

The Heir of Heaven Walking in Darkness, and the Heir of Hell Walking in Light

by J.C. Philpot

The Heir of Heaven Walking in Darkness is a sermon that explores the character of the child of God who fears the Lord, obeys His voice, and walks in darkness, and the means by which God works fear in the soul.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:34, Proverbs 30:12, Isaiah 50:10, Jeremiah 15:19, Matthew 7:13, Romans 7:9, 2 Peter 1:19, Revelation 21:8

Topics: "True Faith", "False Religion"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the contrast between the heir of heaven who fears the Lord, obeys His voice, and walks in darkness, and the heirs of hell who kindle a false fire, surround themselves with sparks, and will lie down in sorrow. He emphasizes the importance of true faith and trust in God's mercy, highlighting the dangers of false religion and self-righteousness. Philpot warns against the deceitful workings of the heart and the delusions of the devil, urging listeners to seek genuine repentance, humility, and a deep relationship with God.

Transcript

"Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all you that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks--walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of my hand; you shall lie down in sorrow." Isaiah 50:10-11.

The Word of God appears to me to resemble a vast and deep mine, in which precious metals of various kinds lie concealed. The rocks and mountains and the general surface of the ground above the mine, every eye may see; but "the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places" Isa 45:3 that lie beneath, are known to but few. And thus many letter-learned professors and wise doctors may understand the literal meaning of the Scriptures, and explain very correctly the connection and the historical sense of the text, who are as ignorant of the rich vein of experience that lies beneath the surface of the letter, as the mules in South America are of the nature and value of the silver which they draw up from the bottom of the mine. "Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they refine it... The stones of it are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. There is a path" that, namely, which lies through the mine "which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eye"-that is, the keen-sighted, but unclean professor Le 11:14 Isa 35:8-"has not seen" Job 28:1, Job 28:6-7.

In this deep mine do God's spiritual laborers work, and as the blessed Spirit leads them into different veins of experimental truth, they bring forth "the precious things of the everlasting hills," to the comfort and establishment of His people. Thus, to one of Christ's ambassadors is given a clear light upon the doctrines of grace, which have been riveted in his soul, and a door of utterance communicated to set them forth with unction and power. On another sent servant of the Lord is bestowed a divine acquaintance with the depths of his own inward depravity, under which he groans, being burdened, and a tongue like the pen of a ready writer to unfold the secret recesses of a deceitful and desperately wicked heart. While to another spiritual laborer is given a heavenly light into the difference between natural and supernatural religion, and utterance bestowed to open up the various delusions whereby Satan transformed into an angel of light, deceives the nations.

According, then, to the line which God the Holy Spirit has distributed to each of His own sent servants 2Co 10:13,16, does He usually lead them to such parts of the Word as fall in with their own experience, and shine with the same light that has shone into their souls. Thus, they "see light in God's light," and as the blessed Spirit of all truth is pleased to shine upon a text, a peculiar light is thrown upon it, a peculiar entrance is given into it, a peculiar unction and savor rests upon it, a peculiar beauty, force, truth and power seems to shoot forth from every part of it, so that every word appears dipped in heavenly dew, and every expression to drop with honey.

Whenever a text has been thus opened to me, I have seen a ray of light shine as it were all through it, and it has seemed clothed with divine beauty and power. The words have perhaps been in my mind for days and have been bursting forth continually from my lips. I have seen a fullness and tasted a sweetness in them, which carried with it its own evidence, that they were the words of the ever-living God; and when I have gone with them into the pulpit, I have usually had a door of utterance set before me to unfold what I have seen in the text, and power has generally accompanied the word to the hearts of God's people. While at other times, and those much more frequent, the same text, as well as every other, has been hidden in darkness, and I have groped for the wall like the blind, and groped as if I had no eyes.

But if my eyes have been opened to perceive anything aright, or to see wondrous things out of God's law, it is, I believe, to discover somewhat of the difference between natural and spiritual religion. And thus, as you have probably perceived, I find myself led from time to time to speak from such texts as that which I have read, in which the strong line between what is of God and what is of not, what is of the Spirit and what is of the flesh, is clearly drawn.

In the two verses of the text, we find two distinct characters traced out by the hand of the blessed Spirit--the one, a child of God, the other, a child of the devil. The one an HEIR OF HEAVEN, the other an HEIR OF HELL. One of these characters is said "to walk in darkness, and to have no light;" the other, "to compass himself about with sparks of his own kindling." One is encouraged "to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay upon his God," against the other it is threatened that "he shall lie down in sorrow."

Now I by no means assert that the one character represents all the family of God, any more than that the other character represents all the offspring of Satan. But it has pleased the blessed Spirit to bring together two opposite characters, to set them side by side, and so place them in strong contrast with each other. And thus I feel myself led to unfold as God shall enable me, these two different characters--first, because I believe the one represents the experience of many children of God during well-near the whole, of some during a part, and of all during one period or other of their spiritual life--and, secondly, because I believe the other character traces out the beginning, middle and end of thousands of dead professors in the

present day.

But as none can reasonably object, if I describe a character, to my giving him a name, that we may know him again, I shall call the one the heir of heaven walking in darkness, and the other the heir of hell walking in light.

THE HEIR OF HEAVEN WALKING IN DARKNESS

The text opens a very striking and solemn way. It begins with a question, an appeal, as it were, to the consciences of those to whom it is addressed, "who is among you that fears the Lord?" Now the very form in which this striking question is put to the heir of heaven, when compared with the mode of address employed in the next verse to the heirs of hell, seems to show that the first of these characters is very rare, the second very frequent.

Thus, the question, "Who is there among you" is worded as if the blessed Spirit were selecting one person out of a crowd, as if He were pointing out a solitary character amid a numerous company. While the word "you"-"Who is there among you"-seems to show that this company is a troop of professors, the same who are afterwards addressed, "Behold, all you that kindle a fire." We have, then, a character pointed out by the finger of God Himself, separated by His distinguishing hand and sealed with His own divine mark as belonging to Himself.

This living soul, this gracious character, this heir of heaven, whom God has here singled out, is stamped by the blessed Spirit with three marks. The first is, that "he fears the Lord;" the second, that "he obeys the voice of God's servant," the third, that "he walks in darkness, and has no light." We will, with God's blessing, then consider these three remarks separately.

