

The Expository
Writings of
C. H. Mackintosh
VOLUME 3

Romans to Revelation

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” – 2 Tim 3:16

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by



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Selected expository writings of C. H. Mackintosh

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Romans 1:11-12, 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

Words of Counsel.

Prefatory Note.

The following little paper was never intended for publication. It was written expressly and exclusively, for two very dear and valued friends. A brother whom I greatly love and esteem, happening to see it, urged me to give it to him, with a view to publication. I demurred; but my friend so earnestly pressed me to allow him to print it, that I gave way.

May the Lord graciously deign to use it! C. H. M. Dublin
February, 14th, 1889

No. 1.

You enter your room, and find the fire all but out, there seems scarcely a trace of vitality. The fire-irons are there, all polished and laid in order; but what could they do? Nothing! A thousand sets of the most splendid fire-irons could not produce a single spark. There must be a living *hand* to move them, or they will lie there motionless and powerless.

What is to be done? You seize the poker, rake out the ashes, and introduce a current of air; then you *stir up* the almost dead lumps of coal; and, in a few moments, you have a brilliant and beautiful fire. Who thinks of praising the poker? Who would say, "Dear, what a marvellous poker!" It is not the lifeless poker, but the living hand that does the work. True, the hand uses the poker; but the poker is useless without the hand.

Now, there is a fine moral lesson here for all who are, in any little way, used in the Lord's blessed work. We have ever to bear in mind that the works that are done upon the earth, God is the doer of them. If He deigns to use us, let us never forget that we are but mere instruments, just as helpless and powerless as the poker. No doubt, we have enjoyment in the work; but we are not now dealing with the question of enjoyment, but ability. If any real work is done, God is

the doer of it. To Him be *all* the glory. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor 3: 5-7.)

It is a very serious thing to attach undue importance or give an undue place to men, how much soever they may be used in the Lord's work. We have seen the work marred and workmen morally ruined by this very thing. It is a fatal mistake. Men are taken out of the place in which God has put them they are lauded, lionised, and gazed at as a sort of phenomenon; their lives are written and published before their death. In this way, they are lifted into an entirely false position, like a person walking on stilts, and then some terrible fall comes, to bring them to their senses, and recall them to their true place.

The Lord's servants should carefully guard against this terrible evil. See how the blessed Master ever retired from human applause and human excitement. When men wondered at His teaching, He said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." When they would come and take Him by force and make Him a king, He retired into a mountain to pray. When they wanted Him to shew Himself to the world, He said, "My time is not yet come." We ever find Him hiding Himself, blessed for ever be His precious, peerless Name Oh, to drink more into His spirit, and walk in His footsteps! To be well content to be a nothing and a nobody, so that Christ may be magnified! May God grant us this immense favour

No. 2.

I remember coming into my room, one day, and seeing the fire very low, indeed, nearly out. On examining it more closely, I observed about half a dozen of dying embers scattered all over the bottom of the grate — quite too far apart to help one another, each fast fading away for want of a little help. What was to be done? To throw in a lot of fresh material would simply be to put the whole thing hopelessly out. The embers could not help the coals, and the coals could only quash the embers.

At once, I hit upon a very simple plan. I gently gathered the scattered embers close together, and the little bit of life in each soon made a good bit of life in all, and the little company of dying embers became quite a nice little collective fire, capable of acting on some fresh material.

Here, thought I, is a fine lesson for me. If I come to a place and find the Lord's beloved people in a very low, feeble, dying state, I must just seek to get them together for mutual help and blessing, in order that they may be in a condition to act on others outside.

This mutual help is of all importance. People are so prone to lean upon gifted men. And if they cannot have such, they get discouraged and scattered, instead of getting lovingly together and helping one another by their mutual faith.

No. 3.

On another occasion, the housemaid was called to attend to the fire in the sitting-room. She found it just as I had found mine; but she adopted a different mode of treatment. Instead of collecting the few dying embers together, she flung in a huge block of coal, and completely quashed the dying embers. In a few moments all was black and cold. The block could not help the embers; and the embers could not help the block. It was a complete failure. The block of coal was very good, but it was out of place. The embers were not in a condition to profit by it.

Now, I learned a lesson from this. I said, that block is like a "big brother" coming into a feeble little meeting, and, instead of seeking to strengthen and develop the little modicum of life in the feeble few, he takes the place of a *factotum*, and sets them entirely aside.

This must be carefully avoided. Let every servant of the Lord watch and pray, and live against this evil; and not suffer the "big brother," or the "minister," to be put upon him. How beautiful are the words of the inspired apostle, in his epistle to the Romans! "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye *may be established*, that is, that I may *be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*" (Rom. 1: 11, 12.)

This is uncommonly fine — the very opposite of the "big brother" principle. Only think of this blessed servant of Christ, the greatest teacher the church has ever had, longing to be comforted by the faith of the very feeblest saint in the assembly! He longed for fellowship — he was ready to help, but he did not want to monopolise. He would not quash the dying embers, but gather them together and edify them, that he and they might be "comforted together."

Nothing can exceed the moral beauty of this. It is simply divine. May we all learn from it! Assuredly we all need it. There is danger on both sides. Some are in danger of taking too much upon them, others of taking too little. May we all be in such a condition of soul, such an attitude of heart as will fit us for any little work in which our gracious Lord may be pleased to use us — not seeking a place for ourselves, but lovingly serving all. The Lord, in His great mercy, grant that thus it may be, with all His beloved people!

Romans 5:10

“RECONCILED AND SAVED”

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5: 10).

If ever there was a moment in which it was important to set forth the great foundation truths of Christianity, it is now. The enemy is seeking by every means in his power to loosen the foundations of our faith — to weaken the authority of Holy Scripture over the heart and conscience — to introduce, in the most specious and fascinating forms, deadly error to draw away the soul from Christ and His Word.

It may be said, “This is an old story.” It is as old as 2 Timothy, 2 Peter and Jude. But it is a new story also; and while we do not feel it to be our work to grapple in a controversial way with popular errors and evils, we do believe it to be our sacred duty to set forth and maintain constantly those grand, solid, fundamental truths which are our only safeguard against every form of doctrinal error and moral depravity.

Hence it is that we feel called upon to draw the attention of our readers to that very weighty passage which stands at the head of this paper. It is one of the fullest and most comprehensive statements of foundation doctrine to be found within the compass of the Volume of God. Let us meditate for a little upon it.

In examining the context in which this passage stands, we find four distinct terms by which the inspired writer sets forth the condition of man in his unconverted state. He speaks of him as “without strength.” This is what we may call a negative term. Man is utterly powerless, wholly incapable of doing anything toward his own deliverance. He has been tried in every possible way. God has tested him and proved him, and found him absolutely good for nothing. When placed in Eden in the midst of the ten thousand delights which a beneficent Creator had poured around him, he believed the devil's lie rather than the truth of God (Gen. 3). When

driven out of Eden, we see him pursuing a career of evil — “evil only” — evil continually — until the judgment of God falls upon the whole race with one solitary exception — Noah and his family (Gen. 6-8). Further, when in the restored earth man is entrusted with the sword of government, he gets drunk and exposes himself to contempt in the very presence of his sons. When entrusted with the holy office of the priesthood, man offers strange fire (Lev. 10). When entrusted with the high office of king and enriched with untold wealth, he marries foreign wives and worships the idols of the heathen (2 Chr. 11).

Thus, wherever we trace man — the human race — we see nothing but the most humiliating failure. Man is proved to be good for nothing, “without strength.”

But there is more than this. Man is “ungodly.” He is not only powerless as to all that is holy and good, but also without one single moral or spiritual link with the living and true God. Examine the unrenewed heart from its center to its circumference, and you will not find so much as one true thought about God or one right affection toward God. There may be a great deal that is amiable and attractive in the way of nature — much that is morally lovely in the eyes of men such as many social virtues and excellent qualities. Human nature, even in its ruins, may exhibit much of all these, just as the visible creation — this earth on which we live — displays, in spite of its ruined and groaning condition, many splendid traces of the master hand that formed it.

All this is perfectly true and perfectly obvious. Moreover, it must ever be taken into account in dealing with the great question of man's standing and condition. There is an extreme way of speaking of the sinner's state which is more likely to stumble and perplex the mind than to convict the conscience or break the heart. This should be carefully avoided. We should always take account of all that is really good in human nature. If we look at the case of the rich young ruler in Mark 10, we see that the Lord recognized something lovable in him, for we read that “Jesus beholding him, loved him,” though we have no warrant whatever to suppose there was any divine work in his soul, seeing he turned his back upon Christ and preferred the world to Him. But there was evidently something most attractive in

this young man, something different from those gross, coarse and degraded forms in which human nature often clothes itself.

We cannot but judge that the man who, in writing or speaking about the sinner's moral and spiritual state, would ignore or lose sight of those moral and social distinctions, does positive damage to the cause of truth and neutralizes the very object which he has in view. If, for example, we approach an amiable, upright, frank and honorable person, and in a sweeping manner place him in the same category with a crooked, scheming, dishonest, contemptible character, we only drive him away in irritation and disgust. Whereas, if we recognize whatever is really good; if we allow, as Scripture most surely does, a sufficient margin in which to set down all that is morally and socially excellent even in fallen humanity, we are much more likely to gain our end, than by injudiciously ignoring those distinctions. Inasmuch as they clearly exist, it is the height of folly to deny them. Still, it holds good — and let the reader solemnly consider the weighty fact — that man, the very best, the very fairest specimen is “without strength” and “ungodly.” Nor is this all. The apostle does not rest in mere negatives. He not only tells us what man is not, but he goes on to tell us what he is. He gives us both sides of this great question. He not only declares that, “When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” but he adds that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Here we have the positive activity of evil, the actual energy of self-will. For, be it remembered, sin is doing our own will in whatever line that will may travel, whatever form it may assume. It may present itself in the shape of the grossest moral depravity or it may array itself in the garb of a cultivated and refined taste, but it is self-will all the while, and self-will is sin. It may be only like the acorn, the mere seed, but the acorn contains the wide spreading oak. Thus the heart of the newly born infant is a little seed-plot in which may be found the germ of every sin that ever was committed in the world. True, each seed may not germinate or bring forth fruit, but the seed is there and only needs circumstances or influences to unfold it.

If anyone be kept from gross outward sins, it is not owing to a better nature, but simply to the fact of his surroundings. All men are sinners. All by nature do their own will. This stamps their character. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." From the days of fallen Adam to this moment — about 6000 years — there has been but one solitary exception to this solemn and terrible rule. There was only One who never sinned, never did His own will, and that is the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Though God over all blessed forever, yet having become a Man, He surrendered His own will completely and did always and only the things that pleased His Father. From the manger to the cross, He was ruled in all things by the will and the glory of God. He was the only perfect spotless Man who ever trod this sin-stained earth. He was the only fair untainted sheaf that ever appeared in the field of this world — "the Man Christ Jesus" who died for us "sinners" and "suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

What marvelous grace! What soul-subduing love! What amazing mercy! Oh! how it should melt these hearts of ours! Think, dear reader, think deeply of this love, this grace, this mercy. Dwell upon it until your soul is absorbed in the contemplation of it. We are painfully insensible and indifferent. Indeed there is nothing more humbling than our guilty, shameful indifference to a Savior's love. We seem content to take salvation as the result of His cross and passion, His agony and grief, His inexpressible sorrow, while at the same time, our hearts are cold and indifferent to Him. He left the bright heavens and came down into this dark and sinful world for us. He went down into the gloomy depths of death and the grave. He endured the hiding of God's countenance, which involved more intense anguish to His precious soul than all that men and demons, earth and hell could do. He sank in deep waters, and went down into the horrible pit and into the miry clay. He did all this for us "sinners" when we were "ungodly" and "without strength." Yet how little we think of it! How little we dwell upon it! How little we are moved by the record of it!

The remembrance of this should humble us in the dust before our precious Savior-God. The hardness of our hearts in the presence of the profound mystery of the cross and passion of our Lord Christ

is, if possible, a more remarkable and striking proof of our depravity than the sins for which He died. But we have rather anticipated what may yet come before us in the further unfolding of our subject. And now a brief reference to the fourth term by which the apostle sets forth our condition in nature. This is contained in the verse which forms our present thesis. "We were enemies." What a thought! We were not merely powerless, godless, sinful, but actually hostile — in a state of positive enmity against God.

Nothing can possibly exceed this. To be the enemy of God gives the most appalling idea we can possibly have of a sinner's state. Yet such is the actual condition of the unconverted reader of these lines. He is an enemy of God. He may be amiable, polite, attractive, refined, cultivated, educated, moral and even outwardly religious. He may occupy the very highest platform of religious profession. He may be a church member, a regular communicant, a worker in the vineyard, a Sunday School teacher, a preacher, a minister, and all the while be an enemy of God.

How awful the thought! Oh beloved reader, do pause and consider, we beseech you. Give this solemn question your undivided attention. Do not put it aside. We appeal to you with all earnestness, as in the presence of Almighty God, of His Son Jesus Christ and of the Eternal Spirit. We adjure you by the value of your immortal soul, by the dread reality of the judgment seat of Christ, by all the horrors of that lake which burns with fire and brimstone, by the worm that never dies, by the awful fact of eternity — an eternity in the gloomy shades of hell — by the unutterable agony of being separated forever from God, from Christ and from all that is pure and lovely. By the combined force of all these arguments, we earnestly and affectionately beseech you to flee, this moment, to the Savior who stands with open arms and loving heart to receive you. Come to Jesus! Come now, just as you are! Only trust Him and you are safe — safe forever — safe as He.

We also would call the attention of our readers to the important distinction between *atonement* and *reconciliation*. They are often confounded through lack of attention to the precise terms of Holy Scripture. The fact is, they are distinct, though intimately connected — distinct as the foundation is from the building —

connected as the building is with the foundation. Atonement is the foundation on which reconciliation rests. Without atonement, there could not possibly be any reconciliation, but reconciliation is not atonement. The reader will do well to weigh this matter thoroughly in the light of inspiration. It is most needful for all Christians to be clear and sound in their thoughts on divine subjects, and accurate in their way of stating them. It will invariably be found that the more spiritual anyone is, the closer he will keep to the language of Scripture in putting forth foundation truth. Unfortunately, our most excellent Authorized Version [KJV] is not accurate in this matter, inasmuch as we find in Romans 5: 11 the word “atonement” where it ought to be “reconciliation.” On the other hand, we have in Hebrews 2: 17, the word “reconciliation” where it ought to be “atonement” or “propitiation.” However, the two things are distinct and it is important that the distinction should be understood and maintained.

Furthermore, we would remind the reader that *there is no foundation whatsoever in the Word of God for the idea that God needed to be reconciled to us*. There is no such thought to be found within the covers of the Bible. It was man that needed to be reconciled to God, not God to man. Man was the enemy of God. He was not only “without strength,” “ungodly,” and “a sinner,” but actually “an enemy.”

Now it is the enemy — the alienated one, the estranged one — that needs to be brought back, to be reconciled. This is plain. But God, blessed be His name, was not man's enemy. He was man's friend, the Friend of sinners. Such was the blessed Lord Jesus Christ when on earth. “He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10). It was His delight to do good unto all. He spent His life in doing good to those who preferred a robber and a murderer to Him, and nailed Him to a cross between two thieves. Thus, whether we look at the life or at the death of Christ, we see in the clearest and most forcible manner the enmity of man, but the friendship, the kindness, the love of God.

How is man to be reconciled to God? Momentous question! Let us look well to the answer. The passage of Scripture which forms the theme of this article declares in the most distinct manner,

that “We are reconciled to God *by the death* of his Son” (Rom. 5: 10). Nothing else could do it. The death of the cross — the atoning death — the vicarious sacrifice — the precious priceless blood of Jesus — is the absolutely essential basis of our reconciliation to a sin-hating God. We must state this great truth in the most emphatic and unequivocal manner. Scripture is as clear and definite as possible. For us to be reconciled to God, sin must be put away, and “without shedding of blood, there is no remission” (Heb. 9: 22).

Thus the matter stands if we are to be taught simply by Scripture. No blood-shedding, no remission; no remission, no reconciliation. Such is the divine order. Let men beware how they tamper with it. It is a very serious thing to touch the truth of God. We may rest assured that all who do so will meddle to their own hurt.

We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. It is not by his incarnation, that is, His taking human nature upon Him. Incarnation could not reconcile us to God inasmuch as it could not blot out our sins. Incarnation is not atonement. It is well to note this. There is a subtle way of playing upon the word *atonement* which consists of a false division of the syllables — as though the word were “*at-one-ment*.” This “atonement” is referred to the incarnation as though, in that mysterious act, our Lord took our fallen human nature into union with Himself. Against this we solemnly warn the reader. *It is fatally false doctrine.* It is an effort of the enemy to displace or set aside altogether the atoning death of Christ, with all those grand foundation truths which cluster round that most precious mystery.

We hold as a cardinal truth the incarnation of the eternal Son! It forms the foundation of that great mystery of godliness of which the topstone is a glorified Man on the throne of God. “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3: 16).

We hold incarnation to be an integral part of the faith of a true Christian, nor could we own as a Christian anyone who denied it.

But it is one thing to hold a truth and another thing altogether to displace it. It is a constant effort of Satan, if he cannot get men to reject a truth, to displace it. In this way he gains some of his greatest apparent triumphs. Thus it is with the essential doctrine of incarnation. Assuredly, the Son of God had to become a Man to die, but becoming Man is one thing and dying upon the cross is another. He might have become a Man; He might have lived and labored for 33 years on this earth; He might have been baptized in Jordan and tempted in the wilderness; He might have ascended from the mount of transfiguration to that glory from which He had come and which He had with the Father from before all worlds. At any moment during His blessed life, He might, so far as He was personally concerned, have returned to that heaven from where He had descended. What could hinder Him? There was no necessity laid on Him to die except the necessity of infinite and everlasting love. Death had no claim on Him inasmuch as He was the sinless, spotless, holy One of God. He had not come under the federal headship of the first man. Had He done so, He would have been under the curse and wrath of God all His days, and that not vicariously, but in virtue of His connection with the first Adam. This would be an open and positive blasphemy against His Person. He was the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, the only untainted grain of human wheat on which the eye of God could rest. As such, we repeat, He could at any point between the manger and the cross, have returned to the bosom of the Father — that dwelling-place of inexpressible love.

Let the reader seize with clearness and power this great truth. Let him dwell upon it. It is a truth of very great importance. Jesus stood alone in this world. He was alone in the manger, alone in the Jordan, alone in the wilderness, alone on the mount, alone in the garden. All this is in perfect keeping with His own memorable words in John 12, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Here is the grand point — "If it die." Unless He was to return to glory alone, He must die. If He was to have us with Him, He must die. If sins were to be forgiven, He must die. If sinners were to be saved, He must die. If a new and living way was to be opened for us into the presence of God, He must die. If the veil was to be rent, He must

die. That mysterious curtain remained intact when the blessed One lay in the manger of Bethlehem — and when He was baptized and when He was anointed and when He was tempted and when He was transfigured and when He was bowed in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood, and when He was scourged before Pontius Pilate. Through all these stages of His marvelous life, the veil was unrent. There and thus it stood to bar the sinner's approach to God. Man was shut out from God and God shut in from man. Nor could all the living labors of the eternal Son — His miracles, His precious ministry, His tears, His sighs, His groans, His prayers, His sore testings and His untold living sorrows — have rent the veil. But the very moment death was accomplished, “The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”

Such is the distinct teaching of Scripture on this vital question. The death of Christ is the foundation of everything. Is it a question of life? He has given His flesh for the life of the world. Is it a question of pardon? “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Is it a question of peace? “He made peace by the blood of His cross.” Is it a question of reconciliation? “We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” In short, it is through death we get everything; without death we get nothing. It is on the ground of death, the atoning death of Christ, that we are reconciled to God and united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and glorified Head in heaven. All rests on the solid groundwork of accomplished redemption. Sin is put away, the enmity is slain, all barriers are removed, God is glorified, the law magnified, and all this by the death of Christ. “He passed through death's dark raging flood” to settle everything for us, and to lay the imperishable foundation of all the counsels and purposes of the Holy Trinity.

Now a few words as to the life of Christ in heaven for us. “If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Be it carefully noted that this refers to His life after death — His life in resurrection, His life in heaven. Some would teach us that it is His life on earth — His fulfillment of the law in our place. This is flatly contradicted by the very structure of the passage and by the entire teaching of the New Testament. It is not life before death, but

life *after* death that the apostle speaks of. It is the priestly life of our blessed and adorable Lord, who ever lives to make intercession for us. It is by this we are saved through all the difficulties and dangers, the snares and temptations of this wilderness world.

We, though reconciled to God by the death of Christ, are nevertheless in ourselves, poor, feeble, helpless, erring creatures. We are prone to wander, ever liable to failure and sin, totally unable to get on for a single moment, if not kept by our great High Priest, our blessed Advocate, our Comforter. He keeps us day and night. He never slumbers nor sleeps. He maintains us continually before God in all the integrity of the position in which His death has placed us. It is impossible that our cause can ever fail in such hands. His intercession is all prevailing. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The One who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, now bears our sorrows on His heart upon the throne. And He will come again to bear the government upon His shoulder.

What a Savior! What a Victim! What a Priest! How blessed to have all our affairs in His hand and to be sustained by such a ministry! How precious to know that the One who has reconciled us to God by His death is now alive for us on the throne. Because He lives we shall live also! All praise to His peerless name!

Romans 8:31

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

"God for us."

How much is wrapped up in these few words, “God for us” They form one of those marvellous chains of three links so frequently found in scripture. We have “God” linked on to “us” by that precious little word “for.” This secures everything, for time and eternity. There is not a single thing within the entire range of a creature's necessities that is not included in the brief but comprehensive sentence which forms the heading of this paper. If God be for us, then it follows, of necessity — blessed necessity — that neither our sins, nor our iniquities, nor our guilt, nor our ruined nature, nor Satan, nor the world, nor any other creature can possibly stand in the way of our present peace and our everlasting felicity and glory. God can dispose of all — has disposed of them, in such a way as to illustrate His own glory, and magnify His holy Name, throughout the wide universe, for ever and ever. All praise and adoration be to the Eternal Trinity!

It may, however, be that the reader feels disposed, at the very outset, to inquire how he is to know his place amongst the “us,” of our precious thesis. This truly, is a most momentous question. Our eternal weal or woe hangs upon the answer. How, then, are we to know that God is for us? In reply to this most weighty question, we shall seek, by God's grace, to furnish the reader with five substantial proofs that God is for us, in all our need, our guilt, our misery, and our danger — for us, spite of all that we are, and all that we have done — for us, although there is no reason whatever, so far as we are concerned, why He should be for us, but every reason why He should be against us.

The first grand proof which we shall adduce is

THE GIFT OF HIS SON.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Now, we are glad, for various reasons, to commence our series of proofs with these memorable words. In the first place, they meet a difficulty which may suggest itself to the mind of an anxious reader — a difficulty based upon the fact that the sentence culled from Romans 8:31 evidently applies, primarily, to believers and only to such, as does the entire epistle and every one of the epistles.

But, blessed be God, no such difficulty can be started in reference to the all-embracing, and encouraging words of Him who spake as never man spake. When we have from the lips of our blessed Lord Himself, the eternal Son of God, such words as these, "God so loved *the world*," we have no ground whatever for questioning their application to each and all who come under the comprehensive word "world." Before anyone can prove that the free love of God does not apply to him, he must first prove that he does not form a part of the world, but that he belongs to some other sphere of being. If indeed, our Lord had said, "God so loved a certain portion of the world," call it what you please, then verily it would be absolutely necessary to prove that we belong to that particular portion or class, ere we could attempt to apply His words to ourselves. If He had said that God so loved the predestinated, the elect, or the called, then we must seek to know our place amongst the number of such, before we can take home to ourselves the precious assurance of the love of God, as proved by the gift of His Son.

But our Lord uses no such qualifying clause. He is addressing one who, from his earliest days, had been trained and accustomed to take a very limited view indeed of the favour and goodness of God. Nicodemus had been taught to consider that the rich tide of Jehovah's goodness, loving kindness, and tender mercy could only flow within the narrow enclosure of the Jewish system and the Jewish nation. The thought of its rolling forth to the wide wide world had never, we may safely assert, penetrated the mind of one trained amid the contracting influences of the legal system. Hence, therefore, it must have sounded passing strange in his ear, to hear "a

teacher come from God" giving utterance to the great fact that God loved not merely the Jewish nation, nor yet some special portion of the human race, but "the world." No doubt, such a statement would add not a little to the amazement felt by this master in Israel at being told that he himself, with all his religious advantages, needed to be born again in order to see or enter the kingdom of God.

Do we then deny or call in question the grand truth of predestination, election, or effectual calling? God forbid We hold these things as amongst the fundamental principle of true Christianity. We believe in the eternal counsels and purposes of our God — His unsearchable decrees — His electing love — His sovereign mercy.

But do any or all of these things interfere, in the smallest degree, with the gracious activities of the divine nature, or the outgoings of God's love towards a lost world? In no wise. God is love. That is His blessed nature, and this nature must express itself toward all. The mistake lies in supposing that because God has His purposes, His counsels, His decrees — because He is sovereign in His grace and mercy — because He has chosen from all eternity a people for His own praise and glory — because the names of the redeemed, all the redeemed, were written down in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world — that therefore God cannot be said to love all mankind — to love the world — and, moreover that the glad tidings of God's full and free salvation ought not to be proclaimed in the ears of every creature under heaven.

The simple fact is that the two lines, though so perfectly distinct, are laid down with equal clearness, in the word of God; neither interferes, in the smallest degree, with the other, but both together go to make up the beauteous harmony of divine truth and to set forth the glorious unity of the divine nature.

Now, it is with the activities of the divine nature and the outgoings of divine love that the preacher of the gospel has specially to do. He is not to be cramped, crippled, or confined in his blessed work, by any reference to God's secret decrees or purposes, though fully aware of the existence of such. His mission is to the world — the wide wide world. His theme is salvation — a salvation as full as

the heart of God, as permanent as the throne of God — as free as the air — free to all without any exception, limitation, or condition whatsoever. The basis of his work is the atoning death of Christ which has removed all barriers out of the way, and opened up the floodgates in order that the mighty tide of divine love may roll forth, in all its fullness, richness and blessedness, to a lost and guilty world.

And here, we may add, lies the ground of man's responsibility in reference to the gospel of God. If, indeed, it be true that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son — if “the righteousness of God is unto all” — if it be God's gracious will that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” — if He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance — then verily is every man who hears this glorious gospel laid under the most solemn responsibility to believe it and be saved. No one can honestly and truthfully turn round and say, “I longed to be saved, but could not, because I was not one of the elect. I longed to flee from the wrath to come but was prevented by the insuperable barrier of the divine decree which irresistibly consigned me to an everlasting hell.”

There is not, within the covers of the volume of God, in the entire range of His dealings with His creatures, in the aspect of His character, or in the enactments of His moral government, the very faintest shadow of a foundation for such an objection. Every man is left without excuse. God can say to all who have rejected His gospel, “I would, but ye would not.” There is absolutely no such thing as reprobation in the word of God, meaning, the consignment on God's part, of any number of His creatures to everlasting damnation. Everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25.) Men *will* rush into it. “Vessels of wrath” are fitted, not by God, but by themselves, “to destruction.” (Rom. 9.) Everyone who gets to heaven will have to thank God for it. Everyone who finds himself in hell will have to thank himself for it.

Furthermore, we have ever to remember that the sinner has nothing to do with God's unpublished decrees. What does he — what can he — know about such? Nothing whatever. But he has to do with God's published love — His proffered mercy — His free

salvation — His glorious gospel. We may fearlessly assert that so long as these glowing and glorious words shine in the record of God, "*Whosoever will* let him take of the water of life *freely*," it is impossible for any son or daughter of Adam to say, "I longed to be saved, but could not. I thirsted for the living water, but could not reach it. The well was deep and I had nothing to draw with." Ah, no, such language will never be used, such an objection will never be urged by anyone in all the ranks of the lost. When men pass into eternity they will see with awful clearness what they now affect to think is so obscure and perplexing, namely, the perfect compatibility of God's electing sovereign grace and the free offer of salvation to all — the fullest harmony between divine sovereignty and human responsibility,

We fondly trust the reader sees these things, even now. It is of the very last possible importance to maintain the balance of truth in the soul — to allow the beams of divine revelation to act, with full power, on the heart and conscience, unimpeded by the murky atmosphere of mere human theology. There is imminent danger in taking up a certain number of abstract truths and forming them into a system. We want the adjusting power of all truth. The growth and practical sanctification of the soul are promoted, not by some truth, but by the truth, in all its fullness, as embodied in the person of Christ, and set forth by the eternal Spirit in the holy scriptures. We must get rid completely of all our own preconceived notions — all merely theological views and opinions — and come like a little child, to the feet of Jesus to be taught by His Spirit, from out His holy word. Thus only shall we find rest from conflicting dogmas. Thus shall all the heavy clouds and mists of human opinion be rolled away and our enfranchised souls shall bask in the clear sunlight of a full divine revelation.

We shall now proceed with our proofs.

The second fact which we shall adduce to prove that God is for us will be found in

THE DEATH OF HIS SON.

And, for our present purpose, it is only necessary for us to take up one feature in the atoning death of Christ, but that one feature is a cardinal one. We refer to the marvellous fact set forth by the Holy Ghost in the prophet Isaiah, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. He hath put him to grief" Isaiah 53.

Our blessed Lord might have come into this world of sin and sorrow. He might have become a man. He might have been baptised in the Jordan — anointed by the Holy Ghost — tempted of Satan in the wilderness. He might have gone about doing good. He might have lived and laboured, wept and prayed, and, at the close, gone back to heaven again, thus leaving us involved in deeper gloom than ever. He might, like the priest or the Levite, in the parable, have come and looked upon us in our wounds and misery, passed by on the other side and returned alone to the place from whence He came.

And what if He had? what, reader, but the flames of an everlasting hell, for thee and me? For, be it well remembered, that all the living labours of the Son of God — His amazing ministry — His days of toil and His nights of prayer — His tears, His sighs, His groans — the whole of His life-work, from the manger up to, but short of, the cross, could not have blotted out one speck of guilt from a human conscience. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." No doubt, the eternal Son had to become a man that He might die; but incarnation could not cancel guilt. Indeed, the life of Christ, as a man on this earth, only proved the human race more guilty still. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin." The light that shone in His blessed ways only revealed the moral darkness of man — of Israel — of the world. Hence, therefore, had He merely come and lived and laboured here for three-and-thirty years, and gone back to heaven, our guilt and moral darkness would have been fully proved but no atonement made. "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."

This is a grand foundation-truth of Christianity, and must be constantly affirmed, and tenaciously held. There is immense moral power in it. If it be true that all the life-labours of the Son of God — His tears, His prayers, His groans — His sighs — if all these things put together could not cancel one single speck of guilt; then, indeed, may we not lawfully inquire what possible value can there be in our

works — our tears — our prayers — our religious services — our ordinances, sacraments and ceremonies — the whole range of religious activity and moral reform? Can such things avail to cancel our sins and give us a righteousness before God? The thought is perfectly monstrous. If any or all of these things could avail, then why the sacrificial, atoning death of Christ? Why that ineffable and inestimable sacrifice, if aught else would have done?

But, it will perhaps be said that, although none of these things could avail without the death of Christ, yet they must be added to it. For what? To make that peerless death — that precious blood — that priceless sacrifice of full avail? Is that it? Shall the rubbish of human doings, human righteousness, be flung into the scale to make the sacrifice of Christ of full avail in the Judgement of God? The bare thought is positive and absolute blasphemy.

But are there not to be good works? Yes, verily; but what are they? Are they the pious doings, the religious efforts, the moral activities of unregenerate, unconverted, unbelieving nature? Nay. What then? What are the Christian's good works? They are *life work's*, not dead works. They are the precious fruits of life possessed — the life of Christ in the true believer. There is not anything beneath the canopy of heaven which God can accept as a good work save the fruit of the grace of Christ in the believer. The very feeblest expression of the life of Christ, in the daily history of a Christian, is fragrant and precious to God. But the most splendid and gigantic labours of an unbeliever are, in God's account, but "dead works."

All this, however, is a digression from our main line, to which we must now return.

We have said that, for our present purpose, we shall merely refer to one special point in the death of Christ, and that is the fact that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him. Herein lies the striking and soul-subduing proof that God is for us. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." He not merely *gave* Him but *bruised Him*, and that for us. That spotless, holy, perfect One — the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth — the One who ever did the things which pleased His Father — whose whole life from the manger to the tree was one continued sweet odour ascending to the

throne and to the heart of God — whose every movement, every word, every look, every thought was well pleasing to God — whose one grand object, from first to last, was to glorify God and finish His work — this blessed One was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God — was nailed to the cursed tree, and there endured the righteous wrath of a sin hating God; and all this because God was for us — even *us*.

What marvellous and matchless grace is here! The Just One bruised for the unjust — the sinless, spotless, holy Jesus, bruised by the hand of Infinite Justice in order that guilty rebels might be saved; and not only saved but brought into the position and relationship of sons — sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty — heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

This surely is grace — rich, free, sovereign grace — grace abounding to the very chief of sinners — grace reigning, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ. Who would not trust this grace? Who can look at the cross, and doubt that God is for the sinner — for any sinner — for him — for the reader of these lines? Who would not confide in that love that shines in the cross? Who can look at the cross and not see that God willeth not the death of any sinner? Why did He not allow us to perish in our guilt — to descend into that everlasting hell which we so richly deserved because of our sins? Why give His Only-begotten Son? Why bruise Him on that shameful cross? Why hide His face from the only perfect Man that ever lived — that Man His own Eternal Son? Why all this, reader? Surely it was because God is for us, spite of all our guilt and sinful rebellion. Yes, blessed be His Name, He is for the poor self-destroyed, hell-deserving sinner, be he who or what he may; and each one whose eye scans these lines is now entreated to come and confide in the love that gave Jesus from the bosom and bruised Him on the cross.

Oh! beloved reader, do come, just now. Delay not! Waver not! Reason not! Listen not to Satan! Listen not to the suggestions and imaginings of your own heart; but listen to that word which assures you that God is for you, and to that love which shines forth in the gift and the death of His Son.

In pursuing what we may truly call the golden chain of evidence in proof that God is for us, we have dwelt upon the two precious facts of the gift and the death of His Son. We have travelled from the bosom to the cross, along that mysterious and marvellous path which is marked by the footprints of divine and everlasting love. We have seen the blessed One not only giving His only begotten Son from His bosom, but actually bruising Him for us — making His spotless soul an offering for sin — bringing Him down into the dust of death — making Him to be sin for us judging Him in our stead — thus affording the most unanswerable evidence of the fact that He is for us, that His heart is toward us, that He earnestly desires our salvation, seeing that He hath not withheld His Son, His only Son from us, but delivered Him up for us all.

We shall now proceed to our third proof, which is furnished by

THE RAISING OF HIS SON.

And in speaking of the glorious fact of resurrection, we must confine ourselves to the one point therein, namely, the proof which it furnishes of God's being friendly to us. A passage or two of scripture will suffice to unfold and establish this special point.

In Romans 4, the inspired apostle introduces God to our hearts as the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He is speaking of Abraham who, He tells us, "against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that" — what? That gave His Son? Nay. That bruised His Son upon the cross? Nay. What then? "That raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" — the very same "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Anxious reader, weigh this great fact. What was it that brought the precious Saviour to the cross? What brought Him down to the dust of death? Was it not our offences? Truly so. "He was delivered for our offences." He was nailed to the cursed tree for us. He represented us on the cross. He was our Substitute, in all the full value and deep significance of that word. He took our place and was treated, in every respect, as we deserved to be treated. The hand of infinite justice dealt with our sins — all our sins, at the cross. Jesus made Himself responsible for all our offences, our iniquities, our transgressions, our liabilities, all that was or ever could be against us — He, blessed be His peerless and adorable name! — made himself answerable for all, and died in our stead, under the full weight of our sins. He died, the just for the unjust.

Where is He now? The heart bounds with ineffable joy and holy triumph at the thought of the answer. Where is the blessed One who hung on yonder cross, and lay in yonder tomb? He is at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour. Who set Him there? Who put the crown upon His blessed brow? God Himself. The One who gave Him, and the One who bruised Him is the One who raised Him, and it is in Him we are to believe if we are to be counted righteous. This is the special point before the apostle's mind. Righteousness shall be imputed to us if we believe on God as the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Mark the vital link. Seize the all-important connection. The self-same One who hung upon the cross, charged with all our offences, is now on the throne without them. How did He get there? Was it in virtue of His eternal Godhead? No: for on that ground He was always there. He was God over all blessed for ever. Was it in virtue of His eternal Sonship? Nay; for He was ever there on that ground also. [We rejoice in every opportunity for the setting forth of Christ's eternal Sonship. We hold it to be an integral and essentially necessary part of the Christian faith.]

Hence, therefore, it could, in no wise, meet our need as guilty sinners, charged with innumerable offences, to be told that the eternal Son of the Father had taken His seat at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, inasmuch as that place ever belonged to Him

— yea, the very deepest and tenderest place in the bosom of the Father.

But, further, we may enquire, was it as the spotless, sinless, perfect Man that our adorable Lord took His seat on the throne? Nay; as such, He could, at any moment, between the manger and the cross, have taken His place there.

To what conclusion, then, are we absolutely shut up, in this matter? To that most precious, that tranquillising conclusion, that the self-same One who was delivered for our offences, bruised for our iniquities, judged in our stead, is now in heaven; that the One who represented us on the cross, is now on the throne; that the One who stood charged with all our guilt, is now crowned with glory and honour; that, so perfectly, so absolutely and completely, has He disposed of the entire question of our sins, that infinite justice has raised him from the dead, and placed a diadem of glory upon His sacred brow.

Reader, dost thou understand this? Dost thou see its bearing upon thyself? Dost thou believe in the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead? Dost thou see that, in so doing, He has declared Himself friendly to thee? And dost thou believe that, in raising up Jesus, He set forth His infinite satisfaction in the great work of atonement, and furnished thee with a receipt in full for all thy debts — a receipt for the “ten thousand talents.”

Here lies the gist, marrow, and substance of this magnificent argument of Romans 4. If the man who was delivered for our offences is now in heaven, and in heaven, too, by the hand and act of God himself; then, most surely, our offences are all gone, and we stand justified from all things, as free from every charge of guilt, and every breath of condemnation, as the blessed One Himself. It cannot possibly be otherwise, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is utterly impossible for a charge to be brought against the believer in the God of resurrection, for the simplest of all reasons that the One whom He raised was the One whom He bruised for the believer's sins. Why did He raise Him? Because the sins for which He bruised Him were all put away, and put away for ever. The Lord Jesus, *having undertaken our cause,*

and made Himself answerable for us in every way, could not be where He now is, if a single jot or tittle of our guilt remained. But, on the other hand, being where He now is, and being there by God's own act, it is impossible — utterly impossible — for any question to be raised as to the full and complete justification and perfect righteousness of the soul that believes in Him. Thus, the moment that any one believes in God, in the special character of the raiser of Jesus, he is counted perfectly righteous before Him. This is most marvellous, but divinely and eternally true. May the reader feel its power, sweetness, and tranquillising virtue! Yea, may the eternal Spirit give him the blessed sense of it, deep down in his heart! Then, indeed shall he have perfect peace in his soul; then, too, shall he understand how that, in raising, as well as in bruising and giving His Son, God has declared and proved Himself to be for us.

We had intended to bring under the special notice of the reader Hebrews 13:20, but we must allow him to dwell upon that lovely passage for himself, while we proceed to exhibit our fourth proof that God is for us, which will be found in

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Here, too, we must confine ourselves to one point in that most glorious event, and that is the form in which that august witness, the eternal Spirit, descended.

Let the reader turn to the second chapter of the Acts. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them *cloven tongues*", like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with *other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, *out of every nation under heaven*. Now, when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak *in his own language*. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we *every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?* Parthians, and

Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak *in our tongues* the wonderful works of God."

Here then we mark one special fact — a fact of deepest interest — three times referred to in the foregoing quotation. It is this, the Holy Ghost came down to speak to every man "in his own dialect" — not the dialect in which he was *educated* merely, but "*in which he was born*" — the very dialect in which his mother first whispered into his infant ears, the sweet and tender accents of a mother's love. Such was the medium, such the vehicle which the divine Messenger adopted for the blessed purpose of making known to man that God was for us. He did not speak to the Hebrew in Greek, or to the Greek in Latin. He spoke to each one in the language which he understood, in the plain vernacular — the mother tongue. If there was any peculiarity in that mother tongue, any idiom, any provincialism in the dialect of each, the blessed Spirit would make use of it for the purpose of reaching the heart with the sweet story of grace.

Contrast with this the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. There Jehovah confined Himself absolutely to one language. If persons had been gathered there "from every nation under heaven," they would not have understood a single syllable. The law — the ten words — the record of man's duty to God and to his neighbour was sedulously wrapped up in one tongue. But when "*the wonderful works of God*" were to be published — when the blessed story of love was to be told out when the heart of God towards poor guilty sinners was to be revealed, was one language enough? No, "Every nation under heaven" must hear. and hear, too, in their own very mother tongue.

Reader, is not this a telling fact? It will perhaps be said that those who heard Peter and the rest on the day of Pentecost, were Jews. Well, that in no wise robs our fact of its charm, its sweetness, and its power. Our fact is that when the eternal Spirit descended from heaven, to tell of the resurrection of Christ, to tell of accomplished redemption — to publish the glad tidings of salvation

— to preach repentance and remission of sins — He did not confine Himself to one language, but spoke in every dialect under heaven!

And why? Because He desired to make man understand what He had to say to him — He desired to reach his heart with the sweet tidings of redeeming love — the soul-stirring message of full remission of sins. When the law was to be given — when Jehovah had to speak to man about his duty — when He had to address him in such terms as, "Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that," He confined Himself to one solitary language. But when He would unfold the precious secret of His love — when He would prove to man that He was for him, He, blessed for ever be His name, took care to speak in every language under heaven, so that every man might hear, in his own dialect wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God.

[The reader will note with interest a fact alluded to elsewhere, that in Genesis 11 divers tongues were given as a judgement upon man's pride. In Acts 2 divers tongues were given in grace to meet man's need. And in Revelation 7 the various tongues are all found united in one song or praise to God and to the Lamb. Such are some of the wonderful works of God. May we praise Him with all our ransomed powers! May our hearts adore Him!]

Thus, then, in our series of proofs — our golden chain of evidence, we have travelled from the bosom of God to the cross of Christ, and from that precious cross back to the throne — we have marked the giving, the bruising, and the raising of the Son; we have seen the very heart of God told out in deep and marvellous love, and tender compassion toward guilty perishing sinners. Moreover, we have marked the descent of the eternal Spirit, from the throne of God — His mission to this world to announce to every creature under heaven the glad tidings of a full, free, and everlasting salvation, through the blood of the Lamb, and to announce these tidings not in an unknown tongue, but in the very tongue wherein each was born.

What more remains? Is there yet another link to be added to the chain? Yes; there is

THE POSSESSION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

It may perhaps be said that our fifth proof is involved in our fourth, inasmuch as the fact of my possessing a copy of the bible in my mother tongue is, in reality, the Holy Ghost speaking to me in the language in which I was born.

True; but still, so far as the reader is concerned, the fact that God has put into his hand or within his reach the sacred volume — the inestimable boon, the holy scriptures — is an additional proof that He is for him. For why were we not left in ignorance and total darkness? Why was the divine book put into our hands? Why, each one may say, for himself and herself, was I thus favoured? Why was I not left to live and die in heathen blindness? Why was the heavenly lamp allowed to cast its precious beams on me — even me?

Ah I beloved reader, the answer is, "Because God is for thee." Yes, for thee, notwithstanding all thy many sins — for thee, spite of all thy forgetfulness, ingratitude and rebellion — for thee, although as thou very well knowest, thou canst not show a single reason why He should not be against thee. He gave His Son from His bosom, bruised Him on the cross, raised Him from the dead, sent down the Holy Ghost, put into your very hands His blessed book, all to show you that He is for you, that His heart is toward you, that He earnestly desires your salvation.

And mark, we pray thee, thou canst not say, nor wilt thou ever dare to say, "I could not understand the bible; it was beyond me; it was full of abstruse mysteries which I could not fathom; of difficulties which I could not solve; of discrepancies which I could not reconcile. And when I turned to those who professed to be Christians, I found them split up into almost innumerable sects, and divided into almost endless schools of doctrine. And, not only so, but I saw such utter hollowness, such gross inconsistency, such flagrant contradiction between profession and practice, that I was forced to abandon the whole subject of religion with a mingled feeling of perplexity, contempt, and disgust."

These objections will not stand in the judgement, nor keep thee out of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Remember this.

Yes, ponder it deeply. Let not the devil, let not thine own heart deceive thee. What does Abraham say to the rich man, in Luke 16? "They have Moses and the prophets, *let them hear them.*" Why does the rich man not reply, "They cannot understand them?" He dare not.

No, reader; a child can understand the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There is not one beneath the canopy of God's heaven, who possesses a copy of the holy scriptures, who is not solemnly responsible before God for the use he makes of them. If professing Christians were split up into ten thousand times as many sects as they are; if they were ten thousand times as inconsistent as they are; if schools and doctors of divinity were ten thousand times more conflicting than they are — still the word to each possessor of the bible is, "You have Moses and the prophets, and the New Testament, hear them."

Oh! that we could persuade the unconverted, the unawakened, the unbelieving reader to think of these things, to think of them now, to ponder them, in the very hidden depths of his moral being, to give them his heart's undivided attention, ere it be too late. We contemplate, with ever-deepening horror, the condition of a lost soul in hell — of one opening his eyes, in that place of endless torment, to the tremendous fact that God is against him and against him for ever; that all hope is gone; that nothing can ever bridge the chasm that separates the region of the lost from the heaven of the redeemed; that "there is a great gulf *fixed.*"

We cannot proceed. The thought is really overpowering. The heart is crushed by the appalling contemplation. Dear, dear reader, do let us entreat of thee, ere we lay down the pen, to turn, this very hour, to a dear loving Saviour who stands with open arms and open bosom to receive all who come to Him, and who assures thee that "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Do come and trust in God's faithful word and Christ's finished work.

Here lies the precious secret of the whole matter. Look away from self, look straight to Jesus, confide simply in Him, and in what He has done for thee on the cross, and all thy sins shall be blotted

out, divine righteousness shall be thine, eternal life, sonship, an indwelling Spirit, an all-prevailing Advocate, a bright home in the heavens, a portion in Christ's eternal glory — yes, reader, if thou wilt but believe in Jesus all shall be thine — Himself the best of all.

May the Holy Ghost lead thee, this moment, to the feet of Jesus, and enable thee to cry out, in holy triumph, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" God grant it for Jesus Christ's sake.

Romans 12: 1

EXHORTATION

There are few things less understood than the real nature of exhortation. We are apt to attach an idea of legal effort to that word which is quite foreign to it. Divine exhortation always assumes that a certain relationship exists, that a certain standing is enjoyed, that certain privileges are understood. The Spirit never exhorts except on a divine basis. For example, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God" (). Here we have an excellent example of divine exhortation. "The mercies of God" are first put before us in all their fullness, brightness and preciousness, before we are called to hear the voice of exhortation.

Again, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4: 30). Here we are exhorted on the settled ground of our being "sealed." He does not say, "Grieve not the Spirit, lest ye be eternally lost." Such would not be in keeping with the true character of divine exhortation. We "are sealed," not as long as we behave ourselves, but "until the day of redemption." It is absolutely done, and this is the powerful reason why we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. If that which is the eternal seal of God, set upon us until the day of redemption, be the Holy Spirit, how careful should we be not to grieve Him.

Again, "*Since* ye then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Col. 3: 1). As those who are risen, what should we seek but "things above?" We do not seek these things in order to be risen, but because we *are* risen. In other words the solid basis of our standing is laid down by the Spirit of grace, before ever the voice of exhortation falls on the ear. This is divine. Anything else would be mere legality. To call upon a man to set his affections upon things above, before he knows upon divine authority that he is "risen with Christ," is to begin at the wrong end and to lose your labor. It is only when I believe that precious emancipating truth that when Christ died, I died; when He was buried, I was buried; when He rose, I rose; it is only when this grand reality takes possession of my soul

that I can lend an open ear and an understanding heart to exhortation's heavenly voice.

It is well for my reader to understand this thoroughly. There is no need whatever for a multitude of words. Let him simply take his New Testament and beginning with the epistle to the Romans, trace throughout the exhortations of the Spirit of God. He will find without a single exception, that they are as completely divested of the legal element as are the promises which glitter like gems on the page of inspiration. This subject is not fully understood. Exhortation in the hands of man is widely different from what it is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. How often do we hear men exhorting us to a certain line of action so we may reach certain privileges. The way of the Spirit is the reverse of this. He sets before us our standing in Christ in the first place, and then He unfolds the walk. He first speaks of privilege — free, unconditional privilege — and then He sets forth the holy responsibility connected therewith. He first presents the settled and unalterable relationship in which free grace has set us, and then dwells upon the affections belonging thereto.

There is nothing so hateful to the Spirit of God as legality, that hateful system which casts us as *doers* back upon self, instead of casting us as lost sinners over upon Christ. Man would eagerly do something, but he must be brought to the end of himself and to the end of all beside, and then as a lost sinner, find his rest in Christ — a full, precious, all-sufficient Christ. In this way alone can he ever expect solid peace and true happiness. Only then will he ever be able to yield an intelligent response to the Spirit's "word of exhortation."

Romans 14: 22

A SPIRIT OF LOVE AND GRACE

Romans 14: 22, with the entire context, teaches us the necessity of walking tenderly in reference to the consciences of our brethren. A man may have faith as to certain things, perfect liberty in his own mind, whether as regards days or foods or many other minor things, but his faith or his liberty should not lead him to act in such a way as to stumble his weak brother. This is the spirit and teaching of this entire beautiful chapter — this lovely summary of Christian morals. Of course, if there were any attempt to impose the eating of herbs, abstinence from meats or observance of days as a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, it would be our place to resist with uncompromising decision.

Your most kind and Christian letter came to hand and we desire to give you our sincere thanks for the gracious spirit in which you write. Would that all who feel obliged in conscience to differ from us, were led to write in a like spirit and tone!

As to your first question, it might be well to ask the persons who use the language to which you refer what they mean by it. It certainly is possible to be occupied with mere doctrine apart from Christ, but we greatly fear that spirit of fault-finding which leads people to pick holes in everything and everyone except themselves. If we prayed more and talked less, we might be the means of doing some little good in our day and generation. We generally find that the fault-finding, hair-splitting generation are not the most blameless in their personal ways. The loudest talkers are generally the lowest walkers.

1 Corinthians 8: 10-11 teaches us the solemn truth that if we, by a false use of our liberty, embolden a weak brother to act against his conscience, we, so far as in us lies, cause him to perish by destroying the action of his conscience toward God. It is of the utmost importance to allow Scripture to have its full play upon the soul and not to blunt its edge by the dogmas of systematic divinity. It is a good thing to open all the chambers of the heart and have

them ventilated by the pure air of Scripture. We constantly find theology acting as a barrier to interrupt the rays of heavenly light and hinder their shining in upon the soul. The same authority that says “My sheep shall never perish” warns us against causing a weak brother to perish by a self-indulgent uncharitable use of our liberty. It will be our wisdom, as it most assuredly is for our moral security, to hearken to the one as well as to the other.

Matthew 18: 23-35 does not refer to the question of “eternal life.” Its primary application is to the Jew and his mode of dealing with the Gentile. Notwithstanding the abounding mercy which God had shown to the Jew, he would not listen to the idea of mercy to the Gentile. The consequence is, as the apostle declares, “The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess. 2: 16, see the entire context). The apostate *nation* will never be forgiven. A *remnant* will be saved through grace and become the nucleus of the restored nation.

No doubt, we professing Christians have to learn a very important lesson from this scripture — the urgent necessity of cultivating a forgiving spirit. If we fail to act in grace, we are in danger of losing the sense of grace in our own souls. How dreadful for one who has been forgiven all his sins to drag a fellow sinner to the judgment-seat on account of a little money! Let us note particularly the closing words of our Lord, “So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also to you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.” This marks the application of the entire passage to our Father's governmental dealings with us from day to day.

It is a terrible thing for a professing Christian to harbor an unforgiving spirit. We do not see how it is possible for such to have any real sense of grace or any communion with God; nor should we wonder to find such given over to the most tormenting feelings as the expression of God's judgment upon a wrong state of heart. May we, beloved friend, ever cultivate a loving, genial, tender, forgiving spirit. We may rest assured our God delights in this. God loves a cheerful giver and a frank forgiver, because that is precisely what He is Himself, blessed forever be His name!

1 Corinthians 1:30

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Christ is the believer's righteousness, as we read in 1 Corinthians 1:30, “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Again in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” When we had no righteousness for God, He provided a righteousness for us, and that righteousness is Christ — a crucified, risen and glorious Christ. In the law, God was *demanding* righteousness from man. In the gospel, God is *providing* righteousness for man. This makes a vast and marvelous difference to anyone who is honestly struggling and toiling to work out righteousness for himself before God.

There was a great difference between Adam's apron and God's coat. God never set a stitch in the former, and man never set a stitch in the latter. There was nothing of God in the apron; there was nothing of man in the coat. Hence we find that Adam's apron proved useless in the hour of need. The very moment he heard the voice of the Lord God, he was afraid and fled to hide because, as he said, “I was naked.” *He ignored his own apron!* It was of no use whatever to him. It could not even satisfy his own conscience. Not so, however, when he got on God's coat. He could then say “I am clothed” because God had clothed him. The coat he wore was of God's own making. Moreover, it was founded on the shedding of blood — an all-important cardinal truth. Divine righteousness rests on the basis of accomplished redemption. The cross is the grand foundation, the great central truth of Christianity.

1 Corinthians 9:27

WHAT IS A CASTAWAY?

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9: 27).

This passage has perplexed and troubled many an earnest heart. Many have argued thus, while pondering the above solemn scripture, “If such an one as Paul was uncertain as to the direction of his course, who then can be sure?” But was Paul uncertain as to the issue? By no means. The verse immediately preceding teaches us the very opposite: “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.” Paul knew quite well how the whole matter was to end, so far as he was concerned. He could say, “I know whom (not merely what) I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 2: 12). And again, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8: 38-39).

These scriptures are amply sufficient to prove that Paul had not so much as a shadow of a doubt as to his eternal security. “I *know*,” “I *am persuaded*.” There is no doubt or uncertainty in such utterances. Paul knew better. His foundation was as stable as the throne of God. Whatever certainty Christ could give, that Paul possessed. We are fully convinced that, so far as Paul was concerned, from the moment the scales dropped from his eyes in the city of Damascus until he was offered up in the city of Rome, his heart never once harbored a single doubt, a single fear, a single misgiving. “He was troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” Yes, in the midst of all his conflict and trouble, he could say, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4: 17).

Paul had no doubts or fears as to the final issue. Neither should anyone who has truly come to Christ, inasmuch as He Himself has said, “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out” (John 6: 37). No one who is really cast upon Christ, will ever be cast away from Him. This is a divine axiom, a fundamental truth, an eternal reality. Christ is responsible for every lamb in the flock. The counsels of God have made Him so; the love of His own heart has made Him so; the Holy Scriptures declare Him to be so. Not one of Christ's blood-bought lambs can ever be lost, not one can ever be cast away. They are all as safe as He can make them — as safe as Himself.

What then does Paul mean when he says, “Lest I myself should be a castaway?” If he does not mean to convey the idea of uncertainty as to his personal security in Christ, what then does he mean? I believe the expression applies not to his future, but his present service — not to his heavenly home, but his earthly path — not to his eternal privileges, but his present responsibilities. Paul was a servant as well as a son, so he exercised himself and kept his body in subjection, “lest that by any means he might be *disapproved of*,” the better translation of *castaway*. The body is a good servant, but a bad master. If not kept down, it will altogether disqualify the servant of Christ for the discharge of his high and holy responsibilities. A person may be a child of God and yet be “disapproved” as a servant of Christ. To be an efficient servant of Christ involves self-denial, self-judgment, self-emptiness, self control. *I do not become a child of God by these exercises, but most assuredly, I shall never be a successful servant of Christ without them.*

This distinction is very plain and very important. We are too prone to think that the question of our personal security is the only one of any importance to us. This is a mistake. God has secured that, and He tells us so, that with free hearts we may run the race, carry on the warfare, fulfill the service. We do not run, fight or work for life; we *have* life-eternal before we take a single step in the Christian race, strike a blow in the Christian warfare, or perform a single act of Christian service. A dead man could not run a race, but a living man must run “lawfully,” else he cannot be crowned. So also in

reference to the servant of Christ. He must deny himself; he must keep nature down; he must keep his body in subjection, lest he be disapproved of and set aside as a servant unfit for the Master's work, a vessel not "meet for the Master's use." A true believer can *never* lose his relationship to Christ or the eternal dignities and privileges connected therewith, but he can lose his present fitness for service. He may so act as to be disapproved of as a workman. Solemn thought!

We have in the person of John Mark an illustration of the principle laid down in 1 Corinthians 9: 27. In Acts 13: 5 John Mark was counted worthy to be associated with Paul in the ministry. In Acts 15: 38 he was disapproved, but in 2 Timothy 4: 11 he was again acknowledged as a profitable servant. Now, Mark was as truly a child of God, a saved person, a believer in Christ, when Paul rejected him as a co-worker, as when he at first acknowledged him and finally restored him to confidence. In no case was the question of John Mark's personal salvation raised. It was altogether a matter of fitness for service. It is evident that the influence of natural affection had been allowed to act on Mark's heart to unfit him in Paul's judgment for that great work which he, as the steward of Christ, was carrying on.

If my reader will turn to Judges 7 he will find another example which strikingly illustrates our principle. What was the great question raised with respect to Gideon's company? Was it as to whether a man was an Israelite, a son of Abraham, a circumcised member of the congregation? By no means. What then? Simply as to whether he was a fit vessel for the service at hand. And what was it that rendered a man fit for such service? Confidence in God and self-denial! See verses 3 and 6. Those who were fearful were rejected (v. 3). And those who consulted their own ease were rejected (v. 7). Now, the 31,700 who were rejected were as truly Israelites as were the 300 who were approved, but the former were not fit servants; the latter were.

All this is easily understood. There is no difficulty if the heart does not make difficulties for itself. Many passages of the Word, which are designed to act on the conscience of the *servant*, are used to alarm the heart of the *child*; many that are only intended to

admonish us in reference to our irresponsibility, are used to make us question our relationship.

May the Lord increase in us the grace of a discerning mind and enable us to distinguish between things that differ, so that while our hearts enter into the sweetness and tranquilizing power of those words, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out," our conscience may also feel the solemnity of our position as servants and recoil from everything that might cause us to be set aside as an unclean vessel which the Master cannot take up and use.

May we ever remember that, while as children of God, we are eternally safe, yet as servants of Christ, we may be disapproved of and set aside.

1 Corinthians 10:31.

A Word on Christian Intercourse.

It is most needful, when about to offer a word of admonition, to set forth the proper ground on which such a word can be received. The New Testament abounds in admonition, warning, and exhortation; but it clearly lays down the truth as to the position in which the believer is set, before ever he is called to listen to such things; and unless we understand and practically enter into that position, an admonition or a precept may lead to a spirit of legalism or bondage.

Now, as to the position of the believer, as set forth in the Scriptures of the New Testament, it is one of the *most* complete — justification and acceptance. "Justified from *all* things," "*complete* in Him who is the head of all principality and power," "accepted in the Beloved."

These are some of the expressions used by the Holy Spirit to set forth the believer's position before God — a position founded on the accomplished work of Christ, with which, it is needless to say he has nothing whatever to do. God's grace has assigned it to him; the blood of Christ has fitted him to occupy it; and the operation of the Spirit has led him into the understanding and enjoyment of it. His being in it, therefore, is the fruit of the combined action of THE DIVINE THREE IN ONE; nor can aught in him ever interfere with that combined action. The believer's justification, completeness, and acceptance, are as independent of himself and everything in him as is the position of the sun in the heavens. There it is; but who set it there? God. There and thus the believer is; but who set him there? God. Hence one is as independent of him as the other, for both alike are founded on what God is.

It is well to see this — well to have a perfectly unclouded view of what we are, and where we are — well to be led to pause in view of the actings of Divine grace on our behalf — well to allow God to do with us as He will, to make us what He will, and set us where He will; assured, as we may well be, that all is to His infinite glory and praise. We may think it all too good to be true: and too good it would

assuredly be, were its truth in any wise dependent on us; but not when its truth depends entirely on God. It might be too good for us to get; but not too good for God to give. This makes all the difference. When God gives, He gives like himself. The blessedness of the gift must depend upon the giver. He GIVES perfect justification — He GIVES complete acceptance. To whom? To *sinners*. On what ground? On the ground of Christ's accomplished sacrifice. For what purpose? That they might be to the praise of His glory (John 17: 2; Acts 13: 39; Rom. 5 *passim*; 6: 23; Eph. 1: 6; Col. 2: 10; Eph. 1: 12).

Hence, therefore, it is clear that no warning, admonition, precept, or exhortation can, in the most remote manner, involve, affect, or interfere with, the believer's position and relationship. So far from this, the very fact of our being addressed in such a way proves, in the clearest manner, God's gracious recognition of our relationship. If God gives me a command, the fact of His doing so proves that He recognizes in me a principle of life and power, whereby I can both hear and obey. He would not call upon one "dead in trespasses and sins" to do anything His command to such a one is to receive, as a free gift, eternal life in His Son Jesus Christ. But when one has gotten this life, is born again, has entered into an eternal relationship, based upon redemption, then, and not until then, is he addressed in the language of warning and exhortation; and on his due observance of such language depends much of his present blessing, comfort, and usefulness.

We are prone to confound two things, which differ very materially, namely, our eternal relationship to God as His children, and our present responsibility to Christ as His servants and witnesses. The former is the result of the action of the Divine will and power; as we read in James, "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." The latter, on the contrary, is a thing devolving upon us daily, and calling for much holy diligence in the prayerful study of the word, and waiting upon God. Many of us fail in answering our responsibility to Christ, in manifesting Him in our ways, and in our practical testimony for Him; but this, blessed be God, does not touch our eternal relationship with Him, though it may and does most seriously interfere with our perception and enjoyment as children of

God; yea, to talk of one without the other, is to be "deceived by vain words."

The train of thought leads us naturally to the immediate subject of this little paper, namely, Christian Intercourse — a subject of much more importance than might, at first sight, appear. By Christian Intercourse, I do not mean that intercourse which we have on the benches of a meeting room, or when gathered, on solemn occasions, for worship or edification. The intercourse to which I allude is of a much more commonplace and familiar character; and for that very reason, it needs much more solemn watchfulness, lest in it the enemy should betray us into anything unbecoming the solemnity, purity, and elevation, which ought to mark the character and path of those who profess to be members of Christ's holy body, and temples of His Holy Spirit.

It is frequently most painful, and deeply humbling, to observe the character of intercourse which prevails now-a-days, amongst those whose professed principles would lead us to look for very different practical results. While marking the intercourse, and hearkening to the conversation which frequently obtains amongst professing Christians of the present day, one feels disposed to ask, Is it possible that these people really believe what they profess? Do they believe that they are "dead and risen with Christ" — that their calling is a heavenly one — that they are part of Christ's body — that they are crucified with Christ — that they are not in the flesh, but in the spirit — that they are pilgrims and strangers — that they are waiting for God's Son from heaven? It may be, that all these weighty principles are items in the creed to which they have given a nominal assent: but it is morally impossible that their hearts can be affected by them. How could a heart, really under the power of such stupendous truths, take pleasure, or even take part, in vain, frivolous, empty talk — talk about people and their circumstances, with whom, and with which, they have nothing whatever to do — talk about every passing trifle of the day? Could a heart full of Christ be thus occupied? It is as impossible as that noon could intermingle with midnight. Yet professing Christians, when they meet in the drawing-room, at the dinner-table, and at their tea-parties, are, alas! too often found thus occupied.

