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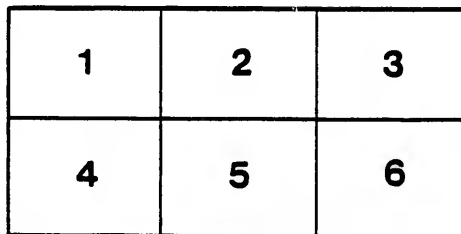
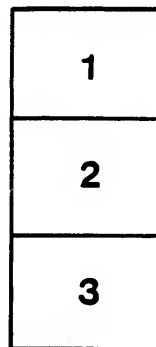
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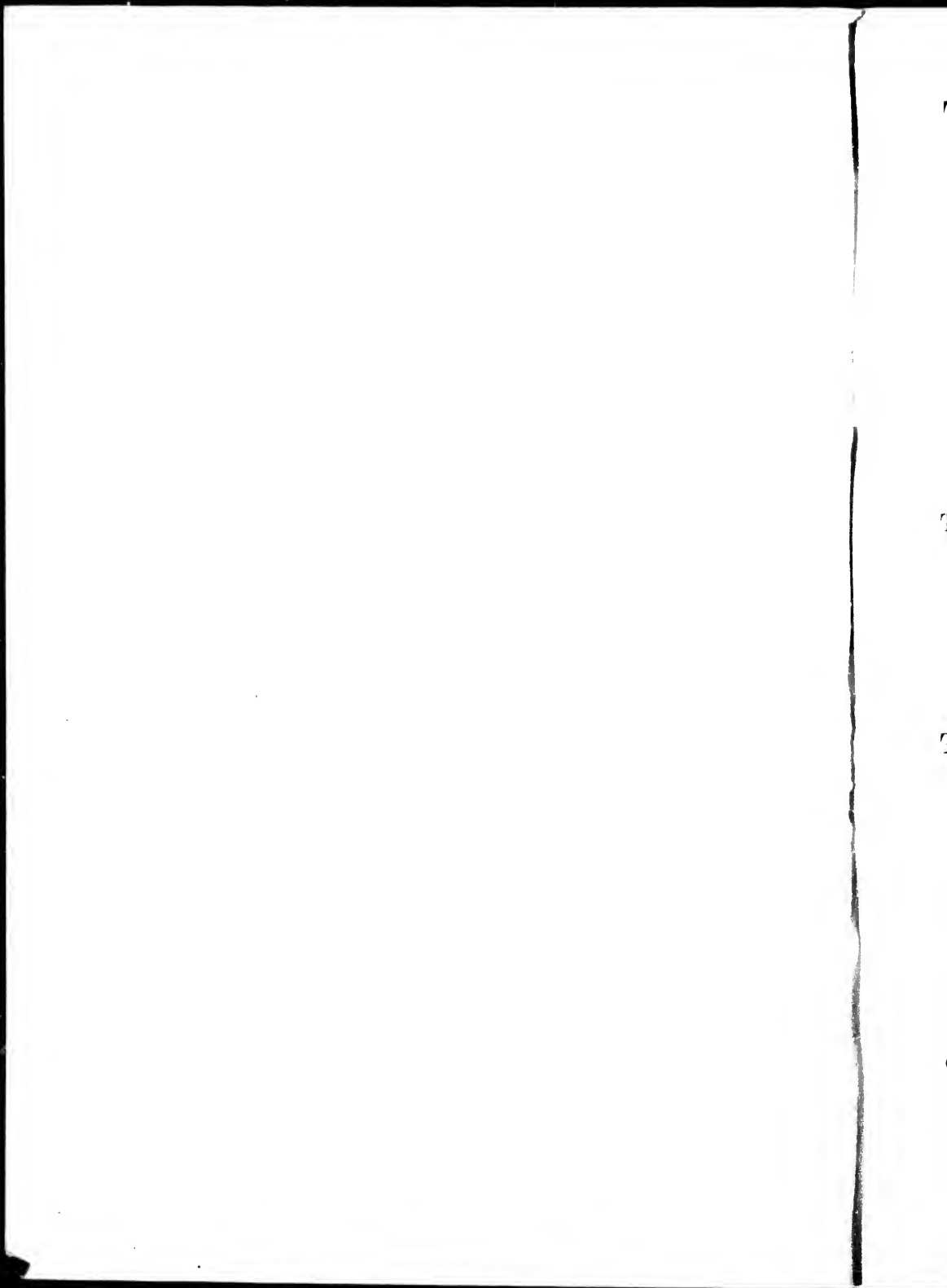
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THE ALL-SEEING EYE OF GOD.



A NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS

TO

THE YOUNG CONNECTED WITH KNOX  
CHURCH, TORONTO,

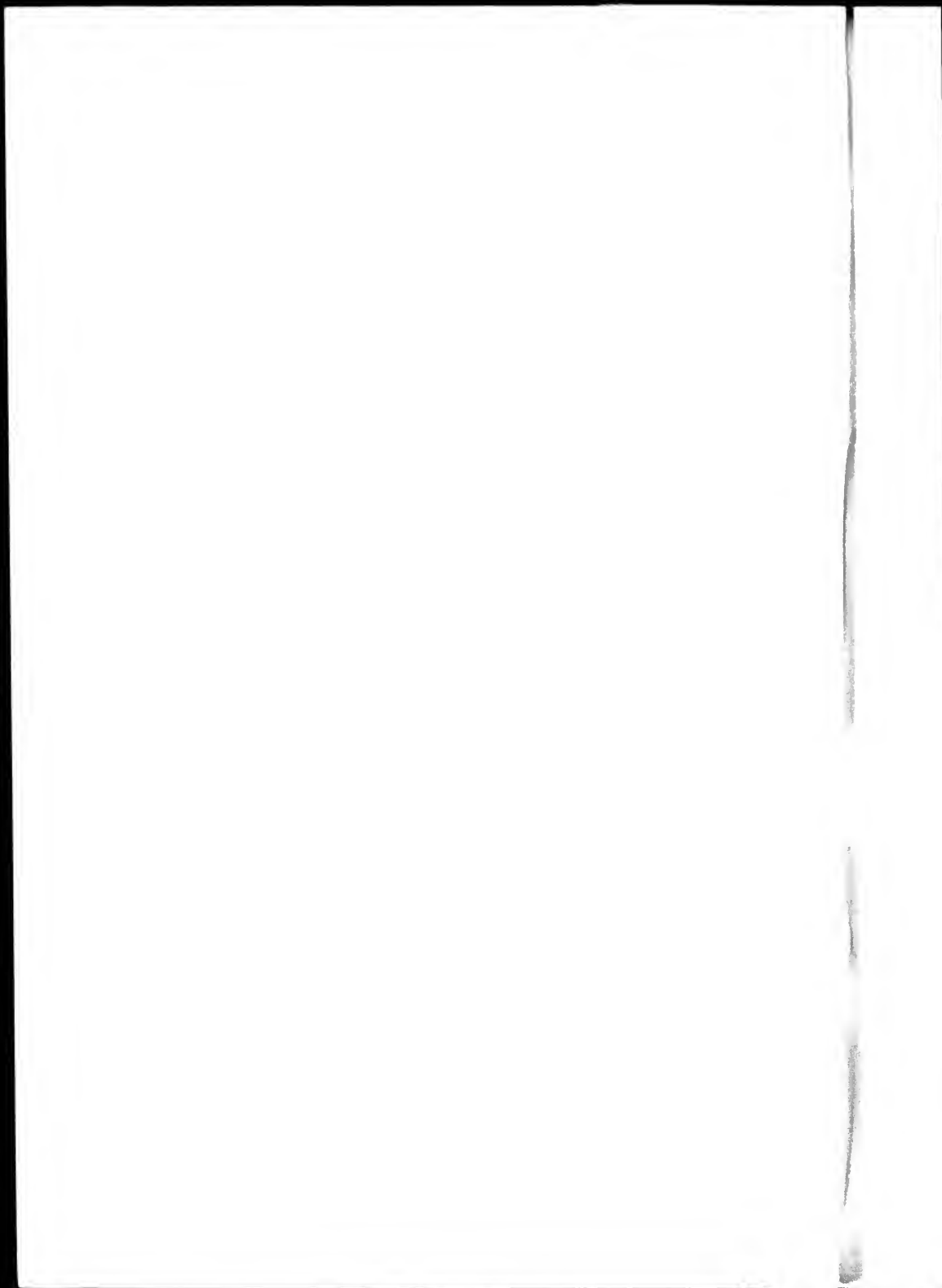
*BY THE PASTOR,*

THE REV. ALEXANDER TOPP, D.D.

1878.

TORONTO :

GLOBE PRINTING COMPANY, 26 & 28 KING ST. EAST.



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.

GEN. xvi, 13 :

—  
“*Thou, God, seest me.*”  
—

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,<sup>f</sup> 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 how ever 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 enquired, "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 travail-ling 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?

1. 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.”

2. 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 for ever 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 one to 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 the 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 tell 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 school-fellows. 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.

4. 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 astonished, 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.

KNOX CHURCH, TORONTO,

1st January, 1878.