1. He Fears God. The first mark, then, of that heir of heaven whose character we are endeavoring to trace is, that "He fears God." "Who is among you that fears the Lord?" But here the question at once arises--What sort of fear is this which the Holy Spirit has thus stamped with His divine approbation? "Is it of heaven or of men?" To err here is to stumble at the very outset, and to throw the whole into confusion. We must therefore, at the very threshold of our inquiry, lay it down as a positive principle, that the fear here spoken of is not a fruit of the flesh, but the work of the Spirit; not a product of nature, but the offspring of the Holy Spirit. And this distinction needs to be drawn, and to be insisted on, with greater carefulness, because there is a natural fear of God as well as a spiritual one.

The very devils believe and tremble. The children of Israel whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, feared God when they heard "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud" Ex 19:16, "so that all the people that were in the camp trembled." Saul feared God when that dreadful sentence fell upon his ear--"Tomorrow shall you and your sons be with me," and "he fell immediately all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel" 1Sa 28:20. Felix feared God when "he trembled, as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and "judgment to come" Acts 24:25. "Terrors are upon the hypocrite," said Zophar Job 20:23,25 when God casts forth the fury of His wrath upon him, and the glittering sword comes out of his gall." And "terrors," says Bildad Job 18:11, "shall make the wicked afraid on every side, and shall drive him to His feet."

The fear of the Lord, then, spoken of in the text is no natural dread of God, no fleshly alarm of a guilty conscience, no late remorse of an enlightened judgment, trembling at the wrath to come. Nor, again, is it any such fear of God as is impressed upon the mind by what is called "a religious education." Against this

the Lord especially directs a sentence of condemnation--"Their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men." Isa 29:13.

The fear of God, then, which He has in the text and elsewhere stamped with His divine approbation, is that which He Himself implants with His own hand in the soul. As it is written, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" Jer 32:40. This is the fear which is called "the beginning of wisdom" Pr 9:10; and is said to be "the fountain of life," "the strong confidence" Pr 14:26-27, and "the treasure" Isa 33:6 of a child of God, and that which "endures forever" in his heart Ps 19:9.

But how is this divine fear, this godly awe, this holy trembling, produced in the soul? It is not sufficient to say--"It is implanted by the hand of God," and so leave it. The question arises--How does the blessed Spirit work it in the soul? To this I answer, that in producing it God works by certain means. A spiritual man is not a steam-engine, or a piece of machinery, driven round and round by cogs and wheels in a certain mechanical course, without feeling and without consciousness. The grace of God indeed works invincibly and irresistibly upon the soul, and produces certain effects in it; but not in the same way as a weaver's loom makes a piece of cloth, or as a spinner makes cotton thread. God works, then, by means. But by means I do not understand what are usually called "means of grace," such as preaching, praying, reading the Word, etc., which many persons speak of, as though, if made use of by carnal men, they would bring grace into their hearts almost as necessarily as a water-pipe carries water into a cistern.

No. For though prayer and hearing the Word, etc., contain in them blessings for the spiritual, thousands have used what are called "the means of grace," who have lived and died without grace; for "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." "Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for, but the election has obtained it, and the rest were blinded." By "means," then, and "God's working by means," I understand not means on our part, but means on God's part. I intend by "the Word," those gracious and powerful operations of the blessed Spirit on the soul, which produce a certain effect and create a certain experience within.

Thus the means which God employs to raise up a holy fear of His great name in the soul, is to cast into it a ray of divine light out of the fullness of the Godhead. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," says Paul 2Co 4:6, "has shined in our hearts." "In Your light," says David Ps 36:9, "we see light;" and again--"The entrance of Your words gives light" Ps 119:130. Until, then, this supernatural light out of the fullness of God enters into the soul, a man has no knowledge of Jehovah. He may say his prayers, read his Bible, attend preaching, observe ordinances, "bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and give his body to be burned;" but he is as ignorant of God as the cattle that graze in the fields. He may call himself a Christian, and be thought such by others, may talk much about Jesus Christ, hold a sound creed, maintain a consistent profession, pray at a prayer meeting with fluency and apparent feeling, may stand up in a pulpit and contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace, may excel hundreds of God's children in zeal, knowledge and conversation; and yet, if this ray of supernatural light has never shone into his soul he is only twofold more the child of hell than those who make no profession- "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

But the same ray of supernatural light which reveals to us that there is a God, manifests also His purity and holiness, His universal presence, His abhorrence of evil and His heart-searching eye. And this it manifests not as a mere doctrine, to form an article of a creed or a part of a system, but as a mighty truth, a divine conviction, lodged and planted in the depths of the soul, which becomes, so to speak, a part of ourselves, so as never more to be sundered from us or lost out of the heart.

But it may be asked, how are we to know whether we possess this spiritual and genuine fear of God, and how are we to distinguish it from all counterfeits? Like all other graces of the blessed Spirit, it must be seen in its own light, tasted in its own savor, and felt in its own power. But wherever this divine fruit of eternal election grows, it will be manifested by the effects which it produces. And thus, those children of God, who have not faith to believe, nor spiritual discernment to see, nor divine unction to feel, that they are true partakers of this heavenly fear, may have it manifested to their consciences that they really possess it, when they hear its effects and operations traced out, and have an inward witness that they have experienced the same. And this is the grand use of experimental preaching, against which so many proud professors shoot out their arrows, even bitter words; that, under the Spirit's unction, it sheds a light on the path of those that walk in darkness, removes stumbling stones out of the way of those that are ready to halt, strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees. To see the sun shining in the mid-day sky and to feel its cheering beams is the surest evidence that he is risen; but to see him reflected in the trembling waters of a brook, or to trace him dimly through clouds and mists, is a proof also that it is day.

And thus, those dear children of God, who cannot behold the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, nor feel His warmth in their souls, may see Him reflected in the experience of their trembling hearts, or trace His work within through the mists of unbelief. A child of God may not be able to see the fear itself, yet may feel that he has experienced its effects and operations, when he hears them traced out by a minister of Christ, who speaks out of the fullness of an exercised heart.

One evidence, then, of our being partakers of this godly fear is the inward feeling of guilt and the sense of our exceeding vileness which always accompanies it. The same ray of divine light which manifests Jehovah to the soul, and raises up a spiritual fear of Him within, discovers to us also our inward depravity. Until we see heavenly light, we know not what darkness is; until we view eternal purity, we are ignorant of our own vileness; until we hear the voice of inflexible Justice, we feel no guilt; until we behold a heart-searching God, we do not groan beneath our inward deceitfulness; and until we feel that He abhors evil, we do not abhor ourselves.

