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3.

ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY.

BY THE
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BEING THE THIRD OF A SERIES OF LECTURES TO YOUNG MEN,
DELIVERED IN BROUGHTON PLACE CHURCH,
BY CLERGYMEN OF VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS, AT REQUEST
OF THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY.

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"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding."—PROVERBS iii. 13.  
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ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding."—PROVERBS iii. 13.

I WILL not so far libel a bygone age, as to assert concerning it, that in the order of its arrangements the acquisition of religion was placed last, and that none were expected to assume the grave deportment of piety till late in life. And yet it must be allowed by competent judges, that with all the preparatory operations of domestic instruction which were supposed to lay the foundation of future excellence, it was seldom expected that Christianity should be bodied out in the lives of young men with any great degree of prominency. For the more part it was designed to evolve itself with mature age, and especially to gild the horizon with the softened hues of holiness and of hope, as the Christian sank to rest. But if I mistake not the character of the Christian world at the present time, there is a mighty improvement in progress among us in this respect,—that every section of the Church of Christ is labouring to train up an *eminently* godly race. A sound religious education is desiderated above all things; and instead of a mere smattering of Bible knowledge, conveyed in the bald forms of catechetical instruction, being held sufficient for a reputable outset in life, the position is taken up and sustained on all sides, that our youth are left miserably deficient in preparation for the great business of life, if, amid the most splendid attainments, they go forth destitute of true religion—of vital piety—of unequivocal proofs and demonstrations of their having received the elements of a new nature. It augurs well for this movement among our young men of the metropolis, that they have placed at the outset of their Course of Lectures, "The Advantages of Early Piety." It is in

accordance with the spirit of the age, to which I have had occasion to refer; and it could scarcely have failed to obtain for the entire course the favourable regard of the considerate and judicious, provided the discussion of this paramount topic had fallen into abler hands. However, as matters now stand, the Lecturer shall proceed without farther introduction to the business in hand, and having with all possible brevity sustained the theme of the present discourse, leave others who may succeed, to gratify the taste that has been awakened, by bringing forward matter, if not more interesting in its nature, yet wrought out with greater skill and ability.

Wisdom and understanding are frequently put for the whole of religion, particularly in this book of Proverbs; and properly so, inasmuch as he who has been so fortunate as to find these, will very soon come into the possession of every thing else. The happiness of that man is set forth in the text; but as this is done in a single breath, it is for us to unfold and expatiate on it, and, in fact, this is the object of the present Lecture, which has been appointed for the purpose of holding out the advantages of early piety. Now, there are at least five distinct and special benefits resulting from the early acquisition of true religion, on each of which I shall offer a few remarks. Early piety brings with it in the first place,

I. Salvation—immediate salvation.

The removal of the curse—that terrible, that inconceivable, that everlasting evil which sin entails upon every human being—follows on the reception of the Gospel testimony concerning Christ crucified, as having been made a curse for us. The moment of honest belief is the moment of justification, in which is swept away for ever the tremendous sentence of damnation that hung suspended o'er the guilty head. It is with the believer then as if he had never sinned,—“there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,”—he, the illustrious surety, paid the debt, and the principal stands discharged in the view of divine justice,—he was made a curse for us—a sin-offering for us, who knew

no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him! Christ exhausted the cup of the believer's woe; and filling it to the brim with the wine of redeeming love, he bid the redeemed sinner drink abundantly and for ever. Now he is constituted righteous, as all that Jesus did and suffered as a surety are counted to him—reckoned to him, as if he had done and suffered these things himself; hence the righteousness of God is the believer's own,—“unto all and upon all them that believe,” as a “robe” which clothes his nakedness—“a covering” large enough to wrap him round—“gold” tried in the fire, which enriches him—and “white raiment,” denoting the purity, the spotlessness, the untainted perfection of that justifying righteousness, wrought out by the Saviour, and thrown around the helpless, hopeless, and forlorn soul who trusts the finished work of the Son of God. And now it is that he is ready for the summons, any year, day, or hour. If disease fall upon him—if death menace him—if the trump of judgment demands his attendance at the bar of the Almighty, he is ready and can reply with holy humble boldness—“here I am!”—“come Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Yes, it is a present—an immediate salvation, that the belief of the gospel brings. It does not merely withdraw the man from the neighbourhood of danger, and give him a chance of escape; it absolutely places him beyond the reach of the devouring fire, and shuts him up as in a fortress unassailable and impregnable, in which he may smile at destruction, and exult over all his enemies. Is this then an enviable position?—Enviably! Why, what may compare with it? What are the riches of the earth!—what the most opulent of the sons of men, but splendid paupers, compared with him whose refuge is the Eternal God, and under whom are extended the everlasting arms! This is a privilege that wealth cannot purchase, nor influence command, nor virtue merit: it is too great, too blessed a thing to reach a human being, otherwise than as the unbought, the munificent gift of the Lord Jehovah. O what a portion to be in favour with heaven!—to be a child of God—to have a title to heaven, and a meetness for it! Then—can it be yours too soon, my young friends? Not an hour too soon. Can you introduce the heir of an estate too soon into possession of the splendour of

