

HOLINESS.

ITS NATURE, HINDRANCES, DIFFICULTIES, AND ROOTS.

BEING

A SERIES OF PAPERS ON THE SUBJECT.

BY

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WITH PREFACE, INTRODUCTORY ESSAY, AND SUPPLEMENTARY EXTRACTS
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PREFACE TO ENLARGED EDITION.

THE volume now in the reader's hands is an enlarged edition of a small work which appeared several years ago, and has been kindly received by the Christian public. The present volume contains so much additional matter, that it is double the size of its predecessor. In fact, the work is half new.

I venture to think that the papers contained in this volume will be found helpful by all who take interest in the subject of Scriptural holiness. I am much mistaken if they do not throw broad light on the real nature of holiness, and the temptations and difficulties which all must expect who follow it. Above all, I hope they will help to bring forward the grand truth that union with Christ is the root of holiness, and will show young believers what immense encouragement Jesus Christ holds out to all who strive to be holy.

Concerning the present position of the whole subject of holiness among English Christians, I have little to add to the introductory essay which appeared in the original edition, and now follows this preface. The older I grow the more I am convinced that real practical holiness does not receive the attention it deserves, and that there is a most painfully low standard of living among many high professors of religion in the land. But, at the same time, I am increasingly convinced that the zealous efforts of some well-meaning persons to promote a higher standard of spiritual life are often not "according to knowledge," and are really calculated to do more harm than good. Let me explain what I mean.

It is easy to get crowds together for what are called "Higher life" and "Consecration" meetings. Any one knows that, who has watched human nature, and read descriptions of American camp-meetings, and studied the curious phenomena of the "Religious affections."* Sensational and exciting addresses by strange preachers or by women, loud singing, hot rooms, crowded tents, the constant sight of strong semi-religious feeling in the faces of all around you for several days, late hours, long protracted meetings, public profession of experience,—all this kind of thing is very interesting at the time, and seems to do good. But is the good real, deeply-rooted, solid, lasting? That is the point And I should like to ask a few questions about it

Do those who attend these meetings become more holy, meek, unselfish, kind, good tempered, self-denying, and Christ-like at home? Do they become more content with their position in life, and more free from restless craving after something different from that which God has given them? Do fathers, mothers, husbands, and other relatives and friends, find them more pleasant and easy to live with? Can they enjoy a quiet Sunday and quiet means of grace without noise, heat, and excitement? Above all, do they grow in charity, and especially in charity towards those who do not agree with them in every jot and tittle of their religion?

These are serious and searching questions, and deserve serious consideration. I hope I am as anxious to promote real practical holiness in the land as any one. I admire and willingly acknowledge the zeal and earnestness of many with whom I cannot co-operate who are trying to promote it. But I cannot withhold a growing

* See the work of President Edwards on this subject.

suspicion that the great “mass-meetings” of the present day, for the ostensible object of promoting spiritual life, do not tend to promote private home religion, private Bible-reading, private prayer, private usefulness, and private walking with God. If they are of any real value, they ought to make people better husbands, and wives, and fathers, and mothers, and sons, and daughters, and brothers, and sisters, and masters, and mistresses, and servants. But I should like to have clear proofs that they do. I only know it is far easier to be a Christian among singing, praying, sympathizing Christians in a public room, than to be a consistent Christian in a quiet, retired, out-of-the-way, uncongenial home. The first position is one in which there is a deal of *nature* to help us: the second is one which can not be well filled without *grace*. But, alas, many talk now-a-days about “*Consecration*,” who seem to be ignorant of the “first principles of the oracles of God” about “*Conversion*.”

I close this preface with the sorrowful feeling that probably some who read it will not agree with me. To the young especially I can see that the great gatherings of the so-called “spiritual life” movement are sure to be attractive. They naturally like zeal, and stir, and enthusiasm, and they say, “Where is the harm?” Be it so: we must agree to differ. When I was as young as they are, perhaps I should have thought as they do. When they are as old as I am, they will very likely agree with me.

To each and all of my readers, I say in conclusion, let us exercise charity in our judgments of one another. Towards those who think holiness is to be promoted by the modern, so-called “spiritual life” movement, I feel nothing but charity. If they do good, I am thankful. Towards myself and those who agree with me, I ask them to feel charity in return. The last day will show who is right and who is wrong. In the meantime, I am quite certain that to exhibit bitterness and coldness toward those who cannot conscientiously work with us, is to prove ourselves very ignorant of real holiness.

