I go, but unto Thee." She became one of the lambs of Christ's flock. Though there were wolves around, ready to devour the sheep of Christ's flock—though his followers were hated and reproached, and persecuted, and their relatives would have nothing to do with them, yet she cast in her lot with them, and said, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God will be my God."

This was to her a blessed choice. It made her one with Christ, and one with God by the Spirit dwelling in her heart. It put her in possession of all that is valuable in time, and of all that is blessed and glorious beyond the grave. She had her sins forgiven—she had the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness to make her comely and perfect in the sight of God—she had Jesus as her Almighty Friend to protect and keep her from all evil—to do her good continually, and to bring her to his own heavenly kingdom at last, there to behold the face of God forever, and there to dwell with ravishing delight among the glorified saints above. Is not this a portion beyond all price? "Happy is the people that is in such a case, yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

The same blessed state you may attain to, if you

will but go to Christ and give your hearts to Him. He came into this world, and laid down his life upon the cross, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. He wrought out redemption for lost sinners, and that redemption He offers you without money, and without price. He bids you all come to Him. He stands at the door of your heart, knocking for admittance, ready to come in and bless you. And does He not further say for your encouragement, "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me," and "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out"?

You are naturally disposed to think, and some people will not hesitate to tell you, that it will be time enough to think of your souls and eternity, when you have entered upon the concerns of business, or when you can no longer enjoy the pleasures of sin and the world. But remember how the inspired writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes warns youth against the idea that they may go on safely in a course of sin and forgetfulness of God. "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." When even the children in the temple were shouting out in praise of Christ, and crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" and when the Scribes and Pharisees found fault, and wished Him to make them desist, Jesus was displeased, and said, "Yea, have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" You know too how He took

up infants in his arms and blessed them, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." Does not all this teach us the great anxiety He has that the young should come to Him, and enter into his service, and love and obey Him from their earliest years?

Then further, Jesus Christ is entitled to your love and homage, from the very beginning of your life. He is entitled to have your youngest as well as your oldest period of life. "Them that honour Me I will honour."

If you delay to give your hearts to Him now, and to take your place among his people, you are only making it more difficult for you to do so afterwards—you are, by refusing to obey his gracious invitations, only binding the cords of sin more strongly around your hearts. On the other hand, you will find that most of those of whom we read, in the Bible, as eminent servants of God, were from the days of their youth lovers of Himself, and his truth and his cause.

It is interesting to observe how intimately usefulness and distinguished names are associated in the Bible with early piety. Abel, the first fruit of redemption was young, when "by faith he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Noah, who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord," to survive the deluge, and become the parent of a second world, was young when first he walked with God.

Joseph was a youth when he resisted courtly temptation, and became the life of all Israel. Moses was young when by faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Joshua was a young man when he departed not out of the tabernacle.

Samuel, the honoured prophet, was but a child, when to the Lord's call, "Samuel, Samuel," he answered, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." David was a lad, when at midnight, keeping his father's flocks, he contemplated the glory of God in the firmament, and sang praises upon the harp. He was but a stripling when God stood by him in the valley with sling and stone to slay the giant. Josiah who repaired the house of the Lord, and brought back the people to his worship "began, while he was yet young, to seek after the God of David his father."

Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, were but young when their hearts swelled in the prospect of the coming Redeemer. Daniel was young when God put his arms around him in the lion's den. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were young, when they walked unhurt within the burning fiery furnace.

Paul was young, when the Lord appeared to him on his way to Damascus; for we read, that shortly before that, at the death of Stephen, the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. Timothy was a child when first he knew the Holy Scripture. And John, the beloved disciple, was young when "he leaned on Jesus' breast at supper."

Give thy youth to the Lord, and then "being planted in the house of the Lord, you shall flourish in the courts of our God."

III. Rhoda was a young damsel of prayer. She loved the prayer-meeting and was there.

It was a time of great anxiety with the Christians in Jerusalem. Peter had been cast into prison.

James had been killed by the orders of Herod. There was great fear that Peter would suffer in a similar manner. And if Peter or any of the other apostles might have been put to death, so might any of the private members of the Church. In these circumstances they betook themselves to God, the refuge of his people in every age. They had no public building or sanctuary to go to; but they held their prayer-meeting in a private house, the house of Mark's mother.

In holding this meeting, they were in great danger of their lives. The opposing Jews might have heard of the place where they had met. The Roman soldiers would have readily obeyed the orders given them, so that at any time the house might have been invaded, and some of the assembled people either imprisoned or put to death.

Yet, notwithstanding the danger to which the followers of Christ were thus exposed at their meeting, Rhoda was there. There is not any particular ground for believing that she was a servant in the house, though she is generally spoken of in that way. I am inclined to think, that she was not an inmate of the house, but had come along with the others to join her petitions with theirs, and to help in knocking at the door of heaven. And the fact of her going to the gate, when the knocking outside was heard, simply intimates her desire to be of service to the Church.

When Rhoda was present at such a meeting, and in such a period of danger, it is evident that she was no stranger to prayer, that she had been in the habit of engaging in it, that she loved to pray, and had experienced the benefit of doing so. Many who profess

to be the members of the body of Christ, are seldom or never found at a prayer meeting. They may frame excuses for absence, and say that they can pray at home; but it is generally found true of such persons, that they are not patterns to others in that respect. On the contrary, it will be borne out by experience, that they who generally take their place at prayer meetings are such as are most assiduous and exemplary in the exercise, not only in secret and private, but in their families, and in all circumstances.

Such, I doubt not, was the case with Rhoda. Indeed, every one, who is truly Christ's, will be given to prayer. It was the first religious act that is recorded of Paul, as soon as he was converted. The Lord thus pointed him out to Ananias. "Go unto the street that is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one Saul of Tarsus, *for behold he prayeth.*" So Rhoda had learned to pray, and to delight in prayer, as every child of God will do.

You need mercy and grace every day, yea, continually. You are invited to ask, and you shall receive, to seek and you shall find, to knock, and it shall be opened unto you. God who is possessed of all fulness, is waiting to bestow upon you all that you require. And Jesus, the great Advocate and Intercessor of his people, will present your prayer and procure their acceptance. "I know," He said to his Father, "that Thou hearest Me always." "You may ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you."

And if thus you delight in prayer, confessing your sins, and seeking to be washed in the fountain of Christ's blood, telling God all your difficulties and burdens and fears, and asking strength from Him to

enable you to flee from all sin, to resist temptation, and to follow after all that is good—if thus you are in the habit of daily prayer, you will love the prayer meeting. Young people should be there as well as grown-up people, for God has promised specially to be there: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He heard the prayers of his anxious waiting people at Jerusalem for the deliverance of Peter; and it is written for the encouragement of all, both old and young, with reference to Christian conference, and meetings for prayer. "They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard; and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name; and they shall be mine in that day, when I make up my jewels."

IV. Rhoda was eminent in faith too. She believed in God. She felt persuaded that He would fulfil his word, and that He would answer prayer. Accordingly, as soon as she heard Peter's voice she recognized it, and ran back to the company of disciples to tell them that Peter was at the gate.

Now, you would have expected that they would gladly receive her intelligence, as it furnished convincing evidence that the object for which they prayed had been attained, even the release of Peter. But they did not. Though they had been asking God to do this very thing, viz., to deliver Peter from the hands of his enemies, yet they acted as if they had no expectation that their supplications would be heard, as if they did not believe that the result would follow. And

not only so, but when Rhoda, with breathless haste, and a heart full of anxiety to give vent to her joyful feelings, cried out, "Peter is at the gate," they said to her, "Rhoda, thou art mad, thou art out of thy mind." They heard her words, as the words of one who had lost her reason, and knew not what she was saying. But she knew well enough what she was doing. She felt that she was not deceived in the matter. She had been familiar with the voice of Peter, having often seen him, and heard him preach the Gospel, and probably having sometimes spoken to him.

Moreover, she felt that it was only an answer to their prayer, and therefore she persisted in affirming that it was even as she had said. And Rhoda was right. God had heard the anxious cry of his people and sent his angel to set his servant Peter at liberty. They were induced to go to the door, and, without any doubt, Peter stood there—a living testimony to the faithfulness of God, and to the efficacy of prayer. They who offered up the prayer were slow of heart to believe; yet He was faithful and true as ever. Peter came in and rehearsed, to their astonished ears, all that the Lord had done.

Rhoda's faith stands out in striking contrast to that of the whole company of the disciples. You thus learn the truth of Jesus' words to his Father, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, but hast revealed them unto babes." Rhoda was probably but as a babe compared with the rest of the assembly in many things. They may not have regarded her as in any way superior to them; but she honoured the Lord—she believed that He would listen to the voice

of his own—that He would care for them, and grant their request. The Lord honoured her in return by making her the medium of communicating the fulfilment of their desire to his distrustful disciples, and by giving her faith a place of remembrance in the midst of the Church at all times and in all ages, till He come the second time, to clear up all mysteries, and to gather his saints to Himself.

Jesus might have said to each one of the assembled members of the Church on that night, as He had done before to his disciples, after the storm, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt." And justly might He thus address many still. For, notwithstanding all the testimonies that have been borne to the power of prayer, how often is prayer uttered, as if there were no thought of an answer, or as if an answer were not expected. Hence the failure of so many prayers. "Ye have not because ye ask amiss." And when the apostle James exhorts every one to pray, he says, "But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind, and tossed, and let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

Rhoda's conduct is very encouraging to the young. It shews that you may have strong faith given you, as well as others, and perhaps above others. It is to the heart that the Lord looks, and if your hearts are full of love to Jesus, and you honour Him as the true and faithful witness, He will honour you with greater faith, and more abundant grace to shine in the beauties of holiness.

An example of this I was privileged to have in my

Bible class, last summer. One of its members was a young man, attending College, in Toronto. He was the son of highly esteemed Christian parents. His father was once a resident in Toronto, and an elder in the congregation, but now occupying an important position elsewhere. When he came to the class, I was struck not only with his intimate acquaintance with divine truth, but with his beautiful, consistent character in every way, and his real anxiety to grow in grace himself, and to lead others to the Saviour. I ascertained afterwards, that he was abundant in prayer, and in daily communion with Christ. This was the secret of his eminently devoted life, above many of his years. He was a young man of much promise, and wished to enter the ministry of the Gospel. But he is not here, for God suddenly took him, and now he serves in the Church triumphant the Lord and Master whom he loved so fervently on earth.

Let me say to you, therefore, have faith in Christ. Make it your earnest prayer with the disciples, "Lord increase our faith." You have his own encouraging words, "If ye shall ask anything of the Father in my name, He will do it." When you go to your father or your mother to make any request of them, you expect them to grant it, if they have said that they will do it. And why not deal thus with the Lord? "He hath never said to any of the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain."

V. I might have said further regarding Rhoda, that she was ready for any service in connection with the Lord's work, whatever the Lord laid to her hand to do. She heard the knocking at the outer gate, whilst

they were engaged in the exercises of divine worship, and she did not wait for others to go to the door, but at once she hastened to be of service to the Church. And so should you be ready to do anything at any time, by which others may be benefited, and the Church served. You may think that it is but little that you can do. But whatever it is that you have the means and the opportunity of doing for Christ or his people, either in speaking or acting, or giving for Christ, do it humbly, but earnestly, and "even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward."

I have thus endeavoured to set before you an example of faith and prayer, and love to Jesus. Rhoda, young and otherwise unknown, as she was, had a place assigned her in the sacred Record. This you cannot have. But one thing you may have, and that is *grace*. It will secure to you riches that will endure for ever. It will clothe you in white raiment. It will write your name with indelible ink in the Book of Life.

How can you get it? Do as Mary did. Sit at the feet of Jesus. He bids you welcome. He knows all your feelings, all your difficulties, doubts, and fears. He will not send you away. He will not say that you are too young. He is the Saviour of all—the young, as well as of grown persons. All your sins He will take away. All needful grace He will give you. If you have Him as your Friend, you will have all you need for time and for eternity. He will guide you by his counsel while here, and afterwards receive you to glory.

"THE LORD'S JEWELS."

My Dear Young Friends,—

We have all been spared in God's mercy during another year. And I desire, as usual, to offer you some words of instruction, and warning, and encouragement, with the earnest prayer that God, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, may apply them to your hearts and consciences, according to your need.

There are many, and I doubt not you all know some, who appeared at the commencement of the year that is past as likely to live as any of us; yet now they are numbered with those who once dwelt upon the earth, and who have gone into the eternal world. Husbands and wives have been separated by the stroke of death—parents and children—brothers and sisters also—and they shall never meet again till the last trumpet shall summon all from their graves, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment."

Which of us, during the present year on which we have entered, shall be called away, none can tell but God alone. But surely the absorbing question ought to be with each of us: In what direction am I journeying? Is it towards God, or away from Him? Is it upwards to heaven, or downwards to the place of

darkness? Have I given my heart to Christ, and entered into his service? or am I still afar off from Christ, never yet brought nigh to God by the blood of his cross?

May the Holy Spirit guide your feet in the way of peace, and direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ, that so your lives may be lives of usefulness in his Church, if God spare you; and that at length you may be honoured to be acknowledged as the Lord's jewels in that day, when he shall judge the secrets of men by his Gospel.

I am, my dear young friends,

Your affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1876.*

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—Malachi iii., 17.

You all know what jewels are. They are ornaments, generally of much value, worn by people of wealth or rank to adorn their persons. You read sometimes of Queens or Princesses, or others of high station, that on great occasions, when they appear in public, they have about them jewels of great worth. A jewel usually means, not so much an ornament of gold or silver, as an ornament of valuable metal, such as gold, having a precious stone fixed in it. This is what makes a jewel so highly prized, not that it con-

tains the purest metal, but that it has a stone set in the same. The distinction lies not in the metal, but in the character of the stone.

Now, you may be ready to say: How can this be true of God? You surely do not mean to say that God has any such ornaments, or that Jesus Christ, when He was on the earth, put any value upon such ornaments. Certainly not. The expression, when applied to the persons here mentioned, is figurative. It means those who are precious in the sight of God, in whom He delights. You may remember, for example, the description which is given of the heavenly city in the Revelation of John. "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

This does not signify that there are material walls in heaven, having foundations of these precious stones —it is intended only to intimate that, as such a city and such walls would be something grand and magnificent on earth, so the heavenly city must be surpassingly excellent and glorious, far beyond our highest imagination to conceive. In like manner, when here the Lord speaks to us of having jewels, and that He

will make them up, and keep them safe in his possession, as his choicest property, and as the objects which He will display before an assembled universe, He means *His own children*—those who are exceedingly dear to Him, in whom He delights above all else, and whom He will at length bring all in safety and happiness, to dwell with Him for evermore, as the triumphs of his grace, and the trophies of his redeeming, conquering power.

The Lord has always had his jewels. In the very first family that was upon the earth, the family of Adam, Abel was one of them, and though his elder brother, Cain, rose up against him in the field and slew him, yet he was precious in the sight of God, and, being dead, he yet speaketh to us by his example and by his testimony. Even in the worst times, He has had his beloved ones, witnesses of his truth, righteous, and faithful. You know that when all flesh had corrupted their way, and the flood was sent to cover the earth, and to destroy every living thing upon it, Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord, and he and all his family were saved from destruction, and peopled the earth again. In the time of the wicked King Ahab, the king of Israel, when Elijah in ignorance complained, "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left; and they seek my life, to take it away," the Lord replied to him, for his comfort and assurance, "I have left Me seven thousand in Israel; all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." And so also in the days of Malachi, the prophet who wrote this part of the Bible, the last prophet of the Old Testament, about

four hundred years before Christ, at a period when wickedness overspread the land, there were those who lifted up a banner, and displayed it, because of the truth, and whom God guarded, therefore, as the apple of his eye, his peculiar treasure. It is of them that He speaks in the words from which we are to address you, and concerning whom He says, "And they shall be mine in that day, when I make up my jewels."

I am sure, my young friends, that this is an honour which you would all wish to have, even to be acknowledged and welcomed at last, as his beloved ones, his jewels. And in this confidence, I desire to call your attention (I.) to the character of those whom the Lord regards as peculiarly his children, and whom He will publicly recognize as his jewels or special treasure in the day of his appearing. I shall then consider (II.) why they may be called *his jewels*. And may God give you all the needed grace to seek this inestimable privilege and honour, above everything else. You may set your hearts upon many things, and try to obtain them; but nothing of all that you can acquire on this earth can you carry with you beyond the grave; and if, for the sake of anything earthly or temporal, you have neglected the great salvation of Jesus Christ, and not sought in earnest a saving interest in his work, you will be constrained to feel, to your unutterable dismay, when too late, that "the harvest is past, the summer ended, and you not saved."

I. Who are they whom the Lord will own, and present as his jewels, when He cometh to judge the world with his holy angels? They are his own people, young and old, wherever they are throughout the earth, or

whatever is their outward condition—all who love and serve Him, and obey his will. The Apostle Paul speaks of those whom he had been the means of bringing from sin and misery to Christ and salvation, as his "joy and crown." He rejoiced over them as once lost, but now found—as once afar off, but now made nigh by the blood of his cross—as once heirs of hell, but now heirs of heaven, not by any power of his, but simply through his labours, as the instrument in God's hand. And he would wear them as a crown or emblem of honour. The Queen values her crown as the symbol of high dignity, and so the Apostle would esteem his converts as his highest mark of distinction and glory. All his toils, and sufferings, and hardships, and persecutions, endured in the work of preaching Christ, and in building up his cause among men, were compensated by the fact of his being honoured to save some perishing souls from everlasting destruction. He says to the Thessalonian converts, "Ye are our glory and joy."

