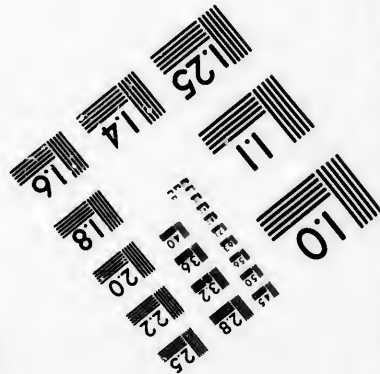
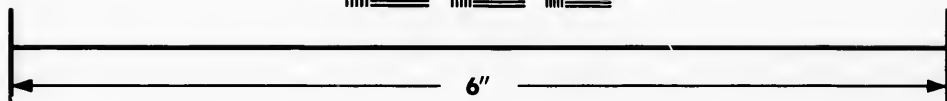
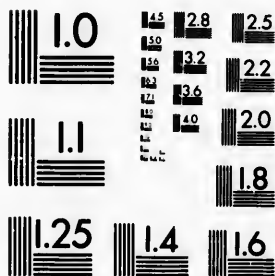


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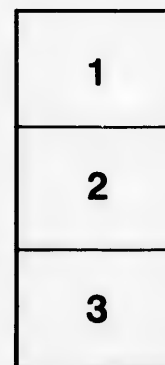
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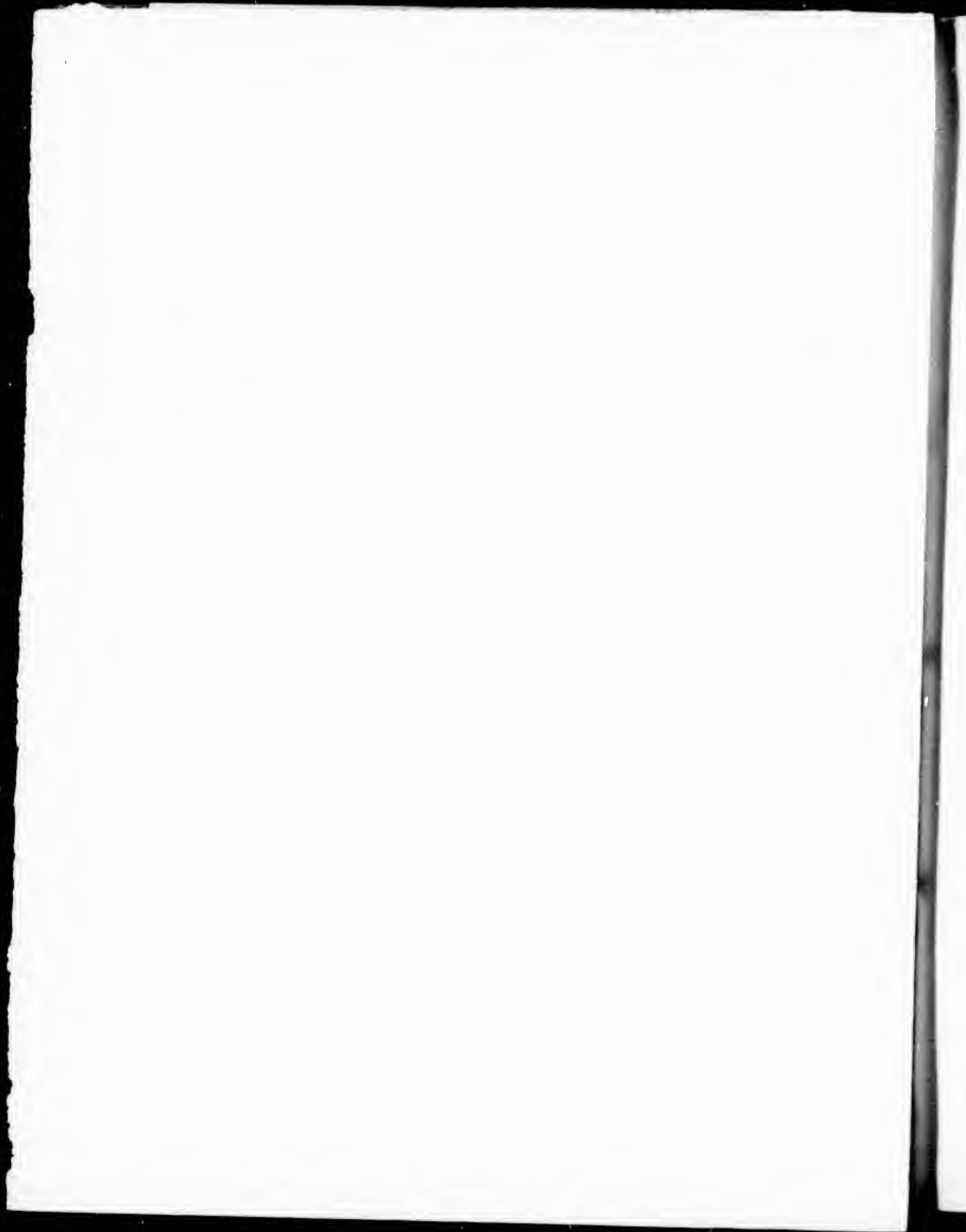
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SOWING AND REAPING.