J. C. RYLE.

XV.

“LOVEST THOU ME?”

“*Lovest thou Me?*”—JOHN xxi. 16.

THE question which heads this paper was addressed by Christ to the Apostle Peter. A more important question could not be asked. Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the words were spoken. But to this very day the inquiry is most searching and useful.

A disposition to love somebody is one of the commonest feelings which God has implanted in human nature. Too often, unhappily, people set their affection on unworthy objects. I want this day to claim a place for Him who alone is worthy of all our hearts' best feelings. I want men to give some of their love to that Divine Person who loved us, and gave Himself for us. In all their loving I would have them not forget TO LOVE CHRIST.

Suffer me to press this mighty subject upon the attention of every reader of this paper. This is no matter for mere enthusiasts and fanatics. It deserves the consideration of every reasonable Christian who believes the Bible. Our very salvation is bound up with it. Life or death, heaven or hell, depend on our ability to answer the simple question “Do you love Christ?”

There are two points which I wish to bring forward in opening up this subject

I. In the first place, let me show *the peculiar feeling of a true Christian towards Christ*,—he loves Him.

A true Christian is not a mere baptized man or woman. He is something more. He is not a person who only goes, as a matter of form, to a church or chapel on Sundays, and lives all the rest of the week as if there was no God. Formality is not Christianity. Ignorant lip-worship is not true religion. The Scripture speaketh expressly;—“They are not all Israel which are of Israel.” (Rom. ix. 6.) The practical lesson of those words is clear and plain. All are not true Christians who are members of the visible Church of Christ.

The true Christian is one whose religion is in his heart and life. It is felt by himself in his heart. It is seen by others in his conduct and life. He feels his sinfulness, guilt, and badness, and repents. He sees Jesus Christ to be that Divine Saviour whom his soul needs, and commits himself to Him. He puts off the old man with his corrupt and carnal habits, and puts on the new man. He lives a new and holy life, fighting habitually against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ Himself is the corner stone of His Christianity. Ask him in what he trusts for the forgiveness of his many sins, and he will tell you, in the death of Christ.—Ask him in what righteousness he hopes to stand

innocent at the judgment day, and he will tell you it is the righteousness of Christ.—Ask him by what pattern he tries to frame his life, and he will tell you that it is the example of Christ.

But, beside all this, there is one thing in a true Christian which is eminently peculiar to him. That thing is *love* to Christ. Knowledge, faith, hope, reverence, obedience, are all marked features in a true Christian's character. But his picture would be very imperfect if you omitted his "love" to his Divine Master. He not only knows, trusts, and obeys. He goes further than this,—he loves.

This peculiar mark of a true Christian is one which we find mentioned several times in the Bible. "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" is an expression which many Christians are familiar with. Let it never be forgotten that love is mentioned by the Holy Ghost in almost as strong terms as faith. Great as the danger is of him "that believeth not," the danger of him that "loveth not" is equally great. Not believing and not loving are both steps to everlasting ruin.

Hear what St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) St. Paul allows no way of escape to the man who does not love Christ. He leaves him no loop-hole or excuse. A man may lack clear head-knowledge, and yet be saved. He may fail in courage, and be overcome by the fear of man, like Peter. He may fall tremendously, like David, and yet rise again. But if a man does not love Christ, he is not in the way of life. The curse is yet upon him. He is on the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

Hear what St Paul says to the Ephesians, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." (Eph. vi. 24.) The Apostle is here sending his good wishes, and declaring his good will to all true Christians. Many of them, no doubt, he had never seen. Many of them in the early Churches, we may be very sure, were weak in faith, and knowledge, and self-denial. How, then, shall he describe them in sending his message? What words can he use which will not discourage the weaker brethren? He chooses a sweeping expression which exactly describes all true Christians under one common name. All had not attained to the same degree, whether in doctrine or practice. But all loved Christ in sincerity.