In a far higher sense does the Lord Jesus regard his people whom He hath purchased by the sacrifice which He offered up of Himself on Calvary. Having given Himself for them, and thus ransomed them at the costly price of his own blood, they are very dear to Him; for that which we get into our possession at a great price, we value very highly.

On the other hand, they love Him because He first loved them, and redeemed them from sin, and Satan, and death. They love Him with supreme affection. They feel that they are not their own, but his; and therefore, to honour Him and to do his will is now their constant aim from day to day. You may know

them by their hatred of sin, and their love of holiness, by their delight in Jesus Christ, and in the things that are his—in his day, in his truth, in his sanctuary, in his worship, and in his ordinances. You may know them by their meek and kindly and benevolent disposition, by their anxiety to get good, and to do good to all.

Wherever you find such boys or girls, or grown up men and women, you find the jewels of the Lord. But whilst we speak of the Lord's jewels by this designation in general—I mean, by saying that they are his people, whom He hath called and sanctified, and thus made partakers of his Holy Spirit, to guide them, and to enable them to fight their way to the heavenly land—we have in the passage under consideration a description of them in several particulars, pointing out certain features of character by which you may all try yourselves whether or not you know anything of them in your own experience, and are thus able or not to take to yourselves the comforts and blessings of an assured faith.

1. *They feared the Lord.* The Psalmist says in one place, "God is great and greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him." And again addressing God, he says, "Thou, even Thou alone, art He that should be feared; and who is he that may stand up in thy sight if once Thou art angry?" He is to be feared, because He is able to destroy as well as to save. You recollect how our Lord said to his disciples, "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but rather fear Him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell."

The fear of God, however, which arises from the thought of his power to punish or to destroy, is not the fear that is here spoken of. That may exist in the mind whilst wickedness is retained, and the heart is not changed. We read that "the devils believe and tremble;" *i.e.*, they believe in the Omnipotence and Majesty of God, in his ability to cast down to perdition, and yet tremble or are afraid as they think of Him. Thus, wicked people, whose consciences accuse them of wilful, habitual sins, are alarmed when they think of the character of God as unchangeably holy, and that He will not allow impenitent transgressors to escape unpunished. Their fear is of the same nature as that which a slave has of his tyrannical master. There is no love to him in the heart, no desire to please him, no anxiety to promote his interests. There is simply subjection on the ground of his mastery and of his power to inflict punishment.

But the fear of God that is found in the hearts of his people is the fear of offending Him, because they love Him supremely. If you love your parents with sincere affection, you will refrain from everything that would offend them—you will not hurt their feelings if you can help it—you will try in every way to please them—you will fear to incur their displeasure.

In like manner you will fear God, just because you love Him; you will ever think of Him with reverence—you will shrink from doing anything that would offend Him. For example, a boy who truly fears God will not give utterance to an oath with his tongue, or indulge it even in his thoughts, because it is dishonouring to the name and character of his

Heavenly Father. He will keep holy the Sabbath day, because God gives the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and he knows that God would be displeased with any profanation of his own day. He will endeavour to keep all the commandments of God, because God expects and demands that they who are his should honour Him in the eyes of others as witnesses of his truth. And hence you read in one of the Psalms, "Blessed is the man who feareth always, and delighteth greatly in his commandments." He rejoiceth in the law of God, and therefore he fears to transgress it. To the same effect it is said, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him." Fear is not inconsistent with true happiness; on the contrary, the two always accompany each other. The fear of a slave, indeed, is attended with torment, but the fear of a loving child has no discomfort, but rather joy in the presence of the father who is loved and honoured. A boy was once tempted by his companions to take some ripe fruit from a tree which his father had forbidden him to touch. "You need not be afraid," they said to him, with the view of inducing him to yield to their temptation, "for your father is so good and kind that even if he knew you had taken it, he would not punish you." The boy at once replied, "For that very reason I ought not to touch that fruit, for though my father would not hurt me, my disobedience would hurt my father." This boy did not do what he was forbidden to do because he was afraid that his father would punish him, but because he loved and honoured his father so much that he could not bear to do anything that would make him angry or displeased.

This fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—the beginning of a wise and holy course of life. Blessed are all they who have it. It is worth all other knowledge and wisdom so called; and in order that you may ascertain whether or not you have it, take this test from the Word of God. "The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." Can you say, my young friends, that you are striving day by day to depart from evil? Can you say with truth, that you hate sin, and are turning away from it; that you are seeking more and more to be like Christ who did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips? When He made supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save, He was heard in that He feared. If you are his children you will, like Him, be ever filled with reverence and fear towards God in your prayers, and in all that you do, loving the good and forsaking the bad.

2. It is said of those whom the Lord shall own as his jewels, that they "*thought upon his name.*" I need scarcely say to you that whatever you love and value most highly, will occupy your minds most largely and frequently. It will rarely be absent from your thoughts. If any of your companions have an object different from yours, and you cannot get them away from such, you are ever ready to say to them, Oh! you are always thinking of that. Well, of course they are, because their hearts are set upon it. So it is with all who love and fear God. Of the ungodly you read that it is one distinguishing mark that "God is not in all their thoughts." They do not honour or love God; they do not care to be in the family of God, and hence their affections are not set

on the things that are above. Let them have earthly comforts, and the means and opportunity of satisfying the flesh and pleasing themselves, and they are content.

But the people of God have their thoughts ever going out to Him as the God with whom they have to do, the fountain of all mercy and grace, the author of salvation in Jesus Christ. They think of his wondrous compassion, his love and wisdom in providing salvation for lost sinners of mankind. They think with astonishment and praise of all that God has provided, and the Lord Jesus hath procured for our ruined race; and they think with adoring gratitude of the work of grace in their own hearts, drawing their affections into the right channel, turning their feet into the way of peace, making them partakers of a Divine nature, and heirs of everlasting life and glory.

And then further, as the name of God may include all that pertains to the work and cause of God upon the earth, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the words we are considering may mean, that the children of God take a deep interest in, and think much of the building up of the Church and kingdom of the Messiah. They not only have this object habitually in their thoughts, but they put forth their efforts in every way to do good to others around them, and to send the Gospel over all the earth. It is easy to say that you think much of the name of God; but do you prove that by your anxieties and efforts to bring careless, unconcerned boys and girls with whom you are daily coming into contact, to the Saviour, Jesus Christ?

You can all do something for the Lord, if you are

really thinking of his name. I cannot tell you how you are specially to do this; but where there is a will there is a way. I remember, now a good many years ago, there lived in a cottage a little boy, about seven years of age, lying on a small bed. He was pale and thin, but he was happy in Jesus Christ. This dear boy loved the Saviour, and thought upon his name continually. This was all his joy, just like a boy of the same age whom I used to visit, and who after several months of severe illness, borne with much patience, was taken away from his parents some weeks ago in this city. They were both lambs in Jesus' fold. The Holy Spirit had changed their hearts and directed them into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ. The other boy to whom I referred first, had a mother who was very kind to him, but who knew and cared nothing about his dear Saviour. He used often to pray for her, as he was lying on his sick bed, "Lord give thy Spirit to my dear mother, and make her love Jesus Christ." He was never tired of praying this prayer, and at length it was answered. The mother sat with her work by her little son's side, and he used to talk to her and tell her about Jesus, and repeat psalms and hymns which he had learned at the Sabbath school, and texts of scripture to her. And God did not forget the good child's prayers, but sent his Spirit into her heart, and she began to love Jesus, and to follow Him. You may conceive how glad he was when he saw this, and how he thanked God for hearing and answering his prayer.

The father was a very bad man. He used to get drunk, and then come home to curse and swear, and to be cruel to his wife and children. So the poor

wife who had learned to love Jesus, used, after her boy's death, to pray for her husband as the departed boy had done for her, and after many attempts she got him to go to the church with her. He went Sabbath after Sabbath, and God blessed what he heard there. He left off his evil habits, and became steady, and quiet, and God-fearing, slowly but effectually. The Holy Spirit led him to the Saviour, who never cast out any who came to Him in penitence and faith.

Thus you see that this little boy was the means of leading both his parents to love and serve God. And oh! what a happy meeting will they have in heaven! Do not think that, because you are young, you can do no good. Remember this case. Pray to God to give you the heart to think upon his name, and then you will be anxious to be the instrument of good to others, and God will honour you therein.

3. It is said of those whom the Lord will own as his jewels on the last day, that "they spake often one to another." Generally when people meet, or come together into one place, they have conversation, sometimes about one thing, and sometimes about another. If they are friends, they speak of subjects which interest them mutually, and regarding which they are concerned. People that are careless and indifferent about Divine things, who don't mind the truth of God and his claims upon them, but rather the pleasures and vanities of the world, will encourage one another in their ungodly habits. On the other hand, they who are good, and delight in that which is good, will delight to commune about God, and the interests of their souls, and they will try to help one another forward in the path of holiness.

Now it is plain, from the character of the persons referred to in the passage that we are considering, that the things which formed the subjects of conversation among them were such as we have just mentioned—God, and the things of God, and the great interests of eternity. Our Lord Himself tells us, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If you have your heart set on things that are good, you will not only think much of them, but you will delight to speak of them to others. If you see a number of boys whom you know to be idle and reckless, and mischievous, congregated at a street corner, and in close intercourse together, you may be pretty sure that they are relating some of their evil doings, or concocting what they would not care others should know. On the other hand, when you observe those who are known to be lovers of Jesus and his work meeting together, you at once think of them as speaking of what may be to their profit, or at any rate not forming plans of iniquity.

But I suppose that what is principally meant by the words, as we find them in Malachi, is Christian fellowship or conference in prayer, or conversation, or in the observance of Divine ordinances. It was a time of great wickedness in the land of Israel. The priests and the people of all classes had forsaken the Lord, and profaned his temple, and trampled on his authority, so that the great mass of the nation seemed to have been regarded as turning away from the true worship of God. There was, however, a remnant who feared God, and thought upon his name. They met together when they had the opportunity, as in the days of persecution the true members of the

Church have been compelled to meet on the mountain side or in the dens and caves of the earth, to hold communion with their Lord and with one another, as having the same precious faith, and the same holy love and hope. They would in this way keep alive the knowledge of God, and of his truth, and worship, till better days in the providence of God came around.

To love the Word of God, and to entreat with David, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law"—to delight in prayer, and to practise it—to love the prayer meeting—to take pleasure in the house of God and its ordinances, are never-failing marks of God's children. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising Thee. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." And then, when you speak together, as you meet, of the things of God, and your own spiritual welfare, and that of others—when you unite in saying to those around you by all your ways, as well as by your words, "We are journeying to the land of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel," is it not an encouraging thought that the Lord hearkens and hears, and writes all in his book of remembrance, to be produced for your approval on the day of his appearing to judge the world? If wicked people, young or old, can combine for evil, why should not they who love Christ and his cause unite for good? May the Lord the Spirit guide you effectually, so that many of you may go forth as a band whose hearts the Lord

hath touched, to do His will, to fight his battles, to be steadfast and unwavering in his cause.

I have thus sought to present for your imitation the character of those who shall be gathered together as the precious jewels of the Lord on the great day. *They fear God. They think upon his name. They speak one to another.*

II. And now, in the second place, let us inquire what is implied in their being called by the Lord *his own* on that day when He maketh up his jewels.

1. Jewels are not common—they are not often found. There are only some places where they are procured—in different parts of India, in Brazil, and within the last few years they have been discovered in the south of Africa. Even in the mines, or the soil out of which they are taken, it is only rarely that you meet with diamonds or jewels of very great value. The large proportion of them are such as do not command a very high price, though still reckoned valuable, more so than any other stones that are classed under the name of precious stones.

So the saints or children of God have always been a little flock, few in number compared with the multitudes that are afar off from God. Think of the whole world having been overwhelmed by the flood, and every living thing perishing, except Noah, who alone was found righteous, and his family, because all the inhabitants had become corrupt, and the wickedness of man was great on the earth. Then for many centuries the Church of God was for the most part in the land of Israel, whilst all the rest of mankind knew not nor worshipped the true God. They were

worshippers of idols. And ever since, how many lands have been sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death! Even in the Bible we read only of some, such as Samuel, and David, and Josiah, and Obadiah, and John the Baptist, and young Timothy, serving the Lord from their youth. And now, though the Gospel of Jesus Christ is penetrating into every land on the face of the earth, and sapping the foundations of systems of idolatry and superstition, and though the people of God in Christian countries are rising up to greater zeal and earnestness and devotedness in the cause of Jesus Christ, yet it is true as our Lord intimates, that the many are yet in spiritual darkness. You remember his own words: "Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." And therefore, the lesson to you all, my young friends, is not to follow the multitude to do evil, but to *seek first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, that all things that are good and needful may be added unto you. A certain person put the question to Christ, "Are there few that be saved?" Instead of answering it, he said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able."

2. Jewels often require much labour and skill, and long time in cutting and polishing them. They are often very rough when found in the soil or in the rocks, and when they have been dug out, their value is not known till they have been cut and fashioned by a skilful workman. This is often a very laborious

and tedious operation. The grinding into the required form is done entirely by the hand. The period of constant work required to reduce an ordinarily sized stone to a regular form will extend to seven or eight months' steady work at least. The large jewel, called the Pitt diamond, possessed by the Government of France, and put by Napoleon on the hilt of the sword of state, was said to occupy two years, and then was sold for more than six hundred thousand dollars.

In like manner all God's saints, all holy children, were originally in the rough quarry of nature. The Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost. He searches about, and wanders after them over the mountains, till he lays hold of them by his Word and Spirit, and brings them to Himself. When He finds them, there is nothing about them attractive to the human eye, but He knows what He intends to make of them. He, therefore, digs them out of their natural soil of corruption and hardness, and with divine power, and wisdom and skill, takes them into his own hand, and so clears away their roughness and vileness, and cuts them into the shape and form in which He designs to use them, that they gradually appear beautiful in the eyes of all beholders, and manifesting the cunning workmanship of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

Many examples of this there are to be found in the Bible and in the history of the Church. Look at Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles. When Jesus laid hold of him he was a fierce, malignant persecutor But by his Spirit, sent into the heart, Jesus turned him into the loving, devoted, determined preacher of the faith which once he laboured to destroy, so that

Paul counted not his life dear to him, that he might finish his course with joy. Think of the woman who was a sinner, so much so that Simon, the Pharisee, in whose house Jesus was, thought that she should not be admitted into the presence of Christ. Yet she stands behind Him weeping, washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head—a memorable example of the love and mercy and grace of Christ, so distinguished as a Christian woman that the Lord honoured her by appearing to her first after his resurrection. Think of Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon, seized by the hand of sovereign mercy, and made profitable not only to his master again, but also to the Church of God. And multiplied are the instances in common life of those who were apparently far from the kingdom, and sunk in vice and profanity, arrested by the power of Christ, and made shining lights in the Church of the living God.

I have known wild boys and thoughtless girls changed into meek, amiable, lovely and devoted children of God. The power and love of Jesus have done it. He can subdue the greatest hardness of heart, and cleanse the most polluted soul. If you looked at a diamond as it came out of its place in the earth, coarse and rugged, and uninviting, and then examined it a year after, when it had been cut and prepared by a skilful workman, you would scarcely believe that it was the same stone, there has been such a difference between the two states. And so the change that Jesus makes in the hearts and lives of those whom He draws to Himself is a change from all that is sinful to all that is good and holy. They be-

come lovers of the truth and of the cause and the ordinances of God; they become lovable and kind, and benevolent and faithful, so that all who know them cannot fail to discern that they have been with Jesus, and that he has made them what they are. Blessed are they who pass through his gracious and loving hands. If you are but willing to submit to his will and government, He will work in you all that is well pleasing in his sight, and the work of faith with power. He will gradually prepare you for his service here and for his glory hereafter.

Then further, just as the diamond requires much cutting, and grinding and polishing, before it appears completely bright and resplendent, so are the children of God often subjected to trials and hardships, and severe afflictions, and heavy crosses. But He who has chosen and called them knows well what He is doing, and what will best accomplish his own purposes regarding them. If you saw the experienced workman cutting and grinding the precious stone, and sometimes hammering part of it, you would think that he was destroying it altogether; but all the time he is bringing out its purity and valuable properties, so as to make it answer the end, even to be a much prized ornament. So God by his dealings wants to fit his children for his work on earth. He wants to adorn them with the beauties of holiness. He wants to prepare them for heavenly blessedness. Hence He uses the discipline of a father in such a way as most effectually to promote their good and his own glory. A father corrects his children for their profit, so does our Heavenly Father correct his children for their benefit. "The trial of their faith will be found

unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

3. Jewels are reckoned very valuable and precious, and are carefully kept and protected by those who have them in their possession. There are some of very great pecuniary value, belonging to monarchs of different countries. One in France that belonged to the crown, called "the Pitt Diamond," said to be worth more than half a million of dollars, another now in the hands of the Austrian Court, but once the property of the Duke of Tuscany, valued at about as much; a third in the possession of the King of Portugal, said to be much more valuable; and "the Koh-i-noor," or mountain of light, which had been in the hands of several of the rulers of India, one after another for more than two thousand years past, and is now possessed by our Queen, and valued at a million and a half of dollars. This precious jewel, which fell to the British Crown, when the territory of the last Indian Sovereign who had it, became the property of the kingdom, is kept carefully protected, lest any one might injure it or carry it away.

