

**THE BACKSLIDER; OR, AN
ENQUIRY INTO THE NATURE,
SYMPTOMS, AND EFFECTS OF
RELIGIOUS DECLENSION, WITH
THE MEANS OF RECOVERY**

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The Backslider; Or, an Enquiry into the Nature, Symptoms, and Effects of Religious Declension, with the Means of Recovery by A. Fuller

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A. FULLER

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—♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦—
BY A. FULLER.
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*I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard
of the man void of understanding: and lo! it was
all grown over with thorns; nettles had covered the
face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken
down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked
upon it, and received instruction.*

SOLOMON.

—♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦—
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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages were occasioned by the Writer's observing several persons, of whom he had formerly entertained a favourable opinion, and with whom he had walked in christian fellowship, having fallen, either from the doctrine, or practice of pure religion. A view of their unhappy condition made a deep impression upon his mind. If he has been enabled to describe the case of a backslider to any good purpose, it has been chiefly owing to this circumstance. He hopes that, though it was written with a special eye to a few, it may yet be useful to many.

THE
BACKSLIDER.

WHETHER the present age be worse than others which have preceded it, I shall not determine; but this is manifest, that it abounds not only in infidelity and profligacy, but with great numbers of loose characters among professing christians. It is true there are some eminently zealous and spiritual, perhaps as much so as at almost any former period: the disinterested concern which has appeared for the diffusion of evangelical religion is doubtless a hopeful feature of our times: yet it is no less evident that others are in a sad degree conformed to this world, instead of being transformed by the renewing of their minds. Even of those who retain a decency of character, many are sunk into a Laodicean lukewarmness. Professors are

continually falling away from Christ; either totally, so as to walk no more with him; or partially, so as greatly to dishonour his name. Alas, how many characters of this description are to be found in our congregations! If we only review the progress of things for twenty or thirty years past, we shall perceive many who once bid fair for the kingdom of heaven now fallen a prey to the temptations of the world. Like the blossoms in the spring, they for a time excited our hopes: but a blight has succeeded: the blossom *has gone up as the dust*, and *the root* in many cases appears to be *rottenness*.

It is one important branch of the work of a faithful pastor to strengthen the diseased, to heal the sick, to bind up the broken, to bring again that which is driven away, and to seek that which is lost.* If these pages might fall into the hands of but a few of the above description and contribute in any degree to their recovery from the snare of the devil, the writer will be amply rewarded. It is a pleasure to recover

* Ezek. xxxiv. 4.

any sinner from the error of his way; but much more those of whom we once thought favourably. The place which they formerly occupied in our esteem, our hopes, and our social exercises, now seems to be a kind of chasm, which can only be filled up by the return of the party. If a child depart from his father's house, and plunge into profligacy and ruin, the father may have other children, and may love them; but none of them can heal his wound, nor any thing satisfy him, but the return of *him who was lost*.

In pursuit of this desirable object, I shall describe the nature and different species of backsliding from God—Notice the symptoms of it—Trace its injurious and dangerous effects—And point out the means of recovery.

ON THE GENERAL NATURE AND DIFFERENT SPECIES OF BACKSLIDING.

All backsliding from God originates in a departure of heart from him: herein consists the essence and the evil of it. *Thine*

*own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that THOU HAST FORSAKEN THE LORD THY GOD, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts.** But the degrees of this sin, and the modes in which it operates, are various.

The backsliding of some is *total*.—After having made a profession of the true religion, they apostatize from it. I am aware it is common to consider a backslider as being a good man, though in a bad state of mind: but the scriptures do not confine the term to this application. Those who are addressed in the passage just quoted, had not *the fear of God in them*, which can never be said of a good man. Backsliding, it is true, always supposes a *profession* of the true religion; but it does not necessarily suppose the existence of the thing professed. There is a *PERPETUAL backsliding*, and a *drawing back UNTO PERDITION*.† Such characters were Saul, and Ahitophel, and Judas. Many persons who have in a

* Jer. ii. 19. † Ch. viii. 5. Heb. x. 39.