

# ANSWERING AGAIN.

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

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“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the  
door of my lips.” PSALM cxli. 3.

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SECOND EDITION.

DUBLIN:  
PRINTED BY THOMAS I. WHITE,  
149, ABBEY STREET.

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MDCCCXXXI.

ANSWERING AGAIN

My Saviour, shall my laughter rise  
And I no more my Saviour's words will  
pity upon thee?"

My Saviour, shall my laughter rise  
CHARLOTTE ELLIABETH

To gaze on thee  
That thou shouldst  
And

For a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the  
down of my lips; keep the

My sin, the sin of all my race,  
Thou'lt be my glory and my joy  
And bow'd down with a word  
SECOND EDITION.

When thou shalt be  
But be thou my  
I shall be thy

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MDCCLXXXII

## ANSWERING AGAIN.

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I ONCE knew a little boy, who was as well taught as most children of his age, and who had sense enough to listen to good advice; and he had learned many things very useful for him to know. I hope that he also loved God, and prayed much to Him, and praised him: I have reason to think that the little boy knew himself to be a sinner, and that he could not be saved or go to heaven unless his sins were washed away in the blood of the Lamb—of the blessed Lord Jesus, who died to redeem us to God by His blood: and the little boy told me that he often asked in prayer for a new heart and a right

spirit, which he knew must be the gift of the Holy Ghost.

All this was well, but my dear little boy had a fault which grieved his friends; and the more so as they could not convince him that it was a great fault. He could not bear to own himself in the wrong, in such little matters of mistake or neglect as he was often reprov'd for. Some excuse he always had; and if you would believe him, it was never owing to him that every thing was not properly done. This was not like what the Bible commands, "Confess your faults one to another; and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." James v. 16.

Now, this way of "answering again," as the apostle calls it, Titus ii. 9, is very wrong: and I think that I can prove it to have been done by those who were committing great sin at the time. If I do this, I hope that all little boys and girls, all servants,

and others, will see how bad an example they are following, and endeavour to leave it off, the more so, because I can tell how very differently the best and holiest persons have acted.

The first people whom I find in the Bible, "answering again," were the first man and the first woman that ever lived; and when did they do so? not while they were obeying God and living innocently, but as soon as they had become very sinful, they began to justify themselves. They knew so well what wickedness they had done, that they hid themselves from the Lord God, as they thought: but who can be hidden from Him who seeth all things! They were called out of their hiding place, and when the Lord questioned Adam about eating of the fruit of the tree, he threw the blame upon Eve, and when Eve was reproved she threw the blame on the serpent, yet Adam and Eve both knew that they were disobeying God by tasting

that fruit; and the serpent could not have forced them to it against their wills. We are ready enough to lay the blame of our bad actions on the devil; but though he may tempt us to sin, it is entirely our own fault if we agree to it.

The next example is that of Cain, wicked ungodly Cain, who killed his pious brother Abel. "And the Lord said unto Cain, where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" See how anxious the murderer is to hide the sin which he was not afraid to commit! and shall not such an example alarm us?

I cannot wait to tell you of all the people mentioned in the Bible who have done the same thing; but it was always when they had been very wrong. What a silly excuse Aaron made to Moses! When Moses was in the Mount with the Lord, the people of Israel would have an

idol made for them to worship ; so they gave their golden ear-rings to Aaron, and he melted them, and with a graving tool made the gold into the figure of a calf. When Moses came down from the Mount, he was very angry, and reprov'd Aaron for his great sin. Aaron threw all the blame on the people, and said that when they had given him the gold, he cast it into the fire, and there came out that calf. As if the calf had come out of the fire ready made ; when Aaron indeed had shaped it himself with a graving tool. For this thing three thousand men were put to death. A sad proof how much it displeas'd the Lord !

Job was a holy man, and satan got leave to afflict him very much, for the trial of his faith. Job's friends came to see him, and thought that his being so distressed was a proof of his great wickedness. So Job began to praise himself, and to prove that he was

quite righteous and innocent. As long as he did this, he got no relief nor comfort; but when at last he confessed himself vile in God's sight; when he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes, leaving off to say one word in his own defence, then God restored him to all that he had lost, and declared His favour to him, and reprov'd his unkind friends. If we submit to reproach when we do not deserve it, and leave our cause with God, He will clear our characters in His own good time.

When our Lord told Simon Peter that he would deny him, Peter, instead of praying to be kept from such wickedness, began to boast of himself, and declared that though all men should deny the Lord, he would never do so. For this, he was left to himself and to Satan; and you know that he not only denied the blessed Jesus three times, but cursed and swore about it. This should be a great warning to us.



And what an instance of this folly and wickedness we have in Pontius Pilate! He condemned the Lord Jesus to suffer a cruel death, and then washing his own hands in a basin of water, declared himself innocent of his blood! Nobody accused him; his own conscience did that—and you see what an answer the devil put into his mouth to silence it. Oh, it is a dangerous thing to be fond of justifying ourselves!