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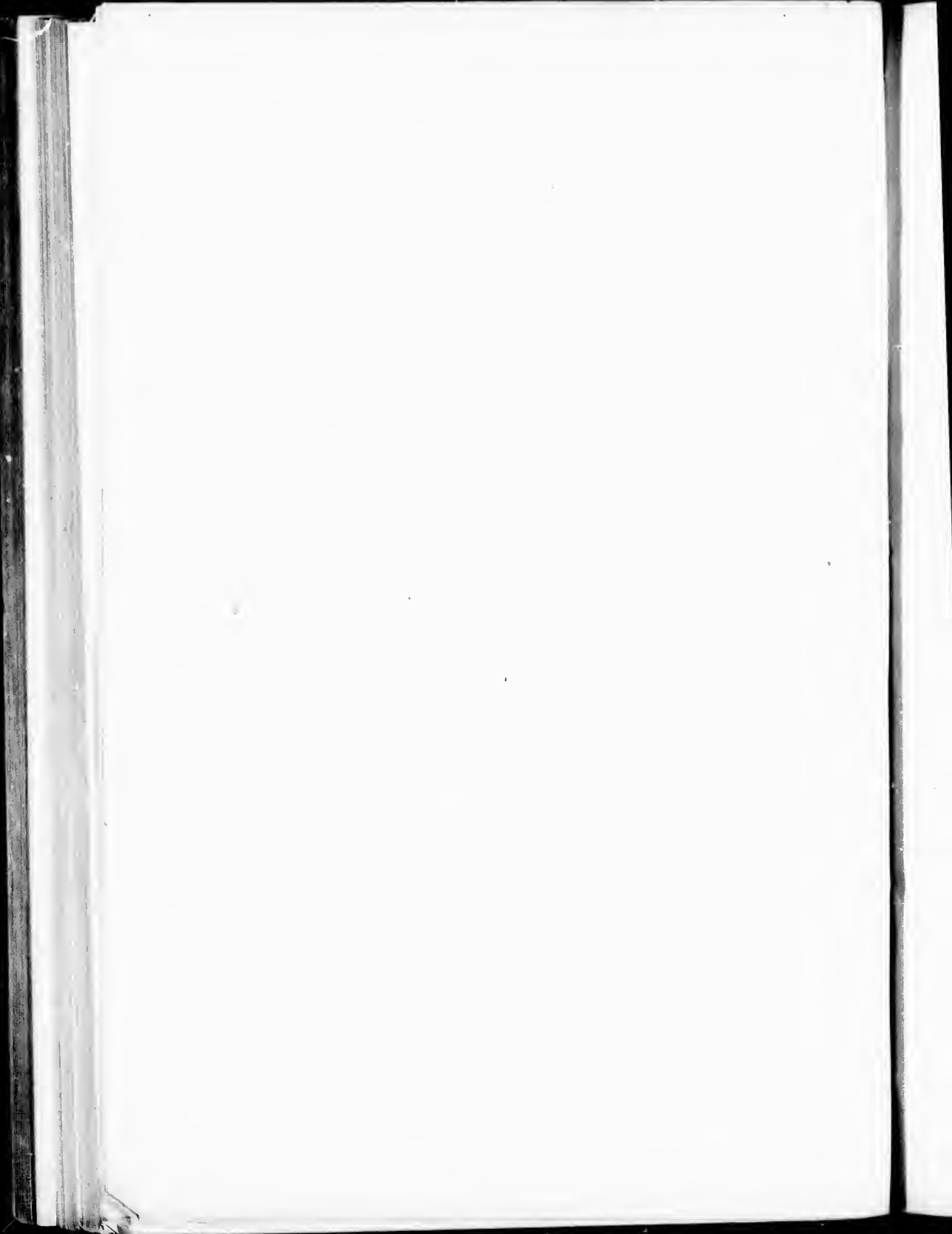
SOWING IN TIME,  
REAPING IN ETERNITY.