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says to the Jews, "If God were your Father, ye would love Me." (John viii. 42.) He saw His misguided enemies satisfied with their spiritual condition, on the one single ground that they were children of Abraham. He saw them, like many ignorant Christians of our own day, claiming to be God's children, for no better reasons than this, that they were circumcised and belonged to the Jewish Church. He lays down the broad principle that no man is a child of God, who does not love God's only begotten Son. No man has a right to call God-Father, who does

not love Christ. Well would it be for many Christians if they were to remember that this mighty principle applies to them as well as to the Jews. No love to Christ,—then no sonship to God!

Hear once more what our Lord Jesus Christ said to the Apostle Peter, after He rose from the dead. Three times He asked him the question, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me.” (John xxi. 15–17.) The occasion was remarkable. He meant gently to remind His erring disciple of His thrice-repeated fall. He desired to call forth from Him a new confession of faith, before publicly restoring to him his commission to feed the Church. And what was the question that He asked him? He might have said,—“Believest thou? Art thou converted? Art thou ready to confess Me? Wilt thou obey Me?” He uses none of these expressions. He simply says, “Lovest thou Me?” This is the point, He would have us know, on which a man’s Christianity hinges. Simple as the question sounded, it was most searching. Plain and easy to be understood by the most unlearned poor man, it contains matter which tests the reality of the most advanced apostle. If a man truly loves Christ, all is right;—if not, all is wrong.

Would you know the secret of this peculiar feeling towards Christ which distinguishes the true Christian? You have it in the words of St. John, “We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John iv. 19.) That text no doubt applies specially to God the Father. But it is no less true of God the Son.

A true Christian loves Christ for all He *has done* for him. He has suffered in his stead, and died for him on the cross. He has redeemed him from the guilt, the power, and the consequences of sin, by His blood. He has called him by His Spirit to self-knowledge, repentance, faith, hope, and holiness. He has forgiven all his many sins, and blotted them out He has freed him from the captivity of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He has taken him from the brink of hell, placed him in the narrow way, and set his face toward heaven. He has given him light instead of . darkness, peace of conscience instead of uneasiness, hope instead of uncertainty, life instead of death. Can you wonder that the true Christian loves Christ?

And he loves Him besides, for all that He *is still doing*. He feels that He is daily washing away his many shortcomings and infirmities, and pleading his soul’s cause before God. He is daily supplying all the needs of his soul, and providing him with an hourly provision of mercy and grace. He is daily leading him by His Spirit to a city of habitation, bearing with him when he is weak and ignorant, raising him up when he stumbles and falls, protecting him against his many enemies, preparing an eternal home for him in heaven. Can you wonder that the true Christian loves Christ?

Does the debtor in jail love the friend who unexpectedly and undeservingly pays all his debts, supplies him with fresh capital, and takes him into partnership with himself? Does the prisoner in war love the man who at the

risk of his own life, breaks through the enemies' lines, rescues him, and sets him free? Does the drowning sailor love the man who plunges into the sea, dives after him, catches him by the hair of his head, and by a mighty effort saves him from a watery grave? A very child can answer such questions as these. Just in the same way, and upon the same principles, a true Christian loves Jesus Christ?

(a) This love to Christ is the inseparable companion of saving faith. A faith of devils, a mere intellectual faith, a man may have without love, but not that faith which saves. Love cannot usurp the office of faith. It cannot justify. It does not join the soul to Christ. It cannot bring peace to the conscience. But where there is real justifying faith in Christ, there will always be heart-love to Christ. He that is really forgiven, is the man who will really love. (Luke vii. 47.) If a man has no love to Christ, you may be sure he has no faith.

(6) Love to Christ is the mainspring of work for Christ. There is little done for His cause on earth from sense of duty, or from knowledge of what is right and proper. The heart must be interested before the hands will move and continue moving. Excitement may galvanize the Christian's hands into a fitful and spasmodic activity. But there will be no patient continuance in well-doing, no unwearied labour in missionary work at home or abroad, without love. The nurse in a hospital may do her duty properly and well, may give the sick man his medicine at the right time, may feed him, minister to him, and attend to all his wants. But there is a vast difference between that nurse and a wife tending the sick-bed of a beloved husband, or a mother watching over a dying child. The one acts from a sense of duty,—the other from affection and love. The one does her duty because she is paid for it,—the other is what she is because of her heart. It is just the same in the matter of the service of Christ. The great workers of the Church—the men who have led forlorn hopes in the mission-field, and turned the world upside down, have all been eminently lovers of Christ.

