

SCENES OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

The awful scenes and dazzling splendors of the Last Judgment were attempted to be described in a discourse by the Rev. Edward Irving, of London, to whose gorgeous eloquence we often listened when he was pastor of the Scotch church in that city. He said: "We have now before us a subject which, for the magnificence of the scene, the magnitude of the transaction, and the durable effects which it draweth on, stands unrivaled in the annals of human knowledge—and with which the powers of conception cannot be brought to contend. Imagination cowers her wing, unable to fetch the compass of the ideal scene. The great white throne descending out of heaven, guarded and begirt with the principalities and powers thereof—the awful presence at whose sight the heavens and the earth flee away, and no place for them is found—the shaking of the mother elements of nature, and the commotion of the hoary deep, to render up their long dissolved dead—the rushing together of quickened men upon all the winds of the heaven down to the centre, where the Judge sitteth on his blazing throne—to give form and figure and utterance to the mere circumstance and pomp of such a scene, no imagination availeth. Nor doth the understanding labor less. The archangel, with the trump of God, riding sublime in the midst of heaven, and sending through the wildest dominion of death and the grave, that sharp summons which divideth the solid earth, and rings through the caverns of the hollow deep, piercing the dull cold ear of death and the grave with the knell of their departed reign; the death of death, the sprouting of the grave with vitality, the reign of life, the second birth of living things, the re-union of the body and soul—the one from unconscious sleep, the other from apprehensive and unquiet abodes—the congregation of all generations over whom the stream of time hath swept—this outstretches my understanding no less than the material imagery confuses my imagination.—And when I bring the picture to my heart, its feelings are overwhelmed: when I fancy this quick and conscious frame one instant re-awakened, the next reinvested, the next summoned before the face of the Almighty Judge—now re-begotten, now sifted through every secret corner—my poor soul, possessed with the memory of its misdeeds, submitted to the scorching eye of my Maker—my fate depending upon his lips, my everlasting, changeless fate—I shriek and shiver with mortal apprehension. And when I fancy the myriads of men all standing thus explored and known, I seem to hear their shiverings like the aspen leaves in the still evenings of autumn. Pale fear possesseth every countenance, and blank conviction every quaking heart. They stand like men upon the perilous edge of battle, withheld from speech and pinched for breath through excess of struggling emotions—shame, remorse, mortal apprehension, and trembling hope.

"Then the recording angel openeth the book of God's remembrance, and inquisition proceedeth apace. Anon they move quicker than the movement of thought to the right and left, two most innumerable companies.—From his awful seat, his countenance clothed with the smile which makes all heaven gay, the Judge pronounceth blessing forever and ever upon the heads of his disciples, and dispenseth to them a kingdom prepared by God from the first of time. To their minds, seized with the tidings of unexpected deliverance, it seemeth as a dream, and they wonder with ecstasy at the unbounded love of their Redeemer. They wonder, and they speak their unworthiness, but they are reassured by the voice of him that changeth not. Then joy seizeth their whole soul, and assurance of immortal bliss. Their trials are ended, their course is finished, the prize is won, and the crown of eternal life is laid up for them in store; and they hasten to inherit the fulness of joy and pleasure forever more, which are at the right hand of God. Again, the Judge lifteth up his voice, his countenance clothed in that frown which kindled hell, and he pronounceth eternal perdition with the devil and his angels, upon the wretched people who despised and rejected him on earth. They remonstrate, but remonstrance is vain. It is finished with hope, it is finished with grace, it is finished with mercy; justice hath begun her terrible reign to endure forever. Then arise from myriads of myriads the groans and shrieks and throes of despair; they invoke every mother element of nature to consume their being back to her dark womb; they call upon the rocks to crush

them, and the hills to cover them from the terrible presence of the Lord and from his consuming wrath. Such episodes of melting tenderness there will be at this final parting of men! such eternal farewells! but, ah! the word farewell hath forgotten its meaning, and wishes of welfare now are vain. A new order of things hath commenced; the age of necessity hath begun its reign; all change is forever sealed.

"This mighty crisis in the history of the human race, this catastrophe of evil and consummation of good, fortunately is not our province to clothe with living imagery, else our faculties would misgive and fail."

"CHOSEN VESSEL."

Individuals are renewed by the grace of God for a double purpose—to be blessed and to be made a blessing—i. e. to be used as vessels for carrying blessings to others. The personal salvation of Paul seems to be but a small item of the reasons, why God's grace was imparted to him. The Sovereign Dispenser of grace is generally represented, as having done it with an eye on the influence, that he was to exert on others. And God speaks of the new converted Saul, as "a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles." And Paul says—"For this cause I obtained mercy, that God might in me show forth a pattern of all long suffering," for the persuasion of others. So in the calling of Abraham, what a small item was his personal salvation, compared with the blessings of which he was made the channel to the world.