BY

JOHN G. MARSHALL.

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HALIFAX, N. S.  
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1871.



## SOWING AND REAPING, &C.

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“Be not deceived, God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to his flesh, shall, of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.—GALATIANS, vi, 7, 8.

From the first clause of these passages of scripture, it is quite evident, that persons possessing the inspired revelations of our holy religion, may be so deceived as to its true nature and designs, as to fail of securing its promised salvation and eternal life. Hence the necessity for the warning and exhortation here given,—“Be not deceived ” Of all the subjects on which the human mind may be exercised, religion is the one on which it is naturally the most liable to be involved in ruinous deception. This liability is owing to the native incapacity to ascertain, and truly judge of spiritual and eternal realities; and is one of the fatal consequences of the first transgression; and like all its other results, has been transmitted, and universally prevails. In secular designs or affairs, there is seldom such liability to deception. Those engaged in them know their nature, and the purposes or effects they will accomplish. But naturally it is not the same in religion. Without a divine revelation, man in the most advanced state of his intellect and attainments, never did, and never can discover the true character of the author of his being, his relations and responsibilities to him, and the nature of the worship and service which will be appropriate and most acceptable. It is the testimony of scripture,—“The world by wisdom knew not God.” Moreover, there is not only ignorance in the natural understanding as regards spiritual objects and things, but what is equally, or even more dangerous and delusive, there is the *deceitfulness* of the unrenewed heart. This, by inspired truth, is declared to be “deceitful above all things;” (Jer. xvii, 9) and the description is applied *universally*, and as to all ages and conditions of man’s natural history. The following are further declarations of scripture, to the same effect:—\*“They hold fast deceit.”—“A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that

\*Jeremiah, viii., 5.—Isaiah, xliv, 20.—Galatians, vi, 3.—Samuel, i, 26.—Revelations, ii, 17.



he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand."—"If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."—"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Our Lord said of the whole church of the Laodiceans: "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They were each and all *deceived*, and knew not their own low and miserable character and condition. There are in scripture, numerous cautions and warnings against being deceived on religious subjects. The highly inspired Paul says,— "Let no man deceive himself;" and uses the terms, "deceitful lusts," and "deceivable of unrighteousness."

