

# The Christian Sun.

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## MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT.

For the Christian Sun.

The following sermon was delivered in the Suffolk Street Christian Church in the City of New York, June 13th 1852, at the request of an In-fidel, while laboring under doubts respecting immortality.

BY ISAAC N. WALTER.

"If a man die shall he live again?"—Job xiv. 14. Man is distinguished by a capacity of looking forward into futurity. His views are not necessarily limited to this earthly habitation, to the horizon which circumscribes his vision, to the time which is measured by years, and days, and hours, that move on with uncontrollable rapidity.

He may calculate on another life, on other opportunities and occasions of perception, and action. He may anticipate new and enlarged capacities. He may look forward to different and far more considerable results from his present labors and character, than any which he ever perceives in this life. The analogy of nature does not allow us to believe that man should have been enabled and induced to plant without ever being permitted to gather; but this must often be the case, if the present life is the whole of his existence.

It is incompatible with any enlarged views of the wisdom of the Creator, whose works are full of glorious design, to think that He should have formed the human mind, capable of boundless desires and conceptions, and yet have designed mankind only for this world, and thus afford them no objects adequate to the capacious imaginations of the soul, no field in which its illustrious faculties may find sufficient employment, or be advanced to the perfection to which they are adapted.

It is not worthy of the Creator, to suppose, that such a curious and magnificent preparation, should have been made without a correspondent purpose, and that the human intellect, that immediate emanation from the Deity, should have been merely to light a passage to the tomb. It is not consistent with just and grateful sentiments concerning the goodness of God, to think, that He would allow His creatures to be grossly deluded with false hopes, and that He should in any way have inspired desires and expectations of immortality, which must prove as baseless as the fabric of a dream.

It is not honorable to His moral attributes to suppose, that vice will not experience a just retribution, or that virtue, often oppressed and injured, will not ultimately be vindicated.

Nature, reason, experience, and the analogy of divine Providence, point continually to a future state as consistent with the present faculties, and probable from the present condition of man, without which the plan of his life, seems incomplete and unworthy of its great and wise Author. The hope of immortality, thus awakened in the human heart, revelation in the fullest manner confirms. What nature and reason spoke of in limited whispers, is proclaimed aloud in the gospel, by the voice of that only Being over whom death has no power, and with whom there is neither succession nor change. It is a leading object of Christianity to teach a future life, and the death and consequent resurrection of Christ give an unquestionable proof of it. On this subject a Christian has no doubt. It is the corner stone of our religion on which every thing connected with it depends. In the light of the gospel, a future is as certain as a present life.

The Scriptures encourage the belief that death will be no interruption of our conscious existence. They constantly exhibit the indispensable and close connexion between the present and the future life. They point to the future state, as a state of moral retribution, where our characters must follow us, and the proper consequences of our characters must follow us, and the proper consequences of our conduct be fully developed. They reveal a state in which the evils of life, or what here appear to us to be such, will be completely remedied, the imperfections of our present knowledge supplied, the ways of God to man vindicated, and the triumphs of the Divine wisdom, equity, and goodness, be not only complete, but apparent. They disclose a state of immortality, secure from the ravages of death and unaffected by the vicissitudes and trials, of life. They promise the enlargement of our powers. They open to the prospect a boundless field for the exertions of benevolence and wisdom, and a course of uninterrupted and endless proficiency in holiness. These are the prospects which religion holds before us, and we can be at no loss as to our duty. This state should be kept constantly in our view.

The consideration of it should be associated with all our labors, hopes, and calculations, with all our views of human life and its concerns, with every thought of our own frailty and mortality, and with every instance of trial and suffering, or death to which we are called in our own condition, or in that of others. Nothing can be more unworthy of us, than, with a capacity of thus extending our views, and with so sublime a destination before us, to live and die like beasts of the field without concern or calculation for the future. No man can say that a future life is not possible. There is no man with any degree of intellectual cultivation, and possessing an unextinguished spark of virtuous feeling, who will deny, that even under the light of nature and reason, it is accompanied with a considerable degree of probability. Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead? Nature and reason often speak to us of a coming life. There is hope of a tree if it be down, that it shall sprout again. When you have stood over the grave of one whom you loved and honored, and have seen youth and beauty, or wisdom and virtue, every thing that is lovely, or every thing that is venerable, consigned to the dust, before the earth has been thrown in upon this sacred deposit, of perhaps a parent, it may be the mother, who bore you, or your child, or the friend who is closer than a brother, and while the fountains of grief are pouring out their streams, and the heart is aching and throbbing with its agony, has not every generous feeling of the soul rushed forward to declare that under the dominion of a perfectly wise and good Being, it is impossible this should be the end of man?

