

**THE CHRISTIAN'S
GREAT INTEREST: IN
TWO PARTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649209514

The Christian's great interest: in two parts by William Guthrie & Thomas Chalmers

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WILLIAM GUTHRIE & THOMAS CHALMERS

**THE CHRISTIAN'S
GREAT INTEREST: IN
TWO PARTS**



THE
CHRISTIAN'S
GREAT INTEREST.

IN TWO PARTS.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM GUTHRIE,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, FENWICK.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,
BY
THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.
PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

FOURTH EDITION.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM COLLINS;

OLIVER & BOYD, WM. WHYTE & CO. AND WM. OLIPHANT, EDINBURGH;
W. F. WAKEMAN, AND WM. CURRY, JUN. & CO. DUBLIN;
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, & ARNOT; HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
AND SIMPKIN & MARSHALL, LONDON.

MDCCCXXXIII.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THERE are few subjects or exercises more deeply important to professing Christians, than that which forms the principal topic in the following admirable Treatise—the work of self-examination. But self-examination is a work of great difficulty, and is accordingly shrunk from, or altogether declined by the great body of professing Christians. It is more the habitual style of the mind's contemplations to look at that which is without, than at that which is within—and it is far easier to read the epistles of the written Record, than to read the tablet of one's own heart, and so to ascertain whether it be indeed a living epistle of Christ Jesus our Lord. There is something so shadowy and evanescent in the phases of the human spirit—such a want of the distinct and of the tangible, in its various characteristics—such a turmoil, and confusion, and apparent incoherence in the rapid succession of those thoughts, and impulses, and emotions, which find their way through the avenues of the inner man—that men, as if lost in the mazes of a labyrinth, deem the world which is within to be the most hopeless and impracticable of all mysteries—nor in the whole range of their varied speculations, do they meet with that which more baffles their endeavours to seize upon, than

the busy principle that is lodged within them, and has taken up its residence in the familiar intimacies of their own bosom.

The difficulty of knowing our own heart is much enhanced, if we are in quest of some character or some lineament which is but faintly engraven thereupon. When the thing that we are seeking for is so very dim, or so very minute, as to be almost indiscernible, this makes it a far more fatiguing exercise—and, it may be, an altogether fruitless one. Should then the features of our personal Christianity be yet slightly or obscurely formed, it will need a more intense and laborious scrutiny ere we can possibly recognise them. Should there be a languor in our love to God—should there be a frailty in our purposes of obedience—should there be a trembling indecision of principle, and the weakness or the wavering of a mind that is scarcely made up on the question of a preference for time or for eternity, let us not marvel, though all disguised as these seeds and elements of regeneration within us may be, amid the vigorous struggles of the old man, and the remaining urgencies of a nature which will not receive its death-blow but with the same stroke that brings our bodies to the dust—let us not marvel, if in these circumstances, the hardships of the search should deter many from undertaking it—and though after months, or even years of earnestness in religion, the disciple may still be in ignorance of himself, as if blindfolded from the view of his own character; or, if arrested at the threshold by a sense of its many difficulties, the work of self-examination has not yet been entered on.

It is thus that the dark and unsearchable nature of the subject operates insensibly but powerfully as a restraint on self-examination—and certainly there would be encouragement felt to begin this exercise, were it made to appear in the light of a more practicable exercise, that could really and successfully be gone through. It is just as if set upon the task of searching for some minute article on the floor of an apartment, of which the windows had been partially closed—a weary and a hopeless undertaking, till the sun has fully arisen, and the shutters have been altogether unfolded, and the greatest possible supply of light has been admitted into the room. Then the search might be entered upon with vigour, and just because now it could be entered upon with the alacrity of a comfortable expectation. The work is less repulsive, because easier—and now might the whole surface of this trial for a discovery be patiently explored, just because now a greater visibility had been poured over it.

This leads to a remark, which though a mere preliminary to the subject of self-examination, we nevertheless deem to be one of great practical importance. We think that however inscrutable at this moment our mind may be, and however faintly the marks and the characteristics of our Christianity are delineated thereupon, yet that even now the inward survey ought to be commenced, and renewed at frequent intervals, and daily persevered in. But, meanwhile, and to facilitate the search, we should do the very thing that is done in the case of a dark apartment. There should be as much light as possible thrown upon the subject from without,

If the lineaments of grace within us be faint, that ought instantly to be done which might have the effect of brightening them into a more lucid distinctness, and so making the work of discovery easier than before. If the love, and the joy, and the grateful devotedness to his Saviour's will, wherewith the heart of a believer is animated, be hardly discernible in his efforts to ascertain them, this is the very reason why all those direct expedients should forthwith be resorted to for stirring up the love, and for exciting the joy, and for fixing in the bosom that grateful devotedness which he is now going so fruitlessly in quest of, and which, if they exist at all, are so shrunken in magnitude, or so enveloped in their own dimness, that they have hitherto eluded all his endeavours to seek after them, if haply he may find them. Now it is not by continuing to pore inwardly that we will shed a greater lustre over the tablet of our own character, any more than we can enlighten the room in which we sit by the straining of our eyes towards the various articles which are therein distributed. In the one case, we take help from the window, and through it from the sun of nature—and this not to supersede the proposed investigation on our part, but altogether to aid and encourage us in that investigation. And in the other case, that the eye of the mind may look with advantage upon itself inwardly, should it often look outwardly to those luminaries which are suspended from the canopy of that revelation which is from above—we should throw widely open the portal of faith, and this is the way by which light is admitted into the chambers of experience—in defect of