In the subsequent portions of the text, there are two opposite descriptions of character and conduct set forth; and the final and eternal results as to each. There is the person who "soweth to the flesh," and shall reap the harvest of "corruption," or as is meant, the "second death,"—everlasting punishment; and the other who "soweth to the spirit," and "shall of the spirit, reap life everlasting." In the previous chapter the same contrasts are shown in the words,— "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

The figurative language of *sowing* and *reaping*, is strictly appropriate, and well adapted to illustrate and make deep and abiding impressions regarding the whole subject. To *sow* means following the pursuits, and transacting the concerns of natural life; and to *reap*, signifies *punishment* or *enjoyment* in another world. What gives the most awful solemnity and importance to the announcements of the text, is, that the great and omniscient God, the final judge and dispenser of *reward* and *punishment*, is intently looking on, and cannot be deceived; and will not be "*mocked*" with any *pretended*, instead of *real* services.

According to the order in the text, attention may first be given to ascertain who they are, who may be said to be "sowing to the flesh;" and next in describing the various modes and forms in which they perform the work. By "sowing to the flesh," is here

evidently meant, making it the primary or chief concern and employment of life to secure present enjoyment and happiness in those occupations, scenes and courses, which minister gratification to the bodily, or sensual passions and appetites. There are many particulars, and great varieties comprehended in the sensual desires for enjoyment, and in carrying them into effect. They are also various in different persons. In scripture they are all appropriately comprised under the terms—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life."

The "lust of the flesh" may be considered here, under the limited meaning of seeking the desired enjoyment, chiefly in eating and drinking. There always have been, and still are such persons in christian communities, and even christian churches. They are persons, who, according to a common saying, do not "eat to live," but as a chief desire and end, *live* to "eat and drink." There are more of such persons than are generally supposed. They look forward with joyous anticipation to the choice and varied dishes, and the old fragrant mellow liquors; not being willing to "put a knife to the throat," as to the one; and not fearing the *bite* of the "Serpent," or the sting of the "Adder" as to the other. Some of these in elderly life, give open evidence of the fond indulgence in the misshapen bodily form and irregular proportions, or the red and blossomed visage; and frequently in both these conspicuous appearances. On others in youthful or middle life, the dangerous and humiliating marks are just becoming visible. Yet most, or all of such sensualists are respectable members of society, and many, or all of them, members of churches. They come under the Apostle Jude's description,— "Walk after their own ungodly lusts, sensual, having not the spirit. They are not of those who find "godliness profitable unto allthings, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." These keep the bodily appetites in subjection to religion and reason, and thus experience the truth of the inspired maxim; while the others, by exclusively seeking sensual enjoyments in the life that now is, are generally even *here*, in one way or the other, painfully disappointed; and having neglected to desire and secure the future enjoyments are eternally ruined. Of those indulging in mere criminal modes of sensuality, in courses

of profligacy, it is sufficient merely to refer to the scriptures, which declare, that they shall have their portion in "the lake which burneth with fire, and in the depths of hell."

Now a few words concerning those who are seeking enjoyment or happiness in indulging in the "lust" or desire "of the eye." There are many forms and varieties in this mode of enjoyment. It cannot be supposed that by this scripture expression, it is intended to censure or disapprove of gratifying the eye in viewing and admiring the *grand* and *beautiful* in natural objects and scenery. These may, and should be viewed with admiration and delight, as displays of the wisdom, the power, and other perfections of their glorious and beneficent Creator, and should ever lead the observer to look up to Him with reverence, adoration and love; but it may here be appropriately remarked, that the gratification of the eye, even on lawful objects, may be *inordinately* indulged, in collecting from various countries, and arranging great varieties of natural productions and objects, and numerous and costly pictures, merely for regaling the eye, and at an expense of time and money, which should have been employed for promoting purposes of religion, morality and benevolence.

The lust or desire of the eye, or what is emphatically called "sight seeing," which indubitably the text includes and condemns; and which it is here intended to describe as "sowing to the flesh," consists in seeking that mode of gratification in theatrical scenes and performances, exhibitions and feats of legerdemain or necromancy, performances in dancing, or on the rope, or the horse, ludicrous tricks and scenes, the circus, the horse race, the boat race, and most especially, and worst of all, representations of scripture characters and events, by persons and scenery. All these, and many similar modes of gratifying the eye which might be mentioned, are manifestly "sowing to the flesh," and living after its merely selfish and sensual desires. Yet all who indulge in them profess christianity; and some, or even many of them are members of evangelical churches. Where will they find any valid authority or excuse for their vain and corrupting conduct? Not in the scriptures, in which they profess to believe. These in their letter and spirit, utterly condemn them.