Examine the characters of Owen and Baxter, of Rutherford and George Herbert, of Leighton and Hervey, of Whitfield, and Wesley, of Henry Martyn and Judson, of Bickersteth and Simeon, of Hewitson and M'Cheyne, of Stowell and M'Neile. These men have left a mark on the world. And what was the common feature of their characters? They all loved Christ. They not only held a creed. They loved a Person, even the Lord Jesus Christ

(c) Love to Christ is the point which we ought specially to dwell upon, in teaching religion to children. Election, imputed righteousness, original sin, justification, sanctification, and even faith itself, are matters which sometimes puzzle a child of tender years. But love to Jesus seems far more within reach of their understanding. That He loved them even to His death, and that they ought to love Him in return, is a creed which meets the span of their

minds. How true it is, "That out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise!" (Matt. xxi. 16.) There are myriads of Christians who know every article of the Athanasian, Nicene, and Apostolic Creeds, and yet know less of real Christianity than a little child who only knows that he loves Christ.

(*d*) Love to Christ is the common meeting point of believers of every branch of Christ's Church on earth. Whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, Calvinist or Arminian, Methodist or Moravian, Lutheran or Reformed, Established or Free,—here, at least, they are agreed. About forms and ceremonies, about Church government and modes of worship, they often differ widely. But on one point, at any rate, they are united. They have all one common feeling towards Him on whom they build their hope of salvation. They "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." (Ephes, vi. 24.) Many of them, perhaps, are ignorant of systematic divinity, and could argue but feebly in defence of their creed. But they all know what they feel toward Him who died for their sins.—"I cannot speak much for Christ, sir," said an old uneducated Christian woman to Dr. Chalmers; "but if I cannot speak for Him, I could die for Him!"

(*e*) Love to Christ will be the distinguishing mark of all saved souls in heaven. The multitude which no man can number will all be of one mind. Old differences will be merged in one common feeling. Old doctrinal peculiarities, fiercely wrangled for upon earth, will be covered over by one common sense of debt to Christ. Luther and Zwingle will no longer dispute. Wesley and Toplady will no longer waste time in controversy. Churchmen and Dissenters will no longer bite and devour one another. All will find themselves joining with one heart and voice in that hymn of praise, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. i. 5–6.)

The words which John Bunyan puts in the mouth of Mr. Standfast, as he stood in the river of death, are very beautiful. He said, "This river has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me. But now methinks I stand easy: my foot is fixed upon that on which the feet of the priests that bear the ark stood while Israel went over Jordan. The waters indeed are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the convoy that waits for me on the other side, lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that Head which was crowned with thorns, and that Face which was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearing and faith, but now I go where I shall live by sight, and be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I

have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes! His voice to me has been most sweet; and His countenance I have more desired than they that have desired the light of the sun! “Happy are they that know something of this experience! He that would be in tune for heaven, must know something of love to Christ. He that dies ignorant of that love had better never have been born.

II. Let me show, in the second place, *the peculiar marks by which love to Christ makes itself known.*

The point is one of vast importance. If there is no salvation without love to Christ,—if he that does not love Christ is in peril of eternal condemnation, it becomes us all to find out very distinctly what we know about this matter. Christ is in heaven, and we are upon earth. In what way shall the man be discerned that loves Him?

Happily the point is one which it is not very hard to settle. How do we know whether we love any person here upon earth? In what way and manner does love show itself between people in this world,—between husband and wife,—between parent and child,—between brother and sister,—between friend and friend? Let these questions be answered by common sense and observation, and I ask no more. Let these questions be honestly answered, and the knot before us is untied. How does affection show itself among ourselves?

(a) If we love a person, we like *to think about him*. We do not need to be reminded of him. We do not forget his name, or his appearance, or his character, or his opinions, or his tastes, or his position, or his occupation. He comes up before our mind’s eye many a time in the day. Though perhaps far distant, he is often present in our thoughts. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! Christ “dwells in his heart,” and is thought of more or less every day. (Ephes. iii. 17.) The true Christian does not need to be reminded that he has a crucified Master. He often thinks of Him. He never forgets that He has a day, a cause, and a people, and that of His people he is one. Affection is the real secret of a good memory in religion. No worldly man can think much about Christ, unless Christ is pressed upon his notice, because he has no affection for Him. The true Christian has thoughts about Christ every day that he lives, for this one simple reason, that he loves Him.

