

GUIDE FOR YOUNG DISCIPLES OF THE HOLY SAVIOR IN THEIR WAY TO IMMORTALITY

by J.G. Pike

Pike's devotional work guiding young Christians toward eternal life, addressing the nature and love of Christ and exhorting young believers to dedicate themselves to the Savior through Scripture study and an understanding of God's character.

2 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. Guide for Young Disciples of the Holy
2. Guide for Young Disciples1

Guide for Young Disciples of the Holy

Guide for Young Disciples of the Holy

Savior, in Their Way to Immortality Forming a Sequel to "Persuasives to Early Piety"

by John Gregory Pike, 1823

PREFACE

While, my young friend, a few fleeting years will fix you in that solemn eternal world, where the business of this life will no longer engage you, and its amusements will have no power to charm you; while every moment hurries on your final hour, and every beating pulse beats nearer to the last; while endless ages rise in solemn succession before you, and DEATH, at the door, is ready to introduce you to those unbounded and amazing scenes — O what is worth a thought, except the favor of God, and heavenly glory! O what is worthy of a moment's care, more than making your calling and election sure! To this momentous subject I now solicit your attention. The design of my previous little volume, which I have addressed to the young, is to urge them to make that religion their choice, which renders its possessor . . .

rich in poverty,

happy in affliction,

secure in danger,

and triumphant in death! In this book, the principal design is the benefit of those who have found the path of peace with God. May I address you as such a happy person? Are you a partaker of that grace which comes from God, and leads the soul to him? Is he your Father and your Friend? Is the blessed Jesus, your Savior? Can you contemplate Heaven as your home? Can you clearly read your title to an everlasting mansion in that happy country, which lies beyond the stormy sea of time? If you can — then "rejoice in the Lord always!" These unseen realities will surely be yours. They will not perish, when all that is now seen — shall fade, and droop, and die! Let earth, if it will, be all delusion — for Heaven is all reality. Let all below be treacherous shadow — for all above is enduring substance. If, my young friend, through grace, those unseen realities are your portion, the cross of Christ your glory, and Heaven your home — still you have need to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

To be a Christian indeed, is widely different from what multitudes suppose. The Christian character, as delineated in the Scriptures, is one of a most peculiar and elevated nature. It rises almost as much above the ideas apparently entertained of it by many professors of the gospel, as it does above those of the careless followers of the world. In times like these, when no prison opens its doors to receive Christian victims as its prey, when no flames call for martyrs to glut the persecutor's rage — it is an easy thing to profess religion. And if to add to that profession, a character fair in human sight, and an attention to religious privileges, were sufficient to constitute a

Christian — then many would deserve that exalted name. But all this, and much more than this, will not constitute a genuine Christian. A Christian in reality, as described by the Spirit of God, is one whom grace makes free, and enriches with a thousand blessings; whom grace prepares for glory, and allures to Heaven; whose chief business is with the things beyond the grave. He is . . .

a new creature in Christ Jesus;

a child of God; a member of Christ;

a stranger on earth;

a traveler to glory;

a future companion to the angels of light;

an heir of Heaven!

Even here, one of that family that will all meet at length before the throne of the Most High God; and whose love and hatred, hopes and fears, desires and tempers, life and conduct — will bear a likeness to the new and happy relations he sustains. Such is a Christian indeed.

How different is the religion which produces this change in an immortal being — from that cold, formal, dead thing, which the world esteems as religion. Is this, my young friend, the character which you sustain? Or do you view it as one too highly elevated for your desires and aims? If you do, will you in the last hours of life maintain the same opinion? When this momentary scene of care and vanity is closing upon you forever; when it no longer matters what you suffered or what you enjoyed; when the overwhelming scenes of the eternal world are ready to burst upon your soul — will you then think that piety could be too elevated, or the Christian upon earth too nearly like the Christian in Heaven? If you do seriously believe that, in your dying moments — you will think it possible to be too pious; if you do indeed believe that, when going to meet your God — you will think it possible to love, or serve, or honor him too much; then you may slight the advice which this little book contains. When you have plunged into the unseen eternal world, and are fixed in happiness or woe, for more myriads of millions of years, than there are drops in the ocean — can you suppose, that then you will think you could be too earnest, too prayerful, too diligent, in preparing for your everlasting state? If you can indeed think so — then read no further! But if instead of this — you feel convinced, that when you die and come to meet your God, you will think all faith weak, all love cold, all diligence carelessness, all labor idleness, and all piety scarcely worth the name — when compared with that faith, and love, and zeal, and piety, which the eternal God, the eternal Savior, an immortal soul, and an endless Heaven demand; if you will think so — O then aim at nobler piety than that which satisfies so many! Do not stay in the valley beneath — but as at death, you will wish to have done — soar to the heights above! O learn to live — as having soon to die; that you may die assured of living with God forever!

The principal object of this little book, is to assist you in your Christian pilgrimage, though at times it may contain a few lines more suitable to those who are strangers to vital religion, than to those who have embraced the gospel; for perhaps some who do not know God may glance over the following pages.

Let the writer be permitted to add, that in drawing up this small volume with the design of assisting youthful piety — he has endeavored to draw instruction from the Sacred Volume — that sole fountain of real wisdom.

That holy book declares, that neither is he who plants anything, neither he who waters — but only God, who gives the increase. To his all-important blessing, the writer therefore now commends this little volume.

Chapter I.

A Brief Scriptural Delineation of the Attributes and Perfections of God, and on Christian Devotedness to Him.

1. If you were, my young friend, going to spend one hour in England, and then never to see it more — but afterwards to pass sixty years in India — of which country would you desire the most extensive knowledge? Would you not reason: The knowledge that will benefit me but for one hour in a country, which after that I shall never visit again, is unworthy of a thought — when compared with that knowledge, which will be useful to me for sixty years?

If you were to spend that one hour in company with people, whose favor or displeasure would render it either a happy or a wretched hour; and were you to pass the following sixty years with those, whose smile or frown would make them all years of happiness or years of pain — whose favor would you be most anxious to enjoy? Would you not argue: The smiles or the frowns of those who can cheer or embitter but one hour, and whom then I shall leave forever, are of little importance; but their friendship, who must render me happy or wretched for sixty years, is ten thousand times more important?

Apply these thoughts to your state in this world — and in the eternal world. Here you have a little while to spend — but compared with the endless life which awaits you there, it is infinitely less than an hour, when compared with sixty years. Of which world, is the knowledge most important to you? Of that where your life is the twinkling of an eye? Or that where eternal ages lie stretched before the view of the astonished soul? The friendship or displeasure of your fellow creatures may cheer or embitter life's short hour; the friendship of your God will brighten and bless your whole eternity; or his displeasure make eternal years — one scene of darkness, bitterness, and woe! How worthless, to a creature born for eternity, is all knowledge, compared with a holy acquaintance with God! How despicable all friendship, compared with his friendship and love!

2. The book of nature may teach us much respecting God; it may at least declare his eternal power and godhead — but it is the book of grace alone, which unfolds the brighter glories of Jehovah. Would you be intimate with God, the God of heaven — and not with the idol that philosophers frame in their imagination? Then search the Scriptures! That holy volume represents the adorable God as possessed of those excellencies which should excite the deepest reverence, and the most fervent love in the human heart.

God is a Spirit. He created the heavens and the earth. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." The sun obeys his voice; and the stars of Heaven appear at his command. He is the one Jehovah and the only true God. Heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool. He reigns as King forever. He is clothed with majesty. Clouds and darkness are round him, righteousness and

judgment are the habitation of his throne. He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the only wise God. To his enemies, he is "a consuming fire." "He is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell."

In Providence, and in the works of nature, the power and majesty of God are displayed: He kills and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and brings up. He makes poor and makes rich. He raises the stormy wind, or makes the storm a calm. He turns rivers into a wilderness, or springs of water into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness; or a dry desert to a watered field. He says to the snow: fall on the earth. He gives rain, and sends waters upon the fields. He feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field with more than kingly glory; and so extensive is his providential care, that without him, not a sparrow falls to the ground. The sublime description of the majesty and glory of God, in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, is as much superior to the loftiest descriptions, which heathen poets or philosophers have given of the Deity, as the God it represents is superior to the idols they extolled. "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and measured out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he takes up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him as less than nothing and vanity."

"Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the Lord consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding? Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust. Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings. Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing. Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff!"

Survey this universe:

Behold its oceans, in themselves a watery world. No line has ever measured their unfathomable depths. The swiftest ship would spend months in crossing them; yet to God, those vast and fathomless oceans are so insignificant, that he "measures the waters of the world in the hollow of his hand."

Behold the heavens — the sun, the moon, the stars of light; how brilliant is their glory! How immense their distances! But God measures out Heaven with his hand — that vast and boundless field of grandeur and of glory.

Behold the earth, its vast islands, its cloud-capped mountains, its unmeasured deserts; the fertile lands of its immense continents, where numerous nations find abundant room for their residence, and which require a line thousands of miles in extent to measure either their length or their breadth; but what are these vast regions, and this vast earth, before Jehovah! "He holds the dust of the earth in a basket, and weighs the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance!"

Survey the nations — perhaps a thousand million human beings. How immense the number! Yet to God so insignificant, that they are as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust which lies unheeded on the balance; as nothing, less than nothing and vanity!

3. Now glance at the unsearchable wisdom and infinite knowledge of God.

He is the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom! The only wise God. He sees in secret. He sees not as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance — but the Lord looks on the heart. He searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. He is not an inattentive spectator of what passes in his wide empire. By him are actions weighed. The Lord looks from Heaven; he beholds all the sons of men, he considers all their works. In this vast survey, he beholds his children with peculiar love. The eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him, upon those who hope in his mercy, to deliver their soul from death; to show himself strong in the behalf of those who heart is perfect toward him.