Why should we not in regard to a future state, be decided and governed by the same rules of prudence, which control us in the ordinary concerns of human life? On what principle is the business of this life conducted but on a calculation of probabilities?

Who can ascertain or confidently conjecture, the events even of the coming hour? How would the affairs of this life proceed if we must be governed only by demonstrative certainty? Is it not surprising that in respect to a future life men are not willing to follow the same maxims of prudence, on which they feel bound to act in respect to what is future in this life: and that what is probable in relation to another existence, in proportion to the degree of probability should not weigh with them equally considerations, attended only with the same measure of probability, in what relates to the present? But with the man who acknowledges a religion which has brought immortality to light, what can be more a duty than to keep this immortality constantly present to his mind?

Such a person should never think of this life, but in connexion with another, of earth, as a scene of preparation for heaven, of time, as preliminaries to be swallowed up in eternity: of the trials of this world, but as a discipline for the next, of moral conduct, but in its relation to moral recompense, of death, but as a necessary step to immortality; and of the various dark, and inscrutable dispensations of heaven, which confound all our calculations, but as ultimately to issue in the most luminous displays of God's perfections: as violent terrific storms are succeeded by a serene and purified air, and the deepest darkness of the night ushers in the day.

These are the feelings and views, which the instructions of religion tend to produce. In this way we have conversation in heaven. Thus we should always associate things, temporal with things eternal, earth with heaven, death with life, time with eternity, present ignorance with future knowledge, and the sufferings of this mortal condition with the happy result to which if religiously improved, they will finally conduct us. How elevating are these doctrines of religion. How unworthy of the character of national, and moral beings to neglect them.

How perfectly are they adapted to promote our virtue, to impart support and consolation to the afflicted, and to give dignity to the human character, and elevate our minds, above all time, and place our affections on things above. What can be more adapted to promote our virtue, than a sentiment of our destination to immortal life? "Let us eat and drink," say those who are without God, and without hope, "for to-morrow we die;" but would any man think that life might be devoted to the excessive indulgence of appetites and passions, which he has in common with the brute creation, if he always lived under the conviction that he is to exist forever? Impressed with the sentiment of God's moral dominion, with a belief that He will bring every work into judge-

ment, that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, that he who soweth, to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, who would not fear to sin? Is there any one who for the criminal, and unsatisfactory pleasures of life, would think it well to sacrifice his hopes in futurity? Under the expectation of a future life, consequent on this, in its results and character connected with this as the effect with the cause, the event with the preparation, the harvest with the spring, the fruit to be expected with the seed sown, is there any one who would not be always, to the certain consequences of his character and conduct, and govern himself by that great law of God's moral dominion, which is plainly indicated here, and will be fully shown in another world, by which the inevitable consequence of vice is shame, privation, disease, infamy and misery: and the sure rewards of virtue are satisfaction, hope, and felicity.

Are there any, who would not be excited to do good, if they lived under the assurance that no benevolent effort, will finally fail of success; that every sacrifice which virtue demands will be fully recompensed, and that beneficence on each, will open the way to unlimited scope for doing good in another world? Are there any who do not labor for improvement in virtue, when they feel assured that the practice of it shall be rewarded with a capacity and opportunity of endless advancement in moral goodness in the presence of God?