(b) If we love a person, we like *to hear about him*. We find a pleasure in listening to those who speak of him. We feel an interest in any report which others make of him. We are all attention when others talk about him, and describe his ways, his sayings, his doings, and his plans. Some may hear him mentioned with utter indifference, but our own hearts bound within us at the very sound of his name. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian delights to bear something about his Master. He

likes those sermons best which are full of Christ. He enjoys that society most in which people talk of the things which are Christ's. I have read of an old Welsh believer, who used to walk several miles every Sunday to hear an English clergyman preach, though she did not understand a word of English. She was asked why she did so. She replied, that this clergyman named the name of Christ so often in his sermons, that it did her good. She loved even the name of her Saviour.

(c) If we love a person, *we like to read about him*. What intense pleasure a letter from an absent husband gives to a wife, or a letter from an absent son to his mother. Others may see little worth notice in the letter. They can scarcely take the trouble to read it through. But those who love the writer see something in the letter which no one else can. They carry it about with them as a treasure. They read it over and over again. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian delights to read the Scriptures, because they tell him about his beloved Saviour. It is no wearisome task with him to read them. He rarely needs reminding to take his Bible with him when he goes a journey. He cannot be happy without it. And why is all this? It is because the Scriptures testify of Him whom his soul loves, even Christ.

(d) If we love a person, *we like to please him*. We are glad to consult his tastes and opinions, to act upon his advice, and do the things which he approves. We even deny ourselves to meet his wishes, abstain from things which we know he dislikes, and learn things to which we are not naturally inclined, because we think it will give him pleasure. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian studies to please Him, by being holy both in body and spirit. Show him anything in his daily practice that Christ hates, and he will give it up. Show him anything that Christ delights in, and he will follow after it. He does not murmur at Christ's requirements, as being too strict and severe, as the children of the world do. To him Christ's commandments are not grievous, and Christ's burden is light. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

(e) If we love a person, *we like his friends*. We are favourably inclined to them, even before we know them. We are drawn to them by the common tie of common love to one and the same person. When we meet them we do not feel that we are altogether strangers. There is a bond of union between us. They love the person that we love, and that alone is an introduction. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian regards all Christ's friends as his friends, members of the same body, children of the same family, soldiers in the same army, travellers to the same home. When he meets them, he feels as if he had long known them. He is more at home with them in a few minutes, than he is with many worldly people after an acquaintance of several years. And what is the secret of all this? It is simply affection to the same Saviour, and love to the same Lord.

(f) If we love a person, we *are jealous about his name and honour*. We do not like to hear him spoken against, without speaking up for him and defending him. We feel bound to maintain his interests, and his reputation. We regard the person who treats him ill with almost as much disfavour as if he had. ill-treated us. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian regards with a godly jealousy all efforts to disparage his Master's word, or name, or Church, or day. He will confess Him before princes, if need be, and be sensitive of the least dishonour put upon Him. He will not hold his peace, and suffer his Master's cause to be put to shame, without testifying against it. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

(g) If we love a person, *we like to talk to him*. We tell him all our thoughts, and pour out all our heart to him. We find no difficulty in discovering subjects of conversation. However silent and reserved we may be to others, we find it easy to talk to a much-loved friend. However often we may meet, we are never at a loss for matter to talk about. We have always much to say, much to ask about, much to describe, much to communicate. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian finds no difficulty in speaking to his Saviour. Every day he has something to tell Him, and he is not happy unless he tells it. He speaks to Him in prayer every morning and night. He tells Him his wants and desires, his feelings and his fears. He asks counsel of Him in difficulty. He asks comfort of Him in trouble. He cannot help it He must converse with his Saviour continually, or lie would faint by the way. And why is this? Simply because he loves Him.