If any would wish to hide themselves from his all-piercing eye-it is impossible; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. He smiles in Heaven; he frowns in Hell. The veil of night which hides all things from the eyes of man — hides nothing from his eye. No spot in the universe can be found that is beyond the reach of his arm, or where one cannot say, "You, O God, see me!"

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens — you are there; if I make my bed in the depths — you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea — even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."

4. This adorable and all-seeing God, is holy and amiable in the highest degree. He is glorious in holiness. There is none as holy as the Lord. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. Just and true are his ways. He is the faithful God, who keeps truth forever.

"High o'er the earth his mercy reigns,

And reaches to the utmost sky;

His truth to endless years remains,

When lower worlds dissolve and die!"

Venerable and lovely in his holiness, he is, if possible, still more lovely in his goodness and mercy. He is the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. Of great mercy. A merciful God. There is none good but God. He proclaimed his name Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. The fountain of his goodness pours forth many streams. He does

not wish that any should perish — but that all should reach repentance. He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. He is a God ready to pardon, "is gracious and full of compassion, is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." "He is plenteous in mercy and truth." The world might drink at the ocean of his love — and this ocean still be full. "He gives grace and glory, and he will withhold no good thing from those who walk uprightly."

He is the Father of all the righteous; "their Father in Heaven;" "and like as a Father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him, for he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust." A stronger principle of love than natural affection actuates him, "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children — how much more shall your Father in Heaven, give good things to those who ask him." Parental love in its strongest form, cannot rival his. "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget — yet I will not forget you."

Love like this cannot be measured. "Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens." Who can measure the heights of Heaven? Or stretch a line from the east unto the west? Yet this is an easier task, than to number the extent of divine love. "As the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west — so far has he removed our transgressions from us." This charming excellence is his delight. "He delights in mercy;" "and takes pleasure in those who fear him, and who hope in his mercy." To sum up all in a few words, "GOD IS LOVE." His richest love is the love unfolded in the gospel; love, like an ocean, which has neither shore nor bottom, measure, beginning, nor end. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish — but have everlasting life." "God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God — but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins." A pious writer observes, "When God gave us his Son, he gave us an infinitely greater gift than the world: the Creator is infinitely more glorious than the creature, and the Son of God is the Creator of all things. God can make innumerable worlds by the word of his mouth; he has but one only Son, and he spared not his only Son — but gave him to the death of the cross for us all. God's love to his people is from everlasting to everlasting: but from everlasting to everlasting there is no manifestation of it known, or conceivable by us, that can be compared to this. The light of the sun is always the same — but it shines brightest to us at noon; just so, the cross of Christ was the noon-tide of everlasting love; the meridian splendor of eternal mercy. There were many bright manifestations of the same love before — but they were like the light of the morning, that shines more and more unto the perfect day; and that perfect day was when Christ was on the cross, when darkness covered all the land."

Pursuing his schemes of love and mercy, he appears as "the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ." He loves those who love his Son. "It is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom." "And God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."

5. All this love is like himself, eternal. "His mercy endures forever;" and "is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him." "The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall grow old like a garment; but his salvation shall be forever."

He who manifests this love is "the eternal God." "A thousand years in his sight are as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." "He inhabits eternity;" and such is that eternity, that, compared with it, one day and a thousand years are alike; they are both so insignificant, that one appears as long as the other.

6. What awe, what reverence should these views of God inspire! His works, how glorious! But himself, how infinitely majestic! When compared with him, his vast creation is as insignificant as a speck of floating dust — and sun and stars are like momentary sparks of fire, just seen and forgotten. Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, shine with a glory which the loftiest language scarcely describes. Yet in prostrate homage — thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, cherubim and seraphim, bow before him, and veil their faces, and cast their crowns at his feet, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who is, and was, and is to come!"

While such is their homage — how reverent should be yours! You, who are a mote, a worm, an insect — compared with them; yet they, with all their radiant majesty — are insects compared with him! If they in his presence shrink into nothing, and less than nothing — then what are you! How great a God is our God! Cherish the deepest reverence for him. Should such a God be treated with irreverence? Should he be mocked in professed devotion, "with solemn sounds on a thoughtless tongue?" Abhor and watch against this common sin, and humble yourself in deep abasement before him, for doubtless it has often polluted your soul.

7. What deep concern for a full assurance of his favor should these views of God excite in your heart! O, could we feel but a thousandth part as much distressed where eternity is concerned, as we do when health or comfort is at stake — how seriously and fervently would we inquire, Is God indeed my God? A single doubt would wring the heart with anguish; and uncertainty almost drive us to distraction. Pursue this blessing. If others are satisfied with a little religion, O imitate not such folly — but seek, in and by Jesus, the full assurance of faith. The power and justice of God are armed with ten thousand terrors against every one who is not his child; the love and goodness of God display ten thousand charms to every one who is his child. O how dreadful must it be to have him for a foe — whose thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, tempests, and pestilences can sweep millions to the grave in a moment! Whose command would extinguish the sun, and crush the universe to nothing! But how inexpressibly desirable is such a friend! A friend,

whose knowledge no enemy can elude;

whose power none can resist,

whose wisdom none can baffle, and

whose love none can comprehend! Who bids seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, to revolve;

who kindled up sun and stars;

who rolls the moon and planets through the expanse of Heaven, and

pours floods of light and warmth from the sun upon this distant earth;

who says to the sea, "Peace, be still!" and to the seraph in glory, "Go!" and he goes.

While all the inanimate creation obey his voice, while angels bask in his smile, while the treasures of Heaven are at his disposal, while nothing exists of which he is not the rightful owner, and while devils are shrinking from his frown, and trembling beneath the chains of his wrath — O why are you concerned about anything else but God?

You have to meet this infinite God. How will you meet him — if you do not become his friend, his child? How will your soul sustain that solemn day? How will you bear the appalling survey of his infinite majesty? How you will shudder at the guilty past! How you will tremble at the amazing future! Prepare to meet your God. Whatever engages you — let God engage your most fervent thoughts. Whatever claims your heart — let God have the first place there. As much as earthly friendships and earthly cares may now agitate and engage you, remember that they are but the things of a moment, compared with what shall be revealed hereafter. The time is coming when those which appear of most importance to your present comfort, and which may now be contemplated with ardent interest, or inexpressible delight — will seem of no importance, any further than as they advance your preparation for eternal scenes.

Keep this in mind, and strive to resign all your dearest interests into the hands of the All-wise God; and seek your lasting good and best treasure in his love. He deserves your best affections, and your highest regard. If, generally, you are so earnest after happiness and comfort in the present state — then how much that should impress upon you the value of immortal blessedness and happiness! And if perhaps you are so anxious to secure the affections of kind and amiable friends here — then how much that should urge upon you the necessity and importance of possessing the love of the ever gracious God, and adorable Redeemer, both here and hereafter! Compared with our God and Redeemer — what are our tenderest, best, and dearest friends? What are even the kindest and most valued parents to us? Their warmest affection is as cold as rocks of ice — compared with that which actuated the heart of the Eternal, when he so loved the world as to give Jesus for its ransom; or with that of the divine Immanuel, when he became for us a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The love of the fondest mortal friends, is nothing but the return of affection; and such too is the love of man, of saints, of angels, to God. "We love him — because he first loved us." The love of God was unsought, unsolicited, shown not to friends — but enemies; and shown when in our character there was everything to prevent, and nothing to produce, it. On our interest in this — an eternity is concerned; on our interest in the hearts of those we hold most dear on earth — nothing but an inch of time.

8. Consider that not merely is the favor of God eternally important to you — but that he has an entire and unalienable claim on all you have and all you are! The first and the greatest commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." This commandment is binding upon all on earth, and all in Heaven. The love it enjoins is the golden link that would bind the whole universe together in harmony and bliss. It would inspire all with one desire, and lead all to pursue one object, calculated supremely to glorify God, and to benefit man. The gospel of Jesus, while it delivers his followers from condemnation incurred by transgressing this law — takes not one jot or one tittle from our obligation to obey it; but strengthens that obligation by additional motives, and thus in fact establishes the law.

Such is the extreme deceitfulness of the human heart — that it may be useful more in detail to show what is required from those who are indeed devoted to God.

There can be no true devotedness to God, until the corrupt selfishness of the human heart is subdued. Selfishness is the root of man's depravity. He is his own idol. He would give to himself, that place which God alone has a right to possess. Some of our old writers called sin, *deicide*; probably from the idea that man, pursuing his career of sin and self-exaltation, would, if he possessed sufficient power — not stop until he had thrust the Creator from his throne; and by destroying him, had assumed that honor to himself!

If the sinner were possessed of sufficient might, he would regard God as his enemy, and not be happy until he had advanced one step higher, and placed his throne above the throne of God. This is the tendency of the selfish depravity of the human heart, and were this corruption armed with equal power, this would be its outcome. Having conquered one world, Alexander the Great wept because he had not another to conquer — but if he could have carried his victorious arms into the world unseen, and have waged war against his Maker, doubtless no place lower than his Creator's throne would have satisfied the infernal ambition which governed in his bosom.

Every child is born with this corrupt principle of selfishness, though in some it afterwards appears much more prominent than in others. It is the root of human wickedness. Every human being, by having indulged selfishness, has become an idolater, for he has preferred self to God; and given self that place in his affections, which only God deserves and justly claims.