Those who are to be acknowledged as the Lord's jewels in the last day, are in like manner precious in his sight, and therefore watched over and guarded by Almighty power and infinite wisdom. He will take care of them as given into his hands, and to be by Him redeemed, and sanctified and glorified at length, so that none of them shall be lost. "All that Thou gavest me I have kept and none of them is lost." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

How precious they are in God's sight we learn from the way in which He speaks of them, as "the glory of Christ," as "a crown of glory in the hands of the Lord," and as "a royal diadem in the hands of thy God." He bought them to Himself at a costly price, even the sacrifice of his own Eternal Son. They are the purchase of Christ's blood, the fruit of his mediation. For their sakes He preserves this earth in being till all the elect shall have been gathered in. "He suffers no man to do them wrong, yea, He reproves kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. "He that toucheth his people, toucheth the apple of his eye." He protects them from all evil. He bestows upon them all that is good. He brings them all at length to the mansions prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

4. They who possess valuable jewels not only keep them carefully from all harm in cabinets made for the purpose, but on great occasions, when they want to make a display of grandeur, they love to exhibit their precious ornaments to the admiration of all beholders. So, when the Lord shall assemble all the generations of men on the great and final day, the winding up of this last dispensation of love and mercy to mankind, nothing shall be more glorious, nothing more lovely, nothing more estimable and precious in his sight, and in the sight of all holy beings, than his own people, acquitted from all guilt, ransomed by blood of infinite value, adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, and receiving the joyful welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."

"They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I shall make up my jewels."

This honour have all the children of God. What reason have you to hope, or have you any reason to hope that you are of that blessed family? *Now* people may deceive themselves, and imagine that they are the Lord's, when they are not really loving Him in their hearts. But *in that day* there will be no mistake. The Lord will separate the righteous from the wicked as easily and as certainly as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

My young friends, do not put away from you this vital question, whether you are in the family of God or in the family of Satan. There is nothing of more importance to you than to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. You have had another year's privileges and mercies, and dealings in providence. Jesus Christ has many times been knocking at the door of your hearts. Have you heard his voice, and opened the door? Have you said to him in all sincerity, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; dwell by thy Spirit in my heart; make me altogether thine."

Then you will be his jewels, and He will keep you and guard you as such. You may have heard the story of the lady who appeared at the Roman Court in very plain but respectful attire, with her two pretty children, leading one by each hand. "Madam," said the Emperor, "where are your jewels?" "These," was her prompt reply, pointing with delight and satisfaction to her children, "These are my jewels."

What a blessed thought to have Jesus saying of you "These are my jewels. I have redeemed them by my blood; I have bought them to myself. They

are my peculiar treasure. No evil shall befall them; I will defend them from every enemy; I will bestow upon them all that is truly good; and finally, I shall take them home to my kingdom above, as the jewels in my mediatorial crown, for ever and ever." May God in his mercy vouchsafe this inestimable blessing to all of you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

DAVID AND GOLIATH, THE PHILISTINE GIANT;

OR,

THE ARMOUR OF THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.

"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."—1 Samuel, xvii. 45.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—

At the beginning of a new year, I have been in the habit of putting into your hands an address in this way. And as we have all to thank God for his sparing mercy in preserving us alive, I have much pleasure in thus speaking to you on this day, the first day of January, 1877. I wish you all many happy years with the blessing of God, for "the blessing of God maketh rich and addeth no sorrow thereto." Moses, in the prospect of his going up through the wilderness, said to God, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." And so it is true now as in the time of Moses. If the gracious presence of God, as our covenant God in Christ, does not go with us, our

life will be a life without hope, and without God in the world, destitute of true happiness here, and terminating in misery everlasting. May the Lord give you grace to choose that good part which shall never be taken from you. "I love them that love Me," says Christ, "and they that seek Me early shall find Me."

The verse at the commencement of this address brings under our notice a very interesting and memorable event, recorded in sacred history. You have all heard of it, or read it in the Bible. I doubt not you have wondered at the courage and determination of David in the presence of such danger. But God had strengthened and prepared him to meet the enemy, and to overcome. And I have taken it as the subject on which to found an address to you regarding the contest in which you have all to engage, if you would vanquish your spiritual enemies, and gain at length the crown of glory, which fadeth not away.

Young people generally take delight in reading about deeds of daring, and fearlessness, and perseverance, done either by young persons like themselves, or by those who are older, in the midst of danger and opposition. No boy or girl likes to be called, or considered a coward. You cannot help admiring the boy who is ready to do what is right, and who never flinches, because of threatening or danger, but is intrepid and resolute in the path of duty. You think a great deal of him, and if you have a right spirit yourself, you will try to imitate his example.

Some boys had formed the project of going off to have a ride on the circular railway, when they saw another boy, one of their schoolfellows, coming their way. "Oh!" they cried out, "come along with us, William."

"Yes, if my mother is willing. I will go and ask her," replied William. "Oh! oh! so you must run and ask your mamma. Aren't you ashamed? I didn't ask my mother." "Nor I, nor I," shouted half a dozen voices. "Be a man, William," cried the first voice, "come along with us, if you don't wish to be called a coward as long as you live. Don't you see that we are all waiting?" They all surrounded him. But William stood with one foot advanced, and his hand firmly clenched in the midst of the group. He was a fine subject for a painter just at that moment. His flushed brow, flashing eye, compressed lip, and changing cheek, all told how that word *coward* was rankling in his breast. Will he prove himself one by yielding to them? It was a strong temptation, and there was a fear that the evil principle would be too strong for the good. But no. "I will not go without asking my mother," said the noble boy, his voice trembling with emotion, "and I am no *coward* either. I promised her I would not go from the house without her permission, and I should be a base coward if I were to tell her a wicked lie." There was something commanding in his tone, which made the noisy group silent. It was the power of a strong soul over the weaker, and they involuntarily yielded to him the tribute of respect.

They were tempting him *to do wrong*, and he dared *to do right*. And he who, by God's grace, dares to do right, is the one who is likely to be fitted, as he grows up, and is called to take his place in the business of life, to do valiant things by the same grace. It was a small matter, apparently, in the case of that boy; but it shews the character of his heart; and he who yields in little things, when conscience and duty are involved,

is preparing himself to yield in greater and more important matters.

I have said that David, who is the speaker in the text, shewed great courage, and at the same time great confidence in God, in the manner in which he conducted himself on the occasion referred to. You know who David was, and, I have no doubt, many things about him. He was not at that time King of Israel. But he had been anointed as king some time before. God had sent Samuel the prophet to his father's house for this purpose. Samuel did not know which of the children of Jesse was to be chosen. They were brought into the room of the house where he was, one by one, that he might see them. He was very much taken with the eldest, Eliab by name, and said at once, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." But this one was not the Lord's choice. Seven sons all passed before the prophet. But the decision was, "The Lord hath not chosen these." Then said Samuel to Jesse, "Are here all thy children?" And he answered, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold he keepeth the sheep." And Samuel said unto Jesse, "Send and fetch him." He was then sent for, and came in, a ruddy young lad, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And the Lord said, "Arise and anoint *him*, for this is he."

Some time after this Saul, the king, became very melancholy, and sad. The Lord had departed from him, because of his disobedience, and the king knew it. His servants thought that the strains of music might soothe his spirit, and in some measure relieve him from the despondency into which he had sunk. David was a skilful player on the harp. His reputa-

tion as such had spread abroad, and reached the ears of those who were in the palace of the king. They spoke to Saul about him, and David is accordingly, by royal request, brought into his presence, though neither Saul nor his courtiers knew that Samuel had, by the Divine direction, anointed him as king after Saul. His lively, accomplished performance on the harp, and probably the cheerful notes of his own voice accompanying, touched the king, and lifted him up, so far, from melancholy. David found favour in his sight, and was much esteemed at court.

The Philistines, however, taking advantage of the circumstances of Saul, and the condition of the nation, came forth to war against Israel. Saul was, no doubt, roused up to active and vigorous exertion, by the danger which threatened the kingdom. David's services being no longer required, he had returned to his father's house at Bethlehem.

The two armies had taken up their position, each on a mountain, opposite to the other, with a valley between them. In the army of the Philistines was a giant, no doubt one of the sons of Anak (a race of giants), spoken of in the Book of Joshua. He was a man of prodigious size, about eleven feet high, and with armour which no ordinary man could carry, so great was the weight of it. From day to day this man, Goliath, stalked out from the rest of the army, and defied any man of the Israelites to fight with him in single combat, and demanded that in this way, the contest between the two armies should be decided. This continued for forty days. His appearance struck terror into the hearts of the Israelites, so that they all fled on his approach.

David had three brothers, the eldest of the family, in the army. His father had resolved to send some provisions for their sustenance, as well as to make some inquiries after their welfare. David is despatched with that view. It so happened that he arrived at the very time when, after the period of forty days, the two armies had set themselves in battle array, and were preparing for the attack. The Philistine, according to his custom, came forth, defying God and his people. David saw him, and heard his words. His spirit is stirred within him. He is fired with zeal for the honour of God and his cause. He suddenly rises to the occasion. His brothers and others reproached him, accusing him of pride and vainglory in thinking to vanquish the Philistine and exalt himself thereby. Nevertheless, under the working, no doubt, of Divine influence, he exclaimed, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

His words are reported to Saul. David is sent for, and offers to be the champion of Israel. Saul and his servants are astonished. They offer him armour, but he will not have it. He rehearses how, as he kept his father's sheep, when a young boy, there came a lion and a bear out of the woods, to seize some of his flock, and how the Lord enabled him to slay both the lion and the bear, and to deliver the sheep. The inference which he draws is—God, who strengthened me to do this, can strenghten me for the contest with this giant, and give me the victory. He could not bear to hear the name of God reproached. He burned with zeal for the honour of Jehovah, and his truth. He had confidence that nothing was too hard for God

to accomplish, that the weakest are stronger than any when God is their support, and therefore he resolves to undertake the arduous work, looking for God to be with him and to be his strength.

David would have no armour, but what he had been accustomed to use. His dependence was not in any outward thing, or any kind of armour. He took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip, and his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

Goliath looks at him with disdain. He sees that he is a young lad, not acquainted with war, and having no warlike appearance. He accordingly curses David in the name of his gods, as no fit warrior for him. As they drew near to each other, David simply took one of the small stones, and put it in a sling, and with well-directed aim, under the Divine guidance, the stone struck the forehead of the giant at an unexpected spot, where he did not expect to be wounded, and penetrating his skull, made him fall to the ground, mortally wounded. David ran, and laying hold of the Philistine's sword, cut off his head; and when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled in all haste. The men of Israel pursued them even to the gates of one of their chief cities, and returned to spoil their tents. The victory was complete.

This was a memorable exploit of David. I suppose that, had you been present, and seen the two representatives of the armies, I mean Goliath on the part of the Philistines, and David on the part of the Israelites, approaching each other, you would have

been ready to say, What is David to this powerful giant? How can he expect to gain the mastery? His opponent was twice his height, and of far superior strength, covered, too, from head to foot with a coat of mail so closely as to be capable of warding off any stroke of sword or spear, and at the same time able to wield weapons most likely to be destructive to any foe. David, on the other hand, had no weapons of war at all, neither sword nor spear. He had on no coat of mail, nothing but his ordinary clothing. All that he had was a sling in his hand, and his shepherd's bag slung over his shoulders, with five small stones in it, taken from the neighbouring brook that ran past the place where they were. Had the issue of the combat depended on the comparative bodily strength and equipment of the two, David could have had no prospect of success. No one looking on, could come to any other conclusion. Then why was it otherwise? Why was it that David, young and feeble as he was apparently, in comparison with Goliath, came off victorious?

The answer is very easily given when you look at the words with which David met his opponent. The Philistine said to him, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And then with curses, he added, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and beasts of the field." He spoke as if nothing could prevent this, and as if by a single stroke of his sword he could smite David to the ground, leaving his body to be devoured by birds of prey, and wild beasts. But David did not quail before the proud blasphemer. He knew where his strength lay. He had confidence in the arm in which he trusted,

even the arm of Omnipotence, and, therefore, he was not dismayed. Probably many of his countrymen, when they looked at him, humanly speaking, so unfitted to meet the great Philistine, thought that he could not prevail, and that their cause was gone. But David answered confidently, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."

When David said that he came to meet Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts, the meaning is, that he depended on the power of God—that he was engaged in fighting the battles of the Lord—that he appeared on behalf of the Lord's cause, and that, therefore, he looked for his almighty arm to shield him and give him the victory. In so doing, he had the promise to rest upon, which is given to all who are on the Lord's side, "Certainly I will be with thee." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe."

Moses leaned upon that promise when he obeyed the command to tell the children of Israel to go forward. He marched them down to the Red Sea, and the Lord made a passage for them on dry land, by parting the waters, while the Egyptians, essaying to overtake them, were drowned. When Gideon was called to be the deliverer of his country from the oppression of the Midianites, the Lord said to him, "I will be with thee." In the strength of this, Gideon went forward with three hundred men, shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and the whole army of the Midianites fled, and great

multitudes were slaughtered. In the name of Jesus Christ the Apostles wrought miracles. You remember how Peter and John said to the lame man in the temple, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." In the name of the Lord the Church has made all the progress it has attained to on this earth—in his name all its triumphs have been achieved. And in the name of the Lord all who have ever reached the heavenly kingdom have fought the good fight of faith, vanquishing all their spiritual foes, and receiving the conqueror's reward, even the incorruptible crown.

All God's people are called to be warriors. They are here in an enemy's country, and have to contend day by day with the assaults of foes, with hindrances and opposition at every step. You know that when the Jews, who had returned from captivity in Babylon, were engaged in building and repairing the walls of the city, they had to hold their weapons of war in the one hand, and their tools and materials for building in the other. They had to labour, and yet always to be ready to fight and ward off the enemy. So it is with all who are on the way to heaven, whether young or old. The followers of Jesus are often called soldiers. Jesus is named the Captain of Salvation. They are said to be engaged in warfare under Him. And they are enjoined to fight on till they get the victory, and are called to sit on Christ's throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with the Father on his throne.

This is a holy war. It is a war against sin—against everything that is wrong and evil—everything contrary to God. You read that Jesus came to destroy

the works of the devil, who is the author of all evil in the world. He fought with Satan and overcame him. He could say at last, near the time of his crucifixion, "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." He was laid in the grave, and there fought with death. But the grave could not retain him a prisoner. He burst the bands of death, and rose a mighty conqueror, and then ascended into heaven, having spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.

Now, having vanquished sin and Satan and death in his own person, and for our benefit, He wants us all to enlist under Himself as our captain. He calls upon us to accept his salvation, and give our hearts to Him, and then to fight under Him, in his name, and in the strength of his Spirit against all our spiritual enemies.

I do not know whether you have entered into the service of Jesus Christ, or how many of you are acting as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But this I know, that none but they who do so, shall be saved from Satan's power hereafter, that none but they who war a good warfare shall be with Jesus, wearing a crown of glory, and casting that crown at his feet, saying, "Salvation to our God, and to the Lamb that was slain."

Now, would you not all like to be welcomed by Jesus, as those who have been his soldiers, and fought his battles, and obeyed his orders, and been faithful to Him even unto death? I am sure you would.

But some of you may be saying, "Can I fight against sin and Satan and all evil? Am I able to do so?" You are not able of yourselves. But Jesus will give you strength, and, like David, you can go into

battle in the name of the Lord; and, if you trust in the Lord, and have Him to fight for you, you have nothing to fear, you will be honoured to overcome. He hath provided armour and weapons for you. You are aware that people cannot fight without weapons. Even David had arms—not like Goliath—who had a sword so large that scarcely any other man could lift it or use it at all. David's arms were apparently very feeble and inadequate. But they were such as God laid to his hand—a sling and a stone, and being of God's providing, He made them effectual. For He can make the weak to be strong, and the feeble to put the might to flight, and the young to be valiant as the old, against their spiritual foes. So, whatever armour God provides will answer the purpose, if used in faith and in his name.

We have a description given by Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, of the armour of God, or what He hath appointed for his people to use. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

1. *Having your loins girt about with truth.*—There is here a reference to the dress which was worn in ancient times in the East. It was generally a loose,

long, flowing garment. It was not suitable for active labour or exertion. Hence, when engaged in any work, or involved in combat, persons so clothed had to gird their garments firmly about their loins with a belt, that they might not be entangled, or in any way hindered in the business in hand. Especially in war, when they required to be always ready for action, it was necessary for them to be thus girt, and free to act at any time without inconvenience.

