

Christian Retirement

By [Thomas Reade](#)

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ON INADEQUATE VIEWS OF HUMAN NATURE

The world is full of mourning, lamentation, and woe. We see many dancing along in thoughtless gaiety, and sporting on the brink of perdition. But this lightness of spirit is transient; sorrow soon darkens the glare of human happiness, and leaves the soul in sad dejection and despair. This picture may be gloomy, yet it is true. Sin has defaced the moral excellence of man; yes, more, has converted him into whatever is base, polluted, and depraved. All his faculties and powers are now employed as weapons against his Maker; and the very plan of mercy, whereby alone he can be restored to holiness, happiness, and heaven, is opposed, neglected, or despised.

And yet we talk of moral excellence in a fallen creature; of goodness in a heart which is desperately wicked; of righteousness in a condemned criminal; of amiable qualities in a mind at enmity against God; of strength in a helpless worm; of wisdom in a soul beclouded in all its powers.

Strange inconsistency! "What communion has light with darkness?" The word of God condemns such a motley character, and pronounces a woe on that which the world so much admires.

It is no uncommon thing to hear people talk about their good hearts and good intentions; when love to God, and a desire to please him, are utter strangers to their soul.

These self-admiring people consider as libelous every attempt to tear away the mask, and to expose the native vileness of the inner man. Thus, pride, vanity, self-love, and unbelief, the deadly roots from where all sin springs, conspire to keep us in a state of bondage, and enveloped in the mist of error.

It is quite compatible with the vanity of our fallen nature, to extol, as the highest excellence, those benevolent and patriotic feelings which often exist in a heart totally alienated from God. The Bible acknowledges no real excellence, but what arises from the regenerating work of grace upon the soul. An attentive reader of that Holy Book must be struck with the faithful delineations which it gives of the human heart. Man is there represented as he appears in the sight of God, when divested of all his meretricious ornaments.

What we call virtues, will be found, when analyzed, to be mere selfish principles; and human approbation to be the secret spring of many a splendid action. This disclosure is revolting to our pride. But proud man must be humbled. The Scripture has concluded all under sin. In this state, grace at first finds the sinner. There is naturally no movement of the soul towards God; no affection for him; no trust in him; no obedience to him.

The first inclination of the heart to God is the sole operation of God's own secret power, by such instruments or means as he, in his wisdom and sovereignty, is pleased to employ. The work, once begun, gradually, and sometimes, indeed, rapidly increases. The blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, are of a longer or shorter period in their growth, as the principle is weaker or stronger; for there are mysteries in grace, as well as in nature.

But in both kingdoms, the work is of God. He begins, carries on, and completes the vast design. All originates in his will, and all shall terminate in his glory. His language is, "I am God, and besides me there is no Savior." "In the Lord, all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory."

Yet man is a responsible creature, a moral agent. In this work of grace, God does not force, but inclines the heart to seek him. He does not compel the sinner, with reluctant steps, to enter in at the strait gate; but, by enlightening his mind, and touching his heart, he sweetly constrains him to enter in, that he may be saved.

His refusing to submit to the yoke of Jesus, and to accept of mercy on Gospel terms, is altogether the fruit and effect of his own depraved heart, and will justly be punished, if persisted in, with everlasting destruction. Thus, all the praise of our salvation is due to God alone; while all the guilt and final misery, flowing from our transgressions, are chargeable solely upon ourselves.

Men may now argue, and dispute, and cavil, about the truths of revelation; but a day is fast approaching, when "every mouth that is now opened against him, God will condemn." In that tremendous day of just judgment, the guilty conscience will speak in loudest thunder to the self-convicted soul; while notes of praise will forever ascend from hearts renewed by sovereign grace, to the fountain of eternal love.

We sin, and forget the sin. But God remembers all our wickedness. Awful, dreadful thought! Every impure imagination, every unhallowed affection, every sinful purpose, though unripened into action, every secret and unknown iniquity, is remembered by that omniscient God, who will judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ, and strictly render to every man according to his works. Oh what a day will that be, which plucks away the mask of hypocrisy from the face of sin! which rolls away the whitened stone from off the loathsome sepulcher; which discloses the impure chambers of imagery, and discovers all

the hidden evils of a heart once admired, but now abhorred by an assembled world of saints and angels!

In that day, the wicked will bewail, in bitter reproaches, their forgetfulness of God, and their love of sin; but this bitterness of soul, being utterly destitute of every gracious feeling, will only increase the sharpness of their torment, and give additional strength to the sting of that worm which never dies! Thus, their self-reproaches, and hatred of God, will be commensurate with eternity. Hating God—hating themselves—and hating the dreadful fiends who torment them, they will be wretched, beyond all conception, forever and ever!

Happy are they who receive the truth as little children. Lord, give me right views of the truth, as it is in Jesus; and right feelings and affections towards you, who are the God of my life and of my salvation. Put your fear into my heart, that I may not depart from you. Fill me with a reverential awe of your holy name. Let me never pry into the wisely-concealed purposes of your grace, but ever remember, and practically regard, this important declaration of Moses, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

When I hear a sinner boasting
Of the goodness of his heart,
And how easy it is for mortals
With their dearest sins to part;

Then, methinks, this man's a stranger
To the work of grace and faith
All he speaks betrays his blindness,
All is darkness that he says.

Did he once, but feel the workings
Of the Spirit's mighty power,
He would feel the flesh rebelling,
From that highly favored hour.

Satan would not let him conquer,
Without many battles fought;
This the Lord permits, that sinners
Their own vileness may be taught.

It is the traitor lodged within us
Seeks to admit the foe without;
When, by grace divinely potent,
Satan has been once cast out.

Inbred evils, dread corruptions,

Natives of the human heart,
League with Satan 'against the Savior,
And determine not to part.

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