his patrimonial inheritance? Can the skilful physician unloose the bonds of affliction, and bring health and cure to the dying man too soon? Can you rescue a moment too soon the screaming passenger from the burning wreck on the edge of which he stands measuring his time, not by hours but seconds? No more can you too early be delivered from the wrath which is to come; and this is the first and prime advantage of early piety, that he who has it is a pardoned sinner—a justified, a saved man.

II. Early piety lets its possessor into the secret of true happiness.

This is what all men desire. Each pursues it with unwearied diligence, and seeks for it with the ardour of a former age, which, by the mysteries of alchemy, thought to discover a process for turning baser metals into gold. From youth to age, the unanimous voice of all ages, of both sexes, and of every condition, ascends on high, is borne on every breeze, and is echoed and re-echoed from shore to shore—"who will show us any good;" and so close the application—so eager the search—so greedy the enormous desire, that you can prevail with the greatest difficulty to arrest or turn aside the purpose of mankind to other matters for but a short while. Need I assure you, my friends, that the men of the world have never yet found the secret. Indeed they have not, else would not the chase be abandoned, and peaceful contentment bless the habitation of man? Broken fragments, minute particles of the precious gem have here and there been discovered, which have served to convince that the thing exists somewhere, rather than to satisfy the keen desire that has been awakened,—just as grains of gold found in the channel of the stream guide the mineralogist to the mountain chain which covers the precious ore; but this is all; unmixed, unalloyed felicity is still a secret to men of the world. That which was spoken concerning wisdom by the patriarch, is equally applicable to the subject in hand;—"man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it to be found in the land of the living. The depth saith it is not in me; and the sea saith it is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof." Christians, however, are bold to

assert, that they have found it. They tell you—they all tell you so. Are they all mistaken? Are they all deceivers? Surely not. It is asserted by believers, that they have got the pearl, and lodged it where no robbery can be committed, and no chance or mishap deprive them of the treasure; that it is deposited in their hearts by the Holy Ghost—fenced round by his omnipotent strength—and incorporated with their own existence; that it lives and moves, and has its being in them, and is itself the earnest of eternal life beyond the grave. Piety has breathed peace into the troubled spirit, gladness into the sorrowful heart, satisfaction into the discontented mind: it has given “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” It must be obvious, then, that he who embraces true religion in the morning of his days, is at once and for ever saved from the fruitless and vexatious inquiries which run the round of threescore years and ten,—from inquiries ever put, but never answered or replied to in so unsatisfactory a manner as to tantalize the fainting spirit, and to compel the mind to fall back on itself, to struggle with anguish and the helplessness of despair. He who is wise for eternity is also wise for time: he ceases to be the martyr of sickening disappointment. From heart-rending grief he is for ever rescued, whose early days are gladdened with the joy of pardon, and bright with the radiance of true holiness. Farewell then, for ever farewell to the delirious schemes of men of pleasure; the expense, the toil, the anxiety, the mortification, and disgust attendant on their wearisome course, the Christian out-distances, nor casts one lingering look behind. *He* has not to travel one mile, no nor one yard from home, to be happy. The divine guest is at his table, and beside his bed; he talks with him by the way—cheers him in solitude—strengthens him in weakness—mingles the cup of social enjoyment—throws out beams of joy on his very countenance—and raises him to a noble independence above all the sensible objects around, for his spiritual existence and his bliss. How high the privilege—how exalted the enjoyment of him whose bosom is the seat of happiness, satisfied from himself, *i. e.* from within. From the well of living water struck out by the Spirit of God in the renewed heart, issue streams which must flow eternally—“springing up,” saith Christ, “unto everlasting life.”