Now, the Apostle says, that in the Christian warfare, the disciples or followers of Christ should have their loins girt about with truth. Truth here clearly does not mean the Word of Truth, for he speaks afterwards of the Word as forming another weapon for aggression or attack. It was prophesied of Jesus Christ in old times, long before his appearance: "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins," *i.e.*, uprightness and fidelity in all things.

So here with regard to his people, the word *truth* means sincerity, faithfulness, uprightness of heart in the service of Jesus Christ. If a soldier is not *true* in heart, *sincere* in heart, really devoted to the service of the sovereign, he ought not to be in the ranks of the army. He would either be a traitor, or a faint-hearted man in the hour of danger. You do not expect the boy to be brave or courageous in any exploit, or difficult undertaking, who does not heartily engage in it. So you cannot expect any one to be strong or valiant for Christ who merely professes, and does not really belong to Christ. It does not make a soldier, to give a man the uniform of the army, and let him wear it. He must have the spirit and the training that will bear him up, and make him steadfast in the hour of trial.

The good, courageous, unwavering soldier of Jesus Christ must be sincere in his religion. His heart must be given to Christ, to be cleansed and renewed, else he cannot do right, or love right, or fight valiantly against the enemies of Christ and his people. The heart is by nature wrong, and must be put right by the Spirit of God. Take the following illustration: "Sometimes," said John Wilson, "my watch is too fast, mother, and sometimes it is too slow, and sometimes it stands still and does not go at all; what am I to do with it?" "Why," replied Mrs. Wilson, "you had better take it to the watchmaker, and he will examine it, and soon make it go right again." John was very soon at the watchmaker's, and taking his watch from his pocket, told him what was the matter, asking him at the same time if he could do anything to make it go right. "Yes," said the watchmaker, "I will see what can be done with it. Yours is a good looking watch, John, and it ought to go right, but I suppose there is something wrong *inside*. You had better leave it with me for a few days, and I will try and make it keep true time." In the course of a few days John called to ask if his watch was done, and whilst the watchmaker was handing it to him, John said, "Will it go right now?" "It will go like a new one," answered the watchmaker. "What was the matter with it?" asked John. The watchmaker replied, "I found the outside all right enough; the case was sound, the hands were straight, and the face was perfect. I then opened your watch and looked within. There was the right number of wheels and pins; the spring, the chain, and other works were all sound and good I found nothing gone, nor out of place, but the dust and dirt were the cause

of its going wrong. Your watch wanted a thorough cleaning, John, and I have done it for you, and it will now keep time with the great town clock."

Now, the Bible tells us that the heart, which is the mainspring of all our thoughts and actions, is unclean, that it is sinful, and whilst it is in this unholy state it cannot go right. Now, what are you to do? You are to do as David did. Pray to God, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." When one has the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love, and devotedness to Christ, and, consequently, heartiness in his cause, he will be ready and prepared to labour for its advancement, and to fight against whatever would retard or injure it. This sincerity, heartiness, or zeal, or devoted gratitude to Christ, is the first requirement in the Christian warfare, and without this piece of armour you will never truly fight, whatever you may pretend to do, the battles of the Lord.

2. *Having on the breastplate of righteousness.*—A breastplate is a piece of strong metal made to be worn upon the breast, as protecting the heart and the vital parts of the body in connection with it. In ancient warfare, when they had no artillery, such as is now used in modern times, but only spears, and arrows for darting at their opponents, and swords to wield against them, this was a very important piece of armour. It would turn aside the edge of any dart, or resist the stroke of any sword.

The righteousness with which the Christian soldier should be clothed, so as to withstand all the assaults of the wicked one, is the righteousness of his Lord, imputed to him as a believer, and received by faith alone. It is a righteousness perfect and complete,

which has no flaw in it, nothing defective, and, therefore, preserving the Christian soldier safe from the accusations and fiery darts of Satan. The moment you believe in Jesus, he takes away your filthy garments, your own obedience, which in another place is called filthy rags, as intimating its utter unworthiness in the sight of God, and clothes you with a change of raiment, this spotless robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, which shall be unto all and upon all them that believe. Were you to stand in your own obedience, how could you stand secure? How many things has Satan to bring against you! How many are the charges which he might bring forward against you, and to which you would be constrained to plead guilty. But, however Satan may accuse, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ." His righteousness forms a complete divine covering through which no weapon of the evil one can ever penetrate.

3. "*Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace,*"—In ancient times sandals or shoes were very useful to those engaged in war. As now, soldiers were often placed in positions of the greatest peril, and had to struggle through very rugged paths, and to clamber over rough and dangerous walls; and without these shoes their legs would never have been safe from wounds. But the man whose feet were well shod feared no ways—he went through every difficulty. There were also greaves, or defensive pieces of armour for the legs.

We are taught here that the peace, which the Gospel brings and speaks to the heart, will enable us to wade through any trial or trouble which meets us in our Christian course. The peace which the Gospel

brings is as much to the Christian as the armour round the legs and feet of the warrior. It takes away fear—he feels that he can overcome every obstacle that sin may raise in his path, and be more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ.

I have read of a little boy who thus passed through the greatest trial of all, the sacrifice of life for Christ, under the influence of the Gospel of peace. It was in the reign of "Bloody Mary" of England. When the good Bishop Hooper was about to be burned to death, a blind boy, by much importunity, prevailed on the guard to bring him to the Bishop. This boy had lately suffered imprisonment in Gloucester for confessing the truth. After the Bishop had examined him concerning his faith, and the cause of his imprisonment, he looked on him stedfastly, tears standing in his eyes, and said, "Ah! poor boy, God hath taken from thee thy outward sight, for what reason He best knows; but He hath endued thy soul with the eye of knowledge and faith. God give thee grace continually to pray unto Him, that thou lose not that sight, for thou shouldst then be blind both in body and soul."

The boy's name was Thomas Dowry. How often or how long he had endured imprisonment for the truth's sake is not known; but he was taken before Dr. Williams, the Chancellor of Gloucester, to be dealt with as a heretic from the faith of the Church of Rome. This Chancellor had himself once professed the truth, and the boy reminded him in the course of the questioning which took place, that he had received the truth through him from that pulpit, pointing to the pulpit in the church. The Chancellor had apos-

tatized from the truth, and answered the boy, "Do as I have done, and thou shalt live, as I do, and escape burning." The blind boy said, "Though you can so easily dispense with yourself, and mock God, the world, and your own conscience, yet will not I do so." "Then God have mercy upon thee," rejoined the Chancellor, "I will read the sentence against you." "God's will be fulfilled," answered the young martyr. The Chancellor passed sentence, and delivered him over to the secular powers, who on the very same day led the blind boy to the place of execution at Gloucester, where for his testimony to the truth he joyfully yielded up his soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus. This young follower of Christ had his feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

4. The next piece of tho Christian's armour is "*the shield of faith, by which he is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*"—There was nothing amongst the arms of the soldier, in the times when the Apostle wrote, more valued than the shield. The Spartans were great warriors, and it was reckoned a calamity that a man should survive the loss of his shield. Hence it was a motto, "Victory or death." It is told in ancient history that, when a Spartan mother presented her son with a shield, on the eve of his departure for the seat of war, she gave him at the same time the advice that he should either bring home his shield with him or be brought home upon it—she would rather he would die than part with it.

The shield of faith, of which the Apostle speaks, is confidence in God—a full persuasion of the truth of all his promises as well as his threatenings. Faith is called a shield, because confidence in the truth of

God's promises and threatenings will strengthen you successfully to resist temptation. If you believe all the Word of God, you will oppose all that presents itself to the enlightened mind, as contrary to God's will. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

You know that "without faith it is impossible to please God." The only way by which you can be saved is thus laid down by Christ Himself. He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." Read the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and you will there see what glorious things are spoken of faith. All, since the days of Abel, who have been enabled to overcome sin, and Satan, and fight the good fight of faith, and attain the heavenly crown, have done so by faith. "By faith Abraham went out not knowing whither he went," etc. "By faith Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," etc. And so with all the patriarchs and holy men of former days, and all the apostles and prophets and saints, and all both young and old who are on their way to the heavenly kingdom.

If you have true faith, you will be strong to maintain the truth at all hazards without fear. If you have not faith you are a prey to all that is evil—you will be carried captive by Satan at his will—and so far from being a soldier of Christ, you will be a servant of the wicked one. May the Lord give you in behalf of Christ to believe in his name.

5. The next piece of armour is "*the helmet of salvation.*" We are not told in the description of the armour, what the helmet is. But if you look at

1 Thess. v. 8, you will find that the Apostle calls it the *hope* of salvation. The helmet is a kind of metal cap for protecting the head of the warrior. So the good hope of salvation is a defence to the soul from receiving any injury from sin. A warrior without his helmet would ever be exposed—and a Christian without the good hope through grace would ever be in danger. If Satan could only get you to despair, he would expect to succeed in ruining you. If any of you are ill, the hope of recovery will enable you to bear much pain and trouble. Suppose that any one of you were anxious to gain the reward of merit in your class at school, you would, if you entertain the hope of securing it, put yourself to a great deal of pains, and deny yourself other enjoyments, in order that you may succeed. The hope of gaining the victory carries the soldier through all the fatigues and dangers of war, and so the hope of salvation will make the Christian bear all hardships, and undergo many trials, and endure much suffering. "I reckon," says Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us."

And then, my young friends, remember that you may struggle after many things in this world and never get them. You may hope for riches, and toil for them, but you may fail in acquiring them. You may hope for honour or fame, and yet it may never come to you. You may hope for long life on the earth, and you may never see old age. But if the anchor of your hope is cast within the veil, it lays hold of solid ground. A vessel may cast her anchor out in the storm, but it may not take hold of the bottom, or the

bottom may not be firm, or the cable may break, and the anchor go. But if your hope is built on Christ, the rock of ages—if it is the work of the Holy Spirit in your hearts, it will never be disappointed. It will bear you up, till faith is lost in sight, and hope in full enjoyment.

6. Another part of the Christian armour is *the sword of the Spirit.*—What is the sword? You could all answer. It is *the Word of God.* It is by this Word that all who are true soldiers of Jesus Christ are to cut their way through all opposition, and to reach heaven at last.

How are you thus to use the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit? Jesus shews you the way. You read that He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And as the devil tempted Him to do that which was wrong, Jesus always answered him with Scripture—something out of the Bible—"It is written," and thus Satan was defeated. He then departed from Christ for a while, when he saw that he could not at that time succeed.

Now Jesus says to all his soldiers, "Do you likewise." Answer every wicked thought, and put down all that is evil, by the Word of God. Suppose an evil desire to come into your hearts, to take something that is not your own, and that you could take it without being seen by any one (though God sees and knows all), then remember that it is written in the Word of God. "Thou shalt not steal,"—use the Word of God then as the sword of the Spirit, and put down the evil desire.

If you are tempted to tell a lie, to speak falsely in order to cover over some other sin, take this sword

"Speak every man truth to his neighbour," and slay that temptation thereby. If on the Lord's day, some wicked boys or girls were to say to you, "Oh! come away, never mind church, or Sabbath school, or anything else of that kind, let us have some amusement on the Sabbath, take the sword again. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Say, "It is written, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and in the strength of God, strike down that temptation, and scatter the enemies of your peace.

This is the way in which you are all, if faithful to Jesus Christ, as your great Captain, to use the Word as the sword of the Spirit. And if you do so, day by day, fighting in faith, in hope, and in watchfulness, God will give you the mastery of your foes, and make you useful boys and girls now, and in future, if you are spared, and finally enable you to say, when the last enemy has been overcome, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." "If God be for you, who can be against you?"

Finally, the Christian warrior is "*to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*" You remember the 121st Psalm:

> "I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
> From whence doth come mine aid;
> My safety cometh from the Lord,
> Who heaven and earth hath made."

Whatever weapons may be used, even when they are the very weapons which God provides, it is God alone who can make them effective. When he went to meet the giant, David did not depend on his sling and the stones, but he says, "I come to thee in the

name of the Lord of hosts." And so to God your eyes are ever to be directed, and in his name and in his strength, you are to war a good warfare. Prayer brings Omnipotence to your aid. Prayer will draw down wisdom to guide you, and power to uphold you, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and then you will be strong to withstand sin, and Satan, and the world.

My young friends, let me entreat you in all affection and earnestness to enter into the army of Jesus Christ. He leads all who enlist under his banners to victory and glory. It may be through the cross, but it will be to the crown at last. With Him alone is your safety. To follow Him as faithful unto death is your happiness. To serve the evil one, and to take your course of life from him, is your misery now—your everlasting ruin hereafter.

May the Lord give you willingness and ability to choose Christ, to appear now and always on his side, so that when others ask, "Who is on the Lord's side?" you may be ready to reply, "Here am I." Be decided now, for there is no security of life to any of you, even the youngest. During the last year three girls and one boy, who used to attend the Sabbath school, have been called away by death. They were all of them very regular attendants. Their parents told me that scarcely anything would keep them away. I trust that as they loved to sing the praises of Jesus Christ, they are now of the happy throng who surround, with unceasing Hallelujahs, the throne of God and the Lamb.

That every one who reads this address may be a true and faithful soldier in the army of Christ, and at

length hear the joyful welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," is the fervent prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1877.*

THE ALL-SEEING EYE OF GOD.

My Dear Young Friends,—

We have, in the mercy and goodness of God, been spared through the year that has just passed away. And I am permitted to have the privilege of thus addressing you at your entrance on another of the great periods by which our existence upon the earth is measured.

This is now the twentieth address which I have had the pleasure of writing for the young people of the congregation. Since the time of the first address, most of those for whom this one is now being written, have been born; whilst many of those who received addresses from year to year have been called away out of this world. We are thus reminded how many and great changes take place as years roll on. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh." My earnest prayer for all of you is, that you may, by the grace of God, learn to serve the Lord from your earliest days, and then, whether you live for a longer or shorter period, you will be the Lord's —his on earth and his in heaven.

The subject which I intend to bring before you this new year, is one which ought never to be absent from your thoughts by day or by night, wherever you are,

or wherever you go, or whatever you are doing. Were it ever present to your minds, it would warn you against sin on the one hand, and on the other it would confirm and encourage you, if you are seeking to do what is right and good. The remembrance of it has been the great consolation of the godly in every age. The thought of it has many a time prevented young persons from taking a step, which, humanly speaking, might have led them on to ruin, both here and hereafter. Applied by the Spirit of God, it will lead you to seek continually the favour of God, in his own appointed way, so that you may become lovers of God, and of all that pertains to Him, followers of Jesus Christ, ready and resolved to do his will, at all times, and at length inheritors of everlasting glory. Surely then, the truth to which I refer is one of the highest importance, viz.: the Omniscience of God—the truth, that his all-seeing eye is ever upon us.

"Thou, God, seest me."—Gen. xvi. 13.

The place where these words were uttered, was far away from the habitations or dwellings of men. You are to think of a wild, desolate, uninhabited tract of country—nothing but barren sand, without any roads by which the traveller could find his way. If from any high hill, you could have looked down upon this arid waste, you might have seen a solitary woman, dragging her steps with difficulty along the wilderness. She becomes very weary, and faint with the heat of the sun, and with the want of water to quench her

thirst, for often there is very little water to be found in the desert. At length she comes to a fountain of water, and sits down there to obtain some rest and refreshment.

As she is thus situated, the angel of the Lord, *i.e.*, the Lord Jesus Christ, suddenly appeared to her (for He it is, who was the Messenger or Angel of the Covenant, who was with the Church in old times) and addressing her as to the reason of her being in this solitary spot, asks, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou, and whither wilt thou go?" She does not say whither she was going, for she did not know herself. She was here without any fixed purpose as to the end of her journey. She had been ill-treated by Sarai. She was angry on that account, and all she wanted was to be away from that hard treatment.

This was natural, and though at first sight we might be inclined to justify her in her conduct, yet when we remember that the Lord said unto her, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands," we cannot but feel that there was something wrong in her thus resenting the matter, of herself, and in fleeing from trouble, when she ought to have entreated the Lord either for deliverance out of it, or for strength to bear it.

However that may be, the Lord so revealed himself to her, that she discerned who it was that spake to her. He had graciously found her out, when away from the path of duty; and now she acknowledged Him as God whose law she ought to obey. Accordingly, when He had not only given her the command to return, but had held out encouragement to her by promises of protection and care, she gratefully obeyed,

and with a sense of her sin at the same time, and feeling that she could not escape from the omniscience of the Most High, she said to Him in reply, "Thou, God, seest me."

My young friends, the great truth contained in these words is, that the eye of God is ever upon you, wherever you are, or however you may be engaged—whether you are in darkness or in light, whether you are on sea or on land, whether you are doing that which is good or that which is evil.

I need not attempt to prove this to you; for, if God is everywhere present, He must see and know everything. He is always beholding us. No human being may observe us; we may take the greatest pains that none should; we may be in the depths of the forest; we may be in a barred-up room; we may be shrouded in pitchy darkness; but there is One, and One above all others, whom we should fear to offend, and strive to please, who is beside us, beholding all our ways. Actually, we have not been alone for a half-second of our lives. He is invisible to us, but we are naked and open in his sight. Any attempt to hide ourselves from Him, is like the silly ostrich attempting to hide herself from her pursuers by thrusting her head into a bush.