Thus all supernatural communications from God and manifestations of Him show us, at the same moment and in the same light, a holy Jehovah and a fallen sinner, heavenly purity and creature vileness, God on the throne of light and a worm of the dust, a righteous Judge and a leper on the ash-heap. The regenerate soul looks with the spiritual eye which the Holy Spirit has planted in it, first up unto God, then down into itself. So it was with Moses, when he heard "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words" and said, "exceedingly fear and quake" Heb 12:19,21. Thus was it with Job, when he said--"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" Job 42:5-6. Isaiah, on a similar vision of the glory of the Lord cried out--"Woe is me! for I am undone" Isa 6:5. Daniel's "strength was turned in him into corruption" Da 10:8, and John "fell at Christ's feet as dead" Re 1:17. If you have never felt guilt, nor abhorred yourself in dust and ashes, you may depend upon it that you have never "seen God" 3 Jo 1:11-, and if you have never seen God with the spiritual eye of a living faith, you are dead in sins, or dead in a profession. As Job says--"Your excellency may mount up to the heavens, and your head reach unto the clouds" Job 20:6; but if you have never felt in your mouth "the wormwood and the gall," have never groaned, being burdened, nor roared for very distress of heart; if you have never cried as a criminal for mercy, nor put your mouth into the dust--you are a dead branch, a rotten hypocrite, an empty professor.

You may talk about the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, be one of those "prating fools that shall fall" Pr 10:10; but if the plague of leprosy has never broken out in you, and that "deeper than the skin" Le

13:25; and if you have never as a loathsome wretch, a monster of inward pollution and iniquity, had your clothes torn, your head bare, and a covering upon you Le 13:45, you have never tasted the love, nor felt the atoning blood of the Savior. He is to you a name, not a person; an idea, not a reality; a Savior in the letter, not a Savior in the Spirit; a Christ in your Bible, not a Christ in your heart; an Immanuel of whom you have heard, but not an Immanuel whom you have seen, and who is "God with you."

Another evidence of the reality and genuineness of the fear of the Lord in the soul is the way in which we approach God in secret prayer. Until we see God in the light of His own manifestations, we cannot worship Him in spirit and in truth. We may utter prayers in public or in private, written or unwritten, taught in childhood or learned in old age, repeated from memory or suggested at the moment; and yet, if we have never seen God in the light of His holiness, we have never prayed to Him in our lives. Some of you in this congregation may have had family prayers, and others of you may have prayed at prayer meetings, and been so pleased with your own gift and the applause of empty professors as to think yourself fit for the ministry, and have got your foot almost on the steps of a pulpit. And what advantage have you reaped by your fleshly prayers? Are you nearer to heaven or more acceptable to God? No. But on the contrary, to the long, black catalogue of your sins you have added that blackest of 'presumption'.

Instead of pleasing God, you have offended Him; instead of worshiping, you have mocked Him; and instead of taking so many steps nearer and nearer to heaven, you have only been taking so many steps nearer and nearer to hell. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates, they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear" Isa 1:14-15. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers, therefore you shall receive the greater damnation" Mt 23:14.

Now the only cure for this dreadful presumption and hypocrisy is the fear of God planted by His own divine hand in the soul. He that is blessed with godly fear, as an internal, abiding principle, cannot mock God. He cannot offer Him the dead sacrifice, the stinking carcase of formality, superstition, tradition, hypocrisy and self-righteousness. He cannot go on, year after year, to mock the ever-living Jehovah to His face, as thousands do in the Church of England, and out of it, by confessing grief for sins for which they never felt sorry, asking for blessings which they never desired, and thanking God for mercies for which they have no gratitude. His soul will be, more or less deeply, and more or less frequently, penetrated with such an inward reverence, such a holy awe, such a realizing sense of the solemn presence of the great holy God of heaven and earth that he will confess his sins, not out of a Prayer Book, but out of the depth of a contrite heart; will beg for mercy, not as a child repeats his A B C's, but as a sinking criminal at the bar of judgment; and will cry for the light of God's countenance, not as a Parish Clerk mumbles forth, "Hear us, good Lord," but as one in whom "the Spirit himself makes intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered."

2. He Obeys The Voice Of His Servant

But that "he fears God," is not the only mark given in the text of that heir of heaven, whose path we are endeavoring to trace.

He is said also "to obey the voice of his servant." To discover whom the Holy Spirit means in this place by "the Servant of God" is perhaps not a matter of much difficulty. It is a name and an office which the adorable Redeemer Himself condescends to bear. "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, My Elect One, in

whom My soul delights" Isa 42:1, was the title by which He was addressed by God the Father more than seven hundred years before He appeared upon earth. Again, it is said of Him Isa 53:11--"By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many," and not to multiply instances, the promise runs Zec 3:8--"Behold! I will bring forth My Servant, the Branch." Thus the voice of God's Servant in the text may justly be explained to refer to that ever-blessed Mediator, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men" Php 2:6-7.

But what sort of voice is this? Is it the mere voice of Christ in the Scriptures? Is it the naked precept, the naked promise, or the naked invitation? No! What is the Bible more than any other book when it is not clothed by the Spirit with almighty power and irresistible energy? The Bible is nothing without the Spirit. It is in itself a mere list of words and syllables, an assemblage of vowels and consonants, a collection or printers' types and inks, which, without the Spirit's divine application, can no more convey life and light into the soul than a letter sent by the post can communicate its contents to the eyes of a man born blind. Unless the Eternal Spirit gives a voice to the voiceless letter, and takes truth out of the Bible, and rivets it in our hearts, the Bible is no more to us than another book.

If your religion is only in the Bible, and has no existence out of the Bible in your own soul, which is the case with thousands who are considered great Christians, the same fire that will at the last day burn up the Bible will burn up your religion with it. No, my friends, we must have the truths of the Bible, which were written there by the finger of the Holy Spirit, taken out of the Bible, and written by the same Holy Spirit upon our hearts. To have the truth in the Bible only is like having the Ten Commandments written up at the east end of a church, which, with their gilt letters and flourished capitals, mightily please the eye of a Pharisee, but which differs as much from "the commandments's coming" with power Ro 7:9 as the prayer of a dead formalist differs from the cries and groans of a broken-hearted saint.