The shaft of death often strikes those, who stand at our side, and in a moment their countenance is changed, their purposes are broken off, and God sends them away. They, who are eminent for their virtues and talent are sometimes arrested in the midst of usefulness, and the brightest lights in the community are extinguished. Children, the object of our confidence, are plucked with the opening blossoms hanging thick upon them. Parents to whom we have clung with all the strength of filial reverence as the ivy entwines itself around its natural supporter, and for whom we have trembled, as we remarked the trunk shattered by the storms of winter, and heard the wind whistle through its naked and decayed branches, are laid prostrate in death. Friends, with whom we shared a common interest, and a common soul, and are torn from us at the very time when confidence has become reasonable, and hope displays its highest visions, before the imagination. Under such calamities where shall we find consolation, but in the Christian immortality.

To whom shall we go but unto Jesus Christ, since with him, and with him only, are the words of eternal life! Because He lives we shall live also.

The death of Christ has rent in twain the veil which hid the unseen from the visible world. Eternity opens upon us in the immensity and magnificence of its prospects. Corruption may claim our body, and our ashes may be scattered to the winds, or employed by nature in productions of other uses and texture, but another form will arise, clad in the freshness of Spring and the beauty of light. While we look at things which are eternal and heavenly, nature may compel the tribute of our tears, but God will have our faith. Man bounding his prospects by the objects of sense, living for this world, and having no hope beyond the grave, forming connexions which must expire with the short day of human life, seeking only possessions which perish with their using, panting for honors, which wither as soon as placed upon his brow, and pursuing pleasures which are sensual and momentary; and man, extending his views into an interminable futurity, living for eternity, rising superior to the fear of death, forming connexions which death may interrupt, but cannot dissolve, securing possessions which are imperishable, seeking the approbation of God, laying plans of good and of virtue, which he may renew and finish beyond the grave, anticipating enlarged powers, and wider scope for intellectual and moral exertion, in a state where his faculties may be exercised without impediment, or fatigue, and aspiring after the felicity of the divine presence—what different characters! how little can the one be compared with the other, how contracted and low are the sentiments which actuate the one, how ennobling are those which fill the heart of the other! Life regarded only as a short season of action and suffering, in which man may do much, but in which, if there is no other state after this, he must labor to little purpose, in which one day after another is but the same round of cares and toils, of hopes and disappointments, of sufferings for which there are in such cases no consolations, of privations for

which this world can neither afford remedy nor equivalent, a state in which, man continually tortured with the apprehension of being cast off in the midst of his pleasures and possessions, and the fear of death holds him in continual bondage, in which, at best a man can only labor and toil, and suffer, and acquire, and then lay himself down and die, and mingle with the earth and be forgotten; and life regarded as only the infancy and school-time of our being, in which much is to be done, and much to be suffered, but always with reference to future acquisition and recompense, and death itself is only the passage to a rational and moral being; life, in which we may indulge the most tender sentiment of virtuous friendship, and delight in the pure interchange of kindred souls, with sure confidence that, although death may interrupt, it cannot ultimately sever such connexions; a life in which we are living for God, for our fellow man, for truth, virtue, and benevolence, honored instruments in this service on earth, and destined for a noble service in heaven, in which, though we must submit to the great law of our nature, and leave these frail tenements to dissolve, yet we shall be had in honored remembrance on earth, and be recognized and welcomed, by the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven—compare these two views with each other, and say if human life does not owe to the Christian doctrine of immortality, its real value, and its real dignity?

Cherish with the most sedulous care this sentiment of immortality. Never loose sight of the connexion between the present and the future. Although the progress of time and the cares of life may erase from your memory the traces of your conduct from day to day, yet they are indelible in the book of God's remembrance. No vicious action shall go unpunished, no virtuous deed be unrewarded. In the future state moral retribution shall be complete. Your labors for good though here often defeated, and often wholly unsuccessful, will not be in vain. Every benevolent and pious wish that now possesses your soul, shall hereafter be gratified. Consider always your habitual temper and course in life, and the sentiments you cherish in reference to the retrospect, which you yourself must take of them in another world, and to the review, in which they pass before the Being, whose knowledge is infinite, and whose judgment is beyond the possibility of mistake. Let your views of human life correspond with the expectations which you indulge of another, and infinitely superior life. Look upon this world in the light of the other. His ways may now appear mysterious, and His purposes unsearchable, but hereafter you will confess, their wisdom and rectitude, and realize that He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.