Another mode of "sowing to the flesh," is called in scripture,

“the pride of life.” This also is a very comprehensive term, including numerous varieties of gratification to the ungodly and worldly mind. There is the pride of exalted or superior social rank, or official station, and the proud and ambitious desires and efforts to obtain them; often accompanied with the most unfaithful, dishonorable, and treacherous acts. With some there is a haughty supercilious conduct towards those in inferior or humble stations. There is the pride of riches, large possessions of worldly substance, and this often with members of churches, notwithstanding the command of their professed Lord,—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.”

The anxieties and labors for obtaining and permanently securing these are almost universally prevalent in the present age, and therefore is one of the most signal, as well as ruinous modes of “sowing to the flesh,” and indulging in “the pride of life.” It induces and exhibits its pernicious influence in numerous displays of vanity; the extended and costly mansion, with its superabundance and varieties of expensive decorations and furniture,—the high priced plate, pictures, ornaments, and other rich and showy appendages, with many similar exhibitions of the perversion, vanity, and folly of the unregenerate mind, which so generally follow the possession of earthly riches. How different are all these vanities, as also their votaries, from the character and conduct of that truly wise, great and good man, the Rev. John Wesley, who, when requested by letter from a government official to give for taxation, a list of his plate, answered that he had “two silver spoons at Bristol, and that he did not intend to have any more plate, while there were so many poor in the land who wanted bread.” There are always poor and distressed in every land, whose wants and sufferings, both scripture and common humanity call on the wealthy to relieve, instead of “sowing to the flesh,” in displays of pride and vanity as just described. Giving and receiving sumptuous and expensive entertainments is another mode of “sowing to the flesh,” and exhibiting “the pride of life” scripturally forbidden and condemned. Kind and suitable hospitality to christian brethren and strangers, is strictly enjoined by scripture; but with equal precision and force it is commanded by our Lord himself: “When thou makest a dinner, or a supper, call

not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee; but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed," &c. (Luke. xiv, 12.) It is not said of the rich man, mentioned in the gospel, that he was dishonest, oppressive, or in any way immoral; but he was richly clothed, and "fared sumptuously every day," and neglected to afford the needed relief to his fellow man, the afflicted Lazarus; and having chosen his portion, or good things on the earth, when death transferred him to the other world he found himself "in hell, tormented in flame," and entreating in vain for the slightest relief. What an awful warning and admonition to all the rich, the sumptuous and luxurious. For their benefit throughout all ages, the narrative has, in divine mercy been permanently recorded.

Another very prevalent mode of "sowing to the flesh," is reading fictitious tales and narratives, very fitly classed under the general term *romances*; the numbers and varieties of which now so greatly abound. This fascinating employment, besides its sinful waste of time, so strictly prohibited in scripture, tends directly to weaken and degrade the rational powers, and distort, if not corrupt the most estimable desires and affections. Many of these pernicious works describe characters and scenes, directly tending to contaminate the mind, and increase and stimulate the sensual passions and propensities. They also contain, more or less frequently, the base and defiling language of corrupt characters, and almost invariably expressions in which the divine names are *profanely* used, either in oaths or curses, or *exclamations*, in direct violation of the third commandment, and other parts of sacred scripture. One of the most prolific authors of such profane and corrupting works, has thus used the divine names with extreme frequency; in one of his romances no less than seventeen times in the forty-eight pages of the work. Yet the writers of those profane and pernicious productions are highly extolled, and their memories cherished or celebrated by very many persons professing christianity, and in high positions in society. It is not too much to say, that neither such writers, nor their patrons or admirers, ever truly learned the first letter of the alphabet of scriptural and

holy christianity. Another mode of sowing to the flesh is indulging in games and sports, the varieties of which are so numerous.