Nor is it only in our intercourse with our fellow Christians that we forget ourselves, or rather forget the Lord; but also in our intercourse with the world. How often, when we meet with unconverted people, do we slip into the current of their thoughts, and find a theme in common with them! Sometimes this is mourned over, sometimes it is defended, and the defence is founded upon an erroneous view of the apostle's expression, "I am made all things to all." This surely, does not mean that he entered into the folly and nonsense of worldly men. By no means. This would be to assert entirely too much. What then does the expression mean? It means, that *Paul denied, himself amongst all classes of men, in order that he might "by all means save some."* His object was to bring sinners to Christ, and not to please himself by entering into their vain and foolish habits of conversation.

Let us look at the Master Himself, our great Exemplar, and inquire how did He carry Himself toward the men of this world? Did He ever find an object in common with them? Never. He was always feeding upon and filled with one object, and of that object He spoke. He ever sought to lead the thoughts of men to God. This, my beloved reader, should be our object too. Whenever, or wherever we meet men, we should lead them to think of Christ; and if we do not find an open door for that, we should not certainly suffer ourselves to be carried into the current of their thoughts. If we have business to transact with men, we must transact it; but we should not have any fellowship with them in their habits of thought or conversation, because our Master never had; and if we diverge from His path as to this, we shall soon sink into a low and unsanctified tone of spirit. We shall be as "salt that has lost its saltness," and thus be "good for nothing."

I cannot doubt but that much of that lack of deep, settled, habitual peace, of which so many complain, is very justly traceable to the light and trifling habits of conversation in which they indulge; to their reading of newspapers and other light works. Such things must grieve the Holy Spirit; and if the Holy Spirit is grieved, Christ cannot be enjoyed; for it is the Spirit alone who, by the written word, ministers Christ to the soul.

I do not mean to deny that very many feel this lack of peace who do not engage in such things. By no means; but I say that these things must necessarily be productive of much serious injury to our spiritual health, and must superinduce a sickly condition of soul, which is most dishonouring to Christ.

It may be, that many who have long been accustomed to high teaching, will turn away from such plain, practical principles as these; but we must expect this. It will be pronounced legalism; and the writer may be accused of seeking to bring people into a sort of bondage, and of casting them upon themselves. I can only say, God forbid. I trust the opening statements of this paper will furnish a very decisive answer to such an accusation. If it be legalism to direct attention to the matter of conversation, then is it the legalism of the Epistle to the Ephesians; for there we find that "foolish talking and jesting" are amongst the things which are not to be "once named among us, as becometh saints?"* Again, we read, "Let your conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt." These are plain statements of Scripture — statements, moreover, found in immediate connection with some of the most elevated doctrines of inspiration; and it will be found that where those plain statements are not allowed their full weight on the conscience, the higher truths are not enjoyed. I can neither enjoy nor walk worthy of my "high vocation," if I am indulging in "foolish talking and jesting."

{*The word, which is rendered "jesting," takes in what is commonly called "wit," "humour," "punning," "*repartee*," and such like. It is well to remember this. The word "jesting" would let a great deal pass which should come under the edge of the original word, which is a compound of two Greek words, signifying "to turn well."}

I quite admit the need of carefully avoiding all affected sanctimoniousness, or fleshly restraint. The sanctimoniousness of nature is fully as bad as its levity, if not worse. But why exhibit either the one or the other? The gospel gives us something far better. Instead of affected sanctimoniousness, the gospel gives us real sanctity; and instead of levity, it gives us holy cheerfulness. There is no need to *affect* anything, for if I am feeding upon Christ, all is reality, without any effort. The moment there is effort, it is all perfect

weakness. If I say I must talk about Christ, it becomes terrible bondage, and I exhibit my own weakness and folly; but if my soul is in communion, all is natural and easy: for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." It is said of a certain little insect, that it always exhibits the colour of the leaf on which it feeds. So is it exactly with the Christian. It is very easy to tell what he is feeding upon.

But it may be said by some, that "we cannot be always talking about Christ." I reply, that just in proportion as we are led by an ungrieved Spirit, will all our thoughts and words be occupied about Christ. We, if we are children of God, will be occupied with Him throughout eternity; and why not now? We are as really separated from the world *now*, as we shall be *then*; but we do not walk in the Spirit.

It is quite true, that in entering into the matter of a Christian's habit of conversation, one is taking low ground; but, then, it is needful ground. It would be much happier to keep on the high ground; but, alas! we fail in this; and it is a mercy that Scripture and the Spirit of God meet us in our failure. Scripture tells us that we are "seated in heavenly places in Christ;" and it tells us also not "to steal." It may be said that it is low ground to talk to heavenly men about stealing; yet it is Scripture ground, and that is enough for us. The Spirit of God knew that it was not sufficient to tell us that we are seated in *heaven*; He also tells us how to conduct ourselves *on earth*; and our experience of the former will be evidenced by our exhibition of the latter. The walk *here* proves how I enter into my place *there*.

Hence, I may find in the Christian's walk a very legitimate ground on which to deal with him about the actual condition of his soul before God. If his walk is low, carnal, and worldly, it must be evident that he is not realizing his high and holy position as a member of Christ's body and a temple of God.

Wherefore, to all who are prone to indulge in habits of light and trifling conversation, I would affectionately but solemnly say, look well to the general state of your spiritual health. Bad symptoms show themselves — certain evidences of a disease working within — a disease, it may be, more or less affecting the very springs of

vitality. Beware how you allow this disease to make progress. Betake yourself at once to the Physician, and partake of His precious balm. Your whole spiritual constitution may be deranged, and nothing can restore its tone, save the healing virtues of what He has to give you.

A fresh view of the excellency, preciousness, and beauty of Christ is the only thing to lift the soul up out of a low condition. All our barrenness and poverty arises from our having let slip Christ. It is not that He has let us slip. No; blessed be His name, this cannot be. But, practically, we have let Him slip, and, as a consequence, our tone has become so low, that it is at times difficult to recognize anything of the Christian in us but the mere name. We have stopped short in our practical career. We have not entered, as we should, into the meaning of Christ's "cup and baptism;" we have failed in seeking fellowship with Him in His sufferings, death, and resurrection. We have sought the result of all these, as wrought out in Him; but we have not entered experimentally into them, and hence our melancholy decline, from which nothing can recover us but getting more into the fulness of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

THE ROLE AND DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN

Scripture is very plain as to the place of the woman (1 Cor. 11: 1-16). We do not believe it to be according to nature or according to revelation for a woman to be prominent either in the Church or in the world. It is our deeply cherished conviction that there is no sphere in which the woman can move with such grace and dignity as in the shade and retirement of the domestic circle. There she can prove herself the helper of the man in all good works. Home is preeminently the woman's place. The Holy Spirit has distinctly assigned her work when He declares that she is to "guide the house." There may be exceptional cases in which the Christian female, having no special home duties, may devote herself to outside work with real advantage to many, but such cases are few and far between. The general rule is as plain as possible (1 Tim. 5: 14).

As to the question of "woman's rights," etc., we have nothing whatever to do with politics. It is our desire to be taught exclusively by Scripture, and most certainly we cannot find anything in the New Testament about women having a place in the legislature. In the history of Israel, it was always a proof of the nation's low condition when the female was thrown into prominence. It was Barak's backwardness that threw Deborah forward. According to the normal, the divine idea, the man is the head. This is seen in perfection in Christ and the Church. Here is the true model on which our thoughts are to be formed. So far as this poor world is concerned, it is all in confusion. The foundations are out of course. God has said, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezek. 21: 27). There can be nothing right until "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." Till then, the Christian must be content to be a pilgrim and a stranger on this earth, having his citizenship, his home, his portion, in heaven. May it be thus with all who belong to Christ!

We do not expect that persons who are bent on carrying out their own thoughts; whose will has never broken; who reason

instead of submitting to the authority of Scripture; who say, “I think” instead of seeing what God thinks — we do not expect that any such will approve or appreciate what we have answered in reply to your question, but we must bow down to the authority of God in this as in all beside.

You have our fullest sympathy in all your mental exercises. We believe you are absolutely right in refusing to be present where a woman undertakes to speak or pray in public. The spirit and teaching of the New Testament are against any such practice. “Silence” is enjoined on the woman in public or in the presence of a man. As to 1 Corinthians 11, you have nothing about the assembly until verse 17 where a new subject is introduced, and as you truly remark, the Spirit of God cannot contradict Himself. He cannot in one place tell a woman to keep silence and in another, tell her to break it. It is both contrary to God and contrary to nature for a woman to come forward as a public speaker. She is to illustrate the proper place of the Church — subjection, not teaching. The Church ought not, does not teach: she is false if she does. “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach.” This is the spirit and genius of popery. To say that the Church has power to decree, enact or teach is apostasy. The Church is taught by the Word of God. She is to obey and be in subjection. She ought to be the pillar and ground of the truth — to *hold* and *maintain* the truth, but never teach. Such is the invariable teaching of the New Testament as to the Church of which the woman should be the illustration.

It will perhaps be said that God uses the preaching and praying of women for the blessing of souls. Well, what does this prove? The rightness of female preaching? No, but the sovereign goodness of God. Were we to argue from the fact of the divine blessing, what might we not be led to approve? God is sovereign and may work where and by whom He pleases; we are *servants* and must do what He tells us. In the time of the “awakening” souls were smitten in Roman Catholic chapels in the presence of the sacrifice of the mass. Does that prove popery to be right? No, it only proves that God is good. *To reason from results may lead us into the grossest error.*

It ought to be sufficient for everyone who bows to the authority of Scripture to know that the Holy Spirit strictly commands the woman to keep silence in public assembly. And truly we may say, “Doth not even nature itself teach” the moral unfitness of a woman's appearing in a pulpit or on a platform? Unquestionably. There are many and varied ways in which women can “labor in the gospel” without the unseemliness of public preaching. We are not told how “those women labored” with the blessed apostle, but most assuredly it was not by speaking in public.

As to the four daughters of Philip the evangelist “who did prophecy,” it rests with the defenders of female preaching to prove that they exercised that gift in public. We believe it was in the shade and retirement of their father's house.

In conclusion, dear friend, we express our ever-deepening conviction that home is, pre-eminently, the woman's sphere. There she can move with moral grace and dignity. There she can shine as a wife and a mother to the glory of Him who has called her to fill those holy relationships. There the most lovely traits of female character are developed — traits which are completely defaced when she abandons her home work and enters the domain of the public preacher.

We believe it is plainly opposed to Scripture for a woman to speak in the Church or to teach or in any way to usurp authority over the man. But if there be a meeting of a private, social character, there is in our judgment an opening for the free communication of thought, provided always that the woman keep the place assigned her by the voice of nature and the Word of God.

Judging from the tone of your letter, we feel assured the Lord will guide you into the right path of service. We are not told in what specific way “those women labored with Paul in the gospel,” but we know there are a thousand ways in which a woman may serve in the gospel without ever stepping out of that sphere which properly belongs to her. As to the married woman, we feel increasingly persuaded that home is preeminently her place; there she has a hallowed and elevated sphere in which she can serve in the full

consciousness of being exactly where the hand of God has set her and where His Word directs her. May the Lord bless and keep you!

Scripture is very plain as to the manner in which Christian women should be attired, not only at the Lord's table, but at all times. Surely in this, as in all beside, there is urgent need of the exercise of a tender conscience, a godly subjection to the authority of God's Word. If Christians will not give heed to the exhortation of the Holy Spirit, they are not likely to pay much attention to these pages. One of the special needs of the moment is thorough submission to the true teachings of Holy Scripture. Where the heart is under the direct government of the Word all will be right; where it is not, there will be nothing right.

1 Corinthians 11:26

“As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” (1 Cor. 11:26)

Thoughts on the Lord's Supper; Designed for the help of Christians in this day of difficulty.

Preface.

The institution of the Lord's Supper must be regarded, by every spiritual man, as a peculiarly touching proof of the Lord's gracious care and considerate love for His Church. From the time of its appointment until the present hour, it has been a steady, though silent, witness to a truth which the enemy, by every means in his power, has sought to corrupt and set aside, namely, that redemption is an accomplished fact to be enjoyed by the weakest believer in Jesus. Eighteen centuries have rolled away since the Lord Jesus appointed “the bread and the cup” in the Eucharist, as the significant symbols of His broken body and His blood shed for us; and notwithstanding all the heresy, all the schism, all the controversy and strife, the war of principles and prejudices which the blotted page of ecclesiastical history records, this most expressive institution has been observed by the saints of God in every age. True, the enemy has succeeded, throughout a vast section of the professing church, in wrapping it up in a shroud of dark superstition — in presenting it in such a way as actually to hide from the view of the communicant, the grand and eternal reality of which it is the memorial — in displacing Christ and His accomplished sacrifice, by a powerless ordinance — an ordinance, moreover, which by the very mode of its administration, proves its utter worthlessness and opposition to the truth. (See note to page 28.) Yet, notwithstanding Rome's deadly error in reference to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, it still speaks to every circumcised ear, and every spiritual mind, the same deep and precious truth — it “shows the Lord's death till he come.” The body has been broken, the blood has been shed ONCE, no more to be repeated: and the breaking of bread is but the memorial of this emancipating truth.

With what profound interest and thankfulness, therefore, should the believer contemplate "the bread and the cup" Without a word spoken, there is the setting forth of truths at once the most precious and glorious — grace reigning — redemption finished — sin put away — everlasting righteousness brought in — the sting of death gone — eternal glory secured — "grace and glory" revealed as the free gift of God and the Lamb — the unity of the "one body," as baptised by "one Spirit." What a feast! it carries the soul back, in the twinkling of an eye, over a lapse of eighteen hundred years, and shows us the Master Himself, "in the same night in which he was betrayed," sitting at the supper table, and there instituting a feast which, from that solemn moment, that memorable night, until the dawn of the morning, should lead every believing heart, at once, backward to the cross, and forward to the glory.

This feast has, ever since, by the very simplicity of its character, and, yet, the deep significance of its elements, rebuked the superstition that would deify and worship it, the profanity that would desecrate it, and the infidelity that would set it aside altogether; and, furthermore, while it has rebuked all these, it has strengthened, comforted, and refreshed the hearts of millions of God's beloved saints. It is sweet to think of this — sweet to bear in mind, as we assemble, on the first day of the week, round the supper of the Lord — that apostles, martyrs, and saints have gathered round that feast, and found therein, according to their measure, refreshment and blessing. Schools of theology have arisen, — flourished, and disappeared — doctors and fathers have accumulated ponderous tomes of divinity — deadly heresies have darkened the atmosphere, and rent the professing church from one end to the other — superstition and fanaticism have put forth their baseless theories and extravagant notions — professing Christians have split into sects innumerable — all these things have taken place; but the Lord's Supper has continued, amid the darkness and confusion to tell out its simple yet comprehensive tale. "As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. 11:26) Precious feast! Thank God for the great privilege of celebrating it. And yet is it but a sign, the elements of which must, in nature's view, be mean and contemptible. Bread broken — wine poured out — how simple faith alone can read, in the sign, the thing

signified, and therefore it needs not the adventitious circumstances, which false religion has introduced, in order to add dignity, solemnity, and awe to that which derives all its value, its power, and its impressiveness from its being a memorial of an eternal fact which false religion denies.

May you and I, beloved reader, enter with more freshness and intelligence into the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and with deeper experience into the blessedness of breaking that bread which is "the communion of the body of Christ," and drinking of that cup which is "the communion of the blood of Christ."

In closing these few prefatory lines, I would just observe that this edition only differs from the former in the alteration of a sentence or two, and the addition of a few notes. I now commend this little book to the Lord's gracious care, praying Him to make it increasingly useful to the souls of His people.

C. H. M.

THOUGHTS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." — 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

I desire to offer a few brief remarks on the subject of the Lord's Supper, for the purpose of stirring up the minds of all who love the name and institutions of Christ, to a more fervent and affectionate interest in this most important and refreshing ordinance.

We should bless the Lord for His gracious consideration of our need in having established such a memorial of His dying love, and also in having spread a table at which all His members might present

themselves, without any other condition than the indispensable one of personal connection with, and obedience to. Him. The Blessed Master knew well the tendency of our hearts to slip away from Him, and from each other, and to meet this tendency was one, at least, of His objects in the institution of the Supper. He would gather His people around His own blessed Person — He would spread a table for them, where, in view of His broken body, and shed blood, they might remember Him, and the intensity of His love for them, and from whence, also, they might look forward into the future, and contemplate the glory of which the cross is the everlasting foundation. There, if anywhere, they would learn to forget their differences, and to love one another — there, they might see around them those whom THE LOVE OF GOD had invited to the feast, and whom the BLOOD OF CHRIST had made fit to be there.

However, in order that I may, the more easily and briefly, convey to the mind of my reader what I have to say on this subject, I shall confine myself to the four following points, viz.: —

1st. — The nature of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

2nd. — The circumstances under which it was instituted.

3rd. — The persons for whom it was designed.

4th. — The time and manner of its observance.

1. And first, as to the nature of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. This is a cardinal point. If we understand not the nature of the ordinance, we shall be astray in all our thoughts about it. The Supper, then, is, purely and distinctly, a feast of thanksgiving — thanksgiving for grace already received. The Lord Himself, at the institution of it, marks its character by giving thanks. "He took bread; when he had given thanks," &c. Praise, and not prayer, is the suited utterance of those who sit at the table of the Lord.

True, we have much to pray for — much to confess — much to mourn over; but the table is not the place for mourners; its language is, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty,

and remember his misery no more." Ours is "a cup of blessing" — a cup of thanksgiving — the divinely appointed symbol of that precious blood which has procured our ransom. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" How, then, could we break it with sad hearts or sorrowful countenances? Could a family circle, after the toils of the day, sit down to supper with sighs and gloomy looks? Surely not. The supper was the great family meal — the only one that was sure to bring *all the family together*. Faces that might not have been seen during the day, were sure to be seen at the supper table, and no doubt they would be happy there. Just so should it be at the Lord's Supper; the family should assemble there, and, when assembled, they should be happy — unfeignedly happy, in the love that brings them together. True, each heart may have its own peculiar history — its secret sorrows, trials, failures, and temptations, unknown to all around; but these are not the objects to be contemplated at the supper; to bring them into view, is to dishonour the Lord of the feast, and make the cup of blessing a cup of sorrow. The Lord has invited us to the feast, and commanded us, notwithstanding all our shortcomings, to place the fullness of His love, and the cleansing efficacy of His blood, between our souls and everything; and when the eye of faith is filled with Christ, there is no room for aught beside. If my sin be the object which fills my eye, and engages my thoughts, of course I must be miserable, because I am looking right away from what God commands me to contemplate; I am remembering my misery and poverty, the very things which God commands me to forget. Hence the true character of the ordinance is lost, and, instead of being a feast of joy and gladness, it becomes a season of gloom and spiritual depression; and the preparation for it, and the thoughts which are entertained about it, are more what might be expected in reference to Mount Sinai, than to a happy family feast.

If ever a feeling of sadness could have prevailed at the celebration of this ordinance, surely it would have been on the occasion of its first institution, when, as we shall see, when we come to consider the second point in our subject, there was everything that could possibly produce deep sadness and desolation of spirit; yet, the Lord Jesus could "give thanks;" the tide of joy that flowed through His soul was far too deep to be ruffled by surrounding

circumstances; He had a joy, even in the breaking and bruising of His body, and in the pouring forth of His blood, which lay far beyond the reach of human thought and feeling. And if he could rejoice in spirit, and give thanks in breaking that bread, which was to be to all future generations of the faithful the memorial of His broken body, should not we rejoice therein — we who stand in the blessed results of all His toil and passion? Yes; it becomes us to rejoice. We can hear our heavenly Father say, "It is meet we should make merry and be glad," and shall we deny the meetness, by making that table, where the Father and the prodigal sit together over the fatted calf, the scene of sorrow and gloomy mistrust? God forbid; we must not bring sorrow into the divine presence; yea, *we cannot*, for "in his presence is fullness of joy;" and when we are unhappy we certainly are not in the presence of God, but in the presence of our sins, or our sorrows, or something outside God.

But, it may be asked, Is there no preparation necessary? — are we to sit down at the table of the Lord with as much indifference as if we were sitting down to an ordinary supper table? Surely not, we need preparation; but it is the preparation of God, and not our own preparation; it is the preparation which suits the presence of God, which is certainly not the result of human sighs or penitential tears, but the simple result of the finished work of the Lamb of God attested by the Spirit of God. Apprehending this by faith, we apprehend that which makes us perfectly fit for God. Many imagine that they are putting honour upon the Lord's table when they approach it with their souls bowed down into the very dust, under a sense of the intolerable burden of their sins. This thought can only flow from the legalism of the human heart, that ever fruitful source of thoughts at once dishonouring to God—dishonouring to the Cross of Christ — grievous to the Holy Ghost, and completely subversive of our own peace. We may feel quite satisfied that the honour and purity of the Lord's table are more fully maintained when THE BLOOD OF CHRIST is made the ONLY title, than if human sorrow and human penitence were superadded. [It is needful to bear in mind that, while the blood of Christ is that alone which introduces the believer, in holy boldness, into the presence of God, yet it is nowhere set forth as our centre, or bond of union. Truly precious is it for every blood-washed soul to remember, in the secret of the

divine presence, that the atoning blood of Jesus has rolled away for ever his heavy burden of sin. Yet, the Holy Ghost can only gather us to the Person of a risen and glorified Christ, who, having shed the blood of the everlasting covenant, is gone up into heaven in the power of an endless life, to which divine righteousness inseparably attaches. A living Christ, therefore, is our centre and bond of union. The blood having answered for us to God, we gather round a risen and exalted Head in the heavens "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me." We behold in the cup in the Lord's Supper the symbol of shed blood; but we are neither gathered round the cup, nor the blood; but round Him who shed it. The blood of the Lamb has put away every obstacle to our fellowship with God; and, in proof of this, the Holy Ghost has come down to baptise believers into the unity of the body, and gather them round the risen and glorified Head. The wine is *the memorial* of a life shed out for sin: the bread is *the memorial* of a body broken for sin: but we are not gathered round a life poured out, nor round a body broken, but round a living Christ, who dieth no more, who cannot have His body broken any more, or His blood shed any more. This makes a serious difference; and when looked at in connection with the discipline of the house of God, the difference is immensely important. Very many are apt to imagine that when any one is put away from, or refused, communion, the question is raised as to there being a link between his soul and Christ. A moment's consideration of this point, in the light of Scripture, will be sufficient to prove that no such question is raised. If we look at the case of the "wicked person" in 1 Corinthians 5 we see one put away from the communion of the Church on earth, who was nevertheless a Christian, as people say. He was not, therefore, put away because he was not a Christian; such a question was never raised; nor should it be in any case. How can we tell whether a man is eternally linked with Christ or not? Have we the custody of the Lamb's book of life? Is the discipline of the Church of God founded upon what we can know, or upon what we *cannot*? Was the man in 1 Corinthians 5 linked eternally with Christ, or not? Was the Church told to inquire Even suppose we could see a man's name written in the book of life, that would not be the ground of receiving him into the assembly on earth, or retaining him there. That which the Church is held responsible for, is to keep herself pure In doctrine, pure in practice, and pure in association, and all

this on the ground of being God's house. "Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever." When any one was separated, or "cut off," from the congregation of Israel, was it because of not being an Israelite? By no means: but because of some moral or ceremonial defilement which could not be tolerated in God's assembly. In Achan's case (Joshua 7), although there were six hundred thousand souls ignorant of his sin, yet God says, "*Israel hath sinned.*" Why? Because they were looked at as God's assembly, and there was defilement there which, if not judged, all would have been broken up.]

However, the question of preparedness will come more fully before us as we proceed with our subject; I shall, therefore, state another principle connected with the nature of the Lord's Supper, viz., that there is involved in it an intelligent recognition of the unity of the body of Christ. "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Now there was sad failure and sad confusion in reference to this point at Corinth; indeed the great principle of the Church's unity would seem to have been totally lost sight of there. Hence, the apostle observes, that, "when ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for every one taketh before other *his own supper.*" (1 Cor. 11:20, 21.) Here, it was isolation, and not unity; an individual, and not a corporate question; "*his own supper*" is strikingly contrasted with "*the Lord's Supper.*" It can only be the Lord's Supper, where the body is fully recognized; if the body be not recognized, it is pure sectarianism. The Lord Himself must be excluded. If the table be spread upon any narrower principle than that which would embrace the whole body of Christ, it is not the Lord's table, nor has it any claim upon the hearts of the faithful. On the contrary, where a table is spread upon this divine principle, which embraces *all* the members of the body *simply as such*, every one who refuses to present himself at it is chargeable with schism, and that, too, upon the plain principles of 1 Corinthians 11. "There must," says the apostle, "be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

When the great church principle is lost sight of by any portion of the body, there must be heresies, in order that the approved ones may be made manifest, and, under such circumstances, it becomes the business of each one to approve himself, and so to eat. The "approved" ones stand in contrast with the heretics, or those who were doing their own will.

{Those who are competent to do so, can look at the original of this important chapter, where they will see that the word translated "approved" (ver. 19), comes from the same root as that translated "examine himself." (Ver. 28.) Thus we see that the man who approves himself, takes his place amongst the approved, and is the very opposite of those who were amongst the heretics. Now, the meaning of a heretic is not merely one who holds false doctrine, though one may be a heretic in so doing, but one who persists in the exercise of his own will. The apostle knew that there must be heresies at Corinth, seeing that there were sects; those who were doing their own will were acting in opposition to God's will, and thus producing division, for God's will had reference to the whole body. Those who were acting heretically were despising the Church of God.}

But, it may be asked, Do not the numerous denominations, at present existing in the professing church, altogether preclude the idea of ever being able to gather the whole body together? and, under such circumstances, is it not better for each denomination to have their own table? If there be any force in this question, it merely goes to prove that the people of God are no longer able to act upon God's principles, but that they are left to the miserable alternative of acting on human expediency. Thank God, such is not the case. The truth of the Lord endureth for ever, and what the Holy Ghost teaches, in 1 Corinthians 11 is binding upon every member of the Church of God. There were divisions and heresies existing in the church at Corinth, just as there are divisions and heresies existing in the professing church now, but the apostle did not tell them to set up separate tables on the one hand, nor yet to cease from breaking bread on the other. No; he merely presses upon them the principles connected with "the Church of God," and tells those who could approve themselves in reference to the Church, or body of Christ, to

eat. The expression "*So let him eat,*" settles everything. We are to eat, at all events; our care must be to eat "so," as the Holy Ghost teaches us, and that is in the true recognition of the unity of the Church of God.

{It may be well to add a word here for the guidance of any simple-hearted Christian, who may find himself placed in circumstances in which he is called upon to decide between the claims of different tables which might seem to be spread upon the same principle. To confirm and encourage such an one in a truthful course of action, I should regard as a most valuable service.

Suppose, then, I find myself in a place where two or more tables have been spread, what am I to do? I believe I am to inquire into the origin of these various tables — to see how it became needful to have more than one table. If, for example, a number of Christians meeting together, have admitted and retained amongst them any unsound principles, affecting the Person of the Son of God — or subversive of the unity of the Church of God on earth; if I say, such principles be admitted and retained in the assembly, or if persons who hold and teach them be received and acknowledged by the assembly; under such painful and humiliating circumstances, the table ceases to be the Lord's table. Why? Because I cannot take my place at it without identifying myself with manifestly unchristian principles. The same remark, of course, applies, if the case be that of corrupt conduct unjudged by the assembly. And then, if the table ceases to be the Lord's, it has no more claim on the Christian, who desires to keep himself pure, than any other sectarian table.

Now, if a number of Christians should find themselves placed in the circumstances above described, they would be called upon to maintain THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PURITY OF THE TRUTH OF GOD These are really the points, *unity* and *purity*. We have not only to maintain the *grace* of the Lord's table, but the *holiness* of it also. Truth is not to be sacrificed in order to maintain unity, nor will *true* unity ever be interfered with by the strict maintenance of truth. Human confederations may be broken up, but the Church of God can never be touched by the maintenance of truth, *provided it be maintained in love*.

It is not to be imagined that the unity of the body of Christ is interfered with, when a community, based upon unsound principles or countenancing unsound doctrine or practice, is broken up or separated from. The Church of Rome charged the Reformers with schism, because they separated from her; but we know that the Church of Rome lay, and still lies, under the charge of schism, because she imposes false doctrine upon her members. Let it only be ascertained that the truth of God is called in question by any community, and that, to be a member of that community, I must identify myself with unsound doctrine or corrupt practice, and then it cannot be schism to separate from such a community, nay, I am bound to separate.

The whole question is settled by a single verse of scripture, viz, "Receive ye one another as Christ also received us;" here we have the *unity* of the Church. But it must be "to the glory of God," and here we have the *purity* of the truth.

These considerations will, I trust, assist any dear Christian, whose mind may be perplexed by the opposing claims of tables. The question can be very simply resolved where the eye is single, and the heart and conscience fully subject to the word of God.}

When the Church is despised, the Spirit must be grieved and dishonoured, and the certain end will be spiritual barrenness and freezing formalism; and although men may substitute intellectual, for spiritual, power, and human talents and attainments, for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet will the end be "like the heath in the desert." The true way to make progress in the divine life is to live for the Church, and not for ourselves. The man who lives for the Church is in full harmony with the mind of the Spirit, and must necessarily grow. On the contrary, the man who is living for himself, having all his thoughts revolving round, and all his energies concentrated upon, himself, must soon become cramped and formal, and, in all probability, openly worldly. Yes; he will become worldly, in some sense of that extensive term, for the world and the Church stand in direct opposition the one to the other, nor is there any aspect of the world in which this opposition is more fully seen than in its religious aspect. What is commonly called the *religious world*, will be found, when examined in the light of the presence of God, to be more

thoroughly hostile to the true interests of the Church of God, than almost anything.

But I must hasten on to other branches of our subject, and I would just state another simple principle connected with the Lord's Supper, to which I desire to call the special attention of the Christian reader; it is this, the celebration of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper should be the distinct expression of the unity of ALL believers, and not merely of the unity of a certain number gathered upon certain principles, which distinguish them from others. If there be any term of communion proposed, save the all-important one of faith in the atonement of Christ, and a walk consistent with that faith, the table ceases to be the Lord's, and becomes the table of a sect, and possesses no claims whatever upon the hearts of the faithful.

Furthermore, if, by sitting at the table, I must identify myself with any one thing, whether it be principle or practice, not enjoined in Scripture as a term of communion, there also the table ceases to be the Lord's, and becomes the table of a sect. It is not a question of whether there may be Christians there or not; it would be hard indeed to find a table amongst the reformed communities of which some Christians are not partakers. The apostle did not say "there must be heresies among you, that they which are *Christians* may be made manifest among you." No; but "that they which are *approved*." Nor did he say, "Let a man prove himself a Christian, and so let him eat." No; but "let a man approve himself," i.e., let him show himself to be one of those who are not only upright in their consciences as to their individual act in the matter, but who are also furthering the unity of the body of Christ. When men set up terms of communion of their own, there you find the principle of heresy; there, too, there must be schism. On the contrary, where a table is spread in such a manner, and upon such principles, as that a Christian, as such, can take his place at it, then it becomes schism not to be there, for, by being there, and by walking consistently with our position and profession there, we, so far as in us lies, promote the unity of the Church of God — that grand object for which the Holy Ghost was sent from heaven to earth. The Lord Jesus, having been raised from the dead, and having taken His seat at the right hand of God, sent

down the Holy Ghost to earth for the purpose of forming one body. Mark, to form *one body* — not many bodies. He has no sympathy with the many bodies, as such; though He has blessed sympathy with many members in those bodies, because they, though being members of human sects or schisms, are, nevertheless, members of the one body; but He does not dwell in the many bodies, but in the one body, for “by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:13.)

I desire that there may be no misunderstanding on this point. I say the Holy Ghost cannot dwell in all the schisms in the professing church, for He Himself has said of such, “I praise you not.” He is grieved by them — He would counteract them — He baptises all believers into the unity of the one body, so that it cannot be thought, by any intelligent mind, that the Holy Ghost could dwell in schisms, which are a grief and a dishonour to Him.

We must, however, distinguish between the Spirit's dwelling in the Church, and His dwelling in individuals. He dwells in the body of Christ, which is the Church (see 1 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 2:22); He dwells also in the body of the believer, as we read, “your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God.” (1 Cor. 6:19) The only body or community, therefore, in which the Spirit can dwell, is the whole Church of God, and the only person in which He can dwell is the believer. But, as has already been observed, the table of the Lord, in any given locality, should be the exhibition of the unity of the whole Church, and where it is not this, it is not the Lord's table. This leads us to another principle connected with the nature of the Lord's Supper, viz., this,

It is an act whereby we not only show forth the death of the Lord until He come, but whereby we, also, give expression to a fundamental truth, which cannot be too strongly or too frequently pressed upon the minds of Christians, at the present day, viz., *that all believers are "one bread and one body."* It is a very common error to view this ordinance merely as a channel through which grace flows to the soul of the individual, and not as an act bearing upon the whole body, and bearing, also, upon the glory of the Head of the Church. That it is a channel through which grace flows to the

soul of the individual communicant there can be no doubt, for there is blessing in every act of obedience. But that individual blessing is but a very small part of it, can be seen by the attentive reader of 1 Cor. 11. It is the Lord's death — the Lord's coming, that are brought prominently before our souls in the Lord's Supper, and where any one of these elements is excluded there must be something wrong. If there be anything to hinder the complete shadowing forth of the Lord's death, or the exhibition of the unity of the body, or the clear perception of the Lord's coming, then there must be something radically wrong in the principle on which the table is spread, and we only need a single eye, and a mind entirely subject to the word and Spirit of Christ, in order to detect the wrong.

Let the Christian reader, now, prayerfully examine the table at which he periodically takes his place, and see if it will bear the threefold test of 1 Cor. 11, and if not, let him, in the name of the Lord, and for the sake of the Church, abandon it. There are heresies, and schisms flowing from heresies, in the professing church, but "let a man approve himself, and so let him eat" the Lord's Supper; and if, once for all, it be asked, What means the term "approved?" it may be answered, It is, in the first place, to be personally true to the Lord in the act of breaking bread; and in the next place, to shake off all semblance of schism, and take our stand, firmly and decidedly, upon the broad principle which will embrace all the members of the flock of Christ. We are not only to be careful that we ourselves are walking in purity of heart and life before the Lord; but also, that the table of which we partake has nothing connected with it that could at all act as a barrier to the unity of the Church. It is not merely a personal question. Nothing more fully proves the low ebb of Christianity, at the present day, or the fearful extent to which the Holy Ghost is grieved, than the miserable selfishness which tinges, yea, pollutes, the thoughts of professing Christians. Everything is made to hinge upon the mere question of self. It is *my* forgiveness — *my* safety — *my* peace — *my* happy frames and feelings, and not the glory of Christ, or the unity of His beloved Church. Well, therefore, may the words of the prophet be applied to us, "Thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and BUILD THE HOUSE; and I will take pleasure in it, and I WILL BE GLORIFIED. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to

little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of *mine house* that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house." (Hag. 1:7-9.) Here is the root of the matter. Self stands in contrast with the house of God; and, if self be made the object, no marvel that there should be a sad lack of spiritual joy, energy, and power. To have these, we must be in fellowship with the Spirit's thoughts; and He thinks of the body of Christ; and, if we are thinking of self, we must be at issue with Him; and the consequences are but too apparent.

2. Having now treated of, what I conceive to be, by far the most important point in our subject, I shall proceed to consider, in the second place, the circumstances under which the Lord's Supper was instituted. These were particularly solemn and touching. The Lord was about to enter into dreadful conflict with all the powers of darkness — to meet all the deadly enmity of man; and to drain to the dregs the cup of Jehovah's righteous wrath against sin. He had a terrible morrow before Him — the most terrible that had ever been encountered by man or angel; yet, notwithstanding all this, we read that "*on the same night* in which he was betrayed, he took bread." What unselfish love is here! "The same night" — the night of profound sorrow — the night of His agony and bloody sweat — the night of His betrayal by one, His denial by another, and His desertion by all, of His disciples — on that very night, the loving heart of Jesus was full of thoughts about His Church — on that very night, He instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. He appointed the bread to be the emblem. of His broken body, and the wine to be the emblem of His shed blood; and such they are to us now, as often as we partake of them, for the word assures us that "as often as ye eat *this bread*, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

Now, all this, we may say, attaches peculiar importance and sacred solemnity to the Supper of the Lord; and, moreover, gives us some idea of the consequences of eating and drinking unworthily. {It is usual to apply the term "unworthily," in the passage, to *persons* doing the act, whereas it really refers to the *manner* of doing it. The apostle never thought of calling in question the Christianity of the Corinthians; nay, in the opening address of his epistle, he

looks at them as “the church of God which is at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints (or saints by calling). How could he use this language, in the first chapter, and, in the eleventh, call in question the worthiness of these saints to take their seat at the Lord's Supper? Impossible. He looked upon them as saints, and as such he exhorted them to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. The question of any but true Christians being there, is never raised; so that it is utterly impossible that the word "unworthily" could apply to *persons*. Its application is entirely to the *manner*. The persons were worthy, but their manner was not; and they were called, as saints, to judge themselves as to their ways, else the Lord might judge them in their *persons*, as was already the case. In a word, it was as true Christians they were called to judge themselves. If they were in doubt as to that, they were utterly unable to judge anything. I never think of setting my child to judge as to whether he is my child or not; but I expect him to judge himself as to his habits, else, if he do not, I may have to do, by chastening, what he ought to do by self judgement. It is because I look upon him as my child, that I will not allow him to sit at my table with soiled garments and disorderly manners. — *Things New and Old*, vol. 2, p. 2.}

The voice which the ordinance utters in the circumcised ear is ever the same. The bread and wine are deeply significant symbols; the bruised corn and the pressed grape being both combined to minister strength and gladness to the heart: and not only are they significant in themselves, but they are also to be used in the Lord's Supper, as being the very emblems which the blessed Master Himself ordained on the night previous to His crucifixion; so that faith can behold the Lord Jesus presiding at *His own table* — can see Him take the bread and wine, and hear Him say, “Take, eat; this is my body;” and again, of the cup, “Drink ye *all* of it. For this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

In a word, the ordinance leads the soul back to the eventful night already referred to — brings before us all the reality of the cross and passion of the Lamb of God, in which our whole souls can rest and rejoice, and reminds us, in the most impressive manner, of the unselfish love and pure devotedness of Him, who, when Calvary

was casting its dark shadow across His path, and the cup of Jehovah's righteous wrath against sin, of which He was about to be the bearer, was being filled for Him, could, nevertheless, busy Himself about us, and institute a feast which was to be, at once, the expression of our connection with Him, and with all the members of His body.

And may we not infer, that the Holy Ghost made use of the expression, "the same night," for the purpose of remedying the disorders that had arisen in the church at Corinth? Was there not a severe rebuke administered to the selfishness of those who were taking "*their own supper*," in the Spirit's reference to the same night in which the Lord of the feast was betrayed? Doubtless there was. Can selfishness live in the view of the cross? Can thoughts about our own interests, or our own gratification, be indulged in the presence of Him who sacrificed Himself for us? Surely not. Could we heartlessly and wilfully despise the Church of God — could we offend or exclude beloved members of the flock of Christ, while gazing on that cross on which the Shepherd of the flock, and the Head of the body, was crucified? Ah, no; let believers only keep near the cross — let them remember "the same night" — let them keep in mind the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there will soon be an end to heresy, schism, and selfishness.

{The reader will bear in mind that the text does not touch the question of scriptural discipline. There may be many members of the flock of Christ who could not be received into the assembly on earth, inasmuch as they may possibly be leavened by false doctrine, or wrong practice. But, though we might not be able to receive them, we do not, by any means, raise the question as to their being in the Lamb's book of life. This is not the province nor the prerogative of the Church of God. "The Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. 2:19.)}

If we could only bear in mind that the Lord Himself presides at the table, to dispense the bread and wine; if we could hear Him say, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves," we should be better able to meet *all* our brethren on the *only* Christian ground of

fellowship which God can own. In a word, the person of Christ is God's centre of union. "I," said Christ "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Each believer can hear his blessed Master speaking from the cross, and saying of his fellow believers, "*Behold thy brethren;*" and, truly, if we could distinctly hear this, we should act, in a measure, as the beloved disciple acted towards the mother of Jesus; our hearts and our homes would be open to all who have been thus commended to our care. The word is, "*Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*"

There is another point worthy of notice, in connection with the circumstances under which the Lord's Supper was instituted, namely, its connection with the Jewish Passover. "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup [i.e., the cup of the Passover], and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come." (Luke 22:7-18.)

The Passover was, as we know, the great feast of Israel, first observed on the memorable night of their happy deliverance from the thralldom of Egypt. As to its connection with the Lord's Supper, it consists in its being the marked type of that of which the Supper is the memorial. The Passover pointed forward to the cross; the supper points back to it. But Israel was no longer in a fit moral condition to keep the Passover, according to the divine thoughts about it; and the Lord Jesus, on the occasion above referred to, was leading His apostles away altogether from the Jewish element to a new order of things. It was no longer to be a lamb sacrificed, but bread broken and wine drunk, in commemoration of a sacrifice ONCE offered, the efficacy of which was to be eternal. Those whose minds are bowed down to Jewish ordinances, may still look, in some way or another,

for the periodical repetition, either of a sacrifice, or of something which is to bring them into a place of greater nearness to God.

{The Church of Rome has so entirely departed from the truth set forth in the Lord's Supper, that she professes to offer, in the mass, "an unbloody sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead." Now, we are taught, in Hebrews 9:22, that "without shedding of blood is no remission;" consequently, the Church of Rome has no remission of sins for her members. She robs them of this precious reality, and, instead thereof, gives them an anomalous and utterly unscriptural thing, called "an unbloody sacrifice, or mass." This, which, according to her own practice and the testimony of Hebrews 9:22, can never take away sin, she offers day by day, week by week, and year by year. A sacrifice without blood *must*, if scripture be true, be a sacrifice without remission. Hence, therefore, the sacrifice of the mass is a positive blind raised by the devil, through the agency of Rome, to hide from the sinner's view the glorious sacrifice of Christ, "*once offered*," and never to be repeated. "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." (Rom. 6:9.) Every fresh sacrifice of the mass only declares the inefficiency of all the previous sacrifices, so that Rome is only mocking the sinner with an empty shadow. But she is consistent in her wickedness, for she withholds the cup from the laity, and teaches her members that they have body and blood and all in the wafer. But, if the blood be still in the body, it is manifestly not shed, and then we get back to the same gloomy point, namely, "no remission." "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

How totally different is the precious and most refreshing institution of the Lord's Supper, as set before us in the New Testament. There we find the bread broken, and the wine poured out — the significant symbols of a body broken, and of blood shed. The wine is not in the bread, because the blood is not in the body, for, if it were, there would be "no remission." In a word, the Lord's Supper is the distinct memorial of an eternally accomplished sacrifice; and none can communicate thereat with intelligence and power, save those who know the full remission of sins. It is not that we would, by any means, make the knowledge of forgiveness a term of communion, for very many of the children of God, through bad

teaching, and various other causes, do not know the perfect remission of sins, and were they to be excluded on that ground, it would be making *knowledge* a term of communion, instead of life and *obedience*. Still, if I do not know, experimentally, that redemption is an accomplished fact, I shall see but little meaning in the symbols of bread and wine; and, moreover, I shall be in great danger of attaching a species of efficacy to the memorials which belongs only to the great reality to which they point. }

Some there are who think that in the Lord's Supper the soul makes, or renews, a covenant with God, not knowing that if we were to enter into covenant with God, we should inevitably be ruined; as the only possible issue of a covenant between God and man, is the failure of one of the parties (i.e., man), and consequent judgement. Thank God, there is no such thing as a covenant with us. The bread and wine, in the supper, speak a deep and wondrous truth; they tell of the broken body and shed blood of the Lamb of God — the Lamb of God's own providing. Here the soul can rest with perfect complacency; it IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, and not a covenant between God and man. Man's covenant had signally failed, and the Lord Jesus had to allow the cup of the fruit of the vine (the emblem of joy in the earth) to pass Him by. Earth had no joy for Him — Israel had become "the degenerate plant of a strange vine;" wherefore, He had only to say, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." A long and dreary season was to pass over Israel, ere her King could take any joy in her moral condition: but, during that time, "the Church of God" was to "keep the feast" of unleavened bread, in all its moral power and significance, by putting away the "old leaven of malice and wickedness," as the fruit of fellowship with Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

However, the fact of the Lord's Supper having been instituted immediately after the Passover, teaches us a very valuable principle of truth, viz., this: the destinies of the Church and of Israel are inseparably linked with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. True, the Church has a higher place, even identification with her risen and glorified Head; yet, all rests upon the cross. Yes; it was on the cross that the pure sheaf of corn was bruised, and the juices of the living

vine pressed forth, by the hand of Jehovah Himself, to yield strength and gladness to the hearts of His heavenly and earthly people for ever. The Prince of Life took from Jehovah's righteous hand the cup of wrath — the cup of trembling, and drained it to the dregs, in order that He might put into the hands of His people the cup of salvation — the cup of God's ineffable love, that they might drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more. The Lord's Supper expresses all this. There the Lord presides there the redeemed should meet in holy fellowship and brotherly love, to eat and drink before the Lord; and while they do so, they can look back at their Master's *night* of deep sorrow, and forward to His day of glory — that “morning without clouds,” when “he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.”

3. We shall now consider, in the third place, the persons for whom, and to whom alone the Lord's Supper was instituted.

The Lord's Supper, then, was instituted for the Church of God — the family of the redeemed. All the members of that family should be there; for none can be absent, without incurring the guilt of disobedience to the plain command of Christ, and His inspired apostle, and the consequence of this disobedience will be positive spiritual decline, and a complete failure in testimony for Christ. Such consequences, however, are the result only of wilful absence from the Lord's table. There are circumstances which, in certain cases, may present an insurmountable barrier, though there might be the most earnest desire to be present at the celebration of the ordinance, as there ever will be, where the mind is spiritual; but we may lay it down, as a fixed principle of truth, that no one can make progress in the divine life who wilfully absents himself from the Lord's table. “ALL the congregation of Israel” were commanded to keep the Passover. (Exodus 12) No member of the congregation could, with impunity, be absent, “The man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.” (Num. 9:13)

I feel that it would be rendering really valuable service to the cause of truth, and a furtherance of the interests of the Church of

God, if an interest could be awakened on this important subject. There is too much lightness and indifference in the minds of Christians, as to the matter of their attendance at the table of the Lord, and where there is not this indifference, there is an unwillingness arising from imperfect views of justification. Now both these hindrances, though so different in their character, spring from one and the same source, viz., selfishness. He who is indifferent about the matter, will selfishly allow trifling circumstances to interfere with his attendance; he will be hindered by family arrangements, love of personal ease, unfavourable weather, trifling, or, as it frequently happens, imaginary bodily ailments; things which are lost sight of, or counted as nothing, when some worldly object is to be gained. How often does it happen, that men who have not spiritual energy to leave their houses on the Lord's day, have abundant natural energy to carry them some miles, to gain some worldly object, on Monday. Alas! that it should be so. How sad, to think that worldly gain could exert a more powerful influence on the heart of the Christian, than the glory of Christ and the furtherance of the Church's benefit; for this is the way in which we must view the question of the Lord's Supper. What would be our feelings, amid the glory of the coming kingdom, if we could remember that, while on earth, a fair, or a market, or some such worldly object, had commanded our time and energies, while the assembly of the Lord's people, around His table, was neglected?

Beloved Christian reader, if you are in the habit of absenting yourself from the assembly of Christians, I pray you to ponder the matter, before the Lord, ere you absent yourself again. Reflect upon the pernicious effect of your absence in every way. You are failing in your testimony for Christ — you are injuring the souls of your brethren, and you are hindering the progress of your own soul in grace and knowledge. Do not suppose that your actings are without their influence on the whole Church of God; you are, at this moment, either helping or hindering every member of that body on earth. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." This principle has not ceased to be true, though professing Christians have split into so many different divisions. Nay, it is so divinely true that there is not a single believer on earth, who is not acting, either as a helper to, or a drain upon, the whole body of Christ; and, if

there be any truth in the principle already laid down (viz., that the assembly of Christians, and the breaking of bread, in any given locality, is, or ought to be, the expression of the unity of the whole body), you cannot fail to see, that, if you absent yourself from that assembly, or refuse to join in giving expression to that unity, you are doing serious damage to all your brethren, as well as to your own soul. I would lay these considerations on your heart and conscience, in the name of the Lord, looking to Him to make them influential.

{I can only feel myself responsible to present myself in the assembly when it is gathered on proper church ground, i.e., the ground laid down in the New Testament. People may assemble, and call themselves the Church of God, in any given locality; but if they do not exhibit the characteristic features and principles of the Church of God, as set forth in holy scripture, I cannot own them. If they refuse, or lack spiritual power, to judge worldliness, carnality, or false doctrine, they are evidently, not on proper church ground; they are merely a religious fraternity, which in its collective character, I am in no wise responsible, before God, to own. Hence, the child of God needs much spiritual power, and subjection to the word, to be able to carry himself through all the windings of the professing church, in this peculiarly evil and difficult day.}

But, not only does this culpable and pernicious indifference of spirit act as a hindrance to many, in presenting themselves at the Lord's table; imperfect views of justification produce the same unhappy result. If the conscience be not perfectly purged — if there be not perfect rest in God's testimony about the finished work of Christ, there will either be a shrinking from the Supper of the Lord, or an unintelligent celebration of it. Those only can show the Lord's death, who know, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the value of the Lord's death. If I regard the ordinance as a means whereby I am to be brought into a place of greater nearness to God, or whereby I am to obtain a clearer sense of my acceptance, it is impossible that I can rightly observe it. I must believe as the gospel commands me to believe, that ALL my sins are FOR EVER put away, ere I can take my place, with any measure of spiritual intelligence, at the Lord's table. If the matter be not viewed in this light, the Lord's Supper can only be regarded as a kind of step to the altar of God,

and we are told, in the law, that we are not to go up by steps to God's altar, lest our nakedness be discovered. (Ex. 20:26.) The meaning of which is, that all human efforts to approach God must issue in the discovery of human nakedness.

Thus we see that, if it be indifference that prevents the Christian from being at the breaking of bread, it is most culpable in the sight of God, and most injurious to his brethren and himself; and if it be an imperfect sense of justification that prevents, it is not only unwarrantable, but most dishonouring to the love of the Father, the work of the Son, and the clear and unequivocal testimony of the Holy Ghost.

But it is not infrequently said, and that, too, by those who are of reputation for spirituality and intelligence, "I derive no spiritual benefit by going to the assembly, I am as happy in my own room reading my Bible." I would affectionately ask such, are we to have no higher object before us in our actings, than our own happiness? Is not obedience to the command of our Blessed Master — a command delivered on "the same night in which He was betrayed," a far higher and nobler object to set before us than anything connected with self? If He desires that His people should assemble, in His name, for the express object of showing forth His death till He come, shall we refuse because we feel happier in our own rooms He tells us to be there; we reply, "We feel happier at home;" our happiness, therefore, must be based on disobedience, and, as such, it is an unholy happiness. It is much better, if it should be so, to be unhappy in the path of obedience, than happy in the path of disobedience. But I verily believe, the thought of being happier at home is a mere delusion, and the end of all who are deluded by it will prove it such. Thomas might have deemed it indifferent whether he was present with the other disciples, but he had to do without the Lord's presence, and to wait for eight days, until the disciples came together on the first day of the week, for there and then the Lord was pleased to reveal Himself to his soul; and just so will it be with those who say, We feel happier at home than in the assembly of believers; they will surely be behind hand in knowledge and experience; yea, it will be well if they come not under the terrible woe denounced by the prophet, "Woe to the idol shepherd that *leaveth the flock!* the

sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." (Zech. 11:17) And again, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, *as the manner of some is*; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. - For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. 10:25-27)

As to the objection upon the grounds of the barrenness and unprofitableness of Christian assemblies, it will generally be remarked that the greatest spiritual barrenness will always be found in connection with a captious and complaining spirit: and I doubt not that, if those who complain of the unprofitableness of meetings, and draw from thence an argument in favour of their remaining at home, were to spend more time in secret waiting on the Lord, for His blessing on the meetings, they would have a very different experience.

And now, having shown from the scripture, who ought to be at the breaking of bread, we shall proceed to consider who ought not. On this point scripture is equally explicit: in a word, then, none should be there who are not members of the true Church of God. The same law which commanded *all* the congregation of Israel to eat the Passover, commanded all uncircumcised strangers *not* to eat; and now that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us, none can keep the feast which is to extend throughout this entire dispensation, nor yet break bread, or drink wine in true remembrance of Him, save those who know the cleansing and healing virtues of His precious blood. To eat and drink without this knowledge, is to eat and drink unworthily — to eat and drink judgement, and, like the woman in Numbers 5 who drank the water of jealousy, to make the condemnation more manifest and awfully solemn.

Now, it is in this that Christendom's guilt is specially manifest. In taking the Lord's Supper, the professing church has, like Judas, put her hand on the table with Christ, and betrayed Him — she has eaten with Him, and, at the same time, lifted up her heel against

Him. What will be her end? Just like the end of Judas. "He then, having received the sop, went *immediately out*: and," the Holy Ghost adds, in awful solemnity, "IT WAS NIGHT." Terrible night! The strongest expression of divine love only elicited the strongest expression of human hatred. So will it be with the false professing church collectively, and each false professor individually; and all those who, though baptised in the name of Christ, and sitting down at the table of Christ, have, nevertheless, been His betrayers, will find themselves, at last, thrust out into outer darkness — involved in a night which shall never see the beams of the morning — plunged in a gulf of endless and ineffable woe; and though they may be able to say to the Lord, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets," yet His solemn, heart-rending reply will be, while he shuts the door against them, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Oh! my reader, think of this, I pray you; and if you be yet in your sins, defile not the Lord's table by your presence; but, instead of going thither as a hypocrite, repair to Calvary, as a poor ruined and guilty sinner, and there receive pardon and cleansing from Him, who died to save just such as you are.

4. Having now considered, through the Lord's mercy, the nature of the Lord's Supper; the circumstances under which it was instituted; and the persons for whom it was designed; I would only add a word as to what scripture teaches us about the time and manner of its celebration.

Although the Lord's Supper was not first instituted on the first day of the week, yet Luke 24, and Acts 20, are quite sufficient to prove, to a mind subject to the word, that that is the day on which the ordinance should specially be observed. The Lord broke bread with His disciples on "the first day of the week" (Luke 24:30); and "on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." (Acts 20:7) These scriptures are quite sufficient to prove that it is not once a month, nor once in three months, nor once in six months, that disciples should come together to break bread, but once a week at least, and that upon the first day of the week. Nor can we have any difficulty in seeing that there is a moral fitness in the first day of the week, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper; it is the resurrection day — the Church's day, in contrast with the seventh,

which was Israel's day; and as, in the institution of the ordinance, the Lord led His disciples away from Jewish things altogether, by refusing to drink of the fruit of the vine, and then instituting another ordinance, so, in the day on which that ordinance was to be celebrated, we observe the same contrast between heavenly and earthly things. It is in the power of resurrection that we can rightly show the Lord's death. When the conflict was over, Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine, and blessed Abraham, in the name of the Lord. Thus, too, our Melchizedek, when all the conflict was over, and the victory gained, came forth, in resurrection, with bread and wine, to strengthen and cheer the hearts of His people, and to breathe upon them that peace which He had so dearly purchased.

If then, the first day of the week be the day on which scripture teaches the disciples to break bread, it is clear that man has no authority to alter the period to once a month, or once in six months. We must be as strictly subject to scripture as to the time for celebrating the ordinance, as we would be in reference to any other point connected with it. And I doubt not, that when the affections are lively and fervent toward the Person of the Lord Himself, the Christian will desire to show the Lord's death as frequently as possible; indeed it would seem from the opening of Acts, that the disciples broke bread whenever they met. This we may infer from the expression "breaking bread from house to house." However, we are not left to depend upon mere inference, as to the question of the first day of the week being the day on which the disciples came together to break bread; we are distinctly taught this, and we see its moral fitness and beauty.

Thus much as to the time. And now one word about the manner. It should be the special aim of Christians, to show that the breaking of bread is their grand and primary object in coming together, on the first day of the week. They should show that it is not for preaching or teaching that they assemble, though teaching may be a happy adjunct, but that the breaking of bread is the leading object before their minds. This can be done *by making it the first thing at their meetings*. And there is a moral fitness in this order, as well as in the time. It is the work of Christ which we show forth in the Supper, wherefore it should have the first place, and, when it has been duly

set forth, there should be a full and unqualified opening left for the work of the Holy Ghost in ministry. The office of the Spirit is to set forth and exalt the name, the Person, and the work of Christ; and if He be allowed to order and govern the assembly of Christians, as He undoubtedly should, He will ever give the work of Christ the primary place.

I cannot close this paper without expressing my deep sense of the feebleness and shallowness of all that I have advanced, on a subject of really commanding interest. I do feel before the Lord, in whose presence I desire to write and speak, that I have so failed to bring out the full truth about this matter, that I almost shrink from letting these pages see the light. It is not that I have a shadow of doubt as to the truth of what I have endeavoured to state; no: but I feel that, in writing upon such a subject as the breaking of bread, at the time when there is such sad confusion among professing Christians, there is a demand for pointed, clear, and lucid statements, to which I am little able to respond.

We have but little conception of how entirely the question of the breaking of bread is connected with the Church's position and testimony on earth; and we have as little conception of how thoroughly the question has been misunderstood by the professing church. The breaking of bread ought to be the distinct enunciation of the fact, that all believers are *one body*; but the professing church, by splitting into sects, and by setting up a table for each sect, has practically denied that fact.

In truth, the breaking of bread has been cast into the background. The table, at which the Lord should preside, is almost lost sight of, by being placed in the shade of the pulpit, in which man presides; the pulpit, which, alas! is too often the instrument of creating and perpetuating disunion, is, to many minds, the commanding object, while the table, which, if properly understood, would perpetuate love and unity, is made quite a secondary thing. And even in the most laudable effort to recover from such a lamentable condition of things, what complete failure have we seen. What has the Evangelical Alliance effected? It has effected this, at least, it has fully developed a need existing among professing Christians, which they are confessedly unable to meet. They want

union, and are unable to attain it. Why? Because they will not give up everything, save what they have as Christians, and meet together as disciples, to break bread. I say, *as disciples*, and not as Churchmen, Independents, or Baptists. It is not that all such may not have much valuable truth, I mean those of them who love our Lord Jesus Christ: they certainly may, but they have no *truth* that should prevent them from meeting *together* to break bread. How could truth ever hinder Christians from giving expression to the unity of the Church? Impossible! A sectarian spirit in those who hold truth may do this, but truth never can. But how is it now in the professing church? Christians, of various communities, can meet for the purpose of reading, praying, and singing together, during the week, but when the first day of the week arrives, they have not the least idea of giving the only real and effectual expression of their unity, which the Holy Ghost can recognize, which is the breaking of bread. "We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."

The sin at Corinth was their not tarrying one for another. This appears from the exhortation with which the apostle sums up the whole question (1 Cor. 11), "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." Why were they to tarry one for another? Surely, in order that they might the more clearly express their unity. But what would the apostle have said, if, instead of coming together, into one place, they had gone to different places, according to their different views of truth? He might then say, with, if possible, greater force, "Ye cannot eat the Lord's Supper." (See *margin*.)

It may, however, be asked, "How could all the believers in London meet in one place?" I reply, if they could not meet in one place, they could, at least, meet on one principle. But how did the believers at Jerusalem meet together? The answer is, they were "*of one accord*." This being so, they had little difficulty about the question of a meeting-room. "Solomon's porch," or any where else, would suit their purpose. They gave expression to their unity, and that, too, in a way not to be mistaken. Neither various localities, nor various measures of knowledge and attainment, could, in the least, interfere with their unity. There was "one body and one spirit"

Finally, then, I would say, the Lord will assuredly honour those who have faith to believe and confess the unity of the Church on earth; and the greater the difficulty in the way of doing so, the greater will be the honour. The Lord grant to all His people a single eye, and an humble and honest spirit.

C. H. M.

Thy broken body, gracious Lord,
Is shadowed by this broken bread,
The wine which in this cup is pour'd
Points to the blood which Thou hast shed.

And while we meet together thus,
We show that we are one in Thee
Thy precious blood was shed for us,
Thy death, O Lord, has set us free.

Brethren in Thee, in union sweet,
(For ever be thy grace ador'd),
'Tis in Thy name, that now we meet,
And know Thou'rt with us, gracious Lord.

We have one hope — that Thou wilt come,
Thee in the air we wait to see,

When Thou wilt take Thy people home

And we shall ever reign with Thee.

1 Corinthians 14: 19.

“FIVE WORDS”

It is often wonderful to mark the way in which the words of Scripture seize upon the heart. They are “as goads and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.” At times some brief sentence or clause of a sentence will lay hold upon the heart, penetrate the conscience or occupy the mind in such a way as to prove beyond all question the divinity of the book in which it is found. What force of reasoning, what fullness of meaning, what power of application, what an unfolding of the springs of nature, what an unveiling of the heart, what point and pungency, what condensing energy we meet with throughout the sacred pages! One delights to dwell upon these things at all times, but more especially at a moment like the present when the enemy of God and man is seeking in such varied ways to cast a slur upon the inspired volume.

The foregoing train of thought has been suggested to the mind by the expression which forms the title of this article. “I had rather,” says the self-emptied and devoted apostle, “speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” How important for all speakers to remember this! We know that tongues had their value. They were for a sign to the unbelieving. But in the assembly they were useless unless there was an interpreter.

The grand end of speaking in the assembly is edification, and this end can only be reached by persons understanding what is said. It is impossible for a man to edify me if I cannot understand what he says. He must speak in an intelligible language and in an audible voice, else I cannot receive any edification. This surely is plain and worthy of the serious attention of all who speak in public.

Further, we would do well to bear in mind that our only warrant for standing up to speak in the assembly is that the Lord Himself has given us something to say. If it be but “five words,” let us say the five and sit down. Nothing can be more unintelligent than for a man to attempt to speak “ten thousand words” when God has

only given him “five.” It is regretful that something like this should so often occur! What a mercy it would be if we could only keep within our measure! That measure may be small. It matters not; let us be simple, earnest and real. An earnest heart is better than a clever head. A fervent spirit is better than an eloquent tongue. Where there is a genuine, hearty desire to promote the real good of souls, it will prove more effective with me and more acceptable to God than the most brilliant gifts without it. We should covet earnestly the best gifts, but we should also remember the “more excellent way,” even the way of love that ever hides itself and seeks only the profit of others. It is not that we value gifts less, but we value love more.