Ah! my friend, if Pharisee-like notions of the goodness of human nature charm your mind, you will think the writer a poor enthusiastic creature, almost beside himself, for penning assertions so strange. But if your heart has ever been broken up, if you have ever gained a glance at the great deep of iniquity within, though your life should have been fair and blameless — yet you will be ready to lie down in the dust of self-abasement, and to acknowledge, not as the extravagance of error — but as the correctness of truth, that

"God only knows the utmost Hell

Of the deceitful heart!"

9. All by nature are without love to God, alienated from him, and disposed to give to self the place which he ought to have in their esteem. Where grace does not subdue this corrupt principle of self, and transform the man, this natural propensity acts and governs in every station. The Indian Brahmin, who courts divine honors; the New Zealand chief, while esteemed a god by his fellow-savages, display its power. The soldier, the sailor, the tradesman, the man of science, the dissolute youth, and the giddy girl — are all under its influence.

Ambition in every form is a desire of self-exaltation.

Selfishness mounts the throne when a desire to gratify the thirst of pleasure, grandeur, and power — is the governing principle in a monarch's heart.

Selfishness guides the general when spreading desolation through peaceful realms — that he may be extolled as a mighty conqueror.

Selfishness rules the philosopher when pursuing his studies or forming his theories — that his name may be applauded through distant days.

Selfishness governs the merchant and the tradesman when laboring for riches — that they or their children may be great upon earth.

Selfishness ascends the pulpit, when the preacher labors not to exalt the Lord — but to charm his hearers, and to advance his own reputation.

Selfishness governs the dissolute youth, whose pursuit is worldly pleasure; and the giddy girl, whose object is the admiration of the vain flatterers around her, or whose ambition it is to be more admired than some rival flirt like herself.

Selfishness descends to the lowest sphere — it governs even in a beggar's heart. And the lowly peasant, whose ambition rises to be the ruler in his native village — is as much under its corrupt influence as a Napoleon, disturbing the peace, and coveting the possession of a world. The principle is the same, the sphere of action makes the difference.

10. When this selfish corruption of human nature is not subdued, it creeps into every action, and pollutes all it touches. Generosity in relieving distress — may spring from selfish motives, from a desire to be seen by men. But then, whatever benefit the relieved sufferer finds — the giver finds none; his charity is polluted by selfishness, and changed into sinful ostentation.

Activity and zeal may spring from this wicked source of selfishness — and their real motive be the desire of human applause! We even read of prayers offered to be seen by men; prayers that, springing from so polluted a source — must bring curses, not blessings, down on the heads of the pretended but wicked worshipers.

Selfishness is in fact, the root of innumerable sins!

Selfishness produces pride and ambition. Man exalts himself in his own esteem; and would love to be exalted higher.

Selfishness is the source of avarice and worldly-mindedness. Man covets much for himself.

Selfishness is the parent of resentment and envy. He is resentful — because self has received a real or imagined hurt; he is envious — because he would not have any rise higher or prosper more than himself.

Selfishness makes man indifferent to his fellow-creatures' welfare. While self does not suffer — it is a trifle to him, that others do. This evil root of selfishness produces slothfulness and inactivity. Even some professors of religion sit down contented with enjoying the blessings of the gospel, and careless of a perishing world; for they (at least they think so) feel no need.

Selfishness produces deceit, and treachery, and dishonesty. These are pursued, to advance its ends.

Discontent is offspring of selfishness. From thinking highly of what himself is or deserves — man becomes dissatisfied with the conduct of his God towards him. Nay, murders, the single murders of villains, or the wholesale murders committed by hostile nations — are to be ascribed to

selfishness. Had man been a stranger to this corruption of selfishness, and loved his God and his fellow-creatures — the earth would never have been dyed with human blood! Could selfishness — this radical corruption of human nature enter Heaven, even Heaven would become a scene of discord and confusion. Its inhabitants would each have an interest of his own, distinct from that of all around him, and opposed to the glory of God. God, instead of being universally loved and enthroned in every heart — would be comparatively disregarded; while each would exalt himself, at least in his own esteem and desires — to his Creator's place. Harmony and holiness would flee away; and the wicked scenes of earth be acted over again in Heaven. Hence it is, that to fit man for Heaven, he must be born again.

It is a solemn and alarming thought, that all short of the vital power of religion, may exist where selfishness, instead of God, governs in the heart. Consider, therefore, what real religion demands, and inquire whether yours is such as leads you to devote yourself entirely, unreservedly, and eternally to God. "You shall love the Lord your God, with ALL your heart, and with ALL your soul, and with ALL your mind, and with ALL your strength. This is the first and great commandment." "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do — do all to the glory of God." "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Behold what an unreserved surrender of yourself to God is here enjoined. Nothing less than consecrating to him . . .

all your powers,

all your faculties,

all you have,

and all you are! With your whole heart, you are bound to love him. Our days are to be spent for him, our property considered as his. You are called upon to offer your body as a living sacrifice to the Lord; to esteem yourself no more your own — but his:

your feet to move at his bidding,

your hands to labor for his honor,

your tongue to speak to his glory, and

your body with all its powers — to be holy and devoted to the Lord. So that even in the common actions of life, God may be regarded and honored by you. Nor is this a mere matter of choice, which may be chosen as a higher good — but neglected without any considerable harm. It is the very object which the gospel is designed to promote! There is no piety, without devotedness to God. All professions of religion without this, are as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Nay, worse! The unconscious brass, when it emits a sound, is not false and hypocritical — but professions of religion, without devotedness to God, are glaring hypocrisy.

O, Reader, is such the life which you lead? Has God your heart? Can you, with the Psalmist, exclaim, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed!" — fixed on you, on Jesus, and on heaven — fixed on consecrating to you my faculties and powers; and though my flesh and heart must fail —

yet would I consecrate to you all the nobler powers of my immortal mind, and in life and in death aspire to you, my God, and my portion forever. The view thus offered of the nature and necessity of devotedness to God, is further confirmed and illustrated by those numerous passages, which represent the Christian as a child of God. Surely from the children of such a Father — all this consecration of their whole selves to him is demanded. The affection of parents claims much — but the love of God claims more. It would be thought wicked ingratitude, not to repay parental love with obedience and affection; and does not God's love demand much more devoted obedience, much more fervent affection?

How high, how noble a character is that of a child of God! Ask an angel what is his highest honor, his noblest joy, and he might reply, "It is that I am a child of God!" Is this yours also, and should not an angel's dispositions be cherished in your heart? How supreme is their devotedness to God! How fervent their love! How rapturous their delight! They have no will — but his. They have no pleasure — but in pleasing him. Why should they be more devoted to God than you! Are not you his child, his son, or daughter? The angels are not more than that. Are not you his child, ransomed by the blood of his Son? They are not. In this, your nearness and dearness to him, excels even theirs — and can you feel this, and not devote to him your body and your soul?

11. True devotedness to God is connected with deep self-abasement and child-like affection. It is not the devotedness of a servant, who employs his powers for his master, merely on account of the wages he expects to earn; it is the devotedness of a ransomed criminal, who consecrates to the friend that redeemed him, the life that his kindness has prolonged. It is the devotedness of a penitent prodigal, when restored by undeserved compassion to his father's house and bosom. He serves God, not for the benefits he wishes to acquire — but for the mercies he has received.

Think of the case of a condemned criminal. Having violated his country's laws, he is justly doomed to death. His claim to life is forfeited. His interest in his property ceases. His connection with his friends terminates. His all is lost. Neither liberty, nor possessions, nor friends, nor life — does he have a further claim. He stands as a wretched, sequestered being — cut off from his connections with man, severed from all that of which he was once a part, and unable to say of anything that surrounds him, excepting misery, "This is mine."

Now suppose some generous friend pays a price sufficient for the ransom of this man and the sentence of death is reversed, he is restored to liberty, to friends, to possessions, to life. But whose would these be? Whose would he be? Could he say of these things, "They are mine"? If possessed of proper feeling must he not say, "They are his, and I am his, who ransomed me."

Every child of God was once as surely a condemned wretch, and condemned to a direful death — the death that never dies. What then should be the language of the Christian, who views himself and his condition rightly. "Father, nothing that I have is mine; for I have forfeited all and lost myself. Behind me were years of sin, before me the gloom of eternal night. I lay a helpless, ruined wretch, justly condemned to death and Hell; and just as able to pluck the sun from the skies — as to blot out my crimes, or to set aside the sentence of deserved condemnation. I had lost Your favor. I had no claim upon the smallest blessing; nothing was mine — but guilt; nothing awaited me — but perdition; without one gleam of hope, I was hastening to eternal night! Then You interposed. Then Your Son bled and atoned for me; and now I live. You have given me more than a reprieve, a gracious pardon. I live, pardoned and saved! But whose am I? not my own. The blood which

ransomed me when I had lost my all — that blood bought all I now possess and all I am! You are my Redeemer, and You have a right to me. You have had compassion on my body and my soul. I am Your property, and while I live — I would live to You."