The Bible is a mighty storehouse, a vast reservoir of blessed truth, but the precepts and promises of the Bible have no more power in themselves to convince or comfort the soul than the swords and muskets in the Tower of London have power to start from their places and kill the spectators. Both are merely dead instruments, lifeless weapons--and need a mighty hand and an outstretched arm to give them power and efficacy. "The words that I speak unto you," says the Redeemer John 6:63, "they are spirit and they are life;" "Written not in tables of stone," says Paul 2Co 3:3, "but in fleshy tables of the heart." Thus, "the voice of God's Servant," which those in the text said to "obey," is not the mere voice of Christ in the Scriptures, but such a voice, "powerful and full of majesty," as called Lazarus forth out of the tomb. This voice, heard by the sheep alone, John 10:27, raises up the dead in sins, John 5:25; penetrates the conscience, Heb 4:12; casts a flood of light within, and carries conviction into the inmost recesses of the soul. Not that I mean any voice is heard by the outward ear; the voice that I speak of is the voice of Christ in the Scriptures, applied with divine authority and power to the soul by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, to some He applies by His Spirit a word of encouragement suited to their case. "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give, you rest," may be the voice of God's Servant to a burdened child. The suitability of the invitation to the needs of the weary soul, the tender kindness of the Speaker, the sweetness that distills from every word of the passage, all meet at once--hope springs up in the heart, strength is communicated to believe, a spirit of prayer rises up from the very bottom of the soul, and strong desires after the enjoyment of Christ within, pour themselves forth in wrestling cries. But whatever be the word of encouragement which the voice of Jehovah's Servant speaks to him that fears God, the effect is one and the same.

That voice is as powerful, and as full of majesty now, Ps 29:4, as when it said, "Let there be light, and there was light." But though it never speaks in vain, for "He spoke, and it was done--He commanded, and it stood fast" Ps 33:9; yet the different degrees of strength in which this voice speaks to the soul vary as much as the loudest voice from the feeblest whisper, or the strongest wind from the gentlest breeze. And just according to the strength in which that voice speaks to the soul will there be all the different degrees of encouragement and consolation, from the feeblest, faintest glimmering of hope, to the full blaze of the assurance of faith.

But promises are not the only parts of the Word which the voice of Christ addresses to those that fear God. The threatenings and warnings contained in the Scriptures He speaks home to the soul as well as the promises. The shepherd drives his flock at times before him, as well as draws them at others by going before them. The wise parent chastises his child when needful; as well as fondles it. There is much presumption, pride, hypocrisy, deceit, delusion, formality, superstition, will-worship and self-righteousness to be purged out of the heart; and "as the blueness of a wound cleanses away evil, so do stripes the inward parts of the belly" Pr 20:30. I look upon the road to heaven as a narrow path that lies between two hedges, and that on the other side of each hedge is a bottomless ditch. One of these ditches is despair, and the other is presumption. The hedge that keeps the soul from falling into the pit of despair is that of the promises; and the hedge that keeps the soul from sinking into the abyss of presumption is that of warnings, precepts and threatenings. Without the spiritual application of the promises the soul would lie down in despair, and without the spiritual application of the precepts and warnings it would be swollen with arrogance, puffed up with pride, and ready to burst with presumption.

But the voice of God's Servant that speaks to him that fears the Lord uses the precept not only in the way of conviction, as I have just described, but also in the way of direction. It not only accuses the soul for any breach of the precept, but also applies the precept itself with power, and enables the soul to obey it. Time will not allow me to mention all the various precepts which the voice of Christ applies to the conscience, but there is one above all others which He invariably speaks, sooner or later, to everyone that fears God; so that I cannot pass it by, and that is, "Come out from among them, and be separate" 2Co 6:17. The people of God are often for a long time, but more especially in their spiritual infancy, when their faith is weak and their judgment ill-formed, mixed up with ungodly systems. On this point I can speak feelingly and experimentally--for how long was I, to my shame, buried in the corrupt, worldly system of the Church of England; and how many struggles and difficulties had I within before I could snatch myself from her!

When divine light enters into the soul, it finds some, as in my case, in the Establishment, others it finds among the Wesleyans, others among the General Dissenters, but all wrapped up, more or less, in some outward form, and mixed up with dead professors. Now, the very first entrance of divine light actually and really separates the heir of heaven from the herd of professors, with whom he is mingled. But as Lot "lingered" in Sodom, after "the angels hastened him, saying, Arise;" so do new-born souls often linger in ungodly systems, under dead ministers, and amid a dead people, before they have strength given them to take up the cross, go outside the camp, and bear the reproach of Christ.

Some are prejudiced against God's people, others view with a kind of undefined suspicion Christ's sent ministers, others are afraid of the doctrines that they preach, and most cleave very close to their own dear reputation, and fear lest to be in "the outcasts of Israel" should injure their business, offend their customers, incense their relations, or tarnish their self-righteousness. But sooner or later every quickened vessel of mercy hears the voice of God's Servant speaking in the name and with the authority of the Father, and bidding him to come out and be separate from all that He hates.

The soul is now enlightened "to know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogues of Satan" Re 2:9. The soul is taught "to try the spirits whether they are of God" 1John 4:1, and "to try those who say they are apostles, and are not, and finds them liars" Re 2:2.

A little communion with the children of God dispels every prejudice, and melts the soul into union with them. A few times hearing the experimental ministers of Christ makes him say, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace;" and the sweet kindlings of life within, amid a living people and under a living minister, show him as with a ray of light the whited sepulchers--the dead people and the dead priest, among whom he has hitherto been walking. Thus his carnal fears about his good name and his worldly interests are scattered to the winds, and he says to the spiritual Israel, as Ruth of old said to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge--your people shall be my people, and your God my God" Ru 1:16.

3. He walks in darkness and has no light.

But there is a third mark with which the blessed Spirit in the text has stamped that heir of heaven whose character we are endeavoring to trace. "He walks in darkness, and has no light." This may well at first sight strike us with surprise. "is it possible," reason asks, "that one who fears God, and obeys the voice of His Servant, should be in this condition?" "Obedience brings light, disobedience is the only cause of darkness," sounds from a thousand pulpits.

"Live up to your privileges, cultivate holiness, be diligent in the performance of your duties, if you would enjoy the pleasures of a cheerful piety," cry aloud a thousand task-masters. Without denying that disobedience produces darkness of soul, for the experience of every believer testifies that 'sin separates between him and his God' Isa 59:2, we cannot allow that it is the only cause, or that obedience necessarily produces light. To speak so is to go point blank against the text, is to ascribe merit to the creature, is "to sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own dragnet," and to boast like him of old--"By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent" Isa 10:13. We must go higher, then, than the creature, and trace it up to the sovereign will of the Creator, even to Him who says--"I form the light and create darkness" Isa 45:7.

