

**THE WORKS OF  
CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH:  
CONFORMITY**

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The Works of Charlotte Elizabeth: Conformity by Charlotte Elizabeth

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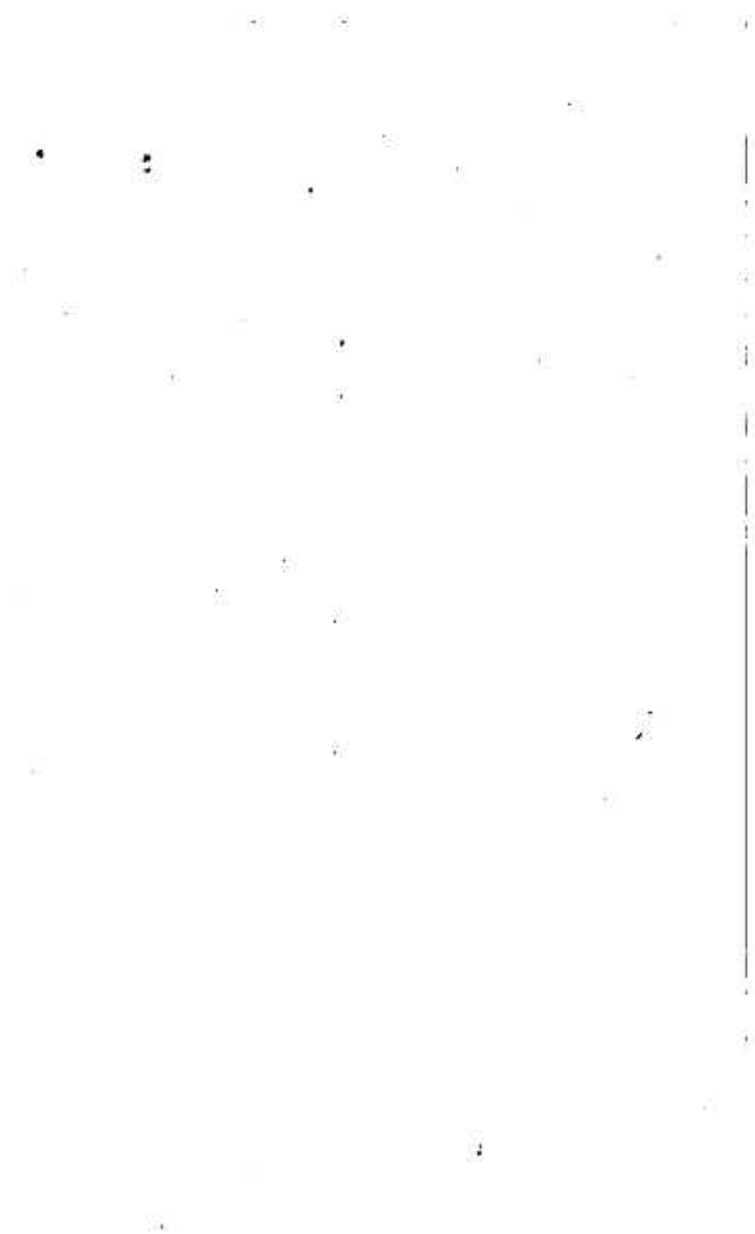


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NEW-YORK:  
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## CONFORMITY



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"You may turn over the leaves of your Bible till this time to-morrow," said Leonard, to his cousin; "you will find nothing there to support the arguments which you have been so stoutly and ingeniously upholding."

"So you say," replied James: "but I never will believe that a practice so generally sanctioned among the most experienced and gifted professors of serious religion is destitute of Scriptural authority."

"The numerous suffrages of which you boast, did they even comprise the whole bulk of the visible church, would weigh as nothing against a single plain precept of inspiration, were there only one, 'Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar.' Happily, however, for the honor of the Gospel among men, the majority is by no means so great as you conceive; while the line of separation is so distinctly marked and laid down throughout the whole book of truth, that it is to me a matter of increasing astonishment how any man, taking that revelation for his guide, can be enticed out of a path so palpably defined."