How important is such a life! Compare the views and feelings of two types of people. There are those whose hearts are actuated by such principles as the poor condemned criminal who is now pardoned. And then there are those who, having never known themselves utterly condemned, hope to please God by their defective morality! How different must their emotions toward God be! How different in their designs, as well as in their governing principles! Let the mere moralist, or the fashionable worldly Christian, utter his sentiments, and he might say, "I trust the virtues of my character; the goodness of my heart and actions — and will obtain the favor of my Maker." Let him who acts from the principles above displayed in the excellent example of the poor condemned criminal who is now pardoned, explain the design of his obedience, and he would say, "I have no such expectation as my deluded fellow-sinner describes; I have deserved Hell, and having deserved that direful doom, I know I cannot deserve Heaven. All that I do, and all I ever can do, for God, (and I would do all I can!) is but a poor imperfect offering of gratitude and love to him for saving me. It is not a service by which I hope to earn his favor — but it is his rightful claim, because he bought my body and my soul, when he redeemed me from the pit of destruction, by the blood of his Son. A life of devotedness to God is not generally connected with retirement and withdrawal from the duties of the present world. Some avocations indeed are of such a nature that religion absolutely forbids them — but with respect to those avocations that are lawful and needful, the followers of Christ are directed: Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Religion does not set aside the common avocations of life — but, while it allows or enjoins the employments, it sanctifies the motives that are to govern in their performance, and says, "Do not do this with the views of the thoughtless worldling — but do all to the glory of God. Let your industry, let your diligence, reflect honor on the gospel, and furnish you with additional means for promoting the honor of God. Seek health, that God may be glorified by your improvement of its blessings. Labor for food, that God may be glorified in the life that food supports. Let holiness to the Lord be as much inscribed on all the engagements of life, as upon the hours devoted to religious acts."

12. Another feature in a life of devotedness to God, will be a prevailing concern to live life as in His sight. That we are always in His sight — all but atheists acknowledge — but we mostly forget the solemn fact. We should desire to remember this, and more and more effectively to feel it. In public, or in private, in blazing day, or midnight darkness — still we acknowledge, "You, O God, see me!" In the season of business, and in the hour of prayer, in the house of worship, or by our own fire-side — God still sees me! He . . .

hears my every word,

observes my every action,

and watches my every thought!

God is intimately acquainted with me — and all that I do, say, think, and am!

He sees me in my day of pain — and knows my every secret sorrow.

He sees me in my cheerful hours — and knows how those hours are spent.

Alas! How much "practical atheism" — even His own children have to deplore! How much this solemn truth is forgotten! Were an apostle or an angel always with you — how you would watch your actions and your words! But an infinitely greater One is always near you! Were you to spend a few years in the immediate presence of God — how would you live? Act therefore, as always in His sight. Often think, "Would I live as I do — if I saw my God right there with me? Would I do these actions, utter these words; indulge these thoughts — if I beheld Him — who now beholds me?"

Imitate the Lord Jesus Christ. In His holy life — devotedness to God shone with its brightest luster. He represented it as His food, His very support — to do His heavenly Father's will. When after a fatiguing journey, His disciples entreated Him to partake of refreshment — He replied, "I have food to eat that you do not know about. My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." He labored and suffered for the honor of God. He ascribed to His heavenly Father — His actions, His doctrines, and His success. He waited on Him in His temple, or sought the solitude of deserts — to spend whole nights in fervent devotion. In life — He was all activity and zeal for His heavenly Father's honor; and in sufferings and death — He was all submission and resignation to His heavenly Father's will. He left us His example that we should follow His steps.

13. Perhaps you think the devotedness to God, thus urged upon you, is far superior to that which many who profess religion manifest. Be it so. Numbers deceive themselves, and claim to live — while they are dead. There are more numbers, of whose sincerity some hope may be entertained, yet, alas — they give cause for many fears that, when weighed in the balance, they will be found lacking. You would not wish at the judgment day, to belong to either of these classes. You will wish for a religion that, when proved by death and eternity, shall appear of the right kind. Do not think, then that you are entreated to devote yourself too entirely to God. He claims you — for his mercies' sake. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, "by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship!" Oh think of all these mercies! God made you what you are. You might have been a brute — but He has blessed you with a human body, and an immortal soul. You enjoy the use of reason. It is his gift. You might have been an idiot or a maniac. Do you possess hearing, speech, sight? Can you taste, feel, smell? It is God, who has blessed you with these abilities! You might have been deaf, dumb, and blind, unable to smell, or feel, or taste. Perhaps you were born to the enjoyment of wealth; consider that — but for His goodness, you might have been a beggar's or a gypsy's child. If not wealthy, you are probably placed in a situation which affords you many temporal comforts. God placed you there. You might have been an Arab — wandering and famishing in burning deserts; or a savage Indian — dwelling with the wild beasts in dens or trees; or a Bushman or a Hottentot — sunk almost to a level with the brute creation!

You have had parents or friends, whose love cheered and blessed your early years. God gave them to you. You might have been born where heathenism destroys natural affection, and parents offer their children as human sacrifices to Moloch. God has been kind in fixing your lot; and has He not been as kind in the dealings of His providence. Of how many comforts has He been the giver! Through how many years has he been your preserver! Your body is formed like a delicate yet complicated machine, and one part disordered might have disorganized all the rest. Yet He has

kept its parts in action; and preserved and regulated the whole!

"Your life contains a thousand springs,

And dies if one is gone!

Strange, that a harp of thousand strings

Should keep in tune so long!"

Ah! it would not have kept in tune, if He had not preserved the harmony.

Survey your past years. They have been years of mercy. He has watched over you by day and by night. How many days of ease have you enjoyed! How many nights of security have you passed, when, sunk in sleep and insensibility, you had none to secure you but God! Have you enjoyed health? He gave it. Has sickness, if it visited you, yet made only a transient visit? He ordered its departure, raised you from the bed of pain, and brightened your sickly countenance with the returning bloom of health. Have you lived many years, and never for a day been destitute of needful food and decent clothing? God has supplied these needs, through all the days of those departed years. Have you, from the moment of your birth, to this hour, had friends, who have been the solace of your life? God gave those friends.

Perhaps you have seen twenty, thirty, or more years roll away; can you say of one day in all those years, that, "God forgot me; that day I had nothing from his bounty!" You know you cannot; though you doubtless can say, "I forgot Him for many, long rebellious years." Through what changing scenes has he led you, and still been uniformly kind! And so kind, that neither ingratitude nor rebellion has ever checked the torrent of his mercies. He blessed you in childhood; He watched over you in youth; and if riper years have rolled over your head, He has crowned those years with all the mercies they have brought you. Through how many dangers has He led you! From how many storms has He sheltered you!

14. God has been kind in providence — has He not been kinder still in grace? How much has God done to make you happy forever! Compare your lot — with the lot of millions; your holy light — with their degrading darkness; your bright hopes — with their mournful despair; the brightness of your day — with the gloom of their sad night. If you are a Christian, contrast your pure and peaceful Sabbaths — with their unhallowed festivals of cruelty and superstition; your support in sorrow — with all their unheeded sadness; your consolations in death — with all their dark and cheerless agonies; your assured prospects in eternity — with their cold and heart-sickening theories; and what a theme have you for gratitude! What an argument you have for praise! Who has made you to be different from them?

Why were you not born in China, or India, or Turkey — and trained to worship the tiger, or Juggernaut, or devils? Some compute that there are six hundred million pagans alive on earth. You might have been one; but God fixed your lot — where the gospel spreads a cheering day. There are perhaps one hundred millions of papists, the greater part of them are as ignorant of religion as the heathens themselves. Why are you not one? Why were you not born where, instead of learning to adore God and the Lamb — you would have been taught to worship silver saviors and saints of gold! And, nursed up in superstition and vice — you would have lived the slave of sin, believing that you could purchase a pardon for your crimes the Pope — the antichrist! Do you have

a Bible? Millions never saw its holy pages. For perhaps one billion humans — only twenty-five million Bibles are supposed to have been printed. Why do you have that precious book? God bestowed it on you! But I address you as a partaker of still greater mercies. Turn your eyes from earth — to Heaven. Think of God showing his love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Think that He who kindled up the stars of light — assumed your nature, and suffered in your stead! And oh, what miracles of love have been manifested to you! Nor did they stop here. Did not God meet with you when you knew Him not? Did He not enlighten your mind — which would otherwise have been forever dark? Did He not kindle in your heart desires — which otherwise you would never have felt? Did He not lead you to that Savior, to whom otherwise you would never have gone? And when you feared rebuke — did He not forgive, receive, adopt, and save you? What mercies are these! Can you not exclaim, "I was lost — but am found; I was dead — but now I am alive; I was a prodigal — but here I am in my Father's house!" Who sought, who quickened, who gave you welcome there? God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved you! And do you not look forward to a time, when you will reside in a heavenly home, to join the song of the ransomed, and to praise redeeming love forever? And there will you have to exclaim, "What miracle of mercy brought me here? Me, who was once so vain, so mirthful, so thoughtless of all real good! Me, once so dissipated, so worldly! Me, who was once stained with ten thousand sins! Me, for whom the pit of Hell yawned, and whom devils expected as their prey! God, that solemn venerable name! God brought me here; and never, never would I have seen this abode of peace — but for His saving love."

Oh my friend, do you possess these rich mercies, and also hope in the richer prospect of those to come — all which is the gift of that much injured, yet still benevolent, Being, God? How then can He expect, or can you be willing to offer, less in return than all you have and are! Is it too much to devote that little to Him, who gives so much? Has He given you life and health, a thousand comforts, and more than doubled all in giving Christ, and will you not devote to Him yourself and your all? Will He give you Heaven — and is it too much to devote to him a span of time on earth? Oh rather, pray, "Merciful God! Little, far too little, is the most I ever can devote to You; and let me not make that little bit even less, by offering a heart but half set on You, and life but half devoted to You! Oh rather, whatever other professors of Your gospel do — enable me to offer to You all that I have, and all that I am — an unworthy and insignificant — yet a living, and, through Jesus Christ, an acceptable sacrifice!"