You might think that no eye could see into the depths of the ocean. No human being can do so; but when Jonah thought to flee away from the presence of the Lord, and had been thrown overboard by the sailors in a storm, God saw and spoke to him in the belly of the fish which swallowed him up. "There is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."

Gehazi stole out at the back door after Naaman, who had been cured of his leprosy, and asked for the change of raiment and the talents of silver, which Elisha, his master, had declined to accept. And when he had stowed them away so noiselessly, and recovered his composure, he went in and stood before Elisha, as he was wont to do. He said to himself no doubt, "This is done cleverly." But God had been witness; and quick as an electric message, the dishonesty of his servant darted into the prophet's mind, and as he entered the chamber and took his place, as we have said, Elisha challenged him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" Gehazi felt at once the truth, "Thou, God seest me," when Elisha thus addressed him: "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee and to thy seed for ever."

Nathanael, as you read in the first chapter of John's Gospel, was engaged in prayer under his favourite fig-tree. He crept among the thick foliage on purpose to escape observation. There he felt that he could speak and act as he pleased, and he would not hear of it again. But when in reply to the cordial welcome of Christ, he inquired, "Whence knowest thou me?" the Lord sent the truth of his omniscience into his heart, when he answered, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." He knew not or had not reflected on the omniscience of the Son of God, "Thou, God, seest me."

Paul was tossing about in a water-logged ship in the Mediterranean Sea. She had lost her reckonings and was drifting at the mercy of the winds and waves. It was dead of night, and not even a lantern glimmered in the tempest-tossed vessel. But all at once

a heavenly messenger stood by his berth, as he vainly tried to sleep, and assured him from God of the safety of all in the ship. With what power could Paul then have preached from the words, "Thou, God, seest me."

I have read about a man who was in the habit of going to his neighbours' corn-fields to steal the grain. One day he took his son with him, a boy eight years of age. They crept through a wood; they stopped to listen; all was favourable; they went to work; the boy was stiffened and tired; and now for the result: "Johnny, lad, hold the bag, whilst I look round, and see if the coast is clear." He got on the wall, and looked north, south, east and west, and then dropped down, saying with a laugh: "Not the tip of a nose—now's our time!" "Father," said Johnny, in a solemn undertone, "you forgot to look up there," pointing to the sky. The man, supposing he had seen some one, let go the bag, as if it were on fire, and cried: "Where, child, where?" "Father, you forgot to look up, and see if God was watching us." It is said that the father was so affected by this reproof that he shook the corn out of the bag, returned home, and never ventured to steal again.

There was a young man who was a hypocrite. He had been highly educated, nourished, and brought up for God. He had the counsels and prayers of godly parents, and strange to say, his own tastes seemed to incline to what was internally religious. He taught in a Sabbath school, had none but Christian companions, attended and spoke at missionary meetings. All this rendered his case more hopeless. He was in the midst of what was good, and yet was secretly led captive by

Satan at his will. Sermons passed over him Sabbath after Sabbath, but no arrow pierced his heart; he was gospel-hardened.

He was spending a night in the country; at bed-time they put a candle into his hand, and directed him to his bed-room. As he entered the apartment, his eye fixed on a picture of the prodigal son. There he was, burying his face in that loving bosom which he had so grieved, but which still was travailing with tenderest compassion for him. As he looked at it, a voice seemed to say within him: "Thou art the man," and he stood, as it were, before God. He felt that God was in that place, and he knelt and bowed himself to the earth, and rendered up his heart; and when he left that room in the morning, he was a new creature.

He used to say, "God laid wait for me in that most unlikely of all spots, and snatched me as a brand from the burning."

When, my young friends, does not God see us?

I. Now the first lesson which I want to impress upon you from the omniscience of God, is, that you ought to confess your sins to Him, acknowledge yourself a sinner, deserving of his wrath, and implore forgiveness through Jesus Christ. To be unforgiven is to be away from God, to be separated from his favour and love—and on the other hand, to be forgiven is to have God for your friend both in time and through eternity. He who has his sins pardoned, is a child of God; he who is unpardoned, is still a child of wrath and of hell.

There is no greater blessing, then, than that of forgiveness. You remember that when a paralytic

man was brought into the presence of Jesus, lying upon his couch, Jesus first of all said unto him: "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," indicating that this was a far more valuable benefit than the healing of his bodily infirmity. And so David says in one of his Psalms, "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Now, God sees that you are all sinners, and that you need forgiveness. I have known and heard people denying that they were guilty of such and such a thing, because they thought that others did not know it, or that it could not be proved against them. But when it was proved, and made clear, or when they felt that it could not be concealed, they would confess that they had done that thing which formerly they denied.

But there is no use of trying to hide anything from God. You recollect reading in the Bible, that when Achan stole the Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold, no human eye saw him do the deed. He went and put them in some secret place, imagining that no one knew what he had done. But God saw him, and, as you know, made him stand before all Israel as the guilty man, who had brought the curse, for a time, upon the whole camp or congregation.

Cain thought, when he killed his brother Abel, that because he had taken him away into a retired solitary spot, no one would know that he had committed such a crime. But God saw it, and said to him "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

There is something, too, within yourselves, which tells you that you have sinned, and which often

warns the guilty so strongly, that they are forced to make confession of wrongs and evils which they have committed. You all know what conscience is. Have not you felt it many a time? Yes; you all have. Every man, woman, and child have felt the existence and the power of it. You have a heart within you, from which your blood comes and goes through all your veins, and returns again, and goes on this way continually from day to day. How do you know that? If you put your hand upon your heart you will feel it beating, and thus you know it.

Now, how do you know that you have conscience? Did you ever tell a lie to any one? When you spoke that false word, was there not something within that told you you had done wrong? This is conscience. When you have been asked about anything that had taken place, and you have heard a boy or girl telling what was not true, then, if you spoke the truth, was there not something in you which said, you did right? That is conscience. It accuses you, when you sin—it approves and commends, when you do good. God implanted it in us for this end.

And there is this, too, about conscience. It keeps a record of all that you do wrong. You put your finger upon pitch or tar; it at once leaves a black mark upon it. So it is with conscience. Every sin makes a spot or stain upon it. And how many such spots, or how much guilt there is upon all of us, God alone can tell, *for He sees and knows all!*

There was a very bad boy by the name of Amos. He had a very good father. This father was grieved and troubled at the wickedness of his son. He had tried in vain to convince him of his sin, and to induce

him to make efforts to reform. One day the father said to Amos," "Here is a hammer, and a keg of nails. I wish you, every time you do a wrong action, to drive one of these nails into this wall." Amos said, "Well, father, I will!" Before long, Amos came to his father, and said, "The keg is empty, I have used all the nails. Come and see." The father went to the spot, and found the wall black with nails. He said to his son, "Amos, have you committed a wrong action for every one of these nails?" "Yes, father," said Amos. The father said sorrowfully, "What a bad boy you must be, Amos! Why will you not turn about and try to be a good boy?" Amos remained thoughtful for a few moments, and then said, "Father, I will try; I have been altogether too bad; I will try to be a better boy!" His father said, "Take the hammer, and for every good act you do, draw out a nail, and put it into your keg." In a few weeks the boy came again to his father, and said, "Come, father, and see the nails in the keg again. For every good act I have done, I have pulled out a nail. See, the keg is full again." "I am glad of it, my son. But Amos! the holes are left; the holes are left."

What did he mean, my young friends? Why, he just meant this, that the holes were the marks, or the stains of his sins, and that they remained, notwithstanding all his good actions, to attest his guilt, and to speak against him. You can never, by all your good deeds—what you may consider good, but God may regard them as dead works—you can never, by any good deeds, wipe away the stains of your sins. The holes remain in spite of all you can do. The

guilt stands there to condemn you, as having broken the law of God.

Your sins, then, are all naked and open before God, and as He sees them all, and as they will bring you to eternal death if they are not taken away, it is of the greatest consequence for you to know how they are to be removed. What are you told about this in the Word of God? What is it that takes away guilt, and purges the conscience? There is only one thing. The prophet Micah asks, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No, nothing but the one sacrifice of atonement will God accept as efficacious, to purge away guilt. This is the testimony of Scripture. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." It is the fountain opened up for sin and for uncleanness, and if you wash in that fountain, your guilt will be all removed, and the promise of God will be fulfilled: "I will cast all your transgressions into the depths of the sea; if they should be sought for, they would not be found."

II. The second lesson to be learned from the omniscience of God, is, that it should make you afraid to commit sin. God hateth sin, and He is angry with the wicked every day. Now, you cannot get out of the sight of God, so as to sin with impunity. You may sin in the dark, or out of the sight of men, or in your heart, but there is the eye of God, that never sleeps, over every sin.

I have read of one who was a great friend of General Washington, of America—I mean General Lafayette.

He tells us that he was once shut up in a little room in a gloomy prison for a great while. In the door of his little cell was a small, very small hole cut. At that hole a soldier was placed, day and night, to watch him. All he could see was the soldier's *eye*; but that *eye* was always there! Day and night, every moment when he looked up, he always saw that *eye!* Oh! he says, it was dreadful! There was no escape, no hiding; when he lay down and when he rose up, that *eye* was watching him! How dreadful will the eye of God be upon the sinner, as it watches him forever in the world to come! Who would be such a sinner? I hope that none of you will be such a one.

And remember, it is not only the sinful action that God sees, but the sinful thought and the sinful purpose also. The last two lead to the other, and all are hateful in the sight of God.

You have all, I doubt not, read the history of Joseph in the Bible. It illustrates each of these three kinds of sins—wrong thoughts or feelings, wrong plans and wrong deeds.

1. Wrong feelings. Joseph's brothers, you know, were envious of him. They were jealous of their father's partiality for him, and amiable as he was, we are told "they hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him." There might still have been kind treatment at home, and no one might have seen by their manner the feeling that lurked in their hearts; but their hearts had gone astray, and on the principle of God's law, they had committed sin. There was guilt, not of action indeed, but of feeling. And the worst of it is, that the wrong does not usually stop here. This is the danger.

2. It takes the second step, planning to do wrong, meaning to do wrong. A great many things may hinder a person from carrying out his wicked thoughts. The providence of God may restrain him from inflicting injury, however he may wish to do it. Did Joseph's brethren lay plans to do him harm? You remember that his father sent him into the fields to see how his brothers and their flocks were getting along; "and when they saw him coming they conspired against him to slay him." They said to one another, "Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him." Here you see the guilty purpose, when the mind, in opposition to duty and conscience, decides to do wrong. And does not God see the heart and its purposes?

3. The third step—the outward step is the last step. Did Joseph's brethren carry out their wicked project? On his arrival, they seized the poor unoffending boy, and threw him down into a deep pit, and left him there to die of hunger and grief. Shortly after, some travelling traders coming along that way, they concluded to pull him out of the pit, and sell him into slavery. This they did; and, then killing a kid, they dipped the poor boy's coat in the blood, and carried it home to his father, as a proof that he had been eaten by wild beasts. This is the guilty act; and only guilty actions do the laws of men punish. Human laws are designed to protect society, and they punish according to the injury done. God's laws go a great way beyond the act; they would stop wrong in the beginning. God looks at the heart as the real seat of right and wrong; and He would have everything clean and pure there.

Therefore He judges people by their sinful feelings or thoughts. He says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." The root of all evil is in the sinful thought.

So you see the danger of harbouring sinful thoughts. They may ruin all your prospects for this world; and if not quite so bad as that, they always damage a person in some way. But the solemn consideration is, that *God judges you by them.* It is true, we look at the conduct of people, and we are thankful for all good behaviour. But the most important, the most serious business of every boy, of every man and woman, is to look after the state of his own heart; for while "man looketh at the outward appearance, God looketh at the heart."

Yes, my dear young friends, have your *hearts right, clean, pure.* And how can you have them thus, but by seeking to have them cleansed by the blood, and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ? "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Now, if you get a new heart, and thus become a child of God, loving Him and his Word, and all that belongs to Him, you will look to Him as your Father, and be able to say, as in the prayer which Jesus taught us, "Our Father who art in Heaven." You are aware that if you love your father and mother, you will try to please them. You will be afraid to do anything that would make them displeased. So, as the children of God, loving Him as your Heavenly Father, you will be anxious to do what He commands you—you will fear to offend Him by your disobedience. You will

truly say with David in the 119th Psalm: "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love. Depart from me all ye evil doers, I will keep the commandments of my God."

Then, think too that God's eye never fails to rest upon you, and perhaps when you are tempted to do anything which your own conscience and the Word of God tells you to be sinful, you can do no better thing than reflect that God your Father is looking down upon you, acquainted with your thoughts and purposes, and concerned that you should not turn aside from the way of his precepts, and thus grieve his Holy Spirit.

One day, a young lad set off with some thoughtless companions to a place of Sabbath amusement. "*What am I going to do?*" he said. "I am going to break the Sabbath, and God's eye will be upon me." This thought so alarmed him, that he turned back.

One afternoon a boy saw a person drop his purse, which he picked up, and was walking off with it and the money which it contained. *What am I going to do?* came to his mind, and this answer followed; "I am going away with a purse of money which does not belong to me. This is not honest. I shall be a thief if I do so. God has said, Thou shalt not steal, and his eye is upon me." In another moment he ran after the person, and gave up the purse. The man rewarded him, and even if he had not, he had the testimony of an approving conscience.

"*What am I going to do?*" asks the Sabbath school scholar on his way to the Sabbath school. I am going where the young are trained up to fear God, and keep his commandments. I remember, *Thou, God, seest*

me. And I pray God, that He may make me an obedient, attentive, anxious scholar, and both make and keep me one of his own children.

"*What am I going to do?*" asks John one holiday afternoon. My mother has given me leave to go out and play with my schoolfellows. Let me not get angry, or fight, or call names, or do any mean or wicked thing, for God sees all I think and do, and it is wrong for any of his children to forget and disregard his law.

Often ask yourself, and never be afraid to ask: What am I going to do? A bad act will not bear reflection, as a good act will. "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand or to the left—remove thy foot from evil."

It will be pleasant, if you are Christians, and trying to do his will, to know that God's all-seeing eye is ever upon you. He looks at you only to see what you need, to keep you from evil, and to do you good.

III. Another lesson I want to impress upon you from the omniscience of God, is, that it should encourage you to follow after that which is good, and to do the things that are pleasing in his sight. If you are seeking Him truly, He knows your hearts, and will fulfil your desires. "Then shall ye find Me, when ye shall seek Me with all your hearts." If you are labouring to do his will, struggling against the wicked inclinations of your own natural hearts, He knows it, and will strengthen you for the conflict, so that you shall not be overcome. If you are resisting the assaults of Satan, or of ungodly men, upon your integrity, He

sees it, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way for you to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

You will remember that when the three Hebrew youths, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, would not worship the golden image, or bow down to idols, the King Nebuchadnezzar was angry and threatened to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. They answered: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden images that thou hast set up." The king, in his wrath, ordered the furnace to be heated seven times more than usual, and that these three young men should be cast into it, bound hands and feet. They were so cast into the furnace, and the heat was so great that the men who took them up to cast them into the fire, were consumed by the flames of fire that issued from the mouth of the furnace.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonied, and rose up in haste and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Jesus was with them in the furnace. And so will He be with all those who serve God. And is not that the highest honour they can have? If you are

trusting Him, He knows and approves the faith which He hath given you. If you are striving in the midst of difficulty and opposition to do his will, He will be with you, to succour, and comfort and guide you. Some of you may attain to places of honour and usefulness and influence among your fellow-men, if God is pleased to spare you. But the portion which you will find the best, and most consoling and satisfying at all times, is that of God in Jesus Christ, as your Father and Friend, to feel that He is yours, and that you are under his omniscient eye, doing his will, and working his work, and striving to do good to all around you. Jesus says for your encouragement: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me. And where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve Me, him will my Father honour."

That this may be the experience of all of you is the earnest prayer of,

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1878.*

COME TO JESUS.

My Dear Young Friends,—

You have all read in the Bible the story of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers, and taken into Egypt as a slave. They hated him, because he loved and did that which was right, and wished his brothers to do the same. He reported their evil doings to his father, and therefore they sought to get him out of the way. But God was with him, and protected him from all evil, enabling him to cleave to the truth, and shewing him favour. From being a slave, Joseph rose to be the Governor of the powerful kingdom of Egypt, and was second only to the King. As Ruler, he controlled all the affairs of the land. He had full charge of all the treasures of corn and food which he had ordered to be stored up during the seven years of plenty. When any of the people of the country, or others from the nations around came to buy corn, whilst the years of famine lasted, the command was "Go to Joseph. Tell him your case, and he will attend to it, and supply your wants."

So, there is One to whom all people upon the earth are invited and commanded to come, I mean Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. You are all sinners. All mankind are sinners. Every sinner deserves the

wrath and curse of God both in this world, and in the next. Now it is Jesus Christ who alone can save any sinner from destruction. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "He came to seek and to save the lost." "He is willing and He is able to save to the very uttermost all that come to Him." And God directs you and every one to go to Him, when He says through John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." God will have all men to "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." And whosoever does not believe in, and serve and obey Christ can have no part in the kingdom of God either here or hereafter. Your safety, your happiness, your present and eternal welfare, depend on your being the followers and servants of Jesus Christ, loving Him above all, and doing his will supremely in every thing.