"That is what I am seeking to ascertain," observed James, "and if I find it as you say, the question is of



course set at rest, but I shall search for myself. At present, I find many persons far before you in years, and in Christian knowledge, asserting a thing to be consistent with the will of God, which you most resolutely and unsparingly stigmatize as tending to the subversion of evangelical purity. The Bible must decide, and should it confirm your position, I shall readily confess that you 'understand more than the ancients,' because you keep the precepts of God."

The subject thus engrossing the attention of the two cousins, was one of no trifling importance. Their respective families both belonged to the congregation of a pious and evangelical minister, whose followers they equally professed to be. In each house, honor was rendered to the name of Jehovah by the regular observance of family worship, and "one Lord, one faith," formed the basis of more than kindred affection among the members of the two households. In one point, however, a very striking distinction was visible; the Ayletts frequently mingling in general society, and sedulously cultivating those accomplishments which are held in high esteem among men; while the Keiths, adhering to a stricter interpretation of the Christian code, abstained from such intercourse, and excluded from their scheme of education whatsoever was calculated to glitter in the eyes of an ungodly multitude. Mr. Aylett had been from childhood a resident in the place, and had enjoyed the privileges attendant on a long succession of gospel ministers. His wife was similarly circumstanced, and they had entered upon the marriage state with a cordial concurrence in the

declaration, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." In assigning the bounds of that service, they acted according to their own views of His requirements, interpreting them with a careful rejection of whatsoever might, as they apprehended, invest religion with a garb too gloomy and austere. In like manner they pursued the education of their children, and, delighted to behold them conspicuous for personal beauty, fondly hoped to render them, and through them the religion which they professed, doubly attractive in the eyes of the world, by perfecting them in all those adornments of taste, manner, and dress, which were considered almost indispensable in young people of their station.

Ample pecuniary resources, and connections of an elevated scale in society, furnished a fair pretext, a plea of necessity indeed; for ranks, they remarked, were not to be levelled, though pride must be humbled, by the entrance of pure religion.

Mr. Keith's progress had been somewhat different. His marriage had been one of strong affection, and his wife, though presenting a model of domestic tenderness, and all that the world accounts amiable, was equally indifferent with himself to the great concern of salvation. Afflicted by the death of two lovely children in one week, she had been enabled to see, by faith, the hand which smote; and, under divine influence, to turn to Him from whom she had so deeply revolted. Her last illness was long and lingering; but she ceased not to magnify the grace of God in bringing her to the knowledge of a Redeemer; and she

easily obtained from her husband a promise of removing, after her decease, to some abode where he and his children should enjoy the advantages of public ministry more faithfully dispensed than in their present neighborhood. She died in peace, her last breath ascending in supplication for her weeping family; and Mr. Keith hastened to fulfil the assurance that he had given. His sister, Mrs. Aylett, rejoicing unfeignedly over the works so manifestly begun, warmly importuned him to purchase a residence then vacant in her immediate vicinity; and thither the widower and his children repaired.

Leonard Keith was the younger son of two. Herbert, the eldest, had been educated for the army by desire of his mother's brother, whose name he bore. From school he had been transferred to a military academy, and perfected in every branch of his future profession, generally passing the vacations with his uncle, surrounded with all that could delight a heart totally unacquainted with itself and with its God. At the period of his mother's death, he was about seventeen, and Leonard two years younger. Their only surviving sister had scarcely numbered eight summers, when, after a brief visit of condolence, Herbert and his uncle parted from the afflicted circle, the former expecting a commission, which was shortly after bestowed on him; and he joined his regiment about the period of Mr. Keith's removal from his now desolate home.

The hope of the expiring wife and mother was speedily and richly fulfilled. Mr. Keith and Leonard