Such a condition is the true dignity of man, of which much has been spoken, but nothing known, till the Lord from heaven made matters plain, bringing life and immortality to light by the Gospel; and such the solid advantage of coming early to a participation of a sound religious experience.

III. He who has true piety has a safeguard amid the dangers of the world.

These, in so far as young men are concerned, divide themselves into two main branches,—infidelity on the one hand, and sensuality on the other. The first teems from a corrupting press on all sides, steals into our manufactories, stalks through our schools of art and halls of science, and taints the streams of education at the fountain,—disguises its true character under specious and new-coined phrases, and with consummate effrontery shows itself in public resorts, a stranger to fear, unabashed before religion and virtue. Thousands have been slain by this monstrous evil, who are either now the victims of wretchedness on earth, or the vessels of wrath in outer darkness. The second, which is sensuality, has its loathsome dens in all our cities, in many of our streets, and like a bewitching sorceress, draws crowds of infatuated beings round her steps, whom she conducts, through scenes of illusive and dreamy pleasure, to mansions of unutterable horror below. The pictured blandishments of this vice are thrown out on the canvass with equal correctness of delineation and strength of colouring by the pencil of Solomon, and long though the quotation be, it were unpardonable to omit it on the present occasion and in this connexion. “For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night; and, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows: therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek

thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us solace ourselves with loves: for the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend unto the words of my mouth: let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths: for she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." —Prov. vii. 6—27. Of what importance is it that the youth of this age should be warned, and, if possible, put in a position of defence against these lurking enemies of their peace, these murderers of souls. Nor are we left to conjecture in this most momentous affair; we certainly know where their strength lies, and can, with perfect confidence, point them to an infallible guide—venerable for age, noted for truthfulness, whose authority is paramount to every other, its prescriptions specific, bearing on every description of temptation, and marking off, with minute exactness, the distance at which we must stand from the moral contagion of sin. Along with the Holy Scripture goes the author of its inspiration, the Holy Spirit, who, by means of his well-attested witness, works in the conscience and heart, prompting to all that is good, restraining from all that is evil, repressing the rising emotions of guilty passion, and progressively exterminating depravity of heart—he incessantly labours to mould the character, to form Christ in the soul, the hope of glory. Now, let the mind be furnished with sacred truth—the memory with its facts and precepts—the understanding with a clear and comprehensive view of its capacious design, and its indestructible evidence, and its holy tendency—let the heart and conscience be the seat of its commanding influence, and the eye ever

turn to the inspired page for light in darkness, direction in prosperity, and all-sufficient aid throughout the conflict of life, then will the assaults of infidelity recoil from the shield of faith, its arrows falling pointless at your feet. Fortified by a sound knowledge of the truth which has enlightened and healed your own soul, the adversary, in his adroit movements, will glide harmlessly before you, who will not fail to deplore that good natural parts should have been prostituted to the base design of overturning the only foundation of hope to which dying men can resort. You will then distinctly perceive that the "new moral world" is a region in utopia, and young socialism the legitimate son of old atheism. As to the other, the danger of falling a prey to habits of sensual indulgence, it will best be avoided by "walking in the Spirit"—the man who has sources of hallowed delight ever open to him is not likely to frequent the filthy puddle or the stagnant marsh. Mankind usually go astray after sensual pleasure because they are destitute of any thing better. But as the opulent are raised above envy of the class beneath, and as absolute fullness admits of no addition, so the heart that has secured an independence of happiness within its own territory is under small temptation to cross the line of demarcation to purvey for the flesh on forbidden ground. He who is "full of the goodness of the Lord"—who looks with increasing intensity of desire on the glories of the Lamb, ascends by a process of accelerated motion through the elements of sacred pleasure into which the gospel has introduced him, and places his chief good in the divine Being himself—in contemplating, imitating, obeying him;—he, I say, is not very likely to be imposed upon by the "pleasures of sin, which are but for a season." His taste for these has in some measure been blunted, rather a new set of feelings have been called into exercise, which have imparted so much more delight than mere animal nature was ever capable of transmitting, that the cultivation of the former now prevails over the latter, the *first* has risen to a prodigious ascendancy over the man, the *last* lies under the mortification of neglect, and is destined to suffer death.