Having thus briefly described some of the principal modes of "sowing to the flesh," the next subject in the text for consideration and remark, is the harvest reaped from all such sowing. It is described in the text by the one repulsive, but comprehensive term, "corruption." This word does not *here* mean the decomposition and corruption of the body, for these take place after death, in the bodies of the righteous, the same as in those of the sensual and wicked. The word is evidently in contrast with the expression, "everlasting life,"—the portion or harvest of those who have "sown to the spirit." The word "reap," in the text, evidently signifies "enjoyment, or punishment in another world." The word "*corruption*," therefore, as applied in the text to the "sower to the flesh," means his reaping or receiving as his harvest, eternal punishment, "in the lake of fire," frequently called in scripture, "the second death," because there is no resurrection or deliverance from it.

Let us now pass on to consider first, what is meant by "sowing to the spirit," and what it comprehends; and then view the present and future circumstances of him who sows in that direction. The expression includes a large number of most important subjects, relating to affections and principles, and external conduct. The word Spirit, here evidently means the Holy Spirit, one of the persons in the glorious and eternal Deity. In order to attain the "eternal life" promised in the text, there is a necessity for sowing to this Divine Spirit, or in other words, seeking and earnestly striving to obtain His operations and influence. This necessity arises from the native condition of all mankind since the first transgression, being as scripturally shown, corrupt, depraved, alienated from God, and consequently exposed to His wrath and just condemnation and punishment, in the future and eternal world. These awful truths are so clearly and fully declared in the sacred scriptures, that for persons possessing ordinary knowledge of them, no citations of texts on those points need be given. The absolute necessity of a spiritual change in the nature and character of man, in order to his reconciliation with his Maker, and acceptance to His favor, are with equal precision and certainty

set forth under various forms of expression in the scriptures, most especially in those of the new covenant. The Lord, under the name of "Wisdom," has said, in Prov. i.—"Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my spirit unto you;" and again, by His prophet Ezekiel He promised to His people of Israel,— "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;" but He also declared,— "I will be enquired of to do it for them." Our blessed Lord, in his interview with Nicodemus, declared in the emphatic words,— "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and repeated,— "except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We find the meaning of these words in His sayings on a subsequent occasion;—"It is the spirit that quickeneth. the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." It is further said in the gospel by John, of true believers in the Saviour, that they are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" and in Romans viii, it is declared, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Numerous other passages in the New Testament declare the necessity of possessing and retaining the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit, in order to obtaining salvation from sin, acceptance with God, a state of holiness *here*, and eternal life *hereafter*. He then who sows to the spirit, receives through grace, and sows and cherishes in his conscience and heart, the good seed of repentance for all his previous transgressions. He further sows to the spirit, by constant and fervent prayer and supplication for continual and enlarged supplies of divine grace, that the heavenly kingdom may be increased and firmly established within him. His desires and affections are constantly going forth, in sincere and ardent praise and thanksgiving to his God and Saviour, for all His mercies and love towards him. Through divine power imparted, he sows the seed of precious justifying and sanctifying faith; the spiritual fruits of which scripture describes as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These precious fruits, while continuing faithful and obedient, he is constantly bearing and exhibiting. His sowing to the spirit is

further shown, by his constant endeavors to walk in obedience to all the divine ordinances and commands; by his religious, benevolent, and charitable spirit and conduct, in all his dealings and intercourse with his fellow men; and in his avoidance of all sinful associations and companionships; and of all ways and practices of sin, vanity, and folly; abstaining, as scripturally enjoined, from "all appearance of evil, and ever "cleaving to that which is good." In personal discipline, he acts in accordance with the declaration and example of the great and self-denying Paul,—“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” In further sowing to the spirit, he goes undauntedly forward in fulfilling the exhortation given in the verse immediately succeeding our text,—“Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not,” and regards and acts on the further injunction,—“in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whither shall prosper, either this, or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.”\* According to his means and ability, he continues in various modes to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”†