And the same general law of divine conduct, in a measure holds in relation to all Christians. They are effectually called by God's purposes and for them. Their souls are renewed, not simply that they may be the receptacles of eternal joy, but mainly that they may be the vessels of its conveyance. They are chosen as vessels for such conveyance. Christ says to them—"I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth much fruit." A candle is not lighted for its own sake, but that it may give its light abroad. It was to the purpose of the Christian life, that Christ said, No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel, but on a candlestick that it may give light.

Grace is given not to be locked up in the heart but to be employed as a self-diffusive heaven. It is given to come into use, as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Great as is the interest involved in the personal salvation of the individual, renewed by grace—and this is greater than our numbers can compute—it is but a small fraction of the good, which God purposed in the choice of that vessel of mercy. No Christian man liveth to himself nor dieth to himself. His whole progress to heaven is an instrumentality of blessing to the world. Whatever exhibition of religious character is required of us, is required that it may work for the benefit of others. If the church is required to give forth a practical declaration, that she seeks a country beyond the skies, in all her example, devotions, professions, and ordinances, it is required as the means of conviction and impression to others. Such a declaration becomes God's own voice to an impenitent world. His mind and heart have utterance when from a living church the invitation is practically and constantly reiterated—Come go with us and we will do you good.

And here in the sovereignty of God's grace, in the choice of the vessels of his mercy, is more clearly reasonable and desirable. If the personal salvation of the individual chosen is but a secondary end in his view, and he has broader reasons in all cases to determine his choice, then he is wise and good in choosing those, who from their positions and relations and other causes, will make the most fit vessels for the conveyance of his grace and glory. And every loyal heart will commend him for this. The interest of a worm may not come in competition with the good involved in the broad sweep of God's glory.

And it belongs to a renewed heart, to concur in that design of God, which makes the Christian's usefulness of more account than his salvation—and requires him to be more solicitous to bear fruit for the glory of God, than to secure the personal good of salvation. In true conversion one in a measure loses himself, and identifies his own interests with those of God and his creatures—and identifies his own salvation with that of God's redeemed to be gathered in. And the more he forgets himself in endeavors and labors for the eternal good of other men, the more he assures himself of his own salvation. In this we do not undervalue

any needful work of self-examination, nor any solicitudes to make our calling and election sure. For all these, in one view, are but means of securing that vigor of Christian character, which is needful, both that we may be blessed and made a blessing.—*Puritan Recorder.*

Mischievous Self-Examination.

The term of self-examination is applied, not to the consideration of one's outward conduct, but to a review and analysis of one's hidden feelings; to the motives, and the moral complexion of one's emotions. In this matter, as in many others, those who most need it seldom practise it, and those practise it most who could best do without it. Thus, if a man have a strong practical cast, a natural sagacity in matters of form and substance, a ready knowledge of men and things, he will tend to cultivate that outward direction of his mind, and to regard introspection as impractical. This opinion is confirmed by the few paroxysmal attempts at the study of himself. Made upon impulse, without skill or practice, upon too large a scale, with the heat of new zeal, the result is confusion and disgust. He reverts to his practical life, and always speaks of himself as not adapted to metaphysical meditation. Yet, this man especially needs to study himself, because he is so strongly drawn away toward outward life.

On the other hand, a reflective, sensitive mind dwells upon its own states too much, and lives so much in introspection, as to have but a slender sympathy with the outward world.

A special form of this last mentioned danger is frequently found in young and conscientious Christians. They attempt to maintain a habitual watch over their minds. They check every budding feeling till they know what fruit it will bear. They stop every swelling emotion till they have "examined" it. They treat the religious feelings, as an officer would a person suspected of having stolen goods about his person—stripping off its cloak, and scrutinizing sharply. The mind, thus badgered, is like a steed whom you whip with one hand, and hold in with the other; it becomes restless and chafed. The poor victim does not know "how he does feel." He wishes he knew his own motives. He will be heard inquiring much after his "evidences." "How can a man tell whether he has faith or not?" "How may I know whether I really love God?" "How do I know whether all my motives in seeking religion are not selfish?" Such questions will identify the victims of narrow self-examination.

The moment a feeling becomes an object of attention, it ceases to be a feeling. Emotions change to ideas. The real process of what is called, by many, self-examination, is but the transmutation of an emotive state into an intellectual state; for feeling perishes where analysis begins. They burn the flower that they may analyze its ashes, and then are discontented that raking in the ashes, they find neither root, stem, nor flower.