Here, then, is a character whom God Himself declares to fear His great name, and to obey the voice of His Servant, and yet he is one "who walks in darkness, and has no light." Two things, we find, are here said of him-

1. That he walks in darkness. "To walk in darkness" implies something habitual. It is not that he feels darkness occasionally, that he is immersed in it for an hour or a day at a time, or that he has long seasons of it chequered with days and weeks of light. The expression "to walk" in Scripture always implies something continual, something habitual, something prolonged through a considerable space of time. Thus, some are said "to walk in pride," others "in a vain show," others "after their ungodly lust," others "after the flesh;" in all which places it means some habitual conduct, some course of action spread through a long period. The expression, therefore, of the text, "to walk in darkness," implies a long, unvaried, unbroken continuance in it. The figure is taken from a man journeying by night, who has neither moon nor stars to shine upon his path.

But the word "darkness" needs explanation likewise. It is not the darkness then of the unregenerate that is here meant, such as David speaks of--"They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness" Ps 82:5. Neither is it the darkness of sin, such as Paul speaks of--"Have no fellowship with the

unfruitful works of darkness" Eph 5:11.

But it is a darkness of feeling, a darkness of inward experience, the darkness of a regenerate soul, and such as is peculiar to the elect. There are TWO KINDS OF DARKNESS. One such as has never given place to light, like the darkness of a deep cave or mine, into which the rays of the sun have never penetrated. The other a darkness produced by the absence or withdrawal of light. Thus the long, long night which brooded over the earth when "it was without form and void," before God said, "Let there be light," is an instance of the first kind of darkness. The first night which fell upon the earth when the sun set for the first time is an instance of the second. The first resembles the darkness of the ungodly, the second the darkness of the regenerate.

There was neither fruit, nor flower, nor beauty, nor ornament in the dark waters of chaos, as there is neither grace nor anything lovely in the dead soul. But after beauty had covered the earth under the creating hand of Jehovah, it was there still, though unseen and covered with darkness, when the new-born sun left for the first time his seat in the heavens. Thus after light has sprung up in the soul, and the hand of God has created it anew, though its faith and hope are hidden in darkness, still they are there. And this is the grand distinction between the darkness of the heir of heaven and the darkness of the heir of hell. Light has never visited the one, it is the withdrawal of light which causes the darkness of the other.

Thus spiritual darkness is only known to those who have enjoyed spiritual light, as the absence of God is only felt by those who have tasted His presence.

"To walk in darkness," then, is to feel light removed, hope faded away, faith at its last gasp, love withered out of the heart, God absent, salvation despaired of, evidences lost, ancient landmarks gone, anchorage failed, comfort changed into mourning, and peace into despondency. To walk in darkness is to find the Bible a sealed book, prayer a burden, ordinances a weariness, spiritual conversation a task, and all religion an enigma. It is to be tossed up and down on a sea of doubts and fears, and to wander here and there amid fogs of confusion and mists of perplexity. It is to feel ignorant of everything that we have once known, and to be at a loss what to think either of ourselves or of God, of His present dealings or past mercies, and to find one black night of confusion fallen upon our path, so that "if we go forward, God is not there, or backward, but we cannot behold Him; He hides Himself on the right hand that we cannot see Him" Job 23:8-9.

And as when God makes darkness and it is night, all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. Ps 104:20, so in this darkness of soul do doubts and fears, jealousies and suspicions, temptations and lusts, vile passions and all the hidden filth and obscenity of the heart, enmity and rebellion, blasphemy and infidelity, atheism and despair, fretfulness and inward cursing, devilism and all the monsters as well as all the crawling reptiles of the carnal mind, all creep forth to harass and torment the soul.

2. That he has no light. But the blessed Spirit has added another expression to denote the experience which we are endeavoring to trace, "he has no light." I cannot say that I am fond of alluding to the original Hebrew or Greek of the Bible, or of finding fault with the translation, as such petty criticism is much more often employed to display one's own half-knowledge than to edify the Church of God, and has often the evil effect of unsettling the minds of Christ's people, and of opening a door to the assaults of the enemy. I would not therefore take any notice of the true meaning of the word "light" in the text, if the force and beauty of the passage had not been much obscured by an imperfect translation. The word then translated "light" in the text means something more than mere light, and signifies rather brightness or shining. It is

thus translated--"the shining of a flaming fire" Isa 4:5; "until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness" Isa 62:1; "the court was full of the brightness" Eze 10:4; "His brightness was as the light" Hab 3:4. Thus, when it says of the heir of heaven in the text, that "he has no light," it means that he has no shining light, no brightness, no radiancy. He has indeed light, yes, divine and supernatural light, and by this heavenly light he has seen God and has seen himself, knows good and evil. The veil upon his heart has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom. His "eyes have been opened, and he has been turned from darkness to light" Ac 26:18.

If he literally and actually had no light, he would be dead in his sins. "You are all," says Paul--that is, babes as well as fathers--"you are all the children of light, and the children of the day" 1Th 5:5. "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" Eph 5:8. "Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" 1Pe 2:9.

This heir of heaven, then, has light--but not SHINING LIGHT. He has light to see sin and holiness, guilt and judgment, iniquities that reach unto heaven, and the flaming sword of justice stretched out against them; but he has not the brightness of divine manifestations. He has twilight, but not sunlight. But who knows not that the first glimmer of twilight which dawns upon the dark world comes from the sun, and is a part of the same beams which blaze in the midday sky? The sun himself indeed is yet hidden beneath the earth, but his rays are refracted by the air, and bent down out of their course to enlighten the world, long before he himself rises in the east.

And so the child of God, who has no sweet view of Jesus as his Savior, is still enlightened by His beams; and as sure as "the day star has arisen in his heart" 2Pe 1:19, will "the Sun of Righteousness" one day arise upon him "with healing in His wings." Thus the heir of heaven in the text has light to see the evil of sin, but not brightness to enjoy the pardon of it. He therefore sees and feels the curse of the law, but not its removal out of the way; the pollution of all his thoughts, words and actions, but not the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; the leprosy, but not the cleansing of the leper; the malady, but not the remedy; the wound, but not the oil and the wine; the justice of God, but not His mercy; his own total insolvency, but not the full forgiveness of the debt; that God is his Master, but not that God is his Father. Mal 1:6.