It is for this reason that I have resolved to address you at this the commencement of a new year, on the subject, "*Come to Jesus.*" I pray for you above all things that you may do this. There is nothing you so much need. You may get many friends in the world. You may have parents, fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, and other relatives, who are very kind to you, and seek to do you good. You may get presents at this season from loving friends—it makes you glad to receive them. We rejoice with you in all this. But there is one thing needful. And this is, that you may have Him as your dearest, your best, your constant, your Almighty Friend. If once yours, He is your Friend forever. He will save you from

sin and Satan and death, protecting you from all evil, and bestowing upon you everything that can enrich your souls, and make you useful, and true, and faithful, and holy. The Lord will be to you your Sun and Shield, giving you grace and glory, enabling you to walk uprightly, and withholding no good thing from you.

A little converted girl, who had been a heathen, when asked if she loved Christ, answered, "Yes I do, and I desire to love Him more." When asked, why she loved Him, when she had never seen Him, she replied, "He loved me first, and died for me on the cross, that I might live."

My young friends, no one can be happy, unless he has the love of Christ shed abroad in his heart. But with Him, you can be happy anywhere and everywhere. Soon, perhaps, your father and your mother may be laid in the silent grave. Soon, too, will your friends and relatives pass away, one after another; but if you love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, He will never leave you, nor forsake you; never grow weary in taking care of you, and providing for all your wants. And when you come to die, He will make you happy even then, for you shall "ever be with the Lord."

God has been pleased to give me the privilege of addressing you again at the beginning of a new year. He has mercifully spared us all, whilst we have seen many as young as any of you, and some from amongst yourselves, cut down by the stroke of death during the year that is now past.

I desire, therefore, to avail myself of the present opportunity which God is giving me, of entreating you

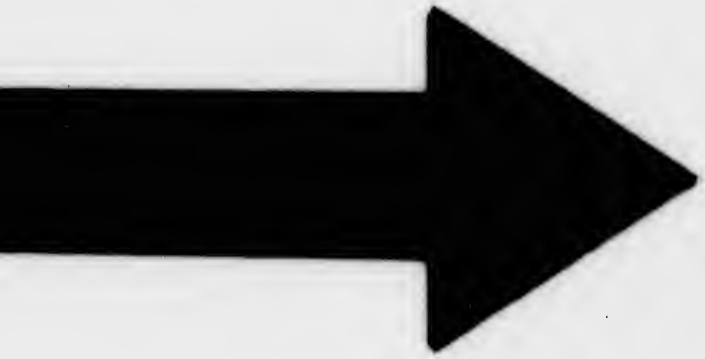
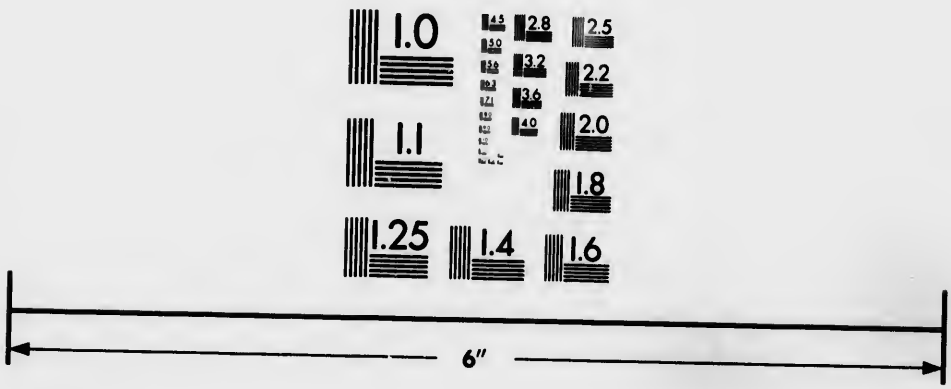


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)



Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503


1.0
2.8
2.5
3.2
3.6
4.0
2.2
2.0
1.8
1.6
1.1
1.0

with all earnestness to come to Jesus, and give your hearts to Him now. I hope that some of you, who may read this, have done so already. But I sincerely long that every one, into whose hands this address shall come, may be persuaded and enabled to comply with the invitation, that you may have life, and that more abundantly.

I. By whom are you called and invited to come to Jesus? I am sure that when you think who they are, you will feel, that if any should be listened to, and obeyed, there are none who deserve to be so, like those who give forth the invitation which we are noticing.

1. God, our Father, the great Creator and Preserver of all, in whom we live and move, and have our being, calls upon us to come to Christ. In the Old Testament Scriptures, long before Jesus appeared upon the earth, He said regarding Him, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth, I have put my Spirit upon Him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for Him; behold, his reward is with Him, and his work before Him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.—Isaiah xl. 9-11. This is spoken of Jesus Christ, who was to ap-

pear as the great Shepherd, to lay down his life for the sheep. And again, "I, the Lord have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness from the prison house. Thou shalt be my salvation unto the ends of the earth." In the New Testament times, when Jesus was about to enter on his public ministry, the Holy Ghost descended on Him at his baptism in a bodily shape, like a dove, and, "lo, a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And so also, at the time of his transfiguration on the mount, with the three disciples, "A bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud which said: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." "This is the Father's will, who sent Me, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth in Him, may have everlasting life."

God the Father provided the means of salvation in the person and work of Jesus Christ. When it was asked, Who will go for us? and whom shall I send? the Son answered, Here am I, send me: "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart." And now that Jesus hath come and accomplished his work, that salvation is freely offered to all—every one is at freedom to take it. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2. Jesus, as the Son of God, invites and calls you to come to Him. "Come to Me, and I will give you

rest." This was the burden of all his addresses and exhortations to his hearers. *Come to Me.* He is warranted in giving this command, for He is the Son of God, equal with, and eternal and omnipotent as the Father. He is possessed of all power and authority. He is the Creator of all things, and by Him all things consist. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." He is entitled, therefore, to demand the homage of all. By his miracles He proved Himself to be God as well as man. And hence he could say with perfect truth, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins," *i.e.*, if ye do not acknowledge and believe in Me, and come to Me as the Saviour, the Anointed One, the Son of God, the Great Deliverer, that was promised to appear to work out redemption for Israel, ye shall die in your sins.

But Jesus invites and calls you to come to Him not only on the ground of his Godhead, as the Son of God; He does so also, because of his marvellous love, and consecration of Himself for the benefit of sinners of mankind. He undertook from all eternity to deliver those who believe in Him from the ruins of the fall. He engaged to appear in their room and stead; and in joyful exultation exclaimed, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction." And having in the fulness of the times obeyed the law, and suffered, and died upon the cross to bear the penalty of sin for his people, He has claims upon all of you to your gratitude and love, and willing, devoted obedience. If any one had done much, and suffered much to do you good,—if he had

given a great deal of his substance to promote your welfare, or had encountered reproach and trial and danger to his life, that he might benefit you, you would at once say that he had claims upon you, to entitle him to your love and confidence; and you would feel that he should have it. But who has done so much, or suffered so much for you, as Jesus Christ? Well might Peter say, "Lord, to whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And, therefore, when He issues the invitation, "Come to Me," it is the greatest ingratitude not to comply with the same. And not only so; but by refusing, you incur the awful alternative, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh."

Again, Jesus Christ invites and commands you to come to Him, as your risen and ascended Lord. He died for sins, the just for the unjust. He was laid in the grave. But it was not possible that He should be holden of death. He rose on the third day victorious from the dead. He thus vanquished death and hell, triumphing over principalities and powers, and leading captivity captive. "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead." With his own blood He hath now entered into the holiest of all, having obtained eternal redemption for us. There He reigns over all on his mediatorial throne, sending forth his Spirit to carry on his work, and destined to be the Omnipotent, Righteous Judge of quick and dead. If now He issues the invitation from his throne of universal sovereignty, *Come to Me*—and if He is to

judge mankind for the manner in which they have treated his call, surely it is the part of wisdom to go to Him at once, with all eagerness and delight.

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Further, the Spirit and the Bride say "come." Come to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure, to qualify Him for his arduous work. But "the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified:" *i.e.*, the Holy Spirit was not poured out so largely and extensively, till Jesus had died upon the accursed tree, and then put his cross into the hands of the Spirit, as the powerful weapon for subduing and melting into obedience the hard hearts of men. And hence it was that Christ said to his disciples, when they were cast down and disquieted by the prospect of his removal from them, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you, and when He is come, He will convince men of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." He has been ever since, I mean since the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ, thus dealing with the hearers of the Gospel, and with the consciences of men. He is the author of all good. And if any of you have ever had any desires or resolutions to be Christ's and any strivings after the possession of Christ, and the giving of your hearts to

Him, all this is just the Holy Spirit calling you to come to Jesus.

Oh! do not grieve the Spirit of love. He will not always call. But *now* He is calling as God called Samuel when a boy. I remember the experience of a young woman as to this. She gave it thus: "When I was about five years old, I read in a little book the death of a certain person. Then something seemed to whisper, 'Though you are young, you may die too. Why do you not give your heart to Christ, and be prepared?' I felt very sober for a while; but it was a still small voice, and I soon drowned it in play. Then again, two or three years later, when I first saw a dead body from which the soul had gone. Then something seemed to say: 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' 'They that seek Me early shall find Me.' Then I listened and felt sober for a few days as before, but did not obey the voice, and it soon ceased. As I grew older the calls became fainter and less frequent, and might, but for God's goodness, have ceased altogether. But thanks to his mercy, the blessed voice came again; and as the words, '*Quench not the Spirit*' sounded from the minister's lips, and were again repeated in my ears, as I tossed upon my bed at midnight; I saw my sins and danger, and Christ ready to forgive and save me. Then I said, *here am I*, and from that time resolved to love and obey Christ all my life. Then peace came into my soul, and I could sleep sweetly; for I had heard and answered the heavenly voice. From that hour I never had been troubled to 'know what to do,' for I find God ever ready to tell me as plainly as He told Samuel."

You have all heard the Spirit, more than once, call-

ing you to love and serve Him. If you do not listen *now*, you would not under any circumstances. Childhood soon passes; and the noise and din of earthly cares soon drown the calls of God, and they thus are often unheeded, till it is too late. Christ loves the young. And when he was on earth, He blessed children, and said, "Of such is the Kingdom of God." Now the next time you hear the Spirit's voice calling you to come to Jesus, say, "Here am I; for Thou didst call me,' and trusting in the Lord for help, try to obey the voice. He will give you grace to obey, if you ask it.

Once more. There is another who calls you to come to Jesus. The Bride as well as the Spirit says, come. In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John tells us that he heard in vision a voice saying unto him, "Come hither, and I will shew thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife." There can, then, be no doubt as to the meaning. The Bride is the Church, or people, of God. They also invite you to come. They have themselves come. They have been made willing in the day of Christ's power. And being united to Christ, one with Him, members of His body, their great business among others is not only to live holy lives, to walk in the Spirit themselves, but to beseech and exhort their fellow-men to do the same, to give their hearts to Christ, and thus to be saved eternally.

When Hobab, the son of Raguel, Moses' father-in-law, who had been on a visit to him, as he was on his way through the wilderness, spoke of his going back to his own country and people, Moses said to him, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you, Come thou with us, and we

will do thee good, for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." When God was about to bring the deluge upon the earth, because of the universal wickedness which prevailed, Noah was told to invite all his family with him into the ark, that they might be saved from the coming destruction. Andrew, as soon as he had come to Jesus, "findeth his own brother Simon, and says to him: We have found the Messias, which is being interpreted the Christ." And he brought him to Jesus. So also Philip went to Nathanael and said to him, "Come and see."

Thus it has ever been, and thus it will ever be. Wicked people will not ask you to come to Christ. They have not come themselves. They would take you into the ways of sin You know, however, the words of heavenly wisdom, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." But when good people, or good companions bid you come to Christ, they speak from their own experience, for they have found that in the keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward. If you were ill, and had got some medicine which had been the means of curing you, you would commend it to others having the same trouble. So, when those who have been healed by Christ, commend Him to you, do not decline to go to Him, and put your case into his hands. He will receive you graciously and love you freely. "Whoso findeth Me," He says, "findeth life. All they that hate Me love death."

II. We inquire, who are invited to come to Jesus? You know that only certain persons are privileged to come into the presence of the Queen, or the Sovereign of any country. And they have to go through cer-

tain forms before they are admitted. But it is not so with Christ, possessed though He is of universal sovereignty. He is free of access to the poorest and meanest, to all sinners, *i.e.*, to every one of the human race. There are no hindrances. You are at liberty to go just as you are—to ask of Him what you will, according to his word, and it shall be given you. More particularly,

1. They are invited, who are troubled in their minds, feeling that they need something more than they have to make them happy, who are dissatisfied with the toils and enjoyments and acquirements of the past, and who are seeking what is solid, substantial, satisfying and enduring. "Come unto Me," says Christ Himself, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Some of you may have read the fable of ancient times regarding Sisyphus, and the penalty to which he was subjected. He had been a notorious criminal, and when he had been apprehended, and put to death for his crimes, he was punished by having to roll a great stone up to the top of a hill, when immediately the stone recoiled upon him, and he had eternally to renew his laborious and wearisome task. There are many persons who are seeking for happiness. They search for it in making money, or in acquiring property, or in following the amusements and pleasures of the world. And yet they do not get it in these, or in any earthly thing. "A man's life (or happiness) consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." They are restless, disquieted in their minds. They know not what to do. Jesus says to them, "Come to Me, and I will give you rest."

Or again, you may be brought in some way to feel that you are sinners, and guilty before God. You have broken God's law. Your conscience tells you that you have often done wrong. You know that God may justly be angry with you. You are troubled about this, uneasy in your minds. You are anxious for something to ease you, and heal your spirits, and take away your sins, and give you confidence towards God. Now, Jesus is the only one who can give you rest and peace. When you are ill in your body, or laid upon a sick bed, you wish for a doctor to come and see you, in hope that he may be the means of making you better; you go to him, if you are able, or you send for him. So, when your soul is in trouble, go to Jesus. He says, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The meaning of this declaration is, that people who do not realize that they are sinners will not come to Him; but that they who feel that they require to have their sins taken away, will do so. Such he gladly welcomes. He will rejoice over them to do them good. He will bestow upon them the peace and the happiness which they vainly search for elsewhere.

We ask you, then, if you are convinced of sin, and desirous of finding relief, to go to Him who never breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax. You may imagine that Jesus will not attend to you, that you are too young, or feeble, or unworthy. But remember how He took up little children in his arms and blessed them, and how, when the young people in the temple were crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and the chief priests, displeased,

said to Him, Hearest thou what these say? Jesus answered them, Yea have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? So He will joyfully receive all who come to Him, thus intreating Him, "Draw me, we will run after thee," "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

Come to Him, then, and sit at his feet. He knows all your feelings, all your difficulties, doubts, and fears. You may be afraid to speak to your minister, or even to your father and mother about your religious feelings; but you need not fear to go to Jesus, and tell Him all. He will not send you empty away. He will not say you are too young. He is the Saviour of all who flee to Him for refuge, young and old. If you have Him for your Friend, you will have the one thing needful. Everything is comprehended in his favour and blessing.

2. They are specially called to come to Jesus, who feel their own weakness to do any good thing, and who look to Him for strength. He speaks of Himself as the Vine, and his people as the branches. You know that a tree gets all its branches, and leaves, and blossoms and fruit from its connection with the root and the stem. So, the people of God, whether young or old, receive all their life and nourishment, and strength and ability to do his will, from their union with Him. Hence He says, "Abide in Me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me. *Without Me ye can do nothing.*" It is when you feel this, and go to Him for the necessary power, that you are strong for anything to which He calls you, whether it be to work, or to suffer. Suppose you were told to do a thing which was difficult, which re-

quired great courage and strength, you feel at the same time how weak you are for it, and consequently you become timid and disheartened and weak. But let some strong one, in whom you have confidence, come to your aid, and say, I will help you, and enable you to do it. You would lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees—your eyes would brighten up, and you would set yourselves bravely and confidingly to the work.

Now this is just what Jesus does with all those who love Him, and wish to serve Him. He bids them come to Him for the needful strength. "All things are possible to Him that believeth." "Ask and it shall be given you." Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

I will illustrate this by the following incident known to me before I came to this country. A very intelligent little girl was passing quietly along the streets of the city, when she came to a spot where several idle boys were amusing themselves by the very dangerous practice of throwing stones. Not observing her, one of the boys, by accident as we say, threw a stone toward her, and struck her a cruel blow in the eye. She was carried home in great agony. The surgeon was sent for; and a very painful operation was declared necessary. When the time came, and the surgeon had taken out his instruments, she lay in her father's arms, and he asked her if she was ready. "No, father, not yet," she replied. "What do you wish us to wait for, my child?" "I want to kneel in your lap, and pray to Jesus first," she answered. And then, kneeling, she prayed a few moments, and afterwards submitted to the operation with the patience of a woman.

How beautiful this little girl appears, under these trying circumstances! Surely Jesus heard her prayer. How He loves every one, every boy, or girl, who calls upon his name!