Now what does the Almighty and righteous Judge declare he shall reap, as the harvest and reward of all his sowing and faithful labors? It is nothing less than “everlasting life.” But what does this expression signify and comprehend? The words “everlasting life” and “eternal life,” so frequently used in scripture, are evidently employed to mean and include all the inconceivable glories and joys of the heavenly kingdom. In this kingdom, as declared in scripture, there will be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. Those faithful sowers of the good seed will have glorious bodies, like unto their Saviour and Lord, who purchased the blessings for them by His sufferings and death. They will see Him as “the King in His beauty,” with His many crowns. They will receive from his hands crowns and palms for faithful endurance and victory. They will also see the eternal and glorious God, for this is the supreme blessing promised to “the pure in heart.” They will freely partake of all the fruits and joys of the glorious<sup>s</sup> Paradise of God, “at His right hand, where are pleasures for

\* Ecclesiastics, xl., 6. † Galatians, vi., 10.—I. Corinthians, ii., 9.



evermore." The most lofty human mind or imagination, cannot reach to the conception of the sublime and rapturous enjoyments of the glorious mansions and scenes of that heavenly region; for God Himself has declared in His word, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which He hath laid up for them that love Him," and have faithfully served Him in this earthly state. Such will be the everlasting portion and reward of those, who while here in an ungodly and tempting world, have continued to sow to the Spirit. They did not profanely mock their God with merely formal and heartless services, but faithfully and diligently sowed the good seed, to and for the Divine Spirit; and they are not deceived, but reap a harvest immeasurably beyond their highest conceptions.

Not so with the others, the sowers to the flesh. Their fleshly propensities and gratifications *deceived*, and in the end utterly ruined them. In the language of inspired truth,—“in the day they made their plants to grow, and in the morning made their seed to flourish, but the harvest was a heap in the day of grief and of desparate sorrow.” Those of them who had been members of churches, were like the man who intruded into the hall of the marriage feast, without the requisite garment,—the *holiness* essential for admission to Heaven—and who was expelled into outer darkness and deepest distress; and like the foolish virgins, who suffered their lamps to go out, and not having taken any oil in their vessels, the door was finally shut against them, and their cries for admittance were utterly unavailing. According, therefore, as the present life has been, so will be the eternal state. Whether the *sowing* be to the flesh, or to the spirit, so will the eternal *reaping* be,—*miser*y for the former, and *happi*ness for the latter.

But many will say, probably all which is here written is in accordance with scripture truth, but are people generally, or even members of churches to have no amusements or diversions; are they to be always thinking and striving about the salvation of their souls. To all this may readily be answered, what all must admit, that both as to time and eternity, the subject of religion is, to every human being, of the very deepest importance, and

ought to engage his chief and most earnest consideration and efforts. If professing christianity, he will also acknowledge that the scriptures of the book we call the Bible, especially the New Testament portion of it, form the only sure and perfect standard for the belief and conduct of all who profess that only valid and pure religion. Now let the caviller as to this standard, and opponent of what he calls pharisaic or puritanical strictness, look through the sacred books, to discover an authority or permission for any of the carnal and worldly diversions and practices, previously mentioned in this discourse, or any others of a merely sensual description. He will look in vain. He will not find in those sacred and binding oracles, even the words, *amusements*, *diversions*, or *recreations*. The only passages looking the least in that direction, are these: "Is any merry, let him sing psalms, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." But these exercises will not at all suit these "sowers of the flesh." They will be willing to take the music *singly*, but it may well be presumed, will readily dispense with the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Some other kind of songs, sonnets, duets, or solos, will please them better. One of England's pious and most gifted Bards, has said of the divinely wise and liberal Paul: "commend me to a quip, or merry turn, in all he ever wrote, and I consent you take it for your text, and preach from thence till sides and benches fail."