Finally, it would greatly tend to raise the tone of public teaching and preaching to remember the following very simple rule, “Do not set about looking for something to say because you have *got* to speak, but speak because you have got something that ought to be said.” This is very simple. It is a poor thing for a man to be merely collecting as much matter as will fill up a certain space of time. This should never be. Let the teacher or preacher attend diligently upon his ministry. Let him cultivate his gift; let him wait on God for guidance, power and blessing; let him live in the spirit of prayer and breathe the atmosphere of Scripture; then will he be always ready for the Master's use. Then his words, whether “five” or “ten thousand,” will assuredly glorify Christ and do good to men. But in no case should a man rise to address his fellows without the conviction that God has given him something to say and the desire to say it to edification.

1 Corinthians 16:22

THE DIVINE ANATHEMA

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” (1 Cor. 16: 22).

The position which this solemn anathema occupies is truly remarkable. In the course of his lengthened epistle, the apostle had to rebuke and correct many practical evils and doctrinal errors. There were divisions among the Corinthians. They were puffed up one against another. There was fornication among them. They went to law one with another. There was gross disorder at the Lord's Supper. Some of them called in question the grand foundation truth of the resurrection of the dead.

These were grave errors and formidable evils — errors and evils which called forth the sharp and stern reproof of the inspired apostle. But when at the close he pronounces his solemn “Anathema Maranatha,” it is not directed against those who had introduced the errors or practiced the evils, but against “any man” who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is well worthy of serious thought. The only security against all manner of error and evil is genuine love to the Lord Jesus Christ. A man may be so strictly moral that no one could put his finger upon a single blot in his character or a single stain in his reputation. Yet underneath that strict morality, there may be a heart as cold as ice, so far as the Lord Jesus is concerned. Again, a man may be so marked by a spirit of noble benevolence that his influence is felt throughout the entire sphere in which he moves, and all the while, his heart may not have a single pulsation of love to Christ. Finally, a man may possess in his understanding, a perfectly orthodox creed and he may be devotedly attached to the ordinances and observances of traditional religion, and be wholly without affection for the adorable Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may even happen that all these things — lofty morality, noble benevolence, sound orthodoxy and devoted attachment to religious forms, exist in one and the same individual, and that individual be wholly void of a single spark of genuine affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, and as a solemn and startling consequence, stand exposed to

the burning Anathema of God the Holy Spirit. I may be moral through love to self. I may be benevolent through love to my fellow. I may be orthodox through a love of dogmas. I may be religious through a love of a sect. But none of these things can shield me from the merited judgment which is denounced by the Holy Spirit against “any man,” no matter who or what, who “loves not the Lord Jesus Christ.”

{*The word "Anathema" signifies anything devoted to death; and "Maranatha" signifies the Lord comes to judgment.}

This is a deeply solemn and most seasonable word for the present moment. Let the reader deeply ponder it. Let him remember that the only basis for true morality, the only basis for divine orthodoxy, the only basis for “pure religion,” is love to the Lord Jesus Christ. Where this love does not exist, all is cold, sterile and worthless, all exposed to death and judgment by the “Anathema Maranatha” of the Holy Spirit. If the heart be really touched with the vital spark of love to Jesus, then every effort after pure morality, every struggle against our hateful lusts, passions and tempers, every opening of the hand of genuine benevolence, every sound and truthful principle, every act of devotion, every pious aspiration, every fervent breathing, every outgoing of the soul, is precious to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. All is fragrant with the perfume of that dear Name which is the theme of heaven's wonder, the center of heaven's joy, the object of heaven's worship.

My beloved reader, should we not “love the Lord Jesus Christ?” Should we not hold Him dearer to our heart than all beside? Should we not be ready to surrender all for Him? Should not our bosoms swell with emotions of sincere attachment to His Person in heaven and His cause on earth? How could we trace Him from the bosom of the Father to the manger of Bethlehem, from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, and from the cross of Calvary to the throne of the majesty in the heavens — how could we “consider” Him as “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” — and not have our whole moral being brought under the mighty constraining influence of His love?

May the Holy Spirit so unfold to our souls His matchless glories and peerless excellencies, that we may “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“Jesus, I love Thy charming name;
'Tis music to mine ear,
Fain would I sound it out so loud,
That earth and heaven should hear.

Yes, Thou are precious to my soul
My transport and my trust:
Jewels to Thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust.

All my capacious powers can wish,
In Thee doth richly meet:
Nor, to mine eyes, is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.

Thy grace still dwells upon my heart,
And sheds its fragrance there;
The noblest balm of all its wounds,
The cordial of its care.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

JUDGMENT

Scripture distinctly teaches that the believer will never come into judgment at all. 2 Corinthians 5: 10 declares that all shall be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, believers and unbelievers alike, although not, of course, at the same time. But how will believers be manifested? *In all the perfectness of Christ Himself!* Are they to be judged? Assuredly not. Their judgment is past forever. It was executed at the cross. If there was a single atom of sin or guilt left unatoned for in the death of Christ, a single question left unsettled, a single thing that has still to be judged, then, most assuredly, we shall be eternally damned. But no, dear friend, it is all settled — blessedly, divinely, eternally settled. All who believe on the Son of God have passed from death unto life and shall not come into judgment (John 5: 24). It is as impossible that a believer can come into judgment, as that Christ Himself can. The members can no more be judged than the Head.

No doubt our works shall be tested. “The day shall declare it.” Those works shall be tried by fire, and all the wood, hay and stubble will be burned up. Further, when we stand in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, we shall look back with an enlightened gaze over the whole of our career and see as we never saw before, our mistakes, our follies, our sins, our infirmities, our mixed motives. But we shall see also, as we never saw before, the fullness of the grace of God and the effectiveness of the blood of Christ.

With regard to Matthew 12: 36-37 it teaches us that “men will have to give account for every idle word.” So also in Hebrews 9: 27, we read, “It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.” But the believer is taken completely off the ground of judgment since Christ was judged in his stead. Hence, instead of looking for judgment, the believer is looking for the Savior. Is all this precious grace intended to make us lax and careless? May we speak idle words because we are not to be judged? Far away be the horrible thought! No, dear friend, it is just because we believe that Jesus was judged in our stead and that we shall *never* come into

judgment, that therefore we judge ourselves day by day and refuse to justify in ourselves a single sinful thought. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" It is our holy privilege to reckon ourselves "dead to sin." We have passed through death and judgment in the Person of our Substitute, so "we have boldness in the day of judgment because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4: 17). Here lies the grand secret of our peace — the secret of our deliverance from the power of sin — the secret of all holy living. May the Spirit of God expound and apply it in power to your heart. Then you will cease to be perplexed.

We quite agree with your view of the expression, "the terror of the Lord," and we trust your friend will be led to see the mind of God in the entire context. The believer can never come into judgment. In John 5: 24 the word is "judgment" and not "condemnation." Every man's work shall be tested, but when the believer is manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, he will be perfectly conformed to the image of his Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 6 we are taught that the saints shall judge the world and even angels. They will be associated with Christ in that solemn work. It would be strange if the judges were to be arranged along with the judged. It is very sad to mark the confusion in people's minds in reference to a subject so plain and simple. It is, no doubt, the result of legal teaching and bad theology. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a general resurrection or general judgment. To maintain such a notion is to deny the very foundations of Christianity.

Scripture most certainly teaches that the unconverted shall stand before the judgment seat. 2 Corinthians 5: 10 takes in all, both believers and unbelievers, though not of course at the same time or on the same ground. The expression "we all" in chapter 5: 10 differs materially in the Greek from the "we all" in 2 Corinthians 3: 18. The latter refers only to believers; the former to both. Our Lord Christ will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and kingdom. In Matthew 25: 31 we have the judgment of the living nations. Revelation 20: 11 gives the judgment of the wicked dead. In the former, not one will have passed through death; in the latter, all will

have done so. In neither scene have we the Church or Israel as the subjects of judgment.

2 Corinthians 5:10

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

We have received earnest requests for help as to the solemn subject of the judgment seat of Christ. One dear friend writes thus: "I am in a difficulty. A dear friend is very unhappy in the thought that, at the judgment seat of Christ, every secret thought and every motive of the heart will be made manifest to all there. She has no fears or doubts as to her eternal salvation or the forgiveness of her sins, but she shrinks with horror from the thought of having the secrets of her heart manifested to all there."

Another writes as follows: "Remembering those blessed and eternally-important truths in John 5: 24; 1 John 1: 7-9, 1 John 2: 12 and Hebrews 10: 1-17, I wish to know how you understand the following texts which I shall transcribe in full, to point out the particular words to which I refer.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5: 10). "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14: 12). "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (Col. 3: 24-25).

"It is on the above texts that I am anxious to be correct as to interpretation and application. I have thought it probable that you would not regard it as trespassing on your time if I were to ask your opinion on the subject."

We have been much interested in looking into the various reasons for the perplexity which seems to prevail in reference to the solemn subject of "the judgment seat of Christ." The very passages which our correspondent quotes are so plain, so pointed and so definite on the question, that we have only just to take them as they stand and allow them to have their due weight upon the heart and conscience. "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ." "Every one of us must give account of himself to God." "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done."

These are plain statements. Should we desire to weaken their force, to blunt their edge, to turn away their point? God forbid! We should rather seek to make a holy use of them by keeping a pressure upon nature in all its vanities, lusts and tempers. The Lord intended we should use these verses thus. He never intended that we should use them in a legal way to shake our confidence in Christ and His full salvation. We shall never come into judgment as to our sins. John 5: 24, Romans 8: 1 and 1 John 4: 17 are conclusive as to that point. But our *services* must come under the Master's eye. Every man's *work* shall be tried of what sort it is. The day will make everything manifest. All this is very solemn and should lead to great watchfulness and carefulness as to our works, ways, thoughts, words, motives and desires. The deepest sense of grace and the clearest apprehension of our perfect justification as sinners, will never weaken our sense of the deep solemnity of the judgment seat of Christ or lessen our desire so to walk that we may be acceptable to Him.

It is well to see this. The apostle labored that he might be accepted. He kept his body under lest he should be disapproved. Every saint should do the same. We are already accepted in Christ, and as such, we labor to be accepted of Him. We should seek to give every truth its proper place. The way to do this is to be much in the presence of God and to view each truth in immediate connection with Christ. There is always a danger of making such a use of one truth as, practically, to displace some other truth. This should be carefully guarded against. We believe there will be a full manifestation of everyone and everything before the judgment seat of Christ. Everything will come out there. Things that looked very brilliant and praiseworthy, and that made a great noise among men down here, will all be burned up as so much "wood, hay and stubble." Things that were blazed abroad and made use of to surround the names of men with a halo of human applause, will all be submitted to the searching action of "the fire" and much of them reduced to ashes.

The counsels of all hearts will be made manifest. Every motive, every purpose, every design will be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. The fire will try every man's work, and nothing

will be stamped as genuine except that which has been the fruit of divine grace in our hearts. All mixed motives will be judged, condemned and burnt up. All prejudices, all erroneous judgments, all evil surmisings concerning others — all these and such like things will be exposed and cast into the fire. We shall see things then as Christ sees them, judge them as He judges them. No one will be better pleased than myself to see all my stubble consumed. Even now, as we grow in light, knowledge and spirituality, as we get nearer and more like Christ, we heartily condemn many things which we once deemed all right. How much more shall we do so when we stand in the full blaze of the light of the judgment seat of Christ?

Now, what should be the practical effect of all this upon the believer? To make him doubt his salvation? To leave him in a state of uncertainty as to whether he is accepted or not? To make him question his relationship to God in Christ? Surely not. What then? To lead him to walk in holy carefulness from day to day, as under the eye of his Lord and Master — to produce watchfulness, sobriety and self-judgment, to induce faithfulness, diligence and integrity in all his services and all his ways.

Take a simple illustration. A father leaves home for a time. When taking leave of his children, he appoints a certain work to be done and a certain line of conduct to be adopted during his absence. When he returns, he may have to praise some for their faithfulness and diligence, while he blames others for the very reverse. But does he disown the latter? Does he break the relationship? By no means. They are just as much his children as the others, though he faithfully points out their failure and censures them for it. If they have been biting and devouring one another instead of doing his will; if one has been judging another's work instead of attending to his own; if there has been envy and jealousy instead of an earnest-hearted carrying out of the father's intentions, all these things will meet with well-deserved censure. How could it be otherwise?

But then some 'shrink with horror from the thought of having the secrets of the heart manifested to all there.' Well, the Holy Spirit declares that "the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall

every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 3: 9). He does not say *to whom* they shall be manifested; nor does this in the least affect the question, because every true-hearted person will be far more deeply concerned about the judgment of the Master than about the judgment of a fellow-servant. Provided I please Christ, I need not trouble myself much about man's judgment. If I am more troubled about the idea of having all my motives exposed to the view of man than I am about their being exposed to the view of Christ, it is plain there must be something wrong. It proves I am occupied about myself. I shrink from the exposure of “*my* secret motives.” Then it is very plain that my secret motives are not right, and the sooner they are judged the better.

What difference would it make if all our sins and failures were made manifest to everybody? Are Peter and David any less happy because untold millions have read the account of their shameful fall? Surely not. They know that the record of their sins only magnifies the grace of God and illustrates the value of the blood of Christ, and hence they rejoice in it. Thus it is in every case. If we were more emptied of self and occupied with Christ, we should have more simple and correct thoughts about the judgment seat as well as about everything else.

May the Lord keep our hearts true to Himself in this the time of His absence, so that when He appears we may not be ashamed before Him! May all our works be so begun, continued and ended in Him, that the thought of having them duly weighed and estimated in the presence of His glory may not disturb our hearts! May we be constrained by the “*love* of Christ,” not by the fear of judgment, to live unto Him who died for us and rose again! We may safely and happily leave everything in His hands, seeing He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. We have no reason to fear, inasmuch as we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The moment Christ appears we shall be changed into His image, pass into the presence of His glory, and there review the past. We shall look back from that high and holy elevation upon our course down here. We shall see things in a different light altogether. It may be we shall be astonished to find that many things of which we thought a great deal down here, will

be found defective up there. On the other hand, many little things which were done in self-forgetfulness and love to Jesus, will be diligently recorded and abundantly rewarded. We shall also be able to see in the clear light of the Master's presence, many mistakes and failures which had never before come within the range of our vision. What will be the effect of all this? Just to evoke from our hearts loud and rapturous hosannas to the praise of Him who has brought us through all our toils and dangers, borne with all our mistakes and failures, and assigned us a place in His own everlasting kingdom, there to bask in the bright beams of His glory and shine in His image forever.

We shall not dwell further on this subject, but we trust sufficient has been said to relieve the minds of those dear friends who have consulted us on the point. We always regard it as a happy service to communicate on any question which may present difficulty to people's minds. We can truly say, our desire is to be a help and blessing to the souls of His people everywhere, and that the name of the Lord Jesus may be magnified.

2 Corinthians 5: 18-21

Ministry of Reconciliation

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as God though did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that ye might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5: 18-21.)

2 Corinthians 5 takes rank amongst the very weightiest section of inspiration. Its closing lines contain the special thesis of the following pages, but ere we proceed to handle it, we must call the reader's attention to some most interesting and important points presented in the course of the chapter.

And, first of all, let us dwell, for a moment, on the opening sentence, "*We know.*" In it we have the language of Christian certainty. It does not say, "*We hope.*" Still less does it say, "*We fear,*" or "*We doubt.*" No; such language would not express that unclouded certainty and calm assurance which it is the privilege of the very feeblest child of God to possess. And yet, alas ! how few, even of the children of God, enjoy this blessed certainty — this calm assurance! Many there are who look upon it as the height of presumption to say, " *We know.*" They seem to think that doubts and fears argue a proper condition of soul — that it is impossible for anyone to be sure — that the most we can expect is to cherish a vague hope of reaching heaven when we die.

Now, it must be admitted that if we ourselves had aught to do with the ground of certainty or assurance, then it would indeed be the very height of folly to think of being sure; then assuredly our hope would be a very vague one. But, thanks be to God, it is not so. We having nothing whatever to do with the ground of our certainty;

it lies entirely outside of ourselves, and it must be sought only and altogether in the eternal word of God. This renders it so blessedly simple. It makes the whole question hinge upon the truth of God's word. Why am I sure ? Because God's word is true. A shadow of uncertainty or misgiving on my part would argue a want of authority or security in the word of God. It really comes to this. Christian certainty rests on the faithfulness of God. Before you can shake the former, you must shake the latter.

We can understand this simple principle by our dealings with one another. If my fellow man makes a statement to me, and I express the smallest doubt or misgiving, or if I feel it without even expressing it, I am calling in question his truthfulness, or credibility. If he is a faithful competent authority, I have no business to entertain a single doubt. My certainty is linked with his credibility. If he is a competent authority, I may enjoy perfect repose as to the matter concerning which he has spoken. Now, we all know what it is to receive in the most unqualified way the testimony of man, and to repose with calmness therein. It is not a question of feeling, but of receiving, without a single question, a plain statement, and resting on the authority of a competent witness. Well, then, as we have it in the First Epistle of John, "If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater." So also our Lord said to the men of His time, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (John 8) He appeals to the truth of what He says as the reason why, or the ground on which, He expected to be believed.

This, Christian reader, is a very weighty principle, and one which demands special attention on the part of all anxious inquirers, as also on the part of all who undertake to deal with such. There is a strong and constant tendency to look *within* for the ground of assurance — to build upon certain feelings experiences and exercises, either past or present — to look back at some special process through which we have passed, or to look in at certain impressions or convictions of our own minds, and to find in these the ground of our confidence — the warrant for our faith. This will never do. It is impossible to find settled peace or calm repose in this way. Feelings, however true and real, change and pass away. Experiences, however genuine, may prove defective. Impressions

and convictions may prove utterly false. None of these things, therefore, can form a solid ground of Christian certainty. This latter must be sought and found in God's word alone. It is not in feelings, not in experiences, not in impressions or convictions, not in reasonings, not in human traditions or doctrines, but simply in the unchangeable, eternal word of the living God. That word which is settled for ever in heaven, and which God has magnified above all His name, can alone impart peace to the mind and stability to the soul.

True, it is only by the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost that we can properly grasp and ever hold fast to the word of God; but still it is His word, and that word *alone*, that forms the ground of Christian certainty, and the true basis and authority for the Christian in the entire range of practical life and action. We cannot be too simple as to this. We can only adopt the opening sentence of our chapter, and say, "We know," when we take God's word as the all-sufficient ground of our personal confidence. It will not do to be, in any wise, propped up by human authority. Thousands of the people of God have been made to taste the bitterness of leaning upon the commandments and doctrines of men. it is sure to end in disappointment and confusion, sooner or later. The edifice which is built upon the sand of human authority must fall at some time or other; whereas that which is founded on the rock of God's eternal truth shall stand for ever. God's word imparts its own stability to the soul that leans upon it. " Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isa. 28: 16)

As is the foundation, so is the faith that builds thereon. Hence the solemn importance of seeking to lead souls to build *only* upon God's precious Word. Look at the anxiety of the apostle Paul, in reference to this matter. Hear what he says to the Corinthians who were in such danger of being led away by human headship and human authority. " And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you *the testimony of God*. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and

my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2: 1-5)

Here is a grand model for all preachers and teachers. Paul declared the "testimony of God," nothing more, nothing less, nothing different. And not only so, but he delivered that testimony in such a way as to connect the souls of his hearers immediately with the living God. Paul did not want the Corinthians to lean upon him; nay, he "trembled" lest they should be tempted to do so. He would have done them a grievous wrong, had he, in anywise, come in between their souls and the true source of all authority — the true foundation of confidence and peace. Had he led them to build upon himself, he would have robbed them of God, and this would have been a wrong indeed. No marvel, therefore, that he was among them "in fear and in much trembling." They were evidently very much prone to set up and follow after human leaders, and thus miss the solid reality of personal communion with, and dependence upon, the living God. Hence the jealous care of the apostle in confining himself to the testimony of God; in delivering unto them *only* that which he had received of the Lord (see 1 Cor. 11: 23, 1 Cor. 15: 3); lest the pure water should suffer in its passage from its source in God to the souls of the Corinthians — lest he should, in the smallest degree, impart the colour of his own thoughts to the precious truth of God.

We see the same thing in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. "For this cause also," says the faithful servant of Christ, "thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it *not as the word of men*, but, its *it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2: 13) Had he been seeking his own things, he would have been glad to obtain influence over the Thessalonians, by linking them on to himself, and leading them to lean upon him. But no; he rejoices in seeing them in living connection — in direct and realised association, with God Himself. This is always the effect of true ministry, as it is ever the object of the true minister. Unless the soul be livingly linked with God, there

is really nothing done. If it be merely following men — receiving what they say, because they say it — an attachment to certain preachers or teachers because of something in their style and manner, or because they seem to be very holy, very separated, or very devoted — all this will come to nought. Those human links will soon be snapped asunder. The faith that stands, in any measure, in the wisdom of men will prove hollow and worthless. Nothing will prove permanent — nothing will endure, but that faith which rests on the testimony and in the power of the only true God.

Christian reader, we earnestly invite your attention to this point. We do indeed feel its importance at the present moment. The enemy is seeking diligently to lead souls away from God, away from Christ, away from the holy scriptures. He is seeking to get them to build on something short of *the truth*. He does not care what it is, provided it is not Christ. It may be reason, tradition, religiousness, human priesthood, fleshy pietism, holiness in the flesh, sectarianism, morality, good works, service so-called, human influence, patronage, philanthropy; anything short of Christ, short of God's word, short of a lively, personal, direct, faith in the living God Himself.

Now, it is the sense of this pressing home upon the heart that leads us to urge with earnestness upon the reader the necessity of being thoroughly clear as to the ground on which he is, at this moment, standing. We want him to be able to say in the face of all around him, "*I know.*" Nothing less than this will stand. It will not do to say, "*I hope.*" No; there must be certainty. There must be the ability to say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, *we have* a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This is the language of faith — the language of a Christian. All is calm, clear, and sure, because all is of God. There may be an "if " with regard to "the earthly house." It may be dissolved it may crumble into dust. All that belongs to this scene may bear the stamp of death; it may change and pass away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and the faith that grasps and rests upon that word partakes of its eternal stability. It enables one to say, "*I know that I have.*" Nought but faith can say this.

Reason can only say, "I doubt;" superstition, "I fear;" only faith can say, "I know and am sure."

An infidel teacher once said to a dying woman, whom he had indoctrinated with his infidel notions, "Hold fast, Mary." What was her reply? "I can't hold fast, for you have never given me anything to hold by." Cutting rebuke! He had taught the poor woman to doubt; but he had given her nothing to believe; and then when flesh and heart were failing, when earthly scenes were passing away, and the dread realities of eternity were crowding in upon her soul's vision, infidelity altogether failed her; its wretched cobwebs could afford no refuge, no covering, in view of death and judgment. How different the condition of the believer — of the one who, in all simplicity of heart and humility of mind, takes his stand on the solid rock of Holy Scripture! Such an one can calmly say, "*I am now ready* to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4: 6-8)

It is more than probable that some may find it difficult to reconcile the calm certainty expressed in the first verse of our chapter with the groan of verse 2. But the difficulty will vanish the moment we are enabled to see the true reason of the groan. "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Here we see that the very certainty of having a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens," makes us groan to possess it. The apostle did not groan in doubt or uncertainty. He did not groan under the weight of guilt or fear. Still less did he groan because he could not satisfy the desires of the flesh or of the mind, or because he could not surround himself with this world's perishable possessions. No; he longed for the heavenly building — the divine, the real, the eternal. He felt the heavy burden of the poor crumbling, tabernacle; it was a grievous hindrance to

him. It was the only link with the scene around, and, as such, it was a heavy clog of which he longed to be rid.

But, most clearly he would not and could not have groaned for the heavenly house if he had a single question on his mind with respect to it. Men are never anxious to get rid of the body unless they are sure of possessing something better; nay, they grasp this present life with intense eagerness, and tremble at the thought of the futures which is all darkness and uncertainty to them. They groan at the thought of quitting the body; the apostle groaned because he was in it.

This makes all the difference. Scripture never contemplates such a thing as a Christian groaning under sin, guilt, doubt, or fear; or sighing after the riches, honours, or pleasures of this vain, sin stricken world. Alas! alas! they do thus groan through ignorance of their true position in a risen Christ, and their proper portion in the heavens,. But such is not the ground or character of the groan in the scripture now before us; Paul saw, with distinctness, his house in the heavens; and, on the other hand, he felt the heavy burden of the tabernacle of clay; and he ardently longed to lay aside the latter and be clothed with the former.

Hence, then, there is the fullest harmony between "*we know*" and "*we groan*." If we did not know for a certainty that we have a building of God, we should like to hold our earthly house as long as possible. We see this constantly. Men cling to life. They leave nothing untried to keep body and soul together. They have no certainty as to heaven. They cannot say, "*we know*" that "*we have*" anything there. On the other hand, they have a terrible dread of the future, which to their vision is wrapped up in clouds and thick darkness. They have never committed themselves in calm confidence to God and His word; they have never felt the tranquillising power of His love. They have viewed Him as an angry Judge instead of seeing Him as the sinner's Friend — a just God and a Saviour — the righteous Justifier. No marvel, therefore, if they shrink with terror from the thought of meeting Him.

But it is a totally different thing with a man who knows God as his Father — his Saviour — his best Friend; who knows that

Jesus died to save him from his sins, and from all the consequences thereof. Such an one can say, —

I have a home above
From sin and sorrow free;
A mansion which eternal Love
Designed and formed for me.

The Father's gracious hand
Has built this blest abode;
From everlasting it was planned
The dwelling-place of God.

The Saviour's precious blood
Has made my title sure;
He passed through death's dark raging flood,
To make my rest secure."

These are the breathings of simple faith, and they perfectly harmonise with the groans of a spirit " that looks beyond its cage and longs to flee away." The believer finds his body of sin and death a heavy burden, and longs to be free from the encumbrance, and to be clothed upon with a body suited to his new and eternal state — a new creation body — a body perfectly free from every trace of mortality. This cannot be until the morning of resurrection, that glorious moment, long looked for, when the dead in Christ shall rise and the living saints be changed, in a moment; when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

It is for this we groan, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon. The unclothed state is not the object, though we know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; and to depart and be with Christ is far better. The Lord Jesus is waiting that glorious consummation, and we wait in sympathy with Him. Meanwhile, " the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8: 22-25)

Thus, then, beloved reader, we have before us a very distinct answer to the question, "Why does the believer groan?" He groans, being burdened. He groans in sympathy with a groaning creation, with which he is linked by means of a body of sin and death — a body of humiliation. He sees around him, day by day, the sad fruits of sin. He cannot pass along the streets of our cities and towns without having before his eyes a thousand proofs of man's sad state. He hears on one side the wail of sorrow; on another, the cry of distress. He sees oppression, violence, corruption, strife, heartless villainy and its victims. He sees the thorn, and the briar. He notes the various disturbing forces which are abroad in the physical, the moral, and the political world. He marks the varied forms of disease and misery around him. The cry of the poor and the needy, the widow and the orphan, falls sadly upon his ear and upon his heart; and what can he do but send up from the deepest depths of his spiritual nature a sympathetic groan, and long for the blissful moment when " the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God"? It is impossible for a true Christian to pass through a world like this without groaning. Look at the blessed Master Himself; did not He groan? Yes, verily. Mark Him as He approached the grave of Lazarus, in company with the two weeping sisters. " When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where

have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." (John 11: 33-35)

Whence came those tears and groans? Was He not approaching the grave of His friend as the Prince of Life — the Quickener of the dead — the Conqueror of death — the Spoiler of the grave? Why, then, did He groan? He groaned in sympathy with the objects of His love, and with the whole scene around Him. His tears and groans emanated from the profound depths of a perfect human heart which felt, according to God, the true condition of the human family and of Israel in particular. He beheld around Him the varied fruits of sin. He felt for man, He felt for Israel. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted saith grief. He never even cured a person without bearing upon His spirit the reality of that with which He was dealing. He did not, He would not, lightly bid away death, disease, and sorrow. No: He entered into it all, as man; and that, too, according to the infinite perfections of His divine nature. He bore it all upon His spirit, in the reality of it, before God. Though perfectly free from it all, and above it all, yet did he in grace voluntarily enter into it most thoroughly, so as to taste, and prove, and know it all, as none else could know it.

All this is fully expressed in Matthew 8 where we read the following words: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*" (Vers. 16, 17)

We have very little idea of what the heart of Jesus felt as He passed through this sorrowful, because sinful, world; and we are far too apt to miss the reality of His sufferings by confining them merely to what He endured on the cross, and also by supposing that because He was God over all, blessed for ever, He did not feel all that a human heart is capable of feeling. This is a sad loss. Indeed we may say it is an incalculable loss. The Lord Jesus, as the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings. See Hebrews 2, where the inspired writer distinguishes carefully between "the suffering of death," and the "sufferings" of the Captain of our salvation. In order to save sinners from *wrath*, " he tasted death for

every man," and having done so, we see Him "crowned with glory and honour." But in order to "*bring many sons to glory*," He had to be "perfected through sufferings." And now all true believers have the unspeakable privilege of knowing that there is One at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens who, when in this world of sin and woe, tasted every form of suffering and every cup of sorrow which it was possible for any human heart to know. He could say, "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none." (Ps. 69: 20)

How deeply affecting is all this! But we cannot pursue this subject here. We have merely touched upon it in connection with the question, "Why does the believer groan?" We trust that the reader will see clearly the true answer to this inquiry; and that it will be most evident to his mind that the groans of a Christian proceed from the divine nature which he actually possesses, and cannot therefore, by any possibility, be occasioned by doubts or fears, on the one hand, nor yet by selfish desires or the insatiable cravings of nature, on the other. But that, on the contrary, the very fact of his possessing everlasting life, through faith in Christ, and the blessed assurance of having a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, causes him to long for that blessed, indestructible building, and to groan because of his connection with a groaning creation, as well as in sympathy therewith.

If any further proof were needed, on this deeply interesting question, we have it in verses 5 and 6 of our chapter (2 Cor. 5), where the apostle goes on to say, "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are *always confident* [not doubting or fearing], knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight), we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (Vers. 5-8)

Here we have two grand cardinal truths laid down, namely, first, The believer is God's workmanship; and secondly, God has given him the earnest of the Spirit. Most marvellous — most glorious facts ! Facts which demand the attention of the reader.

Everyone who simply and heartily believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is God's workmanship. God has created him anew in Christ Jesus. Clearly, therefore, there can be no possible ground for questioning his acceptance with God, inasmuch as God can never call in question His own work. He will, assuredly, no more do this in His new creation, than He did in the old. When God looked upon His work, in the opening of the Book of Genesis, it was not to judge it or call it in question, but to announce it very good, and express His complacency in it. So now, when God looks upon the very feeblest believer, He sees in him His own workmanship, and most assuredly, He is not going, either here or hereafter, to call in question His own work. God is a rock, His work is perfect, and the believer is God's work; and because he is His work He has sealed him with the Holy Ghost.

The same truth is stated in Ephesians 2, where we read, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This, we may truly say, is a point of the weightiest moment. It claims the grave attention of the reader who desires to be thoroughly established in the truth of God as to what a Christian — what Christianity really is. It is not a ruined, lost, guilty sinner seeking to work himself up into something or other fit for God. It is the very reverse. It is God, in the riches of His grace, on the ground of the atoning death of Christ, taking up a poor, dead, worthless, condemned thing — a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, and creating him anew in Christ Jesus. It is, as it were, God beginning *de novo* — on the new, as we may say — to form man in Christ, to place him on a new footing altogether, not now as an innocent being on a creation basis, but as a justified one, in a risen Christ. It is not man's old condition improved by human effort of any sort or description; but it is God's new workmanship in a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ.

It is not man's own garment pierced or patched by human device in any shape or form whatever; but it is God's new garment introduced in the person of Christ, who having, in infinite grace, gone down into the dust of death, and endured, on man's behalf, the judgment to sin, the righteous wrath of a sin-hating God, was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and is become the Head of

the new creation — " The beginning of the creation of God." (Rev. 3: 14)

Now, it must be perfectly clear to the reader, that if our Lord Jesus Christ be, in very deed "the *beginning*" of God's creation, then we must begin at the beginning, else we have done absolutely nothing at all. We may labour and toil — we may do our very utmost, and be perfectly sincere in our doing — we may vow and resolve — we may seek to improve our state, to alter our course, to mend our ways, to live in a different way — but all the while we are in the old creation, which has been completely set aside, and is under the judgment of God; we have not begun at "the beginning" of God's new creation, and, as a necessary consequence, we have gained nothing at all. We have been spending our strength for nought and in vain. We have been putting forth efforts to improve a thing which God has condemned and set aside altogether. We are, to use a very feeble figure indeed, like a man who is spending his time, his pains, and his money in painting and papering a house that has been condemned by the government surveyor, on account of the rottenness of the foundation, and which must be taken down at once.

What should we say to such a man? Should we not deem him very foolish? Doubtless. But if it be folly to paint and paper a condemned house what shall we say to those who are seeking to improve a condemned nature — a condemned world ? We must say this, at least, they are pursuing a course which must, sooner or later, end in disappointment and confusion.

Oh that this were understood and entered into! Would to God that Christians more fully entered into it! Would to God that all Christian writers, preachers, and teachers entered into it, and set it forth distinctly with pen and voice! At the least, we earnestly desire that the reader should thoroughly grasp it. We are most fully persuaded that it is pre-eminently " truth for the times." It is truth to meet the need of thousands of souls — to remove their burdens, relieve their hearts and consciences — solve their difficulties — chase away their clouds. There are, at this moment, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, countless multitudes engaged in the fruitless work of painting and papering a condemned house — a house on which God has pronounced judgment, because of the

hopelessly ruined condition of its foundations. They are seeking to do little jobs of repairs here and there throughout the house, forgetting, or perhaps not knowing, that the whole building is very shortly to be demolished by order of the divine government. Some are doing this with the utmost sincerity, amid much sore exercise of soul, and many tears, because they cannot succeed in satisfying their own hearts even, much less the claims of God. For God demands a perfect thing not a patched-up ruin. There is no use in seeking to cover with paper and paint old walls tottering on a rotten foundation. God cannot be deceived by surface work, by shallow outside appearances. The foundations are bad, the whole thing must come down, and we must put our whole trust in Him who is "the beginning of the creation of God."

Reader, pause here for a moment's calm and serious reflection. Ask yourself the question, "Am I seeking to patch up a ruin? Am I seeking to improve the old nature? Or have I really found my place in God's new creation, of which a risen Christ is the Head and Beginning?" Remember, we beseech you, that you cannot possibly engage in more fruitless toil than seeking to make yourself better. Your efforts may be sincere, but they must, in the long run, prove worthless. Your paper and paint may be all good and genuine enough, but you are putting them on a condemned ruin. You cannot say of your unrenewed nature that it is "God's workmanship;" and, most assuredly, *your* doings, your good works, *your* religious exercises, *your* efforts to keep the ten commandments — nothing, in short, that you can do, could possibly be called "God's workmanship." It is yours, and not God's. He cannot acknowledge it. He cannot seal it with His Spirit. It is all false and good for nothing. If you cannot say, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God," you have really nothing. You are yet in your sins. You have not begun at God's beginning. You are yet "in the flesh" and the voice of holy scripture declares that "they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." (Rom. 8)

This is a solemn and sweeping sentence. A man out of Christ is "in the flesh;" and such a man cannot please God. He may be most religious, most moral, most amiable, most benevolent, a most excellent master, a generous friend, a liberal giver, a genial

companion, a patron of the poor, upright and honourable in all his dealings, he may be an eloquent preacher and a popular writer, and all the while not be "in *Christ*," but "in the flesh," and therefore he "cannot please God."

Can aught be more solemn than this? Only to think of how far a person may go in all that is deemed excellent among men, and yet not be in Christ, but in his sins — in the flesh — in the old creation — in the condemned house. And be it noted that it is not a question of gross sins, of scandalous living, in all its varied, hideous shapes of immorality, in its deeper and darker shades; no, the declaration of holy scripture is, that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." This, truly, is most soul-subduing, and calls for deep and solemn reflection on the part of every thoughtful and earnest soul.

But it may be that, to the reader's view, difficulties and stumbling blocks still surround this most weighty subject. He may still be utterly at a loss to know what is meant by the expression, "In the flesh." If so, it will, we fondly hope, help him, not a little, to remember that scripture speaks of two men — "the first man" and "the second man." These two men are presented as the heads of two distinct races. Adam *fallen* is the head of one race; Christ *risen* is the Head of the other race. Now, the very fact of there being "a second man" proves that the first man had been set aside: for if the first man had proved faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. This is clear and unquestionable. The first man is a total wreck — an irreparable ruin. The foundations of the old edifice have given way; and albeit, in man's view, the building seems to stand, and to be capable of being repaired, yet, in God's view it is completely set aside, and a second Man — a new edifice set up, on the solid and imperishable ground of redemption.

Hence, we read, in Genesis 3, that God "*drove out the man*;" and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned *every way*, to keep the way of the tree of life." In other words, the first man was driven out, and every possible way of return was closed against him, as *such*. He could only get back by "a new and living way," namely, through the rent veil of the Saviour's flesh. The flaming sword "turned every way," so that there was positively no way by which the first man could

ever get back to his former state. The only hope, now, was through "the seed of the woman" — "the second Man." The flaming sword declared, in symbolic yet impressive language, the truth, which comes out in the New Testament divested of all symbol and shadow, namely, that "they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" — "Ye must be born again." Every unconverted man, woman, and child is part and parcel of the first man, fallen, ruined, set aside, and driven out. He is a member of the first Adam — the old race — a stone in the old condemned building.

Thus it stands if we are to be guided by scripture. The head and his race go together. As is the one so is the other; what is true of the one is true of the other. They are, in God's view, absolutely identical. Was the first Adam fallen when he became the head of a race? Was he driven out? Was he completely set aside? Yes, verily, if we are to believe scripture; then the unconverted — the unregenerated reader of these lines is fallen, driven out, and set aside. As is the head, so is the member — each member in particular — all the members together. They are inseparable, if we are to be taught by divine revelation.

But, further, was every possible way of return finally closed against the fallen head? yes, scripture declares that the flaming sword turned "*every way*, to keep the way of the tree of life." Then is it utterly impossible that the unconverted — unregenerate reader can improve himself or make himself fit for God. If the fallen head could not get back to the tree of life, neither can the fallen member. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." That is, they that are on the old footing, in the old creation, members of the first Adam part and parcel of the old edifice, cannot please God. "Ye must be born again." Man must be renewed in the very deepest springs and sources of his being. He must be God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath "before prepared that we should walk in them." He must be able to say, in the language of our text, "He that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God."

But this leads us to another point. How is anyone to get into this marvellous position? How can any soul take up such language? How can anyone whose eyes have been opened to see his utter and hopeless ruin, as connected with the first man, as standing in the old

creation, as a stone in the old edifice — how can such an one ever reach a position in which he can please God? The Lord he praised, scripture gives an answer, full, clear, and distinct, to this serious question. A second Man has appeared upon the scene — the seed of the woman, and, at the same time, God over all, blessed for ever. In Him all begins afresh. He came into this world born of a woman, made under the law, pure and spotless, free from every taint of sin, personally apart from every claim of sin and death, standing in the midst of a ruined world, a guilty race, Himself that pure, untainted grain of wheat. We see Him lying as a babe in the manger. We see Him growing up as a youth beneath the parental roof. We see Him as a man working in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth. We see Him baptised in Jordan, where all the people were baptised confessing their sins — Himself sinless, but fulfilling all righteousness, and, in perfect grace, identifying Himself with the repentant portion of the nation of Israel. We see Him anointed with the Holy Ghost for the work that lay before Him. We see Him in the wilderness faint and hungry, unlike the first man who was placed in the midst of a paradise of creature delights. We see Him tempted of Satan and coming off victorious. We trace Him along the pathway of public ministry — and such a ministry! What incessant toil! What weariness and watching! What hunger and thirst! What sorrow and travail! Worse off than the fowls and the foxes, the Son of man had not where to lay His head. The contradiction of sinners by day, the mountain-top by night.

Such was the marvellous life of this blessed One. But this was not all. He died! Yes, He died under the weight of the first man's guilt, He died to take away the sin of the world, and alter completely the ground of God's relationship with the world, so that God might deal with man and with the world on the new ground of redemption, instead of the old ground of sin. He died for the nation of Israel. He tasted death for every man. He died the just for the unjust. He suffered for sins. He died and was buried, according to the Scriptures. He went through all — met all — paid all — finished all. He went down into the dust of death, and lay in the dark and silent tomb. He descended into the lower parts of the earth. He went down to the very bottom of everything. He endured the sentence passed on man. He paid the penalty, bore the judgment, drained the

cup of wrath, went through every form of human suffering and trial, was tempted in all points, sin excepted. He made an end of everything that stood in the way, and, *having finished all*. He gave up His spirit into the hand of His Father, and His precious body was laid in a tomb on which the smell of death had never passed.

Nor was this all. He rose! Yes, He rose triumphant over all. He rose as the Head of the new creation — "The beginning of the creation of God" — "The first-begotten from among the dead" — "The first-born among many brethren." And now the Second Man is before God, crowned with glory and honour, not in an earthly paradise, but at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. This Second Man is the last Adam, because there is none to come after Him, we cannot get beyond the last. There is only one Man before God now. The first is set aside. The last is set up. And as the first was the fallen head of a fallen race, so the last is the risen Head of a saved, justified, and accepted race. The Head and His members are inseparably identified — all the members together, and each member in particular. We are accepted in Him. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4: 17). There is nothing before God but Christ. The Head and the body, the Head and each individual member are indissolubly joined together — inseparably and eternally one. God thinks of the members as He thinks of the Head — loves them as He loves Him. Those members are God's workmanship, incorporated by His Spirit into the body of Christ, and in God's presence, having no other footing, no other rank, position, or station whatsoever but "in Christ." They are no longer "in the flesh, but in the Spirit." They can please God, because they possess His nature, and are sealed by His Spirit, and guided by His Word. "*He that hath wrought them is God,*" and God must ever delight in His own workmanship. He will never find fault with or condemn the work of His own hand. "God is a rock, His work is perfect," and hence the believer, as God's workmanship, must be perfect. He is "*in Christ*" and that is enough — enough for God — enough for faith — enough for ever.

And, now, if it be asked, "How is all this to be attained?" Scripture replies, "by *faith*." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath*

everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5: 24).

The reader who has travelled intelligently with us through the opening lines of our chapter will be in a position to understand something of the solemn and momentous subject to which we now approach, namely, the judgment-seat of Christ. If indeed it be true that the believer is God's workmanship — if he is actually a member of Christ — associated with the second Adam — bound up in the bundle of life with the risen and glorified Lord, if all this be true — and God's Word declares it is — then it must be perfectly evident that the judgment-seat of Christ cannot, by any possibility, touch the Christian's position, or prove, in any wise, unfriendly to him. No doubt it is a most solemn and serious matter, involving the most weighty consequences to every servant of Christ, and designed to exert a most salutary influence upon the heart and conscience of every man. But it will do all this just in proportion as it is viewed from the true standpoint, and no further. It is not to be supposed that anyone can reap the divinely appointed blessing from meditating on the judgment-seat, if he is looking forward to it as the place where the grand question of his eternal salvation is to be settled. And yet how many are thus regarding it! How many of God's true people are there, who, from not seeing the simple truth involved in these words, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God," are anticipating the judgment-seat of Christ as something that may, after all, condemn them.

This is greatly to be deplored, both because it dishonours the Lord, and completely destroys the soul's peace and liberty. For how, let us ask, is it possible for anyone to enjoy peace so long as there is a single question about salvation to be settled? We conceive it is wholly impossible. The peace of the true believer rests on the fact that every possible question has been divinely and eternally settled; and as a consequence, no question can ever arise, either before the judgment-seat of Christ, or at any other time. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith in reference to this great question: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or judgment]; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5: 24).

It is important to understand that the word used by our Lord in the above passage is not "condemnation" but "judgment." He assures the believer that he shall never come into judgment; and this, too, be it observed, in immediate connection with the statement that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (ver. 22). And, again, "For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man" (ver. 26-27).

Thus, then, the One to whom all judgment is committed — who alone has authority to execute judgment, by the Father's just decree — this blessed One assures us that if we harken to His Word, and believe on Him that sent Him, we shall never come into judgment at all.

This is clear and conclusive. It must tranquillise the heart completely. It must roll away every cloud and mist, and conduct the soul into a region where no question can ever arise to disturb its deep and eternal repose. If the One who has all judgment in His hand, and all authority to execute it — if *He* assures me that I shall never come into judgment, I am perfectly satisfied. I believe His Word, and rest in the happy assurance that whatever the judgment-seat of Christ may prove to others, it cannot prove unfriendly to me. I know that the Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and that the Word tells me I shall never come into judgment.

But it may be that the reader finds it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile this entire exemption from judgment with the solemn fact stated by our Lord, that "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." But there is really no difficulty in the matter. If a man has to meet judgment at all, he must give account for every idle word. How awfully solemn the thought! There is no escaping it. Were it possible for a single idle word to be let pass, it would be a dishonour to the judgment-seat. It would be a sign of weakness and incompetency which is utterly impossible. It were blasphemy against the Son of God to suppose that a single stain could escape His scrutinising gaze. If the reader comes into judgment, that

judgment must be perfect, and, hence, his condemnation must be inevitable.

We would press this serious matter upon the attention of the unconverted reader. It imperatively demands his immediate and earnest consideration. There is a day rapidly approaching when every idle word, and every foolish thought, and every sinful act, will be brought to light, and he will have to answer for it. Christ, as a Judge, has eyes like unto a flame of fire, and feet like unto fine brass — eyes to detect, and feet to crush the evil. There will be no escape. There will be no mercy then: all will be stern and unmitigated judgment. "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the *books* were opened; and another *book* was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the *books*, according to their *works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged *every man according to their works*. And death and the grave were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20: 11-15).

Mark here the difference between "the books" and "the book of life." The entire scene sets forth the judgment of the wicked dead — of those who have died in their sins, from first to last. "The book of life" is opened; but there is no judgment for those whose names are written therein by the hand of electing and redeeming love. "The books" are opened — those awful records written in characters deep, broad, and black — those terrible catalogues of the sins of every man, woman, and child, from the beginning to the end of time. There will be no escaping in the crowd. Each one will stand in his own most intense individuality in that appalling moment. The eye of each will be turned in upon himself, and back upon his past history. All will be seen in the light of the great white throne, from which there is no escape.

The sceptic may reason against all this. He may say, "*How* can these things be? *How* could all the dead stand before God? *How*

could the countless millions, who have passed away since the foundation of the world find sufficient space before the judgment-seat?" The answer is very simple to the true believer, whatever it may be to the sceptic; God who made them, will make a place for them to stand for judgment, and a place to lie in everlasting torment. Tremendous thought? "God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts. 17: 31).

And be it remembered that "*every man* will be judged according to *his* works." The solemn session of the judgment referred to in Revelation 20 will not be an indiscriminate act. Let none suppose this. There are "*books*" — rolls — records. "*Every man*" will be judged. How? "According to *his* works. Nothing can be more precise and specific. Each one has committed his own sins, and for them he will be judged and punished everlastingly. We are aware that many cherish the notion that people will only be judged for rejecting the gospel. It is a fatal mistake. Scripture teaches the direct contrary. It declares that people will be judged according to their works. What are we to learn from the "many stripes" and the "few stripes" of Luke 12? What is the force of the words "more tolerable" in Matthew 11? Are we not plainly taught by these words that there will be a difference in the degrees of judgment and punishment? And does not the apostle most distinctly teach us in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 that the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience (or unbelief) "because of" certain sins against which he solemnly warns the saints?

No doubt the rejection of the gospel leaves people on the ground of judgment, just as the true belief of the gospel takes people off that ground. But the judgment will be, in every case, according to a man's works. Are we to suppose that the poor ignorant savage, who has lived and died amid the gloomy shades of heathen darkness, will be found in the same "book," or punished with the same severity as a man who has lived and died in the total rejection of the full blaze of gospel light and privilege? Not for a moment, so long as the words "more tolerable" stand on the page of inspiration. The savage will be judged according to his works, and the baptised

sinner will be judged according to his works, but assuredly it will be more tolerable for the former than the latter. God knows how to deal with people. He can discriminate, and He declares that He will give to each according to his works.

Think of this, we beseech you. Think deeply, think seriously. If thou art unconverted, think of it for thyself, for, assuredly, it concerns thee. And if thou art converted, think of it for others, as the apostle says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It is impossible for anyone to reflect upon the great and awful fact of judgment to come, and not be stirred up to warn his fellows. We believe it is of the very last possible importance that the consciences of men should be acted upon by the solemn truth of the judgment-seat of Christ — that they should be made to feel the seriousness of having to do with God as a Judge.

Should the reader, whoever he be, have been led to feel this — if he has been roused by this weighty matter — if he is, even now, asking the question, "What must I do?" the answer is blessedly simple. The gospel declares that the One who will, ere long, act as a Judge, is now revealed as a Justifier — even a Justifier of the ungodly sinner that believeth in Jesus. This changes the aspect of things entirely. It is not that the thought of the judgment-seat loses a single jot or tittle of its gravity and solemnity. Quite the contrary. It stands in all its weight and magnitude. But the believer looks at it from a totally different point of view. In place of looking at the judgment-seat of Christ as a guilty member of the first Adam, he looks at it as a justified and accepted member of the Second. In place of looking forward to it as the place where the question of his eternal salvation or perdition is to be decided, he looks to it as one who knows that he is God's workmanship, and that he can never come into judgment, inasmuch as he has been taken clean off the ground of guilt, death, and judgment, and placed, through the death and resurrection of Christ, on a new ground altogether, even the ground of life, righteousness, and cloudless favour.

It is most needful to be clear as to this grand fundamental truth. Very many even of the people of God are clouded in reference to it, and hence it is that they are afraid when they think of the judgment-seat. They do not know God as a Justifier. Their faith has

not grasped Him as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. They are looking to Christ to keep God out as a Judge, very much in the same way as the Israelites looked to the blood to keep out the destroyer. See Ex. 12. It is true and real enough, so far as it goes; but it falls very far short of the truth revealed in the New Testament. There is a vast difference between keeping God out as a Destroyer and a Judge, and bringing Him in as a Saviour and a Justifier. An Israelite would have dreaded, above all things, God's coming in to him. Why? Because God was passing through the land as a Destroyer. The Christian, on the contrary, delights to be in the presence of God. Why? Because He has revealed Himself as a Justifier. How? By raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

There are three forms of expression used by the inspired apostle in Rom. 3 and 4 which should be carefully pondered. In Rom. 3: 26, he speaks of "believing in Jesus." In Rom. 4: 5, he speaks of "believing in Him that justifieth the ungodly." And, ver. 24, he speaks of "believing in Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

Now, there is no distinction in Scripture without a difference; and when we see a distinction it is our business to inquire as to the difference. What then, is the difference between believing in Jesus, and believing in Him that raised up Jesus? We believe it to be this. We may often find souls who are really looking to Jesus and believing in Him, and yet they have, deep down in their hearts a sort of dread of meeting God. It is not that they doubt their salvation, or that they are not really saved. By no means. They are saved, inasmuch as they are looking to Christ, by faith, and all who so look are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. All this is most blessedly true: but still there is this latent fear or dread of God, and shrinking from death. They know that Jesus is friendly to them, inasmuch as He died for them; but they do not see so clearly the friendship of God as expressed in the act of His raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Hence it is that we find so many of God's people in uncertainty and spiritual distress. Their faith has not yet laid hold of God as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. They are not quite sure of how it may go with them. At times they are happy, because

by virtue of the new nature, of which they are assuredly the partakers, they get occupied with Christ: but at times they are miserable, because they begin to look at themselves, and they do not see God as their Justifier, and as the One who has condemned sin in the flesh. They are thinking of God as a Judge with whom some question still remains to be settled. They feel as if God's eye were resting on their indwelling sin, and as if they had, in some way or other, to dispose of that question with God.

Thus it is, we feel persuaded, with hundreds of the true saints of God. They do not see God as the Condemner of sin in Christ on the cross, and the Justifier of the believing sinner in Christ rising from the dead. They are looking to Christ on the cross to screen them from God as a Judge, instead of looking to God as a Justifier, in raising up Christ from the dead. Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Our sins are forgiven; our indwelling sin, or evil nature, is condemned and set aside. It has no existence *before God*. It is in us, but He sees us only in a risen Christ; and we are called to *reckon* ourselves dead, and by the power of God's Spirit, to mortify our members, to deny and subdue the evil nature which still dwells in us, and will dwell until we are passed out of our present condition and find our place forever with the Lord.

This makes all so blessedly clear. We have already dwelt upon the fact, that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God;" but the believer is not in the flesh, though the flesh be in him. He is in the *body*, and on the *earth*, as to the fact of his existence; but he is neither in *the flesh* nor of the *world*, as to the ground or principle of his standing. "Ye," says the Holy Ghost, "are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit" (Rom. 8). "They," says our blessed Lord, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17).

What a sweet relief to a heart bowed down under a sense of indwelling sin, and not knowing what to do with it! What solid peace and comfort flow into the soul when I see God condemning my sin in the cross, and justifying me in a risen Christ! Where are my *sins*? Blotted out. Where is my *sin*? Condemned and set aside. Where am I? Justified and accepted in a risen Christ. I am brought to God without a single cloud or misgiving. I am not afraid of my

Justifier. I confide in Him, love Him, and adore Him. I joy in God, and rejoice in hope of His glory.

Thus, then, we have, in some measure, cleared the way for the believer to approach the subject of the judgment-seat of Christ, as set forth in ver. 10 of our chapter, which we shall here quote at length, in order that the reader may have the subject fully before him in the veritable language of inspiration. "For we must all appear [or rather, be manifested] before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad."

Now there is, in reality, no difficulty or ground of perplexity here. All we need is to look at the matter from a divine standpoint, and with a simple mind, in order to see it clearly. This is true in reference to every subject treated of in the Word of God, and specially so as to the point now before us. We have no doubt whatever that the real secret of the difficulty felt by so many in respect to the question of the judgment-seat of Christ is self-occupation. Hence it is we so often hear such questions as the following, "Can it be possible that all our sins, all our failures, all our infirmities, all our naughty and foolish ways, shall be published, in the presence of assembled myriads, before the judgment-seat of Christ?"

Well, then, in the first place, we have to remark that Scripture says nothing of the kind. The passage before us, which contains the great, broad statement of the truth on this weighty subject, simply declares that "we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." But how shall we be manifested? Assuredly, *as we are*. But how is that? As God's workmanship — as perfectly righteous, and perfectly holy, and perfectly accepted in the Person of that very One who shall sit on the judgment-seat, and who Himself bore in His own body on the tree all the judgment due to us, and made a full end of the entire system in which we stood. All that which, as sinners, we had to meet, Christ met in our stead. Our *sins* He bore; our *sin* He was condemned for. He stood in our stead and answered all responsibilities which rested upon us as men alive in the flesh, as members of the first man, as standing on the old creation-ground. The Judge Himself is our righteousness. We are in Him. All that we

are and all that we have, we owe it to Him and to His perfect work. If we, as sinners, had to meet Christ as a Judge, escape were utterly impossible; but, inasmuch as He is our righteousness, condemnation is utterly impossible. In short, the matter is reversed. The atoning death and triumphant resurrection of our Divine Substitute have completely changed everything, so that the effect of the judgment-seat of Christ will be to make manifest that there is not, and cannot be, a single stain or spot on that workmanship of God which the saint is declared to be.

But whence this dread of having all our naughtiness exposed at the judgment-seat of Christ? Does not He know all about us? Are we more afraid of being manifested to the gaze of men and angels than to the gaze of our blessed and adorable Lord? If we are manifested to Him, what matters it to whom beside we are known? How far are Peter and David and many others affected by the fact that untold millions have read the record of their sins, and that the record thereof has been stereotyped on the page of inspiration? Will it prevent their sweeping the strings of the golden harp, or casting their crowns before the feet of Him whose precious blood has obliterated for ever all their sins, and brought them, without spot, into the full blaze of the throne of God? Assuredly not. Why then need any be troubled by the thought of their being thoroughly manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ? Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? May we not safely leave all in the hands of Him who has loved us and washed us in His own blood? Cannot we trust ourselves implicitly to the One who loved us with such a love? Will He expose us? Will He — can He, do aught inconsistent with the love that led Him to give His precious life for us? Will the Head expose the body, or any member thereof? Will the Bridegroom expose the bride? Yes, He will, in one sense. But how? He will publicly set forth, in view of all created intelligences, that there is not a speck or a flaw, a spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, to be seen upon that Church which He loved with a love that many waters could not quench.

Ah! Christian reader, dost thou not see how that nearness to the heart of Christ, as well as the knowledge of His perfect work, would completely roll away the mists which enwrap the subject of

the judgment-seat? If thou art washed from thy sins in the blood of Jesus, and loved by God as Jesus is loved, what reason hast thou to fear that judgment-seat, or to shrink from the thought of being manifested before it? None whatever. Nothing can possibly come up there to alter thy standing, to touch thy relationship, to blot thy title, or cloud thy prospect. Indeed we are fully persuaded that the light of *the judgment-seat* will chase away many of the clouds that have obscured *the mercy-seat*. Many, when they come to stand before that judgment-seat, will wonder why they ever feared it for themselves. They will see their mistake and adore the grace that has been so much better than all their legal fears. Many who have hardly ever been able to read their title here, will read it there, and rejoice and wonder — they will love and worship. They will then see, in broad daylight, what poor, feeble, shallow, unworthy thoughts they had once entertained of the love of Christ, and of the true character of His work. They will perceive how sadly prone they ever were to measure Him by themselves, and to think and feel as if His thoughts and ways were like their own. All this will be seen in the light of that day, and then the burst of praise — the rapturous hallelujah — will come forth from many a heart that, when down here, had been robbed of its peace and joy by legal and unworthy thoughts of God and His Christ.

But, while it is divinely true that nothing can come out before the judgment-seat of Christ to disturb, in any way, the standing or relationship of the very feeblest member of the body of Christ, or of any member of the family of God, yet is the thought of that judgment most solemn and weighty. Yes, truly, and none will more feel its weight and solemnity than those who can look forward to it with perfect calmness. And be it well remembered, that there are two things indispensably needful in order to enjoy this calmness of spirit. First, we must have a title without a blot; and, secondly, our moral and practical state must be sound. No amount of mere evangelical clearness as to our title will avail unless we are walking in moral integrity before God. It will not do for a man to *say* that he is not afraid of the judgment-seat of Christ because Christ died for him, while, at the same time, he is walking in a loose, careless, self-indulgent way. This is a most dreadful delusion. It is alarming in the extreme to find persons drawing a plea from evangelical clearness to

shrink from the holy responsibility resting upon them as the servants of Christ. Are we to speak idle words because we know we shall never come into judgment? The bare thought is horrible; and yet we may shrink from such a thing when clothed in plain language before us, while, at the same time we allow ourselves to be drawn, through a false application of the doctrines of grace, into most culpable laxity and carelessness as to the claims of holiness.

All this must be sedulously avoided. The grace that has delivered us from judgment should exert a more powerful influence upon our ways than the fear of that judgment. And not only so, but we must remember that while we, *as sinners*, are delivered from judgment and wrath, yet, *as servants*, we must give account of ourselves and our ways. It is not a question of our being exposed here or there to men, angels, or devils. No; "we must give account to God" (Rom. 14: 11-12). This is far more serious, far more weighty, far more influential, than our being exposed in the view of any creature. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as *to the Lord*, and not unto men; knowing that of *the Lord* ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve *the Lord* Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (Col. 3: 23-25).

This is most serious and salutary. It may be asked, "When shall we have to give account to God? When shall we receive for the wrong?" We are not told, because that is not the question. The grand object of the Holy Ghost in the passages just quoted is to lead the conscience into holy exercise in the presence of God and of the Lord Christ. This is good and most needful in a day of easy profession, like the present, when there is much said about grace, free salvation justification without works, our standing in Christ. Is it that we want to weaken the sense of these things? Far be the thought. Yea, we would, in every possible way, seek to lead souls into the divine knowledge and enjoyment of those most precious privileges. But then we must remember the adjusting power of *truth*. There are always two sides to a question, and we find in the pages of the New Testament the clearest and fullest statements of grace, lying side by side with the most solemn and searching statements as to our responsibility. Do the latter obscure the former? Assuredly not.

Neither should the former weaken the latter. Both should have their due place, and be allowed to exert their moulding influence upon our character and ways.

Some professors seem to have a great dislike to the words "duty" and "responsibility"; but we invariably find that those who have the deepest sense of grace have also, and as a necessary consequence, the truest sense of duty and responsibility. We know of no exception. A heart that is duly influenced by divine grace is sure to welcome every reference to the claims of holiness. It is only empty talkers about grace and standing that raise an outcry about duty and responsibility. God deals in moral realities. He is real with us, and He wants us to be real with Him. He is real in His love, and real in His faithfulness; and He would have us real in our dealings with Him, and in our response to His holy claims. It is of little use to say "Lord, Lord" if we live in the neglect of His commandments. It is the merest sham to say "I go sir" if we do not go. God looks for obedience in His children. "He is a rewarder of them that *diligently* seek Him."

May we bear these things in mind, and remember that all must come out before the judgment-seat of Christ. "We must all be manifested" there. This is unmingled joy to a really upright mind. If we do not unfeignedly rejoice at the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ, there must be something wrong somewhere. Either we are not established in grace, or we are walking in some false way. If we know that we are justified and accepted before God in Christ, and if we are walking in moral integrity, as in His presence, the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ will not disturb our hearts. The apostle could say, "We are made manifest to God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." Was Paul afraid of the judgment-seat? Not he. But why? Because he knew that he was accepted, as to his person, in a risen Christ; and, *as to his ways*, he "laboured that whether present or absent he might be acceptable to Him." Thus it was with this holy man of God and devoted servant of Christ. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men" (Acts 24: 16). Paul knew that he was accepted *i n* Christ, and therefore he laboured to be acceptable to Him in all his ways.

These two things should never be separated, and they never will be in any divinely taught mind or divinely regulated conscience. They will be perfectly joined together, and, in holy harmony, exert their formative power over the soul. It should be our aim to walk, even now, in the light of the judgment-seat. This would prove a wholesome regulator in many ways. It will not, in any wise, lead to legality of spirit. Impossible. Shall we have any legality when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? Assuredly not. Well, then, why should the thought of that judgment-seat exert a legal influence now? In point of fact, we feel assured there is, and can be, no greater joy to an honest heart than to know that everything shall come clearly and fully out, in the perfect light of that solemn day that is approaching. We shall see all then as Christ sees it — judge of it as He judges. We shall look back from amid the blaze of divine light shining from the judgment-seat, and see our whole course in this world. We shall see what blunders we have made — how badly we did this, that, and the other work — mixed motives here — an under current there — a false object in something else. All will be seen then in divine truth and light. Is it a question of our being exposed to the whole universe? By no means. Should we be concerned, whether or no? Certainly not. Will it, can it, touch our acceptance? Nay, we shall shine there in all the perfectness of our risen and glorified Head. The Judge Himself is our righteousness. We stand in Him. He is our all. What can touch us? We shall appear there as the fruit of His perfect work. We shall even be associated with Him in the judgment which He executes over the world.

Is not this enough to settle every question? No doubt. But still we have to think of our individual walk and service. We have to look to it that we bring no wood, hay, and stubble into the light of the coming day, for as surely as we do we shall suffer loss, though we ourselves shall be saved through the fire. We should seek to carry ourselves now as those who are already in the light, and whose one desire is to do what is well pleasing to our adorable Lord, not because of the fear of judgment, but under "the vast constraining influence" of His love. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." This is

the true motive spring in all Christian service. It is not the fear of judgment impelling, but the love of Christ constraining us; and we may say, with fullest assurance, that never shall we have so deep a sense of that love as when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon radiant sun
When I stand with Christ on high
Looking o'er life's history,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe.