The pious youth, then, and he only, is prepared to contend with the world. It will be difficult indeed for any one without principle to stem the tide, or so tenaci-

ously to cling to the embankment as not to be carried down the stream. Early piety is the sure safeguard; with Christ and truth on your side all shall be well, his covenant shall begird you round, his Spirit shall work in you to will and to do the divine good pleasure—and while others, who venture on their own fancied strength, may be prostrated in the struggle, and disappear among the heaps of slain, ye who have made God your refuge shall go on conquering and to conquer, till the crown of glory at length encircles your brows.

IV. A fourth advantage of early piety is that it introduces into the most valued and improving society.

Man is made for society. All his powers of observation and reflection, for the reception and communication of knowledge, of sound judgment and acute perception, above all, the noble faculty of speech, all these would become stagnant were man to remain a perpetual recluse, and moral feculence would thus breed pestiferous effects. In habits of association, on the other hand, the powers, both intellectual and moral, are called out, become strengthened, refined, improved, while pleasure of exalted character diffuses itself throughout the happy circle. But let it not be forgotten that the character of our associates determines our own. "Evil communications corrupt good manners;" so says the apostle, and so have we found it on the contrary, that "he who walketh with wise men shall be wise" is a maxim which admits of no dispute. Now the godly do not admit into their society the unholy and impure. Why should they? Besides the risk incurred—and that alone were a solid reason—is there any communion of heart and affection? Certainly none, "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, or what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial, or he that believeth with an infidel?" there is none, there can be none. The pious invariably throw a rampart around them. True, they are ever ready to mingle with and to seek the salvation of all men in a certain sense, yet the lines of sacred friendship are well defined; the hallowed enclosure admits not profane feet. Would the aspiring youth enter it? he must do so legitimately or not at all; that is to say, he must first become one of them, he must first become a new creature through repentance toward

God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; that done, how hearty the welcome, how cordial the invitation, "Come with us and we will do thee good,"—"Come in thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" Now there is a perfect congeniality of taste and of soul; eye speaks to eye and heart to heart, and to all the advantages of an endeared friendship the young Christian is at once admitted. Hence arise encouragement, co-operation, and defence. They hearten each other on their way. The presence of each puts fire into the other, and "as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man his friend by hearty counsel." Who has not heard that unity is strength? the very ardour elicited by combination sweeps before it the most formidable obstructions. While they thus assist one another against common hinderances, and by their mutual assistance, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, clear away the obstacles which had proved insurmountable to their individual efforts, they warn, reprove, counsel, and correct each other as occasion offers, thus promoting their spiritual good as individuals. When one weeps all mourn, when one is gladdened by success all rejoice. How unnecessary is it to show at large that company of this description must be of vast importance to any man, most of all to the youth whose inexperience lays him open to endless wiles and deceptions. Would you have it, my young friend? then possess yourself of early piety, for this is none of the least of its advantages, that it prepares you for the best possible companionship, from which you may in the end ascend to the assembly of the first-born in the house of many mansions.

V. Early piety opens before us a prospect of extensive usefulness through life.

Nothing is so much to be coveted as a capacity and opportunity of serving God and benefiting our fellow-creatures. We may innocently enough imagine this to be the object of hallowed ambition among holy beings in all worlds. A creature, if in a right state of mind toward the Creator, must feel an impulse bearing him away to the fulfilment of the obligations which his relation to God imposes. The service he renders must, in the nature of things, be the delight of that soul, and the more so in proportion to the intensity with which holy

love burns within. To be useful among men is the natural expression of this affection toward God; the mind of an enlightened believer perceiving, intuitively as it were, that he cannot evince his allegiance, and that he cannot gratify the impulse of his renewed nature in any way more rational in itself, and more pleasing to the mind of infinite benevolence, than by "doing good." This is a feast to the man, the invitation of his Lord delights him, assuaging the huge miseries that sin has wrought is pleasing to him, consequently the larger the field of his labours and the more protracted his blessed occupation upon it, so much the better. But one who comes late in life into the service of God, has but a short space in which to magnify the grace of God in the world. In course of nature his powers get enfeebled, his courage decays, and his ardour sinks, so that, whatever resolves were in his heart, of self-surrender and devotedness, his purposes are speedily broken off, he descends into the grave, where "there is no work, nor wisdom, nor device." It is very different with a young and ardent Christian. Before him there stretches a wide and charming prospect, a long series of happy days consecrated to the glory of his divine Master, sacred to his honour who "hath called him out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan to God." To show forth his praise,—to magnify his name,—to act so as to reflect lustre on the religion of the cross, is an object sacred and delightful above every other to a Christian,—for this he would live, and for this he would be willing to die. Now, he who devotes himself to the Saviour in the beginning of life, may indulge the hope of largely promoting his glory among men. The extension of his triumphs at home and among heathen nations offers an enterprise of exalted benevolence, more than sufficient to employ the energies of the longest life, and which the labours of many generations shall scarcely accomplish. What an arena here, then, for pious zeal and consecrated talents of every description to contend against the powers of darkness, the wickedness of man, the multiform shades of destructive error which overspread our world. What a noble, what an august object to dedicate a protracted existence amid the raging elements of sin and death, in waging interminable war with both, and in plucking from the iron grasp of de-

