

Stages of Progress

by William Edwin Boardman

William Edwin Boardman's sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the stages of progress in the Christian life as starting points for deeper faith and growth.

Scripture: Malachi 3:16, John 3:3, Romans 1:17, 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Philippians 3:13, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Transformation"

Description

William Edwin Boardman preaches about the importance of recognizing that the Christian journey is not about reaching a final stopping place on earth but about continuously progressing towards a deeper relationship with God. He emphasizes the need to understand that conversion and new birth are not the end but the starting points of a Christian's spiritual growth. Boardman uses examples of individuals like Governor Duncan and a New England Lady in the West to illustrate how discovering the way of salvation by faith in Jesus can bring peace, joy, and transformation even in the face of death. He highlights the necessity for all Christians to eventually come to the point of trusting in the Lord for purity of heart to be prepared for heaven.

Transcript

STARTING POINTS NOT STOPPING PLACES.

"I do not like this idea of a definite point to be gained. I have no faith in any stopping place in the Christian course this side of heaven."

The tone of this remark had a shade of impatience and contempt, accompanied by just the slightest curl of the lip and all the emphasis of a finality.

The young gentleman who made it had, the day before -- it was now Monday morning -- been trying the new-fledged wings of his recent licensure, and was just returning in the cars to the halls of theological lore, to make a new sermon or mend the old one, against the time of the next invitation from an over-worked pastor needing respite, or a vacant church, seeking supply.

The gentleman to whom it was made was one of some dozen years' experience as a minister of the gospel, seated by his side in the cars. The two had providentially met a few moments before in the depot, and been introduced by a mutual friend. Seated together, and whirling along toward B., they beat about for a while in desultory conversation upon various things general or personal, but soon settled, upon the topic

of the higher walks of the Christian life. Some turn in their talk had called out this remark.

"No," added the young gentleman deliberately, with a peculiar emphasis of a deep downward inflection on the word hate. "No, I hate the idea of a certain fixed point to be gained -- a resting place -- the all in all to be aimed at or expected by the Christian."

His travelling companion, in the softened tone of a mellowed experience of the love of Christ, and of a developed patience with the foibles of mortals like himself, suggested that perhaps his friend had yoked together a right idea with a wrong one, and was condemning the innocent with the guilty, simply from having himself unwittingly placed it in bad company. "You are certainly right in rejecting the idea of any stopping place for the Christian this side of heaven; but are you sure that a definite point in experience is a stopping place."

"We are rushing along in the ears at the rate of twenty miles an hour towards A., and I have no thought of stopping until it is reached; but we have just now passed the very definite point B., in our journey, and have been doubly advertised of the fact by the car whistle as we were halting, and the clear voice of the conductor calling out B., in the long-drawn manner to be heard over all the din of voices and clatter of feet, and also by the name B., in large letters upon the front of the depot. And in a few moments again, we shall come to C., another very definite point -- both on our checks and on the bills, known and read of all journeyers by rail. And yet beyond the moment spent in wooding and watering, and stretching our limbs -- are they in any proper sense stopping places -- much less the all in all aimed at and expected by journeyers to A.? Are they not -- mere stages in the journey -- new and nearer starting points for home? You do not believe in conversion perhaps?"

"O yes, indeed I do and teach it too. I believe in it, and urge it with all my might upon everybody as a distinct experience, the privilege and necessity of all, known by signs before and signs following, clear and easily distinguishable."

"Well, is the new birth a final stopping place?"

"O, no, indeed! Too many, it is to be feared, think they have gained all -- when once they have had clear evidence that they have been born again -- until they are afterwards reluctantly taught better, but it is only the starting point of the Christian race."

"Well, may there not be another period as well, the new starting point of a higher progress, just as distinctly marked as conversion itself, and the second no more a stopping place than the first?"

The young gentleman was interested -- not convinced -- and eager and more eager as they rushed on toward the moment and place of separation, to have his car companion unfold his ideas of the unfolding Christian life.

Willing rather to put his young friend upon the permanent track of a higher happiness and of a nobler usefulness, than merely to gratify any momentary curiosity, the servant of Jesus graphically delineated the two stages of experience as they have been given to the world by eminent men from their own personal history, Luther and D'Aubigne amongst the number. Each stage he described as the definite attainment of an actual progress, the first as the victory conquering peace, and the second as a new start, both in a richer peace and a more expansive wisdom and beneficence.