Thus--"He is led, and brought into darkness, but not into light" La 3:2; "sits desolate on the ground" Isa 3:26, and not "with Christ in heavenly places;" mourns like the dove, but mounts not up with wings as eagles; feels himself black as the tents of Kedar, but not lovely as the curtains of Solomon So 1:5; sighs as a prisoner Ps 79:11, but does not leap as "a hind let loose" Ge 49:21; is lost and driven away and broken and sick, but is not yet sought out, brought back, bound up, and strengthened Eze 34:16.

But what do I mean when I say that the heir of heaven has light to see guilt and wrath and condemnation, but not mercy, love and pardon? Do I mean that he merely sees these things as certain revealed truths, as a system of dry doctrines, just as our DEAD CALVINISTS that swarm through the country see everything and anything but their own ignorance? No. I am speaking here not of a brain-religion, or head-knowledge, or tongue-work, or that miserable, dry, barren, marrowless, moonlight acquaintance with the doctrines of grace which hardens the heart, sears the conscience, and lifts up the soul with presumption, to dash it down into the blackness of darkness forever.

The heir of heaven in the text is not one of those graceless professors who, like the caricatures that we sometimes see in the picture shops, are all head and no body, and who have neither a heart to love Christ, nor affections of compassion to melt into godly sorrow, nor hands to touch Him, nor feet to run the way of

His commandments. The heir of heaven has too much going on at home, too much soul-trouble, too much indoors work, too many temptations, difficulties and conflicts, to allow him to furnish his head with empty notions. He wants to have the gold, silver, and precious stones within, which the fire will not burn, and leaves to dead Calvinists the wood, hay and stubble of dry doctrines, vain contentions and unprofitable disputes.

This is the character, then, whose experience we have endeavored to trace, an heir of heaven walking in darkness. But we must not leave him here. God has not left this tried child of His without a word suitable to his case. He has addressed to him an exhortation, which in fact is a promise--"let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Now this exhortation is not addressed to this heir of heaven, as if he had any strength or power of his own to do that to which he is exhorted. If he could trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, his darkness would well near cease. His trouble, in these seasons of inward darkness is, that he cannot believe, that he cannot trust--but that unbelief, and doubt, and despondency so press him down that he cries, "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth" Ps 88:8.

"But you ought to believe, you ought not to doubt, you ought not to give way to your unbelief," says one of those who sit in Moses' seat, one of those physicians of no value, who know the disease by theory only, and have never felt the malady for which they are prescribing. As well might they say to the criminal in the condemned cell, hand-cuffed and double-ironed, "You ought to come out;" or to a man up to his neck in a slough, "You ought not to give way to sinking," as lavish their oughts and ought-nots upon one who walks in "darkness and has no light."

God does not so mock one of His children, nor when he asks for bread does He give him a stone. But does not He say in the text, "Let him do this and that"? He does; but with the exhortation HE GIVES POWER to do what the exhortation bids. A king does not send his general to take a town without giving him soldiers to take it with. Thus the King of Zion, when He gives a precept, and exhortation, or an invitation, gives to His people ability to perform what He commands. "Where the word of a king is, there is power." It is ignorance of this truth in their own experience that makes so many 'letter-ministers' lay heavy burdens on men's shoulders, which they themselves never touch with one of their fingers. It is the Lord, who in the text bids this child of His to trust in His Name, secretly but powerfully works this very trust in him to which He exhorts. There is in the midst of his darkness at times a WAITING for light. There is a secret resting upon the eternal arms which are underneath. What keeps the heir of heaven from the razor, the halter, or the pond, to which the devil and his own despairing heart would at times drive him? What preserves him from the ale-house, the gambling table, or the brothel? What holds him up in a consistent walk, day after day, in the midst of floods of temptation, when lust and passion fill every corner of his heart, and seem ready every moment to boil over and drown him in destruction and perdition?

What makes him sigh and groan, and hold on his way, with a tender conscience and unblemished life? Is there no faith here in operation? Is there no trusting in the Lord, and staying upon his God in the midst of his temptation? Is it nature, and unbelief, and a work of the flesh, and a delusion of the devil--that hold him up? Who that has eyes to see, and a heart to feel does not perceive that this heir of heaven, walking in darkness and having no light, has the same faith in exercise which Peter had when he walked upon the sea?

His faith is indeed hidden in the bottom of his heart, and struggling for life and liberty, under the weight of temptations and trials, as the seed under the clods is pushing its roots downwards and its blade upwards, though pressed on every side with the stiff clay.

I remarked that this exhortation contained a PROMISE suitable to the case of this tried soul. This promise is not expressed in so many words, but is wrapped up as it were, in the bosom of the exhortation. It is contained, I believe, in a little word of great meaning, in the little pronoun of three letters, "HIS." "Let him stay upon HIS God." It is by these little pronouns, overlooked by teamed doctors and heady professors, that salvation is sealed upon the soul, and made an eternal reality--"Who loved me," says Paul, "and gave himself for me." "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

How many years of temptation, doubt and fear will often roll heavily on before "MY" is sealed upon the heart, and before "ME" and "MINE" can drop from the lips! My Father, My Savior, My God, hundreds of living souls cannot pronounce. "My" falters from the tongue, and dares not come forth, because "I have loved you, I have redeemed you, you are Mine," and such similar testimonies, have not been yet spoken by the mouth of God to the soul. How different is this godly fear, this tender conscience of a living soul, from the pealing voices that sound "Our Father," through the aisles of the Parish Church, speaking of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies them; and from the loud burst, "My Jesus has done all things well," that swells in bass, tenor, and treble from the pews and galleries of the Independent Chapel. These presumptuous mockers will find on a dying pillow, when "their lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness," that it is one thing to call God their Father and Christ their Savior out of a Prayer Book or a Hymn Book, and another thing "to receive the spirit of adoption," whereby living souls cry, "Abba, Father."