Far different was the conduct of David. When he was reprov'd for sin, how humbly he acknowledged his guilt, and how earnestly he prayed for pardon! You may see this in the fifty-first Psalm, and several others. And when David was unjustly reproach'd, he committed his cause to the Lord, saying, "I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me."

But what a beautiful example we have in the Lord Jesus Christ! "Who

when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, he threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." 1 Peter ii. 23. The blessed Jesus who did no sin, answered not a word to all the false accusations of His enemies; how then can we who are so very sinful and unholy dare to shew such impatience under every reproof? Some people when told that they should not have done such and such things, will directly set about proving to you either that it was right, or that they were obliged to do so; and that too, when every body may plainly see that it was wrong, and that it was through neglect or ill-judgment they did it.

"You ought to have brought out some tracts for these poor Cottagers," said I to a little friend who was walking with me.

"Yes," he replied, "but you came out in such a hurry at last that I had not time."

“Now stop,” said I, “and see whether you are not telling an untruth in your anxiety to avoid being blamed. It is true that I was obliged to hasten you at last; but what were you doing for an hour and a half before I put on my bonnet? I told you that I was coming here, and that I had a letter to write first; and yesterday I had charged you never to go out without a few tracts in your hat. Why cannot you own that you forgot this, and say that you will be more careful another time, instead of trying to defend yourself from a little reproof by deserving a much greater?”

“Pride is the cause of all this; and pride is a very dangerous thing, hateful to God, and contrary to the spirit of Christ. The Scripture says, ‘Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased,’ Luke, xviii. 14. and likewise that ‘God resisteth the proud,’ 1 Peter v. 5. for ‘every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the

Lord.' Prov. xvi. 5. The pride of man's heart makes him dislike to be blamed; and a child who loves to make excuses for himself, when reproved by his teachers and governors, will learn by little and little to justify himself before God. That is, he will be denying that his heart is as evil, and his conduct as sinful, as God's law declares them to be; and so in the end, he may even persuade himself that he does not stand in need of Christ's blood and righteousness, and depend, at least partly, on his own works for pardon and salvation. This would shut him out of heaven for ever; because God would then judge him according to His most righteous law; and the least offence against any part of that law, from the moment of his birth to the moment of his death, would occasion his being cast into hell."

Do you understand this? I will try to explain it more to you. God gave

His holy law, to shew us what was pleasing in his sight, and to please Him we must keep it perfectly—never doing, or saying, or thinking any thing contrary to it. Have you kept that law? Oh no, it is not possible that you should have done so. If ever you wished for a single thing that did not belong to you, you broke the tenth commandment: and if you broke only one of them, in the least degree, you could not be forgiven. So you see that you and all mankind must have gone to hell, into which all the wicked shall be turned, if there was no other way of judging you but by this law.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came from heaven, to keep the whole of this law, which men and women and children had been breaking every hour, since Eve eat the fruit of that tree which God had forbidden. And Jesus Christ suffered death which He never had deserved, to make amends for

us, who deserve it every moment. Thus you may perceive that if we would be saved, we must leave off taking any merit at all to ourselves, and only speak to the Lord God of what His Blessed Son has done and suffered for sinners. This will keep us very humble: for we are forced to confess that, as the Prophet says, "We are all as an unclean thing; and all *our* righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Isaiah lxiv. 5. It is therefore plain that we should take great care not to indulge ourselves in any thing that can help to keep us proud, but rather say, with Job, "Behold I am vile; I will lay my hand upon my mouth?" Children and servants should be very careful not to get the habit of answering again; or, if they have got it, to pray and watch, that they may lay it aside; for if they answer those who have authority over

them on earth, they may presently be led to answer God, when He reproves them for sin, by His holy word, or by the afflictions that He sends. And parents and masters must be careful too, not to set the example to those who are very ready to copy whatever they do. That is a beautiful passage which speaks of submitting ourselves one to another in the fear of God. Eph. v. 21.

It is better to bear a little unjust blame silently and meekly, than by being in a hurry to clear ourselves run into danger of becoming impatient under rebuke where it is deserving. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves."

When I am justly blamed,  
 Oh let me not reply;  
 But of my many faults ashamed,  
 To God for pardon cry.

And let me humbly speak  
To those who shew my sin ;  
They my improvement kindly seek,  
And they my love should win.

But if my conscience says  
“ This blame is wrongly thrown,”  
I'll think how many sinful ways  
Are to my Maker known.

And this should keep me low,  
And my proud spirit bend,  
For those who chide me cannot know  
How often I offend.

If God should judge me now  
For all that I have done—  
The thought is dreadful! let me bow  
Before His blessed Son.

To thee, O Christ, I look,  
And for thy mercy pray—  
Thy blood alone can blot the book,  
And take my sins away !

THE END.