As the conversation went on and the point of separation drew near, the fire kindled in the ingenuous heart of the young man and shone forth in his noble face.

Hope -- a new hope of gaining for himself, Luther like, a deeper, stronger vital union with the True Vine, and a more generous fruitage in the vineyard of his Lord, just now opening out before him, sprang up in his soul. He frankly confessed his fruitless struggles and sad disappointments in the past, and as frankly owned his now newly awakened hope for the future. Many things said by his companion struck deep into the generous soil of his ardent young heart, and clear and active mind: nothing however more deeply than the two-fold significance of the text which became the Reformer's watchword and talisman, "The just shall live by faith." The just shall be made alive first, and afterwards learn to live by faith. The just shall be justified before God first, and afterwards learn the way to become just also in heart and life, by faith. This two-fold significance of the text, illustrated by its suggestion the first and the second times in the Reformer's heart, as by a celestial voice within, with the interval of years between the two, and meeting in each case a want so different, caused the young man to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches of the word of God! What hidden force it contains! We get but half of it at most, and then too often think we have all!"

They parted with reluctance. But cars like time and tide wait for no man. With their shrill signals and ringing-bells, they constantly reiterate the words of warning and wisdom, "What thou doest, do quickly," though, alas, only too many like Judas are hurried on by them to the betrayal of the Master for silver. Not so with our travellers, however. Our young friend had even now, got a spur and a life-long power also in the work of his Master, and his companion's heart like the fountain, welling up and full to the brim, was all the fresher and not a whit the less full for all he had given to his thirsty fellow-traveller by the way.

Was it not just such conversations, in just such places that the prophet Malachi referred to, when he said, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. And I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Surely, the Lord, in this instance, did stoop down and bend his ear to their talk by the way, for he evidently sealed it to the permanent blessing of the young man, giving him -- it may be hoped -- in his own happy experience the evidence in his own case of a definite point gained, not a final stopping-place, but the new and nearer starting point of a higher and happier progress. The moment came. They had met for the first time, and now were about to part for the last time, to meet again -- not until that hour when each shall come bearing his sheafs with him. Their hearts were touched; the warm grasp of their hands told it more than their words.

"I shall never forget you, sir, nor this hour in the ears. Already, long ago, I was made alive by faith, and the day and the hour are engraven in living letters in my memory. It was the starting point of Christian life with me; but never until this hour have I learned that the way to live, is also, and in the same way by faith. Now I trust God has taught it to me, and this is to me a new and is a higher stage and starting point. May God reward you, sir. Good by." "Good by. The Lord make you wise and strong to teach others the way. God bless you." So they parted, the one to go on his way to B. and the other to turn off, and return to the venerable school of the prophets.

While upon this subject of stages and starting points, there are yet two or three questions to be answered:

First: Why speak of stages in the Christian life at all. Is it not a thing of gradual growth, like the plant, from the blade to the full corn in the ear, and of steadily unfolding progress, like that of the light from the first

grey dawn of the morning twilight onward to the perfect day, rather than a thing of steps and stages at all?

Here again is another mal-adjustment of ideas: Not now, however, the yoking together of two ideas not yoke-fellows at all, the one true and the other false, and so of condemning the true with false, as the young man in the cars did, but the separation of two ideas both alike true, and true yoke-fellows, and pitting them one over against the other, like David and Goliath arrayed in mortal combat.

The Christian life is, indeed, plant-like, a thing of gradual growth; but then it is also none the less plant-like as a thing of stages.

Conviction is its first stage and starting point. The truth, like the seed sown by the husbandman, may have lain long buried under the soil of youthful levity, or under the hard crust of a heart often reproofed; but at last, when the rain and the sunshine of heaven come down upon it, it begins to feel the power of a divine energy within and swells and bursts its cerements of worldliness, and pushes upward, feeling after the light of heaven until it comes forth "the blade," a new creature born of God into the kingdom of light.

Conversion is a new and a higher starting point, from which plant-like the Christian life unfolds, joint after joint, leaf after leaf, stretching upward and onward for fruitage and fulness of stature, until at last it gains the fruit-bearing status of true Christian manhood and majority and liberty, and rejoices in that stage of its progress marked by our Saviour as "the corn."