There are many other points of interest and value in this marvellous chapter; but we feel we must bring our paper to a conclusion; and, most assuredly, we could not do this more suitably than by unfolding, as God's Spirit may enable us, that theme which has been before us all along, "The Ministry of Reconciliation," to which we shall now direct the reader's attention as briefly as we can.

We may view it under three distinct heads; namely, first, the *foundation* on which this ministry rests; secondly, the *objects* toward whom it is exercised; thirdly, the *features* by which it is characterised.

1 And first, then, as to the foundation on which the ministry of reconciliation rests. This is set before us, in the closing verse of our chapter. "For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

We have here three parties, namely, God, Christ, and sin. This latter is simply the expression of what we are by nature. There is in "us" naught but "*sin*," from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, the whole man is sin. The principle of sin pervades the entire

system of fallen humanity. The root, trunk, branches, leaves, blossom, fruit — all is sin. It is not only that we have committed sins; we are actually *born* in sin. True, we have, all of us, our characteristic sins. We have not only, all of us, "gone astray," but "we have turned every one to his own way." Each has pursued his own specific path of evil and folly; and all this is the fruit of that thing called "sin." The outward life of each is but a stream from the fountain — a branch from the stem; that fountain is sin.

And what, let us ask, is sin? It is the acting of the will in opposition to God. It is doing our own pleasure — doing what we like ourselves. This is the root — this the source of sin. Let it take what shape, or clothe itself in what forms it may; be it gross or be it most refined in its actings, the great root-principle, the parent stem, is self-will, and this is sin. There is no necessity for entering into any detail; all we desire is that the reader should have a clear and thorough sense of what sin is, and not only so, but that he, by nature, is sinful. Where this great and solemn fact takes full possession of the soul, by the power of the Holy Ghost, there can be no settled rest until the soul is brought to lay hold on the truth set forth in 2 Corinthians 5: 21. The question of sin had to be disposed of ere there could be so much as a single thought of reconciliation. God could never be reconciled to sin. But fallen man was a sinner by practice and sinful in nature. The very sources of his being were corrupt and defiled, and God was holy, just, and true. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. Hence, then, between God and sinful humanity there could be no such thing as reconciliation. True it is — most blessedly true — that God is good, and merciful, and gracious. But He is also holy; and holiness and sin could never coalesce.

What was to be done? Hear the answer: "God hath made Christ to be sin." But where? Look well at this. Where was Christ made sin? Was it in His birth? or in Jordan's flood? or in the garden of Gethsemane? Nay; though, most assuredly, in that garden the shadows were lengthening, the darkness was thickening, the gloom was deepening. But where and when was the holy, spotless, precious Lamb of God made sin? *On the cross, and only there!* This is a grand cardinal truth — a truth of vital importance — a truth which

the enemy of God and His Word is seeking to darken and set aside in every possible way. The devil is seeking, in the most specious manner, to displace the cross. He cares not how he compasses this end. He will make use of anything and everything in order to detract from the glory of the Cross, that great central truth of Christianity round which every other truth circulates, and on which the whole fabric of divine revelation rests as upon an eternal foundation.

"He hath made Him to be sin." Here lies the root of the whole matter. Christ, on the cross, was made sin for us. He died, and was buried. Sin was condemned. It met the just judgment of a holy God who could not pass over a single jot or tittle of sin; nay, He poured out His unmingled wrath upon it in the Person of His Son, when that Son was "made sin." It is a serious error to believe that Christ was bearing the judgment of God during His lifetime, or that aught save the death of Christ could meet the question of sin. He might have become incarnate — He might have lived and laboured on this earth — He might have wrought His countless miracles — He might have healed, and cleansed, and quickened — He might have prayed, and wept, and groaned; but not any of these things, nor yet all of them put together, could blot out a single stain of that dreadful thing "*sin*." God the Holy Ghost declares that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9: 22).

Now, then, if the holy life and labours of the Son of God — if His prayers, tears, and groans could not put away sin; how do you think that your life and labours, your prayers, tears, and groans, your good works, rites, ordinances, and ceremonies could ever put away sin? The fact is, that the life of our blessed Lord only proved man more and more guilty. It laid the topstone upon the superstructure of his guilt, and therefore left the question of sin wholly unsettled.

Nor was this all. Our blessed Lord Himself declares, over and over again, the absolute and indispensable necessity of His death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth *alone*; but if it *die*, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12). "Thus it is written, and thus it *beloved* [*or* was necessary for] Christ to suffer" (Luke 24: 46). "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be" (Matt. 26)? In a word, death was the only pathway of life, the only basis of union, the only ground of reconciliation. All who

speak of incarnation as being the basis of our union with Christ deny, in the plainest way, the whole range of truth connected with a dead and risen Christ. Many may not see this; but Satan sees it, and he sees too how it will work. He knows what he is about, and surely the servants of Christ ought to know what is involved in the error against which we are warning our readers.

The fact is, the enemy does not want souls to see that, in the death of Christ, sentence was passed on fallen human nature and upon the whole world. This was not the case in incarnation at all. An incarnate Christ put man to the test — a dead Christ put man to death — a risen Christ takes the believer into union with Himself. When Christ came in the flesh, fallen man was still under probation. When Christ died on the cross, fallen man was wholly condemned. When Christ rose from the dead, He became the head of a new race, each member of which, being quickened by the Holy Ghost, is viewed by God as united to Christ, in life, righteousness, and favour — he is viewed as having been dead, as having passed through judgment, and as being now as free from all condemnation as Christ Himself. "He hath made Him to be sin for us, [He] who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Now, it must be plain to the reader who bows to Scripture, that incarnation did not, and could not accomplish all this. Incarnation did not put away sin. Need we stop here to dwell upon the glories of the mystery of incarnation? Will anyone imagine that we take away from the value, or mar the integrity of that priceless fundamental truth, because we deny that it puts away sin, or forms the basis of our union with Christ? We trust not. That incarnation was essentially necessary for the accomplishment of redemption is plain to all. Christ had to become a man in order to die. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." He had to give His flesh for the life of the world. But this only goes to prove the absolute necessity of death. It was the *giving* of His flesh, not the *taking* of it, that laid the foundation of the whole fabric — life, pardon, peace, righteousness, union, glory, all. Apart from death, there is, and could be, absolutely nothing. Through death we have all.

But we cannot pursue this profound subject any further now. Enough has been said to set forth its connection with our special

thesis — the ministry of reconciliation. When we read that "God hath made Christ to be sin for us," we must see that this involved nothing less than the death of the cross. "*Thou*," says that blessed One, "hast brought *Me* into the dust of death" (Ps. 22). What an utterance! Who can fathom the mighty depths of those words — "Thou" — "Me" — and "death"? Who can enter into the question, "My God, My God, why hast *Thou* forsaken *Me*?" Why did a holy, righteous God forsake His only begotten, well-beloved, eternal Son? The answer contains the solid basis of that marvellous ministry whereof we speak. Christ was made sin. He not only bore our *sins* in His own body on the tree; but He was made sin. He stood charged with the entire question of sin. He was "the Lamb of God bearing away the sin of the world." As such He gloriously vindicated God, in the very scene where He had been dishonoured. He glorified Him in respect to that very thing by which His majesty had been insulted. He took upon Himself the whole matter — placed Himself beneath the weight of the whole burden, and completely cleared the ground on which God could lay the foundations of the new creation. He opened those eternal flood-gates which sin had closed, so that the full tide of divine love might roll down along that channel which His atoning death alone could furnish; so long as sin was in question, reconciliation must be out of the question. But Christ, being made sin, died and put it away forever, and thus changed entirely the ground and character of God's dealing with man and with the world.

The death of Christ, then, as we have seen, is the alone basis of reconciliation. That divine work has opened the way for placing men and things in their right relationship to God, and on their proper footing before Him. And this, be it remembered, is the true sense and meaning of reconciliation. Sin had alienated "men" from God, and set "*things*" entirely astray, and hence both men and things needed to be reconciled, or set straight; and the death of Christ has cleared the way for this.

It is well to see clearly the distinction between "atonement" and "reconciliation." They are often confounded, through inattention to Scripture; and the honoured translators of our excellent Authorised Version have not, with sufficient accuracy, marked this distinction. For example, in Rom. 5: 11, they have the word

"atonement" where it ought to be rendered "reconciliation" and in Heb. 2: 17, we have the word "reconciliation" where it ought to be "atonement."

Nor is the distinction by any means unimportant. The word "atonement," or "propitiation," occurs, in some one or other of its forms, six times in the Greek New Testament. (See carefully Luke 18: 13; Rom. 3: 25; Heb. 2: 17; 9: 5; 1 John 2: 2; 1 John 4: 10.) The word "reconciliation" occurs, in one or other of its forms, thirteen times in the New Testament. (See Rom. 5: 10-11; Rom. 11: 15; 1 Cor. 7: 11; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20; Eph. 2: 16; Col. 1: 20-21.) If the reader will take the trouble of examining and comparing these passages, he will see that atonement and reconciliation are not the same thing, but that the former is the foundation of the latter. Sin had made man an enemy and thrown things into confusion; and in Col. 1: 20-21, we read, "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross [here is the foundation], by Him to reconcile all *things* unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now *hath He reconciled*, in the body of His flesh, *through death*, to present you holy, and unblamable, and unprovable in His sight." Here we have the death of Christ set forth as the ground of the reconciliation of both men and things.

[If the reader will turn, for a moment, to 1 Cor. 7: 11, he will see the use of the word reconciliation. "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be *reconciled* to her husband." In classical Greek the word is applied to the *changing* money: the *exchanging* one thing for another; *exchanging* prisoners; the changing a person from *enmity to friendship*. In short, everywhere the distinction is maintained between "atonement," or "propitiation" and "reconciliation." The former is (*ilasmos*), the latter, (*katallage*)]

Now this leads to another point of immense importance. We often hear it said that "the death of Christ was necessary in order *to reconcile God to man*." This is a pious mistake, arising from inattention to the language of the Holy Ghost, and indeed to the plain meaning of the word "reconcile." God never changed — never stepped out of His normal and true position. He abideth faithful. There was, and could be, no derangement, no confusion, no

alienation, so far as He was concerned; and hence there could be no need of reconciling Him to us. In fact, it was exactly the contrary. Man had gone astray; he was the enemy, and needed to be reconciled. But this was wholly impossible if *sin* were not righteously disposed of; and sin could only be disposed of by *death* — even the death of One, who, as being a man, could die, and being God, could impart all the dignity, value, and glory of His divine Person to the atoning sacrifice which He offered.

Wherefore, then, as might be expected, Scripture never speaks of reconciling God to man. There is no such expression to be found within the covers of the New Testament. "God was in Christ reconciling the world [in its broad aspect — men and things] unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And again, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." In a word, it is God, in His infinite mercy and grace, through the atoning death of Christ, bringing us back to Himself, and placing us not merely in the original place, or on the original footing, or in the original relationship; but, as was due to the work of Christ, giving us back far more than we had lost, and introducing us into the marvellous relationship of sons, and setting us in His presence, in divine and eternal righteousness, and in the infinite favour and acceptableness of His own Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amazing grace! Stupendous and glorious plan! What a ministry! And yet need we wonder when we think of the death of Christ as the foundation of it all? When we remember that "Christ was made sin for us," it seems but the necessary counterpart that "we should be made the righteousness of God in Him." It would have been no adequate result of such a work as Christ accomplished, to have brought men and things back to the Adamic or old creation ground. This would never have satisfied the heart of God in any way, whether as respects Christ's glory or our blessing. It would not have furnished an answer to that omnipotent appeal of John 17: "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And *now*, O Father, glorify Thou Me, with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (ver. 4-5). Who can gauge the depth and power of those

accents as they fell upon the ear of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

But we must not enlarge, much as we should like to do so. Little remains to be said as to the *objects* of the ministry of reconciliation, inasmuch as we have, in a measure, anticipated them by speaking of "men and things," for these are, in very deed, the objects, and they are included in that comprehensive word "world." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." We would merely add here, that it is utterly impossible for any creature under heaven to exclude himself from the range of this most precious ministry. Before the reader can shut himself out from the application of all this grace to himself, he must prove that he does not belong to the world. This he cannot do, and hence he must see that God is beseeching him to be reconciled.

But, this leads us to look, for a moment, at *the features* which characterise this glorious ministry.

First, let us mark God's attitude. He is beseeching sinners. What a thought! It seems too much for the heart to conceive. Only think, reader, of the Most High and Mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth — the One who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell — think of Him as beseeching and praying you to be friends with Him! It is not a question of your praying to Him and His hearing you. No: but the very reverse — He is praying you. And for what does He ask you? Is it to do anything or to give anything? Nay; He simply asks you to be friends with Him because He has befriended you at the cost of His own Son. Think of this. He spared not His only begotten and well-beloved Son, but bruised Him in your stead. He made Him to be sin for you. He judged your sin in the person of His Son, on the cross, in order that He might be able to reconcile you. And now He stretches forth His arms and opens His heart to you, and prays you to be reconciled — to be friends with Him. Surpassing grace! It really seems to us as though human language can only tend to weaken and impoverish this grand reality.

We would only further suggest that the force of ver. 20 is greatly weakened by the word "you," which, as the reader will observe, ought not to be inserted. It makes it appear as though the

apostle were beseeching the Corinthian saints to be reconciled, whereas he is only setting forth the terms and the style adopted by all "ambassadors" for Christ wherever they went through the wide world — the language in which they were to address "every creature" under heaven. It is not, "Do this or that" — "Give this or that." It was not command or prohibition; but simply, "Be reconciled."

Then, what encouragement to the poor trembling heart that feels the burden of sin and guilt to be assured that God will not impute, will not reckon, one of his sins! This is another precious feature of the ministry of reconciliation. "*Not* imputing their trespasses unto them." This must set the heart at rest. If God tells me that He will not count one of my trespasses to me, because He has already counted them to Jesus on the cross, this may well tranquillise my spirit and emancipate my heart. If I believe that God means what He says, perfect peace must be my portion. True, it is only by the Holy Ghost that I can enter into the power of this glorious truth; but what the Holy Ghost leads me to believe and rest in is, that God does not, and will not, blessed be His name, impute a single sin to me, because He has already imputed *all* to Christ.

But this leads us to the third feature of the ministry of reconciliation.

If God will not impute my trespasses to me then what will He impute? Righteousness — even the righteousness of God. We cannot attempt to unfold the nature and character of this righteousness. We may do so on another occasion, if the Lord permit; but here we confine ourselves to the statement contained in the passage before us, which declares that God hath made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us who were all sin, that we might become the righteousness of God *in Him*. Most glorious truth! Sin is made an end of, as regards the believer. Christ lives as our subsisting righteousness, before God, and we live in Him. There is not so much as one single entry to our debit in the book of divine justice; but there is a risen and glorified Christ to our credit. Nor is this all. Not only are our sins gone, our guilt cancelled — our old self completely ignored — not only are we made the righteousness of God in Jesus; but we are loved by God as Jesus is loved —

accepted in Him — one with Him in all that He is and has, as a risen, victorious, ascended, and glorified Man at God's right hand. Higher than this it is impossible to go.

And now we must close, and we do it reluctantly. We do it with a certain painful consciousness of the feebleness and poverty of our handling of this lofty and comprehensive theme. But all this we must leave in the Master's hand. He knows all about the subject and the treatment thereof — all about the reader and the writer of these lines. To Him we commit all, while we make one solemn, closing appeal to the unconverted, unawakened reader.

Let us remind you that this glorious ministry will very soon close. The acceptable year, the day of salvation, shall ere long come to an end. The ambassadors shall soon be all called home and their embassy be closed forever. The door shall soon be shut, and the day of vengeance set in in terror and wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world. Let us entreat of you to flee from the wrath to come. Remember that the One who is now praying and beseeching you to be reconciled, has uttered the following awful words, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. 1: 24-26). May the reader escape the unutterable horrors of the day of wrath and judgment!

2 Corinthians 6:14

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, (2 Corinthians 6:14)"

The Unequal Yoke.

Preface.

The following paper appeared in a recent number of "The Present Testimony;" but, inasmuch as that periodical is out of the reach of a large number of Christian readers, I have been requested by many, in various places, to send it forth, in the form of a separate tract. One shrinks from multiplying books at a time like the present, when it may, in good truth, be said, "of making of books there is no end;" still, if the enemy is making diligent use of the press, for the purpose of diffusing abroad infidelity, profanity superstition, and impurity, I believe the servant of Christ may feel perfectly free to make use of the same powerful engine for the purpose of disseminating doctrinal and practical truth. No doubt, we have to watch against the evil of allowing human writings to usurp that place in our minds which belongs to sacred scripture alone. We have to remember that the soundest and most excellent of such writings are only the pure ore, beaten out into thin plates, and that they owe all their value, and all their truth, to the fact of their being based upon or connected with, the word of God. But how often does it happen that we read scripture over and over again, and fail to apprehend the truth contained therein, until the Lord graciously makes use of the lips or pen of another to point it out? Thus, for example, how many have read the words, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," without ever being aware of their just application? The remembrance of this should be sufficient to keep us from despising human writings. We find God using books and tracts for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of His people; and, assuredly, what He uses, we should not make light of There is a great difference between God's using a book for the purpose of teaching me more of the value, the beauty, and authority of His word, and my abusing the book by allowing it to displace that word altogether. In this, as in everything else, we have to watch against

dangerous extremes. We know that "the word of God is quick and powerful," and that the Holy Spirit makes use of it, and it alone, to quicken, enlighten, and build up souls; but we know also that He makes man's lips and man's pen His instruments in bringing that word home to the heart.

In the full confidence that He will graciously use the following pages, I now send them forth to the Church of God

C. H. M.

Clontarf, March, 1856.

THE UNEQUAL YOKE.

No one who sincerely desires to attain, in his own person, or promote in others, a purer and more elevated discipleship, can possibly contemplate the Christianity of the present day without an indescribable feeling of sadness and heaviness. Its tone is so excessively low, its aspect so sickly, and its spirit so enfeebled, that one is, at times, tempted to despair of anything like a true and faithful witness for an absent Lord. All this is the more truly deplorable, when we remember the commanding motives by which it is our special privilege ever to be actuated. Whether we look at the Master whom we are called to follow — the path which we are called to tread — the end which we are called to keep in view — or the hopes by which we are to be animated — we cannot but own that, were all these entered into, and realised by a more simple faith, we should, assuredly, exhibit a more ardent discipleship. "The love of Christ," says the apostle, "constraineth us." This is the most powerful motive of all. The more the heart is filled with Christ's love, and the eye filled with His blessed Person, the more closely shall we seek to follow in His heavenly track. His footmarks can only be discovered by "a single eye;" and unless the will is broken, the flesh mortified, and the body kept under, we shall utterly fail in our discipleship, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

Let not my reader misunderstand me. It is not, here, by any means, a question of personal salvation. It is quite another thing. Nothing can be more basely selfish than, having received salvation as the fruit of Christ's agony and bloody sweat, His cross and

passion, to keep at as great a distance from His sacred Person as we can, without forfeiting our personal safety. This is, even in the judgement of nature, deemed a character of selfishness worthy of unmingled contempt; but when exhibited by one who professes to owe his present and his everlasting all to a rejected, crucified, risen, and absent Master, no language can express its moral baseness. "Provided I escape hell-fire, it makes little matter as to discipleship." Reader, do you not, in your inmost soul, abhor this sentiment? If so, then earnestly seek to flee from it, to the very opposite point of the compass; and let your truthful language be: "Provided that blessed Master is glorified, it makes little matter, comparatively, about my personal safety." Would to God that this were the sincere utterance of many hearts in this day, when, alas it may be too truly said that, "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." (Phil. 2:21) Would that the Holy Ghost would raise up, by His own resistless power, and send forth by His own heavenly energy, a band of separated and consecrated followers of the Lamb, each one bound, by the cords of love, to the horns of the altar — a company, like Gideon's three hundred of old, able to confide in God, and deny the flesh. How the heart longs for this! How the spirit, bowed down at times beneath the chilling and withering influence of a cold and uninfluential profession, earnestly breathes after a more vigorous and whole-hearted testimony for that One, who emptied Himself, and laid aside his glory, in order that we, through His precious bloodshedding, might be raised to companionship with Him in eternal blessedness.

Now, amongst the numerous hindrances to this thorough consecration of heart to Christ which I earnestly desire for myself and my reader, "the unequal yoke" will be found to occupy a very prominent place indeed. "Be ye not unequally yoked together [*eterozugountes*] with unbelievers: for what partnership [*metoch*] hath righteousness with unrighteousness [or rather lawlessness — *anomia*]? and what communion [*koinonia*] hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath a believer with an unbeliever [*apistou*] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from

among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

Under the Mosaic economy, we learn the same moral principle. "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together." Deut. 22:9-11; Lev. 19:19.

These scriptures will suffice to set forth the moral evil of an unequal yoke. It may, with full confidence be asserted that no one can be an unshackled follower of Christ who is, in any way, "unequally yoked." He may be a saved person, he may be a true child of God — a sincere believer, but he cannot be a thorough disciple; and not only so, but there is a positive hindrance to the full manifestation of that which he may really be, notwithstanding his unequal yoke. "Come out . . . and I will receive you . . . and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." That is to say, "Get your neck out of the unequal yoke, and I will receive you, and there shall be the full, public, practical manifestation of your relationship with the Lord Almighty." The idea, here, is evidently different from that set forth in James: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." And also in Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." And, again, in 1 John: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." So also, in John's gospel, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In all these passages, the relationship of sons is founded upon the divine counsel and the divine operation, and is not set before us as the consequence of any acting of ours; whereas, in 2 Corinthians 6, it is put as the result of our getting out of the unequal yoke. In other words, it is entirely a practical question.

Thus, in Matthew 5, we read, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; in order that [*hupos*] ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven; because he causeth his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." Here, too, it is the practical establishment and public declaration of the relationship, and its moral influence. It becomes the sons of such a Father to act in such a way. In short, we have the abstract position or relationship of sons founded upon God's sovereign will and operation; and we have the moral character consequent upon and flowing out of this relationship which affords just ground for God's public acknowledgment thereof. God cannot fully and publicly own those who are unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for, were He to do so, it would be an acknowledgment of the unequal yoke. He cannot acknowledge "darkness," "unrighteousness," "Belial," "idols," and "an infidel." How could He! Hence, if I yoke myself with any of these, I am morally and publicly identified with them, and not with God at all. I have put myself into a position which God cannot own, and, as a consequence, He cannot own me; but if I withdraw myself from that position — if I "come out and be separate" — if I take my neck out of the unequal yoke — then, but not until then, can I be publicly and fully received and owned as a "son or daughter of the Lord Almighty."

This is a solemn and searching principle for all who feel that they have unhappily gotten themselves into such a yoke. They are not walking as disciples, nor are they publicly or morally on the ground of sons. God cannot own them. Their secret relationship is not the point; but they have put themselves thoroughly off God's ground. They have foolishly thrust their neck into a yoke which, inasmuch as it is not Christ's yoke, must be Belial's yoke; and until they cast off that yoke, God cannot own them as His sons and daughters. God's grace, no doubt, is infinite, and can meet us in all our failure and weakness; but if our souls aspire after a higher order of discipleship, we must at once cast off the unequal yoke, cost what it may; that is, if it can be cast off; but, if it cannot, we must only bow our heads beneath the shame and sorrow thereof, looking to God for full deliverance.

Now, there are four distinct phases in which "the unequal yoke" may be contemplated, viz., the domestic, the commercial, the religious, and the philanthropic. Some may be disposed to confine 2 Corinthians 6:14 to the first of these; but the apostle does not so confine it. The words are "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." He does not specify the character or object of the yoke, and therefore we are warranted in giving the passage its widest application, by bringing its edge to bear directly upon every phase of the unequal yoke; and we shall see the importance of so doing, ere we close these remarks, if the Lord permit.

1. And first, then, let us consider the domestic or marriage yoke. What pen can portray the mental anguish, the moral misery, together with the ruinous consequences, as to spiritual life and testimony, flowing from a Christian's marriage with an unconverted person? I suppose nothing can be more deplorable than the condition of one who discovers, when it is too late, that he has linked himself for life with one who cannot have a single thought or feeling in common with him. One desires to serve Christ; the other can only serve the devil: one breathes after the things of God the other sighs for the things of this present world the one earnestly seeks to mortify the flesh, with all its affections and desires; the other only seeks to minister to and gratify these very things. Like a sheep and a goat linked together, the sheep longs to feed on the green pasture in the field, while, on the other hand, the goat craves the brambles which grow in the ditch. The sad consequence is that both are starved. One will not feed on the pasture, and the other cannot feed upon the brambles, and thus neither gets what his nature craves, unless the goat, by superior strength, succeeds in forcing his unequally yoked companion to remain amongst the brambles, there to languish and die.

The moral of this is plain enough; and, moreover, it is, alas! of but too common occurrence. The goat generally succeeds in gaining his end. The worldly partner carries his or her point, in almost every instance. It will be found, almost without exception, that in cases of the unequal marriage yoke, the poor Christian is the sufferer, as is evidenced by the bitter fruits of a bad conscience, a depressed heart a gloomy spirit, and a desponding mind. A heavy price, surely, to

pay for the gratification of some natural affection, or the attainment, it may be, of some paltry worldly advantage. In fact, a marriage of this kind is the death-knell of practical Christianity, and of progress in the divine life. It is morally impossible that any one can be an unfettered disciple of Christ with his neck in the marriage yoke with an unbeliever.

As well might a racer in the Olympic or Isthmian games have expected to gain the crown of victory by attaching a heavy weight or a dead body to his person. It is enough, surely, to have one dead body to sustain, without attaching another. There never was a true Christian yet who did not find that he had abundant work to do in endeavouring to grapple with the evils of *one* heart, without going to burden himself with the evils of two; and, without doubt, the man who, foolishly and disobediently, marries an unconverted woman; or the woman who marries an unconverted man, is burdened with the combined evils of two hearts; and who is sufficient for these things? One can most fully count upon the grace of Christ for the subjugation of his own evil nature; but he certainly cannot count, in the same way, upon that grace in reference to the evil nature of his unequal yoke-fellow. If he have yoked himself ignorantly, the Lord will meet him personally, on the ground of full confession, with entire restoration of soul, but in the matter of his discipleship, he will never recover it.

Paul could say, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disapproved of." And he said this, too, in immediate connection with "striving for the mastery." "Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one obtaineth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate [self-controlled] in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air," &c. 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

Here, it is not a question of life or salvation, but simply one of "running in a race," and "so running that we obtain," not life, but "an incorruptible crown." The fact of being called to run assumes the possession of life, for no one would call upon dead men to run in a

race. I have got life, evidently, before I begin to run at all, and, hence, though I should fail in the race, I do not lose my life, but only the crown, for this and not that was the object proposed to be run for. We are not called to run for life, inasmuch as we get that, not by running, but "by faith of Jesus Christ," who by His death has purchased life for us, and implants it in us, by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost. Now, this life, being the life of a risen Christ, is eternal, for He is the eternal Son; as He says Himself, in His address to the Father, in John 17, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give *eternal life* to as many as thou hast given him." This life is not conditional. He does not *give* us life, as sinners, and then set us to run for it as saints, with the gloomy foreboding, that we may lose the precious boon by failing in the race. This would be to "run *uncertainly*," as many alas! are trying to do, who profess to have entered upon the course, and yet know not whether they have life or not. Such persons are running for life, and not for a crown; but God does not set up life at the goal, as the reward of victory, but *gives* it at the starting post, as the power by which we run. The power to run, and the object of running, are two very different things; yet they are constantly confounded by persons who are ignorant of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, in which Christ is set forth as the life and righteousness of all who believe on His name; and all this, moreover, as the free gift of God, and not as the reward of our running.

Now, in considering the terribly evil consequences of the unequal marriage yoke, it is mainly as bearing upon our discipleship that we are looking at them. I say, mainly, because our entire character and experience are deeply affected thereby. I very much question if any one can give a more effectual blow to his prosperity in the divine life, than by assuming an unequal yoke. Indeed, the very fact of so doing proves that spiritual decline has already set in, with most alarming symptoms; but as to his discipleship and testimony, the lamp thereof may be regarded as all but gone out; or if it does give an occasional faint glimmer, it only serves to make manifest the awful gloom of his unhappy position, and the appalling consequences of being "unequally yoked together with an unbeliever."

Thus much as to the question of the unequal yoke, in its influence upon the life, the character, the testimony, and the discipleship, of a child of God. I would now say a word as to its moral effect, as exhibited in the domestic circle. Here, too, the consequences are truly melancholy. Nor could they possibly be otherwise. Two persons have come together in the closest and most intimate relationship, with tastes, habits, feelings, desires, tendencies, and objects diametrically opposite. They have nothing in common; so that, in every movement, they can but grate one against the other. The unbeliever cannot, in *reality*, go with the believer; and if there should, through excessive amiability, or downright hypocrisy, be a show of acquiescence, what is it worth in the sight of the Lord, who judges the true state of the heart in reference to Himself? But little indeed; yea, it is worse than worthless. Then, again, if the believer should, unhappily go in any measure with his unequal yoke-fellow, it can only be at the expense of his discipleship, and the consequence is, a condemning conscience in the sight of the Lord; and this, again, leads to heaviness of spirit, and, it may be, sourness of temper, in the domestic circle so that the grace of the gospel is, by no means commended, and the unbeliever is not attracted or won. Thus it is, in every way, most sorrowful. It is dishonouring to God, destructive of spiritual prosperity, utterly subversive of discipleship and testimony, and entirely hostile to domestic peace and blessing. It produces estrangement, coldness, distance, and misunderstanding; or, if it does not produce these, it will, doubtless, lead, on the part of the Christian, to a forfeiture of his discipleship and his good conscience, both of which he may be tempted to offer as a sacrifice upon the altar of domestic peace. Thus, whatever way we look at it, an unequal yoke must lead to the most deplorable consequences.

Then, as to its effect upon children, it is equally sad. These are almost sure to flow in the current with the unconverted parent. "Their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." There can be no union of heart in the training of the children; no joint and mutual confidence in reference to them. One desires to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the other desires to bring them up in the principles of the world, the

flesh, and the devil: and as all the sympathies of the children, as they grow up, are likely to be ranged on the side of the latter, it is easy to see how it will end. In short, it is an unseemly, unscriptural, and vain effort to plough with an "unequal yoke," or to "sow the ground with mingled seed;" and all must end in sorrow and confusion.

{There are many cases in which one finds persons united, who, though they cannot exactly be said to be "unequally yoked," are, to say the least, very badly matched. Their tempers, tastes, habits, and views, are totally different; and so different, that instead of maintaining a desirable balance (which opposite tempers, it properly arranged, might do), they keep up a perpetual jar, to the sad derangement of the domestic circle, and the dishonour of the Lord's name. All this might be very much obviated if Christians would only wait upon God, and make His glory more their object than personal interest or affection.}

I shall, ere turning from this branch of our subject, offer a remark as to the reasons which generally actuate Christians in the matter of entering into the unequal marriage yoke. We all know, alas! how easily the poor heart persuades itself of the rightness of any step which it desires to take, and how the devil furnishes plausible arguments to convince us of its rightness — arguments which the moral condition of the soul causes us to regard as clear, forcible, and satisfactory. The very fact of our thinking of such a thing, proves our unfitness to weigh, with a well-balanced mind and spiritually-adjusted conscience, the solemn consequences of such a step. If the eye were single (that is, if we were governed but by one object, namely, the glory and honour of the Lord Jesus Christ) we should never entertain the idea of putting our necks into an unequal yoke; and, consequently, we should have no difficulty or perplexity about the matter. A racer, whose eye was resting on the crown, would not be troubled with any perplexity as to whether he ought to stop and tie a hundred-weight round his neck. Such a thought would never cross his mind: and not only so, but a thorough racer would have a distinct and almost intuitive perception of everything which would be likely to prove a hindrance to him in running the race; and, of course, with such a one, to perceive would be to reject with decision.

{It is important for the Christian to bear in mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." whenever I am in perplexity as to my path, I have reason to suspect that my eye is not single; for assuredly, perplexity is not compatible with a "body full of light." we frequently go to pray for guidance in matters with which, if the eye were single, and the will subject, we would have nothing whatever to do, and hence we should have no need to pray about them. To pray about aught concerning which the word of God is plain marks the activity of a rebellious will. As a recent writer has well remarked, "we sometimes Seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances *in which it is not His will that we should be found at all*; if conscience were in real healthful activity, its first effect would be to make us quit them. It is our own will which sets us there, and we would like, nevertheless, to enjoy the consolation of God's direction in a path which ourselves have chosen. such is a very common case. Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall have no trouble to know His will.... However, 'if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light — ' whence it is certain that if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, That is poor consolation. I answer, "It is a rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single and to *walk with God*." [See an admirable article in "The Present Testimony," January 1856. entitled, "How to know the Will of the Father." I cannot too highly recommend this paper to the attention of the Christian reader, it is deeply practical]]

Now, were it thus with Christians, in the matter of unscriptural marriage, it would save them a world of sorrow and perplexity; but it is not thus. The heart gets out of communion, and is morally incompetent to "try the things that differ;" and when in this condition, the devil gains an easy conquest, and speedy success in his wicked effort to induce the believer to yoke himself with "Belial" — with "unrighteousness" — with "darkness" — with "an infidel." When the soul is in full communion with God, it is entirely subject to His word; it sees things as He sees them, calls them what He calls them, and not what the devil or his own carnal heart would call them. In this way, the believer escapes the ensnaring influence of a deception which is very frequently brought to bear upon him in

this matter, namely, a false profession of religion on the part of the person whom he desires to marry. This is a very common case. It is easy to show symptoms of leaning towards the things of God; and the heart is treacherous and base enough to make a profession of religion in order to gain its end; and not only so, but the devil, who is "transformed into an angel of light," will lead to this false profession, in order thereby the more effectually to entrap the feet of a child of God. Thus it comes to pass that Christians, in this matter, suffer themselves to be satisfied, or at least profess themselves satisfied, with evidence of conversion, which, under any other circumstances, they would regard as utterly lame and flimsy.

But alas! experience soon opens the eyes to the *reality*. It is speedily discovered that the profession was all a vain show, that the *heart* is entirely in and of the world. Terrible discovery! Who can detail the bitter consequences of such a discovery — the anguish of heart — the bitter reproaches and cuttings of conscience — the shame and confusion — the loss of power and blessing — the forfeiture of spiritual peace and joy — the sacrifice of a life of usefulness? Who can describe all these things? The man awakes from his delusive dream, and opens his eyes upon the tremendous reality, that he is yoked for life with "Belial!" Yes, this is what the Spirit calls it. It is not an inference, or a deduction arrived at by a process of reasoning; but a plain and positive statement of Holy Scripture, that thus the matter stands in reference to one who, from whatever motive, or under the influence of whatever reasons, or deceived by whatever false pretences, has entered into an unequal marriage-yoke.

Oh, my beloved Christian reader, if you are in danger of entering into such a yoke, let me earnestly, solemnly, and affectionately entreat of you to pause first, and weigh the matter in the balances of the sanctuary, ere you move forward a single hair's breadth on such a fatal path. You may rest assured that you will no sooner have taken the step, than your heart will be assailed by hopeless regrets, and your life embittered by unnumbered sorrows. **LET NOTHING INDUCE YOU TO YOKE YOURSELF WITH AN UNBELIEVER.** Are your affections engaged? Then, remember, they cannot be the affections of your new man; they are, be assured of it, those of the old or carnal nature, which you are called upon to mortify and set

aside. Wherefore you should cry to God for spiritual power to rise above the influence of such affections; yea, to sacrifice them to Him. Again, are your interests concerned? Then remember that they are only *your* interests; and if they are promoted, Christ's interests are sacrificed by your yoking yourself with "Belial." Furthermore, they are only your temporal, and not your eternal interests. In point of fact, the interests of the believer and those of Christ ought to be identical; and it is plain that His interests, His honour, His truth, His glory, must inevitably be sacrificed, if a member of His body is linked with "Belial." This is the true way to look at the question. What are a few hundreds, or a few thousands, to an heir of heaven? "God is able to give thee much more than this." Are you going to sacrifice the truth of God, as well as your own spiritual peace, prosperity, and happiness, for a paltry trifle of gold, which must perish in the using of it? Ah! no. God forbid! Flee from it, as a bird from the snare, which it sees and knows. Stretch out the hand of genuine, well-braced whole-hearted discipleship, and take the knife and slay your affections and your interests on the altar of God and then, even though there should not be an audible voice from heaven to approve your act, you will have the invaluable testimony of an approving conscience and an ungrieved Spirit — an ample reward, surely, for the most costly sacrifice which you can make. May the Spirit of God give power to resist Satan's temptations!

It is hardly needful to remark, here, that in cases where conversion takes place after marriage, the complexion of the matter is very materially altered. There will then be no smittings of conscience, for example; and the whole thing is modified in a variety of particulars. Still there will be difficulty, trial, and sorrow unquestionably. The only thing is that one can, far more happily, bring the trial and sorrow into the Lord's presence, when he has not deliberately and wilfully plunged himself thereinto; and, blessed be God, we know how ready He is to forgive, restore, and cleanse from all unrighteousness, the soul that makes full confession of its error and failure. This may comfort the heart of one who has been brought to the Lord after marriage. Moreover, to such an one the Spirit of God has given specific direction and blessed encouragement in the following passage: "If any brother have an unbelieving wife, and she think proper to dwell with him, let him not put her away: and if any

woman have an unbelieving husband, and he think proper to dwell with her, let her not put him away (for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy) for what knowest thou, O wife, if thou shalt save thy husband? Or what knowest thou, O husband, if thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. 7:12-16.)

2. We shall now consider "the unequal yoke," in its commercial phase, as seen in cases of partnership in business. This, though not so serious an aspect of the yoke as that which we have just been considering, will, nevertheless, be found a very positive barrier to the believer's testimony. When a Christian yokes himself, for business purposes, with an unbeliever — whether that unbeliever be a relative or not — or when he becomes a member of a worldly firm, he virtually surrenders his individual responsibility. Henceforth the acts of the firm become his acts, and it is perfectly out of the question to think of getting a worldly firm to act on heavenly principles. They would laugh at such a notion, inasmuch as it would be an effectual barrier to the success of their commercial schemes. They will feel perfectly free to adopt a number of expedients in carrying on their business, which would be quite opposed to the spirit and principles of the kingdom in which he is, and of the Church of which he forms a part. Thus he will find himself constantly in a most trying position. He may use his influence to christianise the mode of conducting affairs; but they will compel him to do business as others do, and he has no remedy save to mourn in secret over his anomalous and difficult position, or else to go out at great pecuniary loss to himself and his family. Where the eye is single, there will be no hesitation as to which of these alternatives to adopt; but, alas! the very fact of getting into such a position proves the lack of a single eye; and the fact of being in it argues the lack of spiritual capacity to appreciate the value and power of the divine principles which would infallibly bring a man out of it. A man whose eye was single could not possibly yoke himself with an unbeliever for the purpose of making money. Such an one could only set, as an object before his mind, the direct glory of Christ; and this object could never be gained by a positive transgression of divine principle.

This makes it very simple. If it does not glorify Christ for a Christian to become a partner in a worldly firm, it must, without doubt, further the designs of the devil. There is no middle ground; but that it does not glorify Christ is manifest, for His word says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Such is the principle, which cannot be infringed without damage to the testimony, and forfeiture of spiritual blessing. True, the conscience of a Christian, who transgresses in this matter, may seek relief in various ways — may have recourse to various subterfuges — may set forth various arguments to persuade itself that all is right. It will be said that, "We can be very devoted and very spiritual, so far as we are personally concerned, even though we are yoked, for business purposes, with an unbeliever." This will be found fallacious when brought to the test of the actual practice. A servant of Christ will find himself hampered in a hundred ways by his worldly partnership. If in matters of service to Christ he is not met with open hostility, he will have to encounter the enemy's secret and constant effort to damp his ardour, and throw cold water on all his schemes. He will be laughed at and despised — he will be continually reminded of the effect which his enthusiasm and fanaticism will produce in reference to the business prospects of the firm. If he uses his time, his talents, or his pecuniary resources, in what he believes to be the Lord's service, he will be pronounced a fool or a madman, and reminded that the true, the proper way for a commercial man to serve the Lord is to "attend to business, and nothing but business;" and that it is the exclusive business of clergymen and ministers to attend to religious matters, inasmuch as they are set apart and paid for so doing.

Now, although the Christian's renewed mind may be thoroughly convinced of the fallacy of all this reasoning — although he may see that this worldly wisdom is but a flimsy, threadbare cloak, thrown over the heart's covetous practices — yet who can tell how far the heart may be influenced by such things? We get weary of constant resistance. The current becomes too strong for us, and we gradually yield ourselves to its action, and are carried along on its surface. Conscience may have some death-struggles; but the spiritual energies are paralysed, and the sensibilities of the new nature are blunted, so that there is no response to the cries of conscience, and

no effectual effort to withstand the enemy; the worldliness of the Christian's heart leagues itself with the opposing influences from without — the outworks are stormed, and the citadel of the soul's affections vigorously assaulted; and, finally, the man settles down in thorough worldliness, exemplifying, in his own person, the prophet's touching lament, "Her Nazarites *were* purer than snow, they *were* whiter than milk, they *were* more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire: their visage *is* blacker than a coal; they *are* not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick." (Lam. 4:7, 8) The man who was once known as a servant of Christ — a fellow-helper unto the kingdom of God — making use of his resources only to further the interests of the gospel of Christ, is now, alas, settled down upon his lees, only known as a plodding, keen, bargain-making man of business, of whom the apostle might well say, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present age." (ton nun aiona)

But, perhaps, nothing so operates on the hearts of Christians, in inducing them to yoke themselves commercially with unbelievers, as the habit of seeking to maintain the two characters of a Christian and a man of business. This is a grievous snare. In point of fact there can be no such thing. A man must be either the one or the other. If I am a Christian, my Christianity must show itself, as a living reality, in that in which I am; and, if it cannot show itself there, I ought not to be there; for, if I continue in a sphere or position in which the life of Christ cannot be manifested, I shall speedily possess naught of Christianity but the name, without the reality — the outward form without the inward power — the shell without the kernel. I should be the servant of Christ, not merely on Sunday, but from Monday morning to Saturday night. I should not only be a servant of Christ in the public assembly, but also in my place of business, whatever it may happen to be. But I cannot be a proper servant of Christ with my neck in the yoke with an unbeliever; for how could the servants of two hostile masters work in the same yoke? It is utterly impossible; as well might one attempt to link the sun's meridian beams with the profound darkness of midnight. It cannot be done; and I do, therefore, most solemnly appeal to my reader's conscience, in the presence of Almighty God, who shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ, as to this important matter. I would say

to him, if he is thinking of getting into partnership with an unbeliever, FLEE FROM IT! yes, flee from it, though it promises you the gain of thousands. You will plunge yourself into a mass of trouble and sorrow. You are going to "plough" with one whose feelings, instincts, and tendencies are diametrically opposed to your own. "An ox and an ass" are not so unlike, in every respect, as a believer and an unbeliever. How will you ever get on? He wants to make money — to profit himself — to get on in the world; you want (at least you ought to want) to grow in grace and holiness — to advance the interests of Christ and His gospel on the earth, and to push onward to the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. His object is money; yours, I trust, is Christ: he lives for this world; you for the world to come: he is engrossed with the things of time; you with those of eternity. How, then, can you ever take common ground with him? Your principles, your motives, your objects, your hopes, are all opposed. How is it possible you can get on? How can you have aught in common Surely, all this needs only to be looked at with a single eye in order to be seen in its true light. It is impossible that any one whose eye is filled and whose heart is occupied with Christ, could ever yoke himself with a worldly partner, for any object whatsoever. Wherefore, my beloved Christian reader, let me once more entreat you, ere you take such a tremendous step — a step fraught with such awful consequences — so pregnant with danger to your best interests, as well as to the testimony of Christ, with which you are honoured — to take the whole matter, with an honest heart, into the sanctuary of God, and weigh it in His sacred balance. Ask Him what He thinks of it, and hearken, with a subject will, and a well-adjusted conscience, to His reply. It is plain and powerful — yea, as plain and as powerful as though it fell from the open heavens — *Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*

But, if, unhappily, my reader is already in the yoke, I would say to him, disentangle yourself as speedily as you can. I am much mistaken if you have not already found the yoke a burdensome one. To you, it were superfluous to detail the sad consequences of being in such a position; you, doubtless, know them all. It is needless to print them on paper, or paint them on canvas, to one who has entered into all their reality. My beloved brother in Christ, lose not a

moment in seeking to throw off the yoke. This must be done before the Lord, on His principles, and by His grace. It is easier to get into a wrong position than to get out of it. A partnership of ten or twenty years' standing cannot be dissolved in a moment. It must be done calmly, humbly, and prayerfully, as in the sight of the Lord, and with entire reference to His glory. I may dishonour the Lord as much in my way of getting out of a wrong position, as by getting into it at the first. Hence, if I find myself in partnership with an unbeliever, and my conscience tells me I am wrong, let me honestly and frankly state to my partner, that I can no longer go on with him; and having done that, my place is to use every exertion to wind up the affairs of the firm in an upright, a straightforward, and business-like manner, so as to give no possible occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, and that my good may not be evil spoken of. We must avoid rashness, headiness, and high-mindedness, when apparently acting for the Lord, and in defence of His holy principles. If a man gets entangled in a net, or involved in a labyrinth, it is not by bold and violent plunging he will extricate himself. No; he must humble himself, confess his sins before the Lord, and then retrace his steps, in patient dependence upon that grace which can not only pardon him for being in a wrong position, but lead him forth into a right one.

Moreover, as in the case of the marriage yoke, the matter is very much modified by the fact of the partnership having been entered into previous to conversion. Not that this would, in the slightest degree, justify a continuance in it. By no means; but it does away with much of the sorrow of heart and defilement of conscience connected with such a position, and will also, very materially, affect the mode of escape therefrom. Besides, the Lord is glorified by, and He assuredly accepts, the moral bent of the heart and conscience in the right direction. If I judge myself for being wrong and that the moral bent of my heart and conscience is to get right, God will accept of that, and surely set me right. But if He sets me right, He will not suffer me to do violence to one truth while seeking to act in obedience to another. The same word that says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," says also, "render, therefore, to all their dues" — "owe no man anything" — "provide things honest in the sight of all" — "walk honestly toward them that are without." If

I have wronged God by getting into partnership with an unbeliever, I must not wrong man in my way of getting out of it. Profound subjection to the word of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, will set all to rights, will lead us into straight paths, and enable us to avoid all dangerous extremes.

3. In glancing for a moment at the religious phase of the unequal yoke, I would assure my reader that it is, by no means, my desire to hurt the feelings of any one by canvassing the claims of the various denominations around me. Such is not my purpose. The subject of this paper is one of quite sufficient importance to prevent its being encumbered by the introduction of other matters. Moreover, it is too definite to warrant any such introduction. "The unequal yoke" is our theme, and to it we must confine our attention.

In looking through scripture we find almost numberless passages setting forth the intense spirit of separation which ought ever to characterise the people of God. Whether we direct our attention to the Old Testament, in which we have God's relationship and dealings with His earthly people, Israel; or, to the New Testament, in which we have His relationship and dealings with His heavenly people, the Church; we find the same truth prominently set forth, namely, the entire separation of those who belong to God. Israel's position is thus stated in Balaam's parable, "Lo, the people shall *dwell alone*, and shall not be reckoned amongst the nations." Their place was outside the range of all the nations of the earth; and they were responsible to maintain that separation. Throughout the entire Pentateuch, they were instructed, warned, and admonished as to this; and, throughout the Psalms and the Prophets we have the record of their failure in the maintenance of this separation, which failure, as we know, has brought down upon them the heavy judgements of the hand of God. It would swell this little paper into a volume were I to attempt a quotation of all the passages in which this point is put forward. I take it for granted that my reader is sufficiently acquainted with his Bible, to render such quotation unnecessary. Should he not be so, however, a reference, in his Concordance, to the words "separate," "separated," and "separation," will suffice to lay before him at a glance the body of scripture evidence on this subject. The passage just quoted, from the Book of Numbers, is the

expression of God's thoughts about His people Israel: "The people shall dwell ALONE."

The same is true, only upon a much higher ground in reference to God's heavenly people, the Church — the body of Christ — composed of all true believers. They, too, are a separated people.

We shall now proceed to examine the ground of this separation. There is a great difference between being separate on the ground of what *we* are, and of what *God* is. The former makes a man a *Pharisee*; the latter makes him a *saint*. If I say to a poor fellow sinner, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," I am a detestable Pharisee and a hypocrite; but if God, in His infinite condescension and perfect grace, says to me, "I have brought you into relationship with Myself in the person of My Son Jesus Christ, therefore be holy and separate from all evil; come out from among them and be separate," I am bound to obey, and my obedience is the practical manifestation of my character as a saint — a character which I have, not because of anything in myself, but simply because God has brought me near unto Himself through the precious blood of Christ.

It is well to be clear as to this. Pharisaism and divine sanctification are two very different things: and yet they are often confounded. Those who contend for the maintenance of that place of separation which belongs to the people of God, are constantly accused of setting themselves up above their fellow-men, and of laying claim to a higher degree of personal sanctity than is ordinarily possessed. This accusation arises from not attending to the distinction just referred to. When God calls upon men to be separate, it is on the ground of what He has done for them upon the cross, and where He has set them, in eternal association with Himself, in the person of Christ. But if I separate myself on the ground of what I am in myself, it is the most senseless and vapid assumption, which will sooner or later be made manifest. God commands His people to be holy on the ground of what He is: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." This is evidently a very different thing from "stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." If God brings people into association with himself, He has a right to prescribe what their moral character ought to be, and they are responsible to answer thereto. Thus we see that the most profound humility lies at the bottom of a saint's separation. There is

nothing so calculated to put one in the dust as the understanding of the real nature of divine holiness. It is an utterly false humility which springs from looking at ourselves — yea, it is, in reality, based upon pride, which has never yet seen to the bottom of its own perfect worthlessness. Some imagine that they can reach the truest and deepest humility by looking at self, whereas it can only be reached by looking at Christ. "The more thy glories strike mine eye, the humbler I shall be." This is a just sentiment, founded upon divine principle. The soul that loses itself in the blaze of Christ's moral glory, is truly humble, and none other. No doubt, we have a right to be humble when we think of what poor creatures we are; but it only needs a moment's just reflection to see the fallacy of seeking to produce any practical result by looking at self. It is only when we find ourselves in the presence of infinite excellency, that we are really humble.

Hence, therefore, a child of God should refuse to be yoked with an unbeliever, whether for a domestic, a commercial, or a religious object, simply because God tells him to be separate, and not because of his own personal holiness. The carrying out of this principle, in matters of religion, will necessarily involve much trial and sorrow; it will be termed intolerance, bigotry, Narrow-mindedness, exclusiveness, and such like; but we cannot help all this. Provided we keep ourselves separate upon a right principle and in a right spirit, we may safely leave all results with God. No doubt, the remnant, in the days of Ezra, must have appeared excessively intolerant in refusing the co-operation of the surrounding people in building the house of God; but they acted upon divine principle in the refusal. "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him, since the days of Esar-haddon, king of Assur, which brought us up hither." This might seem a very attractive proposal — a proposal evidencing a very decided leaning toward the God of Israel; yet the remnant refused, because the people, notwithstanding their fair profession, were, at heart, uncircumcised and hostile. "But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have

nothing to do *with us* to build an house unto *our* God; but *we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel.*" (Ezra 4:1-3.) They would not yoke themselves with the uncircumcised — they would not "plough with an ox and ass" — they would not "sow their field with mingled seed" — they kept themselves separate, even though, by so doing, they exposed themselves to the charge of being a bigoted, narrow-minded, illiberal, uncharitable set of people.

So, also, in Nehemiah, we read, "And the seed of Israel *separated themselves* from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers." (Neh. 9:2.) This was not sectarianism, but positive obedience. Their separation was essential to their existence as a people. They could not have enjoyed the divine presence on any other ground. Thus it must ever be with God's people on the earth. They must be separate, or else they are not only useless, but mischievous. God cannot own or accompany them if they yoke themselves with unbelievers, upon any ground, or for any object whatsoever. The grand difficulty is to combine a spirit of intense separation with a spirit of grace, gentleness, and forbearance; or, as another has said, "to maintain a *narrow circle with a wide heart.*" This is really a difficulty. As the strict and uncompromising maintenance of *truth* tends to narrow the circle around us, we shall need the expansive power of *grace* to keep the heart wide, and the affections warm. If we contend for *truth* otherwise than in *grace*, we shall only yield a one-sided and most unattractive testimony. And, on the other hand, if we try to exhibit grace at the expense of truth, it will prove, in the end, to be only the manifestation of a popular liberality at God's expense — a most worthless thing.

Then, as to the object for which real Christians usually yoke themselves with those who, even on their own confession, and in the judgment of charity itself, are not Christians at all, it will be found, in the end, that no really divine and heavenly object can be gained by an infringement of God's truth. *Per fas aut nefas* can never be a divine motto. The means are not sanctified by the end; but both means and end must be according to the principles of God's holy word, else all must eventuate in confusion and dishonour. It might have appeared to Jehoshaphat a very worthy object, to recover

Ramoth Gilead out of the hand of the enemy; and, moreover, he might have appeared a very liberal, gracious, popular, large-hearted man, when, in reply to Ahab's proposal, he said, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; *and we will be with thee in the war.*" It is easy to be liberal and large-hearted at the expense of divine principle; but how did it end? Ahab was killed, and Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped with his life, having made total shipwreck of his testimony.

Thus we see that Jehoshaphat did not even gain the object for which he unequally yoked himself with an unbeliever; and even had he gained it, it would have been no justification of his course.* Nothing can ever warrant a believer's yoking himself with an unbeliever; and, therefore, however fair, attractive, and plausible the Ramoth expedition might seem in the eye of man, it was, in the judgment of God, "helping the ungodly, and loving them that hate the Lord." (2 Chr. 19:2.) The truth of God strips men and things of the false colours with which the spirit of expediency would deck them, and presents them in their proper light; and it is an unspeakable mercy to have the clear judgment of God about all that is going on around us: it imparts calmness to the spirit, and stability to the course and character, and saves one from that unhappy fluctuation of thought, feeling, and principle which so entirely unfits him for the place of a steady and consistent witness for Christ. We shall surely err, if we attempt to form our judgment by the thoughts and opinions of men; for they will always judge according to the outward appearances, and not according to the intrinsic character and principle of things. Provided men can gain what they conceive to be a right object, they care not about the mode of gaining it. But the true servant of Christ knows that he must do his Master's work upon his Master's principles and in his Master's spirit. It will not satisfy such an one to reach the most praiseworthy end, unless he can reach it by a divinely appointed road. The means and the end must both be divine. I admit it, for example, to be a most desirable end to circulate the scriptures — God's own pure, eternal word; but if *I could not* circulate them save by yoking myself with an unbeliever, I should refrain, inasmuch as I am not to do evil that good may come.

{*The unequal yoke proved a terrible snare to the amiable heart of Jehoshaphat. He yoked himself with Ahab for a religious object and, notwithstanding the disastrous termination of this scheme, we find him yoking himself with Ahaziah for a commercial object, which likewise ended in loss and confusion; and, lastly, he yoked himself with Jehoram for a military object. Compare 2 Chr. 18; 2 Chr. 20:32-37; 2 Kings 3.}

But, blessed be God, His servant can circulate His precious book without violating the precepts contained in that book. He can, upon his own individual responsibility, or in fellowship with those who are really on the Lord's side, scatter the precious seed everywhere, without leaguering himself with those whose whole course and conduct prove them to be of the world. The same may be said in reference to every object of a religious nature. It can and should be gained on God's principles, and only thus. It may be argued, in reply, that we are told not to judge — that we cannot read the heart — and that we are bound to hope that all who would engage in such good works as the translation of the Bible, the distribution of tracts, and the aiding of missionary labours, must be Christians; and that, therefore, it cannot be wrong to link ourselves with them. To all this I reply, that there is hardly a passage in the New Testament so misunderstood and misapplied as Matthew 7:1: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In the very same chapter we read, "Beware of false prophets by their fruits ye shall know them." Now, how are we to "beware," if we do not exercise judgment? Again, in 1 Corinthians 5 we read, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here we are distinctly taught that those "within" come within the immediate range of the Church's judgment; and yet, according to the common interpretation of Matthew 7:1, we ought not to judge anybody; that interpretation, therefore, must needs be unsound. If people take, even in profession, the ground of being "within," we are commanded to judge them. "Do not ye judge them that are within?" As to those "without," we have naught to do with them, save to present the pure and perfect, the rich, illimitable, and unfathomable grace which shines, with unclouded effulgence, in the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

All this is plain enough. The people of God are told to exercise judgment as to all who profess to be "within;" they are told to "beware of false prophets;" they are commanded to "try the spirits:" and how can they do all this, if they are not to judge at all? What, then, does our Lord mean, when he says, "Judge not?" I believe He means just what St. Paul, by the Holy Ghost, says, when he commands us to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Cor. 4:5) We have nothing to do with judging motives; but we have to judge conduct and principles; that is to say, the conduct and principles of all who profess to be "within." And, in point of fact, the very persons who say, "We must not judge," do themselves constantly exercise judgment. There is no true Christian in whom the moral instincts of the divine nature do not virtually pronounce judgment as to character, conduct, and doctrine; and these are the very points which are placed within the believer's range of judgment.

All, therefore, that I would press upon the Christian reader is, that he should exercise judgment as to those with whom he yokes himself in matters of religion. If he is, at this moment, working in yoke or in harness with an unbeliever, he is positively violating the command of the Holy Ghost. He may be ignorantly doing so up to this; and if so, the Lord's grace is ready to pardon and restore; but if he persist in disobedience after having been warned, he cannot possibly expect God's blessing and presence with him, no matter how valuable or important the object which he may seek to attain. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

4. We have only now to consider the philanthropic phase of the unequal yoke. Many will say, "I quite admit that we ought not to mingle ourselves with positive unbelievers in the worship or service of God; but, then, we can freely unite with such for the furtherance of objects of philanthropy — such, for instance, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, reclaiming the vicious, in providing asylums for the blind and Lunatic, hospitals and infirmaries for the sick and infirm, places of refuge for the homeless and houseless, the

fatherless and the widow; and, in short, for the furtherance of everything that tends to promote the amelioration of our fellow-creatures, physically, morally, and intellectually."

This, at first sight, seems fair enough; for I may be asked, if I would not help a man, by the road-side, to get his cart out of the ditch? I reply, Certainly; but if I were asked to become a member of a mixed society for the purpose of getting carts out of ditches, I should refuse — not because of my superior sanctity, but because God's word says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This would be my answer, no matter what were the object proposed by a mixed society. The servant of Christ is commanded "to be ready to every good work" — "to do good unto all" — "to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction;" but then, it is as the servant of Christ, and not as the member of a society or a committee in which there may be infidels and atheists, and all sorts of wicked and godless men. Moreover, we must remember, that all God's philanthropy is connected with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the channel through which God will bless — that the mighty lever by which He will elevate man, physically, morally, and intellectually. "After that the kindness and philanthropy (*philanthropia*) of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Titus 3:4-6) This is God's philanthropy. This is His mode of ameliorating man's condition. With all who understand its worth the Christian can readily yoke himself, but with none other.

The men of the world know naught of this, care not for it. They may seek reformation, but it is reformation without Christ. They may promote amelioration, but it is amelioration without the cross. They wish to advance, but Jesus is neither the starting-post nor the goal of their course. How, then, can the Christian yoke himself with them? They want to work without Christ, the very One to whom he owes everything. Can he be satisfied to work with them? Can he have an object in common with them? If men come to me and say, "We want your co-operation in feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, in founding hospitals and lunatic asylums, in feeding and

educating orphans, in improving the physical condition of our fellow mortals; but you must remember that a leading rule of the society, the board, or the committee, formed for such objects, is, that the name of Christ is not to be introduced, as it would only lead to controversy. Our objects being not at all religious, but undividedly philanthropic, the subject of religion must be studiously excluded from all our public meetings. We are met as men, for a benevolent purpose, and therefore Infidels, Atheists, Socinians, Arians, Romanists, and all sorts, can happily yoke themselves to move onward the glorious machine of philanthropy." What should be my answer to such an application? The fact is, words would fail one, who really loved the Lord Jesus, in attempting to reply to an appeal so monstrous. What! benefit mortals by the exclusion of Christ? God forbid! If I cannot gain the objects of pure philanthropy without setting aside that blessed One who lived and died, and lives eternally for me, then away with your philanthropy, for it, assuredly, is not God's, but Satan's. If it were God's, the word is, "He shed it on us abundantly THROUGH Jesus Christ," the very One whom your rule leaves entirely out. Hence your rule must be the direct dictation of Satan, the enemy of Christ. Satan would always like to leave out the Son of God; and when he can get men to do the same, he will allow them to be benevolent, charitable, and philanthropic.

But, in good truth, such benevolence and philanthropy ought to be termed malevolence and misanthropy, for how can you more effectually exhibit ill-will and hatred toward men, than by leaving out THE ONLY ONE who can really bless them, for time or for eternity. But what must be the moral condition of a heart, in reference to Christ, who could take his seat at a board, or on a platform, on the condition that that name must not be introduced? It must be cold indeed; yea, it ,proves that the plans and operations of unconverted men are of sufficient importance, in his judgment, to lead him to throw his Master overboard, for the purpose of carrying them out. Let us not mistake matters. This is the true aspect in which to view the world's philanthropy. The men of this world can "sell ointment for three hundred pence, and give to the poor;" while they pronounce it *waste* to pour that ointment on the head of Christ. Will the Christian consent to this? Will he yoke himself with such? Will he seek to improve the world without Christ? Will he join with men

to deck and garnish a scene which is stained with his Master's blood? Peter could say, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Peter would heal a cripple by the power of the name of Jesus; but what would he have said, if asked to join a committee or society to alleviate cripples, on the condition of leaving that name out altogether? It requires no great stretch of imagination to conceive; his answer. His whole soul would recoil from such a thought. He only healed the cripple for the purpose of exalting the name of Jesus, and setting forth its worth, its excellency, and its glory, in the view of men; but the very reverse is the object of the world's philanthropy; inasmuch as it sets aside His blessed name entirely, and banishes Him from its boards, its committees, and its platforms.

May we not, therefore, well say, "Shame on the Christian who is found in a place from which his Master is shut out?" Oh! let him go forth, and, in the energy of love to Jesus, and by the power of that name, do all the good he can; but let him not yoke himself with unbelievers, to counteract the effects of sin by excluding the cross of Christ. God's grand object is to exalt His Son — "that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." This should be the Christian's object likewise; to this end he should "do good unto all;" but if he join a society or a committee in order to do good, it is not "in the name of Jesus" he acts, but in the name of the society or committee, without the name of Jesus. This ought to be enough for every true and loyal heart. God has no other way of blessing men, but through Christ; and no other object in blessing them but to exalt Christ. As with Pharaoh of old, when the hungry Egyptians flocked to his presence, his word was, "Go to Joseph;" so God's word to all is, "Come to Jesus." Yes, for soul and body, time and eternity, we must go to Jesus; but the men of the world know Him not, and want him not; what, therefore, has the Christian to do with such? How can He act in yoke with them? He can only do so on the ground of practically denying his Saviour's name. Many do not see this; but that does not alter the case for those who do. We ought to act honestly, as in the light; and, even though the feelings and affections of the new nature were not sufficiently strong in us to lead us to shrink from ranking ourselves with the enemies of Christ, the conscience ought, at least, to bow to the commanding authority of

that word, BE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS.