But although the sower to the flesh will not find a single passage of scripture to sanction his sensual diversions and amusements, he will find very many informing him, that like all the rest of mankind, he is by nature corrupt and depraved, held under sin, and in consequence exposed to Divine wrath and punishment, from a just and holy God. He will see in those inspired records, that he is, while in that natural state, called a "child of wrath;" and that in order to escape from that dreadful condition, and obtain mercy from his offended God, and acceptance to His favor, he must earnestly and anxiously seek for Divine grace, to enable him truly to repent; must turn from his evil ways, be renewed in heart and mind through divine operations; believe with his heart in the remedy graciously provided for his pardon and resto-

ration to the Divine favor, through the atoning sufferings and death of the Lamb of God—the Lord Jesus Christ. Being thus, and only thus, reconciled to God and become a christian, he must “walk circumspectly” in the christian course, as described and enjoined in the scriptures; must take the whole spiritual armour divinely provided, and therein offered for his use; must constantly “watch and pray, that he does not enter into temptation, redeem time” for good purposes only; “fight the good fight of faith; abstain from all appearance of evil; must “not be slothful in business;” but be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;” be “patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer;” be *upright* and *honest* in all the transactions of life; doing “good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith;” thus endeavoring to “work out his own salvation,” while a gracious “God worketh in him, to will and to do of His good pleasure;” and ever giving “all diligence to make his calling and election sure.” If he bears in mind, and obeys all these inspired precepts and exhortations, as he is under the most solemn responsibilities to do, he will inevitably find that he will have no time to spare for any merely sensual diversions or amusements.

Now my reader, if you are one who pleads for such diversions, and indulges in them, whether you are a member of a church, or merely one of a congregation, do not begin to say, what is the use of arraying all these texts for my perusal? I believe they are all contained in the scriptures, and therefore all they declare is true. But the personally important question is, are you earnestly regarding them, and endeavoring to act in accordance with them? These are the purposes for which they have been given, and not merely forming parts of a religious scheme or system for examination and belief, or as branches of scriptural knowledge. You profess a belief in christianity as a Divine revelation contained in the scriptures; and these are as fully binding on you, as they were on those to whom they were first given; for they declare, that “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;” and “for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” The Divine Judge, who will assign to all their eternal state, either of happiness or misery, according to their doings on this earth, has Himself declared: “He that receiveth

not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John, xii, 48.) You, a professor of christianity, yet a "sower of the flesh," and pleading for its vain diversions, have the whole of that word in your house, and you hear it read and explained by its ministers, you cannot therefore escape the awful responsibility you are under, to diligently search and obey it. Your soul's everlasting destiny, either of happiness or misery, is suspended on your obedience or neglect. That word has been given, to be as "a lamp" to your "feet," and "a light" to your "path;" and again you are solemnly directed "to the law and testimony," for instruction and guidance. These inspired oracles, form the only standard, by which all who have possessed them will be eternally judged; and not by any standard, or flexible course which each individual may form for himself; nor by the traditions, or accommodating creeds and maxims of men, however exalted they may be in human estimation, and however specious and plausible their interpretations and systems may appear.

The whole Christian revelation is of the most spiritual character, and requires and enjoins continual watchfulness, and most earnest and persevering efforts, to secure a holy preparation for reaping the harvest of "everlasting life," promised in the text.

Let all take heed to the warning with which the text commences, "Be not deceived." There need not be any deception or mistake, for if the sacred scriptures are duly regarded and consulted, it will be seen that they clearly show, that for the lovers of worldly pleasures, who have refused self-denial, and persevered in sowing to their fleshly lusts and desires, the harvest reaping must be, "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that shall never be quenched." But of those who have continued sowing to the spirit, have avoided all ungodly and worldly lusts, and obtained the wedding garment of holiness, the same inspired oracles declare,— "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, even so saith the spirit, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Their harvest will be, as immutably promised, "life everlasting, pleasures for evermore."