Having now learned the way to live by faith, it goes on ripening its fruit for the golden harvest, and the heavenly garner of its Lord, and becomes in due time the "full corn in the ear," ready for the sickle of the angel reapers.

Or, taking the figure of the light, increasing more and more to the perfect day, you have the same two ideas of gradual growth, and yet of stages of progress, harmoniously and beautifully blended and expressed. For while the light pours in upon us, in ever increasing flood, through the opening gates of day, from the first rays gladdening night's darkest hour onward until, in noontide splendor, the day is perfected. Yet is there not first the dawn, then the sunrise, and finally the noon of the perfect day? Strange that an argument for the rejection of the idea of distinct stages in the Christian life should ever have sought its basis in these comparisons, which so beautifully and clearly express and illustrate the very ideas sought to be condemned by the argument!

The same idea is also given by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans i. 17. "For therein (in the gospel) the righteousness of God (to all and upon all that believe, Jew and Greek,) is revealed (made manifest) from faith unto faith (from stage to stage) as it is written the just shall live by faith."

And how vivid the living comment and confirmation of Luther's actual progress by stages in connection with this very text!

Expressed again also by the apostle to the Corinthians, second Epistle, iii. 18, by a figure which gives the true philosophy of the whole glorious mystery of our sanctification or transformation into the image of God by a single dash of the pen. "But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." That is the Holy Spirit as promised by our Lord to his disciples -- takes of the relations of Christ to us, and unfolds them before us, while we behold his glory, and his glorious fitness exactly to meet each want of our souls, as in turn one after the other they unfold and press upon us, whether of justification from the law, or of sanctification to

God, or of glorification in his presence above; and thus we are changed by the view of Christ into his image from glory to glory. The same thing is expressed also by the apostle in another form in first Cor. i. 30, where the various relations of Christ are unfolded in order to us as they do actually open out in experience, to meet our unfolding wants from stage to stage. "Made of God unto us WISDOM," that is conviction of folly and sin, conviction, as Jesus himself says, because they believe not on me. The fear of God which, according to King Solomon, is the beginning of wisdom -- RIGHTEOUSNESS -- that is, justification from sin -- SANCTIFICATION -- that is transformation into the likeness of God -- and REDEMPTION that is transfiguration from the earthly image of the Lord to the glorious image he bears now in heaven, and translation to heaven.

The answer, therefore, to the question, "Why speak of the Christian life as a thing of stages at all? is first of all because it is so, and so to speak of it is to speak truth.

But this is not all. There is another reason impelling it, because it is a fire in the bones -- it must out.

And another and a better one still, because it is the way of all ways to arrest attention, and induce men to press for the experimental apprehension of that which is set before them.

The preaching of John the Baptist had this striking feature, that it was distinct and clear above all who had gone before him, and therefore his success was greater, insomuch that the Saviour said that, amongst those born into the world a greater had not arisen than John. His trumpet had the clarion ring of an Elijah in its power. And it had also the clear ring of an apostle almost in the definiteness with which he presented the one stage of experience, "metanoia " change of heart.

The force of John's preaching is in some measure hidden to us by the translation of the word metanoia as repentance, whereas its full meaning is new birth or change of heart. But as we, in imagination, bend the ear and listen to the prophet on the banks of the Jordan, proclaiming to the gathering crowd coming from far and near, the baptism of repentance, the need of a change of heart to escape the damnation of hell, we might almost imagine it to be Whitefield on Bristol common, reiterating the Saviour's words, "Except ye shall be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God," and urging his message by depicting the wrath to come. It was just this vivid apprehension of the truth, and this definite presentation of it, which gave both the Judean and the Anglican prophets such power and success.

The success of the apostles in winning men to the higher experience -- the baptism of the Holy Ghost -- first received by themselves, and then definitely proclaimed by them to others, as the privilege of all who would believe on the Lord Jesus, was due also, in great measure, to the definite vividness, with which they set this stage of the Christian life before men as an object of desire and attainment.

There are those who seek to muffle the arrows of truth, lest their naked points should pierce the heart and hurt the feelings, but arrows must be sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, or they will not fall under them.

It is the lack of a definite experience, first, in our own hearts of the fact and truth that Christ is made of God unto us sanctification, and then the consequent lack of a clear and vivid presentation of it to others, as an experience within sure and easy reach of all who will make it a point, and urge their way to it which, more than everything else -- love of the world not excepted -- keeps the church back from receiving and living in the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of peace.