May the Holy Ghost clothe His own word with heavenly power, and make its edge sharp to pierce the conscience, that so the saints of God may be delivered from everything that hinders their "running the race that is set before them!" Time is short. The Lord Himself will soon be here. Then many an unequal yoke will be broken in a moment; many a sheep and goat shall then be eternally severed. May we be enabled to purge ourselves from every unclean association and every unhallowed influence, so that, when Jesus returns, we may not be ashamed, but meet Him with a joyful heart and an approving conscience!

C.H.M.

2 Corinthians 10:16

A MOTTO FOR THE EVANGELIST.

"TO PREACH THE GOSPEL in the regions beyond you." These words, while they set forth the large-heartedness of the self-denying and devoted apostle, do also furnish a fine model for the evangelist, in every age. The gospel is a traveller; and the preacher of the gospel must be a traveller likewise. The divinely-qualified and divinely-sent evangelist will fix his eye upon "the world." He will embrace, in his benevolent design, the human family From house to house; from street to street from city to city; from province to province — from kingdom to kingdom; from continent to continent; from pole to pole. Such is the range of "the good news," and the publisher thereof. "The regions beyond" must ever be the grand gospel motto. No sooner has the gospel lamp cast its cheering beams over a district, than the bearer of that map must think of the regions beyond. Thus the work goes on. Thus the mighty tide of grace rolls, in enlightening and saving power, over a dark world which lies in "the region of the shadow of death." Waft, waft, ye winds, the story, And you, ye waters roll, Till, like a sea of glory, It spreads from pole to pole.

Christian reader, are you thinking of "the regions beyond you"? This expression may, in your case, mean the next house, the next street, the next village, the next city, the next kingdom, or the next continent. The application is for your own heart to ponder; but say, are you thinking of "the regions beyond you"? I do not want you to abandon your present post, at all; or, at least, not until you are fully persuaded that your work, at that post, is done. But, remember, the gospel plough should never stand still. "Onward" is the motto of every true evangelist. Let the shepherds abide by the flocks; but let the evangelists betake themselves hither and thither, to gather the sheep. Let them sound the gospel trump, far and wide, over the dark mountains of this world, to gather together the elect of God. This is the design of the gospel. This should be the object of the evangelist, as he sighs after "the regions beyond." When Caesar beheld, from the coast of Gaul, the white cliffs of Britain, he earnestly longed to carry his arms thither. The evangelist, on the other hand, whose

heart beats in unison with the heart of Jesus, as he casts his eye over the map of the world, longs to carry the gospel of peace into regions which have heretofore been wrapped in midnight gloom, covered with the dark mantle of superstition, or blasted beneath the withering influences of "a form of godliness without the power."

It would, I believe, be a profitable question for many of us to put to ourselves, how far we are discharging our holy responsibilities to "the regions beyond." I believe the Christian who is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelistic spirit, is in a deplorable condition. I believe, too, that the assembly which is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelistic spirit is in a dead state. One of the truest marks of spiritual growth and prosperity, whether in an individual, or in an assembly, is earnest anxiety after the conversion of souls. This anxiety will swell the bosom with most generous emotions; yea, it will break forth, in copious streams of benevolent exertion, ever flowing toward "the regions beyond." It is hard to believe that "the Word of Christ" is "dwelling richly" in any one who is not making some effort to impart that Word to his fellow sinners. It matters not what may be the amount of the effort; it may be to drop a few words in the ear of a friend, to give a tract, to pen a note, to breathe a prayer. But one thing is certain, namely, that a healthy vigorous Christian will be an evangelistic Christian — a teller of good news — one whose sympathies, desires, and energies, are ever going forth toward "the regions beyond." "I must preach the gospel to other cities also, therefore am I sent." Such was the language of the divine Evangelist.

It is very doubtful whether many of the servants of Christ have not erred in allowing themselves, through one influence or another, to become too much localised — too much tied to one place. They have dropped into routine work — into a round of stated preaching, in the same place, and, in many cases, have paralysed themselves and paralysed their hearers also. I speak not, now, of the labours of the pastor, the elder, or the teacher, which must, of course, be carried on in the midst of those who are the proper subjects of such labours. I refer more particularly to the evangelist. Such an one should never suffer himself to become localised. The world is his sphere — "the regions beyond," his motto — to gather out God's

elect, his object — the current of the Spirit, his line of direction. If the reader should be one whom God has called and fitted to be an evangelist, let him remember these four things, the sphere, the motto, the object, and the line of direction which all must adopt, if they would prove fruitful labourers in the gospel field.

Finally, whether the reader be an evangelist or not, I would earnestly entreat him to examine how far he is seeking to further the gospel of Christ. We really must not stand idle. Time is short! Eternity is rapidly passing on! The Master is most worthy! Souls are most precious! The season for work will soon close! Let us, then, in the name of the Lord, be up and doing. And when we have done what we can, in the regions around, let us carry the precious gospel into "the regions beyond.

2 Corinthians 10:16"

The regions beyond."

"To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you."

These words, while they set forth the large-heartedness of the self-denying and devoted apostle, do also furnish a fine model for the evangelist, in every age. The gospel is a traveller; and the preacher of the gospel must be a traveller likewise. The divinely-qualified and divinely-sent evangelist will fix his eye upon "*the World.*" He will embrace, in his benevolent design, the human family. From house to house; from street to street; from city to city; from province to province; from kingdom to kingdom; from continent to continent; from pole to pole. Such is the range of "the good news," and the publisher thereof "The regions beyond" must ever be the grand gospel motto. No sooner has the gospel lamp cast its cheering beams over a district, than the bearer of that lamp must think of the regions beyond. Thus the work goes on. Thus the mighty tide of grace rolls, in enlightening and saving power, over a dark world which lies in "the region of the shadow of death"

"Waft, waft, ye winds, the story,

And you, ye waters, roll,

Till, like a sea *of* glory,

It spreads from pole to pole."

Christian reader, are you thinking of "the regions beyond you"? This expression may, in your case, mean the next house, the next street, the next village, the next city, the next kingdom, or the next continent. The application is for your own heart to ponder; but say, are you thinking of "the regions beyond you"? I do not want you to abandon your present post, at all; or, at least, not until you are fully persuaded that your work, at that post, is done. But, remember, the gospel plough should never stand still. "*Onward*" is the motto of every true evangelist. Let the shepherds abide by the flocks; but let

the evangelists betake themselves hither and thither, to gather the sheep. Let them sound the gospel trump, far and wide, over the dark mountains of this world, to gather together the elect of God. This is the design of the gospel. This should be the object of the evangelist, as he sighs after "the regions beyond."

[The conversion of the world is not the object of the divinely instructed evangelist, but the gathering out of a people to the Lord's name — a people for the heavens — the body of Christ — the Church of God. (Acts 15: 14.)]

When Caesar beheld, from the coast of Gaul, the white cliffs of Britain, he earnestly longed to carry his arms thither. The evangelist, on the other hand, whose heart beats in unison with the heart of Jesus, as he casts his eye over the map of the world, longs to carry the gospel of peace into regions which have heretofore been wrapped in midnight gloom, covered with the dark mantle of superstition, or blasted beneath the withering influences of "a form of godliness without the power."

It would, I believe, be a profitable question for many of us to put to ourselves, how far we are discharging our holy responsibilities to "the regions beyond." I believe the Christian who is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelistic spirit, is in a deplorable condition. I believe, too, that the assembly which is not cultivating and manifesting an evangelistic spirit is in a dead state. One of the truest marks of spiritual growth and prosperity, whether in an individual, or in an assembly, is earnest anxiety after the conversion of souls. This anxiety will swell the bosom with most generous emotions; yea, it will break forth, in copious streams of benevolent exertion, ever flowing toward "the regions beyond." It is hard to believe that "the word of Christ" is "dwelling richly" in any one who is not making some effort to impart that word to his fellow sinners. It matters not what may be the amount of the effort; it may be to drop a few words in the ear of a friend, to give a tract, to pen a note, to breathe a prayer. But one thing is certain, namely, that a healthy vigorous Christian will be an evangelistic Christian — a teller of good news — one whose sympathies, desires, and energies, are ever going forth toward "the regions beyond." "I must preach the

gospel to other cities also, for therefore am I sent” Such was the language of the divine Evangelist.

It is very doubtful whether many of the servants of Christ have not erred in allowing themselves, through one influence or another, to become too much localised — too much tied to one place. They have dropped into routine work — into a round of stated preaching, in the same place, and, in many cases, have paralysed themselves and paralysed their hearers also. I speak not, now, of the labours of the pastor, the elder or the teacher, which must, of course, be carried on in the midst of those who are the proper subjects of such labours. I refer more particularly to the evangelist. Such an one should never suffer himself to become localised. The world is his sphere - "the regions beyond," his motto — to gather out God's elect, his object — the current of the Spirit, his line of direction. If the reader should be one whom God has called and fitted to be an evangelist, let him remember these four things, the sphere, the motto, the object, and the line of direction which all must adopt, if they would prove fruitful labourers in the gospel field.

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Go, labour on, while it is day

The world's dark night is hastening on —

Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away;

It is not thus that souls are won.

Men die in darkness at thy side

Without a hope to cheer the tomb
Take up the torch and wave it wide,
The torch that lights time's thickest *gloom*.

Go on, faint not, keep watch, and pray
Be wise the erring soul to win
Go forth into the world's highway
Compel the wanderer to come in.

Galatians 6:10

Life-works

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" Gal. 6: 10.

If aught could enhance the value of these lovely words, it would be the fact of their being found at the close of the Epistle to the Galatians. In the progress of this very remarkable writing, the inspired apostle cuts up by the roots the entire system of legal righteousness. He proves, in the most unanswerable way, that by works of law, of any sort, moral or ceremonial, no man can be justified in the sight of God. He declares that believers are not under law in any way whatever, either for life, for justification, or for walk — that if we are under law, we must give up Christ; we must give up the Spirit of God; we must give up faith; we must give up the promises. In short, if we take up legal ground, in any shape whatever, we must give up Christianity and lie under the actual curse of the law.

We do not attempt to quote the passages, or to go into this side of the question at all, just now. We merely call the earnest attention of the Christian reader to the golden words which stand at the head of this paper — words which, we cannot but feel, come in with incomparable beauty and peculiar moral force at the close of an Epistle in which all human righteousness is withered up and flung to the winds. It is always needful to take in both sides of a subject. We are all so terribly prone to one-sidedness, that it is morally healthful for us to have our hearts brought under the full action of *all* truth. It is, alas, possible for grace itself to be abused; and we may sometimes forget that, while we are justified in the sight of God by faith alone, a real faith must be evidenced by works. We have, all of us, to bear in mind that while *law-works* are denounced and demolished, in the most unqualified manner, in manifold parts of Holy Scripture, yet that *life-works* are diligently and constantly maintained and insisted upon.

Yes, we have to bend our earnest attention to this. If we profess to have life, this life must express itself in something more tangible and forcible than mere words or empty lip-profession. It is quite true that law cannot give life, and hence it cannot produce life-works. Not a single cluster of living fruit ever was, or ever will be, culled from the tree of legality. Law can only produce "dead works," from which we need to have the conscience purged just as much as from "wicked works."

All this is most true. It is demonstrated in the pages of inspiration beyond all possibility of question or demur. But then there must be life-works, or else there is no life. Of what possible use is it to profess to have eternal life; to talk about faith; to advocate the doctrines of grace, while at the same time, the entire life, the whole practical career is marked by selfishness in every shape and form? "Whoso," says the blessed Apostle John, "hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

So also the Apostle James puts a very wholesome question to our hearts, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

Here we have life-works insisted upon in a way which ought to speak home, in the most solemn and forcible way, to our hearts. There is an appalling amount of empty profession — shallow, powerless, worthless talk in our midst. We have a wonderfully clear gospel — thanks be to God for it! We see very distinctly that salvation is by grace, through faith, not by works of righteousness, nor by works of law. Blessedly true, and our heart praises God for it. But when people are saved, ought they not to live as such? Ought not the new life to come out in fruits? It must come out if it be in; and if it does not come out, it is not there.

Mark what the Apostle Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Here we have what we may call the upper side of this great practical question. Then the other side, to which every true and earnest Christian will delight to give his attention. The apostle goes on to say, "*We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them.*"

Here we have the whole subject fully and clearly before us. God has created us to walk in a path of good works, and He has prepared the path of good works for us to walk in. It is all of God, from first to last; all through grace, and all by faith. Thanks and praise be to God that it is so! But, let us remember that it is utterly vain to talk about grace and faith, and eternal life, if the "good works" are not forthcoming. It is useless to boast of our high truth, our deep, varied, and extensive acquaintance with Scripture, our correct position, our having come out from this, that, and the other, if our feet are not found treading that "path of good works which God hath before prepared" for us.

God looks for reality. He is not satisfied with mere words of high profession. He says to us, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in *deed* and in *truth*." He, blessed be His name, did not love us in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and He looks for a response from us — a response clear, full, and distinct; a response coming out in a life of good works, a life yielding mellow clusters of the "fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus, to the glory and praise of God."

Beloved Christian reader, do you not consider it to be our bounden duty to apply our hearts to this weighty subject? Ought we not diligently to seek to promote love and good works? And how can this be most effectually accomplished? Surely by walking in love ourselves, and faithfully treading the path of good works in our own private life. For ourselves, we confess we are thoroughly sick of hollow profession. High truth on the lips and low practice in daily life, is one of the crying evils of this our day. We talk of grace; but fail in common righteousness — fail in the plainest moral duties in

our daily private life. We boast of our "*position*" and our "*standing*;" but we are deplorably lax as to our *condition* and *state*

May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, stir up all our hearts to more thorough earnestness, in the pursuit of good works, so that we may more fully adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things!

P.S. — It is very interesting and instructive to compare the teaching of Paul and James — two divinely inspired apostles — on the subject of "works." Paul utterly repudiates *law-works*. James jealously insists upon *life-works*. If this fact be seized, all difficulty vanishes; and the divine harmony is clearly seen. Many have failed to do this, and hence have been much perplexed by the seeming difference between Romans 4: 5, and James 2: 24. We need not say there is the most perfect and beautiful harmony. When Paul says, "To him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," he refers to law-works. When James says, "Ye see then how that by *works* a man is justified, and not by faith only," he refers to life-works.

This is abundantly confirmed by the two cases adduced by James in proof of his thesis, namely, Abraham offering up his son and Rahab concealing the spies. If you abstract faith from these cases, they were bad works. Look at them as the fruit of faith, and they were life-works.

How marked is the far-seeing wisdom of the Holy Spirit in all this! He foresaw the use that would be made of this passage; and hence, instead of selecting works abstractedly good, He takes up two from the history of four thousand years, which, if they were not the fruit of faith, were bad works.

Ephesians 1:2.

The Church.

We have in these chapters three distinct points, viz., first, the purpose of God; secondly, the development of that purpose; and, thirdly, the result of that purpose.

It is a thought full of blessedness and comfort to the heart, that it is with God and His deep purposes of grace we have to do, and not with human circumstances. Faith apprehends this; it looks away from what the professing Church has made of herself, and only contemplates what the Church is as the body of Christ — beloved of God, washed in the blood, indwelt by the Holy Ghost. Faith travels backward to eternity, reposes upon the purpose of God, and thus gives the soul power to act amid the most depressing and humiliating circumstances. It was this truth that sustained the spirit of the apostle Paul, while he lay a prisoner at Rome, deserted and despised. He knew that nothing could shake the reality of the purpose of God. Hence he writes: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be *holy and without blame* before Him in love." Here was faith's resting-place. "All spiritual blessings *in the heavenlies*." There was nothing here — all was above. Looking at earth, all might present an aspect of hopeless ruin; but faith ever occupies itself with God's reality; it looks at the Church according to God's predestination, and acts accordingly. If this be not the habit of our souls, we shall have no power at all to get on. If we look at things around us, unbelief at once enters in, with all its reasonings, and renders us powerless; or it may lead us, with uninstructed zeal, to build up the Church after a human model, or to lend our aid to such attempts, which must issue in thorough confusion.

Now, the ever blessed God purposed to have the Church "holy and without blame before Him in love." This was His purpose; and it is just as we are able to get up to God's point of view that we see the Church to be that holy, blameless, lovely thing which God has made

her to be in Christ. One of old, who looked at Israel "*in the vision of the Almighty,*" was constrained to say, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." This is truly precious for the soul. It is not that "iniquity and perverseness" are not there. No; but God does not see them, because He has set the cleansing efficacy of the blood of His own dear Son between Him and all the blots and stains that might trouble the conscience. In the vision of man, who looks only at the outward appearance, the camp of old, or the Church now, might exhibit but a poor spectacle; but in "the vision of the Almighty" it is totally different. The Church *is "all fair"* in the eye of God; and surely, this is enough.

"Beholders many faults may find,

But they can guess at Jesus' mind,

Content if written in His book."

Yes, truly, content if written in His book; and are we not so? Yea, are we not engraved on His hands, and borne upon His heart continually? Thank God, it is even so. God views the Church as He views Jesus. She is "accepted in the Beloved." "As He is, so are we." "We are in Him that is true." "We ere members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved me." And all this was arranged in the infinite mind of God, before the foundation of the world, before the entrance of sin, before a single member of the Church had breathed the breath of life. "In Thy book (as perhaps we may be allowed to apply a well-known Scripture) were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them" (Ps. 139). Thus should we view the Church — thus should we think of and act toward her. We must rise to the everlasting counsel of God concerning her, in order to receive power to serve her perseveringly. If we get off this high ground we must fail altogether. It is impossible for any one to serve the Church, who is not walking in communion with God's thoughts about her. We may make efforts after personal holiness; we may progress in grace and knowledge; but if these things are not connected with the Church, they are merely selfish efforts. We should increase in holiness of character; we should make progress in grace and knowledge; but these things

should ever be connected with the true interests of the Church of Christ; they would then be in harmony with the mind of Him who could say, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."

Now, this purpose of God was developed in Christ, who is the risen Head of the Church: in Him, too, it finds its accomplishment. All that God purposed concerning the Church was actualized in Christ when He was raised from the dead, and set at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, and the Holy Ghost was sent down to actualize it in reference to all the members, as it had already been in reference to the Head, to make that true of *them* which was already true of *Him*. This was the object of the mission of the Holy Ghost. The Son was the standard, the model to which the Church *was* to be, in process of time, conformed by the operation of the Spirit. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8: 29). We have therefore, first, the purpose of God — His own deep and precious thoughts about the Church. We have then the accomplishment of that which was to clear away every obstacle to the full application of that purpose to the Church, viz., the death of Christ, who having taken the Church's place, and made Himself fully answerable for *all* her sins, paid the penalty for *her*, went down into the deepest depths of sorrow for her, cleared away every cloud from the prospect; and then, being raised from the dead, He took His seat at the right hand of God, and sent down the Holy Ghost to form the Church, to bring it into the unity which belonged to it as the body of Christ.

Now, seeing, that all that was needed for the application of the purpose of God to the Church, was accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ, it is impossible that anything can finally prevent its being actualized in reference to all the foreknown and predestined members of the Church. Neither Satan, nor the world, nor sin, nor death, nor aught else, can by any means countervail the purpose of God. Hence the apostle prays for the Ephesians, "That ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and *what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which he wrought in Christ when He*

raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

To have this prayer answered in our experience, is to be raised above the influence of every doubtful thought. It seems as if the Holy Ghost would provide a powerful remedy for any hesitating thought that might assault us, while viewing the wondrous counsel of God's will about the Church, and the high and holy destinies marked out for her in the ages to come.

The very position which the prayer occupies is remarkable. The apostle had been dealing with the question of what the Church is in the purpose of God, and he was about to treat of the Church's condition by nature; and the distance between these two points was so vast, that we need to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened in order to know "the exceeding greatness of the power" which could raise us from one to the other. For what is our condition by nature? "Dead in trespasses and sins" — "walking according to the course of this world" — "children of wrath." Such is our state by nature, and not of us Gentiles only, but of the favoured Jews too; and when we look from this state up to the wondrous height of glory which the counsel of God has fixed as the future portion of the Church, we may well pray to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened, that we may know the greatness of God's power to usward. Now, this power "to usward" is the very same power that was brought to bear on Christ when He lay in the grave. Christ took the place of greatest distance from God, inasmuch as He was "*made sin.*" He had a weight, of sin upon Him which no mortal could bear. Hence, when we behold Him raised to the right hand of God, "far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," we see, at once, the measure of the Church's acceptance. The Church is the body of Christ, His fulness, and, therefore, can never be viewed apart from Him. Hence, if it be asked, How was Jesus raised up

from the dead? The answer is, By the working of *God's mighty power*.

What an expression! The mighty power of God! Who or what could resist it? There was nothing to resist it; it was exercised in most perfect harmony with wisdom, prudence, justice, and truth. The law of God had been magnified and made honourable by the spotless life of the Lord Jesus; all the claims of justice had been satisfied by His death as the spotless Lamb of God; hence, "the working of God's mighty power" (*energeian tou kratous tes hischuos*) was brought to bear, and Christ was raised from the dead and set far above all the power of the enemy; and now He can set His foot upon everything that could stand in the way of the Church's full blessedness. He entered into the strong man's house, and took from him his armour wherein he trusted, and spoiled his house and all this, be it observed, as Head of the Church and on her behalf.

Now, all this truth about Christ and the Church was shadowed forth in Adam and Eve. In Genesis 1: 26, we have the counsel of God respecting man, in the following words: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let *them* have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth," etc. Again: "God blessed *them*, and God said unto *them*," etc.

It is important, in connection with our subject to see that, in these verses, we have the counsel of God about Adam and Eve rather than the actual accomplishment of facts. This will appear from the following chapter, where we find the Lord God saying, "It is not good that the man should be *alone*." The purpose of God had not been actualized in reference to Eve when the Divine benediction was pronounced on her in the person of Adam; she was blessed in him — in him too, she got dominion; she had nothing of, in, nor through herself; ALL WAS IN THE MAN. This is a sublime and glorious truth. The Church is *bound up* in the same "bundle of life" with the Lord Jesus; yea, and in the same bundle of glory likewise. The hand that would wrest from her her portion of life and glory, must wrest it from Him first, for she holds ALL IN HIM.

Here is faith's Divine resting-place; here, too, the standard by which it estimates the Church's place and character. Why should not the Church be pronounced "very good," when looked at in the Person of Christ? Why should not she be blessed, when blessed in Him? When the Church shall shine in all the brightness of the glory of Christ, and share in the honours of His throne, what will it be but the accomplishment of God's blessed purpose about her? Eve was thought of and spoken of before she had been called into being; it was "*them*" (Gen. 1), while none but the man existed. And so surely as Eve was thought of, so surely would she be called into being — but how? "The Lord God caused a *deep sleep* to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took *one of his ribs*, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made (margin *buildded*) He a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Gen. 2: 21, 22).*

{*It is interesting to observe that the word used by the LXX. in verse 22, is substantially the same as that which occurs with a preposition referring to the union of Jewish and Gentile believers in Ephesians 2: 22. In the former it is *ochodomesen*, and in the latter it is *sunoiCodomeisthe*. Indeed, the analogy between Genesis 1 and 2 and Ephesians 1 and 2, as bearing upon our immediate subject, can hardly fail to arrest the spiritual mind. Adam and Eve point to Christ and the Church; Adam's sleep, to Christ's death, and the building of the woman, to the building of the Church by the present operation of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Other more minute analogies might easily be added.}

Thus it was that the purpose of God was applied to Eve. Adam had to sleep, and lose a rib, ere the woman could be formed according to the Divine counsel. Just so is it as regards the antitype of all this. The second man, the Lord from heaven, had to descend into the lower parts of the earth, according to the eternal purpose of the Father, ere the Church could enter into the actual enjoyment of the glory and dominion of which we have been constituted joint-heirs with Christ; and it is the aim of the Holy Ghost, in His present work in the Church, to lead every foreknown and predestinated member of the body into the realization of the purpose of God concerning the whole. This attaches special importance to the

preaching of the Gospel in all its completeness "the mystery of the Gospel," as it is called in Ephesians 6; it being the great instrument by which souls are brought into the Church. The intelligent evangelist will ever keep Christ and the Church in view; he does not preach to swell the ranks of a party, but to gather souls to Christ in the unity of the body on earth. His object is not only the salvation of sinners, but to have realized and expressed here in the believers what is already true and real above — that for which Christ died (John 10: 11) and the Spirit came down (Acts 1: 2, and 1 Cor. 6: 12). Faith has to do with God's realities.

And now, as to the result of the purposes of God about the Church, what is it? The object which God had in view — simply that. The result *must* correspond with the Divine purpose, for God cannot be frustrated. And what was that object? "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together *in one* all things in Christ." This is the purpose, and this, too, will be the result.* But there is a present result, of which we read in Ephesians 2: 22, viz., "In whom *ye also are builded together* for an habitation of God through the Spirit." God dwells in the Church, not only in the Church (or the assembly of God) as a whole, but in each local assembly *which owns the name of Jesus as the only centre of union, and the Holy Ghost as the only source and power of ministry in the unity of the Church, Christ's body, on earth.* Where these truths are held in power, there is a distinct expression of the present result of God's purpose about the Church.

{*"It is worthy of note that in Ephesians, which contemplates us as already seated in heavenly places in Christ, there is no direct reference to the Lord's coming. So in the kindred epistle to the Colossians; it is not His coming from heaven to them who were on earth (which would involve the thought of distance and separateness, instead of the Head and His body); it is not His coming for us, but our appearing with Him in glory. This is, to my mind, a singularly beautiful sample of the harmony of truth that pervades the Scriptures."}

I pray the reader to pause here, and see if he understands this. It is of real moment that every Christian should prayerfully and solemnly consider the question of what the Church really is; and in

doing so, the word of God must be our only guide. We cannot commit ourselves to man on this great question. The Lord alone can teach us to profit. Neither can we view it in the light of circumstances. What power of action can be had by looking at men or things? None whatever. We need what God has given us, a spirit of love and of power and of a sound mind. Led of the Holy Ghost and subject to Scripture, we shall not long want a clear, calm, and settled conviction of what the Church is, as presented in the New Testament, and learnt in the secret of the Lord's own presence. When, through grace, my reader has gotten this, he will be no more "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in weight to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, he will grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ." Let us learn from the Lord what His Church is, and then we shall be able, *as we shall feel ourselves bound*, to turn away from everything which is not like it; for conduct should ever be according to conviction. So also we shall seek grace from day to day, to carry out in our respective spheres, and according to our measure of faith, understanding, and power, the Divine purpose about the Church. Let us take up, for instance, the epistle to the Ephesians, and study it with a teachable and impartial mind, and we shall soon see what the Church is: mark, not merely what the Church *is to be*, but what *the Church is now*.

Could one who was divinely taught the doctrine of the Church — could one who knew and valued the place of the Bride, the Lamb's wife, have a happy heart and a peaceful conscience in sanctioning the harlot which commits fornication with the kings of the earth, or with any human imitation of the Church, whereby the Holy Ghost is hindered, dishonoured, and grieved? A religious institution is not necessarily the Church of God; on the contrary, it may be hostile to the Church — a positive barrier to the expression of the unity of the Spirit. Hence, if we will be the upholders of Babylon, we must abandon the idea of holily serving the Church of God, for the two are incompatible. The reader would therefore do well to ponder the fearful consequences of occupying a position hostile to the true interests of Christ's body on earth. True, it will ever be difficult to flesh and blood to live for Christ and the Church,

but then it is well worth encountering all the difficulty. The Lord has special joy and complacency in those who sacrifice themselves for the sake of the Church. It was what He did Himself, and all who are filled with His Spirit will follow His example. One who, perhaps, came nearer than any to his Master, could say, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." And again: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." Indeed, it was for the purpose of furthering the interests of the Church that Paul desired to remain on earth. "To abide in the flesh," he writes, "is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." To him the world presented one vast desert — the scene of his trial and conflict; but when he thought of the beloved Church, he could willingly sacrifice his own feelings to further its joy. Blessed servant! Would that we had more of his spirit. Wherever Paul went, the Church was his object; when he preached, he preached for the Church; when he made tents, it was for the Church likewise. *He lived for Christ and the Church*; and, oh! my reader, if you and I love the name of Jesus, ought we not to live for the same object? Do not say, What can I do for the Church? You can do much, very much for it; you can, by precept, and, above all, by example, promote its unity; you can bear testimony against everything that would hinder that unity. First, ascertain what the Church is, so that you may not be calling that, the Church which is nothing more than a human arrangement, set up for the professed purpose of providing for the religious wants of men, whether Christians or not. Could such a thing be the Church? And if it be not the Church, it must be opposed to it, and subversive of its blessing and testimony on earth. For if we gather not with Christ, we can but scatter. Again, you should beware of upholding anything which practically denies the unity of the Church, by setting up any other centre of union than the name of Jesus.

The body of Christ on earth consists of all who, savingly believing in His name, are indwelt by the Holy Ghost. As such, they will endeavour to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called," and "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

It may be well just to add a word here as to the strict meaning of the term "the Church," Christ's body, as used in the epistle to the Ephesians, etc. And be it noted well, that the apostle here is not treating of an invisible unity in heaven, but of the Church on earth. Let any spiritual person read Ephesians 4, and answer if the body, the members, the gifts there treated, are in heaven or on earth. (Compare also 1 Cor. 12 and Rom. 12) Are these apostles, prophets, teachers, healings, for the Church in heaven? And, if not in heaven, where, if not in the Church here below? Unquestionably the Church will still enjoy a special place of nearness to the Lord as His body in heaven. But the Scriptures say little of a truth so obvious and almost self-evident, while they speak much and frequently of the Church as one body on earth. We learn from these and other portions of the Word of God, that the Church of God did not begin to be formed here below until the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God, and the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost. After these things had become accomplished facts, believers began to be brought into a position different from, and higher than, anything that had yet been known. Believers, previously, did not form a part of this body, for it was *when the second Adam slept* that His Eve was formed. God in His manifold wisdom, has various spheres of blessing, various departments of service and worship for His people. There are the heavenlies and the earthlies. The Spirit speaks of "every family" (*pasa patria*) in heaven and on earth. These things are not to be confounded. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."

Is it, therefore, asked, what is the precise period to which the formation of the Church is confined? The answer is very simple, viz.: From the time that Christ took His seat at the right hand of God, and sent the Holy Ghost from on high to baptize believers into one body, until the time when He shall leave it to meet His Church in the air. (Compare Ps. 110: 1, and 1 Thess. 4: 14-17.) This, be it long or short, is, properly speaking, the Church period. It must be confined to this; for, before its commencement, and after its expiration, *the earthly family*, the seed of Abraham, must be regarded as the special object of the Divine dealings on earth. This, then, makes the matter very simple. It requires no effort to understand the peculiarly unique and heavenly character of the

Church of Christ. The time during which the Church of God is being formed is just while Christ, the risen and glorified Head, is hidden in the heavens, and while the earth ceases to be the scene of God's manifested operations. Neither the earth nor any particular land is publicly owned of God now; it was once, before the Church period commenced, and it will be again after that period has ceased. But *now*, God is gathering out of the earth the heavenly family to be the body of Christ, His Bride — to be conformed to Him in everything, to be as separated from the world as He is, to have nothing on earth, either in the way of standing, hope, or calling.

But, it may be asked, Were not Abel, Abraham, Moses, and David, members of the Church? The answer to this is fully involved in what has been already advanced. If the formation of the Church must be confined to the precise period above named (and is it not?) then those who lived a thousand years, more or less, before that period commenced, cannot be regarded as part of it. They belonged to some of the families referred to in Ephesians 3: 15 (Which does not merge all in one family, but is rightly rendered, "*every family* in heaven and on earth is named"), but they do not belong to the Church, properly so called. They were saved by faith in Christ, no doubt, and they will occupy, in the ages to come, a place suited to them in the manifold wisdom of God; but we must not unduly limit nor extend the actings of the blessed God; He will order the various departments of His happy house according to His own grace and wisdom, and not according to our foolish thoughts. Scripture applies the term, the Church of God, of the first-born, etc., to the saints between Pentecost and the Lord's coming again, and to none others. If it do, nothing can be more easy of proof. Let a single text be produced which speaks of the saints before and after those termini as the Church of God, or body of Christ. But there is none. And the only safe course is to give up our own thoughts and to follow the unerring Word. Nor is it merely the name which is peculiar, but there are special privileges and a special walk, which are connected, so far as Scripture speaks, with the believers who are found in the Church period, and with none else. And to me it is clear, that if you make the Church to be the aggregate of all saints from the beginning to the end of all things, you lose entirely the power of the truth of its

union as a proper living body on earth, indwelt of the Holy Ghost, and made one spirit with the Lord in heaven.

The Lord give us to know more and more of His own mind concerning us, that we may serve Him more intelligently and devotedly!

Ephesians 1:6, 2 Corinthians 5:9

“ACCEPTED” AND “ACCEPTABLE”

“He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1: 6).
“Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him” (2 Cor. 5: 9).

The two words which form the heading of this paper, though rendered by the same word in our Authorized Version, are not at all the same. The former has respect to the *person* of the believer, the later to his *practical ways*. The first refers to his standing, the second to his state. It is one thing to be accepted; it is quite another to be acceptable. The former is the fruit of God's free grace to us sinners; the latter is the fruit of our earnest labor as saints, though most surely, it is only by grace we can do anything.

It is well that the Christian reader should thoroughly understand the distinction between these two things. It will preserve him effectively from legality on the one hand, and laxity on the other. It remains unalterably true of all believers, that God has made them accepted in the Beloved. Nothing can ever touch this. The very feeblest lamb in all the flock stands accepted in a risen Christ. There is no difference. The grace of God has placed them all on this high and blessed ground. We do not labor to be accepted. It is all the fruit of God's free grace. He found us all dead in trespasses and sins. We were morally dead, far off from God, hopeless, Godless, Christless, children of wrath, whether Jews or Gentiles. But Christ died for us, and God has co-quickenened, co-raised and co-seated us in Christ, and made us accepted in Him.

This is the inalienable, eternal standing of all without exception, who believe in the name of the Son of God. Christ in His infinite grace placed Himself judicially where we were morally, and having put away our sins and perfectly satisfied on our behalf the claims of divine righteousness, God entered the scene and raised Him from the dead, and with Him all His members as seen in His own eternal purpose, and to be called in due time and brought into

the actual possession and enjoyment of the marvelous place of blessing and privilege, by the effective operation of the Holy Spirit.

Well may we take up the opening words of the Epistle to the Ephesians and say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” All praise to His name throughout the everlasting ages!

All believers, then, are accepted — perfectly and forever accepted — in the Beloved. God sees them in Christ and as Christ. He thinks of them as He thinks of Him; loves them as He loves Him. They are ever before Him in perfect acceptance in the blessed Son of His love, nor can anything or anyone ever interfere with this their high and glorious position which rests on the eternal stability of the grace of God, the accomplished work of His Son, and attested by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

But are all believers *acceptable* in their practical ways? Are all so conducting themselves that their dealings and doings will bear the light of the judgment-seat of Christ? Are all laboring to be agreeable to Him?

Christian reader, these are serious questions. Let us solemnly weigh them. Let us not turn away from the sharp edge of plain practical truth. The blessed apostle knew he was accepted. Did that make him lax, careless or indolent? Far from it. “We labor,” he says, “to be *acceptable* to Him.” The sweet assurance that we are *accepted* in Him is the ground of our labor to be acceptable to Him. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead. And He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5: 14-15).

All this is preeminently practical. We are called upon, by every argument which can bear sway over the heart and conscience, to labor diligently to be acceptable to our blessed and adorable Lord. Is there anything of legality in this? Not the slightest tinge. The very reverse. It is the holy superstructure of a devoted life, erected on the solid foundation of our eternal election and perfect acceptance in a risen and glorified Christ at God's right hand. How could there be the very smallest atom of legality here? Utterly impossible! It is all the pure fruit of God's free and sovereign grace from first to last.

But ought we not, beloved Christian reader, to arouse ourselves to attend to the claims of Christ as to practical righteousness? Should we not zealously and lovingly aim at giving Him pleasure? Are we to content ourselves with simply talking about our acceptance in Christ, while at the same time having no real earnest care as to the acceptability of our ways? God forbid! Yes, let us so dwell upon the rich grace that shines in the acceptance of our persons, that we may be led out in diligent and fervent effort to be found acceptable in our ways.

It is greatly to be feared that there is an appalling amount of unhallowed traffic in the doctrines of grace without any godly care as to the application of those doctrines to our practical conduct. How all this is to end, it would be hard to say, but most assuredly, there is an urgent call upon all who profess to be accepted in Christ to labor fervently to be acceptable to Him.

Ephesians 1:7

"In whom *we have* redemption through his blood, the *forgiveness of sins* according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7)

Forgiveness of sins: What is it?

"Oh! the blessedness; transgression forgiven; sin covered." This truly is blessedness, and without this, blessedness must be unknown. To have the full assurance that my sins are all forgiven, is the only foundation of true happiness. To be happy without this, is to be happy on the brink of a yawning gulf into which I may, at any moment, be dashed for ever. It is utterly impossible that any one can enjoy solid happiness until he is possessed of the divine assurance that all his guilt has been cancelled by the blood of the cross. Uncertainty as to this must be the fruitful source of mental anguish to any soul who has ever been led to feel the burden of sin. To be in doubt as to whether my guilt was all borne by Jesus or is yet on my conscience, is to be miserable.

Now, before proceeding to unfold the subject of forgiveness, I should like to ask my reader a very plain, pointed, personal question, namely, "Dost thou believe that thou canst have the clear and settled assurance that thy sins are forgiven?" I ask this question, at the outset, because there are many, now-a-days, who profess to preach the gospel of Christ, and yet deny any one can be sure that his sins are forgiven. They maintain that it is presumption for any one to believe in the forgiveness of his sins; and, on the other hand, they look upon it as a proof of humility to be always in doubt as to this most momentous point. In other words, it is presumption to believe what God says, and humility to doubt it. This seems strange in the face of such passages as the following, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46, 47) "In whom *we have* redemption through his blood, the *forgiveness of sins* according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14)

Here we have remission or forgiveness of sins (the word is the same in the three passages) preached in the name of Jesus, and possessed by those who believed that preaching. A proclamation was sent to the Ephesians and Colossians, as belonging to the "all nations," telling them of forgiveness of sins, in the name of Jesus. They believed this proclamation, and entered on the possession of the forgiveness of sins. Was this presumption on their part? or would it have been piety and humility to doubt the forgiveness of sins? True, they had been great sinners, indeed in trespasses and sins — children of wrath aliens and foreigners — "enemies by wicked works." Some of them had, doubtless, bowed the knee to Diana They had lived in gross idolatry and all manner of wickedness. But then, "forgiveness of sins" had been preached to them in the name of Jesus. Was this preaching true, or was it not? Was it for them, or was it not? Was it all a dream — a shadow — a myth? Did it mean nothing? Was there nothing sure, nothing certain, nothing solid about it?

These are plain questions, demanding a plain answer from those who assert that no one can know for certain that his sins are forgiven. If indeed no one can know it now, then how should any one have known it in apostolic times? If it could be known in the first century, then why not in the nineteenth? "David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. 4:6-8) Hezekiah could say, "*Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*" (Isaiah 38:17) the Lord Jesus said to one in His day, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. 9:2.

Thus, at all times, forgiveness of sins was known with all the certainty which the word of God could give. Any one of the cases adduced above is sufficient to overthrow the teaching of those who assert that no one can know that his sins are forgiven. If I find from scripture that any one ever knew this marvellously precious blessing, that is quite enough for me. Now, when I open my Bible, I find persons, who had been guilty of all manner of sins, brought to the knowledge of forgiveness; and I therefore argue that it is

possible for the very vilest sinner to know now, with divine certainty, that his sins are forgiven. Was it presumption in Abraham, in David, in Hezekiah, in the palsied man, and in numbers besides, to believe in the forgiveness of sins? Would it have been a sign of humility and true piety in them to doubt? It will, perhaps, be argued that these were all special and extraordinary cases. Well, it matters not, so far as our present question is concerned, whether they were ordinary or extraordinary. One thing is plain, they completely disprove the assertion that *no one* can know that his sins are forgiven. The word of God teaches me that numbers, subject to like passions, like infirmities, like failures, and like sins as the writer and reader, were brought to know and rejoice in the full forgiveness of sins, and hence those who maintain that no one can be sure on this momentous question, have no scriptural foundation for their opinion.

But is it true that the cases recorded in the holy scripture are so special and extraordinary as not to afford any precedent for us? By no means. If any case could be so regarded it is surely that of Abraham, and yet of him we read that "it was not written for his sake alone, that righteousness was imputed to him; *but for us also*, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:18, 25) Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6) And the Holy Ghost declares that righteousness shall be imputed to us also if we believe. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38, 39) "To him give *all the prophets* witness, that through his name *whosoever believeth* in him shall receive the remission of sins." (Acts 10:43)

Now, the question is, what did the apostles Peter and Paul mean, when they so unreservedly preached the forgiveness of sins to those who listened to them? Did they really mean to convey to their hearers the idea that no one could be sure that he possessed this forgiveness of sins? When in the synagogue of Antioch, Paul said to

his audience, "We declare unto you *glad tidings*," did he entertain the notion that no one could be sure that his sins were forgiven? How could the gospel ever be called "glad tidings" if its only effect were to leave the soul in doubt and anxiety? If indeed it be true that no one can enjoy the assurance of pardon, then the whole style of apostolic preaching should be reversed. We might then expect to find Paul saying to his hearers, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that no one can ever know, in this life, whether his sins are forgiven or not." Is there ought like this in the entire range of apostolic preaching and teaching? Do not the apostles everywhere set forth, in the fullest and clearest manner, remission of sins as the necessary result of believing in a crucified and risen Saviour? Is there the most remote hint of that which is so much insisted upon by some modern teachers, namely, that it is a dangerous presumption to believe in the full forgiveness of all our sins, and that it argues a pious and humble frame of soul to live in perpetual doubt? Is there no possibility of ever enjoying, in this world, the comfortable certainty of our eternal security in Christ? Can we not rely upon God's word, or commit our souls to the sacrifice of Christ? Can it be possible that the only effect of God's glad tidings is to leave the soul in hopeless perplexity? Christ has put away sin; but I cannot know it! God has spoken; but I cannot be sure! The Holy Ghost has come down; but I cannot rely upon His testimony. It is piety and humility to doubt God's word, to dishonour the atonement of Christ, and to refuse the faith of the heart to the record of the Holy Ghost! Alas! alas! if this is the gospel, then adieu to peace and joy in believing. If this is Christianity, then in vain has "the dayspring from on high visited us to give the knowledge of salvation through the remission of our sins" (Luke 1). If no one can have this "knowledge of Salvation," then to what end has it been given.

And let my reader bear in mind that the question before us is not whether a person may not deceive himself and others. This would be at once ceded. Thousands, alas! have deceived themselves, and thousands more have deceived others. But is that any reason why I cannot possess the absolute certainty that what God has said is true, and that the work of Christ has availed to put away all my sins? Men have deceived themselves. and therefore I am afraid to trust Christ

Men have deceived others, and therefore I am afraid that God's word will deceive me! This is really what it all amounts to, when put into plain language. And is it not well to have things thus put? Is it not needs, at times, to strip certain propositions of the dress in which legality and fleshly pietism would clothe them, so that we may see what they are. Does it not behove us, when men stand forth as the professed and authorized exponents of a sound and enlightened Christianity, to test what they say by the unerring standard of holy scripture? Assuredly it does; and if they tell us we can never be sure of salvation; and that it is presumption to think of such a thing; and, further, that the very utmost we can attain to in this life is a faint hope that, through the mercy of God, we may get to heaven when we die; we must utterly reject such teaching, as being in direct opposition to the word of God. False theology tells me I can never be sure, God's word tells me I can. Which am I to believe? The former fills me with gloomy doubts and fears; the latter imparts divine certainty. That casts me upon my own efforts; this upon a finished work. To which shall I attend? Is there a shadow of foundation, throughout the entire volume of God, for the notion that no one can be sure of his eternal salvation? I most fearlessly assert there is not. So far, from this the word of God, in every section of it, sets before us, in the clearest way, the privilege of the believer to enjoy the most unclouded certainty as to his pardon and acceptance in Christ.

And, let me ask, is it not due to God's faithful word and Christ's finished work, that the soul confiding therein should enjoy the fullest assurance? True, it is by faith that any one can so confide, and this faith is wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost. But all this, in nowise, affects our present question. What I desire is, that my reader should rise from the study of this paper with a full and firm conviction that it is possible for him to possess the present assurance that he is as safe as Christ can make him. If any sinner ever enjoyed this assurance, then why may not my reader now enjoy it? Is Christ's work finished? Is God's word true? Yes, verily. Then, if I simply trust therein, I am pardoned, justified, and accepted. All my sins were laid on Jesus when He was nailed to the cursed tree. Jehovah made them all meet on Him. He bore them and put them away; and, now, He is up in heaven without them. This is enough for me. If the

One who stood charged with all my guilt is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, then, clearly, there is nothing against me. All that divine justice had against me was laid on the Sin-bearer, and He endured the wrath of a sin-hating God that I might be freely and for ever pardoned and accepted in a risen and glorified Saviour.

These are glad tidings. Does my reader believe them? Say, beloved, dost thou heartily believe in a dead and risen Christ? Hast thou come to Him as a lost sinner, and put thy hearts full confidence in Him? Dost thou believe that He died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures? If so, thou art saved, justified, accepted, complete in Christ. True, thou art, in thyself, a poor feeble creature, having an evil nature to contend with every moment; but Christ is thy life, and He is thy wisdom, and thy righteousness, thy sanctification, thy redemption, thy all. He ever lives for thee up in heaven. He died to make thee clean. He lives to keep thee clean. Thou art made as clean as His death can make thee, and thou art kept as clean as His life can keep thee. He made Himself responsible for thee. God sees thee to be what Christ has made thee to be. He sees thee in Christ, and as Christ. Therefore, then, I pray thee, tread no more those gloomy corridors of legalism, pietism, and false theology, which have resounded for ages with the sighs and groans of poor sin-burdened, and misguided souls; but seeing the fullness of thy portion, and completeness of thy standing in a risen and glorious Christ, rejoice in Him all thy days on earth, and live in the hope of being with Him for ever in His own mansions of heavenly glory.

Having thus sought to establish the fact that is possible for one to know, upon divine authority, that his sins are forgiven, we shall now, in dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit of God, proceed to consider the subject of forgiveness of sins, as unfolded in the word, and doing so, we shall present it under the three following heads, namely: — First, the *ground* on which God forgives sins; secondly, the *extent* to which He forgives sins; and, thirdly, the *style* which He forgives sins. There is value in this threefold presentation, as it gives clearness, fullness, and precision to our apprehension of the object as a whole. The more clearly we understand the ground of

divine forgiveness the more shall we appreciate the extent, and admire the style thereof.

May God the Spirit now be our guide while we ponder for a little,

THE GROUND OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

It is of the very last importance that the anxious reader should understand this cardinal point. It is quite impossible that a divinely convicted conscience can enjoy true repose until the ground of forgiveness is clearly seen. There may be certain vague thoughts respecting the mercy and goodness of God, His readiness to receive sinners and pardon their sins, His unwillingness to enter the place of judgment, and His promptness to enter the place of mercy. All this there may be; but until the convicted soul is led to see how God can be just and yet the justifier — how He can be a just God and yet a Saviour-God — how He has been glorified with respect to sin — how all the divine attributes have been harmonized, it must be a stranger to the peace of God which truly passeth all understanding. A conscience on which the light of divine truth has poured itself in convicting power, feels and owns that sin can never enter into the presence of God — that sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the just judgment of a sin-hating God. Hence, until the divine method of dealing with sin is understood and believed, there must be intense anxiety. Sin is a reality, God's holiness is a reality, conscience is a reality, judgment to come is a reality. All these things must be looked at and duly considered. Justice must be satisfied — conscience purged — Satan silenced. How is all this to be done? Only by the cross of Jesus.

Here, then, we have the true ground of divine forgiveness. The precious atonement of Christ forms the base of that platform on which a just God and a justified sinner meet in sweet communion. In that atonement I see sin condemned, justice satisfied, the law magnified, the sinner saved, the adversary confounded. Creation never exhibited ought like this. There the creature enjoyed the manifestation of power, wisdom, and goodness; but the fairest fields of the old creation presented nothing like "grace reigning through righteousness" — nothing like a glorious combination of

"righteousness and peace, mercy and truth." It was reserved for Calvary to display all this. There that grand and all important question, "How can God be just and the Justifier?" received a glorious reply. The death of Christ furnishes the answer. A just God dealt with sin at the cross, in order that a justifying God might deal with the sinner on the new and everlasting ground of resurrection. God could not tolerate or pass over a single jot or tittle of sin; but He could put it away. He has condemned sin. He has poured out His righteous wrath upon sin. in order that He might pour the everlasting beams of His favour upon the believing sinner.

"On Jesus' cross this record's graved,

Let sin be judged and sinners saved."

Precious record! may every anxious sinner read it with the eye of faith. It is a record which must impart settled peace to the heart. God has been satisfied as to sin. This is enough for me. Here my guilty, troubled conscience finds sweet repose. I have seen my sins rising like a dark mountain before me, threatening me with eternal wrath; but the blood of Jesus has blotted them all out from God's view. They are gone, and gone for ever — sunk as lead into the mighty waters of divine forgetfulness, and I am free — as free as the One who was nailed to the cross for my sins, but who is now on the throne without them.

Such, then, is the ground of divine forgiveness. What a solid ground! Who or what can touch it? Justice *has* owned it. The troubled conscience *may* rest in it. Satan *must* acknowledge it. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier, and faith walks in the light and the power of that revelation. Nothing can be simpler, nothing clearer, nothing more satisfactory. If God reveals Himself as a Justifier, then I am justified through faith in the revelation. When the moral glories of the cross shine upon the sinner, he sees and knows, believes and owns, that the One who has judged his sins in death, has justified him in resurrection.

Anxious reader see I beseech thee that thou apprehendest the true ground of the forgiveness of sins. There is no use in our proceeding to the *extent* and *style*, until thy poor troubled conscience

has been led to rest upon the imperishable *ground* of forgiveness. Let me reason with thee. What is to hinder thee from this very moment, resting on the foundation of accomplished atonement? Say, does thy conscience need something more to satisfy it than that which has satisfied the inflexible justice of God? Is not the ground on which God reveals Himself as a righteous Justifier sufficiently strong for thee to stand upon as a justified sinner? What sayest thou, friend? Art thou satisfied? Is Christ sufficient for thee? Art thou still searching for something in thyself, thy ways, thy works, thy thoughts, thy feelings? If so, give up the search as utterly vain. Thou wilt never find anything. And even though thou couldst find something, it would only be an encumbrance a loss, a hindrance. Christ is sufficient for God, let Him be sufficient for thee likewise. Then but not until then, wilt thou be truly happy.

May God the Holy Ghost cause thee to rest this moment, upon an all-sufficient sacrifice, as the only ground of divine forgiveness, so that thou mayest be able to enter, with real intelligence and interest, upon the examination of the second point in our subject, namely,

THE EXTENT OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

Very many are perplexed as to this. They do not see the fullness of the atonement. They do not grasp the emancipating fact of its application to all their sins. They do not enter into the full force of those lines, which, perhaps, they often sing:

"All thine iniquities who doth

Most graciously forgive."

They seem to be under the impression that Christ only bore some of their sins, namely, their sins up to the time of their conversion. They are troubled as to the question of their daily sins, as if these were disposed of upon a different ground from their past sins. Thus are they, at times, much cast down and sorely beset. Nor could it be otherwise with them until they see that in the death of Christ, provision was made for the full forgiveness of ALL their sins. True it is that the child of God who commits sin has to go to his Father

and confess that sin. But what does the apostle say, in reference to one so confessing his sins? "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, why does he say, faithful and just?" Why does he not say, "Gracious and merciful?" Because he speaks on the ground that the entire question of sin was gone into and settled by the death of Christ, who is now up in heaven as the righteous Advocate. On no other ground could God be faithful and just in connection with the forgiveness of sins. The sins of the believer have *all* been atoned for on the cross. If one had been left out, he should be eternally lost, inasmuch as it is impossible that a single sin, however trifling, can ever enter the precincts of the sanctuary of God. And, further, let me add, if all the believer's sins were not atoned for in the death of Christ, then neither by confession, nor by prayer, nor by fasting, nor by any other means, could they ever be forgiven. The death of Christ is the *only* ground on which God could, in faithfulness and justice, forgive sin; and we know He must either do it in faithfulness and justice, or not at all. This is to His praise and our exceeding comfort.

But I can imagine my reader exclaiming "What! do you mean to say that my *future* sins were all atoned for?" To this I reply, that all our sins were future when Christ bore them on the cursed tree. The sins of all believers, for the last eighteen centuries, were future when Christ died for them. Hence, if the idea of future sins presents a difficulty in reference to what we may commit, if left here, it presents just as great a difficulty in reference to what we have committed. But, in truth, all this perplexity about future sins arises very much from the habit of looking at the cross from our own point of view, instead of God's — looking at it from earth instead of from heaven. Scripture never speaks of future sins. Past, present, and future are only human and earthly. All is an eternal now with God.

All our sins were before the eye of infinite Justice, at the cross, and all were laid on the head of Jesus the Sin-bearer who, by His death, laid the eternal foundation of forgiveness of sins, in order that the believer, at any moment of his life, at any point in his history, at any stage of his career, from the time at which the hallowed tidings of the gospel fall upon the ear of faith until the moment in which he steps into the glory, may be able to say, with clearness and decision,

without reserve, misgiving, or hesitation, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." To say this is but faith's response to God's own declaration, when He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "Jehovah hath made to meet on him the iniquities of us all."

Let us, by way of illustration, take the case of the thief on the cross. When he, as a convicted sinner, cast the eye of faith upon that blessed One who hung beside him, was he not, then and there rendered fit, to enter the paradise of God? Was he not furnished with a divine title to pass from the cross of a malefactor into the presence of God? Unquestionably. Did he need anything more to be done for him, in him, or with him, in order to fit him for heaven? By no means. Well, then, suppose that, instead of passing into heaven, he had been permitted to come down from the cross. Suppose the nails had been extracted and he allowed to go at liberty. He would have had sin in his nature, and having sin in his nature, he would have been liable to commit sin, in thought, word, and deed. Now, could he ever lose his title, his fitness, his meetness? Surely not. His title was divine and everlasting. All his sins were borne by Jesus. That which had fitted him to enter heaven at the first, had fitted him once and for ever, so that if he had remained on earth for fifty years he would, at any moment, have been equally fit to enter heaven.

True it is, if the pardoned sinner commits sin, his communion is interrupted, and there must be the hearty confession of that sin ere his communion can be restored. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." But this is, obviously, a different point altogether. My communion may be interrupted, but my title can never be forfeited. All was accomplished on the cross. Every trace of sin and guilt was atoned for by that peerless, priceless sacrifice. By that sacrifice, the believer is transferred from a position of guilt and condemnation into a position of justification and perfect favour. He is translated from a condition in which he had not a single trace of righteousness, into a condition in which he has not a single trace of guilt, nor ever can have. He stands in grace, he is under grace, he breathes the very atmosphere of grace, and he never can be otherwise, according to God's view. If he commits sin — and who does not? — there must

be confession. And what then? Forgiveness and cleansing, on the ground of the faithfulness and justice of God which have had their divine answer in the cross. *All is founded on the cross.* The faithfulness and justice of God — the advocacy of Christ — our confession--our full forgiveness — our perfect cleansing — the restoration of our communion — all rest upon the solid basis of the precious blood of Christ.

My reader will bear in mind that we are, at present, occupied with the one point, namely, the extent of divine forgiveness. There are other points of great importance, which might be looked at in connection, such as the believer's oneness with Christ. his adoption into the family of God, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, all of which, necessarily, imply the full forgiveness of sins. But we must confine ourselves to our immediate theme, and having endeavoured to set forth the ground and the extent, we shall close with a few words on

THE STYLE OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

We are all conscious of how much depends upon the style of an action. Indeed, there is frequently far more power in the style than in the substance. How often have we heard such words as these: "Yes, I own he did me a favour; but, then, he did it in such a way as to take away all the good of it." Now, the Lord has His style of doing things, blessed be His name. He not only does great things, but He does them in such a way as to convince us that His heart is in the doing of them. Not only is the substance of His acts good, but the style most charming.

Let us have a sample or two. Look, for instance, at Christ's touching word to Simon the Pharisee, in Luke 7. "When they had nothing to pay, he *frankly* forgave them both." Now, so far as the mere matter of the debt was concerned, the result would have been the same whatever style had been adopted. But what heart does not receive the moral power of the word, "frankly?" Who would part with it? Who could bear to see the substance stripped of its style? The creditor might forgive with a murmur about the amount. That murmur would, in the judgment of a sensitive heart, rob the act of all

its charms. On the other hand, the frankness of the style enhances, beyond expression, the value of the substance.

Again, look for a moment at that familiar but ever fruitful section of inspiration, Luke 15. Each of the parables illustrates the power and beauty of style. When the man finds his sheep, what does he do? Does he complain of all the trouble, and commence to drive the sheep home before him? Ah! no; this would never do. What then? "He layeth it on his shoulders." How? Complaining of the weight or the trouble? Nay; but "*rejoicing*." Here we have the lovely style. He showed that he was glad to get His sheep back again. The sheep would have been safe on the shoulder, however it had been placed there; but who would part with the word "rejoicing?" Who could bear to see the substance of the action stripped of its charming style?

So also in the case of the woman and her lost piece of silver. "She lights a candle, sweeps the house, and seeks." How? With dullness, weariness, indifference? By no means; but "diligently," like one whose whole heart was in her work. It was quite manifest that she really wanted to find the lost piece of silver. Her style proved this.

Lastly, mark the style of the father in receiving the poor returning prodigal. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." He does not send out a servant to tell the erring one to turn aside into one of the out-offices, or betake himself to the kitchen, or even to confine himself to his own room. No; he himself *runs*. He, as it were, lays aside his paternal dignity, in order to give expression to his fatherly affection. He is not satisfied with merely receiving the wanderer back. He must prove that his whole heart is in the reception; and this he does, not merely by the substance of the act, but by his style of doing it.

Various other passages might be adduced to illustrate the style of divine forgiveness; but the above will suffice to prove that God graciously recognizes the power which style has to act upon the human heart. I shall, therefore, in closing this paper, make an earnest

appeal to my reader, as to what he now thinks of the ground, the extent,, and the style of divine forgiveness.

Beloved reader, thou seest that the ground is as stable as the very throne of God itself that the extent is infinite; and the style all that the heart could possibly desire. Say, therefore art thou satisfied as to the great question of the forgiveness of sins? Can you any longer doubt God's willingness to forgive when He has set before you, in such a way, the ground on which the extent to which, and the style in which He forgives sin? Can you hesitate when He actually

"Opens His own heart to thee

And shows His thoughts how kind they be?"

He stands with open arms to receive thee. He points thee to the cross, where His own hand laid the foundation of forgiveness, and assures thee that all is done, and beseeches thee to rest now, henceforth, and for evermore, in that which He has wrought for you. May the blessed Spirit lead thee to see these things in all their clearness and fullness, so that thou mayest not only believe in the forgiveness of sins, but believe also that, thy sins are frankly and for ever forgiven.

C. H. M.

Unity: What is it? And am I confessing it?

Leviticus 24 and Ephesians 4: 4.

A lecture by C. H. Mackintosh.

I suppose, beloved brethren, there is not one of us, whatever may have been our experience, whether our course has been long or

short, who is not impressed with the unspeakable importance of having the truth of God distinctly before us, and not only before our minds, but in our hearts, as a divine reality — something influential and formative — a living link between our souls and the living God, not merely as to the question of individual salvation, infinitely precious as that is, but as to the path we are called to tread, and the position that we occupy as Christians.

As you get along, beloved brethren, you must be discovering that nothing stands, but having the truth of God in your own hearts, and holding it directly from Him, no matter who may be the instrument in communicating it to you. You must be able to give a reason, not only for the hope that is in you, but for the path which you tread, the niche which you fill — you must be able to give a divine reason for all, or else you will not be able to stand. Never was the truth of this more apparent than at the present moment, because, as we all know, people are being tested; there is a testing and a sifting going on in the professing church, and in our own very midst, brethren, which most of you may feel. No doubt some of us may be called to feel it more than others, but the most cursory observer cannot fail to see this, that the sieve is doing its work in the professing church, and doing its work amongst ourselves, and that it is being made manifest, in the most striking manner, who has been really taught of God, and who has been merely hanging on to something of his own, or blindly following in the wake of his fellow. It has been made manifest, brethren, whether our faith is set in the wisdom of men or in the power of God. Secondhand faith is being proved and found lacking. It cannot stand in the day of trial. We must have to do, each for himself, with the living God.

Now in the whole of what I have to say, there is one thing which I believe the Spirit of God has laid upon my heart to impress upon you, beloved — and you know I always speak in the utmost confidence and freedom, and I feel assured you will receive it in the same manner. I feel then, brethren, that the Spirit of God would have me impress first of all upon you the importance of having your faith standing *only in the power of God*; that no matter what may be the measure of it — it may be very small or it may be very large — it does not matter what the measure is, the point is that your fixed stay

must be in the wisdom and the power of God, so that if you had not a second person to support you, if you had not the sympathy of another individual, you at least possess the blessed consciousness that God has communicated to your soul truth which you hold from Him, and which is the spring of all your authority, the ground of your confidence, and the true secret of your power.

A saint once said, when passing through a time of deepest exercise, he was brought to ask himself this question, and to ask it in all solemnity, in all godly simplicity, "If the whole world and church were gone, is the word of God sufficient as a thread to take me across the abyss?" That is the question, my brethren, and that question I will suggest at the outset to every one of you, from the oldest to the youngest. I see before me saints of God who were such long before the one who is speaking to them, and I see before me saints of God of perhaps a few days' or a few weeks' standing, but the principle I am now urging upon you is a principle of cardinal importance; it is a principle of unspeakable value; it is what I would urge upon you; and if I do nothing else than to urge and re-urge and rivet home this principle on your souls, I shall feel that I have not spoken in vain. The question is this — Can you say when you are all alone, "The word of God is quite sufficient for me, if both world and church were gone; is it quite sufficient as a thread to take me across the abyss?"

Now, that is the point. Can you say that, beloved? I pause and put this question to you, as in the very presence of our one Lord and Master, Have you such a sense of the value and authority of the word of God; have you got such a sense of the reality of this truth, this revelation which God has given you, that, though you had not a second person to support you, you could say, "That is quite enough for me?"

Of course you will tell me, beloved, that it is only the Spirit that can enable you to appreciate and grasp and hold that word. Quite so; but I am speaking now of the value of the word of God; and never, I am persuaded, was there a moment in the history of the church of God on earth, when it was so distinctly necessary that your souls, my beloved brethren, should be rooted and grounded,

established and braced up in the knowledge of this fact, that you have in the word of God all that you can possibly want — the word of God as brought home by the Spirit to your hearts.

Now some of you may be disposed to ask, "What have these introductory remarks to do with the scripture that has been read?" Or perhaps you may ask, "What is your subject? What is your message?" Well, beloved brethren, I tell you at once, my thesis is this — The unity of the church of God as stated in Ephesians 4: 4. And then again, if any feel disposed to ask, "What has the 24th of Leviticus to do with the unity of the church of God?" I reply, It has to do with it in this way. I read Leviticus 24 with the purpose of illustrating to you, brethren, from the history of Israel, and the unity of the nation of Israel, the deeper truth of the unity of the one body, and it is my object now to set before you the fact of the unity of God's Israel, His earthly people, as an illustration, as a type, if you please, of the higher unity of the church of God.