15. As one motive more for devotedness to God, remember that they who live most to God — live most to their own true welfare; and they who live to themselves — live to ruin. On this subject a pious writer observes, "The fact is, no man will have been found too cunning for God. Men, all men, will be forever and ever, exactly what they were through life. Every grain of the seed sown in time, will bear its own fruit in time and through eternity. The tree which you plant, O immortal — of its fruit shall you partake forever. By the merits of Christ, believers will attain to life eternal — but the history of that life eternal will bear the motto, Whatever one sows — that will he also reap. And thus a life of selfishness invariably ends in disappointment in some shape or another. There is an inseparable, an eternal, connection between actions and their fruit — and no wit or cunning of men can dissolve it. Whoever sows sparingly — will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully — will also reap bountifully. The one who sows to his own flesh — will from the flesh reap corruption; but the one who sows to the Spirit — will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

"But he who has lived to himself, shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. God says, 'I set before you a heavenly life, a glorious career of Christian benevolence; and My grace should have been perfected in your weakness. But you lived for yourself. Absorbed in secular engagements, you raised a noble mansion; you elevated your family to the highest dignities, and the name of your family has survived the ravages of centuries. But see, the world is on fire! Behold, a new earth and a new Heaven! What share have you in this new creation? Is there one soul on these thrones which you have instrumentally raised there? Is there one scene, to the beauties of which you have contributed? None. All your labors, all your projects — have perished in the great inferno, and you are left alone, since all earthly connections are dissolved, forever to reflect on the inexpressible folly and depravity of a life which has been consumed on a base and fruitless effort to make self the object of adoration and service; while I and all the creatures have been burdened with your sins. Go, infatuated wretch, eternity is before you; you are a god for a moment — but a miserable reptile forever. Had you lived to Me, I would have made you a son and an heir of God. You have lived to yourself; yourself in ruins — this shall be to you the only object of contemplation — amidst the solitudes and unavailing anguish of eternity!"

16. While the goodness, and love, and compassion of God thus claim for Him your supreme regard, the contemplation of His excellencies should fill your soul with pure delight. If you are indeed a follower of the Lamb — then this is God, your God forever and ever. He will guide you forever.

Look at the creation, and you may exclaim, "My Father made it all." Look at the sun; it is darkness compared to His glory. Look at the world; it is the creature of a moment in His sight. He, before whom angels veil their faces; He, at whose frown the pillars of Heaven tremble — He is your God. He who inhabits eternity is your God, and is preparing a mansion for you in His own abode.

O think more of God, and less of the world; more of His favor, and less of earthly cares or troubles. What is the world — to one who has to do with God? What are its pleasures or its pains — to one who hopes before long to be with God? What all the cares that agitate its followers — to one who knows he has but a moment here — and eternity there? What is the world, what is your country, what all your friends to you — compared with God? This world — is not your world. This country — is not your country. These friends, unless they too are the children of God — are not your lasting friends; but Heaven is your country, and God is your Friend and your Father forever! And who is He who is thus engaged as your friend? The God who is love. Love is his brightest glory. For scores of ages has He been showering down innumerable blessings on this ungrateful world; for He is love. The meanest insect is not beneath his care. A sparrow does not die without him, and the birds of the skies are fed, because GOD IS LOVE. But in eternity, the sun of His love sheds its brightest beams without one darkening cloud. Joy is diffused through all the immense regions of Heaven, because GOD IS LOVE. Eternal day smiles on its peaceful mansions, for God is there, and GOD IS LOVE. Myriads of happy spirits exult there in unsullied holiness, unmingled happiness, and never-fading glory — for God is their friend, and GOD IS LOVE. He pours the tide of joy through their abodes, he lights up their eternal day! All that they are, and all that they have, all that Heaven can furnish and eternal life can bestow — all is the gift of God, for GOD IS LOVE. And is this God, your God? Then rejoice! The friend of angels is your Friend and Father; and GOD IS LOVE TO YOU. What are all your friends, and all their love compared with His? His love that reaches through earth and Heaven! His love that supplies a sparrow's wants, and crowns with

glory every angel's head! His love that extends through time, and stretches to eternity! His love to you, more boundless than that to the angels which bow at his feet! For you, a rebel and a worm — He gave his Son. Oh wonder and adore! This God is your God! Oh bow at his feet! Abhor yourself for having ever offended Him, and triumph in His love. "Father of Heaven, are You my Father — and shall I not delight in You? Giver of eternal life, are You my life — and shall I not live to You? God of angels, are You my God, and a kinder God to me than even to them — and shall I not love You, and yield all my powers to You? And shall I not wish to love You with an angel's fire? Light of eternity, are You my light — and shall I not listen to You, and count all wisdom folly — but the wisdom of Your word; count all learning ignorance, except the truth Your blessed book unfolds?"

You are love. O patient love! I have injured You, yet You are kind to me. How are my sins — even of a hellish dye! How have I acted — even a devil's part, in sinning against infinite goodness! and grieving infinite love!"

Yes, my young friend, these mingled feelings of exulting joy in God, and deep self-detestation, well befit us when viewing the love of God. Look but at His everlasting love, and there you will find a sufficient portion to gladden all your soul; and without a sigh, you will leave riches, and honors, and pleasures, and fame, to their possessors — while you can say, GOD IS LOVE, and God is mine.

17. Reflect further: He, your God, is ever with you. Friends may be absent — but He is always near. He sees your tears, He hears your prayers, He beholds the pantings of your heart, and the desires of your soul after more of His presence, His likeness, and His love. He is by you, when you are praying in secret; and He goes with you in your lonely walks. He gives you strength for the labors of the day; and watches over you through the darkness of the night.

Perhaps your house is poor; the great ones of the earth might scorn to enter your humble dwelling, or come under your lowly roof — but your God is there. Your cottage is not too poor for Him, whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, to dwell with you in that cottage.

He is near by, when you are meditating on His word, to pour the light of instruction on your soul; to wing your hopes, and fire your heart, and raise your desires to the mansions of eternal love. He is near by, when you are conversing on His goodness; and hearkens and hears, and a book of remembrance is written for those who fear the Lord and think upon his name. Nor is He absent when you are wishing that your eyes were fountains of tears, to pour a ceaseless flood, because you love and serve him so poorly. Through all your days of health, God is with you; and when you lay on your sick-bed, He will be near you, and near you in your dying hour.

Perhaps you are unknown and despised on earth, your wisdom is counted folly, your name is cast out with scorn; but while God is your portion — what trifles are poverty, contempt, and scorn! However lowly, however despised on earth, as His child — your name is written in the book of life, and stands enrolled in the records of Heaven. While God is yours, though you may have little here — you have much there. On earth you may have but just a humble shelter, in which to lay your head; but in Heaven you shall have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. You may have no riches here — but you shall have endless riches there; and it does not matter if you are poor on earth — if you shall be rich in Heaven.

Perhaps you have few friends, yet can you lack a friend, while God is your friend? He is more to you than the whole universe; and His friendship of infinitely more value than that of all the inhabitants of earth or Heaven besides.

Perhaps you are as feeble as a moth — but the eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath you are the everlasting arms.

Perhaps you are beset by foes and dangers — but the infinite God is your shield.

You are a dying creature — but the immortal God is your life and your portion. Perhaps God has given you more of the comforts and mercies of this dying world; yet it is a dying world, and all is dying round you. Rejoice then not in fading transitory things — but in your God. God is your God forever — but nothing here is yours forever. The tender parents, or beloved and loving friends, whose kindness and affection give life its chief charm, and gladden the very heart, are not to be your friends in this shadowy world forever. The bloom of youth, the strength of manhood, the vigor and the joy of health, will not be yours forever. The possessions and comforts of this life cannot long be yours. This is not the eternal world. All is shadow here — all is change and decay. Your friends must quickly die — but your God will never die. He inhabits eternity. Your health must be changed to sickness, your ease to pain, your life to death. Your wick will burn out; your sun will set; all that you have — insatiable death will tear away. Therefore do not rejoice in dying things — but if God is yours, glory in your God, Who dwells above the reach of change; your God, the everlasting solace of the immortal soul. And He your Friend, your Portion, through the span of life, will be yours through eternal years. The sun that cheers you with its light and warmth, must shortly shine upon your grave; but God, your glory, will then shine with all the beams of heavenly love upon your soul. That sun itself must before long expire — but God shall be your everlasting light. The world on which you are a pilgrim now, must perish like a bubble, that bursts and is forgotten; but God, Who leads you here, will be your God in those brighter regions, where dwell the nations of the saved.

There He will make you rich — when all except His children are poor; and He will make you happy — when all but they are wretched. There his love will diffuse unutterable joy, exceeding and eternal joy, through your soul. There, violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

Guide for Young Disciples1

18. The views that the Scriptures provide of God — should lead you to bind that volume to your heart. How different is the God of the Bible, from that motley train of polluted idols which heathenism has produced! They are weak and feeble, vile and sinful gods. How different too is Jehovah from the idol which infidels, who admit any god, describe as god! A god who sees the wicked conduct of men with unconcern; a god divested of holiness and justice, and his brightest attributes. Who, except men inspired by God, could represent Him as He is described in the Scriptures? From what source — but Heaven, should Moses and the prophets, and the uneducated men of Galilee, obtain those views of the divine majesty and glory which we have now contemplated? What but inspiration could teach them what the philosophers of all nations, and of all ages, never discovered? And what else could teach them so well — that all the philosophers of the world, with all their vaunted wisdom, are mere idiots in divine knowledge — if compared with a poor child instructed from the sacred writings in Sunday School?

Chapter 2.

On the Nature and Love of the Lord Jesus Christ; and on Love to Him.