For the Christian Sun.

## The Judgment—No. 3.

BY ELDER JUBILEE SMITH.

It seems from the beseechings of the apostle Paul, in 1 Thess. 1; 1, 2: That there was something important to be borne in mind; And what was it? We beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and gathering together unto him that ye be not soon shaken in mind; i. e. hold fast to the faith and grace received, or otherwise ye shall not be ready at his appearing. He exhorts Timothy 6. 14, "Keep this commandment without spot unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." See here, obedience to Christ is required by the apostle. We are told what we should do in order to be welcome guests at the last day by the King of heaven. Those admonitions have direct reference to the final judgment, or coming of the Lord at the last day. Paul in his epistle to Titus 2. 12, 13, says "denying ungodliness and worldly lust we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." If it be important, that those who have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, be admonished in order to keep them on their guard; take care ungodly sinner, that that day come upon you unawares; lest you might have an occasion to call upon the rocks and the mountains to hide you from his presence. Hear James 5. 7. "Be patient brethren, unto the coming of the Lord?" again, "for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Hear Peter 1 epistle 1, 7, "That trial of your faith being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Again says he, "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end; for the grace that shall be given

unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; but as he who hath called you is holy, be ye also holy in all manner of conversation" "the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer"—"inasmuch, as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed ye may be glad with exceeding joy"—"Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; looking unto, and hastening to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Hear John, first epistle 2. 28; "Little children abide in Christ, that when he shall appear ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed of his coming"—"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. "Again in Rev. 14, 7; "Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth and the fountains of waters." David declares in Ps. 102, 25; "The heavens are the work of thy hands, they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; ye all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed."

We would again in conclusion cite you to Peter, 2 epistle 3, 7: "The heavens and the earth which are now are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men," verse 10: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up," 12 and 13 verses: "Nevertheless according to his promise we look for a new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Thus we conclude our investigation of the judgment, as recorded in Scripture language; trusting that some one may be led to think on the scenes of the last great day, and turn from the error of his ways to serve the living God.

For the Christian Sun.

## The Christian Cause in Georgia.

BRO. HAYES: I purpose offering a few thoughts in this article on the above caption. I have learned since my arrival here, that the Christian cause was once flourishing, and bid fair to be like a strong man armed. But owing to the members of the different Churches moving about, from one place to another, they of course became scattered; just about that time the Campbellites came along and told them they were the true Christian Church, and deceived the good people and led them off. (But there were some old ministers that knew better.) But for the want of stability, suffered themselves to be carried off by the doctrine of a MAN, of such I am sorry to say, that they left Christ, to follow Campbell's notions. But in the midst of this sore conflict, Elder G. L. Smith, and Jacob Callahan, stood boldly up in defence of the pure, unspotted doctrine of Christ, and the liberal principles of the Christian Church. And now, though age creeps upon them apace, they are still fighting against the *isms* of the day. They, and the cause they espouse under-went a great amount of persecution. But still they persevered, until the Lord raised up others to aid them in the work. On they went, each one nearly alone, until last fall, when at the suggestion of Elder J. Smith, a Conference was called at Liberty, six miles below Milledgeville. The Conference met, and was partially organized. The ministers went from Conference with renewed zeal to labor in their Masters cause. The writer of this, was at that time requested to come and travel in the bounds of this Conference. He did so. But still opposition reigns. The sects around have fears, and they endeavor to put the little band down, but to no purpose. Through all the cloud that hover over us, we can see a light ahead which in our imagination will ere long fully develop itself. The prospects now are bright; I guess never brighter. But there is something to be done to speed its progress; every one must put his shoulder to the wheel, and it will go. The ministry must be actively engaged, with the sword on their thigh, and firmly and fearlessly meet the enemy. But says one, our ministers are few, and some of them nearly broke down. That is true, there are but six, and two of them old men. Elder G. L. Smith, is old, and nearly worn down, Elder J. Callahan, is already laboring with the palsy, or something similar, and in all human probability can't live long. Well what is to be done. Pray the Lord of the vineyard to raise up laborers, two