Now in this passage of the 24th of Leviticus, what have you got? You have one of the most expressive and beautiful figures that can possibly engage the spiritual mind; you have in those twelve loaves ranged upon the golden table before the Lord, the distinct figure of the indissoluble unity and yet the perfect distinctness of Israel's twelve tribes. Now there is a grand truth — the perfect distinctness and yet the indissoluble unity of Israel's twelve tribes, and you may have noticed — I do not think you could have avoided noticing — the frequent occurrence in this chapter of the words "continual, perpetual, everlasting." Again and again these words occur in reading this passage. What do they mean, beloved brethren? They mean this, that the unity of God's people Israel was not a thing of today or tomorrow; it was a grand verity, an eternal truth of God foreshadowed in those twelve loaves on the golden table, before the Lord.

Oh what a type, brethren, what a presentation! And, further, as to the intention of this passage, you may perhaps feel disposed to ask another question, "What has that paragraph about the stoning of the blasphemer to do with all this?" I believe it has a great deal to do with it, beloved brethren. I believe that the grouping of this passage

by the Holy Ghost is striking, forcible and instructive. In the stoning of the blasphemer you have that which might be the fate of the nation under the governmental dealings of God; but, at the same time, in those twelve loaves on the golden table, you have the eternal truth as to the nation's condition in God's view — that looked at from God's stand point the nation was ONE whatever might be its condition, as viewed from man's stand point. I repeat it, beloved — looked at from God's stand point, looked at in the light of those seven golden lamps which in other words was the expression of the light and testimony of the Holy Ghost, based upon and connected with the perfect work of Christ, Israel is ONE, the nation is one; there are twelve tribes maintained in the unity although, as I have said, in the governmental dealings of God, and looked at from man's stand point, the nation may be suffering the penalty of their sin. In a word, however the nation of Israel may be scattered, and broken, and crushed, in man's view, it is in God's view — in God's eternal counsels — and in the view of faith one and indivisible. To deny this is to call in question the integrity of the truth of God. If we can play fast and loose with scripture as to one point, we may do so as to all.

And now I will give a few illustrations of the way in which faith laid hold of and acted upon this grand truth.

Turn with me for an instance to 1 Kings 18. I shall not ask you to read the passage, but have your Bibles open there. It is familiar, I am sure, to all. The scene is upon the top of Carmel. It is a scene in the history of Elijah the Tishbite, perfectly familiar to all, but I want you to look at it for one special object. I want you to look at it as an illustration of the power of faith in that great truth of the unity of Israel's twelve tribes.

I feel sure that you have often read of Elijah's building his altar of twelve stones. Every Sunday school child has read it; but I confess to you, beloved brethren, that, often as one has read the passage, it has lately shone before the vision of my so I with a brighter lustre than I have ever seen before. I ask myself this question, Why did Elijah build an altar of twelve stones? What was his authority for that? What was it, shall I say, that nerved his arm to the act? He was standing in the presence of eight hundred false prophets, he was

standing in the presence of all the power of Jezebel, and in the presence of ruin and apostasy. The ten tribes were separated from the two. There was a rent made in the nation, looked at from man's stand point, but Elijah stands upon Mount Carmel, and he looks at that nation in the vision of GOD, and with the eye of *faith*. He does not reason; he does not say, "It is no use now my taking this lofty stand, it is no use my attempting to build an altar with twelve stones now. The day is gone by for that. I must lower the standard according to the practical condition of things around me. It was well and perfectly consistent for a Joshua or a Solomon to build such an altar, but it would only be a piece of folly on my part. It is the height of presumption to be talking about an altar of twelve stones when the ten tribes and the two are divided, and when the whole scene is plunged in ruin."

No, my brethren, Elijah did not reason thus; he took his stand on the imperishable ground of faith. Elijah placed his foot where I want every child of God to place his foot — that is, on the indestructible revelation of God. I want you to read this act in the light which emanates from the seven golden candlesticks, and in the light which emanates from that golden table in the sanctuary of God. I want you, my beloved brethren, to see that the words "continual, perpetual, everlasting" are stamped upon the whole of the history of God's truth and His thoughts respecting Israel. Elijah knew nothing of the principle so rife in this our day, "It is no use talking about the unity of the church of God." You see a sneer of contempt and unbelief upon the lips of people when you talk about the unity of the body of Christ. Persons will shrug their shoulders and say, "Do not talk to me about the unity of the body. It is a thing of the past. It is a bygone thing. Don't talk to me about the unity of the church. Where is it to be seen? Where is it developed? Where is it illustrated?"

Beloved brethren, bring yourselves back in thought for a moment, and stand beside that man of faith on the top of Carmel, and ask yourselves, Where are the twelve tribes? It might, with equal force, have been said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Do not talk to me about the unity of the nation. It is a thing of the past. It no longer exists. It is the height of presumption to think of building an altar of twelve stones in the face of a divided people — a broken unity." But what

weight would such suggestions have had with our prophet? None whatever. He looked at the nation from a divine standpoint, and therefore he erected his altar of twelve stones "according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name."

Now, the question is, How long was Israel to tee the name, and how long was Israel's unity to subsist? Continually, perpetually, everlastingly. Here Elijah took his stand.

And mark further, beloved, what I think is of unspeakable importance. It was not a mere speculation of Elijah's mind. It was not an inoperative dogma, an uninfluential opinion which he held. Elijah might have held the truth of Israel's unity as a cold theory, in the region of his intellect) he might very comfortably have gone on, and said in his heart, "I believe in the unity of the nation of Israel, but I am not going to confess it. There is no manifestation of it, and, therefore, I am not going to bring it forward; I am not going to take, as it were, my stand upon it. I am not going to carry it out." But this would never do. Elijah justly felt that if the unity of the twelve tribes was a grand truth, then it must, at all cost, be carried out, and hence he did carry it out. How? By building an altar of twelve stones, "according to the number of the tribes of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name." Faith could never give that up. It was a great practical truth — to be owned and acted upon, in the face of ten thousand difficulties, and ten thousand foes. Elijah could not lower the standard the breadth of a hair. He could not surrender the truth of God to be trampled under foot by the priests and prophets of Baal. He felt that the sacrifice which he was about to offer to the God of Israel could only be presented on an altar of twelve stones. *This was faith.*

And here I pause, that your souls may dwell upon this, because it really demands our deepest attention. It is not a mere matter of opinion to be taken up or laid down at our pleasure. People speak of holding the doctrine of the mystical unity of the body of Christ; but there is no truth that is not designed to be practical, no truth that is not designed to have an influence on the heart and life. This is very manifest in Elijah's case. The unity of the twelve tribes was to him a

grand reality; it was something which he felt bound to confess in the presence of Baal's eight hundred prophets, and in the presence of Jezebel and her persecutions. He did not hide the truth under a bushel, or under a bed; but confessed it openly and boldly before men and devils. He built an altar of twelve stones, and, by so doing, he expressed his lively faith in that grand truth, namely, the eternal unity of the nation of Israel.

And mark, if he had not done that, he would have been lowering the standard of God's truth to be trampled in the dust by the prophets of Baal. This he could not do. God's truth was a sacred thing. And not only so, but it was and is formative and influential. So the prophet felt, and so he acted. And we are safe in asserting that if he had not built the altar of twelve stones, the fire of God would not have fallen upon the sacrifice. That fire was the expression of the divine approval. It was like the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle of old, and the temple afterward, when all had been done according to the divine command. Beloved brethren, what a sublime spectacle for the heart to gaze upon! It is perfectly magnificent to see Elijah the prophet unfurling the standard in the presence of those eight hundred false prophets, and to read on that standard, in imperishable characters, the truth of the unity of the nation of Israel.

There is a moral grandeur about it that captivates the heart. And more than that — for that would be a small thing — there is moral power in it to *sustain* your hearts and mine in the confession of that higher truth of the unity of the body of Christ, in the very face of the sneer of unbelief, in the face of all the contempt and ridicule which we may have to encounter in seeking to carry out that precious truth, "There is one body and one Spirit." But here allow me to ask you, brethren, Do you think that Elijah had no heart to feel that the ten tribes and the two were divided? Do you suppose for a moment that with all the sublimity of that spectacle presented to us on Mount Carmel, he had no tears to shed over the ruin and desolation around him? Ah! no. Take another look at the prophet, and see him — where? See him prostrate before God, his head down between his knees, down in the very dust. Waiting — waiting upon God for what? Till a cloud should appear, a harbinger of blessing flowing forth from the exhaustless treasure-house of God, who, in

spite of all the unfaithfulness of his people, is always ready to answer faith where it exists. Faith owns the ruin, bows low under the sense of it, yet rises above it and counts on God, who never fails a trusting heart.

I shall now ask you to turn with me to the 29th chapter of the second book of Chronicles. Take one clause in the 24th verse of that chapter, which contains the same principle. "For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for" — whom? For Judah and Benjamin? No. (2 Chr. 29: 24) For "*all Israel*." Here we have the same principle. Here you have Hezekiah taking his stand upon the same lofty ground that Elijah had occupied in his day. The ten tribes were divided from the two. Jotham and Ahaz had been doing their work, and things had gone from bad to worse. But here is Hezekiah doing the same thing as Elijah, and acting in the same faith. It is not a question of the measure of intelligence — that is not the point; but, beloved brethren, it is one of the most precious features of the subject that is before us to-night that it is a question of simple faith in the truth of Israel's perfect unity before the eye of God. It is simple faith gazing on those precious words which shine like gems in Lev. 24: "A *perpetual* statute," "An *everlasting* covenant." It is not a question here of Israel's conduct towards God. That assuredly has its place and its importance. But we are not speaking now of man's deserts, but of God's dealings — not of Israel's failure, but of Jehovah's faithfulness. It is our holy privilege to stand in the sanctuary of God, and gaze with the eye of faith on those twelve loaves on the pure table beneath the seven lamps of the golden candlestick — type of the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

And what does that testimony set forth? This, most distinctly, that all through the dark and gloomy watches of the nation's night the twelve tribes are before the eye of God in their perfect unity, undisturbed by all the heavings, and tossings, and surgings of the nations. The blasphemer may have to be stoned outside the camp; the governmental dealings of God may be displayed in all their stern reality; but faith sees the twelve loaves on the golden table. Faith has to do with eternal realities. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. It looks at things within the veil. It makes God its significant figure,

and is in nowise moved by outward appearances. In a word, faith knows God, and can trust Him for everything. Faith is the knowledge of God, it is confidence in God — this is faith. Ah, what a reality, beloved brethren! I earnestly beseech you, as in the presence of God — I beseech every one of you to get hold of what this is, this simple faith in God, that will carry your soul through all sorts of circumstances, the same faith that sustained Elijah on the top of Carmel, the same faith that enabled Hezekiah to command that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for "all Israel" — that is to say, the sacrifice which was to be the foundation of all the nation's hopes, the sacrifice which was in its aspect to embrace the whole Israel of God.

And now, in reference to the actings of the good king Hezekiah, let us see how his faith was regarded; let us mark how he was treated when he sought, according to his measure, to carry out practically the truth of God. For be it well remembered, Hezekiah did not rest satisfied with offering the sacrifice for "all Israel." He not merely established the ground on which God's people might gather, but he sought to gather them thereon. And observe how he did this. "So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto *the Lord God of Israel* at Jerusalem: *for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.*

So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout *all Israel* and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, *Ye children of Israel*, turn again to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and *enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever:* and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again to the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and

merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him." (2 Chr. 30: 5-9.)

This, if rightly viewed, was a most touching and powerful appeal. Hezekiah takes the highest ground, and would have others to do the same. He was himself consciously on God's ground, and he would have others to occupy it with him. His eye rested on the God of Abraham — on the land of Israel — on Jerusalem — and on the whole nation of God's people. It might, and doubtless did, in the judgment of many, savour of presumption in Hezekiah to put forth such very lofty language, to speak as if he and those with him were alone right, and all their brethren wrong. But that would entirely depend upon the spirit in which the letter was received and read. To pride and self-sufficiency such an appeal would be absolutely intolerable; but where there was true contrition and humility it would be received with a hearty approval. Thus, in fact, it proved, as we read in the scripture before us. "So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but *they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them*. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun *humbled themselves*, and came to Jerusalem."

This, brethren, is just as it will ever be. Faith and its actings will be laughed at by those who are on false ground, those who are walking in the sparks of their own kindling. But the broken and contrite heart gets the blessing which ever flows from taking God at His word, and acting on His eternal truth. Those who humbly bowed to Hezekiah's appeal gathered themselves together on God's ground, and owned God's centre. They did not say, "It is vain to take such lofty ground in the face of the nation's actual condition. It is the height of folly and presumption for Hezekiah to attempt to carry out such principles amid the hopeless ruin of the dispensation." No; they "humbled themselves," and came up to Jerusalem. In true humility of mind they gathered themselves together to carry out God's object — namely, to keep the passover.

And what was the result? Were they disappointed? Did the issue prove them to be mere visionary enthusiasts who were acting on some silly chimera of Hezekiah, or some wild imagination of their

own minds? Ah! no; they were permitted to taste as rich blessing as ever was known in the nation's brightest and palmiest days. "The children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord; and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness. And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven." (2 Chr. 30: 21-27.)

Here, then, was the answer of God to the faith of Hezekiah, for He never disappoints a heart that counts on Him. These fourteen joyous days, spent by the congregation around the paschal feast, furnished the most ample proof of the reality of counting on the living God, spite of all the failure and ruin which ever mark the history of man and his ways. "Since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem." God can fill the hearts of His people with joy and thanksgiving and praise, though all around be characterised by confusion and desolation.

And, be it remembered — yea, let it never be forgotten — that all this joy and blessing may well comport with the deepest sense of the failure and unfaithfulness of man. Indeed they will ever be found in company. Thus, in Hezekiah's case, we see him most fully recognising the true practical condition of the nation. This is seen in the fact of their keeping the passover in the second month instead of the first. "Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the Lord." Here we observe the congregation availing

themselves of grace as set forth in Numbers 9: 10-12. This was in lovely moral order. Faith always recognises the true condition of things, but counts on the ample provisions of divine grace. Hezekiah felt that the people were not up to the divine standard, but he knew that the grace of God could meet them where they were, provided only they took their true place; hence he prayed for them, saying, "The good Lord pardon *every one that prepareth his heart* to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people."

Thus it was in Hezekiah's day, and thus it is now. There was the confession of human failure, and yet the grasping of divine faithfulness. If Israel was not in a condition to keep the passover in the first month, God could bless them in the second month. Though Israel's condition was not up to the standard of God, yet the grace of God could come down to the condition of Israel. The second month most surely was not the first, but if only there was true preparation of heart, God could bless in the one as well as in the other. There is no use in assuming to be what we are not. We must take our true place, and God can meet us there, according to what He is in Himself. Thus it is that faith mounts up to God, and lays hold of those things that are according to His infallible faithfulness.

Hence, then — to apply our illustration — I read in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians that "there is one body," and I find that truth lying side by side with all the great cardinal truths of the Christian religion, insomuch that if you touch one you must touch all, if you shake one you must shake all. I do not see, beloved brethren, how a person can really and solemnly hold any one truth of God, if he allows another truth to be frittered away, because it is not practically exhibited. Suppose you ask me, "Do you believe in the doctrines of justification by faith, original sin, and man's hopeless ruin?" Surely. "Do you believe that 'there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all?'" "Why do you believe these things? Because you *feel* them, or see them?" No. "Why do you believe them?" I believe them because God's word reveals them. This is the only ground of faith in any truth of the Christian religion, and therefore were I to reject the grand doctrine of the unity of the body of Christ because of the

innumerable divisions of Christendom, I should be judging by the sight of my eyes, instead of building upon the truth of God. I should be reasoning upon what I see, instead of believing what God tells me.

If, therefore, I be asked why I believe in the doctrine of justification by faith, I reply, Because it is set forth in the imperishable volume of God. On the very same ground I believe in the unity of the body, the deity of Christ, the perfect humanity of Christ, and the sacrificial virtue of His blood. I believe in the efficacy of His priesthood. I believe in the fact of His coming glory. I believe all these verities because they are written in the holy scriptures. Very well, on the selfsame ground, there is one body and one Spirit. Do you suppose that I should believe this more firmly if all the true saints of God in London were to break bread in one building every Lord's day? Indeed I should not. I believe it, but it is not because I see it practically carried out, but because it is declared in the fourth of Ephesians, that "there is one body."

Let us turn now, for a few moments, to the profoundly interesting and instructive history of Josiah, as recorded in 2 Chr. 34 and 35. We shall find a striking illustration of the same weighty principle. Josiah, like Hezekiah and Elijah, recognised the unity of the twelve tribes, and acted upon the truth thereof in the face of the most depressing and humiliating condition of things. He acted according to the immutable truth of God, and not according to the practical state of God's people. He carried his reformatory operations into all the cities *that pertained to Israel*. And in speaking to the Levites, he charged them, at the opening of that marvellous day, to serve the Lord and His people *Israel*. Get hold of that point. He charges the Levites that they were to serve Jehovah, and not His people *Judah*; but 'His people *Israel*.' He can only speak of and act toward the nation according to the revealed mind of God, and not according to their practical condition. It is the altar of twelve stones over again. It is the "burnt-offering and the sin-offering for *all Israel*." It is the twelve loaves on the golden table, beneath the light of the seven golden candlesticks. It is the Israel of God in the vision of faith.

And yet Josiah stood at the very lowest point; the nation was on the eve of dissolution; Nebuchadnezzar was almost at the gates —

no matter. The whole thing was about to crumble into decay — no matter; faith was not going to crumble; Josiah in spirit, Josiah in principle, got back to the golden table — the only place for faith to get. Oh! brethren, do you see it? I ask you, Do you drink into your souls the precious truth, that however one may fail to put this before you in intelligible language, I am as convinced of this as that those lamps are burning before me, that we are occupied now with a principle which, if you grasp it, will brace up your souls and give decision and vigour to your entire practical career, no matter what is against you?

Do not suppose I am conducting you through these historic scenes of Old Testament scriptures merely to occupy an hour: no, brethren, I am delivering to you the verities that God has laid upon my heart to speak to you. For what is the grand object of this assembly? What are you here for? Is it to pass an hour? No; you must remember that the object of an assembly like this is to bring souls into personal, living contact with the truth of God. That is the object of such meetings; and it is the bounden duty of every man who stands in a position like this to speak in the ears of his brethren. I say it is his bounden duty, and should be his one absorbing object, to bring the soul and God into living personal contact. That is power. I may preach a sermon, I may deliver a course of lectures, and never bring the soul face to face with God, or bring the conscience under the light and authority of holy scripture.

Now this latter was what Josiah did. Having felt in his own soul the mighty action of the word of God, he sought to bring the souls of his brethren under the same mighty influence. (See 2 Chr. 34: 29, 30.) And what was the result? That from the days of King Solomon, those brilliant and palmy days, there had never been such a passover as that which was kept by Josiah at the very close of the nation's history. What is the meaning of that? It is another link in the chain; it is another pearl in the string; it is another gem in the tiara. It is God's answer to the faith of His servant. Josiah took his stand upon faith in God, and God answered the faith. There had not been such a passover kept during all the days of the kings. Just think of that! There had been all the glories of Solomon's reign, and all the victories of David's reign, but there is the testimony of the Holy

Ghost that there never had been such a passover as was kept in Josiah's reign. And you see that, because the very fact of the circumstances in which he was, threw a halo round his faith, God was more glorified by Josiah taking that stand, than He was by all the gold and silver that flowed into the treasury of Solomon.

But I must ask you to turn to another instance. Those cases which we have already adduced are drawn, as you will observe, from the period *before* the captivity. I want you now to come to an instance *during* the captivity. I ask you to turn to the sixth chapter of Daniel, and there you have another charming section in the history of faith. This chapter opens before you the same great principle. Here we see an exile, a captive of the children of Judah, under the most depressing and humiliating circumstances. The glory and the power had departed from Israel. God's judicial actings, God's governmental dealings, had taken effect upon them. They were all broken up, and carried captive; the city in ruins; all gone!

But, brethren, God's word was not in ruins; God's truth was not in ruins; God's faithfulness was not in ruins. And because God's truth and God's faithfulness were not in ruins, so neither was the faith of God's people in ruins. This latter shines out with peculiar lustre in the actings of that illustrious exile Daniel. Indeed, judging from his history, it would seem that the deeper the gloom that enwrapped the nation as a whole, the more brilliant were the flashes of individual faith.

Thus it was during the Babylonish captivity. Though the captives had to hang their harps on the willows; though the glory had departed from Israel; though the vessels of the Lord's house were in the temple of a false god; though all was as dismal and oppressive as it well could be; yet Daniel's faith rose majestically above the surrounding gloom, and laid hold upon the eternal and immutable truth of God; and not only laid hold of it, but carried it out practically. He opened his window, and prayed towards Jerusalem. Why did he do this? Why pray towards Jerusalem? Was this some notion of his own, or was it the fruit of some grand divine principle? It was the latter unquestionably, as you may see at a glance in 2 Chronicles 6: 36-38. This scripture anticipates the very position in which Daniel

found himself, and prescribes his course of action. "If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, *and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name.*"

This was the basis of Daniel's acting at Babylon in the days of Darius; this was his authority.

Faith always seeks and finds a warrant for its activities in the word of God. This is of the very deepest possible moment. If Daniel had not a divine warrant for praying toward Jerusalem, his conduct would have been preposterous in the extreme. It would have been the height of folly to rush into the lions' den merely to carry out some theory of his own. But, on the other hand, if there was a divine principle involved, then his conduct was what we may call perfectly sublime. It was, in point of fact, "the burnt-offering and sin-offering for Israel;" it was the altar of twelve stones over again; it was the twelve loaves on the pure table; it was owning God's centre, and taking God's ground, spite of the hopeless ruin of the dispensation, and the deep moral gloom that hung over the nation's horizon. Faith acts on the truth of God, let outward circumstances be what they may; and God always honours faith, and permits it to reap a golden harvest amid the most dreary and humiliating circumstances.

Thus then we see that Daniel simply followed in the wake of the Josiahs, the Hezekiahs, and the Elijahs of other days. He occupied the same platform with those men of God who, in the face of appalling difficulties had held up with a firm hand the standard of eternal truth. He takes his place amid that "great cloud of witnesses" of which the Holy Ghost speaks in Hebrews 11, witnesses to the power and value of faith in the living God. He opened his window, and prayed toward Jerusalem, though Jerusalem was in ruins; he prayed toward the temple, though the temple was in ashes. He looks not at the things that were seen, but at the things that were not seen. He owned God's centre — the gathering-point of Israel's twelve tribes, although that centre lay not within the range of human vision, and the twelve tribes were scattered to the ends of the earth. He did

not lower God's standard to suit the condition of Israel, but held it up with the vigorous hand of faith.

And what was the result? A splendid triumph! True he had to go down into the lions' den; but he came up again. He went down as a witness, and came up as a conqueror. All God's worthies get up by going down. This is the law of the kingdom. Daniel went down into the den; but we doubt if he ever spent a happier night upon earth than the night he spent in the den. He was there for God, and God was there with him.

Thus much as to the night. But what of the morning? Further victory! Earth's proudest monarch is subdued before the captive exile. Daniel was allowed to realize in his own person the truth of that early promise to Israel — "Thou shalt be the head, and not the tail." It is ever thus. The individual who acts on the truth of God, regardless of outward circumstances, is allowed to taste as high communion as ever was or ever could be known in the very brightest moments of the dispensation.

This is an immensely important principle, and one which we would earnestly press upon all Christians. We are apt at times, when under the withering influences of unbelief, to suppose that it is impossible to enjoy the high privileges which attach to our calling as Christians, seeing that the church has failed, and is in ruins. This is the miserable mistake of a dark and depressing unbelief. Faith, on the other hand, counts on God. It fixes its gaze upon His imperishable and unchangeable revelation. It rests on the infallible faithfulness of God, and thus enjoys communion with the very highest truth that characterizes the dispensation under which it lives.

Daniel proved this in his day, and so shall all who will only act on the same grand principle.

No doubt it might be said to him, as it is not infrequently said in our own day: "It is the height of folly and presumption; you are a visionary enthusiast to be praying towards a place that is a scene of desolation; you ought rather to hush the very name in oblivion; you ought to draw the curtain of silence over the very name of Jerusalem;

it is the very scene of your ruin and humiliation." But, ah! beloved, Daniel was in the deep and precious secret of God. He occupied the divine standpoint, and saw all from thence; and hence the correctness of his entire range of vision — hence the steadiness of his course — hence the splendour of his victory.

And here again, let me remind you of what I remarked before, that this truth was not a speculation; it was not a thing which you might keep very comfortably and quietly in some secret recess of your mind, while you occupied your house, and sat very comfortably in your arm-chairs by your firesides, and professed that Israel was one. No; Daniel acted thus in the very face of the lions' den. The lions' den was yawning to receive him, but Daniel never minded it; Daniel had nothing to do with the lions' den — no more than he had to do with the ruins of Jerusalem: he had to do with *God's truth*; he got back to the twelve loaves, to the golden table with the candlestick in the sanctuary of God — he got back to those twelve loaves, and there he saw by the eye of faith the stream of living light pouring down from heaven on the unbroken union of God's beloved Israel.

Ah! you see, it is not a speculation; it is a truth that must be confessed, come what may, and he did confess it. Yes; he "prayed toward Jerusalem." A man who did not understand what he was doing would say, "I cannot for the life of me understand that. I am sure you might pray as earnestly, as trustfully, with your curtains down and your windows shut. You might retire to your inmost closet. Why do you pray there? Do you think it was acting from some notion of his own brain? No, beloved, I want you to see this, and I cannot let you go without establishing this truth in your souls, that it was acting simply and entirely on the truth of God when he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem. Daniel could say, "There, you may throw me into the den tonight, but I will never give up the truth of God. I must stand for that, cost what it may. I have nothing to do with results — nothing to do with consequences. These I leave entirely with God. My place is simply to obey."

And this is of the utmost possible value. We hear a great deal now-a-days about the absence of power in the church. We are told that there is no power for this, and no power for that. Our simple reply to

all this sort of reasoning is that *it is not at all a question of power, but of obedience*. Was there much power in Daniel's day? There was. There was the power of faith, and the power of obedience. This is the sort of power which we want. It is not external power — or showy gifts — or astounding miracles, but that quiet, humble, steady spirit of obedience that leads the man of God along the narrow path of God's commandments. This is what we want. It is in this that our God delights, and to this He grants the sweet sanction of His presence.

Tell me, beloved brethren, to what does God give the sanction of His presence? He gives the sanction of His presence where there is faith to believe His word, where there is faith to confess the truth of God. No matter what the difficulties may be, no matter what the discouragements may be, never lower the standard. A person will say, "Oh, you must; it's no use talking like that; you must give it up: don't you see that God Himself is against you?" Governmentally, if you please — the blasphemer is being stoned without the camp, but the twelve loaves are undisturbed on the table. That is the principle — it is the double principle which overlaps the whole history of the ways of God, whether with Israel of old, or with the church now. The judgment of God may rest upon our practical state, while the eye of faith rests upon God's imperishable standard. Individual faith basks in the sunlight of God's eternal truth, spite of the wreck and ruin of the ostensible people of God.

This is a principle of the utmost simplicity, but of the greatest magnitude and practical value.

Its application to the special subject before us; namely, the unity of the Church of God, is as clear as it is forcible. If we look around us — if we judge by the sight of our eyes — if we form our conclusions amid the ruins of Christendom, it may seem an idle chimera to talk of the unity of the church of God. But no; we simply take God at His word; we believe what He says, not because we see it or feel it, but because He says it. This is faith. Why do we believe in the forgiveness of sins? Why do we believe in the presence of the Holy Ghost? Why do we believe in any one of the grand fundamental truths of Christianity? Simply because we find them on the eternal page of inspiration. Well, upon precisely the same ground

we believe in the one body and in the indissoluble unity of the church of God.

"There is one body." He does not say, "There *was* one body," and "There *shall* be one body." No; he says, "There is one body." Here is our authority for believing and confessing this glorious truth, and for our practical testimony against everything that denies it. The first step in confessing the unity of the church of God is to step out of the divisions of Christendom. Let us not stop to ask what is to be our second step. God never gives light for two steps at a time. Is it true that there is but one body? Unquestionably. God says so. Well then the divisions, the sects, and the systems of Christendom are plainly opposed to the mind and will and word of God. Truly so. What are we to do? Step out of them. This, we may rest assured, is *the* first step in a right direction. If our standpoint is false, our whole range of vision must be false. We must get to a true standpoint, and then our entire range is correct. It is impossible to yield any practical confession to the unity of the church of God while we stand connected with that which practically denies it. We may hold the theory in the region of our understanding, while we deny the reality in our practical career. But if we desire to confess the truth of the one body, our very first business — our primary duty is to stand in thorough separation from all the sects and schisms of Christendom.

"But," some may enquire, "Will not this involve the formation of a new sect, and that, too, the narrowest and most intolerant of all sects?" By no means. It may seem to be so, in the judgment of mere nature — even religious nature. But the question is, Are the divisions of Christendom according to God? Are the many bodies of the professing church in accordance with the "one body" of Ephesians 4? Clearly not. Then it is our divinely appointed duty to come out of them, and it is impossible that the discharge of a divinely enjoined duty can ever lead to sectarianism or schism; nay it is a direct and positive testimony against it; and, furthermore, the first grand step toward keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is to step out of the divisions of Christendom. And what then? Looking to Jesus; and this is to continue right on to the end. Is this — we repeat the question — to form a new sect, or join some new body? By no means; it is but fleeing from the ruins around us to find our resource

in the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus. It is but leaving the ship at the bidding of Jesus, to keep the eye fixed on Him amid the wild watery waste, until we reach in safety the haven of everlasting rest and glory.

Ephesians 4: 4. and Leviticus 24

Unity: What is it? And am I confessing it?

A lecture by C. H. Mackintosh.

I suppose, beloved brethren, there is not one of us, whatever may have been our experience, whether our course has been long or short, who is not impressed with the unspeakable importance of having the truth of God distinctly before us, and not only before our minds, but in our hearts, as a divine reality — something influential and formative — a living link between our souls and the living God, not merely as to the question of individual salvation, infinitely precious as that is, but as to the path we are called to tread, and the position that we occupy as Christians.

As you get along, beloved brethren, you must be discovering that nothing stands, but having the truth of God in your own hearts, and holding it directly from Him, no matter who may be the instrument in communicating it to you. You must be able to give a reason, not only for the hope that is in you, but for the path which you tread, the niche which you fill — you must be able to give a divine reason for all, or else you will not be able to stand. Never was the truth of this more apparent than at the present moment, because, as we all know, people are being tested; there is a testing and a sifting going on in the professing church, and in our own very midst, brethren, which most of you may feel. No doubt some of us may be called to feel it more than others, but the most cursory observer cannot fail to see this, that the sieve is doing its work in the professing church, and doing its work amongst ourselves, and that it is being made manifest, in the most striking manner, who has been really taught of God, and who has been merely hanging on to something of his own, or blindly following in the wake of his fellow. It has been made manifest, brethren, whether our faith is set in the wisdom of men or in the power of God. Secondhand faith is being proved and found lacking. It cannot stand in the day of trial. We must have to do, each for himself, with the living God.

Now in the whole of what I have to say, there is one thing which I believe the Spirit of God has laid upon my heart to impress upon you, beloved — and you know I always speak in the utmost confidence and freedom, and I feel assured you will receive it in the same manner. I feel then, brethren, that the Spirit of God would have me impress first of all upon you the importance of having your faith standing *only in the power of God*; that no matter what may be the measure of it — it may be very small or it may be very large — it does not matter what the measure is, the point is that your fixed stay must be in the wisdom and the power of God, so that if you had not a second person to support you, if you had not the sympathy of another individual, you at least possess the blessed consciousness that God has communicated to your soul truth which you hold from Him, and which is the spring of all your authority, the ground of your confidence, and the true secret of your power.

A saint once said, when passing through a time of deepest exercise, he was brought to ask himself this question, and to ask it in all solemnity, in all godly simplicity, "If the whole world and church were gone, is the word of God sufficient as a thread to take me across the abyss?" That is the question, my brethren, and that question I will suggest at the outset to every one of you, from the oldest to the youngest. I see before me saints of God who were such long before the one who is speaking to them, and I see before me saints of God of perhaps a few days' or a few weeks' standing, but the principle I am now urging upon you is a principle of cardinal importance; it is a principle of unspeakable value; it is what I would urge upon you; and if I do nothing else than to urge and re-urge and rivet home this principle on your souls, I shall feel that I have not spoken in vain. The question is this — Can you say when you are all alone, "The word of God is quite sufficient for me, if both world and church were gone; is it quite sufficient as a thread to take me across the abyss?"

Now, that is the point. Can you say that, beloved? I pause and put this question to you, as in the very presence of our one Lord and Master, Have you such a sense of the value and authority of the word of God; have you got such a sense of the reality of this truth, this revelation which God has given you, that, though you had not a

second person to support you, you could say, "That is quite enough for me?"

Of course you will tell me, beloved, that it is only the Spirit that can enable you to appreciate and grasp and hold that word. Quite so; but I am speaking now of the value of the word of God; and never, I am persuaded, was there a moment in the history of the church of God on earth, when it was so distinctly necessary that your souls, my beloved brethren, should be rooted and grounded, stablished and braced up in the knowledge of this fact, that you have in the word of God all that you can possibly want — the word of God as brought home by the Spirit to your hearts.

Now some of you may be disposed to ask, "What have these introductory remarks to do with the scripture that has been read?" Or perhaps you may ask, "What is your subject? What is your message?" Well, beloved brethren, I tell you at once, my thesis is this — The unity of the church of God as stated in Ephesians 4: 4. And then again, if any feel disposed to ask, "What has the 24th of Leviticus to do with the unity of the church of God?" I reply, It has to do with it in this way. I read Leviticus 24 with the purpose of illustrating to you, brethren, from the history of Israel, and the unity of the nation of Israel, the deeper truth of the unity of the one body, and it is my object now to set before you the fact of the unity of God's Israel, His earthly people, as an illustration, as a type, if you please, of the higher unity of the church of God.

Now in this passage of the 24th of Leviticus, what have you got? You have one of the most expressive and beautiful figures that can possibly engage the spiritual mind; you have in those twelve loaves ranged upon the golden table before the Lord, the distinct figure of the indissoluble unity and yet the perfect distinctness of Israel's twelve tribes. Now there is a grand truth — the perfect distinctness and yet the indissoluble unity of Israel's twelve tribes, and you may have noticed — I do not think you could have avoided noticing — the frequent occurrence in this chapter of the words "continual, perpetual, everlasting." Again and again these words occur in reading this passage. What do they mean, beloved brethren? They mean this, that the unity of God's people Israel was not a thing of today or tomorrow; it was a grand verity, an eternal truth of God

foreshadowed in those twelve loaves on the golden table, before the Lord.

Oh what a type, brethren, what a presentation! And, further, as to the intention of this passage, you may perhaps feel disposed to ask another question, "What has that paragraph about the stoning of the blasphemer to do with all this?" I believe it has a great deal to do with it, beloved brethren. I believe that the grouping of this passage by the Holy Ghost is striking, forcible and instructive. In the stoning of the blasphemer you have that which might be the fate of the nation under the governmental dealings of God; but, at the same time, in those twelve loaves on the golden table, you have the eternal truth as to the nation's condition in God's view — that looked at from God's stand point the nation was ONE whatever might be its condition, as viewed from man's stand point. I repeat it, beloved — looked at from God's stand point, looked at in the light of those seven golden lamps which in other words was the expression of the light and testimony of the Holy Ghost, based upon and connected with the perfect work of Christ, Israel is ONE, the nation is one; there are twelve tribes maintained in the unity although, as I have said, in the governmental dealings of God, and looked at from man's stand point, the nation may be suffering the penalty of their sin. In a word, however the nation of Israel may be scattered, and broken, and crushed, in man's view, it is in God's view — in God's eternal counsels — and in the view of faith one and indivisible. To deny this is to call in question the integrity of the truth of God. If we can play fast and loose with scripture as to one point, we may do so as to all.

And now I will give a few illustrations of the way in which faith laid hold of and acted upon this grand truth.

Turn with me for an instance to 1 Kings 18. I shall not ask you to read the passage, but have your Bibles open there. It is familiar, I am sure, to all. The scene is upon the top of Carmel. It is a scene in the history of Elijah the Tishbite, perfectly familiar to all, but I want you to look at it for one special object. I want you to look at it as an illustration of the power of faith in that great truth of the unity of Israel's twelve tribes.

I feel sure that you have often read of Elijah's building his altar of twelve stones. Every Sunday school child has read it; but I confess to you, beloved brethren, that, often as one has read the passage, it has lately shone before the vision of my so I with a brighter lustre than I have ever seen before. I ask myself this question, Why did Elijah build an altar of twelve stones? What was his authority for that? What was it, shall I say, that nerved his arm to the act? He was standing in the presence of eight hundred false prophets, he was standing in the presence of all the power of Jezebel, and in the presence of ruin and apostacy. The ten tribes were separated from the two. There was a rent made in the nation, looked at from man's stand point, but Elijah stands upon Mount Carmel, and he looks at that nation in the vision of GOD, and with the eye of *faith*. He does not reason; he does not say, "It is no use now my taking this lofty stand, it is no use my attempting to build an altar with twelve stones now. The day is gone by for that. I must lower the standard according to the practical condition of things around me. It was well and perfectly consistent for a Joshua or a Solomon to build such an altar, but it would only be a piece of folly on my part. It is the height of presumption to be talking about an altar of twelve stones when the ten tribes and the two are divided, and when the whole scene is plunged in ruin."

No, my brethren, Elijah did not reason thus; he took his stand on the imperishable ground of faith. Elijah placed his foot where I want every child of God to place his foot — that is, on the indestructible revelation of God. I want you to read this act in the light which emanates from the seven golden candlesticks, and in the light which emanates from that golden table in the sanctuary of God. I want you, my beloved brethren, to see that the words "continual, perpetual, everlasting" are stamped upon the whole of the history of God's truth and His thoughts respecting Israel. Elijah knew nothing of the principle so rife in this our day, "It is no use talking about the unity of the church of God." You see a sneer of contempt and unbelief upon the lips of people when you talk about the unity of the body of Christ. Persons will shrug their shoulders and say, "Do not talk to me about the unity of the body. It is a thing of the past. It is a bygone thing. Don't talk to me about the unity of the church. Where is it to be seen? Where is it developed? Where is it illustrated?"

Beloved brethren, bring yourselves back in thought for a moment, and stand beside that man of faith on the top of Carmel, and ask yourselves, Where are the twelve tribes? It might, with equal force, have been said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Do not talk to me about the unity of the nation. It is a thing of the past. It no longer exists. It is the height of presumption to think of building an altar of twelve stones in the face of a divided people — a broken unity." But what weight would such suggestions have had with our prophet? None whatever. He looked at the nation from a divine standpoint, and therefore he erected his altar of twelve stones "according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name."

Now, the question is, How long was Israel to tee the name, and how long was Israel's unity to subsist? Continually, perpetually, everlastingly. Here Elijah took his stand.

And mark further, beloved, what I think is of unspeakable importance. It was not a mere speculation of Elijah's mind. It was not an inoperative dogma, an uninfluential opinion which he held. Elijah might have held the truth of Israel's unity as a cold theory, in the region of his intellect) he might very comfortably have gone on, and said in his heart, "I believe in the unity of the nation of Israel, but I am not going to confess it. There is no manifestation of it, and, therefore, I am not going to bring it forward; I am not going to take, as it were, my stand upon it. I am not going to carry it out." But this would never do. Elijah justly felt that if the unity of the twelve tribes was a grand truth, then it must, at all cost, be carried out, and hence he did carry it out. How? By building an altar of twelve stones, "according to the number of the tribes of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name." Faith could never give that up. It was a great practical truth — to be owned and acted upon, in the face of ten thousand difficulties, and ten thousand foes. Elijah could not lower the standard the breadth of a hair. He could not surrender the truth of God to be trampled under foot by the priests and prophets of Baal. He felt that the sacrifice which he was about to offer to the God of Israel could only be presented on an altar of twelve stones. *This was faith.*

And here I pause, that your souls may dwell upon this, because it really demands our deepest attention. It is not a mere matter of opinion to be taken up or laid down at our pleasure. People speak of holding the doctrine of the mystical unity of the body of Christ; but there is no truth that is not designed to be practical, no truth that is not designed to have an influence on the heart and life. This is very manifest in Elijah's case. The unity of the twelve tribes was to him a grand reality; it was something which he felt bound to confess in the presence of Baal's eight hundred prophets, and in the presence of Jezebel and her persecutions. He did not hide the truth under a bushel, or under a bed; but confessed it openly and boldly before men and devils. He built an altar of twelve stones, and, by so doing, he expressed his lively faith in that grand truth, namely, the eternal unity of the nation of Israel.

And mark, if he had not done that, he would have been lowering the standard of God's truth to be trampled in the dust by the prophets of Baal. This he could not do. God's truth was a sacred thing. And not only so, but it was and is formative and influential. So the prophet felt, and so he acted. And we are safe in asserting that if he had not built the altar of twelve stones, the fire of God would not have fallen upon the sacrifice. That fire was the expression of the divine approval. It was like the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle of old, and the temple afterward, when all had been done according to the divine command. Beloved brethren, what a sublime spectacle for the heart to gaze upon! It is perfectly magnificent to see Elijah the prophet unfurling the standard in the presence of those eight hundred false prophets, and to read on that standard, in imperishable characters, the truth of the unity of the nation of Israel.

There is a moral grandeur about it that captivates the heart. And more than that — for that would be a small thing — there is moral power in it to *sustain* your hearts and mine in the confession of that higher truth of the unity of the body of Christ, in the very face of the sneer of unbelief, in the face of all the contempt and ridicule which we may have to encounter in seeking to carry out that precious truth, "There is one body and one Spirit." But here allow me to ask you, brethren, Do you think that Elijah had no heart to feel that the ten tribes and the two were divided? Do you suppose for a moment that

with all the sublimity of that spectacle presented to us on Mount Carmel, he had no tears to shed over the ruin and desolation around him? Ah! no. Take another look at the prophet, and see him — where? See him prostrate before God, his head down between his knees, down in the very dust. Waiting — waiting upon God for what? Till a cloud should appear, a harbinger of blessing flowing forth from the exhaustless treasure-house of God, who, in spite of all the unfaithfulness of his people, is always ready to answer faith where it exists. Faith owns the ruin, bows low under the sense of it, yet rises above it and counts on God, who never fails a trusting heart.

I shall now ask you to turn with me to the 29th chapter of the second book of Chronicles. Take one clause in the 24th verse of that chapter, which contains the same principle. "For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for" — whom? For Judah and Benjamin? No. (2 Chr. 29: 24) For "*all Israel.*" Here we have the same principle. Here you have Hezekiah taking his stand upon the same lofty ground that Elijah had occupied in his day. The ten tribes were divided from the two. Jotham and Ahaz had been doing their work, and things had gone from bad to worse. But here is Hezekiah doing the same thing as Elijah, and acting in the same faith. It is not a question of the measure of intelligence — that is not the point; but, beloved brethren, it is one of the most precious features of the subject that is before us to-night that it is a question of simple faith in the truth of Israel's perfect unity before the eye of God. It is simple faith gazing on those precious words which shine like gems in Lev. 24: "*A perpetual statute,*" "*An everlasting covenant.*" It is not a question here of Israel's conduct towards God. That assuredly has its place and its importance. But we are not speaking now of man's deserts, but of God's dealings — not of Israel's failure, but of Jehovah's faithfulness. It is our holy privilege to stand in the sanctuary of God, and gaze with the eye of faith on those twelve loaves on the pure table beneath the seven lamps of the golden candlestick — type of the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

And what does that testimony set forth? This, most distinctly, that all through the dark and gloomy watches of the nation's night

the twelve tribes are before the eye of God in their perfect unity, undisturbed by all the heavings, and tossings, and surgings of the nations. The blasphemer may have to be stoned outside the camp; the governmental dealings of God may be displayed in all their stern reality; but faith sees the twelve loaves on the golden table. Faith has to do with eternal realities. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. It looks at things within the veil. It makes God its significant figure, and is in nowise moved by outward appearances. In a word, faith knows God, and can trust Him for everything. Faith is the knowledge of God, it is confidence in God — this is faith. Ah, what a reality, beloved brethren! I earnestly beseech you, as in the presence of God — I beseech every one of you to get hold of what this is, this simple faith in God, that will carry your soul through all sorts of circumstances, the same faith that sustained Elijah on the top of Carmel, the same faith that enabled Hezekiah to command that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for "all Israel" — that is to say, the sacrifice which was to be the foundation of all the nation's hopes, the sacrifice which was in its aspect to embrace the whole Israel of God.

And now, in reference to the actings of the good king Hezekiah, let us see how his faith was regarded; let us mark how he was treated when he sought, according to his measure, to carry out practically the truth of God. For be it well remembered, Hezekiah did not rest satisfied with offering the sacrifice for "all Israel." He not merely established the ground on which God's people might gather, but he sought to gather them thereon. And observe how he did this. "So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto *the Lord God of Israel* at Jerusalem: *for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.*

So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout *all Israel* and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, *Ye children of Israel*, turn again to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to

desolation, as ye see. Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and *enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever*: and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again to the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him." (2 Chr. 30: 5-9.)

This, if rightly viewed, was a most touching and powerful appeal. Hezekiah takes the highest ground, and would have others to do the same. He was himself consciously on God's ground, and he would have others to occupy it with him. His eye rested on the God of Abraham — on the land of Israel — on Jerusalem — and on the whole nation of God's people. It might, and doubtless did, in the judgment of many, savour of presumption in Hezekiah to put forth such very lofty language, to speak as if he and those with him were alone right, and all their brethren wrong. But that would entirely depend upon the spirit in which the letter was received and read. To pride and self-sufficiency such an appeal would be absolutely intolerable; but where there was true contrition and humility it would be received with a hearty approval. Thus, in fact, it proved, as we read in the scripture before us. "So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun: but *they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them*. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun *humbled themselves*, and came to Jerusalem."

This, brethren, is just as it will ever be. Faith and its actings will be laughed at by those who are on false ground, those who are walking in the sparks of their own kindling. But the broken and contrite heart gets the blessing which ever flows from taking God at His word, and acting on His eternal truth. Those who humbly bowed to Hezekiah's appeal gathered themselves together on God's ground, and owned God's centre. They did not say, "It is vain to take such lofty ground in the face of the nation's actual condition. It is the height of folly and presumption for Hezekiah to attempt to carry out such principles amid the hopeless ruin of the dispensation." No; they

"humbled themselves," and came up to Jerusalem. In true humility of mind they gathered themselves together to carry out God's object — namely, to keep the passover.

And what was the result? Were they disappointed? Did the issue prove them to be mere visionary enthusiasts who were acting on some silly chimera of Hezekiah, or some wild imagination of their own minds? Ah! no; they were permitted to taste as rich blessing as ever was known in the nation's brightest and palmiest days. "The children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord. And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord; and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers. And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness. And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven." (2 Chr. 30: 21-27.)

Here, then, was the answer of God to the faith of Hezekiah, for He never disappoints a heart that counts on Him. These fourteen joyous days, spent by the congregation around the paschal feast, furnished the most ample proof of the reality of counting on the living God, spite of all the failure and ruin which ever mark the history of man and his ways. "Since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem." God can fill the hearts of His people with joy and thanksgiving and praise, though all around be characterised by confusion and desolation.

And, be it remembered — yea, let it never be forgotten — that all this joy and blessing may well comport with the deepest sense of the failure and unfaithfulness of man. Indeed they will ever be found in company. Thus, in Hezekiah's case, we see him most fully

recognising the true practical condition of the nation. This is seen in the fact of their keeping the passover in the second month instead of the first. "Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the Lord." Here we observe the congregation availing themselves of grace as set forth in Numbers 9: 10-12. This was in lovely moral order. Faith always recognises the true condition of things, but counts on the ample provisions of divine grace. Hezekiah felt that the people were not up to the divine standard, but he knew that the grace of God could meet them where they were, provided only they took their true place; hence he prayed for them, saying, "The good Lord pardon *every one that prepareth his heart* to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people."

Thus it was in Hezekiah's day, and thus it is now. There was the confession of human failure, and yet the grasping of divine faithfulness. If Israel was not in a condition to keep the passover in the first month, God could bless them in the second month. Though Israel's condition was not up to the standard of God, yet the grace of God could come down to the condition of Israel. The second month most surely was not the first, but if only there was true preparation of heart, God could bless in the one as well as in the other. There is no use in assuming to be what we are not. We must take our true place, and God can meet us there, according to what He is in Himself. Thus it is that faith mounts up to God, and lays hold of those things that are according to His infallible faithfulness.

Hence, then — to apply our illustration — I read in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians that "there is one body," and I find that truth lying side by side with all the great cardinal truths of the Christian religion, insomuch that if you touch one you must touch all, if you shake one you must shake all. I do not see, beloved brethren, how a person can really and solemnly hold any one truth of God, if he allows another truth to be frittered away, because it is not practically exhibited. Suppose you ask me, "Do you believe in the doctrines of justification by faith, original sin, and man's hopeless

ruin?" Surely. "Do you believe that 'there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all?'" "Why do you believe these things? Because you *feel* them, or see them?" No. "Why do you believe them?" I believe them because God's word reveals them. This is the only ground of faith in any truth of the Christian religion, and therefore were I to reject the grand doctrine of the unity of the body of Christ because of the innumerable divisions of Christendom, I should be judging by the sight of my eyes, instead of building upon the truth of God. I should be reasoning upon what I see, instead of believing what God tells me.

If, therefore, I be asked why I believe in the doctrine of justification by faith, I reply, Because it is set forth in the imperishable volume of God. On the very same ground I believe in the unity of the body, the deity of Christ, the perfect humanity of Christ, and the sacrificial virtue of His blood. I believe in the efficacy of His priesthood. I believe in the fact of His coming glory. I believe all these verities because they are written in the holy scriptures. Very well, on the selfsame ground, there is one body and one Spirit. Do you suppose that I should believe this more firmly if all the true saints of God in London were to break bread in one building every Lord's day? Indeed I should not. I believe it, but it is not because I see it practically carried out, but because it is declared in the fourth of Ephesians, that "there is one body."

Let us turn now, for a few moments, to the profoundly interesting and instructive history of Josiah, as recorded in 2 Chr. 34 and 35. We shall find a striking illustration of the same weighty principle. Josiah, like Hezekiah and Elijah, recognised the unity of the twelve tribes, and acted upon the truth thereof in the face of the most depressing and humiliating condition of things. He acted according to the immutable truth of God, and not according to the practical state of God's people. He carried his reformatory operations into all the cities *that pertained to Israel*. And in speaking to the Levites, he charged them, at the opening of that marvellous day, to serve the Lord and His people *Israel*. Get hold of that point. He charges the Levites that they were to serve Jehovah, and not His people *Judah*; but 'His people *Israel*.' He can only speak of and act toward the nation according to the revealed mind of God,

and not according to their practical condition. It is the altar of twelve stones over again. It is the "burnt-offering and the sin-offering for *all Israel*." It is the twelve loaves on the golden table, beneath the light of the seven golden candlesticks. It is the Israel of God in the vision of faith.

And yet Josiah stood at the very lowest point; the nation was on the eve of dissolution; Nebuchadnezzar was almost at the gates — no matter. The whole thing was about to crumble into decay — no matter; faith was not going to crumble; Josiah in spirit, Josiah in principle, got back to the golden table — the only place for faith to get. Oh! brethren, do you see it? I ask you, Do you drink into your souls the precious truth, that however one may fail to put this before you in intelligible language, I am as convinced of this as that those lamps are burning before me, that we are occupied now with a principle which, if you grasp it, will brace up your souls and give decision and vigour to your entire practical career, no matter what is against you?

Do not suppose I am conducting you through these historic scenes of Old Testament scriptures merely to occupy an hour: no, brethren, I am delivering to you the verities that God has laid upon my heart to speak to you. For what is the grand object of this assembly? What are you here for? Is it to pass an hour? No; you must remember that the object of an assembly like this is to bring souls into personal, living contact with the truth of God. That is the object of such meetings; and it is the bounden duty of every man who stands in a position like this to speak in the ears of his brethren. I say it is his bounden duty, and should be his one absorbing object, to bring the soul and God into living personal contact. That is power. I may preach a sermon, I may deliver a course of lectures, and never bring the soul face to face with God, or bring the conscience under the light and authority of holy scripture.

Now this latter was what Josiah did. Having felt in his own soul the mighty action of the word of God, he sought to bring the souls of his brethren under the same mighty influence. (See 2 Chr. 34: 29, 30.) And what was the result? That from the days of King Solomon, those brilliant and palmy days, there had never been such a passover as that which was kept by Josiah at the very close of the nation's

history. What is the meaning of that? It is another link in the chain; it is another pearl in the string; it is another gem in the tiara. It is God's answer to the faith of His servant. Josiah took his stand upon faith in God, and God answered the faith. There had not been such a passover kept during all the days of the kings. Just think of that! There had been all the glories of Solomon's reign, and all the victories of David's reign, but there is the testimony of the Holy Ghost that there never had been such a passover as was kept in Josiah's reign. And you see that, because the very fact of the circumstances in which he was, threw a halo round his faith, God was more glorified by Josiah taking that stand, than He was by all the gold and silver that flowed into the treasury of Solomon.

But I must ask you to turn to another instance. Those cases which we have already adduced are drawn, as you will observe, from the period *before* the captivity. I want you now to come to an instance *during* the captivity. I ask you to turn to the sixth chapter of Daniel, and there you have another charming section in the history of faith. This chapter opens before you the same great principle. Here we see an exile, a captive of the children of Judah, under the most depressing and humiliating circumstances. The glory and the power had departed from Israel. God's judicial actings, God's governmental dealings, had taken effect upon them. They were all broken up, and carried captive; the city in ruins; all gone!

But, brethren, God's word was not in ruins; God's truth was not in ruins; God's faithfulness was not in ruins. And because God's truth and God's faithfulness were not in ruins, so neither was the faith of God's people in ruins. This latter shines out with peculiar lustre in the actings of that illustrious exile Daniel. Indeed, judging from his history, it would seem that the deeper the gloom that enwrapped the nation as a whole, the more brilliant were the flashes of individual faith.

Thus it was during the Babylonish captivity. Though the captives had to hang their harps on the willows; though the glory had departed from Israel; though the vessels of the Lord's house were in the temple of a false god; though all was as dismal and oppressive as it well could be; yet Daniel's faith rose majestically above the surrounding gloom, and laid hold upon the eternal and

immutable truth of God; and not only laid hold of it, but carried it out practically. He opened his window, and prayed towards Jerusalem. Why did he do this? Why pray towards Jerusalem? Was this some notion of his own, or was it the fruit of some grand divine principle? It was the latter unquestionably, as you may see at a glance in 2 Chronicles 6: 36-38. This scripture anticipates the very position in which Daniel found himself, and prescribes his course of action. "If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, *and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name.*"

This was the basis of Daniel's acting at Babylon in the days of Darius; this was his authority.

Faith always seeks and finds a warrant for its activities in the word of God. This is of the very deepest possible moment. If Daniel had not a divine warrant for praying toward Jerusalem, his conduct would have been preposterous in the extreme. It would have been the height of folly to rush into the lions' den merely to carry out some theory of his own. But, on the other hand, if there was a divine principle involved, then his conduct was what we may call perfectly sublime. It was, in point of fact, "the burnt-offering and sin-offering for Israel;" it was the altar of twelve stones over again; it was the twelve loaves on the pure table; it was owning God's centre, and taking God's ground, spite of the hopeless ruin of the dispensation, and the deep moral gloom that hung over the nation's horizon. Faith acts on the truth of God, let outward circumstances be what they may; and God always honours faith, and permits it to reap a golden harvest amid the most dreary and humiliating circumstances.

Thus then we see that Daniel simply followed in the wake of the Josiahs, the Hezekiahs, and the Elijahs of other days. He occupied the same platform with those men of God who, in the face of appalling difficulties had held up with a firm hand the standard of eternal truth. He takes his place amid that "great cloud of witnesses" of which the Holy Ghost speaks in Hebrews 11, witnesses to the power and value of faith in the living God. He opened his window, and prayed toward Jerusalem, though Jerusalem was in ruins; he

prayed toward the temple, though the temple was in ashes. He looks not at the things that were seen, but at the things that were not seen. He owned God's centre — the gathering-point of Israel's twelve tribes, although that centre lay not within the range of human vision, and the twelve tribes were scattered to the ends of the earth. He did not lower God's standard to suit the condition of Israel, but held it up with the vigorous hand of faith.

And what was the result? A splendid triumph! True he had to go down into the lions' den; but he came up again. He went down as a witness, and came up as a conqueror. All God's worthies get up by going down. This is the law of the kingdom. Daniel went down into the den; but we doubt if he ever spent a happier night upon earth than the night he spent in the den. He was there for God, and God was there with him.

Thus much as to the night. But what of the morning? Further victory! Earth's proudest monarch is subdued before the captive exile. Daniel was allowed to realize in his own person the truth of that early promise to Israel — "Thou shalt be the head, and not the tail." It is ever thus. The individual who acts on the truth of God, regardless of outward circumstances, is allowed to taste as high communion as ever was or ever could be known in the very brightest moments of the dispensation.

This is an immensely important principle, and one which we would earnestly press upon all Christians. We are apt at times, when under the withering influences of unbelief, to suppose that it is impossible to enjoy the high privileges which attach to our calling as Christians, seeing that the church has failed, and is in ruins. This is the miserable mistake of a dark and depressing unbelief. Faith, on the other hand, counts on God. It fixes its gaze upon His imperishable and unchangeable revelation. It rests on the infallible faithfulness of God, and thus enjoys communion with the very highest truth that characterizes the dispensation under which it lives.

Daniel proved this in his day, and so shall all who will only act on the same grand principle.

No doubt it might be said to him, as it is not infrequently said in our own day: "It is the height of folly and presumption; you are a visionary enthusiast to be praying towards a place that is a scene of desolation; you ought rather to hush the very name in oblivion; you ought to draw the curtain of silence over the very name of Jerusalem; it is the very scene of your ruin and humiliation." But, ah! beloved, Daniel was in the deep and precious secret of God. He occupied the divine standpoint, and saw all from thence; and hence the correctness of his entire range of vision — hence the steadiness of his course — hence the splendour of his victory.

And here again, let me remind you of what I remarked before, that this truth was not a speculation; it was not a thing which you might keep very comfortably and quietly in some secret recess of your mind, while you occupied your house, and sat very comfortably in your arm-chairs by your firesides, and professed that Israel was one. No; Daniel acted thus in the very face of the lions' den. The lions' den was yawning to receive him, but Daniel never minded it; Daniel had nothing to do with the lions' den — no more than he had to do with the ruins of Jerusalem: he had to do with *God's truth*; he got back to the twelve loaves, to the golden table with the candlestick in the sanctuary of God — he got back to those twelve loaves, and there he saw by the eye of faith the stream of living light pouring down from heaven on the unbroken union of God's beloved Israel.

Ah! you see, it is not a speculation; it is a truth that must be confessed, come what may, and he did confess it. Yes; he "prayed toward Jerusalem." A man who did not understand what he was doing would say, "I cannot for the life of me understand that. I am sure you might pray as earnestly, as trustfully, with your curtains down and your windows shut. You might retire to your inmost closet. Why do you pray there? Do you think it was acting from some notion of his own brain? No, beloved, I want you to see this, and I cannot let you go without establishing this truth in your souls, that it was acting simply and entirely on the truth of God when he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem. Daniel could say, "There, you may throw me into the den tonight, but I will never give up the truth of God. I must stand for that, cost what it may. I have

nothing to do with results — nothing to do with consequences. These I leave entirely with God. My place is simply to obey."

And this is of the utmost possible value. We hear a great deal now-a-days about the absence of power in the church. We are told that there is no power for this, and no power for that. Our simple reply to all this sort of reasoning is that *it is not at all a question of power, but of obedience*. Was there much power in Daniel's day? There was. There was the power of faith, and the power of obedience. This is the sort of power which we want. It is not external power — or showy gifts — or astounding miracles, but that quiet, humble, steady spirit of obedience that leads the man of God along the narrow path of God's commandments. This is what we want. It is in this that our God delights, and to this He grants the sweet sanction of His presence.

Tell me, beloved brethren, to what does God give the sanction of His presence? He gives the sanction of His presence where there is faith to believe His word, where there is faith to confess the truth of God. No matter what the difficulties may be, no matter what the discouragements may be, never lower the standard. A person will say, "Oh, you must; it's no use talking like that; you must give it up: don't you see that God Himself is against you?" "Governmentally, if you please — the blasphemer is being stoned without the camp, but the twelve loaves are undisturbed on the table. That is the principle — it is the double principle which overlaps the whole history of the ways of God, whether with Israel of old, or with the church now. The judgment of God may rest upon our practical state, while the eye of faith rests upon God's imperishable standard. Individual faith basks in the sunlight of God's eternal truth, spite of the wreck and ruin of the ostensible people of God.

This is a principle of the utmost simplicity, but of the greatest magnitude and practical value.

Its application to the special subject before us; namely, the unity of the Church of God, is as clear as it is forcible. If we look around us — if we judge by the sight of our eyes — if we form our conclusions amid the ruins of Christendom, it may seem an idle chimera to talk of the unity of the church of God. But no; we simply

take God at His word; we believe what He says, not because we see it or feel it, but because He says it. This is faith. Why do we believe in the forgiveness of sins? Why do we believe in the presence of the Holy Ghost? Why do we believe in any one of the grand fundamental truths of Christianity? Simply because we find them on the eternal page of inspiration. Well, upon precisely the same ground we believe in the one body and in the indissoluble unity of the church of God.

"There is one body." He does not say, "There *was* one body," and "There *shall* be one body." No; he says, "There is one body." Here is our authority for believing and confessing this glorious truth, and for our practical testimony against everything that denies it. The first step in confessing the unity of the church of God is to step out of the divisions of Christendom. Let us not stop to ask what is to be our second step. God never gives light for two steps at a time. Is it true that there is but one body? Unquestionably. God says so. Well then the divisions, the sects, and the systems of Christendom are plainly opposed to the mind and will and word of God. Truly so. What are we to do? Step out of them. This, we may rest assured, is *the* first step in a right direction. If our standpoint is false, our whole range of vision must be false. We must get to a true standpoint, and then our entire range is correct. It is impossible to yield any practical confession to the unity of the church of God while we stand connected with that which practically denies it. We may hold the theory in the region of our understanding, while we deny the reality in our practical career. But if we desire to confess the truth of the one body, our very first business — our primary duty is to stand in thorough separation from all the sects and schisms of Christendom.

"But," some may enquire, "Will not this involve the formation of a new sect, and that, too, the narrowest and most intolerant of all sects?" By no means. It may seem to be so, in the judgment of mere nature — even religious nature. But the question is, Are the divisions of Christendom according to God? Are the many bodies of the professing church in accordance with the "one body" of Ephesians 4? Clearly not. Then it is our divinely appointed duty to come out of them, and it is impossible that the discharge of a divinely enjoined duty can ever lead to sectarianism or schism; nay

it is a direct and positive testimony against it; and, furthermore, the first grand step toward keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is to step out of the divisions of Christendom. And what then? Looking to Jesus; and this is to continue right on to the end. Is this — we repeat the question — to form a new sect, or join some new body? By no means; it is but fleeing from the ruins around us to find our resource in the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus. It is but leaving the ship at the bidding of Jesus, to keep the eye fixed on Him amid the wild watery waste, until we reach in safety the haven of everlasting rest and glory.