1. There are few proofs of human depravity that are more impressive, than mankind's general indifference to subjects of everlasting importance; and the contempt of the world for the happy few who are warmly devoted to the Savior. Zeal in other pursuits is admired — while zeal for the gospel is despised. Yet real Christians will continue to triumph in their Redeemer's cross, and admire most and love most the grand glories of the gospel, even though the world ridicules and despises them for their attachment to those glories. No name is so dear to them as that Name which shall endure forever; no part of Christianity is so prized as that which is a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the wise of this world. Such regard to the Savior can exist only where exalted views are entertained of His person and offices.

2. In taking a view of a few of the leading arguments that prove that Jesus Christ is God over all, blessed forever, we may observe that the Scriptures repeatedly assert that He is God, and give Him the names and titles of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:7.) That Jesus Christ is here spoken of, is clear from a following verse. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. They shall call his name Immanuel, which means God with us. (Matthew 1:23.) Jesus Christ therefore is God with us. Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. (Romans 9:5.)

Inquiries on this subject are not speculative. Correct views upon it affect the heart, and the life. "If Jesus Christ is God, then we perceive how vast was His love, how great are our obligations to him, for taking human nature to save a lost world! How inestimable is that Heaven to which He would raise us! How deep the depravity, guilt, and misery, from which the Son of God could rescue us, only by taking human nature and dying for sin! But if we could look on Jesus Christ as merely a man — we would see no more in the love of Jesus Christ than in the love of Paul; and should

discern nothing in what He did, that could peculiarly display . . .

the depth of our sinfulness,

the worth of the soul,

the love of God, or

the value of Heaven!"

Thus this momentous question affects all the branches of religion and religious truth.

Inquiry on this subject is more important in the present than in some past ages. Open infidelity has received a check. Its atrocities in France brought it into disgrace. It therefore in many cases adopts the deceptive and more imposing form of Unitarianism. It sets aside . . .

the infinite evil of vice,

the righteous strictness of the divine law,

and the lost and undone condition of man.

It removes, or tries to remove, the fear of future punishment. It tells its disciples that there is no such being as Satan, and no such place as Hell; or if there be, it is but a purgatory, and when purified by fire, they will rise to Heaven. Thus taught, they need not be very solicitous about eternity, nor much concerned about strict morality; for profligate and moral, the pious and the atheist — will find all well at last. They may join in scenes of dissipation; frequent the theater, the ball, and the debauched playhouse; love the world and the things of the world; reject a great part of the divine Word; treat Paul as an inconclusive reasoner, and Jesus as a peaceable man. What is this system, but infidelity under another name?

Perhaps these remarks may be thought uncandid and severe. Let the writer therefore be permitted to add, that to Unitarians, as men, and fellow-citizens, he feels no dislike, but cordial benevolence. Nor are the above remarks designed to attack them, as if all put on Unitarianism as a mask to cover infidelity. Some no doubt do, but many adopt it through the pride of reason, or the blindness of the mind, and alas, some (in themselves amiable characters) through the influence of education. It is the system that this writer attacks; for he cannot see that it is any part of real candor to describe black as white, or white as black, or to represent the difference as small between them. The two systems of evangelical and modern Unitarian faith — are removed as far asunder as the east and the west. If the former is Christianity, the latter is disguised, though, in many instances, not designed, infidelity. This system attacks, with peculiar violence, the divinity and atonement of Jesus. While therefore in many ways Unitarianism endeavors to beguile the young and unsuspecting, it is important for them to be able to give a reason of their professed belief in the deity of Jesus, and of the hope which rests upon him, as God over all.

Let them consider that humility of mind is an indispensable requisite for a satisfactory investigation of divine truth. If you wish to be taught of God — then you must submit the powers of boasted reason to him. You are to employ those powers to judge of the evidences which prove Christianity a religion from Heaven; but when that conviction is obtained, it then becomes your duty to believe whatever God declares, however incomprehensible. And this is why: for this obvious principle, that

He is acquainted with the truths revealed in His word, infinitely better than His creatures can be. To see men trying the doctrines of revelation, by what they are pleased to term the dictates of reason, and then rejecting divine truths because unable to comprehend them by their insect powers, may remind us of the poet's words:

"The moles and bats in full assembly find,

On special search, the keen-ey'd eagle blind."

God leaves the proud to wander in their own delusions, and to perish in the folly of their boasted wisdom. He knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile. If you would know His will — then you must inquire for truth with child-like simplicity; and must long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation. Jesus praised God that He had hidden these things from the wise and understanding — and revealed them to little children.

If to become one of these babes, in child-like teachableness and simplicity, is too humbling for you — then you are no scholar in the school of Christ. Go then, and "Indian-like," adore your idol, reason. Go, join the upstart ranks of the wise, and compliment each other on your wisdom, and on your superiority to the credulous crowd, who are so simple as to suppose that God knows His own nature better than they. Go spread your philosophic cobwebs; like other cobwebs, they will last their hour; but remember the rough hand of death will sweep you and them to destruction together; and Heaven will pour down eternal blessings on the babe in Christ, whom you despise — when despite all your imagined worth and wisdom, it has no blessing left for you.

It is acknowledged that this is a subject replete with mystery. The Scriptures plainly declare that there is but one God. On their authority, this is to be believed. The Scriptures, as plainly as they assert that the Father is God over all, assert that Jesus Christ is God, and represent the Holy Spirit as God. How the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are in some respects distinct, and yet but one God, it is not for man to explain. But this forms no objection to its truth. What is there which is not mysterious to man? Let some philosopher, who denies the divinity of Jesus, because he cannot comprehend how the Father and the Son can be but one God, tell us of some object in nature which is not mysterious, before he rejects the Scriptures for describing a mysterious God. A blade of grass contains mysteries that no philosopher can unravel. Should the nature of the Creator of the universe be less mysterious than that of a blade of grass? Look at yourself — you are a world of mysteries. What is your body? You cannot answer. What is your spirit? You are still more unable to reply, and can no more comprehend your own spirit, than you can the God of Heaven. How does spirit act on matter? How do your limbs move at the direction of your mind? Still you can give no satisfactory statement. You are engulfed in mystery. Does your nature consist of a body and a spirit merely, or do a body, an animal soul, and an immortal spirit, unite you? Even this you cannot answer, nor tell whether you yourself are compounded of two, or of three distinct parts or principles. Let man then comprehend and explain his own nature — before he endeavors to unfold that of the infinite God! Then it will be soon enough to listen to the Unitarian's arguments against the divinity of Jesus, because it is a subject fraught with mystery. An eloquent passage from Skelton, a writer comparatively little known, shall conclude this long note. "As to the doctrine of the Trinity, it is even more amazing than that of the Incarnation. Yet, as prodigious and amazing as it is, such is the incomprehensible nature of God, that I believe it will be extremely difficult to prove from thence, that it cannot possibly be true. The point seems to be above the reach of reason, and

too wide for the grasp of human understanding. However, I have often observed, in thinking of the eternity and immensity of God; of His existing from eternity, to the production of the first creature, without a world to govern, or a single being to manifest his goodness to; of the motives that determined Him to call his creatures into being; why they operated when they did, and not before; of His raising up intelligent beings, whose wickedness and misery He foresaw; of the state in which His relative attributes, justice, bounty, and mercy, remained through an immense space of duration, before He had produced any creatures, towards which to exercise them. In thinking, I say, of these unfathomable matters, and of His raising so many myriads of spirits, and such prodigious masses of matter, out of nothing; I am lost, and astonished, as much as in the contemplation of the Trinity.

There is but a small distance in the scale of being, between a mite and me; although that which is food to me — is a world to him; we eat, notwithstanding, on the same cheese, breathe the same air, and are generated much in the same manner; yet how incomprehensible must my nature and actions be to him; He can take but a small part of me with his eye at once; and it would be the work of his life to make the tour of my arm; I can eat up his world, as immense as it seems to him, at a few meals. He, poor creature, cannot tell but there may be a thousand distinct beings, or persons, such as mites can conceive in so great a being. By this comparison, I find myself vastly capacious and comprehensive; and begin to swell still bigger with pride and high thoughts; but the moment I lift up my mind to God, between Whom and me there is an infinite distance — then I myself become a mite, or something infinitely less; I shrink almost into nothing, I can follow Him but one or two steps in His lowest and plainest works, until all becomes mystery and matter of amazement to me! How, then, shall I comprehend He Himself? How shall I understand His nature — or account for His actions? In these, He plans for a boundless scheme of things, whereas I can see but an inch before me. In that He contains what is infinitely more inconceivable, than all the wonders of His creation put together — and I am plunged in astonishment and blindness, when I attempt to stretch my wretched inch of line along the immensity of His nature. Were my body so large, that I could sweep all the fixed stars, visible from this world in a clear night, and grasp them in the hollow of my hand; and were my soul capacious in proportion to so vast a body; I would, notwithstanding, be infinitely too narrow-minded to conceive His wisdom, when He forms a fly; and how then should I think of conceiving of He Himself? No; this is the highest of all impossibilities. His very lowest work checks and represses my vain contemplations; and holds them down at an infinite distance from Him. When we think of God in this light, we can easily conceive it possible, that there are a Trinity of persons in His nature." The Father is represented as addressing Christ as God. Of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." (Hebrews 1:8.) While the Father pronounces Him God, God possessed of an everlasting dominion — shall we hesitate to acknowledge Him divine?