The second question is this: Admitting that the Christian life is one of stages, do all Christians pass through the same -- the same in number and variety?

The answer is both yes and no. Yes, if the question embraces only such stages as are essential to: salvation. No, if it relates to such as have their occasions in the peculiar circumstances of individual life.

A glance must satisfy every disciple of Christ, that in the case of every sinner saved, unless filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb like John the Baptist, there must be a period of conviction -- a time when he is convinced of sin -- else he never could repent and be saved.

And also the period of conversion; the moment when he does repent of sin, forsake the world, and become the Lord's; else he never would be the Lord's.

And a time likewise when he comes to the perception and reception, of the fact that Jesus will cleanse him from all sin, and fit him for heaven; else he never will be fitted for heaven, for Jesus alone can fit him, and faith alone is the condition upon which he does it.

These several periods may, or may not be marked at the moments of their occurrence, and may or may not be remembered afterwards. They may be very unequal in the intervals between -- sometimes all crowded into a moment, as in the case of the thief on the cross. Sometimes the period of conviction may last a life-time almost, and the subsequent stages all be passed through in an hour, as in the case of the brother of George Whitefield, who after long years of gloomy forebodings, at last, while at the table of Lady Huntingdon, caught from her lips the words that Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost, and in these words received Jesus by faith -- and next morning was dead -- already washed white and made pure in the blood of the Lamb, and presented faultless by the hand of him whom he had so lately received as the seeker and Saviour of the lost. Sometimes the interval after the conviction may be only a moment before conversion, but a whole lifetime may be spent after conversion before learning that faith is the victory that overcometh; and at last, after terrible struggles and fears, like those of that wonderful man, Dr. Payson, he may in the evening hour of life learn the great secret of the gospel as the way of salvation from sin, and have a peaceful -- yea, a gorgeous sunset of it.

So, also, these several periods may each be separated from every other, and from everything else, so as to be clearly and distinctly described as stages of experience, or they may be so associated with other and peculiar circumstances of individual life as to be regarded by themselves and others, as special incidents of their own peculiar lot in the world.

As for example, the case of

A NEW ENGLAND LADY IN THE WEST.

Before becoming the bride of the man of her choice, she had espoused the bridegroom of the church. Indeed, in giving to him her heart with her hand, she gave him clearly to understand that it was a heart in which Jesus was enthroned. This he liked well -- for he too had settled the great question of life first of all, long before becoming engrossed with the questions and cares of a settlement in the world.

So, as they journeyed westward through the -- then dense forests of the new country, they had the company of him who had proclaimed himself to Jacob at Bethel, and promised him never to leave him or forsake him until he should have done all that he had told him of. And when they threw up their log cabin, in the unbroken wilderness, and kindled their first fire on the hearth, and prepared their first repast in their

new forest home, and sat down for the first time to their table spread in the wilderness for them, the cheerful blaze in the heart toward God was brighter than the fire on the hearth, and they had meat to eat which was unseen on the table -- their cabin and table, and all like themselves to each other were regarded as God's gifts, and held by them as God's stewards.

But days of darkness came. Children were born to them and given to the Lord from their birth -- but it was hard for them, the mother especially, to lay them in the grave. The death of their first born, with its multiplied sorrows, and the long weary watchings induced a low long running fever from which, after many months, she recovered, but always bore the marks of it in two ways: first, in a weakened body weighed down with infirmity, and second, in a strengthened heart borne up by a trust and a peace never felt before.

Her murmurings and rebellions in the days of her trial had brought up to the surface all the deep sediment of sin, and startled her at the sight of herself, and her sickness had called up the judgment as at hand, and her own heart had condemned her as unfit and unready to meet the welcome of her Judge. She was afraid to die, but her struggles to prepare were as vain as any attempt could have been to remove mountains, until at last in sheer despair, she cast the whole care of her sins -- the cure of her sins -- as well as their pardon, upon Christ and was at peace. While at the same time she cast all her cares for her own health and the safety of her husband and children, and indeed every thing else on the Lord: and when at last she rose from that weary but blessed bed, she was changed to herself and to every body else. Calm and peaceful, placid and happy.