Ephesians 5: 33

“NEVERTHELESS”

The word which forms the heading of this paper occurs in Ephesians 5: 33. It is a very important word, indicating what we are all so prone to forget, that there are two sides to every question, and in particular to the great question before the apostle's mind in this passage. He is speaking of the subject of marriage and of the relative duties of husband and wife, and he uses as an illustration, “The great mystery of Christ and the Church.”

There are two sides to this subject. There is a heavenly side and there is an earthly side. We want them both. We cannot dispense with either, and the Holy Spirit has, in His infinite wisdom, bound them together by the little word “nevertheless.” And what God has joined together let not man put asunder! It is blessedly true that the Church's relation to Christ is heavenly. The Church is called to know, rejoice in, feed upon, walk with, follow and be conformed to a heavenly Christ.

All this is vital and fundamental truth which cannot for a moment be given up or lost sight of, without giving up, so far, the heavenly side of Christianity.

But are we not in danger of forgetting the *practical application* of all this to our present walk on the earth amid the stern realities of actual life day by day? Are not husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, *earthly* relationships? Unquestionably. True, they are formed upon a heavenly model and to be carried out after a heavenly pattern, as they also rest upon a heavenly base. Still they are relationships in nature, formed on the earth and to be carried out in daily life. There will be no such relationships in heaven. They do not belong to the resurrection-state. They belong to nature, to earth, to our time-condition, and we are called to walk in them as Christian men, women and children, and to glorify God by our spirit and temper and manner, our whole deportment therein, from hour to hour and day to day.

Thus, for example, of what use is it for a man to speak of lofty theories respecting the heavenly relationship of Christ and the Church while he fails every day of his life in his earthly relationship as a husband? His wife is neglected. She may be treated coldly or harshly. She is not nourished, cherished, sustained and ministered to according to the heavenly model of Christ and His Church.

No doubt, the same pointed question may be asked in reference to the wife and to all the other sacred relationships of our earthly and natural existence, for “there are two sides to every question.”

Hence the very great importance of the apostle's “nevertheless.” It has wide application. It is most evident that the Holy Spirit anticipated the need of such a qualifying, modifying, regulating clause when, having commented upon the heavenly side of the subject of marriage, He adds, “Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

Christian reader, let us remember the two sides. Let us deeply ponder the inspired “Nevertheless.” We may rest assured there is a need for it. There is the most urgent need of the practical application of divine and heavenly truth to our natural relationships and earthly ways. We have to remember that God recognizes nature, else why have we marriage? *Flesh is not recognized, but nature is*, and even admitted as a teacher (see 1 Corinthians 11: 14). We are not yet *actually* in heaven. We are there, thank God, as to our standing, there in spirit, there in principle, there by faith. Our life, our portion, our hope, our home is there because Christ is there.

But we are here on this earth, called to represent Christ in this world as He represents us in heaven. God views us as men, women and children, called to tread the sand of the desert and to meet the positive realities of daily life. Life is a reality, an actual bona fide practical reality. And our God has provided for us in view of this fact, by the priestly ministry of Christ on high and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Holy Scripture here below. We must have what is real to meet what is real. We are not called, thank God, to be occupied with visionary notions, with empty theories,

with a powerless sentimentality, nor even with one-sided truth. No; we are called to be real, genuine, sound, practical Christian men, women and children. We are called to display in our daily history here on this earth, the practical results of that which we know and enjoy by faith in heaven. In one word, we must never forget that when the very highest truths are being unfolded before us, there is a healthful and holy *application* of these truths indicated by the inspired “Nevertheless.”

Philippians 2

EPAPHRODITUS

We want the reader to turn with us to Philippians 2 and study the brief sketch of the interesting character of Epaphroditus. There is great moral beauty in it. We are not told very much about him, but in what we are told, we see a great deal of what is truly lovely and pleasant — much that makes us long for men of the same stamp in this our day. We cannot do better than quote the inspired record concerning him; and may the blessed Spirit apply it to our hearts and lead us to cultivate the same lovely grace which shone so brightly in that dear and honored servant of Christ!

“I supposed it necessary,” says the blessed apostle, “to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation, because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (Phil. 2: 25-30).

Now it is quite possible that some of us, on reading the above, may feel disposed to inquire if Epaphroditus was a great evangelist or teacher or some highly gifted servant of Christ, seeing the inspired apostle bestows upon him so many high and honorable titles, styling him his “brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier.”

Well, we are not told that he was a great preacher or a great traveler or a profound teacher in the Church of God. All we are told about him in the above touching narrative is that he came forward in a time of real need to supply a missing link, to “fill a gap,” as we say. The beloved Philippians had it upon their hearts to send help to

the revered and aged apostle Paul in his prison at Rome. He was in need and they longed to supply his need. They loved him, and God had laid it upon their loving hearts to communicate with his necessities. They thought of him, though he was far away from them, and they longed to minister to him of their substance.

How lovely was this! How pleasing to the heart of Christ! Hearken to the glowing terms in which the dear old prisoner speaks of their precious ministry. "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.... Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now, ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God" (Phil. 4: 10, 14-18).

Here we see the place which Epaphroditus filled in this blessed business. There lay the beloved apostle in his prison at Rome, and there lay the loving offering of the saints at Philippi. But how was it to be conveyed to him? These were not the days of banks checks and post-office money orders. No, nor of railway traveling. It was no easy matter to get from Philippi to Rome in those days. But Epaphroditus, that dear, unpretending, self-surrendering servant of Christ, presented himself to supply the missing link, to do the very thing that was needed and nothing more; to be the channel of communication between the assembly at Philippi and the apostle at Rome. Deep and real as was the apostle's need, precious and seasonable as was the Philippians' gift, yet an instrument was needed to bring them both together, and Epaphroditus offered himself for the work. There was a manifest need and he filled it. He did not aim at doing some great showy thing, something which would make him very prominent and cause his name to be blazed abroad as some wonderful person. Ah! no, Epaphroditus was not one of the pushing, self-confident, extensive class. He was a dear, self-hiding, lowly

servant of Christ, one of that class of workmen to whom we are irresistibly attracted. Nothing is more charming than an unpretending, retiring man who is content just to fill the empty niche; to render the needed service, whatever it is; to do the work cut out for him by the Master's hand.

There are some who are not content unless they are at the head and tail of everything. They seem to think that no work can be rightly done unless they have a hand in it. They are not satisfied to supply a missing link. How repulsive are all such! How we retire from them! Self-confident, self-sufficient, ever pushing themselves into prominence. They have never measured themselves in the presence of God, never been broken down before Him, never taken their true place of self-abasement.

Epaphroditus was not of this class at all. He put his life in his hand to serve other people; and when at death's door, instead of being occupied with himself or his ailments, he was thinking of others. "He longed after you all and was full of heaviness" — not because he was sick, but — "because ye had heard that he had been sick." Here was true love. He knew what his beloved brethren at Philippi would be feeling when informed of his serious illness, an illness brought on by his willing-hearted service to them.

All this is morally lovely. It does the heart good to contemplate this exquisite picture. Epaphroditus had evidently studied in the school of Christ. He had sat at the Master's feet and drunk deeply into His spirit. In no other way could he have learned such holy lessons of self-surrender and thoughtful love for others. The world knows nothing of such things; nature cannot teach such lessons. They are altogether heavenly, spiritual, divine. Would that we knew more of them! They are rare among us with all our high profession. There is a most humiliating amount of selfishness in all of us, and it looks so hideous in connection with the name of Jesus. It might agree well enough with Judaism, but its inconsistency with Christianity is terribly glaring.

Notice the very touching manner in which the inspired apostle commends Epaphroditus to the assembly at Philippi. It seems as if he could not make enough of him, to speak after the manner of men.

“He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” How deeply affecting! What a tide of divine affection and sympathy rolled in upon that unpretending, self-sacrificing servant of Christ! The whole assembly at Philippi, the blessed apostle and above all, God Himself all engaged in thinking about a man who did not think about himself. Had Epaphroditus been a self-seeker, had he been occupied about himself or his interests, or even his work, his name would never have shone on the page of inspiration. But no; he thought of others, not of himself. Therefore God and His apostle and His Church thought of him.

Thus it will ever be. A man who thinks much of himself saves others the trouble of thinking about him. But the lowly, the humble, the modest, the unpretending, the retiring, the self-emptied, who think of and live for others, who walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, these are the persons to be thought of and cared for, loved and honored, as they ever will be by God and His people.

“I sent him therefore the more carefully,” says the beloved apostle, “that when ye see him again ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation. Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (Phil. 2: 28-30).

Thus it was with this most dear and honored servant of Christ. He did not regard his life, but laid it at his Master's feet, just to supply the missing link between the church of God at Philippi and the suffering and needy apostle at Rome. Therefore, the apostle calls upon the Church to hold him in reputation, and the honored name of Epaphroditus has been handed down to us by the pen of inspiration, and his precious service has been recorded and the record of it read by untold millions, while the names and the doings of the self-seekers, the self-important, the pretentious of every age and every clime and every condition are sunk — and deservedly so — in eternal oblivion.

Philippians 2

SELF-SURRENDER

It is delightful to contemplate the moral triumphs of Christianity — the victories which it gains over self and the world, and the marvelous way in which such victories are obtained. The law said, “Thou shalt do this; and thou shalt not do that.” But Christianity speaks a totally different language. In it, we see life bestowed as a free gift — life flowing down from a risen and glorified Christ. This is something entirely beyond the range of the law. The language of the law was, “The man that doeth these things shall live in them.” Long life in the land was all the law proposed to the man who could keep it. Eternal life in a risen Christ was something utterly unknown and unthought of under the legal system.

But Christianity not only gives eternal life; it gives also an object with which that life can be occupied — a center round which the affections of that life can circulate — a model on which that life can be formed. Thus it gains its mighty moral triumphs. Thus it gains its conquests over a selfish nature and a selfish world. It gives divine life and a divine center; and as the life moves round that center we are taken out of self.

This is the secret of self-surrender. It cannot be reached in any other way. The unconverted man finds his center in self, and hence to tell him not to be selfish is to tell him not to be at all. This holds good even in the matter of mere religiousness. A man will attend to his religion in order, as he thinks, to promote his eternal interest. But this is quite a different thing from finding an object and a center outside himself. Christianity alone can supply these. The gospel of the grace of God is the only thing that can effectively meet man's need and deliver him from the selfishness which belongs to him. The unrenewed man lives for himself. He has no higher object. The life which he possesses is alienated from the life of God. He is away from God. He moves around another center altogether, and until he is born again, until he is renewed, regenerated, born of the Word and Spirit of God, it cannot be otherwise. Self is his object, his center in all things. He may be moral, amiable, religious, benevolent, but until

he is converted, he has not done with himself as to the ground of his being or as to the center round which that being revolves.

The foregoing train of thought naturally introduces us to the striking and beautiful illustration of our theme afforded in Philippians 2. In it we have a series of examples of self-surrender, commencing with a divinely perfect One, the Lord Himself.

Before we proceed to gaze upon this exquisite picture, it may be well to enquire what it was that rendered it needful to present such a picture before the Philippian saints. The attentive reader will observe in the course of this most charming epistle, certain delicate touches from the inspired pen, leading to the conclusion that the keen and vigilant eye of the apostle detected a certain root of evil in the bosom of the beloved and cherished assembly gathered at Philippi. To this he addresses himself, not with a sledge-hammer or a long whip, but with a refinement and delicacy far more powerful than either the one or the other. The mightiest moral results are reached by those delicate touches from the hand of God the Holy Spirit.

What was the root to which we have referred? It was not a splitting into sects and parties as at Corinth. It was not a return to the law and ritualism as at Galatia. It was not a hankering after philosophy and the rudiments of the world as at Colosse. What was it then? It was a root of envy and strife. The sprouting of this root is seen distinctly in the collision between those two sisters, "Euodias and Syntyche" (Phil. 4: 2), but it is glanced at in earlier portions of the epistle, and a divine remedy supplied.

It is a great point with a medical man not only to understand what is wrong with his patient, but also to understand the true remedy. Some physicians are clever in discovering the root of the disease, but they do not so well know what remedy to apply. Others are skilled in the knowledge of medicine, the powers of various drugs, but they do not know how to apply them to individual cases. The divine Physician knows both the disease and its remedy. He knows exactly what is the matter with us and He knows what will do us good. He sees the root of the matter and He applies a radical cure. He does not treat cases superficially. He is perfect in diagnosis. He

does not guess at our disease from mere surface-symptoms. His keen eye penetrates at once to the very bottom of the case and His skillful hand applies the true remedy.

Thus it is in the epistle to the Philippians. Those saints held a very large place in the large heart of the apostle. He loved them much, and they loved him. Again and again he speaks in grateful words of their fellowship with him in the gospel from the very first. But all this did not and could not shut his eyes to what was wrong among them. It is said that “love is blind.” In one sense, we look upon this saying as a libel upon love. If it were said that “love is superior to faults,” it would be nearer the truth. What should anyone give for blind love? Of what use would it be to be loved by one who only loved us because he was ignorant of our blots and blemishes? If it be meant that love will not see our blots, it is blessedly true (Num. 23: 21), but no one would care for a love that was not at once aware of and superior to our failures and infirmities.

Paul loved the saints at Philippi and rejoiced in their love to him, and tasted the fragrant fruit of that love again and again. But then he saw that it was one thing to love and be kind to a distant apostle, and quite another thing to agree among themselves. Doubtless, Euodias and Syntyche both contributed to send a present to Paul, though they were not pulling harmoniously together in the wear and tear of daily life and service. This is no uncommon case. Many sisters and brothers too are ready to contribute of their substance to help some distant servant of Christ, but they do not walk pleasantly together. How is this? There is a lack of self-surrender. This, we may rest assured, is the real secret of much of the “strife and vainglory” so painfully manifest in the very midst of the people of God. It is one thing to walk alone and it is another thing to walk in company with our brethren in the practical recognition of that great truth of the unity of the body and in the remembrance that “we are members one of another.”

Christians are not to regard themselves as mere individuals, as isolated atoms, as independent persons. This cannot be, seeing that Scripture declares, “There is one body” and we are members thereof. This is a divine truth — a grand fact — a positive reality. We are not to stand out in lonely individuality. We are living members of a

living body, each one having to do with other members with whom we are connected by a bond which no power of earth or hell can sever. In a word, there is a relationship formed by the presence of the Holy Spirit who not only dwells in each individual member, but is the power of the unity of the one body. It is the presence of God the Spirit in the Church that constitutes that Church as the one living body of the living Head.

It is when we are called to walk in the actual acknowledgement of this great truth that there is a demand for self-surrender. If we were merely solitary individuals, treading each in his own self-chosen path, carrying out his own unique thoughts, walking in the sparks of his own kindling, pursuing his own unique line of things, indulging his own will, then indeed a quantity of self might be retained. If Euodias and Syntyche could have walked alone, there would have been no collision — no strife. But they were called to walk together, and here was the demand for self-surrender. And be it ever remembered that Christians are not members of a club, of a sect or of an association; they are members of a body, each connected with all, and all connected by the fact of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with the risen and glorified Head in heaven.

This is an immense truth, and the practical carrying out of it will cost us not only all we have, but all we are. There is no place in all the universe where self will be so pulled to pieces as in the Assembly of God. And is it not well? Is it not a powerful proof of the divine ground on which that Assembly is gathered? Should we not be glad to have our hateful self thus pulled to pieces? Shall we or ought we run away from those who do it for us? Are we not glad — do we not often pray to get rid of self? And shall we quarrel with those who are God's instruments in answering our prayers? True, they may do the work roughly and clumsily, but never mind that. Whoever helps me to crush and sink self does me a kind turn, however awkwardly he may do it. One thing is certain, no man can ever rob us of that which, after all, is the only thing worth having, namely Christ. This is a precious consolation. Let self go and we shall have the more of Christ. Euodias might lay the blame on Syntyche, and Syntyche on Euodias; the apostle does not raise the

question of who was right or who was wrong, but he beseeches both to be “of the same mind in the Lord.”

Here lies the divine secret. It is self-surrender. But this must be a real thing. There is no use in talking about sinking self while at the same time, self is fed and patted on the back. We sometimes pray with fervor to be enabled to trample self in the dust, and the very next moment, if anyone seems to cross our path, self is like a porcupine with all its quills up. This will never do. God will have us real. Surely we can say with all our weakness and folly, we want to be real — real in everything and therefore real when we pray for the power of self-surrender. But, most assuredly, there is no place where there is a more urgent demand for this lovely grace than in the bosom of the assembly of God.

We may range through the wide domain of inspiration and not find a more exquisite model of self-surrender than that which is presented to us in the opening lines of Philippians 2. It is impossible for anyone to breathe the holy atmosphere of such a scripture and not be cured of the sore evils of envy and jealousy, strife and vain glory. Let us approach the marvelous picture and, gazing intently upon it, seek to catch its inspiration.

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (vv. 1-8.)

Here then is the divine remedy for envy and jealousy, strife and vain glory — for self-occupation in all its hideous forms. The inspired penman introduces to our hearts the self-emptied, humble,

obedient Man, Christ Jesus. Here was One who possessed all power in heaven and earth. Divine majesty and glory belonged to Him. He was God over all, blessed forever. By Him all things were made and by Him they subsist. And yet He appeared in this world as a poor man — a servant — one who had nowhere to lay His head. The foxes and the fowls, the creatures of His formation, were better provided for than He, their Maker. They had a place to rest. He had none. He thought of others, cared for them, labored for them, wept with them, ministered to them, but He never did a thing for Himself. We never find Him taking care to supply Himself with anything. His was a life of perfect self-surrender. He who was everything, made Himself nothing. He stood in perfect contrast to the first Adam who being but a man, thought to make himself like God, and became the serpent's slave. The Lord Jesus, the Most High God, took the very lowest place among men. It is utterly impossible that any man can ever take so low a place as Jesus. The word is, "He made himself of no reputation." He went so low that no one could possibly put Him lower. "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Be it observed that the cross is here viewed as the consummation of a life of obedience — the completion of a work of self-surrender. It is what we may call, to use a Levitical term, the burnt-offering aspect of the death of Christ rather than the sin offering. True it is that the self-same act which consummated a life of obedience, also put away sin, but in the passage now before us, sin-bearing is not so much the thought as self-surrender. Jesus gave up all. He laid aside His glory and came down into this poor world. When He came, He shunned all human pomp and grandeur and became a poor man. His parents were poor. They were only able to procure the lowest grade of sacrifice which the law allowed for the poor; not a bullock, not a lamb, but a pair of turtle doves. Compare Leviticus 15: 29 and Luke 2: 24. He Himself worked and was known as a carpenter. Nor are we to miss the moral force of this fact by saying that every Jew was brought up to some trade. Our Lord Jesus Christ really took a low place. The very town where He was brought up was a proverb of reproach. He was called "The Nazarene." And it was asked, with a sneer of contempt, "Is not this the carpenter?" He was a root out of a dry ground. He had no form

nor comeliness, no beauty in man's eye. He was the despised, neglected, self-emptied, meek and lowly Man from first to last. He gave up all, even to life itself. His self-surrender was complete.

Mark the result. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The blessed Lord Jesus took the very lowest place, but God has given Him the very highest. He made Himself nothing, but God has made Him everything. He said, "I am a worm and no man," but God has set Him as Head over all. He went into the very dust of death, but God has placed Him on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

What does all this teach us? It teaches us that the way to get up is to go down. This is a grand lesson and one which we very much need to learn. It would effectively deliver us from envy and jealousy, from strife and vain glory, from self-importance and self-occupation. God will assuredly exalt those who, in the spirit and mind of Christ, take the low place. On the other hand, He will as assuredly abase those who seek to be somebody.

Oh! to be nothing! This is true liberty — true happiness — true moral elevation. What intense power of attraction in one who makes nothing of himself! On the other hand, how repulsive is a pushing forward, elbowing, self-exalting spirit! How utterly unworthy of one bearing the name of Him who made Himself of no reputation! It is a fixed truth that ambition cannot possibly live in the presence of One who emptied Himself. *An ambitious Christian is a flagrant contradiction.*

There are other samples of self-surrender presented to us in Philippians 2; inferior to the divine model at which we have been gazing, for in this as in all things else, Jesus must have the pre-eminence. Still, though inferior and imperfect, they are deeply interesting and valuable to us. Look at Paul. See how deeply he had drunk into his Master's spirit of self-surrender. Hear the following

words from one who, naturally, would have allowed none to outstrip him in his career of ambition. “Yea,” he says, “and if I be poured forth [as a drink offering] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all” (v. 17).

This is uncommonly fine. Paul was ready to be nothing — to be spent — to be poured forth as a drink offering upon the Philippians' sacrifice. It mattered not to him who presented the sacrifice or who performed the service, provided the thing was done. Does not this put some of us to shame? How little do we know of this excellent spirit! How prone we are to attach importance to work if we ourselves have anything to do with it! How little we are able to joy and rejoice with others in *their* sacrifice and service! Our work, our preaching, our writings, have an interest in our view quite different from those of anyone else. In a word, self, self, detestable self, creeps in even in that which seems to be the service of Christ. We are drawn to those who think well of us and of our work, and retire from those who think otherwise. All this needs to be judged. It is unlike Christ and unworthy of those who bear His holy Name. Paul had so learned Christ as to be able to rejoice in the work and service of others as well as in his own; and even where Christ was preached of contention, he could rejoice.

Then look at Paul's son, Timothy. Hearken to the glowing testimony borne to him by the pen of inspiration. “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel” (vv. 19-22).

Here was self-surrender. Timothy naturally cared for the saints; and that, too, at a moment when all sought their own things. And yet, dear as Timothy was to Paul's heart — valuable as such a self-denying servant must have been to him in the work of the gospel, he was willing to part with him for the sake of the Church. Timothy, likewise, was willing to be separated from his invaluable friend and father in the faith in order to ease his anxious mind in reference to the state of the Philippians. This was indeed giving

proof of real devotedness and self-surrender. *Timothy did not talk of these things; he practiced them.* He did not make a parade of his doings, but Paul by the Holy Spirit engraved them on a tablet from which they can never be erased. This was infinitely better. Let another praise you and not yourself. Timothy made nothing of himself, but Paul made a great deal of him. This is divine. The sure way to get up is to go down. Such is the law of the heavenly road.

A man who makes much of himself saves others the trouble of doing so. There is no possible use for two persons doing the same thing. Self-importance is a noxious weed nowhere to be found in the entire range of the new creation. It is, alas, often found in the ways of those who profess to belong to that blessed and holy creation, but it is not of heavenly growth. It is of fallen nature — a weed that grows luxuriantly in the soil of this world. The men of this age think it laudable to push and make way for themselves. A bustling, self-important, pretentious style takes with the children of this generation. But our heavenly Master was the direct opposite of all this. He who made the worlds, stooped to wash the disciples' feet (John 13); and if we are like Him, we will do the same. There is nothing more foreign to the thoughts of God, the mind of heaven, the spirit of Jesus, than self-importance and self-occupation. On the other hand, there is nothing that savors so of God, of heaven and of Jesus as self-surrender.

Look once more at our picture in Philippians 2. Examine with special care that figure which occupies a very prominent place. It is Epaphroditus. Who was he? Was he a great preacher — a very eloquent speaker — a pre-eminently gifted brother? We are not told. But this we are told, and told powerfully and touchingly; he was one who exhibited a lovely spirit of self-surrender. This is better than all the gifts and eloquence, power and learning that could possibly be concentrated in any single individual. Epaphroditus was one of that illustrious class who seek to make nothing of themselves. As a consequence the inspired apostle spares no pains to exalt him. See how he writes in detail about the actings of this singularly attractive person. “Yet I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.”

What a cluster of dignities! What a brilliant array of titles! How little did this dear and unpretentious servant of Christ imagine that he was to have such a monument erected to his memory! But the Lord will never permit the fruits of self-sacrifice to wither, nor the name of the self-emptied to sink into oblivion. Hence it is that the name of one who, otherwise, might never have been heard of, shines on the page of inspiration as the brother, companion and fellow soldier of the great apostle of the Gentiles.

What did this remarkable man do? Did he spend a princely fortune in the cause of Christ? We are not told, but we are told what is far better — he spent himself. This is the grand point for us to seize and ponder. It was not the surrender of his fortune merely, but the surrender of himself. Let us listen to the record concerning one of the True David's mighty men. "He longed after you all, and was full of heaviness." Why? Was it because he was sick? Because of his pains and aches and privations? Nothing of the sort. Epaphroditus did not belong to the generation of whiners and complainers. He was thinking of others. "He was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." How lovely! He was occupied with the Philippians and their sorrow about him. The only thing that affected him in his illness was the thought of how it would affect them. Perfectly exquisite! This honored servant of Christ had brought himself to death's door to serve others, and when there, instead of being occupied about himself and his ailments, he was thinking of the sorrow of others. "He was sick and nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

Can anything be more morally beautiful than this? It is one of the rarest pictures ever presented to the human eye. There is Epaphroditus near to death for the sake of others, but he is full of sorrow about the Philippians, and the Philippians are full of sorrow about him; Paul is full of sorrow about both, and God comes and mingles Himself with the scene and in mercy to all, raises up the loved one from the bed of death.

Then mark the tender care of the blessed apostle. It is like some tender mother sending her darling son away and committing him with fond earnestness to the care of some friend. "I sent him

therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation.” Why? Was it because of his gifts, his rank or his wealth? No; but because of his self-surrender. “Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” Oh! dear Christian reader, let us think on these things. We have introduced you to a picture and we leave you to gaze upon it. The grouping is divine. There is a moral line running through the entire scene and linking the figures into one striking group. It is like the anointing of the true Aaron, and the oil flowing down to the skirts of his garments. We have the blessed Lord, perfect in His self-surrender, as in all beside; and then we have Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, each in his measure exhibiting the rare and lovely grace of self-surrender.

Philippians 3: 7

“GAIN TO ME”

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Phil. 3: 7). What a marvelous change! Saul had many sources of gain. He had gathered many honors around his name. He had made progress in Judaism beyond many of his equals. He had achieved a legal righteousness in which no man could find a flaw. His zeal, his knowledge and his morality were of the very highest order. But from the moment Christ was revealed to him, there was a thorough revolution. Everything was changed. *His* righteousness, *his* learning, *his* morality, all that could in any wise be gain to Paul, became as dung. He does not speak of open sins, but of those things that could justly be esteemed as gain to him. The revelation of the glory of Christ had so completely changed the entire current of Paul's thoughts, that the very things which he had once esteemed as positive gain, he now regarded as positive loss.

Why? Simply because he had found his all in Christ. That blessed One had supplanted everything in Paul's heart. All that belonged to Paul was displaced by Christ. Hence it would have involved actual loss to possess any righteousness or wisdom, holiness or morality of his own, seeing that he had found all these in divine perfectness in Christ.

If Christ is made of God unto me righteousness, is it not a loss to me to have any righteousness of my own? Surely. If I have gotten that which is divine, have I any need of that which is human? Clearly not. The more completely I am stripped and emptied of everything in which “I” could glory or which would be gain to “me,” the better, inasmuch as it only renders me all the more entitled to a full and all-sufficient Christ. Whatever it be that tends to exalt self, whether it be religiousness, morality, respectability, wealth, glory, personal beauty, intelligence or philanthropy, it is a positive hindrance to our enjoyment of Christ as both the foundation of the conscience and as the object of the heart. May the Spirit of God make Christ more precious to us!

Philippians 3: 11

RESURRECTION

A correspondent requests special notice of Philippians 3: 11, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead." The point toward which the desires of the true Christian ever tend is resurrection-glory. It matters not to him by what way he is to reach that point. He longs to reach the glory "by any means."

It may be that our friend finds difficulty in the word "if," as though it implied a doubt in the mind of the apostle as to his reaching the end in safety. The apostle did not have any such thought in his mind. The idea is simply that he had the goal before him and he was eagerly pressing toward it. His vision was filled with it, his heart was set on it, and as to the "means" by which he was to reach it, he was quite indifferent.

It may be interesting to observe that the word which is rendered "resurrection" only occurs in this one passage and properly signifies "resurrection from among." The Greek word *anastasis* (resurrection) occurs about 42 times in the New Testament and is applied to the broad fact of resurrection. But the word used in verse 11 is morally linked with the expression in Mark 9: 10, "Questioning one with another what rising from *among* the dead should mean." The disciples would have found no difficulty in the thought of resurrection as such, seeing that every orthodox Jew believed in it. But a "rising from *among* the dead" was something strange to them. Hence their "questioning."

Now, the proper hope of the Christian is not merely "resurrection of the dead," but "resurrection from *among* the dead." This makes a substantial difference. It completely sets aside the idea of a general simultaneous resurrection. To speak of a resurrection from *among* the dead, obviously implies that all shall not rise together. Revelation 20: 5 teaches us that there will be a thousand years between the two resurrections, but it is important to see that the very word used by the apostle to express that resurrection for which he was looking, is quite different from that usually employed

to set forth the general thought of resurrection. Why is this? Simply because he meant a special thing and he therefore used a special word — a word which occurs only in this one place.

It is deeply solemn to remember that the Lord's people will rise from their graves and leave behind them the ashes of the wicked dead for a thousand years longer. This thought may seem to be foolishness to the natural man, but Scripture teaches it and that is quite enough for the Christian. The resurrection of the Church will be upon the same principle and partake of the same character as the resurrection of Christ; it will be “a resurrection from among the dead.” May our hearts be set upon that glorious goal!

Philippians 3

Christianity — What is it?

We have endeavoured to hold up the Bible as the Church's supreme and all-sufficient guide, in all ages, in all climes, and under all circumstances. We now desire to hold up Christianity in its divine beauty and moral excellence, as illustrated in this well-known passage of Holy Scripture. And be it observed that, as it was the Bible itself, and not any special system of theology deduced therefrom, that we sought to present to our readers; so now, it is Christianity, and not any peculiar form of human religiousness, that we desire to place before them. We are deeply thankful for this.

We dare not enter upon the defence of men or their systems. Men err in their theology and fail in their ethics; but the Bible and Christianity remain unshaken and unshakeable. This is an unspeakable mercy. Who can duly estimate it? To be furnished with a perfect standard of divinity and morals is a privilege for which we can never be sufficiently thankful. Such a standard we possess, blessed be God! in the Bible and in the Christianity which the Bible unfolds to our view. Men may err in their creed and break down in their conduct, but the Bible is the Bible still, and Christianity is Christianity still.

Now, we believe that this third chapter of Philippians gives us the model of a true Christian — nor as one endowed with extraordinary gifts, and privileged to see unspeakable visions. It is not to Paul, the apostle, nor Paul, the gifted vessel, that we look, but to Paul the Christian (John 17). "Our citizenship is in heaven;" and we should never be satisfied to propose to ourselves any lower object than Christ. It matters not in the least what a man's position may be. He may be only a scavenger, or he may be a prince, or he may stand at any one of the many gradations between these two extremes. It is all the same, provided Christ is his real, his only object. It is a man's object, not his position, that gives him his character.

Now Paul's one object was Christ. Whether he was stationary, or whether he travelled; whether he preached the gospel, or whether he gathered sticks; whether he planted churches, or made tents, Christ was his object. By night and by day, at home or abroad, by sea or by land, alone or in company, in public or private, he could say, "One thing I do." And this, be it remembered, was not merely Paul the laborious apostle, or Paul the raptured saint, but Paul the living, acting, walking Christian — the one who addresses us in these words, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me." Nor should we ever be satisfied with anything less than this. True, we fail sadly; but let us always keep the true object before us. Like the school-boy at his copy, he can only expect to succeed by keeping his eye fixed upon his head-line. His tendency is to look at his own last written line, and thus each succeeding line is worse than the preceding one. Thus it is in our own case. We take our eye off the blessed and perfect head-line, and begin to look at ourselves, our own productions, our own character, our interests, our reputation. We begin to think of what would be consistent with our own principles, our profession, or our standing instead of fixing the eye steadily upon that one object which Christianity presents, even Christ Himself.

But some will say, "Where will you find this?" Well, if it be meant, where are we to find it amongst the ranks of Christians, now-a-days, it might be difficult indeed. But we have it in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians. This is enough for us. We have here a model of true Christianity, and let us ever and only aim thereat. If we find our hearts going after other things let us judge them. Let us compare our lines with the head-line, and earnestly seek to produce a faithful copy thereof. In this way, although we may have to weep over constant failure, we shall always be kept occupied with our proper object, and thus have our character formed; for, let it never be forgotten, it is the object which forms the character. If money be my object, my character is covetous; if power, I am ambitious; if books, I am literary; if Christ, I am a Christian. It is not here a question of life and salvation, but only of practical Christianity. If we were asked for a simple definition of a Christian, we should at once say, a Christian is a man who has Christ for his object. This is most simple. May we enter into its

power, and thus exhibit a more healthy and vigorous discipleship in this day, when so many, alas! are minding earthly things.

We shall close this hasty and imperfect sketch of a wide and weighty subject, with a line or two on *the Christian's Hope*.

This, our third and last point, is presented in our chapter in a manner quite as characteristic as the other two. The *standing* of the Christian is to be found in Christ; the *object* of the Christian is to know Christ; and the *hope* of the Christian is to be like Christ. How beautifully perfect is the connection between these three things. No sooner do I find myself in Christ as my righteousness, than I long to know Him as my object, and the more I know Him, the more ardently shall I long to be like Him, which hope can only be realized when I see Him as He is. Having a perfect righteousness, and a perfect object, I just want one thing more, and that is to be done with everything that hinders my enjoyment of that object. "For our conversation [or citizenship, (Gr) not (Gr) Phil. 3:20], is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Now putting all these things together, we get a very complete view of true Christianity. We cannot attempt to elaborate any one of the three points above referred to; for, it may be truly said, each point would demand a volume to treat it fully. But we would ask the reader to pursue the marvellous theme for himself. Let him rise above all the imperfections and inconsistencies of Christians, and gaze upon the moral grandeur of Christianity as exemplified in the life and character of the model man presented to our view in this chapter. And may the language of his heart be, "Let others do as they will, as for me, nothing short of this lovely model shall ever satisfy my heart. Let me turn away my eye from men altogether, and fix it intently upon Christ Himself, and find all my delight in Him as my righteousness, my object, my hope." Thus may it be with the writer and the reader, for Jesus' sake.

Colossians 2:10

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (Colossians 2:10)

The All-sufficiency of Christ.

When once the soul has been brought to feel the reality of its condition before God, the depth of its ruin, guilt, and misery, its utter and hopeless bankruptcy, there can be no rest until the Holy Spirit reveals a full and an all-sufficient Christ to the heart. The only possible answer to our total ruin is God's perfect remedy.

This is a very simple, but a most important truth; and we may say, with all possible assurance, the more deeply and thoroughly the reader learns it for himself the better. The true secret of peace is to get to the very end of a guilty, ruined, helpless, worthless self, and there find an all-sufficient Christ as God's provision for our very deepest need. This truly is rest — a rest which can never be disturbed. There may be sorrow, pressure, conflict, exercise of soul, heaviness through manifold temptations, ups and downs, all sorts of trials and difficulties; but we feel persuaded that when a soul is really brought by God's Spirit to see the end of self, and to rest in a full Christ, it finds a peace which can never be interrupted.

The unsettled state of so many of God's dear people is the result of not having received into their hearts a full Christ, as God's own very provision for them. No doubt this sad and painful result may be brought about by various contributing causes, such as a legal mind, a morbid conscience, a self-occupied heart, bad teaching, a secret hankering after this present world, some little reserve in the heart, as to the claims of God, of Christ, and of eternity. But, whatever may be the producing cause, we believe it will be found, in almost every case, that the lack of settled peace, so common amongst the Lord's people, is the result of not seeing, not believing, what God has made His Christ to be to them, and for them, and that for ever:

Now what we propose, in this paper, is to show the anxious reader, from the precious pages of the word of God, that there is treasured up for him in Christ all he can possibly need, whether it be

to meet the claims of his conscience, the cravings of his heart, or the exigencies of his path. We shall seek, by the grace of God to prove that the *work* of Christ is the only true resting place for the *conscience*: His *Person*, the only true object for the *heart*: His *word*, the only true guide for the *path*.*

PART 1

And first, then, let us dwell for a little upon

THE WORK OF CHRIST AS THE ONLY RESTING PLACE FOR THE CONSCIENCE.

In considering this great subject, two things claim our attention: first, what Christ has done for us; secondly, what He is doing for us. In the former we have atonement; in the latter, advocacy. He died for us on the cross. He lives for us on the throne. By his precious atoning death, He has met our entire condition as sinners. He has borne our sins, and put them away for ever. He stood charged with all our sins — the sins of all who believe in His name. "Jehovah laid on him the iniquities of us all." (Isa. 53) And again, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3:18.

This is a grand and all-important truth for the anxious soul — a truth which lies at the very foundation of the whole Christian position. It is impossible that any truly awakened soul, any spiritually enlightened conscience, can enjoy divinely-settled peace until this most precious truth is laid hold of in simple faith. I must know, upon divine authority, that all my sins are put away for ever out of God's sight; that He Himself has disposed of them in such a manner as to satisfy all the claims of His throne, and all the attributes of His nature; that He has glorified Himself in the putting away of my sins, in a far higher and more wonderful manner than if he had sent me to an everlasting hell on account of them.

Yes, He Himself has done it. This is the very gist and marrow, the heart's core of the whole matter. God has laid our sins on Jesus, and He tells us so in His holy word, so that we may know it upon divine authority — an authority that cannot lie. God planned it; God

did it; God says it. It is all of God, from first to last, and we have simply to rest in it like a little child. How do I know that Jesus bore my sins in His own body on the tree? By the very same authority which tells me I had sins to be borne. God, in His marvellous and matchless love, assures me, a poor guilty, hell-deserving sinner, that He has Himself undertaken the whole matter of my sins, and disposed of it in such a manner as to bring a rich harvest of glory to His own eternal name, throughout the wide universe, in presence of all created intelligence.

The living faith of this must tranquilize the conscience. If God has satisfied Himself about my sins, I may well be satisfied also. I know I am a sinner — it may be the chief of sinners. I know my sins are more in number than the hairs of my head; that they are black as midnight — black as hell itself. I know that any one of these sins, the very least, deserves the eternal flames of hell. I know — because God's word tells me — that a single speck of sin can never enter His holy presence; and hence, so far as I am concerned, there was no possible issue, save eternal separation from God. All this I know, upon the clear and unquestionable authority of that word which is settled for ever in heaven.

But oh the profound mystery of the cross! — the glorious mystery of redeeming love I see God Himself taking all my sins — the black and terrible category — all my sins, as He knew and estimated them. I see Him laying them all upon the head of my blessed Substitute, and dealing with Him about them. I see all the billows and waves of God's righteous wrath — His wrath against my sins — His wrath which should have consumed me soul and body in hell throughout a dreary eternity; I see them all rolling over the man who stood in my stead; who represented me before God; who bore all that was due to me: with whom a holy God dealt as He should have dealt with me. I see inflexible justice, holiness, truth, and righteousness dealing with my sins, and making a clear and eternal riddance of them. Not one of them is suffered to pass! There is no connivance, no palliation, no slurring over, no indifference. This could not possibly be, once God Himself took the matter in hand. His glory was at stake; His unsullied holiness, His eternal majesty, the lofty claims of His government.

All these had to be provided for in such wise as to glorify Himself in view of angels, men, and devils. He might have sent me to hell — righteously, justly, sent me to hell — because of my sins. I deserved nothing else. My whole moral being, from its profoundest depths, owns this — must own it. I have not a word to say in excuse for a single sinful thought, to say nothing of a sin-stained life from first to last — yes, a life of deliberate, rebellious, high-handed sin.

Others may reason as they please as to the injustice of an eternity of punishment for a life of sin — the utter want of proportion between a few years of wrong-doing and endless ages of torment in the lake of fire. They may reason, but I thoroughly believe, and unreservedly confess, that for a single sin against such a Being as the God whom I see at the cross, I richly deserved everlasting punishment in the deep, dark, and dismal pit of hell.

I am not writing as a theologian; if I were, it would be a very easy task indeed to bring an unanswerable array of scripture evidence in proof of the solemn truth of eternal punishment. But no; I am writing as one who has been divinely taught the true desert of sin, and that desert I calmly, deliberately, and solemnly declare, is, and can be, nothing less than eternal exclusion from the presence of God and the Lamb — eternal torment in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

But — eternal hallelujahs to the God of all grace! — instead of sending us to hell because of our sins, He sent His Son to be the propitiation for those sins. And in the unfolding of the marvellous plan of redemption, we see a holy God dealing with the question of our sins, and executing judgment upon them in the Person of His well-beloved, eternal, and co-equal Son, in order that the full flood-tide of His love might flow down into our hearts. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10.

Now this must give peace to the conscience, if only it be received in the simplicity of faith. How is it possible for a person to believe that God has satisfied Himself as to his sins, and not have peace? If God says to us, "Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more," what could we desire further as a basis of peace for our

conscience? If God assures me that all my sins are blotted out as a thick; cloud — that they are cast behind His back — for ever gone from His sight — should I not have peace? If He shows me the man who bore my sins on the cross, now crowned at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, ought not my soul to enter into perfect rest as to the question of my sins? Most assuredly.

For how, let me ask, did Christ reach the place which He now fills on the throne of God? Was it as God over all, blessed for ever? No; for He was always that. Was it as the eternal Son of the Father? No; He was ever that — ever in the bosom of the Father — the object of the Father's eternal and ineffable delight. Was it as a spotless, holy, perfect Man, whose nature was absolutely pure, perfectly free from sin? No; for in that character, and on that ground, He could at any moment, between the manger and the cross, have claimed a place at the right hand of God. How was it then? Eternal praise to the God of all grace! it was as the One who had by His death accomplished the glorious work of redemption — the One who had stood charged with the full weight of our sins — he One who had perfectly satisfied all the righteous claims of that throne on which He now sits.

This is a grand, cardinal point for the anxious reader to seize. It cannot fail to emancipate the heart, and tranquilize the conscience. We cannot possibly behold by faith the Man who was nailed to the tree, now crowned on the throne, and not have peace with God. The Lord Jesus Christ, having taken upon Himself our sins, and the judgment due to them, He could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained unatoned for. To see the sin-bearer crowned with glory is to see our sins gone for ever from the divine presence. Where are our sins? They are all obliterated. How do we know this? The One who took them all upon Himself has passed through the heavens to the very highest pinnacle of glory. Eternal justice has wreathed His blessed brow with a diadem of glory, as the Accomplisher of our redemption — the Bearer of our sins; thus proving, beyond all question, or possibility of a question, that our sins are all put away out of God's sight for ever. A crowned Christ, and a clear conscience, are, in the blessed economy of grace,

inseparably linked together. Wondrous fact! Well may we chant with all our ransomed powers the praises of redeeming love.

But let us see how this most consolatory truth is set forth in holy scripture. In Romans 3 we read, "But now the righteousness of God, without law [*coris nomou*], is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: *whom God hath set forth* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission [or passing over] of sins that are past [in time gone by], through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Again, in Romans 4, speaking of Abraham's faith being counted to him for righteousness, the apostle adds, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: but for as also to whom it shall be imputed, if we *believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.*" Here we have God introduced to our souls as the One who raised from the dead the Bearer of our sins. Why did He do so? Because the One who had been delivered for our offences had perfectly glorified Him respecting those offences, and put them away for ever. God not only sent His only begotten Son into the world, but He bruised Him for our iniquities, and raised Him from the dead, in order that we might know and believe that our iniquities are all disposed of in such a manner as to glorify Him infinitely and everlastingly. Eternal and universal homage to His name!

But we have farther testimony on this grand fundamental truth. In Hebrews 1 we read such soul-stirring words as these: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners [or in divers measures and modes] spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by [His] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, *when he*

had by himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Our Lord Christ, blessed be His name, would not take His seat on the throne of God, until he had, by the offering of Himself on the cross, purged our sins. Hence a risen Christ at God's right hand is the glorious and unanswerable proof that our sins are all gone, for He could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained. God raised from the dead the selfsame Man on whom He Himself had laid the full weight of our sins. Thus all is settled — divinely, eternally settled. It is as impossible that a single sin can be found on the very weakest believer in Jesus, as on Jesus Himself. This is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but it is the solid truth of God, established in manifold places in holy scripture; and the soul that believes it must possess a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

PART 2.

Thus far, we have been occupied with that aspect of the work of Christ which bears upon the question of the forgiveness of sins; and we earnestly trust that the reader is thoroughly clear and settled on this grand point. It is assuredly his happy privilege so to be, if only he will take God at His word. "Christ hath once suffered for. Sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

If then Christ hath suffered for our sins, should we not know the deep blessedness of being eternally delivered from the burden of those sins? Can it be according to the mind and heart of God that one for whom Christ suffered should remain in perpetual bondage, tied and bound with the chain of his sins, and crying out from week to week, month to month, and year to year, that the burden of his sins is intolerable?

If such utterances are true and proper for the Christian, then what has Christ done for us? Can it be true that Christ has put away our sins, and yet that we are tied and bound with the chain of them? Is it true that He bore the heavy burden of our sins, and yet that we are still crushed beneath the intolerable weight thereof?

Some would fain persuade us that it is not possible to know that our sins are forgiven; that we must go on to the end of our life in a

state of complete uncertainty on this most vital and important question. If this be so, what has become of the precious gospel of the grace of God — the glad tidings of salvation? In the view of such miserable teaching as this, what mean those glowing words of the blessed apostle Paul, in the synagogue of Antioch? "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus Christ, dead and risen] is preached [not promised as a future thing, but proclaimed now] the forgiveness of sins; and by him all who believe *are* [not shall be, or hope to be] justified from *all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38, 39.

If we were resting on the law of Moses, on our keeping the commandments, on our doing our duty, on our feeling as we ought, on our valuing Christ and loving God as we ought, reason would that we should be in doubt and dark uncertainty, seeing we could have no possible ground of assurance. If we had so much as the movement of an eyelash to do in the matter, then verily it would be the very height of presumption on our part to think of being certain.

But, on the other hand, when we hear the voice of the living God who cannot lie, proclaiming in our ears the glad tidings that through His own beloved Son who died on the cross, was buried in the grave, raised from the dead, and seated in the glory — that through Him alone — through Him without anything whatever of ours — through His one offering of Himself once and for ever, full and everlasting remission of sins is preached, as a present reality, to be enjoyed now by every soul who simply believes the precious record of God, how is it possible for any one to continue in doubt and uncertainty? Is Christ's work finished? He said it was. What did He do? He put away our sins. Are they then put away, or are they still on us — which?

Reader, say which? where are thy sins? Are they blotted out as a thick cloud? or are they still lying as a heavy load of guilt, in condemning power on thy conscience? If they were not put away by the atoning death of Christ, they will never be put away. If He did not bear them on the cross, you will have to bear them in the tormenting flames of hell for ever, and ever, and ever. Yes; be assured of it, there is no other way of disposing of this most weighty

and momentous question. If Christ did not settle the matter on the cross, you must settle it in hell. It must be so, if God's word be true.

But glory be to God, His own testimony assures us that Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; not merely bring us to heaven when we die, but bring us to God *now* How does He bring us to God? Tied and bound with the chain of our sins? with an intolerable burden of guilt on our souls? Nay, verily; He brings us to God without spot or stain or charge. He brings us to God in all His own acceptableness. Is there any guilt on Him? No; there was, blessed be His name, when He stood in our stead, but it is gone — gone for ever — cast as lead into the unfathomable waters of divine forgetfulness. He was charged with our sins, on the cross. God laid on Him all our iniquities, and dealt with Him about them. The whole question of our sins, according to God's estimate thereof, was fully gone into and definitively, because divinely settled between God and Christ, amid the awful shadows of Calvary. Yes, it was all done, once and for ever there. How do we know it? By the authority of the only true God. His word assures us that *we have* redemption through the blood of Christ, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace. He declares to us, in accents of sweetest, richest, deepest mercy, that our sins and our iniquities He will remember no more. Is not this enough? Shall we still continue to cry out that we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins? Shall we thus cast a slur upon the perfect work of Christ? Shall we thus tarnish the lustre of divine grace and give the lie to the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the scripture of truth? Far be the thought! It must not be so. Let us rather hail with thanksgiving the blessed boon so freely conferred upon us by love divine, through the precious blood of Christ. It is the joy of the heart of God to forgive us our sins, Yes, God delights in pardoning iniquity and transgression. It gratifies and glorifies Him to pour into the broken and contrite heart the precious balm of His, own pardoning love and mercy. He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up, and bruised Him on the cursed tree, in order that He might be able, in perfect righteousness, to let the rich streams of grace flow forth from His large, loving heart, to the poor, guilty, self-destroyed, conscience-smitten sinner.

But, should it be, that the reader still feels disposed to inquire how he may have the assurance that this blessed remission of sins — -this fruit of Christ's atoning work, applies to him, let him hearken to those magnificent words which flowed from the lips of the risen Saviour, as He commissioned the earliest heralds of His grace. "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:46, 47.

Here we have the great and glorious commission — its basis, its authority, its sphere. Christ has suffered. This is the meritorious ground of remission of sins. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. But by the shedding of blood, *and by it alone*, there is remission of sins — a remission as full and complete as the precious blood of Christ is fitted to effect.

But where is the authority? "*It is written.*" Blessed, indisputable authority! Nothing can ever shake it. I know, on the solid authority of the word of God, that my sins are all forgiven, all blotted out, all gone for ever, all cast behind God's back, so that they can never, by any possibility, rise against me.

Finally, as to the sphere. It is "all nations." This includes me, beyond all question. There is no sort of exception, condition, or qualification. The blessed tidings were to be wafted, on the wings of love, to all nations — to all the world — to every creature under heaven. How could I exclude myself from this world-wide commission? Do I question, for a moment, that the beams of God's sun are intended for me? Surely not. And why should I question the precious fact that remission of sins is for me? Not for a single instant. It is for me as surely as though I were the only sinner beneath the canopy of God's heaven. The universality of its aspect precludes all question as to its being designed for me.

And surely if any further encouragement were needed, it is found in the fact that the blessed ambassadors were to "begin at Jerusalem" — the very guiltiest spot on the face of the earth. They were to make the earliest offer of pardon to the very murderers of the Son of God. This the apostle Peter does in those words of

marvellous and transcendent grace, "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son, sent him to bless you, by turning away every one of you from your iniquities." Acts 3:26.

It is not possible to conceive anything richer or fuller, or more magnificent than this. The grace that could reach the murderers of the Son of God, can reach any one. The blood that could cleanse the guilt of such a crime can cleanse the vilest sinner outside the precincts of hell.

Anxious reader, do you — can you still hesitate as to the forgiveness of your sins? Christ has suffered for sins. God preaches remission of sins. He pledges His own word on the point. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." What more would you have? How can you any longer doubt or delay? What are you waiting for? You have Christ's finished work and God's faithful word. Surely these ought to satisfy your heart and tranquilize your mind. Do then let us entreat you to accept the full and everlasting remission of all your sins. Receive into your heart the sweet tidings of divine love and mercy, and go on your way rejoicing. Hear the voice of a risen Saviour, speaking from the throne of the majesty in the heavens, and assuring you that your sins are all forgiven. Let those soothing accents from the very mouth of God Himself, fall in their enfranchising power upon your troubled spirit, "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." If God thus speaks to me; if He so assures me that He will no more remember my sins, should I not be fully and for ever satisfied? Why should I go on doubting and reasoning when God has spoken? What can give certainty but the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever? It is the only ground of certainty; and no power of earth or hell, human or diabolical, can ever shake it. The finished work of Christ and the faithful word of God are the basis and the authority of full forgiveness of sins.

But, blessed for ever be the God of all grace, it is not only remission of sins which is announced to us through the atoning death of Christ. This, in itself, would be a boon and a blessing of the very highest order; and as we have seen, we enjoy it according to the largeness of the heart of God, and according to the value and

efficacy of the death of Christ, as God estimates it. But, besides the full and perfect remission of sins, we have also

ENTIRE DELIVERANCE FROM THE PRESENT POWER OF SIN.

This is a grand point for every true lover of holiness. According to the glorious economy of grace, the same work which secures the complete remission of sins has broken for ever the power of sin. It is not only that *the sins of the life* are blotted out, but *the sin of the nature* is condemned. The believer is privileged to regard himself as dead to sin. He can sing, with a glad heart,

"For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,
And I have died in Thee;
Thou'rt risen, my bands are all untied,
And now Thou livest in me.
The Father's face of radiant grace
Shines now in light on me."

This is the proper breathing of a Christian. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is Christianity. The old "I" crucified, and Christ living in me. The Christian is a new creation. Old things are passed away. The death of Christ has closed for ever the history of the old "I;" and hence, though sin dwells in the believer, its power is broken and gone for ever. Not only is its guilt cancelled, but its terrible dominion completely overthrown.

This is the glorious doctrine of Romans 6-8. The thoughtful student of this most magnificent epistle will observe that, from Rom. 3:21 to Rom. 5:11, we have the work of Christ applied to the question of sins. And, from chapter 5:12 to the end of chapter 8, we have another aspect of that work, namely, its application to the question of sin — "our old man" — "the body of *sin*" — "*sin* in the

flesh." There is no such thing in scripture as the forgiveness of sin. God has condemned sin, not forgiven it — an immensely important distinction. God has set forth His eternal abhorrence of sin, in the cross of Christ. He has expressed and executed His judgment upon it; and now the believer can see himself as linked and identified with the One who died on the cross, and is raised from the dead. He has passed out of the sphere of sin's dominion into that new and blessed sphere where grace reigns through righteousness. "God be thanked," says the apostle, "that ye *were* [once, but now no longer are to be] the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that type of doctrine to which ye were delivered. (Margin.) Being then made *free from sin* [not merely sins forgiven], ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness. For when ye *were* the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made *free from sin*, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Romans 6:17-22.

Here lies the precious secret of holy living. We are dead to sin; alive to God. The reign of sin is over. What has sin to do with a dead man? Nothing. Well, then, the believer has died with Christ; he was buried with Christ; he is risen with Christ, to walk in newness of life. He lives under the precious reign of grace, and he has his fruit unto holiness. The man who draws a plea from the abundance of divine grace to live in sin, denies the very foundation of Christianity. "How shall we that have died to sin, live any longer therein?" Impossible. It would be a denial of the whole Christian standing. To imagine the Christian as one who is to go on, from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year, sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, is to degrade Christianity and falsify the whole Christian position. To say that a Christian must go on sinning because he has the flesh in him is to ignore the death of Christ in one of its grand aspects, and to give the lie to the whole of the apostle's teaching in Romans 6-8. Thank God, there is no necessity whatever why the believer should commit sin. "My little children, these things

write I unto you that ye sin not." We should not justify ourselves in a single sinful thought. It is our sweet privilege to walk in the light, as God is in the light; and, most surely, when we are walking in the light, we are not committing sin. Alas! we get out of the light and commit sin; but the normal, the true, the divine idea of a Christian is, walking in the light, and not committing sin. A sinful thought is foreign to the true genius of Christianity. We have sin in us, and shall have it so long as we are in the body: but if we walk in the Spirit, the sin in our nature will not show itself in the life. To say that we need not sin, is to state a Christian privilege; to say that we cannot sin is a deceit and a delusion.

PART 3.

From what has already passed before us, we learn that the grand result of the work of Christ in the past is to give us a divinely perfect standing before God. "He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He has introduced us into the Divine Presence, in all His own perfect acceptability, in the full credit and virtue of His name, of His Person, and of His work; so that, as the Apostle John declares, "As he is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4:17.

Such is the settled standing of the very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ. Nor could it possibly be otherwise. It must be either this or eternal perdition. There is not the breadth of a hair between this standing of absolute perfectness before God and a condition of guilt and ruin. We are either in our sins, or in a risen Christ. There is no middle ground. We are either covered with guilt, or complete in Christ. But the believer is declared, by the authoritative voice of the Holy Ghost in scripture, to be "complete in Christ" — "Perfect, as pertaining to his conscience" — "Perfected in perpetuity" — "Clean every whit" — "accepted in the beloved" — "Made [or become] the righteousness of God in Christ."

And all this through the sacrifice of the cross. That precious atoning death of Christ forms the solid and irrefragable foundation of the Christian's standing. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." A seated Christ is the glorious proof and the perfect definition of the believer's Place in the presence of God. Our Lord Christ, having

glorified God about our sins, and borne His judgment on our entire condition as sinners, has conducted as, in living association with Himself, into a place, not only of forgiveness, acceptance, and peace, but of complete deliverance from the dominion of sin — a place of assured victory over everything that could possibly be against us, whether indwelling sin, the fear of Satan, the law, or this present evil world.

Such, we repeat, is the absolutely settled standing of the believer, if we are to be taught by holy scripture. And we earnestly entreat the Christian reader not to be satisfied with anything less than this. Let him not any longer accept the muddled teachings of Christendom's creeds, and its liturgical services, which only drive the soul back into the darkness, distance, and bondage of Judaism — that system which God found fault with, and which He has for ever abolished, because it did not meet His holy mind, or satisfy His Loving heart, in giving the worshipper perfect peace, perfect liberty, perfect nearness to Himself, and that for ever.

We solemnly call upon all the Lord's people, throughout the various sections of the professing church, to consider where they are, and to see how far they understand and enjoy the true Christian position, as set forth in the various passages of scripture which we have quoted, and which might easily be multiplied a hundredfold. Let them diligently and faithfully compare the teachings of Christendom with the word of God, and see how far they agree. In this way they will find how completely the professing Christianity of the present day stands in contrast with the living teachings of the New Testament; and, as a consequence, souls are robbed of the precious privileges which belong to them as Christians, and they are kept in the moral distance which characterised the Mosaic economy.

All this is most deplorable. It grieves the Holy Spirit, wounds the heart of Christ, dishonours the grace of God, and contradicts the plainest statements of holy scripture. We are most thoroughly persuaded that the condition of thousands of precious souls at this moment is enough to make the heart bleed; and all this, to a large extent, is traceable to Christendom's teachings, its creeds and its formularies. Where will you find, amid the ordinary ranks of Christian profession, a person in the enjoyment of a perfectly purged

conscience, of peace with God, of the Spirit of adoption? Is it not true that people are publicly and systematically taught that it is the height of presumption for any one to say that his sins *are* all forgiven — that he *has* eternal life — that he *is* justified from all things — that he *is* accepted in the Beloved — that he *is* sealed with the Holy Ghost — that he cannot be lost, because he is actually united to Christ by the indwelling Spirit? Are not all these Christian privileges practically denied and ignored in Christendom? Are not people taught that it is dangerous to be too confident — that it is morally safer to live in doubt and fear — that the very utmost we can look for is the hope of getting to heaven when we die? Where are souls taught the glorious truths connected with the new creation? Where are they rooted and grounded in the knowledge of their standing in a risen and glorified Head in the heavens? Where are they led into the enjoyment of those things which are freely given of God to His beloved people?

Alas! alas! we grieve to think of the only true answer which can be given to such inquiries. The flock of Christ is scattered upon the dark mountains and desolate moors. The souls of God's people are left in the dim distance which characterised the Jewish system. They know not the meaning of the rent veil, of nearness to God, of conscious acceptance in the Beloved. The very table of the Lord is shrouded with the dark and chilling mists of superstition, and surrounded by the repulsive barriers of a dark and depressing legality. Accomplished redemption, full remission of sins, perfect justification before God, acceptance in a risen Christ, the Spirit of adoption, the bright and blessed hope of the coming of the Bridegroom — all these grand and glorious realities — these chartered privileges of the Church of God — are practically set aside by Christendom's teachings and religious machinery.

Some, perhaps, may think we have drawn too gloomy a picture. We can only say — and we say it with all sincerity — would to God it were so! We fear the picture is far too true; yea, the reality is far more appalling than the picture. We are deeply and painfully impressed with the fact, that the condition, not merely of the professing church, but of thousands of the true sheep of the flock of

Christ, is such, that if we only realised it as God sees it, it would break our hearts.

However, we must pursue our subject, and by so doing furnish the very best remedy that can possibly be suggested for the deplorable condition of so many of the Lord's people.

We have dwelt upon that precious work which our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished for us, in the putting away of all our *sins*, and in the condemnation of *sin*, securing for us perfect remission of the former, and entire deliverance from the latter, as a ruling power. The Christian is one who is not only forgiven but delivered. Christ has died for him, and he has died in Christ. Hence he is free, as one who is raised from the dead, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is a new creation. He has passed from death unto life. Death and judgment are behind him, and nothing but glory before him. He possesses an unblotted title and an unclouded prospect.

Now, if all this be indeed true of every child of God — and scripture says it is — what more do we want? Nothing, as to title; nothing, as to standing; nothing, as to hope. As to all these, we have absolute, divine perfection. But then our *state* is not perfect, our *walk* is not perfect. We are still in the body, compassed about with manifold infirmities, exposed to manifold temptations, liable to stumble, to fall, and to wander. We are unable of ourselves to think a right thought, or to keep ourselves for one moment in the blessed position into which grace has introduced us. True it is, we have everlasting life, and we are linked to the living Head in heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down to earth, so that we are eternally secure. Nothing can ever touch our life, inasmuch as it is "hid with Christ in God.'

But while nothing can touch our life, or interfere with our standing, yet, seeing that our state is imperfect, and our walk imperfect, our communion is liable to be interrupted, and hence it is that we need

THE PRESENT WORK OF CHRIST FOR US.

Jesus lives at the right hand of God for us. His active intervention on our behalf never ceases for a single moment. He has passed through the heavens, in virtue of accomplished atonement, and there He ever carries on His perfect advocacy for us before our God. He is there as our subsisting righteousness, to maintain us ever in the divine integrity of the position and relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us. Thus we read, in Romans 5:10, "If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." So also, in Hebrews 4, we read, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted, in like manner, without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Again, in Hebrews 7: "But this man, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And in Hebrews 9: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Then, in the first epistle of John, we have the same great subject presented under a somewhat different aspect. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not our sins only, but also for the whole world."

How precious is all this to the true-hearted Christian who is ever conscious deeply and painfully conscious — of his weakness, need, infirmity, and failure? How, we may lawfully inquire, is it possible for any one, with his eye resting on such passages as we have just quoted, to say nothing of his own self-consciousness, the sense of his own imperfect state and walk, to call in question the Christian's need of the unceasing ministry of Christ on his behalf? Is it not marvellous that any reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews, any

observer of the state and walk of the most advanced believer, should be found denying the application of Christ's priesthood and advocacy to Christians now?

For whom, let us ask, is Christ now living and acting at the right hand of God? Is it for the world? Clearly not, for He says, in John 18, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." And who are these? Are they the Jewish remnant? Nay; that remnant is yet to appear on the scene. Who are they then? Believers, children of God, Christians, who are now passing through this sinful world, liable to fail and to contract defilement every step of the way. These are the subjects of Christ's priestly ministry. He died to make them clean. He lives to keep them clean. By His death He expiated our guilt, and by His life He cleanses us, through the action of the word by the power of the Holy Ghost. "This is he that came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood." We have expiation and cleansing through a crucified Saviour. The double stream emanated from the pierced side of Christ, dead for us. All praise to His name!