3. They are specially called to come to Jesus, who are inquiring after the way of life. All are, by nature, far away from God. When Adam and Eve had sinned, and fallen from their high estate, they were driven out of Paradise, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, kept the way of the tree of life. The tree of life was thus forfeited or lost to mankind —to all their posterity. If any one tried to enter in, in any manner, or on any side, he would have to meet the flaming sword, and would be utterly consumed.

The way of life was, therefore, barred up against the entrance of every man. The flaming sword means the justice of God, demanding the penalty of the broken law, viz., death. If, then, all were to be subjected to the penalty, none could be saved, all would perish eternally. But Jesus undertook to meet the flaming sword, and to suffer the penalty of death for all who believe in his name. He did so in the fulness of time. He appeared on the earth for this end. He came and made known the Divine will. He obeyed and suffered, and died upon the cross, saying with his expiring breath, "It is finished; the penalty is paid; justice is satisfied; the believing sinner is saved; God is now a just God, and the justifier of him that believeth in Christ."

Accordingly you will recollect how He said in one place, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." He met the justice of God, and though He died under the stroke,

yet He rose again, and ascended into heaven the holiest of all, opening up to all a new and living way of access to God, even by his own blood. Jesus is the way. He is the light, the true light of this dark world. What would the earth be without the light of the sun? Just consider. All would be in darkness. There would be no light—no life, nothing but dismal barrenness and death. It was so when creation came from the hands of God; the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. God said, Let there be light and there was light.

In like manner, all is spiritual darkness in the soul without Christ. He is the Sun of Righteousness. He shines into the heart that comes to Him. He will teach you and enable you to believe in his name, to give your hearts to Him, to trust in Him as all your salvation and all your desire. And thus coming to Christ you will be guided in the way of life—your path will be as the shining light—goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

4. Every one that thirsteth is invited to come to Jesus. "Let him that is athirst come." The man who is thirsty longs to have a draught of water from the cool, refreshing spring. David, when he was worn out and fatigued in his stronghold near Bethlehem, where the Philistines had their garrison, exclaimed in his longing desire, remembering the well out of which he had often, when a boy, quenched his thirst, "O! that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate!" So the thirsty soul longs for the water of life that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, or in other words,

Christ Himself, for thus He spoke on the last, the great day of the feast, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. And whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." How ready Jesus is to bestow Himself upon the believing soul, and to take up his residence there by faith, you learn from his own words "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

5. All, without exception, are called to come to Jesus. All stand in need of his mediation, for all are banished from the presence of God, yet the invitation is to all. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." None are excluded, who do not exclude themselves. Whatever or however many may have been your sins, Jesus will not refuse to receive you. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world, to save sinners, even the chief." He gladly welcomes all who come in faith and earnestness, and showers down upon them the richest blessings of his mercy and grace. The fountain lies open with the free and blessed invitation, "According to your faith, be it unto you."

III. For what are you to come to Jesus? This is our third inquiry. When you go to any place, or to any person, it is generally for some purpose. So, when you are called to come to Christ, it is for the

highest of all ends, even that you may be saved, and enriched with all the blessings which you need. It hath pleased the Father, that in Christ should all fulness dwell. And this fulness dwells in Him, that out of it you may receive grace for grace. All that He has, and all that He did as Mediator was for his people. And He is willing, as He is able, to give you all that you require. You cannot see Him with your bodily eyes, but you know that by his Spirit, He is always present, and that He is in heaven to hear your prayers, to love, and watch over you, and to do you good. Read of Him in the Bible, and as you read, think of his great love in dying for you on the cross, and let your hearts go out to Him, and pray that He would make you members of His flock, and not only suffer you to come to Him here, but bestow upon you all mercy and grace, that you may serve Him on earth and be prepared for his glory in heaven. Specially, I observe,

1. That they who truly come to Jesus will receive from Him the forgiveness of all their sins. You have sinned, all of you who read this address, many, many times. Your own hearts tell you that you have often broken God's laws, and thought that which is evil, and spoken bad words, and done wrong to your parents and others; you know that it is sin which displeases God; and so long as you have sins lying upon you, untaken away, you can have no hope from God. Who then can cleanse you from the guilt of sin? none but Jesus. "He shall be called Jesus," so runs the prediction, "for He shall save his people from their sins." He was wounded for our transgressions; He bore our sins in his own body on the

tree; and now we are told, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." This blood is the fountain that was to be opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness.

You read in the book of Revelation of the great multitude seen by John in the vision of the heavenly city, which he had in the isle of Patmos, young men and maidens, old people and little children, all classes from all nations. Well: Jesus saved them all, all that are in heaven. Do you not wonder at this? An eminent minister, the present Moderator of one of the Presbyterian Churches across the Atlantic, tells the following beautiful incident:—

Once there was a deaf and dumb boy who was taught his task by a kind friend. This kind lady could speak to him only by signs and pictures; she drew upon a sheet of paper a picture of a great crowd of people, old and young, standing near a wide deep pit, out of which smoke and flames were issuing; she then drew the picture of one who came down from heaven, and this was to represent Jesus, the Son of God. She explained to the boy, that when this person came, He asked God not to throw the people into the pit, if He Himself agreed to be nailed to a cross for them; and how, as soon as He bowed his head on the cross and died, the pit was shut up, and the people saved. The deaf and dumb boy wondered much; but he made signs that the person that died on the cross was but one, and the crowd were many. How could God be content to take one for so many? The lady took off her gold ring, and then put beside it a great heap of withered leaves of flowers, and asked the boy which was the best; the *one* gold ring, or the many, many

dry leaves. And then to shew that he knew what this meant, and that Jesus was the one that was worth all the rest, he ran and got his letters, and looking up, spelt the words, *Good, Good One.* He had learned that day that Jesus alone had saved them all, and he stood wondering at his love.

My young friends, if you come to Jesus, and ask Him truly to pardon all your sins, He will do it; and then you will be able as part of the great multitude around the throne, to sing the heavenly song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing, for Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation."

2. If you come to Jesus, and give yourselves to Him, He will bestow on you a spotless, rich dress, in which, and in which alone you can go unto the infinitely holy God, and be accepted by Him. You know that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and that nothing that defileth shall enter into his presence. Whatever is spiritually filthy and spotted is not fit to appear in the presence of the Most High.

If you had to go into the audience room of the Queen, you would not think of going, and you would not be allowed to go, in a ragged, tattered coat or gown; you would require to have the appointed dress of the court. The parable of the Marriage Feast is founded upon this fact. "A king made a marriage supper for his son, and called many, and the wedding was furnished with guests; but when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend!

how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then saith the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called but few are chosen."

This parable was spoken by our Lord, to teach us that however many may be in the Church by profession, if they have not the garment of Christ's perfect righteousness as their covering, they can have no place in the kingdom of God and of Christ. The man at the marriage supper thought that his own dress was good enough. He would not take that which was provided, and freely offered to him, as he entered the house. So, many may imagine themselves good enough to appear in the presence of God, and that their own doings will procure their admittance into heaven. But all our own works are imperfect. God demands, and must have that which is perfect. And there never was, and never can be on this earth, any perfect obedience to the law, but that of Jesus Christ. He gives it to all them who come to Him, that it may be their dress, their covering before God. "Take from Joshua," said the Angel of the Lord, "his filthy garments, and give him a change of raiment, to stand before the throne above." And so "Jesus who became sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," bestows his perfect righteousness upon his people, and then God accepts them as righteous in his sight, not for anything in them, but because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, and received by faith alone. "Who are these that are arrayed in white

robes, and whence came they? These are they who came out of great tribulation, who washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple."

3. They who truly come to Jesus receive the Spirit, to quicken and renew and sanctify their hearts. In other words, they are made new creatures in Christ, old things passing away, and all things becoming new. Your hearts are by nature unholy, hearts of stone, hard and insensible to all that is good. No one but God can take away the hard and stony heart, and give a heart of flesh. Your parents may do much for you; they may labour to instruct you; they may pray with you and for you; your teachers and ministers may try to impart to you the knowledge of divine truth. But they cannot make your hearts good. This is the work of Omnipotence. And Jesus, as God, is able and willing and pledged to give to all those who come to Him, and ask Him for it, a new heart, a heart to hate sin, and to love holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.

A minister calling one day, in the course of his pastoral visits, at the house of a friend, affectionately noticed a child in the room, a little girl of six years old. Among other things he asked her if she knew that she had a bad heart, and opening the Bible, pointed to the passage where the Lord promises a new heart. He then entreated her to plead that promise in prayer, and she would find God faithful to his word.

Many years after, a lady at the age of twenty-three, came to him to propose herself for communion with the Church. And how great was his delight to find

that she was the very person with whom, when she was a child, he had so faithfully conversed on the subject of religion, and that the conversation was blessed, and was made the means of her being brought to Jesus. Taking her Bible, she had retired, as he advised, pleaded the promise, and prayed to the Lord, and He had heard and answered her petition. He gave her what she so anxiously sought, *a new heart.*

4. They who truly come to Christ are taught by his Word and Spirit to walk in the ways of holiness, to practise all that is good and pure. Jesus Christ came not only to deliver you from wrath and misery and death as the penalty of sin, but to bring you back to the image of God again, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Hence you read, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

To hate sin, and to love holiness, is the grand distinguishing mark of a Christian. You come to Jesus for this end, that you may be made like Christ, that you may have the same mind which was in Him. It is by this likeness to Him that you prove yourselves to be his. When you are like Christ, and when that appears in you, then the end of salvation is accomplished in you, in so far as this life is concerned; you become witnesses for Christ, sources of light, like well-lighted lanterns in a dark night, to guide others amidst the spiritual darkness around. You thus shew your possession of the image of Christ, and commend Him to the homage and love of all who are acquainted with you.

What a fine thing it would be if all boys and girls, and all the men and women, who have the privileges

of the Gospel, were well-lighted Christian lanterns! How much good they would do, which now is left undone! We are not so much lanterns in what we say, as in what we do. It is the quiet, but real influence of a good example that is a light to lighten others.

A young boy or girl may be a very useful lantern. A small lantern, well-lighted, is of much service; while a very large lantern, without any light in it, is of no use. And who knows how many the light from his lantern may reach and benefit? Do not then be dim lights. But as you pass along through life, at home, or in the school, or in the street, or wherever you are, shew that you love the truth, and that you seek by God's grace, to walk as you are taught in his holy word. Shew this in your lives. Shew it by a cheerful, loving, honest walk with your companions. Never be afraid to let others see that you love God, and desire to do that which is right in his sight. If thus you live, some may follow in the path of your light, whom you know not, nor ever shall know until you meet them in the world of glory above.

IV. Another most important question is, When are you to come to Jesus? There can be no doubt as to this. It is *now*. In one of his parables Jesus Christ represents Himself as giving the command, "Son, go, work *to-day* in my vineyard." You are called to go *to-day*. You are nowhere called to come *to-morrow*. To-day you may be accepted and have your sins forgiven in Christ; this hour you may become the adopted sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Jesus Christ even now waits to receive and welcome

you. He wants the love of your youth, the best of your affections, the best of your strength, the service of your earliest years. "I love them that love Me, and they that seek Me early shall find Me." Observe here; it is not said that they *may* find Him. But the promise is that they who seek Christ early *shall* find find Him. Here is encouragement to you to come at once to Jesus, and enter into his service. Put Him to the test. His promise will never fail.

You should come to Jesus *now*, because delay only makes you more unwilling, and tends to harden your hearts against the truth. I have known people whose conscience told them that they ought to give themselves to Jesus and his service, and who felt seriously impressed, putting off the all-important act from year to year, till they became very careless and indifferent, and had no anxieties about salvation, or they became openly wicked and profane. Beware, therefore, of any delay, Jesus calls you *now*. But if you refuse to hear and obey, He may say at any time, "my Spirit shall no longer strive with them;" and then you may be left to yourselves, to plunge more deeply into the ways of sin, and thus to provoke the justice of the Most High. An old man one day, taking a child on his knee, entreated him to seek the Saviour now, to pray to Him. The child, looking up to him, asked, "But why don't you seek God?" The old man, deeply affected, answered, "I would, my child, but my heart is hard, my heart is hard."

You ought to come to Jesus at once, because you know not how soon you may lose the opportunity of being saved by Him. You have no security for the continuance of your life. You may die at any time,

as well as those who are grown up, or who are advanced in years.

Amongst those who have been called away from our midst by death during the year, I find some much younger than any of you who may read these pages. One child, only two weeks old, a boy aged three months, and a girl nine months old have been carried off, when only just entering, as it were, on existence here. An engaging little boy of five years of age, who had been for about a year ill, was suddenly taken away at last from his loving parents. In another family, two promising children were removed, to the great grief of their parents, both after a few days' illness, first a little girl three years old, and then, about six months after, a boy, five years old, who used to regularly attend the Sabbath school, in the youngest class. In another family still, a boy of fine spirit, twelve years old, who also was in the Sabbath school, ever since he was able to come to it, was for some months complaining of illness, and then was suddenly called away. We sympathize with the parents in those bereavements. May God enable them to bear the stroke of his hand with patient submission, saying, "It is a Father's hand which hath done it. He has a right, when He pleases, to come down, and to gather lilies out of his own garden, and to transplant them to paradise above. Not our will, but thine, O Lord, be done."

But, my young friends, the lesson *to you* is, Come to Jesus *now*, and accept his offered salvation. Then you will be safe in his keeping, whatever may befall you on this earth. Whether you live, you will live to the Lord, or whether you die, you will die to the

Lord, whether you live, therefore, or die, you will be the Lord's. If others around you are determined to persevere in the ways of sin, you will be of a different spirit; you will be the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. He will guide you by his counsel and afterwards receive you unto glory.

That this may be the case with all of you—that the Holy Spirit may persuade and enable you to come to Jesus now, is the earnest prayer of

My dear young friends,

Your very affectionate Pastor,

ALEXANDER TOPP.

TORONTO, *1st January, 1879.*

THE PERPETUITY OF THE REIGN OF CHRIST.

THE LAST SERMON PREACHED BY

THE LATE REV. ALEXANDER TOPP, D.D.

"His name shall endure forever; 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. 17.

This lofty, animated production, is entitled "A Psalm for Solomon." There can be little doubt, from the whole tenor of the Psalm, and the mould in which it has been cast, that, whatever part Solomon may have had in putting it into its present form or shape, the sentiments and petitions were those of David. And with much probability it may be conjectured and the statement at the close of the Psalm confirms this, ("The prayers of David, the son of Jesse are ended") that he was then on his deathbed, and occupied in his thoughts with the future reign of Solomon, his son, and the incomparably more glorious reign of his greater Son and Divine Lord.

At any rate, there can be no doubt as to the ultimate meaning of the Psalm. It is one that is eminently

Messianic; I mean, referring to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. There may be a few expressions in the commencement of it which can bear application to Solomon, or the government of any earthly kingdom, and which might be advocated as terminating in him. But taking the whole Psalm together, it seems to be a prophetic delineation of the surpassing greatness and glory of the Messiah, and also of his kingdom, and government and work, the elevated inspiration of a soul thoroughly in union with the purposes of God as to the triumphant progress and the perpetuity of the Church of Christ. Splendid and imposing as Jerusalem, the city of the great king, became during the reign of Solomon; great and decisive as were the victories with which his arms were crowned; extensive and enriching as were the conquests which he made, and largely as the nation flourished in all the arts of peace during the greater part of his reign, after the days of battle were over; the language of the Psalm would be nothing but exaggerated and out of place, when understood to apply to anything of wordly grandeur or fame, anything merely human, which had ever appeared upon the earth. As we begin, and proceed with the reading of the Psalm, our thoughts are irresistibly drawn to Him to whom all the law and the prophets bear witness, even the Branch from the stem of Jesse, growing out of his place to build the temple of the Lord, the King reigning in righteousness, coming to judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end; and then, when we read that his subjects shall be as the grass upon the ground for multitude, that all the nations shall be blessed in Him, and come

to the concluding words, "Blessed be his glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory, amen, and amen," all doubt is dispelled from our minds, and we are constrained to say, Here, without any question, is the Son of God, Emmanuel, the mighty Deliverer of our fallen race, the Destroyer of the great destroyer, He who was to repair the ruins of the fall, and cause righteousness and truth to pervade and cover the earth, before whom every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord.

Though He of whom this is spoken is Lord of all, He is not an inaccessible king. He enlarges his kingdom, and subdues subjects to Himself, by his own personal call, the call of his Word and Spirit. And if we have been brought into his kingdom, if it is ours to glory in Jesus' name above every other, if we regard it as the highest honour of our life to belong to Him, and to have been made partakers of his salvation, we will rejoice in every opportunity given to us to celebrate his praise, to acknowledge our obligations to Him supremely, for all that hath gladdened our hearts in time, and imparted the certain hope of immortality and glory beyond the grave, and to do what we can to honour and extol and commend Him to all around us. We do so, when in a right spirit we wait upon Him in the ordinary means of grace; we do so in the most effective manner, when in all the relations of life, both public and private, we so act in conformity with his law as to lift up a banner for his truth, and bear testimony to Him as our Lord and Ruler before our fellowmen.

Let us then, in the strength of divine grace, and in dependence on the divine blessing, seek to contemplate

the excellence and glory of the great Redeemer, and the grounds on which He is entitled to the transcendent fame which the whole of this Psalm, and our text especially, ascribes to Him, "His name shall endure forever," etc.