Christ is called the true God. We are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5:20.) That the Person here called the true God is Jesus Christ, is evident not merely from the natural import of the passage, but from 1 John 1:2, where Christ is called the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

Christ is called the great God, and the mighty God. Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13.) It is Christ, and not the Father Who will appear as the Judge of the world; consequently as the appearing of Christ is that of the

great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ is here declared to be the great God. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6.) These are titles which no mere mortal could sustain. Yet if Jesus were merely a man, there is no more reason for applying them to Him, than to Moses or Elijah.

Christ is called the LORD or Jehovah. This is God's incommunicable name. He says, I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other. (Isaiah 43:8.) This name, the peculiar title of the eternal God, is freely applied to Christ. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' (Jeremiah 23:6.) A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isaiah 40:3.) In each of the four gospels, it is asserted that the person here spoken of, as a voice crying in the wilderness, was John the Baptist. (John 1:23; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4.) Since John came as a messenger, to prepare the way for Jesus Christ — He, in this celebrated prophecy, is called Jehovah. This view of the passage is further confirmed by the language of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah. (Luke 1:16-17.) That Jesus is called Jehovah (LORD) is further evident from observing that the glory of the Lord (Jehovah,) which Isaiah saw, was the glory of Christ. In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3.) John refers to Isaiah 6:9-10, and then, speaking of Christ adds, Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him. It was the glory of the Lord Almighty, and of no other person, which the prophet saw; and yet John says that he then saw the glory of Christ, and spoke of Him. Consequently Christ is the Lord (Jehovah) Almighty.

Thus in the plain, unperverted language of Scripture, Jesus Christ is represented as God, as the true God, the great God, the mighty God, Jehovah, as God over all blessed forever, and even as addressed as God by the Father. If, as the Unitarians assert, Christ were no more than man — then how dark, confused, and unintelligible would that holy volume appear! Instead of being a sure guide — none would be more uncertain. If Christ were but a man, to worship Him would be idolatry, yet millions of the best and wisest of mankind have been led to worship Him, by that very book, which says, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:21.) If Jesus Christ is not God, the sacred writers have deceived millions who wished to know the divine will; have led them to pay divine honors to a man, or an angel; and thus have drawn them into the enormous and ruinous crime of idolatry. Can you believe a system true, which evidently leads to this conclusion?

3. That Jesus Christ is God, is further proved from His possessing those divine excellencies which dwell in no created nature.

He is eternal. Of Himself he says, "I am the first and the last:" "The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life." (Revelation 2:8.) These words contain the strongest assertion that eternity past and to come belongs to Himself. If He is the first — then none can have been before Him; if He is the last — then none can be after him. Were He the eldest and the greatest of created beings — He would not be the first, for God would have been before Him.

If it were possible to render these passages more decisive, it might be done by comparing them with some others, which speak of Jehovah. Thus says the LORD, I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. (Isaiah 44:6.) I am the first, and I am the last. My hand laid the foundation of the earth. (Isaiah 48:12.) That existence from eternity to eternity which Jehovah claims to Himself in these passages — Jesus claims in the former.

4. Christ is God, for He is the Creator of all things. Let us survey this argument a little more fully. It may be stated thus: The Scriptures represent creation as the work of God. The same holy volume declares, that creation was the work of the Lord Jesus. In effecting this work, He did not act as an agent of the Father's. Therefore, as the Creator of all things, He is God over all, blessed forever. The Scriptures represent the creation of the universe as the work of God: this is so generally allowed, that it may seem almost needless to refer to that sacred book in proof of the assertion. The Scriptures appropriate the work of creation to God, and exclude all others from any participation in the glory of having effected that work. The builder of all things is God. (Hebrews 3:1.) O LORD, you have made Heaven and earth. (2 Kings 19:15.) Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? (Job 38:4.) I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself. (Isaiah 44:24.) I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. (Isaiah 45:12.) Thus plainly does Jehovah assume to Himself the glory of creating the universe, and deny the claim of every inferior being, howsoever exalted, to any participation in the honor of that stupendous work.

We may next observe, that that holy book which, in terms so plain, declares God to be author of the whole universe — in terms as plain ascribes that work to Jesus Christ. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1, John 1:3.) Criticism has labored hard to wrest this passage from its obvious meaning, but after all it stands a steadfast witness to the fact, that Christ is the Creator of all things. As strong as it appears in our translation, it is still stronger in the original, "Without him was not a single thing made, that was made." For by him all things were created, in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16-17.) The language in this passage is peculiarly powerful. The leading idea, that all things owe their existence to Christ, is repeated twice over — by him all things were created — all things were created through him. It is also asserted that He existed before them all; and that His power keeps them all in being — in him all things hold together.

It may properly be observed, that the language used here is altogether opposed to the idea of Jesus Christ's having acted as the Almighty's agent in producing the world; "He is before all things — Without him was not one single thing made." Can He be a creature, Who existed before all creatures? Can He have been made, without Whom was not one single thing made? The next testimony that shall be cited, is rendered remarkable by the circumstance of the very same words, which in the Old Testament ascribe creation to God — being used in the New Testament to attribute that work to Christ. You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the

same, and your years will have no end. (Hebrews 1:10-12.) The unavoidable conclusion is, that Jesus Christ is God over all. These statements respecting creation, if Christ were a created being, would be perfectly contradictory — but explained by His own words, I and the Father are one, they are perfectly true and consistent.

5. It would occupy too much of this little volume to pursue the subject very diffusely; however, allow me to present a few more proofs, in a concise form, by placing in one column passages which undoubtedly refer to the infinite God — and in an opposite column passages which ascribe the same perfections as Jehovah possesses to Jesus Christ.

OMNISCIENCE GOD:

You, you alone know the hearts of all the children of mankind. (1 Kings 8:39.) The heart, who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart. (Jeremiah 17:10.) The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him are actions weighed. (1 Samuel 2:3.) The LORD searches all hearts and understand every plan and thought. (1 Chronicles 8:9.) CHRIST:

I am HE who searches mind and heart. (Revelation 2:23.) I know your works. (Revelation 2:2.) Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts. (Luke 9:47; Luke 6:8; Luke 5:22; Matthew 9:4.) The first two passages of the first column with the first passage of the second column are peculiar. In one of them it is declared that God alone knows the heart. In the other not merely that Christ searches the heart, but is He (the Divine Being) who searches the heart.

OMNIPRESENCE

GOD:

Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:27.) CHRIST:

Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. (Matthew 18:20.) Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20.)

IMMUTABILITY GOD:

I the LORD do not change. (Malachi 3:6.) CHRIST:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8.) PRESERVATION OF THE UNIVERSE GOD:

You watcher of mankind; Man and beast you save, O LORD. (Job 7:20; Psalms 36:6; Psalms 145:20.) CHRIST:

In Him (Christ) all things hold together. (Colossians 1:17.) THE END FOR WHICH ALL THINGS WERE CREATED GOD:

The Lord has made all things for himself. (Proverbs 16:4.) CHRIST:

All things were created by him, and for him. (Colossians 1:16.) THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNIVERSE GOD:

God is the King of all the earth. (Psalms 47:7.) The LORD is king forever and ever. (Psalms 10:16.) The blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (1 Timothy 6:15.)
CHRIST:

He is Lord of all. (Acts 10:36.) On his robe he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:13-16.) The Lamb; He is Lord of lords and King of kings. (Revelation 17:14.)

DIVINE WORSHIP GOD:

You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve. (Matthew 4:10.) You shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:14.)
Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. (Luke 23:46.) CHRIST:

Let all God's angels worship him. (Hebrews 1:6.) That all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. (John 5:23.) Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (Acts 7:59.)

Stephen worshiped the Lord Jesus in his dying moments. (Acts 7:59-60.) Paul worshiped him. (2 Corinthians 12:8-9.) Christians are described as his worshipers. (1 Corinthians 1:2.) Saints and angels in Heaven worship him. (Revelation 5:8-13.) This worship is similar to that which they pay to God himself. (Revelation 7:9-10; Revelation 4:10-11.)

6. Now, as if placed in the presence of God, let me call upon you to give a faithful verdict on this great question — Is Jesus Christ God over all — or is he merely man? or at most an exalted creature? Can a man or an angel bear the exalted titles of God: God with us; God over all; the true God; the great God; the mighty God; Jehovah? Can a man or an angel be the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; the Creator of all things both visible and invisible? Can such a being be the Searcher of hearts; present in all places at the same moment, wherever two or three are gathered in his name? and this to the end of the world? Can a man or an angel be the same yesterday, today, and forever? the Preserver and Sovereign of the universe? and the end for which all things were created? Could it be said of a man or an angel, that all should honor him, as they honor the infinite God? that even all the angels of Heaven should worship him? To adopt the words of an able writer: "Can a creature be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person; the Light of the world, the Propitiation for sin, the Savior of mankind, or the Object of religious worship? Can any religious man, on a death-bed, say, 'Gabriel, receive my spirit?' or, 'Lay not the sin of my murderers to their charge?' Can the angel Gabriel give life, raise the dead, or bestow immortal life? Can he judge the world, reward the righteous and the wicked, or be the glory, light, and temple of Heaven? What would be the impression, were a minister of the gospel to say, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of Gabriel, and of the Holy Spirit!' or, 'The grace of Gabriel, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen'? Would not these things shock the minds of a Christian assembly beyond measure — as the most tangible blasphemy? Was there ever a minister, even an Arian, or a Socinian, who could bring himself thus to speak in such an assembly? Would not this be, not merely comparing, or likening, one of the angels to Jehovah, but placing him on the same level? Yet these things are said of Christ!