struction immortal beings, susceptible of happiness without limit and without end.

To be saved and sent to heaven at once, as was the malefactor who was Christ's companion to paradise, must be a privilege of unutterable value, but to pass the whole period of our sojourn on earth in works of faith and labours of love, and to retire late in the evening of life full of the fruits of righteousness, and laden with the trophies of many a victory, is unspeakably more desirable, just as the veteran warrior who is dismissed by his sovereign from the toils of the field to spend the evening of life amid the peaceful endearments of country and home, becomes an object of greater interest than the raw recruit who has only learned to frequent the camp. O, is there a heart that cannot feel the thrill of exulting joy as the venerable saint is seen to enter the dark valley, and faith's enlightened eye beholds him emerge from its gloomy horrors on the farther side—ushered into the presence of the King, and greeted with a "well done good and faithful?" Is there a young and ingenuous heart among us which does not bound with generous ardour to share the honours of that hour, or one who would not be willing to encounter all the perils of the longest campaign for the graciousness and the glory of such a reception as this? Well, my young friends, the path is before you—if you enter the field early, contend lawfully, and come off honourably, think not that you shall in anywise lose your reward. Salvation is wholly of grace: he who wears the brightest diadem on the sea of glass, casts it at the feet of him who fills the throne,—the burden of his adoring worship is ever the same, "worthy is the Lamb who was slain." Notwithstanding, the service of love cannot be forgotten, and they who have followed the Captain of Salvation in the regeneration, and with him braved the trials and difficulties of the war, "shall sit down with him on his throne, even as he overcame, and has sat down with his Father on his throne,"—then, he who has endured the most and the longest, will be honoured the most.

Having thus sketched a few of the advantages of early piety, at your request, you will permit me to sum up all, by offering a few directions for the attainment of it. A mistake here would be serious indeed, and yet

multitudes, we fear, begin not at the beginning, but lose their pains, if not accumulate much guilt on their heads, by cherishing an erroneous conception on this point. It is not improbable that some of you may go away from this lecture, your hearts in some degree smitten with the subject, resolved that you will, by God's help, possess yourselves of the advantages of early piety, and with that design set about an instant reformation of life and manners. Peradventure you may determine to apply the pruning knife to evil habits, to mend your tempers, to read the Bible, to pray to God, to frequent the means of grace, to avoid vicious companions, in a word, to put yourselves in a position, as you suppose, to invite the good pleasure of the Almighty towards you now, and hereby secure your admission into heaven when you die. Now, don't mistake me, I would not be the man who would stand in the way of any reformation you may project; rather, if I could do no better, I would assist to lay the axe at the root of every evil thing about you, and thus lessen, if but by a single drop, the burning draughts of future wrath. But I must warn you in that case still that you begin not at the beginning. Many have done as you propose now to do, who have taken up with a religious course of life, as Herod, who did many things and heard John gladly, yet fallen short of true religion after all, and spent their lives in a round of dry formalities which had not in them a spark of the vitality and life of genuine piety. It is against this—which I shall take leave to call a religious snare—I warn you. Be assured that nothing less than the requirement of Jesus Christ will suffice. Nicodemus, for aught that appears to the contrary, was one who went by the name of a decent and religious person of that day, evidently he was a master in Israel and sufficiently proud of his distinction, yet to him did the Saviour of the world say, "*Ye must be born again;*" yea many times, within small compass, he repeated the wonderfully mysterious saying, adding, "*marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.*" And so say we to you, early or late piety must originate here,—in the new birth,—in conversion to God. The heart itself must be changed; its darkness enlightened; its obduracy softened; its alienation from God removed; its wilfulness restrained; its aversion to holiness healed; its love of sin