(h) Finally, if we love a person, *we like to be always with him*. Thinking, and hearing, and reading, and occasionally talking are all well in their way. But when we really love people we want something more. We long to be always in their company. We wish to be continually in their society, and to hold communion with them without interruption or farewell. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The heart of a true Christian longs for that blessed day when he will see his Master face to face, and go out no more. He longs to have done with sinning, and repenting, and believing, and to begin that endless life when he shall see as he has been seen, and sin no more. He has found it sweet to live by faith, and he feels it will be sweeter still to live by sight He has found it pleasant to hear of Christ, and talk of Christ, and read of Christ. How much more pleasant will it be to see Christ with his own eyes, and never to leave him any more! "Better," he feels, "is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire." (Eccles, vi. 9.) And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

Such are the marks by which true love may be discovered. They are all plain, simple, and easy to be understood. There is nothing dark, abstruse, and

mysterious about them. Use them honestly, and handle them fairly, and you cannot fail to get some light on the- subject of this paper.

Perhaps you had a beloved son in the army at the time of the Indian mutiny, or Crimean war. Perhaps he was actively engaged in that war, and in the very midst of the struggle. Cannot you remember how strong, and deep, and anxious your feelings were about that son?—That, was love!

Perhaps you have known what it is to have a beloved husband in the navy, often called from home by duty, often separated from you for many months and even years. Cannot you recollect your sorrowful feelings at that time of separation?—That was love!

Perhaps you have at this moment a beloved brother in London, launched for the first time amidst the temptations of a great city, in order to make his way in business. How will he turn out? How will he get on? Will you. ever see him again? Do you not know that you often think about that brother?—That is affection!

Perhaps you are engaged to be married to a person every way suited to you. But prudence makes it necessary to defer the marriage to a distant period, and duty makes it necessary to be at a distance from the one you have promised to make your wife. Must you not confess that she is often in your thoughts?—Must you not confess that you like to hear of her, and hear from her, and that you long to see her?—That is affection!

I speak of things that are familiar to every one. I need not dwell upon them any further. They are as old as the hills. They are understood all over the world. There is hardly a branch of Adam's family that does not know something of affection and love. Then let it never be said that we cannot find out whether a Christian really loves Christ. It can be known; it may be discovered; the proofs are all ready to your hand. You have heard them this very day. Love to the Lord Jesus Christ is no hidden secret, impalpable thing. It is like light,—it will be seen. It is like sound,—it will be heard. It is like heat,—it will be felt Where it exists it cannot be hid. Where it cannot be seen you may be sure there is none.

It is time for me to draw this paper to a conclusion. But I cannot end without an effort to press its subject home to the individual conscience of each into whose hands it has fallen. I do it in all love and affection. My heart's desire and prayer to God, in writing this paper, is to do good to souls.

1. Let me ask you, for one thing, to look the question in the face which Christ asked of Peter, and *try to answer it* for yourself Look at it seriously. Examine it carefully. Weigh it well After reading all that I have said about it, can you honestly say that you love Christ?

It is no answer to tell me that you believe the truth of Christianity, and hold the articles of the Christian faith. Such religion as this will never save your soul The devils believe in a certain way, and tremble. (James ii. 19.)

True saving Christianity is not the mere believing a certain set of opinions, and holding a certain set of notions. Its essence is knowing, trusting, and loving a certain living Person who died for us,—even Christ the Lord, The early Christians, like Phoebe, and Persis, and Tryphena, and Tryphosa, and Gaius, and Philemon, knew little, probably, of dogmatic theology. But they all had this grand leading feature in their religion, they loved Christ

It is no answer to tell me that you disapprove of a religion of feelings. If you mean by that that you dislike a religion consisting of nothing but feelings, I agree with you entirely. But if you mean to shut out feelings altogether, you can know little of Christianity. The Bible teaches us plainly, that a man may have good feelings without any true religion. But it teaches us no less plainly that there can be no true religion without some feeling towards Christ.

It is vain to conceal that if you do not love Christ, your soul is in great danger. You can have no saving faith now while you live. You are unfit for heaven if you die. He that lives without love to Christ, can be sensible of no obligation to Him. He that dies without love to Christ, could never be happy in that heaven where Christ is all, and in all. Awake to know the peril of your position. Open your eyes. Consider your ways, and be wise. I can only warn you as a friend. But I do it with all my heart and soul. May God grant that this warning may not be in vain!