God, then, seals this heir of heaven as a son, by saying to him, "Let him stay upon his God;" as though He said to him; "Though you can not call Me yours, I call you Mine; I am still your God though you can not call Me, Father." He is thus encouraged to stay upon his God, and to hope in His mercy. Almost invisibly to himself, and in a deep, mysterious, incomprehensible manner, he is "helped with a little help" Da 11:34, and though he continually falls, he is not utterly cast down. "Though faint, he still pursues, "though weary, he holds on his way; though often defeated by sin and Satan, he does not surrender; though foiled again and again, he still perseveres; though God gives no answer, he ceases not to cry; though "plunged again and again in the ditch" of heart-evil Job 9:31, he cannot lie there, but struggles forth into the light of day; and though he expects that his corruptions will one day break forth to destroy him utterly, and sweep him away into despair beyond the mercy of God and beyond the pity of His people, he is still checked and restrained as if by an invisible hand. Sometimes he obtains a respite from his besetments just when they seem ripened into action; at others, providential interpositions restrain the outbreaks of inward temptations, when opportunity favors them most.

Conscience works at one time, the fear of man at another. Godly sorrow keeps him in this instance, and a sense and sight of the evil of sin in that. Now the fear of God, and now inward feelings of uprightness and integrity; at one moment the weight of guilt, and at another, fear of bringing a reproach on the cause of Christ; today, a sense of God's goodness and mercy; tomorrow, earnest desires to live to His glory--these and similar workings, which none but gracious souls know, act as a counter-balance to the vile inquiries that seem pent up in his heart.

Thus he seems always working and counter-working, doing and on going, fighting and yielding; raging with inward passions, and softened into contrition; diving into all the pollution of a fallen nature, and rising up into the presence of a holy God; hating sin, and loving it; longing after the vilest iniquities, and pained at an idle word; feeding upon the filthiest garbage, and eating manna; reveling in a train of past sins, and abhorring himself as the vilest monster that crawls upon the earth. At times he feels earnestly desirous never to sin more, and would gladly be as holy as an angel; at other times he feels as if the sins of thousands were pent up in his bosom, and as if his vile heart could lie down and wallow in all the

abominations which have ever been conceived by the mind, uttered by the lips, or acted by the man.

But mark, my friends, that all these are INWARD workings, not outward actions; God forbid! And do not forget that all these hidden sins are locked up in the saint's own bosom, and though they roar and swell there, are kept down by the hand of God, as boiling water is kept by the top of the cauldron. God forbid that we should encourage sin, or lead anyone to think lightly of that abominable thing which God hates. No. When his right mind a living soul would sooner die than that his corruptions should break forth into action, and his burden is that he feels such powerful workings of sin within. But all these things keep him low, mar his pride, crush his self-righteousness, cut the locks of his presumption, stain his self-conceit, stop his boasting, preserve him from despising others, make him take the lowest room, teach him to esteem others better than himself, drive him to earnest prayer, fit him for an object of mercy, break to pieces his free-will, and lay him low at the feet of the Redeemer, as one to be saved by sovereign grace alone.

Thus, the only wise God shows His children enough of themselves to keep them humble, and enough of His goodness to preserve them from despair. When the gale of free grace blows, the ballast of corruption keeps the vessel from pitching over; and when the storms of temptations arise, the anchor of hope holds her head from driving on the rocks of destruction. Thus the heir of heaven "sings of mercy and judgment;" has a thorn in the flesh, as well as manifestations of God; is kept as a wayfaring man in the highway of the redeemed, with "his eyes right on and his eye-lids straight before him" Isa 35:8-9 Pr 4:25. And though for the most part he walks in darkness, and has no light, he is yet encouraged and enabled "to trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God."

Thus have I laid open, as far as God hits enabled me, the experience of a living soul. Who here can say, "It is mine"? Who can "subscribe with his hand" Isa 44:5 that such things have passed within, in the secret depths of his heart between him and God? But mark well, my friends, lest we have no shuffling, no taking up on one side and not on the other, no setting up a "vile" experience instead of a "precious one" Jer 15:19, no resting upon "inward workings as marks of grace", unless they be such as "accompany salvation." Many will set up their sins, their fretfulness, their evil temper, their unbelief, their hardness of heart and deadness of soul as evidences. Now, I feel all these things as evidences against me, and not for me, and to make them witnesses in my behalf is like a criminal's making the evidence of his crimes so many witnesses in his favor. It is not sin, but the workings of grace under sin; it is not unbelief, but the strugglings of filth against unbelief; it is not inward evil, but sorrow for it; it is not iniquity, but the pardon of it; it is not lust, but deliverance from the power of it; it is not pride, but humility; it is not hardness of heart, but contrition; it is not deadness, but life; it is not man's rebellion, but God's mercy felt within--that is the TRUE EVIDENCE of a work of grace. You are proud, you confess, but so is Satan; unbelieving, but so is the atheist; murmuring, but so are the reprobate Isa 8:21; covetous, but so is the worldling; doubting, but so is the hypocrite; despairing, but so was Judas; prayerless, but so are the carnal; hardened, but so was Pharaoh; fearful, but so are the lost Re 21:8; pierced with guilt, but so was Cain.

Let us take up the other side. Do you ever loathe yourself like Job, turn to the wall as Hezekiah, weep like Peter, put your mouth in the dust as Jeremiah, fear God as Joseph, pant after Him as David, find Him the strength of your heart as Asaph Ps 73:26, cry, "Woe is me!" as Isaiah Isa 6:5, have a tender heart as Josiah, wrestle with God as Jacob, are of a sorrowful spirit like Hannah, and obey the voice of the Lord's Servant as the heir of heaven in the text? You may find on a dying pillow, when conscience grasps you by the throat, that neither doubts nor fears are able to save, but the revelation of Christ to the soul, the sprinkling of His blood, and the manifestation of His righteousness.

But we now have to draw a different picture, the fearful picture of AN HEIR OF HELL WALKING IN LIGHT. Our materials for this sketch form of a character so various, so intricate. So ever-changing, so branching out into a thousand shapes and a million hues. Our description can only be a very feeble sketch must be drawn from three sources-

1. From Scripture.
2. From observation of others.
3. From what I know of the deceitful workings and delusions of my own heart.

To some who know neither their own deceitfulness and hypocrisy, nor the dreadful delusions of the devil as an angel of light, I may appear harsh, bitter, severe, bigoted, narrow-minded, and to deserve every other term of reproach which self-seekers and flesh-pleasers heap upon those who fearlessly hunt out their refuge of lies. To preach the gospel in our days is to preach to PLEASE EVERYBODY AND OFFEND NOBODY, to starve the children, and feed the bastards, to beat the heir, and caress the dog, to call the children of God antinomians, and to call empty formalists decided Christians; to style opening up Satan's delusions "preaching in a bad spirit;" and wrapping up hypocrites, impostors, Pharisees, and self-deceivers in their delusions, "not preaching in the spirit of the gospel."