But then it was so connected in her own mind and the mind of others with the deaths of her child and her own illness, that it was always spoken of as a special result of the Lord's special chastenings upon her -- altogether a special thing -- while in fact, hidden under the special circumstances of her case, there was the experimental apprehension of the way of salvation from sin by faith in the Lord Jesus, which was the hidden spring of the great change in her feelings, and the open fountain of her peace and good fruits abounding in all after life.

And this brings us to the second answer -- No. No, to the question, Do all Christians pass through the same stages of experience, when the question embraces such stages as are peculiar to the special mission or circumstances of particular individuals.

While there are general features of likeness amongst all, each one has his own special mission in the world, and his own special occasions with God.

Not every one like Abraham is called upon to pack up all -- strike tent and away for a strange land, the very name and boundaries of which he knows nothing at all.

Not every one like Abraham is called upon to lay an Isaac upon the altar and lift the knife to slay him, and then to hear the angel voice that commands him to stay his hand, for God had prepared himself a Lamb. Why? Because not every one is called to become the father of nations like Abraham and the father of the faithful.

These experiences of the patriarch are peculiar to himself, because peculiar to his mission. And yet Abraham at some time and in some way, had to pass through the period of conviction, and afterwards learn the way of pardon by faith, and also of purification in the same way; all the same as any of the multitudes who call him father.

Oftentimes, doubtless, there is -- in the wise providence of God a combination of that which is general with that which, is peculiar, as in the case of the Lady in the West. The Bethel scene in the life of Jacob is an instance of this kind. His peculiar distress in leaving his home and losing the heirship of his father's wealth, sold to him by Esau in the birthright for a mess of pottage, but wrested from him again by threatened violence, together with his fears for his own safety in the long lone wilderness journey before him, and his own sins rising up in accusation against him and bringing with them dread of God's wrath, caused him to cry unto God in the bitter anguish of despair, as he was about to pillow his head on the stone and stretch his weary limbs on the ground for the night.. And this made occasion for God to manifest himself to him, and unfold to him his purposes towards him, and his loving care and kindness over him. And this in turn called forth the vow of service from Jacob, and filled his heart with a joyous faith in the Lord.

Under all these specialties there was, all enfolded in their drapery, the one great generality -- the youthful patriarch's conversion to God.

He went forth from Bethel a new creature, born not of man nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.

The third and last question relating to this topic of stages and starting points, is this: must all who are saved, then pass through the stage of experience called for convenience second conversion?

The answer here again is both yes and no. No, if by the question it is intended to ask whether every one or any one must have a time of deep anxiety and violent struggling, like many whose experiences have been sketched in these pages, followed by a moment when light breaks in, and joy springs up, and peace overflows, and doubt and darkness all flee away.

Any particular kind of experience is nowhere in the Bible made a pre-requisite of salvation. He who really and truly believes in the Lord Jesus, will be saved whether he has any experience at all to relate or not.

Like the record of the patriarch ISAAC'S LIFE, there may be a life laid on the altar of God, by parental faith in infancy, followed in due time by a faith in the child, like the little boy prophet Samuel's, as bright as an Abraham's and yet too early in its beginnings, and too steady in its unfoldings to be marked by memory or recounted in its stages; a life which life-long, is a living sacrifice to God, unceasingly sending up the smoke of its incense from the glowing fire in the heart, kindled and fanned and fed by the Holy One of Israel, and yet with no particular Damascus Road, or Bethel scene to mark it from first to last. And who will say that such a life is any less the living epistle of God, or any the less the sure precursor of heaven, than the life of vicissitudes and vacillations, marked by a Bethel, a Mahanaim, a Jabbok and a Shechem, like the patriarch Jacob's?

But then, on the other hand, if the questioner means to ask whether it is necessary for all to come to the point of trusting in the Lord for purity of heart to be prepared for heaven, the answer is yes. For there is no other way under heaven to be purified but by faith in the Lord. And none but the pure in heart shall see God in peace.

This may be learned sooner or later in life, and with or without a distinct period of struggling, followed by the joys of knowing the glorious truth; but it is a point that must be gained, or heaven must be lost.

Millions have lived life-long in ignorance of it, trembling often and often at the thought of death and of their own unfitness for heaven. And at last, in the very last days, or hours, or moments, or seconds of life, the glorious fact that Jesus would purify them and present them whiter than snow in his own spotless robes

has been revealed to them, and all their doubts and fears have been swallowed up in the triumphs of faith.

GOVERNOR DUNCAN,

Of Illinois, is an illustration of this.