This course is every way unnatural, and inflicts upon the mind a long train of mischiefs. There can be no such thing as a current in the mind, a free sweep, a generous momentum, where every state is stripped for examination. The mind becomes restless. It begins nervously to break out in one direction or another, seeking by violent reactions that natural liberty which has been denied it. If the causes continue, the results will vary according to the peculiar temperament and structure of the mind. Some will retract in disgust from all attempts at religion, except as a scheme of morals. Others will grow despondent, and all their lifetime be subject to bondage. Others still will come to a degree of morbid sensitiveness, which will but stop short of superstition. They will have a thousand questions starting up—they will feel pangs of remorse upon the slightest occasion; they will be thrown off their guard by a text suddenly presented, by the remarks of clergymen or Christian friends, and brood in perpetual disquiet over a chaotic and gloomy experience.

In such states, every effort of the sufferer, being a stimulus upon a jaded or morbid condition, will aggravate the suffering and put relief yet farther off.

Such mischiefs are not imaginary. Every year we meet very many. Some five persons within a week have come to our notice.

Perhaps the detail of instances from life, and the treatment proposed, with the reasons, will benefit some who are sufferers, and excite attention to this department of pastoral theology.—*Independent.*

Skillful Dealing with Religious Despondency.

In Dr. Wardlaw's Memoir of Dr. McAll, late of Manchester, England, we find the following narrative, says the Independent, supplied by a friend who derived it from McAll.

"One circumstance he related to me, connected with his own ministrations among the sick, which awakened considerable interest in the neighborhood. A pious person, residing some distance from Macclesfield, where Mr. McAll began his pastoral life, had suffered many years under the influence of religious despondency, particularly resembling the melancholy case of Cowper. As he was held in much esteem, his mental sufferings created much sympathy. Many Christian friends and eminent ministers, of different religious persuasions, visited him, endeavouring to kindle anew the spark of life in his bosom, and restore to his mind those religious consolations which he formerly possessed. These efforts proved wholly in vain; as he possessed, like many others in similar circumstances, that kind of preternatural acuteness which led him to convert all arguments and topics of consolation into the occasion of deeper discouragement and gloom. It was natural for me to inquire, 'Did you go?'"

"'Yes!' he said, 'I did, though without any hope of a beneficial result. But I went to express my sympathy with a disciple of Christ under one of the severest afflictions which could befall a good man, and deepen my own impressions of the importance of spiritual things. You may suppose,' he added, 'I was not very forward to speak; but I listened, with unwearied attention, to the sad details of his doubts, his difficulties, his gloomy temptations and his utterly desponding rebodings and fears. Meantime, my eye was not silent, and I noticed every circumstance, however minute, which might assist me to place myself in his state of feeling, and to go along with the processes of his mind; and I was exceedingly anxious to detect any little discrepancy which might arise between the facts he advanced and the conclusions to which he came. At last, looking toward the head of the bed, I observed upon the curtains several pieces of paper carefully pinned here and there, and apparently written upon. Though I suspected what might be the nature of their contents, I said with apparent surprise and abruptness, 'What are these papers?'"

"'O, sir,' said the hardened man, 'they are texts of Scripture!'"

"'But what texts?' I quickly rejoined.

"'Sir,' he added, with a slow and faltering voice, 'they are promises.'"

"'Promises! but what business have they here? You say you are a castaway from God's favour, an utter alien from his friendship; that all your religion was a delusion, that you have no interest in one of the promises, and can look for nothing but to be an eternal monument of the Divine displeasure. Why, then, should you have these texts and promises of Scripture perpetually around you, when you have no sort of interest in the religion they represent, or in the Saviour they reveal? The two things do not agree together. Either your despondency is excessive and undue, or those promises have no business there. Let me take them away.'"

"'No, sir! No, sir!' said the sufferer, 'do not take them away; I love to see them. I had an interest in them once, and they are still precious. The memorial of them is sweet, though the enjoyment of them is wholly gone.'"

"Upon this," said Mr. McAll, "I altered my tone, and said with the tenderness I really felt, But, my dear friend, are you not aware that the truths are the same as ever, and your mind clings as tenaciously as ever to those truths, and the Author of those truths is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever? All the difference, therefore, arises from your diseased apprehension of things; and you are confounding the decay of consolation with the decay of piety. Recollect that while these truths are precious to you, the emotions with which you still cherish the remembrance of them are precious in God's sight; and whilst you have your memorials of the past, God has his memorials too! He says, 'Yea, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving kindness shall never depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' It pleased God to bless this conversation (which has been too briefly and imperfectly sketched) to the afflicted man.—His mind recovered its trust and consolation, and he shortly afterward died in peace."