This turning of things upside down, this calling good evil and evil good, and putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, may God ever keep me from, and may He enable me to speak boldly and faithfully, whether men will hear or forbear, that by manifestation of the truth I may commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

I called your attention in the beginning of this discourse to the different form of the address to the heir of heaven and the heirs of hell. The first, I observed, was singled out by the hand of God as a solitary individual out of a numerous company by the expression, "Who is there among you?" etc.; while the latter were stamped as an immense troop by the differently worded phrase, "Behold, all you that kindle a fire," etc. The road to heaven is "strait and narrow, and few there be that find it;" while "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat" Mt 7:13-14. Thus the heir of heaven is represented as a solitary traveler, a lonely pilgrim, journeying on amid darkness and sorrow; but the heirs of hell as a merry troop, with their blood boiling high with confidence, and their spirits undismayed with fear.

The blessed Spirit, then, calls our attention by the expression, "Behold!" "Behold, all you that kindle a fire," etc. Usually, I believe, whenever we find the word "Behold!" or the similar word "Lo!" prefixed to a passage of Scripture, it introduces something that is weighty and important. If a man says to us, "Look!" we, of course, expect there is something strange, something worth seeing, something not of everyday occurrence. And thus the blessed Spirit seems in the text to call our attention to a strange sight, to something we would not expect to see, and which we might not observe, unless our notice was especially directed to it. And what is this strange sight, this spectacle, to which the Holy Spirit calls our particular attention? It is to "a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness" Pr 30:12.

I may very simply arrange all that is said of the heirs of hell in the text under two heads-

1. Their conduct.
2. Their sentence.

1. Their conduct. We will consider, then, as God shall enable us, their conduct first, that we may understand their crime before we hear their sentence. The catalogue of their offences is a very short, but it is a very black one. The sum total of their crimes is stated in a few words, but it is heavy enough to sink them down into hell. To give their complicated offences a single name, we will call it "HIGH TREASON AGAINST JEHOVAH;" this is to say, high treason, first, against God the Father, in presuming to call themselves His children, when He has never elected them. Secondly, against God the Son, in calling Him their Savior, when He never redeemed them. Thirdly, against God the Holy Spirit, in walking in a light which He has not kindled, and resting in a confidence which He has not inspired.

The charge against them consists of two heads--the bill of indictment, so to speak, contains two counts--First, that "they kindle a fire." Secondly, that "they compass themselves about with sparks." The one is the origin of their crime, the other the continuation; the first is the bud, the second the fruit. The first accusation is, that "lust conceives and brings forth sin;" the second accusation is, "sin when it is finished, brings forth death." Let us trace up their crimes then to the fountainhead-

They "kindle a fire." This implies their taking hold of religion without religion taking hold of them; that they come to the law without the law coming with power to them. But here lies the core of their offence, this is the turning point of their case, that they take up a counterfeit religion and call it the true one; that they kindle a false fire and say that it came down from heaven.

It would be a crime if the forgers of money were to coin gold and silver into sovereigns and shillings. It would be "an iniquity to be punished by the judge," to be guilty of such daring presumption as to stamp the king's head and superscription on coin that never came out of his mint. But to coin the king's head upon lead and copper, to gild or plate over these base imitations, so as to represent the gold and silver coins of the realm, to pass them off as genuine, in order to defraud honest men, this multiplies the offence a hundred-fold. According to the ancient laws of this land, therefore, the crime of forgery is high treason, and the punishment death.

Apply this to the crime of false professors. If it were possible for these forgers to procure for themselves the right religion, which they can never do, for God keeps that in His own hands, they would still be guilty of the most dreadful presumption in calling their religion the religion of God. But when, as is the true state of the case, their religion is nothing but a base counterfeit, nothing but, "a potsherd covered with silver dross" Pr 26:23, it multiplies the offence a thousand-fold. Let us, however, enter more clearly into their case, that Scripture may be fulfilled--"Reprobate silver shall men call them, for the Lord has rejected them," and again, "Whose hatred is covered with deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation." But as examples are more striking than mere assertions, and as it is better to describe living characters than hint a little here and a little there, which hints the right persons are never sure to take, I will, with God's help, try to sketch out a few likenesses, who may, if they have a mind, see their faces in the looking-glass which I shall hold up before their eyes.

I might point then, first, if I were minded so to waste my breath and your time, to the heathen, the Jew, the Roman Catholic, and the Socinian, as all instances of men who "kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks," and shall at last "lie down in sorrow." But I am not fond of shooting my arrows where they are not likely to hit, and prefer coming a tittle closer home. To preach so is to beat the air, and imitate the high-church ministers of the Establishment, who are wonderfully severe against the Pharisees and Sadducees of old, and the Papists and the Unitarians of present times, and know not that they themselves equal the Pharisee for self-righteousness, the Sadducee for unbelief, the Roman Catholic for superstitious

ceremonies, and the Socinian for hatred and contempt of the doctrines of grace and the mysteries of vital godliness. We will leave, then, such false religions as Popery and Socinianism to the righteous judgment of God, who says of all such delusions--"To Me belongs vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time" De 32:34-35.

Let us rather pass on to such delusions as occur daily before our eyes. And I know not with whom we had better begin than the corrupt ministers of a carnal establishment (the Church of England). These take high ground, and put themselves forward as the only successors of the apostles, as the only ministers of Christ, the only stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. I once heard a minister of this stamp declare, in a sermon preached at Oxford before the Bishop and his assembled clergy, that there was no hope of salvation whatever for any man who wilfully separated or dissented from the Church of England. And this is, I believe, the received opinion among such clerical bigots. But what is all their religion made up of from the first to last? It is nothing else but a tissue of forms and ceremonies of man's invention. This is the fire which they have kindled, and these are the sparks with which they compass themselves. Their boast, for instance, that they receive their ministry in a direct line from the apostles--what is it but a spark of fire which they have kindled to warm themselves into a persuasion that they are the true ministers of Christ?

The distinguishing mark of all false religion is, that it commences with man and not with God. "Behold, all you that kindle a fire," etc. So Aaron made the golden calf; so Nadab and Abihu offered false fire; so Korah, Dathan and Abiram took each man his censer; so Balak built seven altars and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar; so Gideon made an ephod in Ophrah; so Micah had a Levite for his priest; so Saul offered the burnt-offering

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