
INTERIOR OR HIDDEN LIFE.*

PROFESSOR UPHAM, who for about seventeen years has sedulously occupied the chair of moral philosophy at Bowdoin College, in this volume, presents an additional proof of the spontaneous love which entitles him to that office, as well as of his sincere regard for the well being of all mankind. The basis of his work is the position that the human soul, every human being, may be holy. Strange proof of occasional default that men should ever think otherwise!

As might naturally be expected, however, from the author's occupation, his work manifests more precision in style, than most productions on similar subjects in former

* Principles of the Interior or Hidden Life, designed particularly for the consideration of those who are seeking assurance of faith and perfect love. By THOMAS C. UPHAM; Boston: D. S. King; 1843. 12mo. pp. 464.

times, which the professor has evidently read with a feeling even deeper than that of an admiring taste. There is, nevertheless, a gravity and a serene humble tone spread over the whole book, which justifies us in placing it on the same shelf with the works of Madame Guion, Fenelon, and others whom the author ardently loves. Those sentiments, principles, and experiences, which a gay and fretful world is glad to swamp in the deluge of frivolous occupations, the learned professor has endeavored to revive and embody forth in language so simple and plain, that none can fence their selfish idleness behind the usual epithet of "mystic." Scarcely a chapter in the two and forty, into which the work is divided, but might be quoted as proof of the simplest method in which such sentiments can be uttered. We cannot say he has the familiar, household eloquence of William Law, nor has he perhaps drunk from the like depths of the drainless well of spiritual being, but he is undoubtedly always sincere to the revelation within him, and perhaps better calculated than such earlier authors to address his cotemporaries. As a specimen of the style, and as a key to the whole work, which we have not space now to analyse fully, we submit the following extract from the first chapter, entitled "*Some Marks or Traits of the Hidden Life.*"

"There is a modification or form of religious experience which may conveniently, and probably with a considerable degree of propriety, be denominated the Interior or Hidden Life. When a person first becomes distinctly conscious of his sinfulness, and in connection with this experience, exercises faith in Christ as a Saviour from sin, there is no doubt, however feeble these early exercises may be, that he has truly entered upon a new life. But this new life, although it is in its element different from that of the world, is only in its beginning. It embraces undoubtedly the true principle of a restored and renovated existence, which in due time will expand into heights and depths of knowledge and of feeling; but it is now only in a state of incipency, maintaining and oftentimes but feebly maintaining a war with the anterior or natural life, and being nothing more at present than the early rays and dawns of the brighter day that is coming.

"It is not so with what may conveniently be denominated

the Hidden Life; a form of expression which we employ to indicate a degree of Christian experience, greatly in advance of that, which so often lingers darkly and doubtfully at the threshold of the Christian's career. As the Hidden Life, as we now employ the expression, indicates a greatly advanced state of the religious feeling, resulting in a sacred and intimate union with the the Infinite Mind, we may perhaps regard the Psalmist, who had a large share of this interior experience, as making an indistinct allusion to it, when he says, 'Thou art my HIDING place, and my shield.' And again 'He that dwelleth in the SECRET PLACE of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' Perhaps the Apostle Paul makes some allusion to this more advanced and matured condition of the religious life, when in the Epistle to the Galatians, he says, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME.' And again, addressing the Colossians, 'Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth; for ye are dead, and YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD.' And does not the Saviour himself sometimes recognize the existence of an Interior or Hidden Life, unknown to the world, and unknown, to a considerable extent, even to many that are denominated Christians, but who are yet in the beginning of their Christian career? 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the HIDDEN MANNA, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which *no man knoweth save he that RECEIVETH it.*'—p. 15.

In this cautious and unassuming way does the author endeavor to introduce the reader to an understanding of that, which cannot indeed be truly understood without experience, but which he devotedly applies his scholastic faculties and facilities to awaken some conception of in the public mind. To the well experienced soul it must appear strange indeed that the question need be put, "Does not the Saviour himself *sometimes* recognise the Interior or Hidden Life?" We would ask, "Does he not *always* recognise it, appeal to it, endeavor to quicken it?" Was it not the peculiar and high revelation he opened to man, that the kingdom of Heaven is within him? Scattered over the heathen world might, more or less obscurely, be

found affirmations of most Christian doctrines; but this fact had never before been declared with such emphasis, clearness, and certitude as by Jesus and his intimate disciples. It is the especial fact which makes Christianity the transcendent religion of this world. From this ground alone could Christ justly denounce priestcraft in the vehement terms familiar to us all, and establish a religion utterly unsectarian or formal, but dwelling only in heart and life.