2. In the next place, if you do not love Christ, let me tell you plainly what is *the reason*. You have no sense of debt to Him. You have no feeling of obligation to Him. You have no abiding recollection of having got anything from Him.. This being the case, it is not likely, it is not probable, it is not reasonable that you should love Him.

There is but one remedy for this state of things. That remedy is self-knowledge, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The eyes of your understanding must be opened. You must find out what you are by nature. You must discover that grand secret, your guilt and emptiness in God's sight.

Perhaps you never read your Bible at all, or only read an occasional chapter as a mere matter of form, without interest, understanding, or self-application. Take my advice this day, and change your plan. Begin to read the Bible like a man in earnest, and never rest till you become familiar with it. Read what the law of God requires, as expounded by the Lord Jesus in the fifth of St. Matthew. Read how St. Paul describes human nature in the first two chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. Study such passages as these with prayer for the Spirit's teaching, and then say whether you are not a debtor to God, and a debtor in mighty need of a Friend like Christ.

Perhaps you are one who have never known anything of real, hearty, business-like prayer. You have been used to regard religion as an affair of churches, chapels, forms, services, and Sundays, but not as a thing requiring

the serious heartfelt attention of the inward man. Take my advice this day, and change your plan. Begin the habit of real earnest pleading with God about your soul. Ask Him for light, teaching, and self-knowledge. Beseech Him to show you anything you need to know for the saving of your soul. Do this with all your heart and mind, and I have no doubt before long you will feel your need of Christ.

The advice I offer may seem simple and old-fashioned. Do not despise it on that account. It is the good old way in which millions have walked already, and found peace to their souls. Not to love Christ is to be in imminent danger of eternal ruin. To see your need of Christ and your amazing debt to Christ is the first step towards loving Him. To know yourself and find out your real condition before God is the only way to see your need. To search God's Book and ask God for light in prayer is the right course by which to attain saving knowledge. Do not be above taking the advice I offer. Take it and be saved.

(3) In the last place, if you really know anything of love towards Christ, accept two parting words of *comfort and counsel*. The Lord grant they may do you good.

For one thing, if you love Christ in deed and truth, rejoice in the thought that you have good evidence about the state of your soul. Love, I tell you this day, love is an evidence of grace.

What though you are sometimes perplexed with doubts and fears? What though you find it hard to say whether your faith is genuine and your grace real? What though your eyes are often so dimmed with tears that you cannot clearly see your calling and election of God? Still there is ground for hope and strong consolation, if your heart can testify that you love Christ. Where there is true love there is faith and grace. You would not love Him if He had not done something for you. Your very love is a token for good.

For another thing, if you love Christ, never be ashamed to let others see it and know it. Speak for Him. Witness for Him. Live for Him. Work for Him. If He has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood, you never need shrink from letting others know that you feel it, and love Him in return.

"Man," said a thoughtless, ungodly English traveller, to a North American Indian convert,—“Man, what is the reason that you make so much of Christ, and talk so much about Him? What has this Christ done for you, that you should make so much ado about Him?”

The converted Indian did not answer him in words. He gathered together some dry leaves and moss and made a ring with them on the ground. He picked up a live worm and put it in the middle of the ring. He struck a light and set the moss and leaves on fire. The flame soon rose, and the heat scorched the worm. It writhed in agony, and after trying in vain to escape on every side, curled itself up in the middle, as if about to die in despair. At that

moment the Indian reached forth his hand, took up the worm gently and placed it on his bosom. "Stranger," he said to the Englishman, "Do you see that worm? I was that perishing creature. I was dying in my sins, hopeless, helpless, and on the brink of eternal fire. It was Jesus Christ who put forth the arm of His power. It was Jesus Christ who delivered me with the hand of His grace, and plucked me from everlasting burnings. It was Jesus Christ who placed me, a poor sinful worm, near the heart of His love. Stranger, that is the reason why I talk of Jesus Christ, and make much of Him. I am not ashamed of it, because I love Him."

If we know anything of love to Christ, may we have the mind of this North American Indian! May we never think that we can love Christ too well, live to Him too thoroughly, confess Him too boldly, lay ourselves out for Him too heartily! Of all the things that will surprise us in the resurrection morning, this I believe will surprise us most, that we did not love Christ more before we died.