For many years the Governor was distinguished as a Christian -- a consistent member of his church. A rare and a shining mark, both for the jests of ungodly politicians, and for the happy references of all lovers of Jesus.

It is a very lovely thing, and only too remarkable to see one occupying the highest position of honor in a State, himself honoring the King of kings. Happy is the people who exalt such a ruler, to the places of power, and happy such a ruler, in his exaltation, more, however, in the humility with which he bows to Jesus, than in the homage which the people pay to him.

His conversion was clear and satisfactory, and he renounced all merit of his own as the ground of his acceptance with God. The blood of Jesus, the Lamb of Calvary, was all his hope. He was firmly grounded in the atonement of Christ. And all went well until death and the judgment drew near. About three weeks before the hour of his departure, he was seized with an illness which he himself felt would end in his death. And with the premonition of death came the question of fitness for heaven. He was troubled. His unfitness was only too apparent for his peace. The fever of his mind was higher than the fever in his veins -- and, alas he had not yet learned that Jesus is the physician of unfailing skill, to cure every ill that the spirit is heir to. He saw plainly enough how he could be justified from the law that it should not condemn him; for its penalty had been borne already by the Saviour himself; and its claims on the score of justice were all satisfied. But he did not see that the same hands which had been nailed to the cross would also break off the manacles of sin, wash out its stains and adjust the spotless robe of Christ's perfect righteousness upon him, and invest him with every heavenly grace.

His perplexity was great. The night thickened upon him, his soul was in agony, and his struggles utterly vain.

The point of despair is sure to be reached, sooner or later, by the struggling soul, and the point of despair to him who abandons all to Jesus is also the point of hope. The Governor at last gave over and gave up, saying in his heart, " Ah! Well. I see it is of no use. Die I must. Fit myself for heaven I cannot. O, Lord Jesus I must throw myself upon thy mercy, and die as I am."

This hopeless abandonment was the beginning of rest to his soul. Indeed, it was the victory that overcometh. Soon the loveliness of Jesus began to be unfolded to him, and he saw that the way of salvation from sin was by faith in the Saviour. The fire in his veins burned on, steadily and surely consuming the vital forces of his manly frame, but the fever of his spirit was all allayed by the copious and cooling draughts given him from the gushing fountain of the waters of life flowing from the smitten Rock, and his joy was unbounded.

As his stricken and sorrowing family gathered around his bed for the last words of the noble man, he told them with a face radiant with joy, that he had just found what was worth more to him than riches, or honors, or office, or anything else upon earth. "The way of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," and he charged them as his dying mandate, by the love they bore him, not to rest until they too -- whether already Christians as he himself long had been, or not, had also found the same blessed treasure.

They asked him what legacy he wished to leave for an absent relative, whom they knew it was his intention to have remembered in the division of his estate.

"That is all arranged in my will," said he. "But tell her from me that I have found the way of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if she too will find that, she will find infinitely more than I could bestow upon her, if I should give her all I am worth in the world."

They mentioned the name of a distinguished fellow officer and special friend of the governor's, living in a distant part of the State, and asked if he had any message for him.

"Tell him that I have found the way of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if he will also find it for himself it will be better than the highest offices and honors in the reach of man upon earth."

So he died. "O, had he only known this before," you say. Yes, that was just what he himself said. "O, had I only known this when I first engaged in the service of God, how happy I should have been! And how much good I could have done!"

How like the dying regret of Dr. Payson. Liking himself in the fulness of his bliss, as the chariot of fire which should bear him to heaven drew near, to a mote floating in the sunshine of infinite love. He exclaimed, "O had I only known what I now know twenty years ago!"

And this might answer still another question should it be asked as it often has been, viz.

How does it fare with all those professors of religion who live on to the end of their days without the experimental knowledge of the way of sanctification by faith?

Badly, of course, if they are mere professors, and not truly converted, as it is to be feared too many are. For they have not been justified, and therefore they cannot be either sanctified or glorified, but will be banished from the presence of God and the glory of his power forever, and covered with shame everlasting contempt.

But, if really converted, then the way of sanctification by faith in Jesus will be made plain in the evening of their earthly course, as in the case of Payson and Duncan, for if it is so with the leaders of God's host, will it not be also with the rank and file?

But O how much better it had been! How much better would it be in the morning of life! How much it would save! How much it would bless the world if it should be twenty years earlier!

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