"Why are they said of Christ, if His nature is only like that of Gabriel? Why are they seemingly said? Was it not perfectly easy for the Omniscient God to have said, if He chose to say it, that Christ was a mere man, or a mere creature? And could not he have said this in a way that would

not have been misunderstood even by the plainest man? Did He not understand language sufficiently? Has it not been said in such a manner, as to be intelligible to all men — by Arius, Socinius, Zuicker, Price, Priestley, Belsham, and many others? Was not Jehovah more interested to say it, if it is true, than they were? and so to say it, as to be easily, generally, and certainly understood? Was He not more able? Did He not foresee all the doubts, difficulties, errors, misconstructions, and consequent sins and idolatries, if they have indeed been misconstructions and idolatries, arising from unhappy language used in the Scriptures? Have not the prophets, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; have not the apostles, who spoke the things freely given to them of God, not in the words which man's wisdom taught, but which the Holy Spirit taught — expressed the mind of God on this subject, and every other, in the very manner chosen by God himself? Has not His infinite faithfulness and mercy, then, sufficiently guarded every honest mind against this erroneous sin?

"But if Christ is not the true God, then the great body of Christians have, in every age of the church, wholly misunderstood the Scriptures concerning this most important doctrine — and infinitely mistaken, the real character of their Savior.

"Of course the Scriptures have been written, so that the natural interpretation of them is a source of total and dreadful error; even of that which they themselves denounce in terms of the highest reprobation: namely, idolatry. For the interpretation, which has been given the Scriptures by the great body of Christians, in every age and country, in which they have existed, is beyond a controversy the natural interpretation. That men, who first make a philosophical system of religion, and then endeavor to reconcile the Scriptures to it, should understand them falsely — cannot be wondered at; but that the Scriptures should be falsely understood by the great body of mankind, who come to them only for their religion, and yet the way of holiness be still a highway, in which wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err — is a position which is yet to be explained." In your progress through the world, you may probably hear objections started to the all-important truth maintained in these pages. Bear in mind, however, that there is no truth against which cunning men cannot start puzzling objections. One plain assertion of God's, should do more to confirm your belief — than a thousand perplexing cavils, to shake your confidence. Some bring forward objections against the being of God, others against the existence of matter; some will argue that you have no soul, others that you have no body. Perhaps the sophistry of their arguments may perplex you. Will you therefore believe them? Will you not rather scorn their imagined wisdom?

7. That holy volume which thus clearly asserts the divinity of Jesus Christ, also declares that he was strictly and properly man. The Holy Spirit, speaking by the apostle Paul, unites in one passage, (Php 2:6-8) the two views; and in others speaks of the latter only. As man he was born of a virgin; was the reputed son of a carpenter; was submissive to his parents; increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man; was himself a carpenter; was wearied; hungered; thirsted; wept; prayed; was poor and destitute; was despised and rejected of men, and a man of sorrows; was in agony; was betrayed, judged, condemned; was crucified; questioned his Father forsaking him; died and was buried.

How wonderful was the union thus existing between God and man! How human nature was exalted, when Christ appeared as God manifest in the flesh! But the subject grows in wonder as we advance. Jesus, in his exalted state, though God — still is content to wear the glorified human

nature. This subject is referred to by the apostle when referring to the Christian's future glory: We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body, to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. The Lord himself also speaks of this subject: I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore. It is only as God that he could assert, I am the first and the last. And it is only as man that he could declare, I am he who lives and was dead. The subject is astonishing, above the reach of our powers, but not of our praise.

8. In the Bible, the Christian is represented as under the greatest obligations to the adorable Savior, and as sensible of those obligations.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us. Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. The Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places; he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the Beloved. We have redemption through his blood. We have been brought near by the blood of Christ. We are no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Since we have now been justified by his blood — much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father — to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" With what united heart and voice do the disciples of Jesus thus express their obligations to Him! The grateful acknowledgments of earth become the topic of Heaven; the song of praise begun by men below, is carried on by saints and angels in the realms above; and the Lamb who was slain is the boast and focus alike of earth and Heaven. Christians are described not as anticipating, but as actually possessing, blessings of inestimable value. And all this multitude of blessing flows from no superiority or virtue that they possess, nor from the mere mercy of their God — but all is enjoyed through the blessed Jesus. Are Christians reconciled to God? It is through His death. Do they have peace with God? He made it through the blood of His cross. Do they have redemption? It is through His blood. Are they delivered from this present evil world? He gave Himself for their deliverance. Have they received the atonement? It is through the Lord Jesus. Are their sins forgiven? He is their propitiation. Are they delivered from the curse of the law? He was made a curse for them. Are they saved from the wrath to come? He died and delivered them. Are they rich? It is through His poverty. Are they accepted by God? It is in the Beloved. Are they complete? It is in Him. Have they hope? Jesus Christ is their hope. Are they made divinely righteous? He was made a sin-offering to render them so. Are they made near to God? It is by the blood of Christ. Do they have every spiritual blessing? They have them in Him. His atoning blood has done so much for them, as to justify the expression of a pious minister, "We are floating to Heaven in the blood of the Deity!"

9. The subject of this chapter displays the love and condescending of the Lord Jesus Christ in the most amazing manner. The apostle represents this love as incomprehensible; that you may have

strength to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. We have reason to believe that the Savior's incarnation is the most amazing event that ever happened, even in the records of eternity; and to believe that through an eternity to come, it will never have an equal. Had Gabriel, from benevolence to insects, left the presence of God, to assume an insect's form — such condescension and love might have excited astonishment in every angel's breast; but with what astonishment must they have beheld the incarnation and the sufferings of Jesus!

They saw him who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person. They worshiped Him as the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. He had created the heavens and the earth, and upheld them in being for four thousand years. He had peopled earth with myriads of immortal beings, and He had filled Heaven with ranks of glorified angels. Seraphim and cherubim, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers — owed to him their being, their dignity, and happiness. He had kindled up the seraph's fire, and arrayed every angel with immortal youth, and beauty, and glory. In Heaven, these immortal multitudes enjoyed happiness beneath His smile. Below, all things are supported by His hand, and governed by His power. All was harmony above, and all, excepting man, was order and subjection below. Thus He reigned, blessed — and blessing. Heaven His throne, the universe His kingdom. At length, a time of inexpressible wonder and astonishment arrived. From the heights of eternal glory, He descends. The infinite enjoyments of Heaven He leaves; forsakes the bosom of the Father; leaves the regions of eternal day; and, in a way surpassing all thought and investigation, this divine Person unites Himself to human nature; so unites Himself as to become literally man; so unites Himself as, though rich, to become poor. And though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Thus in one wondrous person, God and man are united. When He had thus taken human nature, this divine Person spends more than thirty tedious years below. He is wearied with labor. The sun scorches Him by day; and the cold chills Him by night. Friends forsake Him, and enemies murder Him. He stoops to all. What a succession of wonders! What unequalled love! What condescension is here! And this was all done for creatures who are lower and more ignoble, compared with Him, than a moth compared with an archangel! For creatures, whose destruction could not have taken one ray from the sun of His glory, nor one drop from the ocean of His joy. Creatures, whose very world He could have destroyed by a word, as easily as a moth is crushed by a human hand; and could have banished them, and sin, and misery together — into everlasting nothingness and oblivion. But, with love unparalleled, He descends to this dark, polluted world; and lives and dies for deceived, guilty, and wretched man. O love divine! Where are your limits? Great God! Beyond the sight of mortals and of angels! The stupendous sun, the brilliant moon, the amazing stars, the extended skies; these have their bounds, but that love has none! It extends, "Beyond the flaming bounds of space and time." It reaches from, "The living throne, the sapphire blaze, Where angels tremble as they gaze," — to man's humblest habitation.

Lift up your eyes and behold this vast world, the product of His power! See its continents and its oceans extending for thousands of miles; those continents may be measured — but not His love, who, though God, became man — for man to die. Sooner would those unfathomable oceans be

fathomed — than the depths of His compassion. Lift up your eyes to the heavens! Survey the countless glories of the starry skies, all its "moving worlds of light!" Let your thoughts rove from star to star! How great is He who formed them all! How glorious He who has bid them shine with undiminished splendor through six thousand years! and to whom they are as obscure as a speck of flying dust! Yet He who hung out those brilliant fires — stooped from His amazing heights of bliss and majesty to take on mortal flesh, and appear a feeble infant, and a suffering man. Far sooner should you measure the stars immeasurable distances, and count their countless numbers — than calculate the vastness of His love, and the blessings it bestows. The sun is darkness, when compared with His superior glory who hung it in the heavens — and yet He humbled himself to the dark abodes of misery and death for guilty man! O! when you gaze upon the blue expanse, or when the solemn stillness of night banishes from your mind the thoughts of a vain, departing world; when you behold the midnight sky, and mark the thousands of its glowing fires — then think, that He who fixed them there once hung on Calvary for you — that you might shine a star, a sun, in Heaven, when all those stars shall shine no more. Think that He was once base and dishonored, stained with blood, and bruised with blows — that you might have a treasure greater than a thousand worlds united, and infinitely more lasting than the countless lights which illuminate the firmament. Amazing love! But vain is language, and vain is thought! It cannot grasp this love, nor by all the powers of imagination reach it, much less by words express it! And vain is time. Its ages, were they as numerous as the drops of winter rain — would not suffice to unfold all the wonders of this mysterious wonder! nor to declare the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of this mysterious love! Were all the love of all the men that ever were, or shall be on the earth; and all the love of all the angels in Heaven, united in one heart — it would be a cold heart compared to that which was pierced with the soldier's spear on the cross! Holy Jesus, your creatures can but dishonor Your love, when speaking of it. But come, engulf me in it! Come, overwhelm my sinking, rising soul, by the amazing view; at least so far overwhelm it, that I may speak, and think, and act, and live and love for you!

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net