On the subject of the two degrees of religious experience, which Professor Upham in the above extract endeavors to elucidate, Christ appears to us to have been so strikingly explicit, that it is surprising the mere biblical student should overlook it. He says, "You must be born again; of the water, *and* of the Spirit." In this case one term is not to be interpreted into the other. The water-birth and the Spirit-birth are clearly two processes in the human soul, which Swedenborg illustrates by the terms "Spiritual" and "Celestial," and other writers of deep religious experience have under some terms or other endeavored to make them sensible to their fellow pilgrims; a labor however on which little success has yet attended. Books sell and circulate in the world in the ratio of the natures and taste of the people at the time. It is not just at present so easy to find readers on the subject of the Inner Life as of the Outer Life. Frivolous novels are rather more in demand than relations from the ever new. Much that is beautiful, much that is valuable, nay, that very reality which is most needful to human happiness, is for the greater part lost to mankind by the overlooking of this second inward birth; by the supposition that the first, or the birth into intelligence, is all that need succeed to the natural birth in order to human redemption. Truly does our author observe "the life, which we are considering may properly be called a Hidden Life, because its moving principles, its interior and powerful springs of action, are not known to the world."

"The natural man can appreciate the natural man. The man of the world can appreciate the man of the world. And it must be admitted, that he can appreciate, to a considerable extent, numbers of persons, who profess to be Christians, and who are probably to be regarded as such in the ordinary sense of the term, because the natural life

still remains in them in part. There is such a mixture of worldly and religious motives in the ordinary forms of the religious state, such an impregnation of what is gracious with what is natural, that the men of the world can undoubtedly form an approximated, if not a positive estimate of the principles, which regulate the conduct of its possessors. But of the springs of movement in the purified or Hidden Life, except by dark and uncertain conjecture, they know comparatively nothing." — p. 16.

"Again, the Hidden Life has a claim to the descriptive epithet, which we have proposed to apply to it, because, in its results upon individual minds, it is directly the reverse of the life of the world. The natural life seeks notoriety. Desirous of human applause, it aims to clothe itself in purple and fine linen. It covets a position in the market-place and at the corners of the streets. It loves to be called Rabbi. But the life of God in the soul, occupied with a divine companionship, avoids all unnecessary familiarities with men. It pursues a lowly and retired course." "It is willing to be little, to be unhonored, and to be cast out from among men. It has no eye for worldly pomp; no ear for worldly applause. It is formed on the model of the Saviour, who was a man unknown." "It has no essence, but its own spiritual nature, and no true locality but the soul, which it sanctifies." — p. 18.

We must be permitted to use warmer language than the usual phrase, that "this book is a valuable addition to the literature of our country." Professor Upham has a nobler and a sincerer design than that of adding merely another volume to our abundant stores, or of gaining proselytes to some miserable sectarianism, or of building up a personal fame. He pursues his subject, without needless literary display, through its theological and personal windings and accessories, until he discourses on 'the state of union with God,' in language as plain and as suitable to the present state of the public mind, as could characterize the humblest disciples of goodness.

"The state of union with God, when it is the subject of distinct consciousness, constitutes, without being necessarily characterized by revelations or raptures, the soul's spiritual festival, a season of special interior blessedness, a foretaste of Heaven. The mind unaffected by worldly vicissitudes,

and the strifes and oppositions of men, reposes deeply in a state of happy submission and quietude, in accordance with the expression of the epistle to the Hebrews, that those who believe "ENTER INTO REST." So true it is, in the language of Kempis, that "he who comprehendeth all things in His will, and beholdeth all things in His light, hath his *heart fixed*, and abideth in the peace of God." "How can there be otherwise than the peace of God, pure, beautiful, sublime, when consecration is without reserve, and faith is without limit; and especially when self-will, the great evil of our fallen nature, is eradicated. What higher idea can we have of the most advanced Christian experience, than that of entire union with the divine will, by a subjection of the human will? When the will of man, ceasing from its divergencies and its disorderly vibrations, becomes fixed to one point, henceforward immovable, always harmonizing, moment by moment, with God's central and absorbing purposes, then we may certainly say, that the soul, in the language which is sometimes applied to it, and in a modified sense of the terms, has become not only perfected in faith and love, but "united and one with God," and "transformed into the divine nature."—"He, that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." "And from that moment, in its higher nature, and so far as it is not linked to earth by sympathies, which its God has implanted, and which were smitten and bled even in the case of our Saviour, the soul knows sorrow no more; the pain of its inward anguish is changed into rejoicing; it has passed into the mount of stillness, the Tabor of inward transfiguration, the Temple of unchanging tranquillity."—p. 429.

Such an unusual, we might almost say, as far as the American public is concerned, such an unprecedented appeal, we trust will not be made in vain. Pious narratives, providential adventures, and personal experiences have from time to time found a ready auditory, in this republic; and a reception not less cordial ought to be awarded to the expression of like principles and sentiments uttered in universal terms.
