

## Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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### ON PERVERTED VIEWS OF THE GOSPEL

Men, in general, have awfully low conceptions of true religion. They neither understand its nature, nor desire to understand it. When we look into the nominally Christian world, it would almost seem as if the great bulk of professing Christians thought nothing about the holy design of the Christian dispensation, or of their own responsibility respecting it. Their views are alarmingly erroneous, on a subject of all others the most important. Taking their own wisdom for their guide, they go on stumbling in the dark, until either Sovereign Grace makes them wise unto salvation, or Infinite Justice allows them to reap the fruit of their own folly, in "the blackness of darkness forever."

Some consider the Gospel as a mitigated law, whereby the standard of holiness is lowered, and a door opened for the commission of venial offenses. Others imagine that mercy, by being ultimately extended to all, will triumph in the final judgment; though all may not reach that standard, which some over-righteous enthusiasts deem essential to salvation. Some view the plan of salvation as happily accommodated to the needs of sinners. Jesus they acknowledge as the only Savior, whose merits are apportioned to the deficiencies of each applicant for mercy; so that very moral people need less of the Savior's merits than the profligate, as their own excellencies help to fill up the scale of righteousness. Thus Jesus becomes a mere additional weight in the balance of their good works. Oh the pride and blindness of the human heart!

Others blasphemously make Christ the minister of sin, declaring that nothing can hurt the privileged believer; no, not even the cherished evils of his own deluded heart. They assert that Christ has done all; and left him nothing to do but to rejoice, although unsubdued corruptions are continually breaking out in his life and conversation. They maintain that divine grace is the more glorified, by thus rising superior, in its gifts of mercy, to the infirmities and allowed sins of believers. Thus, the moral law is set aside, and holiness considered as a burden, from which they are happily freed.

How Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, the more effectually to allure and destroy! Awful delusions indeed! Such self-deceivers love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Of divine truth, they are "willingly

ignorant." How great is the change, when God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ! By this divine process, we become new creatures, bear the image of the Savior, shine forth in the beauty of holiness, and live to his glory, who works all things after the counsel of his will.

The redeemed sinner is a child of God. He is born from above, and resembles his heavenly Father in his imitable perfections. "God is love." Hence, every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. God is "glorious in holiness." His people are, therefore, a holy people; being called with a "holy calling." God is just. And his children are all righteous. They walk before him in uprightness, simplicity, and godly sincerity. God is eternal truth. His redeemed ones speak the truth from the heart. They abhor deceit and lies. God is almighty. His people "are strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;" and come off "more than conquerors through him that loved them." God is "rich in mercy." His children are commanded to be merciful, even as their Father who is in heaven is merciful. God is wisdom. All his faithful servants are enlightened by his Spirit, guided into all truth, and made wise unto salvation. Thus, every communicable perfection which resides in the Deity, is reflected by the new creature to the praise of his glory, from whom comes every good and perfect gift.

From this view, we perceive that the mere externals of religion will avail nothing unto salvation. There must be the accompanying power of godliness, and an inward experience of the truth upon the heart. Head-knowledge, without heart-work, is but a shadow, good for nothing. The gracious promise of our all-merciful God is sweetly proclaimed by the prophet Jeremiah: "I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord;" and Paul declares, that "with the heart man believes unto righteousness." "My son, give me your heart," is the paternal command of the Almighty, at once reasonable, loving, and delightful.

Now, let me ask myself seriously, as in the sight of the all-searching God: Am I reflecting the bright beams of his grace on my own soul? Do I love God, his people, and his ways? If I am a child, I must, of necessity, be filled with love; for God is love. Do I hate all sin, and walk in all the commandments of God; knowing that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord? Am I just and equitable in all my dealings, remembering that God has declared his abhorrence of all unrighteousness of men? Are deceitful lies hateful to my soul? Do I love the truth, and practice it in all my intentions, words, and conduct? Am I ready to forgive, knowing how mercy shines forth in the covenant of grace, and how much I stand in need of divine mercy every moment of my life? Oh that I could feel more of the sweet influence of those graces in my heart!

"Lord, pity a poor sinful worm of the earth. Let me not be destitute of this sure and certain evidence of belonging to you, even that of bearing your holy image. Fill me with love; make me holy in all my life; just and true in all my ways; powerful in resisting evil; merciful to my offending brethren; and wise in all

heavenly wisdom. Thus may my light shine before men to your glory, until, by your sovereign grace, I am admitted through the gates into the city, clothed with the righteousness of Jesus, and having the inward seal and witness by the Spirit, enabling me to exclaim "Abba, Father!" in the courts above.

Almighty God, to you belong  
The heart-felt praise, the grateful song;  
From you all joy and peace proceed,  
And grace to help your people's need.

Who can recount your mercies o'er,  
Or fathom that unbounded store  
Of love divine, which freely gave  
Your Son, rebellious man to save?

Here language fails, nor can express,  
The riches of redeeming grace.  
Its depth exceeds an angel's ken;  
Its height, the feeble eye of men.

Behold its length, its breadth survey,  
Co-equal with eternity;  
For everlasting love alone,  
Could place a rebel on the throne.

And is this love held forth to me?  
Amazing thought! Ah! can it be?  
Angelic tongue can never express  
The vastness of redeeming grace!

For me, a rebel worm, he died!  
For me "my Lord was crucified!"  
Away you sins—you lusts, begone;  
I will be his, and his alone.

Almighty Jesus, make me thine;  
Oh! wash me in your blood divine;  
Preserve my soul from every sin,  
And reign the sovereign Lord within.

Oh! clothe me in that beauteous dress;  
The garment of your righteousness;  
Then may I look towards your throne,  
And claim each promise as my own.

With joy shall I appear among

The blood-bought flock, the ransomed throng;  
And when you bid time be no more,  
Your grace in endless worlds adore!

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