destroyed; its bias and tendency rectified; and its affections, forsaking their old channel, made to flow in the direction of God and goodness. Say not this is too much to be expected, or at least, to be done at once. At once it *may be* done; at all events done it must be or you are lost! Between spiritual life and death there is no alternative; between justification and condemnation there is no neutral condition. Now, Jesus Christ did not put forward to Nicodemus the proposition you have heard, leaving him lost in perplexity and wonderment, how it was to be wrought out, for the same breath which enunciated the *exception*, "*except a man be born again,*" told how it was to be overborne, how that which the one moment struck the astonished hearer as a thing impossible, might, the next moment, be realized in himself as a thing most surely accomplished. The "teacher sent from God" just uncoiled the love of God to the world, all wicked, loathsome, vile, and obnoxious to wrath as it lay before him,—that he "*so loved*" it, as to give up his only begotten Son to the death for it, that every one who believed in him might not perish but be saved,—that the Spirit like water flowed in the channel of this his testimony,—that the one prompted the conscience while the other addressed the understanding,—and that the soul under this combined influence rose into a new existence. Now, Jesus Christ made these disclosures to the ruler of the Jews, that he might on the instant believe them and become the subject of their transforming influence,—that he might possess himself, on the spot, and without doing anything else, of true piety, henceforward enjoying all the incomparable advantages of it. This, then, is precisely what we would do for you. We offer to your consideration and cordial acceptance, "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." We implore you before the cross; and knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade you to allow this view of the divine character to roll before your eyes—to lie upon your hearts—to be received into your inmost spirit. It will, through mercy, mould your passions, subdue your rebellion, save your souls. The *root* of early piety thus implanted—nourished by the blood of the cross—and breathed on by the Holy Ghost, will secure for you all the advantages of

which we have spoken, and bear fruit unto life eternal. It might now be very fairly allowed to me to turn the leaf and exhibit in the close of this lecture the miseries attendant on him who sets himself *practically* to controvert these statements. But as this falls not immediately under the subject, we shall not detain you at any length. And yet, were the task assigned, who is competent to disclose the wretchedness of the youth who steps on the busy theatre of the world, wholly unprepared by a course of moral discipline to withstand the witchery of its smiles, or to contemn the terror of its frowns. He, unhappy mortal, remains in his native state of alienation from the Being who made him, is a stranger to happiness, a foreigner to the companionship which would have benefited and blessed him;—a stranger to the cause of well-doing and of virtue, he falls of necessity into the hands of parties who stand ready to push him still nearer to the brink of destruction, and whose malicious joy it will be to make him ten-fold more the child of the devil than themselves. He hesitates but a moment; the cup of pleasure is scarce from his lips when compunction and remorse wring his soul; horrible imaginings call for fresh libations to drown sorrow, and the retreats of guilty indulgence are sought to banish care. While health is vigorous, money abundant, and gay companions surround his steps, all things seem to smile; but, shortly, the scene shifts, when exhausted resources and disease, neglect, and helplessness, tell a tale of approaching misery in language too plain to be misunderstood, and too loud to be shut out. He sees nought but darkness here, and nought but dimness of anguish beyond, and is fain to throw himself into the cold embrace of infidelity, not because he dares believe its ravings, but because it administers an opiate to his burning spirit. He now sees Infinite Intelligence blotted from creation, and behind, unintelligent fate driving all before it. He resigns himself to it, laughs at responsibility, makes merry with the figment of eternal punishment, is driven away in his enormous wickedness at last, and reads his sentence at the flames of hell. O my young friends, “happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding,”—be it your calm, calculating, determined resolution, to find the wisdom, to get the understanding, and that without delay, which

can alone qualify you to act your part in *this* world—which can alone prepare you for the scenes of the *next*. Amen.

NOTE to p. 4.

Amid the keen contendings of this age as to the extent of the death of Christ, one class standing out for *limited*, and another for *unlimited* atonement, it would be well to bear in mind that whatever of worth there may be in the blood of the Lamb, let it for argument's sake be as his own nature—infinite, still is it true, that the *abstract doctrine* of atonement can be of use to no one: benefit to man from the sacrifice of the Son of God is everywhere *limited* to “*them who believe in his name.*” He who clings to the Rock is safe, and shall know all about the *why* and the *wherefore* by-and-bye; he whose feet are not upon it, say what he may respecting it, must sink into the abyss of woe.





X

