

The King's Highway.

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness.

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness—Isa. 35-8.

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NO.

IN THE THOUGHT REALM

Thoughts Which Are Sinful, and Thoughts Which Are Not Sinful

Bringing Into Captivity Every Thought to the Obedience of Christ

WANDERING THOUGHTS.

By Rev. John Wesley.

1. But will God "so bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," that no wandering thought will find a place in the mind, even while we remain in the body? So some have vehemently maintained; yea, have affirmed that none are perfected in love unless they are so far perfected in understanding, that all wandering thoughts are done away; unless not only every affection and temper be holy and just and good, but every individual thought which arises in the mind be wise and regular.

2. This is a question of no small importance. For how many of those who fear God, yea, and love him, perhaps with all their hearts, have been greatly distressed on this account! How many, by not understanding it right, have not only been distressed, but greatly hurt in their souls—cast into unprofitable, yea, mischievous reasonings, such as slackened their motion towards God, and weakened them in running the race set before them! Nay, many, through misapprehensions of this very thing, have cast away the precious gift of God. They have been induced, first to doubt of, and then to deny, the work of God had wrought in their souls; and hereby have grieved the Spirit of God, till he withdrew and left them in utter darkness!

3. How is it then, that amidst the abundance of books which have been lately published almost on all subjects, we should have none upon wandering thoughts? At least none that will at all satisfy a calm and serious mind? In order to do this in some degree, I purpose to inquire,

I. What are the several sorts of wandering thoughts?

II. What are the general occasions of them?

III. Which of them are sinful, and which not?

IV. Which of them we may expect and pray to be delivered from?

1. I purpose to inquire, First, What the several sorts of wandering thoughts? The particular sorts are innumerable; but, in general, they are of two sorts: Thoughts that wander from God; and thoughts that wander from the particular point we have in hand.

2. With regard to the former, all our thoughts are naturally of this kind: For they are continually wandering from God: We think nothing about him: God is not in all our thoughts: We are, one and all, as the Apostle observes, "without God in the world." We think of what we love; but we do not love God; therefore, we think not of him. Or, if we are now and then constrained to think of him for a time, yet as we have no pleasure therein, nay, rather, as these thoughts are not only insipid, but distasteful and irksome to us, we drive them out as soon as we can, and return to what we love to think of. So that the world, and the things of the world—what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on—what we shall see, what we shall hear, what we shall gain—how we shall please our senses or our imagination—takes up all our time, and engrosses all our thought. So long, therefore, as we love the world; that is, so long as we are in our natural state; all our thoughts, from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, are no other than wandering thoughts.

3. But many times we are not only "without God in the world," but also fighting against him; as there is in every man by nature a "carnal mind which is enmity against God:" No wonder, therefore, that men abound with unbelieving thoughts; either saying in their hearts, "There is no God," or questioning, if not denying, his

power or wisdom, his mercy, or justice, or holiness. No wonder, that they so often doubt of his providence, at least, of its extending to all events; or that, even though they allow it, they still entertain murmuring or repining thoughts. Nearly related to these, and frequently connected with them, are proud and vain imaginations. Again: Sometimes they are taken up with angry, malicious, or revengeful thoughts; at other times, with airy scenes of pleasure, whether of sense or imagination; whereby the earthly, sensual mind becomes more earthly and sensual still. Now by these they make flat war with God: These are wandering thoughts of the highest kind.

4. Widely different from these are the other sort of wandering thoughts; in which the heart does not wander from God, but the understanding wanders from the particular point it had then in view. For instance: I sit down to consider those words in the verse preceding the text: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." I think, "This ought to be the case with all that are called Christians. But how far it is otherwise! Look around into most every part of what is termed the Christian world. What manner of weapons are these using? In what kind of warfare are they engaged;

While men, like fiends, each other tear,
In all the hellish rage of war?

See how these Christians love one another! Wherein are they preferable to Turks and Pagans? What abomination can be found among Mahometans or Heathens which is not found among Christians also?" And thus my mind runs off, before I am aware, from one circumstance to another. Now, all these are, in some sense, wandering thoughts: For, although they do not wander from God, much less fight

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