In addressing you from this passage and opening up the subject of it, we shall consider: (1) His fame, the sources of it, or what it rests upon; (2) The perpetuity of his fame; and (3) The results of his glorious reign.

I. Our notice is first directed to the fame or renown of Christ: "His name shall endure forever." The name cannot be dissociated from the person. When the name is mentioned or made known, it recalls the person designated, and by consequence everything about him that is fitted to attract attention and procure for him esteem. "O Lord, according to thy name, so is thy praise throughout all the earth," *i.e.*, according as the character and attributes and works of God are published abroad in the world, according as people come to know, and apprehend aright, God and the things of God, so will He be praised and honoured.

Now, one who acquires fame does so because of some great achievements by which he has been distinguished, or because of the excellence of his character, or of some special qualities or dispositions about him, marking him out from the generality of mankind. Solomon was renowned for his wisdom. Homer's fame rests upon his poetic genius. Alexander the Great, Cæsar and Napoleon are celebrated as military commanders, and because of the conquests which they made. Paul attained the pre-eminent place which he occupies in the history of the world from his being

honoured to unfold the doctrines of salvation, and to set them forth for the guidance of the Church in all future ages, and by his self-denying, laborious efforts to build up the Church of Christ among the nations of the earth.

But what are the greatest conquerors, or philosophers, or statesmen, or the highest benefactors of mankind in material things, whom the world ever saw, compared with Christ? Just as the most brilliant stars disappear in the heavens as the sun rises and appears in his meridian splendour, so do all the most renowned on earth fade into nothingness in the presence of Christ.

On what, then, does his fame rest? Why is it that his name will endure, and be continued as long as the sun?

1. It rests upon his glorious and divine character. The work of mediation between God and man required divinity in Him who undertook it. For who knows God, and can mediate for God, but God? Who but one who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all divine attributes, could make adequate atonement and satisfaction to the justice of the Most High for his violated law? Godhead is as essential as humanity to the God-man, the daysman, to lay his hand upon both, and so make up the peace. Hence you read,—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." "He is God over all, blessed for ever." "His name shall be called Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." He is the Creator of the universe, and as such receives the homage of all holy and intelligent beings. Creation is essentially

God's. But on this we need not enlarge. Did we, with the Unitarians, believe that Christ is only a created being, however high, we are chargeable with profanity in worshipping Him; we have no Gospel, we have no hope as sinners. But, blessed be God, we have no such faith. He is Emmanuel, "God and man, in two distinct natures and one person."

2. The fame of Jesus rests upon his work of humiliation, and obedience, and sufferings and death for his people. That the eternal Word, the Son of God, should become flesh and dwell among men, that He should put Himself in the room of guilty creatures—rebels against his authority and laws—undertaking to do for them what they could never have done for themselves, and to endure for them all that they were bound to endure, in order to procure salvation; this is the most wonderful of all mysteries. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. Into this fact the angels desire to look, as unable to comprehend it. And *we*, of course, can only say, the love displayed therein passeth our knowledge. Yet, had it not been displayed, salvation, so far as we know from the sacred volume, would have been impossible to any sinner of the human race. Had He not gone along with the counsels of eternity, and carried out to the full the determination which He had formed, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart," what but everlasting banishment from the divine presence awaited the whole human family?

But He shrank not from his work in any respect, or from the terrible conflict with the wicked one. He obeyed the law, not for Himself, but that He might be

able to present a perfect righteousness which shall be unto all and upon all them that believe. The Messiah died for sins, but not his own. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised," etc.

It is this work of humiliation, and obedience, and death, which is the source of all the hopes of a well-founded character which you cherish of everlasting life and blessedness in heaven. It is to this that as believers you are indebted for the felt sense of pardon and peace and reconciliation with God, and all the benefits of salvation. It is this which you propose to remember, I trust with true hearts, and with full assurance of faith, at the table of the Lord. It is this which hath gathered multitudes to Him, saying in truth, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross," etc. It is this, wherever it is proclaimed and believed, which makes the earth resound with the praises of Emmanuel; and it is this which will fill the mansions of heaven with the unceasing song of victory and triumph, "Worthy is the Lamb which was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom," etc.

3. The fame of Jesus Christ is derived also from his glorious resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand, as Head of his Church, and Head over all things to the Church. He laid down his life that He might take it again. He died and was laid in the sepulchre with a great stone rolled on its mouth and sealed, but it was not possible that He could be holden of death. He had rendered perfect obedience to the law. He had baffled all the power and cunning of Satan, so that he could say, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." He had met the last enemy on his own ground, going down to the cav-

erns of the tomb; and now nothing remained but that He should, as the mighty Conqueror, burst the fetters of the grave, and in the fact of his resurrection give the assurance that his work is a finished work, that by one offering up of Himself He hath forever perfected them that are sanctified.

He hath thus assured all his believing people of their resurrection in due time from the power of the grave, the body as well as the soul redeemed. He hath promised them with a similar assurance, that they also shall at length follow Him to be where He now is, in the fact that He appears as their forerunner in heaven. And consequently the Holy Ghost hath thus recorded his fame, and the ground of it which we have already mentioned: "He humbled Himself and became obedient . . . wherefore, also God hath highly exalted Him," etc.

On these grounds, then, his glorious and divine person and character, his wondrous work of redemption for his people, being made a curse for them, and then his exaltation to his mediatorial throne as universal Lord for the interests of his Church—on these grounds does the renown of Jesus rest. In every heart that has experienced the benefits of his salvation, He reigns supreme. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Praise waiteth for Him continually in Zion, in his ransomed Church, wherever any are found doing his will and working his work. Even the consciences of the ungodly stand in awe of the despised Nazarene. Infidels have in their last moments prayed to Him for mercy. And as one generation after another passes away, and the songs of the redeemed are heard more extensively through-

out all the tribes of the earth, so is the fame of Jesus more loudly celebrated, and his brow encircled with more numerous crowns, as trophies of his surpassing and sovereign and victorious grace.

II. We come now in the second place to notice the perpetuity of the fame of Christ: "His name shall endure," etc. Whatever is fleeting and uncertain is comparatively of little worth. Permanence and increase give value to anything which we possess. The meteor may flash brightly through the sky, and then disappear in a moment. But the fixed star remains brilliant as before. So earthly fame is often unstable as the wind. How often amongst men is the renown of one eclipsed by the superior power or skill or talents of another? How frequently does it happen that the idol of a nation to-day, may soon be almost forgotten or little heeded! But the name of Jesus has never faded in its renown. On the contrary, just as before his appearance on the earth, the expectation of his coming only grew in ardour and intensity, as the fulness of the times approached, so since He came as the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," his kingdom has been advancing, and his fame has gone on increasing, overshadowing all else, and commanding the homage of tribes and nations "from the river unto the ends of the earth."

1. I observe that the continuance of his name or renown is matter of promise in that Word which abideth forever. For example, when the Father is represented as saying, "I have laid help on One that is mighty, I have exalted One chosen out of the people," and when He had gladly undertaken the commission,

the assurance is given, "I will make Him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for Him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with Him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven." So also by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, He shall see his seed, He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." And again it is promised of Him, "My servant shall deal prudently: He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very nigh."

2 We argue for the perpetuity of the name of Christ from the fact that it hath kept its place, though assailed by the strongest opposition of wicked men, and of all the powers of hell; that so far from losing its lustre it has been more and more honoured, and his kingdom hath gone on extending itself from one period to another. From the time when after the fall of our first parents, God said to the old serpent, the devil, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed," it has been found true both in the Old and New Testament economy that "he who was born after the flesh persecuted him who was born after the Spirit." When Christ appeared upon the earth, He came unto his own, and his own received Him not. Not only did Herod seek to slay Him in his infancy, not only did Satan come forth with all his power and malice against Him, as He entered on his public ministry, but the Jews, who ought to have been the builders, reviled and persecuted and put Him to death, imagining that they had crushed out his name forever as an impostor and deceiver

But the stone which the builders rejected, became the headstone of the corner. In his resurrection and ascension He proved how vain and impotent was their malice. His Gospel proved mighty to the pulling down of strongholds. His kingdom hath gone on from age to age, sometimes bitterly opposed, and torn, and cast down, as it were in the dust, as if it would speedily be extinguished, yet rising out of the ashes of the fire as glorious as ever, only to carry on and extend its conquests to the increase of the fame and glory of Messiah.

This, you know, has been the history of the Church of Christ down to the present time. To many He hath been "as a root out of a dry ground, having no form or comeliness, and no beauty wherefore they should desire Him." Many have fallen upon this stone, and been broken, and upon many it has fallen, only to grind them to powder; but the name of Jesus still rises in renown. And if there is anything that ought to stir the Church of Christ (by this I mean his believing people everywhere), if there is anything which ought to stimulate our zeal and fervour in behalf of the kingdom and cause of Christ, in subserviency to the grand motive, the constraining influence of the love of Christ, it is the rapidity with which the Gospel is spreading, and taking effect in the great centres of heathenism and in the islands of the sea—the fact that whilst Satan is busy sowing the seeds of infidelity and error in professedly Christian lands, stirred up to all the greater activity, because he knows that his time is short, yet the truth as it is in Jesus is shewing itself to be mighty to undermine the hoary systems of idolatry and to convert the rudest savage into the

meek and humble follower of Christ, and thus to give an earnest of the speedy coming of the time when the Messiah shall have his kingdom from the rising to the setting sun. The kings and rulers of the earth have taken counsel together against the Lord and his anointed, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." "He that sitteth," etc. "Yet have I set Him king upon his holy hill of Zion." And then the certain, infallible promise is added, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen," etc.

3. We argue for the perpetuity of the name of Christ, and for the continuance and increase of his fame, from the means which He hath left and put in operation for the advancement of his cause and kingdom on the earth. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. The battle of earthly warriors is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood. In this way they generally achieve their conquests. But the government of Christ is first in the hearts and consciences of men, and then over all their affairs—all that pertains to them. And the sword which He employs for this end is his own truth—the Word wielded by the omnipotence of the Holy Ghost. Physical force can never overbear the conscience, or command the will of man. You may compel an individual to do certain acts, or to go through some outward process or piece of work; but you cannot by any external power bring the will and the moral faculties into subjection. That can only be by the persuasive, quickening, sanctifying influence of the truth in the hands of the Spirit of God, enlightening the understanding, renewing the will, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. You know

how the doctrine of Christ crucified, as soon as it was proclaimed by the apostles after the ascension of Christ, and when the promise of the Father had been fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, reached the hearts of thousands on the day of Pentecost, and as carried into both Jewish and heathen communities, was effectual to overcome the most rebellious and depraved and sunk in barbarism, making them new creatures in Jesus Christ, and thus partakers of all the precious benefits which it was designed to convey to those who embraced it. The Word is still the same, as efficacious as ever, when carried by divine power into the heart. For saith the Lord by the mouth of his prophet, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it The Word of Truth, as administered by his servants is noticed in another passage as identified with, and in fact constituting the grand means for, the salvation of the souls of men "Whosoever, says the apostle, "shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard And how shall they hear without a preacher And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."

This is God's plan for the renovation of our fallen world. "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the Word of the Lord endureth forever." So the continuance of the Word or Gospel of Christ as the weapon by which the kingdom of Christ is to be advanced, shall certainly secure the stability and permanence of the Redeemer's fame. "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And accordingly, wherever the Gospel is published, and the Cross of Christ is lifted up, *there* we may say, an ensign is presented around which the tribes of the earth shall gather, and thus the grand and glorious consummation will be attained, when "men shall be blessed" in Jesus "and all nations shall call Him blessed."

III.—This is the third part of our subject: The results of Christ's reign.

1. "Men shall be blessed in Him." This has been, and will be, wherever the Gospel is known and received. It is the necessary consequence of the saving knowledge of Jesus' name. You may, by the progress of civilization and the arts, communicate material benefits to those who have hitherto been destitute of them; but whatever improvement there may be in the temporal condition of any man, or community of men, they are left, if destitute of the Gospel of Christ, still strangers to everything which can impart light to the darkened mind, or peace to the troubled conscience. When the Gospel comes into a man's heart with quickening, regenerating, and sanctifying power, it brings him as it were into a new world. Not only does he see all

things in a different light, but he has got into his possession a treasure, full of the substantial elements of happiness, which he would not exchange for all that the world contains, if he had it. Whatever is precious and excellent comes into a man's heart as soon as the Gospel comes—pardon, reconciliation with God, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, grace and strength according to his day, comfort and support in the day of trouble, resignation to the divine will at all times, triumph over the last enemy, and glory inconceivable in the end. "Men shall be blessed in Him." This refers to the blessings which come to every believing soul in every place, and at any time. And for what purpose are these blessings bestowed upon any? Is it that they may rest in self-complacency and satisfaction with them? Certainly not. Is it not that they may long and pray, and labour, and give, that the same blessings may be conveyed to all to whom they may have access, and even to the ends of the earth?

2. It is added, "All nations shall call Him blessed." This refers to the willing subjugation of all to his sway, as most benign, and just, and full of mercy. "All power," he said before his ascension, "all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." And "He must reign till all his enemies are made his footstool." Messiah shall be king over all the earth: "In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one."

We cannot, my friends, attempt anything like a probable description of what will be the state of our long sin-diseased and groaning world, when the influence of "Him whose name shall endure forever" is thus to extend far and wide among the empires of the world. Is there anything beautiful in light? Light

is chosen as an emblem of that period. Is there anything beautiful in fertility and power? Fertility and power are chosen emblems of that period. Is there anything beautiful in order and harmony and peace? Order and harmony and peace are mentioned as the emblems of that time. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like an ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." Men "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; they shall hang their trumpets in the hall, and learn the art of war no more." The light of the moon is to be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun is to be sevenfold. Man is to be the child of God, and God is to be the protector of man. Then shall the cry ascend as the sound of many waters, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ."

1. Our first remark from this important subject is that it becometh you so to contemplate the wondrous name and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as that you may be constrained to realize and act in accordance with his claims upon you. Think of Him first as dwelling in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, equal and eternal and omnipotent as Himself. You

see Him in Bethlehem, a little babe in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger. You see Him in the garden, agonized and distressed, as bearing the load of his people's guilt, till his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. You see Him next at Calvary, stretched on the cross between two thieves, exclaiming, "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" And now you see Him as the Lord of glory, swaying the sceptre of universal sovereignty, and addressing to you the same invitation as He did to the people by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And what then is the call to you, but to fall prostrate at his feet, whilst you exclaim, "My Lord and my God."

2. He taught the necessity of being found in Him, having a personal, saving interest in those objects for which the Saviour died, and rose and revived. What matters it if Christ is the subject and the source of knowledge to others, if He is not so to you? What matters it that He is the source of repentance to others, if you possess not that repentance yourselves? Pardon? Freedom? Peace? Salvation? Are any of you to remain ignorant, hardened, guilty, enslaved, lost? Let me seriously ask you, are you content to leave this sanctuary without having part or lot in the salvation and glory and fame of Christ? If his voice does not say to you on the day of redemption, "Come ye blessed of my Father," it will certainly tell you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." There are the two states, no neutral one. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you," etc.

3. Do you who are true believers cultivate a growing attachment to the great Redeemer. Let your love to Him be written out in legible characters—you know what I mean—in the characters of a highly devoted, self-denying and spiritual life. Be faithful to your principles; love Him because He first loved you, because of what He is in Himself and what He hath done for you; avow your love, if it be needful, at the cost of all that is dear, even life itself. You have, no doubt, read within the last few weeks of the terrible massacre at Isandula in South Africa, when almost a whole regiment, with a large number of native troops, were overpowered by multitudes of Zulus, and cut down without mercy and in savage barbarity. Some of you may have read too, that among the bodies of the slain was found that of the young officer whose duty it was to carry and preserve the colours of his regiment. And in what condition was it found? It was discovered with the flag which he had sworn to defend wrapped around his body, as if in the prospect of what he saw coming to himself and his companions in arms, he was resolved that these colours should not be taken from him but in death. Even the most indifferent cannot but be filled with admiration of such heroism and courageous bearing, such fidelity and devotedness to the honour of his sovereign and country. Blessed be God, there have been those in every age who have thus borne up and maintained the banner of Christ, and have perished rather than part with it. Oh! how does this put to shame the pusillanimous conduct of many, who will allow their profession, their flag, to be blotted and marred, and rent, by daily inconsistencies, who will allow their colours

to droop and fall from their hands before the temptations of sin and self, and the world. And yet, what is the honour of any sovereign, or any country, compared with Jerusalem, the city of the great King, and the honour of the King himself?

My young friends, here is an object worthy of your noblest ambition, to be on the side of Christ, to maintain the fame and honour of Him who is the highest in heaven. Make that your constant aim in the strength of the Spirit of God. Think it not enough to sing, "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord," but let it be manifest day by day.

And to all I say, in conclusion, seek to be in Christ. Let that be your glory. Scorn to be ashamed of Him or his cause. Be resolved by his grace to make mention of his righteousness, and of that only, and to do what you can that through your instrumentality his name may be honoured and his cause promoted. "For his name shall endure forever," etc. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."