We have all, in virtue of the precious death of Christ. Is it a question of our guilt? It is cancelled by the blood of atonement. Is it a question of our daily shortcomings? We have an Advocate with the Father — a great High Priest with God. "If any man sin." He does not say, "If any man repent." No doubt, there is, and must be, repentance and self-judgment. But how are they produced? Whence do they proceed? Here it is: "We have an advocate with the Father." It is His all-prevailing intercession that procures for the sinning one the grace of repentance, self-judgment, and confession.

It is of the very utmost importance for the Christian reader to be thoroughly clear as to this great cardinal truth of the advocacy or priesthood of Christ. We sometimes erroneously think that when we fail in our work something has to be done on our part to set matters straight between our souls and God. We forget that, ere we are even conscious of the failure — before our conscience becomes really cognisant of the fact — our blessed Advocate has been to the Father about it; and it is to His intercession we are indebted for the grace of repentance, confession, and restoration. "If any man sin, we have" — what? The blood to return to? No; mark carefully what the Holy

Ghost declares. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Why does He say, "the righteous?" Why not the gracious, the merciful, the sympathising? Is He not all this? Most surely; but not any one of these attributes would be in place here, inasmuch as the blessed apostle is putting before us the consolatory truth, that in all our errors, our sins, and our failures, we have "a righteous" representative ever before the righteous God, the holy Father, so that our affairs can never fall through. "He *ever* liveth to make intercession for us;" and because He ever liveth, "He is able to save to the *uttermost*" — right through to the very end — "them that come unto God by him."

What solid comfort is here for the people of God! And how needful for our souls to be established in the knowledge and sense of it. Some there are who have an imperfect sense of the true *standing* of a Christian, because they do not see what Christ has done for them in the past. Others, on the contrary, have such an entirely one-sided view of the *state* of the Christian, that they do not see our need of what Christ is doing for us now. Both must be corrected. The former are ignorant of the extent and value of the atonement; the latter are ignorant of the place and application of the advocacy. Such is the perfection of our *standing*, that the apostle can say, "As he is, so are we in this world." If this were all, we should certainly have no need of priesthood or advocacy. But then, such is our *state*, that the apostle has to say, "If any man sin." This proves our continual need of the Advocate. And, blessed be God, we have Him continually; we have Him *ever living for us*. He lives and serves on high. He is our subsisting righteousness before our God. He lives to keep us always right in heaven, and to set us right when we go wrong upon earth. He is the divine and indissoluble link between our souls and God.

PART 4.

Having, in the three preceding papers of this series, sought to unfold the grand foundation truths connected with the work of Christ for us — His work in the past, and His work in the present — His atonement, and His advocacy; we shall now seek, by the gracious aid of the Spirit of God, to present to the reader something of what the Scriptures teach us as to the second branch of our subject, namely,

CHRIST AS AN OBJECT FOR THE HEART.

It is a wonderfully blessed thing to be able to say, "I have found an object which perfectly satisfies my heart — I have found Christ." It is this which gives true elevation above the world. It renders us thoroughly independent of the resources to which the unconverted heart ever betakes itself. It gives *settled rest*. It imparts a calmness and quietness to the spirit which the world cannot comprehend. The poor votary of the world may think the life of the true Christian a very slow, dull, stupid affair indeed. He may marvel how such an one can manage to get on without what he calls amusement, recreation, and pleasure; no theatres — no balls or parties — no concerts — no cards or billiards — no hunts or races — no club or news-room — no cricket or croquet parties.

To deprive the unconverted man of such things would almost drive him to despair or lunacy. But the Christian does not want such things, would not have them. They would be a perfect weariness to him. We speak, of course, of the true Christian, of one who is not merely a Christian in name but in reality. Alas! alas! many profess to be Christians, and take very high ground in their profession, who are, nevertheless to be found mixed up in all the vain and frivolous pursuits of the men of this world. They may be seen at the communion table on the Lord's Day and at a theatre or a concert on Monday. They may be found assaying to take part in some one or other of the many branches of Christian work on Sunday, and, during the week, you may see them in the ball-room, at the race-course, or some such scene of folly and vanity.

It is very evident that such persons know nothing of Christ as an object for the heart. Indeed, it is very questionable how any one with a single spark of divine life in the soul can find pleasure in the wretched pursuits of a godless world. The true and earnest Christian turns away from such things — turns away instinctively. And this, not merely because of the positive wrong and evil of them — though most surely he feels them to be wrong and evil — but because he has no taste for them, and because he has found something infinitely superior, something which perfectly satisfies all the desires of the new nature. Could we imagine an angel from heaven taking pleasure

at a ball, a theatre, or a racecourse? The bare thought is supremely ridiculous. All such scenes are perfectly foreign to a heavenly being.

And what is a Christian? He is a heavenly man; he is a partaker of the divine nature. He is dead to the world — dead to sin — alive to God. He has not a single link with the world. He belongs to heaven. He is no more of the world than Christ his Lord. Could Christ take part in the amusements, gaieties, and follies of the world? The very idea were blasphemy. Well, then, what of the Christian? Is he to be found where his Lord could not be? Can he consistently take part in things which he knows in his heart are contrary to Christ? Can he go into places, and scenes, and circumstances in which he must admit his Saviour and Lord can take no part? Can he go and have fellowship with a world which hates the One to whom he professes to owe everything?

It may, perhaps, seem to some of our readers that we are taking too high ground. We would ask such, what ground are we to take? Surely Christian ground, if we are Christians. Well, then, if we are to take Christian ground, how are we to know what that ground really is? Assuredly from the New Testament. And what does it teach? Does it afford any warrant for the Christian to mix himself, in any shape or form, with the amusements and vain pursuits of this present evil world? Let us hearken to the weighty words of our blessed Lord, in John 13. Let us hear from His lips the truth as to our portion, our position, and our path in this world. He says, addressing the Father, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because *they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Verses 14-18.

Is it possible to conceive a closer measure of identification than that set before us in these words? Twice over, in this brief passage, our Lord declares that we are not of the world, even as He is not. What has our blessed Lord to do with the world? Nothing. The world has utterly rejected Him, and cast Him out. It nailed Him to a shameful cross, between two malefactors. The world lies as fully

and as freshly under the charge of all this, as though the act of the crucifixion took place yesterday, at the very centre of its civilisation, and with the unanimous consent of all. There is not so much as a single moral link between Christ and the world. Yea, the world is stained with His murder, and will have to answer to God for the crime.

How solemn is this! What a serious consideration for Christians! We are passing through a world that crucified our Lord and Master, and He declares that we are not of that world, even as He is not of it. Hence it follows that in so far as we have any fellowship with the world, We are false to Christ. What should we think of a wife who could sit, and laugh and joke, with a set of men who had murdered her husband? And yet this is precisely what professing Christians do when they mix themselves up with this present evil world, and make themselves part and parcel of it.

It will perhaps be said, "What are we to do? Are we to go out of the world?" By no means. Our Lord expressly says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." In it, but not of it, is the true principle for the Christian. To use a figure, the Christian in the world is like a diver. He is in the midst of an element which would destroy him, were he not protected from its action, and sustained by unbroken communication with the scene above. And what is the Christian to do in the world? What is his mission? Here it is: As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." And again, in John 20:21, "As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you."

Such is the Christian's mission. He is not to shut himself within the walls of a monastery or convent. Christianity does not consist in joining a brotherhood or a sisterhood. Nothing of the kind. We are called to move up and down in the varied relations of life, and to act in our divinely-appointed spheres to the glory of God. It is not a question of what we are doing, but of how we do it. All depends upon the object which governs our hearts. If Christ be the commanding and absorbing object of the heart, all will be right. If He be not, nothing is right. Two persons may sit down at the same table to eat; the one eats to gratify his appetite, the other eats to the

glory of God — eats simply to keep his body in proper working order as God's vessel, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the instrument for Christ's service.

So in everything. It is our sweet privilege to set the Lord always before us. He is our model. As He was sent into the world, so are we. What did He come to do? To glorify God. How did He live? By the Father. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I Live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John 6:57.

This makes it all so simple. Christ is the standard and touchstone for everything. It is no longer a question of mere right and wrong according to human rules. It is simply a question of what is worthy of Christ. Would He do this or that? Would He go here or there? "He left us an example that we should follow *His* steps;" and, most assuredly, we should not go where we cannot trace His blessed footsteps. If we go hither and thither to please ourselves, we are not treading in His steps, and we cannot expect to enjoy His blessed presence.

Christian reader, here is the real secret of the whole matter. The grand question is just this — Is Christ my one object? What am I living for? Can I say, "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?" Nothing less than this is worthy of a Christian. It is a poor miserable thing to be content with being saved, and then to go on with the world, and live for self-pleasing and self-interest — to accept salvation as the fruit of Christ's toil and passion, and then live at a distance from Himself. What should we think of a child who only cared about the good things provided by his father's hand, and never sought his father's company — yea, preferred the company of strangers? We should justly despise him. But how much more despicable is the Christian, who owes his present and his eternal all to the work of Christ, and yet is content to live at a cold distance from His blessed Person, caring not for the furtherance of His cause — the promotion of His glory!

PART 5.

If the reader has been enabled, through grace, to make his own of what has passed before our minds in this series of papers, he will have a perfect remedy for all uneasiness of conscience and all restlessness of heart. The work of Christ, if only it be laid hold of by an artless faith, must, of blessed necessity, meet the former; and the Person of Christ, if only He be contemplated with a single eye, must perfectly meet the latter. If, therefore, we are not in the enjoyment of peace of conscience, it can only be because we are not resting on the finished work of Christ; and if the heart is not at ease, it proves that we are not satisfied with Christ Himself.

And yet, alas! how few, even of the Lord's beloved people, know either the one or the other. How rare is it to find a person in the enjoyment of true peace of conscience and rest of heart! In general, Christians are not a whit in advance of the condition of Old Testament saints. they do not know the blessedness of an accomplished redemption. They are not in the enjoyment of a purged conscience. They cannot draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. They do not apprehend the grand truth of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father." They are, as to their experience, under law. They have never really entered into the deep blessedness of being under the reign of grace. They have life. It is impossible to doubt this. They love divine things. Their tastes, their habits, their aspirations, yea, their very exercises, their conflicts, their anxieties, doubts, and fears, all go to prove the existence of divine life. They are, in a way, separated from the world, but their separation is rather negative than positive. It is more because they see the utter vanity of the world, and its inability to satisfy their hearts, than because they have found an object in Christ. They have lost their taste for the things of the world, but they have not found their place and their portion in the Son of God where He now is at the right hand of God. The things of the world cannot satisfy them, and they are not in the enjoyment of their proper heavenly standing, object, and hope; hence they are in an anomalous condition altogether; they have no certainty, no rest, no fixedness of purpose; they are not happy; they do not know their true bearings; they are neither one thing nor the other.

Is it thus with the reader? We fondly hope not. We trust he is one of those who, through infinite grace, "know the things that are freely given them of God," who know that they have passed from death unto life — that they have eternal life; who enjoy the precious witness of the Spirit; who realise their association with a risen and glorified Head in the heavens, with whom they are linked by the Holy Ghost who dwells in them; who have found their object in the Person of that blessed One whose finished work is the divine and eternal basis of their salvation and peace; and who are earnestly looking for the blessed moment when Jesus shall come to receive them to Himself, that where He is they may be also, to go no more out for ever.

This is Christianity. Nothing else deserves the name. It stands out in bold and striking contrast with the spurious religiousness of the day, which is neither pure Judaism on the one hand, nor pure Christianity on the other, but a wretched mixture, composed of some of the elements of each, which unconverted people can adopt and go on with, because it sanctions the lusts of the flesh, and allows them to enjoy the pleasures and vanities of the world to their heart's content. The arch-enemy of Christ and of souls has succeeded in producing an awful system of religion, half-Jewish, half-Christian, combining, in the most artful manner, the world and the flesh, with a certain amount of scripture so used as to destroy its moral force, and hinder its just application. In the meshes of this system souls are hopelessly entangled. Unconverted people are deceived into the notion that they are very good Christians indeed, and going on all right to heaven. And, on the other hand, the Lord's dear people are robbed of their proper place and privileges, and dragged down by the dark and depressing influence of the religious atmosphere which surrounds and almost suffocates them.

It lies not, we believe, within the compass of human language to set forth the appalling consequences of this mingling of the people of God with the people of the world in one common system of religiousness and theological belief. Its effect upon the former is to blind their eyes to the true moral glories of Christianity as set forth in the pages of the New Testament; and this to such an extent, that if any one attempts to unfold these glories to their view, he is regarded

as a visionary enthusiast, or a dangerous heretic. Its effect upon the latter is to deceive them altogether as to their true condition, character, and destiny. Both classes repeat the same formularies, subscribe the same creed, say the same prayers, are members of the same community partake of the same sacrament, are, in short, ecclesiastically, theologically, religiously one.

It will, perhaps, be said in reply to all this, that our Lord, in His wonderful discourse in Matthew 13, distinctly teaches that the wheat and the tares are to grow together. Yes; but where? In the *church*? Nay; but "in the field;" and He tells us that "*the field is the world.*" To confound these things is to falsify the whole Christian position, and to do away with all godly discipline in the assembly. It is to place the teaching of our Lord in Matthew 13 in opposition to the teaching of the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians 5.

However, we shall not pursue this subject further just now. It is far too important and too extensive to be disposed of in a brief article like the present. We may, perhaps, discuss it more fully on some future occasion. That it demands the serious consideration of the Christian reader we are most thoroughly convinced; bearing, as it does, so manifestly on the glory of Christ on the true interests of His people, on the progress of the gospel, on the integrity of Christian testimony and service, it would be quite impossible to overestimate its importance. But we must leave it for the present, and draw this paper to a close by a brief reference to the third and last branch of our subject, namely,

THE WORD OF CHRIST AS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GUIDE FOR OUR PATH.

If Christ's work suffices for the conscience, if His blessed Person suffices for the heart, then, most assuredly, His precious word suffices for the path. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that we possess in the divine volume of holy scripture all we can ever need, not only to meet all the exigencies of our individual path, but also the varied necessities of the church of God, in the most minute details of her history in this world.

We are quite aware that in making this assertion we lay ourselves open to much scorn and opposition, in more quarters than one. We shall be met on the one hand by the advocates of tradition, and on the other by those who contend for the supremacy of man's reason and will. But this gives us very little concern indeed. We regard the traditions of men, whether fathers, brothers, or doctors, *if presented as an authority*, as the small dust of the balance; and as to human reason, it can only be compared to a bat in the sunshine, dazzled by the brightness, and blindly dashing itself against objects which it cannot see. It is the deepest joy of the Christian's heart to retire from the conflicting traditions and doctrines of men into the calm light of holy scripture; and when encountered by the impudent reasonings of the infidel, the rationalist, and the sceptic, to bow down his whole moral being to the authority and power of holy scripture. He thankfully recognises in the word of God the only perfect standard for doctrine, for morals, for everything. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be *perfect [artios], thoroughly furnished unto all Good works.*"

What more can we need? Nothing. If scripture can make a child "wise unto salvation," and if it can make a man "perfect," and furnish him "thoroughly to all good works," what do we want of human tradition or human reasonings? If God has written a volume for us, if He has graciously condescended to give us a revelation of His mind, as to all we ought to know, and think, and feel, and believe, and do, shall we turn to a poor fellow-mortal — be he ritualist or rationalist — to help us? Far away be the thought! As well might we turn to our fellow-man to add something to the finished work of Christ, in order to render it sufficient for our conscience, or to supply some deficiency in the Person of Christ, in order to render Him a sufficient object for the heart, as to betake ourselves to human tradition or human reason to supply some deficiency in divine revelation.

All praise and thanks to our God, it is not so. He has given us in His own beloved Son all we want for the conscience, for the heart, for the path — for time, with all its changing scenes — for eternity,

with its countless ages. We can say, "Thou, O Christ, art all we want; more than all in Thee we find." There is, there could be, no lack in the Christ of God. His atonement and advocacy must satisfy all the cravings of the most deeply exercised conscience. The moral glories, the powerful attractions, of His divine Person must satisfy the most intense aspirations and longings of the heart. And His peerless revelation — that priceless volume contains within its covers all we can possibly need, from the starting post to the goal of our Christian career.

Christian reader, are not these things so? Dost thou not, from the very centre of thy renewed moral being, own the truth of them? If so, art thou resting, in calm repose, on Christ's work? Art thou delighting in His Person? Art thou submitting in all things to the authority of His word? God grant it may be so with thee, and with all who profess His name! May there be a fuller, clearer, and more decided testimony to "The All-sufficiency of Christ," till "that day! "

C.H.M.

Colossians 4: 12.

Epaphras, The Service of Prayer.

There is a very striking difference between the inspired records of the people of God and all human biographies. The former may truly be said to be "*much in little*"; while many of the latter may as truly be said to be "*little in much*." The history of one of the Old Testament saints — a history stretching over a period of 365 years — is summed up in two short clauses — "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5: 24). How brief! but yet how full, how comprehensive! How many volumes would man have filled with the records of such a life! And yet, what more could he have said? To walk with God comprehends all that could possibly be said of any one.

A man may travel round the globe; he may preach the gospel in every clime; he may suffer in the cause of Christ; he may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick; he may read, write, print and publish; in short, he may do all that ever man could or did do; and yet it may be all summed up in that brief clause, "He walked with God." And right well it will be for him if it can be so summed up. One may do nearly all that has been enumerated and yet never walk with God one hour; yea, one may not even know the meaning of a walk with God. The thought of this is deeply solemnising and practical. It should lead us to the earnest cultivation of the hidden life, without which the most showy services will prove to be but mere flash and smoke.

There is something peculiarly touching in the mode in which the name of Epaphras is introduced to our notice in the New Testament. The allusions to him are very brief, but very pithy. He seems to have been the very stamp of man which is so much needed at the present moment. His labours, so far as the inspired penman has recorded them, do not seem to have been very showy or attractive. They were not calculated to meet the human eye or elicit human praise. But oh, they were most precious labours — peerless, priceless labours! They were the labours of the closet, labours within the closed door, labours in the sanctuary, labours without which all beside must

prove barren and worthless. He is not placed before us by the sacred biographer as a powerful preacher, a laborious writer, a great traveller, which he may have been, and which are all truly valuable in their place.

The Holy Ghost, however, has not told us that Epaphras was any of the three; but then, He has placed this singularly interesting character before us in a manner calculated to stir the depths of our moral and spiritual being. He has presented him to us as *a man of prayer* — earnest, fervent, agonising prayer; prayer not for himself, but for others. Let us harken to the inspired testimony:

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently [agonising] for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis" (Col. 4: 12-13). Such was Epaphras! Would there were hundreds like him in this our day! We are thankful for preachers, thankful for writers, thankful for travellers in the cause of Christ; but we want men of prayer, men of the closet, men like Epaphras.

We are happy to see men on their feet preaching Christ; happy to see them able to ply the pen of a ready writer in the noble cause; happy to see them making their way, in the true evangelistic spirit, into "the regions beyond"; happy to see them, in the true pastoral spirit, going again and again to visit their brethren in every city. God forbid that we should undervalue or speak disparagingly of such honourable services; yea, we prize them more highly than words could convey.

But then, at the back of all we want a spirit of prayer — fervent, agonising, persevering prayer. Without this, nothing can prosper. A prayerless man is a sapless man. A prayerless preacher is a profitless preacher. A prayerless writer will send forth barren pages. A prayerless evangelist will do but little good. A prayerless pastor will have but little food for the flock. We want men of prayer, men like Epaphras, men whose closet walls witness their agonising labours. These are, unquestionably, the men for the present moment.

There are immense advantages attending the labours of the closet, advantages quite peculiar, advantages for those who engage in them, and advantages for those who are the subjects of them. They are quiet, unobtrusive labours. They are carried on in retirement, in the hallowed, soul-subduing solitude of the divine presence, outside the range of mortal vision.

How little would the Colossians have known of the loving, earnest labours of Epaphras had the Holy Ghost not mentioned them! It is possible that some of them might have deemed him deficient in zealous care on their behalf: it is probable that there were persons then, as there are those now, who would measure a man's care or sympathy by his visits or letters. This would be a false standard. They should see him on his knees to know the amount of his care and sympathy. A love of travel *might* take me from London to Edinburgh to visit the brethren. A love of scribbling might lead me to write letters by every mail. Naught save a love for souls, a love for Christ, could ever lead me to agonise as Epaphras did, on behalf of the people of God, "that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Again, the precious labours of the closet demand no special gift, no peculiar talents, no pre-eminent mental endowments. Every Christian can engage in them. A man may not have the ability to preach, teach, write, or travel; but every man can pray. One sometimes hears of a *gift* of prayer. It is not a pleasant expression. It falls gratefully on the ear. It often means a mere fluent utterance of certain known truths which the memory retains and the lips give forth. This is poor work to be at. This was not the way with Epaphras. This is not what we want and long for. We want a real *spirit* of prayer. We want a spirit that enters into the present need of the Church, and bears that need in persevering, fervent, believing intercession before the throne of grace. This spirit may be exercised at all times, and under all circumstances. Morning, noon, eventide, or midnight will answer for the closet labourer.

The heart can spring upward to the throne in prayer and supplication at any time. Our Father's ear is ever open, His presence-chamber is ever accessible. Come when or with what we may, He is always ready to hear, ready to answer. He is the Hearer, the

Answerer and the Lover of importunate prayer. He Himself has said, "Ask . . . Seek . . . Knock"; "Men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint"; "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"; "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." These words are of universal application. They are intended for all God's children. The feeblest child of God can pray, can watch, can get an answer, and return thanks.

Furthermore, nothing is so calculated to give one a deep interest in people as the habit of praying constantly for them. Epaphras would be intensely interested in the Christians at Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. His interest made him pray, and his prayers made him interested. The more we are interested for any one, the more we shall pray for him; and the more we pray, the more interested we become. Whenever we are drawn out in prayer for people, we are sure to rejoice in their growth and prosperity. So, also, in reference to the unconverted. When we are led to wait on God about them, their conversion is looked for with the deepest anxiety, and hailed, when it comes, with unfeigned thankfulness. The thought of this should stir us up to imitate Epaphras, on whom the Holy Ghost has bestowed the honourable epithet of "a servant of Christ," in connection with his fervent prayers for the people of God.

Finally, the highest inducement that can be presented to cultivate the spirit of Epaphras is the fact of its being so directly in unison with the spirit of Christ. This is the most elevated motive. Christ is engaged on behalf of His people. He desires that they should "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God;" and those who are led forth in prayer in reference to this object are privileged to enjoy high communion with the great Intercessor. How marvellous that poor, feeble creatures down here should be permitted to pray about that which engages the thoughts and interests of the Lord of glory! What a powerful link there was between the heart of Epaphras and the heart of Christ when the former was labouring for his brethren at Colosse!

Christian reader, let us ponder the example of Epaphras. Let us imitate it. Let us fix our eyes on some Colosse or other, and labour fervently in prayer for the Christians therein. The present is a deeply solemn moment. Oh for men like Epaphras — men who are willing

to labour on their knees for the cause of Christ, or to wear, if it should be so, the noble bonds of the gospel. Such was Epaphras. We see him as a man of prayer (Col. 4: 12), and as a companion in bonds with the devoted apostle of the Gentiles (Phil. 23).

May the Lord stir up amongst us a spirit of earnest prayer and intercession. May He raise up many of those who shall be cast in the same spiritual mould as Epaphras. These are the men for the present need.

1 Thessalonians 1

Conversion: What is it?

Part 1

1 Thessalonians 1 presents a very striking and beautiful picture of what we may truly call *genuine conversion*. We propose to study the picture in company with the reader. If we are not much mistaken, we shall find the study at once interesting and profitable. It will furnish an answer, distinct and clear, to the question which stands at the head of this article, namely, What is conversion?

Nor is this by any means a small matter. It is well, in days like these, to have a divine answer to such a question. We hear a good deal now-a-days about cases of conversion; and we would heartily bless God for every soul truly converted to Him.

We need hardly say we believe in the absolute, the indispensable, the universal necessity of divine conversion. Let a man be what he may; be he Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, Protestant or Roman Catholic; in short, whatever be his nationality, his ecclesiastical position, or his theological creed, he must be converted else he is on the broad and direct road to an everlasting hell.

There is no one born a Christian, in the true sense of that word. Neither can anyone be educated into Christianity. It is a fatal mistake, a deadly delusion, a deceit of the arch-enemy of souls, for anyone to think that he can be a Christian either by birth or education, or that he can be made a Christian by water baptism, or by any religious ceremony whatsoever. A man becomes a Christian only by being divinely converted. We would earnestly press on the attention of all whom it may concern, the urgent and absolute necessity in every case of true conversion to God.

This cannot be overlooked. It is the height of folly for anyone to attempt to ignore or to make light of it. For an immortal being — one who has a boundless eternity stretching away before him — to neglect the solemn question of his conversion, is the wildest fatuity

of which anyone can possibly be guilty. In comparison with this most weighty subject, all other things dwindle into utter insignificance. The various objects that engage the thoughts and absorb the energies of men and women in the busy scene around us, are but as the small dust of the balance in comparison with this one grand, momentous question of the soul's conversion to God. All the speculations of commercial life, all the schemes of money-making, the absorbing question of profitable investment, all the pursuits of the pleasure hunter — the theatre the concert, the ball-room, the billiard-room, the card-table, the dice-box, the race-course, the hunting-ground, the drinking saloon — all the numberless and nameless things that the poor unsatisfied heart longs after, and grasps at — all are but as the vapour of the morning, the foam on the water, the smoke from the chimney-top, the withered leaf of autumn — all vanish away, and leave an aching void behind. The heart remains unsatisfied, the soul unsaved, because unconverted.

And what then? Tremendous question! What remains at the end of all this scene of commercial excitement, political strife and ambition, money-making and pleasure hunting? Why, then the man has to face death! "It is appointed unto men once to die." There is no getting over this. There is no discharge in this war. All the wealth of the universe could not purchase one moment's respite at the hand of the ruthless foe. All the medical skill which earth affords, all the fond solicitude of affectionate relatives and friends, all their tears, all their sighs, all their entreaties cannot stave off the dreaded moment, or cause the king of terrors to sheathe his terrible sword. Death cannot be disposed of by any art of man. The moment *must* come when the link is to be snapped which connects the heart with all the fair and fascinating scenes of human life. Fondly loved friends, charming pursuits, coveted objects, all must be given up. A thousand worlds could not avert the stroke. Death must be looked at straight in the face. It is an awful mystery — a tremendous fact — a stern reality. It stands full in front of every unconverted man, woman, and child beneath the canopy of Heaven; and it is merely a question of time — hours, days, months, or years — when the boundary line must be crossed which separates time, with all its empty, vain, shadowy pursuits, from eternity with all its stupendous realities.

And what then? Let Scripture answer. Nothing else can. Men would fain reply according to their own vain notions. They would have us believe that after death comes annihilation. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Empty conceit! Vain delusion! Foolish dream of the human imagination blinded by the god of this world! How could an immortal soul be annihilated? Man, in the garden or Eden, became the possessor of a never-dying spirit. "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a *living soul*" — not a dying soul. The soul must live forever. Converted or unconverted, it has eternity before it. Oh, the overpowering weight of this consideration to every thoughtful spirit! No human mind can grasp its immensity. It is beyond our comprehension, but not beyond our belief.

Let us harken to the voice of God. What does Scripture teach? One line of holy Scripture is quite sufficient to sweep away ten thousand arguments and theories of the human mind. Does death annihilate? Nay! "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement."

Mark these words, "*After this* the judgement." And this applies only to those who die in their sins, only to unbelievers. For the Christian, judgement is passed forever, as Scripture teaches in manifold places. It is important to note this, because men tell us that, inasmuch as there is eternal life only in Christ, therefore all who are out of Christ shall be annihilated.

Not so says the Word of God. There is judgement after death. And what will be the issue of the judgement? Again Scripture speaks in language as clear as it is solemn. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them; and *they were judged every man according to their works*.... This is the second death" — the lake of fire. "And whosoever was

not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20).

All this is as plain as words can make it. There is not the slightest ground for demur or difficulty. For all whose names are in the book of life there is no judgement at all. Those whose names are not in that book shall be judged according to their works. And what then? Annihilation? Nay; but "the lake of fire;" and that forever and forever.

How overwhelming is the thought of this! An unconverted person, whoever and whatever he is, has death, judgement, and the lake of fire before him, and every throb of his pulse brings him nearer and nearer to those awful realities. It is not more sure that the sun shall rise, at a certain moment, to-morrow morning, than that the reader must, ere long, pass into eternity; and if his name is not in the book of life — if he is not converted — if he is not in Christ, he will assuredly be judged according to his works, and the certain issue of that judgement will be the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and that through the endless ages of a dark and gloomy eternity. Oh! the terrible monotony of hell.

The reader may perhaps marvel at our dwelling at such length on this dreadful theme. He may feel disposed to ask, "Will this convert people?" If it does not convert them, it may lead them to see their need of conversion. It may lead them to see their imminent danger. It may induce them to flee from the wrath to come. Why did the blessed apostle reason with Felix on the subject of "judgement to come"? Surely that he might persuade him to turn from his evil ways and live. Why did our blessed Lord Himself so constantly press upon His hearers the solemn reality of eternity? Why did He so often speak of the deathless worm and the unquenchable fire? Surely it was for the purpose of rousing them to a sense of their danger, that they might flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.

Are we wiser than He? Are we more tender? Have we found out some better mode of converting people? Are we to be afraid of pressing upon our readers the same solemn theme which our Lord so pressed upon the men of His time? Are we to shrink from offending polite ears by the plain declaration that all who die unconverted

must inevitably stand before the great white throne, and pass into the lake of fire? God forbid! It must not be. We solemnly call upon the unconverted reader to give his undivided attention to the all-important question of his soul's salvation. Let nothing induce him to neglect it. Let neither cares, pleasures, nor duties so occupy him as to hide from his view the magnitude and deep seriousness of this matter. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Oh! reader, if thou art unsaved, unconverted, let us earnestly entreat thee to ponder these things, and rouse thee to a sense of thy need of being savingly converted to God. This is the only way of entering His kingdom. So our Lord Christ distinctly tells us; and we trust you know this at least, that not one jot or tittle of His holy sayings can ever pass away. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but His Word can never pass away. All the power of earth and hell, men and devils, cannot make void the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Either of two things for thee — *conversion here, or eternal damnation hereafter.*

Thus it stands, if we are to be guided by the Word of God; and, in view of this, is it possible for us to be too earnest, too vehement, too importunate in urging upon every unconverted soul with whom we may come in contact, either with voice or pen, the indispensable necessity, this very moment, of fleeing from the wrath to come, fleeing to that blessed Saviour who died on the cross for our salvation; who stands with open arms to receive all who come; and who declares in His own sweet and precious grace, "*Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out*"?

Part 2

In our previous paper, we have sought to set forth the absolute need, in every case, of conversion. Scripture establishes this point in such a way as to leave no possible ground of doubt for anyone who bows to its holy authority. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18: 3).

This applies, in all its moral force and deep solemnity, to every son and daughter of fallen Adam. There is not so much as a solitary exception, throughout the thousand millions that people this globe. Without conversion, there is — there can be — no entrance into the kingdom of God. Every unconverted soul is outside the kingdom of

God. It matters not, in the smallest degree, who I am, or what I am; if I am unconverted, I am in "the kingdom of darkness," under the power of Satan, in my sins, and on the way to hell.

I may be a person of blameless morals; of spotless reputation; a high professor of religion; a worker in the vineyard; a Sunday-school teacher; an office-bearer in some branch of the professing church; an ordained minister; a deacon, elder, pastor or bishop; a most charitable individual; a munificent donor to religious and benevolent institutions; looked up to, sought after, and revered by all because of my personal worth and moral influence. I may be all this and more; I may be, and I may have, all that it is possible for a human being to be or to have, and yet be unconverted, and hence outside the kingdom of God, and in the kingdom of Satan, in my guilt, and on the broad road that leads straight down to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Such is the plain and obvious meaning and force of our Lord's words in Matt. 18: 3. There is no possibility of evading it. The words are as clear as a sunbeam. We cannot get over them. They bear down, with what we may truly call tremendous solemnity, upon every unconverted soul on the face of the earth. "Except ye be converted, ye *cannot* enter the kingdom of heaven." This applies, with equal force, to the degraded drunkard that rolls along the street, worse than a beast, and to the unconverted Good Templar or teetotaler who prides himself on his sobriety, and is perpetually boasting of the number of days, weeks, months, or years during which he has refrained from all intoxicating drink. They are both alike outside the kingdom of God; both in their sins; both on the way to eternal destruction.

True it is that the one has been converted from drunkenness to sobriety — a *very great* blessing indeed, in a moral and social point

of view — but conversion from drunkenness to a temperance, society is not conversion to God; it is not turning from darkness to light, it is not entering the kingdom of God's dear Son. There is just this difference between the two, that the teetotaler may be building upon his temperance, pluming himself upon his morality, and thus deceiving himself into the vain notion that he is all right, whereas, in reality, he is not. The drunkard is palpably and unmistakably wrong. Everybody knows that no drunkard can inherit the kingdom of God; but neither can an unconverted teetotaler. Both are outside. Conversion to God is absolutely indispensable for the one as well as the other; and the same may be said of all classes, all grades, all shades, all castes and conditions of men under the sun. There is no difference as to this great question. It holds good as to all alike, be their outward character or social status what it may — "Except ye be converted, *ye cannot* enter the kingdom of heaven."

How important, then — yea, how momentous the question for each one, "Am I *converted?*" It is not possible for human language to set forth the magnitude and solemnity of this inquiry. For any one to think of going on, from day to day, and year to year, without a clear and thorough settlement of this most weighty question, can only be regarded as the most egregious folly of which a human being can be guilty. If a man were to leave his earthly affairs in an uncertain, unsettled condition, he would lay himself open to the charge of the grossest and most culpable neglect and carelessness. But what are the most urgent and weighty temporal affairs when compared with the salvation of the soul? All the concerns of time are but as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, when compared with the interests of the immortal soul — the grand realities of eternity.

Hence it is, in the very highest degree, irrational for any one to rest for a single hour without a clear and settled assurance that he is truly converted to God. A converted soul has crossed the boundary line that separates the saved from the unsaved — the children of light from the children of darkness — the Church of God from this present evil world. The converted soul has death and judgement behind him, and glory before. He can be as sure of Heaven as though he were already there; indeed as a man in Christ he belongs

there already. He has a title without a blot, and a prospect without a cloud. He knows Christ as his Saviour and Lord; God as his Father and Friend; the Holy Ghost as his blessed Comforter, Guide, and Teacher; Heaven as his bright and happy home. Oh! the unspeakable blessedness of being converted. Who can utter it? "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us [believers] by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2: 9-10).

And now let us inquire what this conversion is, whereof we speak. Well, indeed, will it be for us to be divinely instructed as to this. An error here will prove disastrous in proportion to the interests at stake.

Many are the mistaken notions in reference to conversion. Indeed we might conclude, from the very fact of the vast importance of the subject, that the great enemy of our souls and of the Christ of God would seek, in every possible way, to plunge us into error respecting it. If he cannot succeed in keeping people in utter carelessness as to the subject of conversion, he will endeavour to blind their eyes as to its true nature. If, for example, a person has been roused, by some means or other, to a sense of the utter vanity and unsatisfactoriness of worldly amusements, and the urgent necessity of a change of life, the arch-deceiver will seek to persuade such an one to become religious, to busy himself with ordinances, rites and ceremonies, to give up balls and parties, theatres and concerts, drinking, gambling, hunting and horse-racing; in a word, to give up all sorts of gaiety and amusement, and engage in what is called a religious life, to be diligent in attending the public ordinances of religion, to read the Bible, say prayers, and give alms, to contribute to the support of the great religious and benevolent institutions of the country.

Now, this is not conversion. A person may do all this, and yet be wholly unconverted. A religious devotee whose whole life is spent in vigils, fastings, prayers, self-mortifications and alms deeds, may be as thoroughly unconverted, as far from the kingdom of God as the thoughtless pleasure hunter, whose whole life is spent in the pursuit of objects as worthless as the withered leaf or the faded

flower. The two characters, no doubt, differ widely — as widely perhaps, as any two could differ. But they are both unconverted, both outside the blessed circle of God's salvation, both in their sins. True, the one is engaged in "wicked worked and the other in "dead works;" they are both out of Christ; they are unsaved; they are on the way to hopeless, endless misery. The one, just as surely as the other, if not savingly converted, will find his portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Again, conversion is not a turning from one religious system to another. A man may turn from Judaism, Paganism, Mahometanism, or Popery, to Protestantism, and yet be wholly unconverted. No doubt, looked at from a social, moral, or intellectual standpoint, it is much better to be a Protestant than a Mahometan; but as regards our present thesis, they are both on one common platform, both unconverted. Of one, just as truly as the other, it can be said, unless he is converted, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Conversion is not joining a religious system, be that system ever so pure, ever so sound, ever so orthodox. A man may be a member of the most respectable religious body in Christendom, and yet be an unconverted, unsaved man, on his way to eternal perdition.

So also as to the theological creeds. A man may subscribe to any of the great standards of religious belief, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, John Wesley's sermons, Fox and Barclay, or any other creed, and yet be wholly unconverted, dead in trespasses and sins, and on his way to that place where a single ray of hope can never break in upon the awful gloom of eternity.

Of what use, we may lawfully inquire, is a religious system or a theological creed to a man who has not a single spark of divine life? Systems and creeds cannot quicken, cannot save, cannot give eternal life. A man may work on in religious machinery like a horse in a mill, going round and round, from one year's end to another, leaving off just where he began, in a dreary monotony of dead works. What is it all worth? what does it all come to? where does it all end? *Death!* Yes; and what then? Ah! that is the question Would to God the weight and seriousness of this question were more fully

realized! But further, Christianity itself, in all its full-orbed light, may be embraced as a system of religious belief. A person may be intellectually delighted — almost entranced with the glorious doctrines of grace, a full, free gospel, salvation without works, justification by faith; in short, all that goes to make up our glorious New Testament Christianity. A person may profess to believe and delight in this; he may even become a powerful writer in defence of Christian doctrine, an earnest eloquent preacher of the gospel. All this may be true, and yet the man be wholly unconverted, dead in trespasses and sins, hardened, deceived and destroyed by his very familiarity with the precious truths of the gospel-truths that have never gone beyond the region of his understanding — never reached his conscience never touched his heart, never converted his soul.

This is about the most appalling case of all. nothing can be more awful, more terrible, than the case of a man professing to believe and delight in, yea, actually preaching the gospel of God, and teaching all the grand characteristic truths of Christianity, and yet wholly unconverted, unsaved, and on his way to an eternity of ineffable misery — misery which must needs be intensified to the very highest degree, by the remembrance of the fact that he once professed to believe, and actually undertook to preach the most glorious tidings that ever fell on mortal ears.

O! reader, whoever thou art, do, we entreat of thee, give thy fixed attention to these things. Rest not, for one hour, until thou art assured of thy genuine, unmistakable conversion to God.

Part 3

Having thus far seen the absolute necessity, in every case, of conversion, and having, in some measure, sought to point out what conversion is *not*, we have now to inquire what it *is*. And here we must keep close to the veritable teaching of holy Scripture. We can accept nothing less, nothing different.

It is greatly to be feared that very much of what passes, now-a-days, for conversion is not conversion at all. Many so-called cases of conversion are published and talked of, which cannot stand the test of the Word of God. Many profess to be converted, and are

accredited as such, who prove to be merely stony-ground hearers. There is no depth of spiritual work in the heart, no real action of the truth of God on the conscience, no thorough breaking with the world. It may be the feelings are wrought upon by human influence, and certain evangelical sentiments take possession of the mind; but *self* is not judged; there is a clinging to earth and nature; a lack of that deep-toned earnestness and genuine reality which so remarkably characterise the conversions recorded in the New Testament, and for which we may always look where the work of conversion is divine.

We do not here attempt to account for all these superficial cases; we merely refer to them in order that all who are engaged in the blessed work of evangelization may be led to consider the matter in the light of holy Scripture, and to see how far their own mode of working may call for holy correction. It may be there is too much of the merely human element in our work. We do not leave the Spirit of God to act. We are deficient in faith, in the power and efficacy of the simple work of Christ itself. There may be too much effort to work on the feelings, too much of the emotional and the sensational. Perhaps, too, in our desire to reach results — a desire which may be right enough in itself — we are too ready to accredit and announce, as cases of conversion, many which, alas! are merely ephemeral.

All this demands our serious attention. It is of the very last possible importance that we allow the Spirit of God to work and to display — as He most assuredly will — the fruit of His work. All that He does is well done, and it will speak for itself in due time. There is no necessity for us to blaze around our cases of conversion. all that is divinely real will shine out to the praise of Him to whom all praise is due. and then the workman will have his own deep and holy joy. He will see the results of his work, and think of them in adoring homage and worship at his Masters feet — the only safe and happy place to think of them.

Will this lessen our earnestness? The very reverse; it will intensify our earnestness immensely. We shall be more earnest in pleading with God in secret, and in pleading with our fellows in public.

We shall feel more deeply the divine seriousness of the work, and our own utter insufficiency. We shall ever cherish the wholesome conviction that the work must be of God from first to last. This will keep us in our right place, that of self-emptied dependence upon God, who is the Doer of all the works that are done upon the earth. We shall be more on our faces before the mercy-seat, both in the closet and in the assembly, in reference to the glorious work of conversion; and then, when the golden sheaves and mellow clusters appear, when genuine cases of conversion turn up — cases which speak for themselves, and carry their own credentials with them to all who are capable of judging — then verily shall our hearts be filled with praise to the God of all grace who has magnified the name of His Son Jesus Christ in the salvation of precious souls.

How much better is this than to have our poor hearts puffed up with pride and self-complacency by reckoning up our cases of conversion! How much better, safer and happier to be bowed in worship before the throne, than to have our names heralded to the ends of the earth as great preachers and wonderful evangelists! No comparison, in the judgement of a truly spiritual person. The dignity, reality, and seriousness of the work will be realized; the happiness, the moral security, and the real usefulness of the workman will be promoted; and the glory of God secured and maintained.

Let us see how all this is illustrated in 1 Thessalonians 1. "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: remembering without ceasing your work of *faith* and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope*" — the grand elements of true Christianity — "in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election." How did he know it? By the clear and unquestionable evidence afforded in their practical life — the only way in which the election of any one can be known. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but

also *in power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; *as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*"

The blessed apostle was, in his daily life, the exponent of the gospel which he preached. He *lived* the gospel. He did not demand or exact aught of them. He was not burdensome to them. He preached unto them the precious gospel of God freely; and in order that he might do so, he wrought with labour and travail, night and day. He was as a loving, tender nurse, going in and out among them. There were with him no high-sounding words about himself, or his office, or his authority, or his gifts, or his preaching, or his wonderful doings in other places. He was the loving, lowly, unpretending, earnest, devoted workman, whose work spoke for itself, and whose whole life, his spirit, style, deportment, and habits, were in lovely harmony with his preaching.

How needful for all workmen to ponder these things! We may depend upon it that very much of the shallowness of our work is the fruit of the shallowness of the workman. Where is the power? Where is the demonstration of the Spirit? Where is the "much assurance"? Is there not a terrible lack of these things in our preaching? There may be a vast amount of fluent talking; a great deal of so-called cleverness; and much that may tickle the ear, act on the imagination, awaken a temporary interest, and minister to mere curiosity. But oh! where is the holy unction, the living earnestness, the profound seriousness? And then the living exponent in the daily life and habits — where is this? May the Lord revive His work in the hearts of His workmen, and then we may look for more of the results of the work.

Do we mean to teach that the work of conversion depends upon the workman? Far away be the monstrous notion! The work depends wholly and absolutely on the power of the Holy Ghost, as the very chapter now lying open before us proves beyond all question. It must ever hold good, in every department and every stage of the work, that it is "not by might nor by power; but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

But what kind of instrument does the Spirit ordinarily use? Is not this a weighty question for us workmen? What sort of vessels

are "meet for the Master's use"? Empty vessels — clean vessels. Are we such? Are we emptied of ourselves? Are we cured of our deplorable self-occupation? Are we "clean"? Have we clean hands? Are our associations, our ways, our circumstances, clean? If not, how can the Master use us in His holy service? May we all have grace to weigh these questions in the divine presence! May the Lord stir us all up, and make us more and more vessels such as He can use for His glory!

We shall now proceed with our quotation. The whole passage is full of power. The character of the workman on the one hand, and of the work on the other, demands our most serious attention.

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples [or models] to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything, for they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you."

This was real work. It carried its own credentials with it. There was nothing vague or unsatisfactory about it — no occasion for any reserve in forming or expressing a judgement respecting it. It was clear, distinct, and unmistakable. It bore the stamp of the Master's hand, and carried conviction to every mind capable of weighing the evidence. The work of conversion was wrought, and the fruits of conversion followed in delightful profusion. The testimony went forth far and wide, so that the workman had no need to speak about his work. There was no occasion for him to reckon up and publish the number of conversions at Thessalonica. All was divinely real. It was a thorough work of God's Spirit as to which there could be no possible mistake, and about which it was superfluous to speak.

The apostle had simply preached the Word in the power of the Holy Ghost, in much assurance. There was nothing vague, nothing doubtful about his testimony. He preached as one who fully believed and thoroughly entered into what he was preaching about. It was not the mere fluent utterance of certain known and acknowledged truths

— not the cut and dry statement of certain barren dogmas. No; it was the living outpouring of the glorious gospel of God, coming from a heart that felt profoundly every utterance, and falling upon hearts prepared by God's Spirit for its reception.

Such was the work at Thessalonica — a blessed divine work — all real, the genuine fruit of God's Spirit. It was no mere religious excitement, nothing sensational, no high pressure, no attempt to "get up a revival." All was beautifully calm. The workman, as we are told in Acts 17, "came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews; and as his manner was, he went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures" — Precious, powerful reasoning! would to God we had more of it in our midst! — "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

How simple! Preaching Jesus out of the Scriptures! Yes, here lay the grand secret of Paul's preaching. He preached a living Person, in living power, on the authority of a living Word, and this preaching was received in living faith, and brought forth living fruit, in the lives of the converts. This is the preaching that God has ordained and uses. It is not sermonising, not religious talk, but the preaching of Christ by the Holy Ghost speaking through men who are themselves under the power of what they are preaching. God grant us more of this!

Part 4

The last two verses of our chapter (1 Thess. 1) demand our very special attention. They furnish a remarkable statement of the real nature of conversion. They show, very distinctly, the depth, clearness, fullness, and reality of the work of God's Spirit in those Thessalonian converts. There was no mistaking it. It carried its own credentials with it. It was no uncertain work. It did not call for any careful examination ere it could be accredited. It was a manifest, unmistakable work of God, the fruits of which were apparent to all. "They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how *ye turned to God from idols*, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised

from the dead, Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (vers. 9-10).

Here, then, we have a divine definition of conversion — brief, but comprehensive. It is a turning from and a turning *to*. They turned from idols. There was a complete break with the past, a turning of the back, once and forever, on their former life and habits; a thorough surrender of all those objects that had ruled their hearts and commanded their energies.

Those dear Thessalonians were led to judge, in the light of divine truth, their whole previous course, and not only to judge it, but to abandon it unreservedly. It was no half-and-half work. There was nothing vague or equivocal about it. It was a marked epoch in their history — a grand turning-point in their moral and practical career. It was not a mere change of opinion, or the reception of a new set of principles, a certain alteration in their intellectual views. It was far more than any or all of these things. It was the solemn discovery that their whole past career had been one great, dark, monstrous lie. It was the real heart conviction of this. Divine light had broken in upon their souls, and in the power of that light they judged themselves and the entire of their previous history. There was an out-and-out surrender of that world which had hitherto ruled their hearts' affections; not a shred of it was to be spared.

And what, we may ask, produced this marvellous change? Simply the Word of God brought home to their souls in the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. We have referred to the inspired account of the apostle's visit to Thessalonica. We are told that "he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." He sought to bring their souls into direct contact with the living and eternal Word of God. There was no effort to act on their feelings and imagination. All this the blessed workman judged to be utterly valueless. He had no confidence whatever in it. His confidence was in the Word and Spirit of God. He assured the Thessalonians of this very thing in the most touching manner, in 1 Thess. 2: "For this cause," he says, "thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it *not as the word of men*, but, as it is in truth, *the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

This is what we may call a vital and cardinal point. The Word of God, and that alone, in the mighty hand of the Holy Ghost, produced these grand results in the case of the Thessalonians, which filled the heart of the beloved apostle with unfeigned thanksgiving to God. He rejoiced that they were not linked on to him, but to the living God Himself, by means of His Word. This is an imperishable link. It is as enduring as the Word which forms it. The word of man is as perishable as himself; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. The apostle, as a true workman, understood and felt all this, and hence his holy jealousy, in all his ministry, lest the souls to whom he preached should, in any way, lean upon him instead of on the One whose messenger and minister he was.

Hear what he says to the Corinthians: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you *the testimony of God*. For I determined not to know anything among you, saving Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but *in demonstration of the Spirit* and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but *in the power of God*" (1 Cor. 2: 1-5).

Here we have true ministry — "the testimony of God," and "the demonstration of the Spirit" — the Word and the Holy Ghost. Nothing else is of any value. All mere human influence, human power, and the results produced by human wisdom or energy, are perfectly worthless — yea, positively mischievous. The workman is puffed up by the apparent results of his work paraded and talked of, and the poor souls that are acted upon by this false influence are deceived, and led into an utterly false position and false profession. In a word, the whole thing is disastrous in the extreme.

Not so when the Word of God, in its mighty moral power, and the energy of the Holy Ghost, are brought to bear on the heart and conscience. Then it is we see divine results, as in the case of the Thessalonians. Then indeed it is made apparent, beyond all question, who is the workman. It is not Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, but God Himself, whose work accredits itself, and shall stand forever; all homage to His holy name! The apostle had no need to reckon up and

publish the results of his work at Thessalonica, or rather God's work by his means. It spoke for itself. It was genuine. It bore, with unmistakable distinctness, the stamp of God upon it, and this was quite enough for Paul; and it is quite enough for every true-hearted, self-emptied workman. Paul preached the Word, and that Word was brought home, in the quickening energy of the Holy Ghost, to the hearts of the Thessalonians. It fell into good ground, took root, and brought fruit in abundance.

And let us mark the fruit. "*Ye turned from idols.*" Here we have, in one word, the whole life of every unconverted man, woman, or child on the face of the earth. It is all wrapped up and presented to our view in the one expression, "*idols.*" It is not by any means necessary to bow down to a stock or a stone in order to be an idolater. Whatever commands the heart is an idol; the yielding of the heart to that thing is idolatry, and the one who so yields it is an idolater. Such is the plain, solemn truth in this matter, however unpalatable it may be to the proud human heart. Take that one great, crying, universal sin of "covetousness." What does the inspired apostle call it? He calls it "idolatry." How many hearts are commanded by money! How many worshipers bow down before the idol of gold! What is covetousness? Either a desire to get more, or the love of what we have. We have both forms in the New Testament. The Greek has a word to represent both. But whether it be the desire to grasp, or the desire to hoard, in either case it is idolatry.

And yet the two things may be very unlike in their outward development. The former, that is, the desire to get more, may often be found in connection with a readiness to spend; the latter, on the contrary, is generally linked with an intense spirit of hoarding. There, for example, is a man of great business capacity — a thorough commercial genius — in whose hand everything seems to prosper. He has a real zest for business, an unquenchable thirst for making money. His one object is to get more, to add thousand to thousand, to strengthen his commercial foundation, and enlarge his sphere. He lives, thrives, and revels in the atmosphere of commerce.

He started on his career with a few pence in his pocket, and he has risen to the proud position of a merchant prince. He is not a

miser. He is as ready to scatter as to obtain. He fares sumptuously, entertains with a splendid hospitality, gives munificently to manifold public objects. He is looked up to and respected by all classes of society.

But he loves to get more. He is a covetous man — an idolater. True, he despises the poor miser who spends his nights over his money-bags, "holding strange communion with his gold"; delighting his heart and feasting his eyes with the very sight of the fascinating dust, refusing himself and his family the common necessities of life; going about in rags and wretchedness, rather than spend a penny of the precious hoard; who loves money, not for what it can get or give, but simply for its own sake; who loves to accumulate, not that he may spend, but that he may hoard; whose one ruling desire is to die worth so much wretched dust — strange, contemptible desire!

Now these two are apparently very different, but they meet in one point; they stand on one common platform; they are both covetous, and they are both idolaters. [The two Greek words to which we have alluded in the text: are, (*pleonexia* — the desire to get more), and (*philarguria* — the love of money). Now it is the former that occurs in Col. 3: 5 — "Covetousness, which is idolatry"; and there it stands in the terrible category with some of the very vilest sins that stain the pages of human history.] This may sound harsh and severe, but it is the truth of God, and we must bow down before its holy authority. True it is that nothing is apparently more difficult to bring home to the conscience than the sin of covetousness — that very sin which the Holy Ghost declares to be idolatry. Thousands might see it in the case of the poor degraded miser, who nevertheless would be shocked by its application to a merchant prince.

It is one thing to see it in others, and quite another to judge it in ourselves. The fact is, that nothing but the light of the Word of God shining in upon the soul, and penetrating every chamber of our moral being, can enable us to detect the hateful sin of covetousness. The pursuit of gain — the desire to have more — the spirit of commerce — the ability to make money — the desire to get on — all this is so "highly esteemed amongst men," that very few, comparatively, are prepared to see that it is positively "an

abomination in the sight of God." The natural heart is formed by the thoughts of men. It loves, adores and worships the objects that it finds in this world; and each heart has its own idol. One worships gold, another worships pleasure, another worships power. Every unconverted man is an idolater; and even converted men are not beyond the reach of idolatrous influences, as is evident from the warning note raised by the venerable apostle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5: 21).

Reader, will you permit us to put a plain, pointed question to you, ere we proceed further? Are you converted? Do you profess to be so? Do you take the ground of being a Christian? If so, have you turned from idols? Have you really broken with the world, and with your former self? Has the living Word of God entered your heart, and led you to judge the whole of your past life, whether it has been a life of gayety and thoughtless folly, a life of busy money-making, a life of abominable vice and wickedness, or a life of mere religious routine — Christless, faithless, worthless religion?

Say, how is it? Be thoroughly in earnest. Be assured there is an urgent demand for out-and-out earnestness in this matter. We cannot hide from you the fact that we are painfully conscious of the sad lack of thorough decision amongst us. We have not, with sufficient emphasis or distinctness, "turned from idols." Old habits are retained; former lusts and objects rule the heart. The temper, style, spirit and deportment do not bespeak conversion. We are sadly too like our former selves — too like the openly and confessedly worldly people around us.

All this is really terrible. We fear it is a sad hindrance to the progress of the gospel and the salvation of souls. The testimony falls powerless on the ears of those to whom we speak, because we do not seem as though we ourselves really believe what we are talking about. The apostle could not say to us, as he said to his dear Thessalonian converts, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord . . . so that we need not to speak anything." There is a want of depth, power and markedness in our conversion. The change is not sufficiently apparent. Even where there is a work, there is a tameness, feebleness and vagueness about it truly deplorable and discouraging.

Part 5

We are now called to consider what we may term the positive side of the great subject of conversion. We have seen that it is a turning from idols — a turning from all those objects which ruled our hearts and engaged our affections — the vanities and follies, the lusts and pleasures which made up the whole of our existence in the days of our darkness and blindness. It is, as we read in Acts 26: 18, a turning from darkness, and from the power of Satan; and, as we read in Gal. 1: 4, a turning from this present evil world.

But conversion is much more than all this. It would, in one sense, be but a poor thing if it were merely a turning "from sin, the world, and Satan." No doubt it is a signal mercy to be delivered, once and forever, from all the wretchedness and moral degradation of our former life; from the terrible thralldom of the god and prince of this world; from all the hollowness and vanity of a world that lieth in the arms of the wicked one; and from the love and practice of sin — the vile affections which once held sway over us. We cannot be too thankful for all that is included in this side of the question.

But, we repeat, there is very much more than this. The heart may feel disposed to inquire, "What have we gotten in lieu of all we have given up? Is Christianity merely a system of negations? If we have broken with the world and self — if we have given up our former pleasures and amusements — if, in short, we have turned our back upon what goes to make up life in this world, what have we instead?"

1 Thessalonians 1: 9 furnishes, in one word, the answer to all these inquiries — an answer full, clear, distinct, and comprehensive. it is — "Ye turned to *God*."

Precious answer! Yes, unspeakably precious to all who know aught of its meaning. What have I got instead of my former "idols"? God! Instead of this world's vain and sinful pleasures? God! Instead of its riches, honours, and distinctions? God! Oh, blessed, glorious, perfect Substitute! What had the prodigal instead of the rags of the far country? The best robe in the father's house! Instead of the

swine's husks? The fatted calf of the father's providing! Instead of the degrading servitude of the far country? The father's welcome, his bosom, and his table!

Reader, is not this a blessed exchange? Have we not, in the familiar, but ever charming history of the prodigal a most touching and impressive illustration of true conversion in both its sides? May we not well exclaim, as we gaze on the inimitable picture, "What a conversion! What a turning from and turning to!" Who can utter it? What human tongue can adequately set forth the feelings of the returned wanderer when pressed to the father's bosom and bathed in the light and love of the father's house? The rags, the husks, the swine, the slavery, the cold selfishness, the destitution, the famine, the misery, the moral degradation — all gone, and gone forever; and instead thereof the ineffable delight of that bright and happy home, and, above all, the exquisite feeling that all that festive joy which surrounded him was wakened up by the very fact of his return — that it made the father glad to get him back!

But we shall, perhaps, be told that this is but a figure. Yes; but a figure of what? Of a precious, a divine reality; a figure of what takes place in every instance of true conversion, if only it be looked at from a heavenly standpoint. It is not a mere surrender of the world, with its thousand and one vanities and follies. It is this, no doubt; but it is very much more. It is being brought to God, *brought home*, brought to the Father's bosom, brought into the family; made — not in the language of a barren formulary, but in the power of the Spirit, and by the mighty action of the Word — a child of God, a member of Christ, and an heir of the kingdom.

This, and nothing less, is conversion. Let the reader see that he thoroughly understands it. Let him not be satisfied with anything short of this grand reality — this turning from darkness to light, from the power of Satan, and from the worship of idols, to God. The Christian is, in one sense, as really brought to God now as if he were actually in Heaven. This may seem strong, but it is blessedly true. Hear what the apostle Peter says as to this point: "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to" — what? Heaven when we die? Nay; but "to bring us to God" *now*. So, also, in Rom. 5 we read, "For if, when we were enemies, we were

reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life! And not only so, but we also joy *in God*, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation. "

This is an immense principle. It is not within the compass of human language to set forth all that is involved in being "turned," or "brought to God." Our adorable Lord Jesus Christ brings all who believe in His name into God's presence, in all His own perfect acceptability. They come in all the credit, and virtue, and value of the blood of Jesus, and in all the fragrance of His most excellent name. He brings us into the very same position with Himself. He links us with Himself, and shares with us all He has, and all He is, save His Deity, which is incommunicable. We are perfectly identified with Him.

"Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me; *because I live, ye shall live also.*" Again, "Peace I leave with you, *My peace I give unto you;* not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "These things have I spoken unto you, that *My joy might remain in you,* and that your joy might be full." "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for *all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.*"

So, also, in that marvellous prayer in John 17, we read, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them." "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because *they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" "*As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*"

"And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know

that Thou hast sent Me, *and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.* Father, *I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am;* that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that *the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*"

Now it is utterly impossible to conceive anything higher or more blessed than this. To be so thoroughly identified with the Son of God, to be so wholly one with Him as to share in the very same love wherewith He is loved by the Father, to partake of His peace, His joy, His glory — all this involves the very highest possible measure and character of blessing with which any creature could be endowed. To be saved from the everlasting horrors of the pit of hell; to be pardoned, washed, and justified; to be reinstated in all that Adam lost; to be let into Heaven on any ground or in any character whatsoever, would be marvellous mercy, goodness, and loving-kindness; but to be brought to God in all the love and favour of His own beloved Son, to be intimately associated with Him in all His position before God — His acceptability now — His glory by and by — this, truly, is something which only the heart of God could think of, and only His mighty power accomplish.

Well, all this is involved in the conversion whereof we speak. Such is the magnificent grace of God, such the love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, enemies in our minds by wicked works, serving divers lusts and pleasures, worshipping idols, the blind, degraded slaves of sin and Satan, children of wrath, and going straight to hell.

And the best of it all is, that it both glorifies the name and gratifies the heart of God to bring us into this place of inconceivable blessedness, love, and glory. It would not satisfy the love of His heart to give us any lower place than that of His own Son. Well might the inspired apostle exclaim, in view of all this stupendous grace, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation

of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, *to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved*, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1).

What depth of love, what fullness of blessing, have we here! It is the purpose of God to glorify Himself, throughout the countless ages of eternity, in His dealings with us. He will display, in view of all created intelligences, the riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, by Christ Jesus. Our forgiveness, our justification, our perfect deliverance, our acceptance — all the blessings bestowed upon us in Christ — are for the display of the divine glory throughout the vast universe forever. It would not meet the claims of God's glory, or answer the affections of His heart, to have us in any other position but that of His own well-beloved and only begotten Son.

All this is marvellous. It seems too good to be true. But it is worthy of God, and it is His good pleasure so to act toward us. This is enough for us. It may be, and most assuredly is, too good for us to get, but it is not too good for God to give. He acts toward us according to the love of His heart, and on the ground of the worthiness of Christ. The prodigal might ask to be made as one of the hired servants, but this could not be. It would not be according to the Father's heart to have him in the house as a servant. It must be as a son or not at all. If it were a question of desert, we do not deserve the place of a servant any more than that of a son. But, blessed be God, it is not according to our deserts at all, but according to the boundless love of His heart, and to the glory of His holy name.

This, then, is conversion. Thus we are *brought to God*. Nothing short of this. We are not merely turned from our idols, whatever they were, but we are actually brought into the very presence of God, to find our delight in Him, to joy in Him, to walk with Him, to find all our springs in Him, to draw upon His exhaustless resources, to find in Him a perfect answer to all our necessities, so that our souls are satisfied, and that for ever.

Do we want to go back to the idols? Never! Have we any hankering after our former objects? Not if our hearts are realising our place and portion in Christ. Had the prodigal any longings after the husks and the swine when folded in the father's bosom, clothed in the father's house, and seated at the father's table? We do not, and cannot, believe it. We cannot imagine his heaving a single sigh after the far country when once he found himself within the hallowed circle of that bright and blissful home of love.

We speak according to the divine standard. Alas! many profess to be converted, and seem to go on for a season; but ere long they begin to grow cold, and get weary and dissatisfied. The work was not real. They were not really brought to God. Idols may have been given up for a time, but God Himself was never reached. They never found in Him a satisfying portion for their hearts — never knew the real meaning of communion with Him — never tasted heart-satisfaction, heart-rest, in Christ. Hence, in process of time, the poor heart began to long once more for the world, and back they went, and plunged into its follies and vanities with greater avidity than ever.

Such cases are very sad, very disappointing. They bring great reproach on the cause of Christ, and are used as a plea for the enemy, and as a stumbling-block for anxious inquirers. But they leave the question of divine conversion just where it was. The soul that is truly converted is one who has not merely been turned from this present evil world, and all its promises and pretensions, but who has been led by the precious ministry of the Holy Ghost to find in the living God, and in His Son Jesus Christ, all he can possibly want for time and eternity. Such an one has divinely done with the world. He has broken with it forever. He has had his eyes opened to see, through and through, the whole thing. He has judged it in the light of the presence of God. He has measured it by the standard of the cross of Christ. He has weighed it in the balances of the sanctuary, and turned his back upon it forever, to find an absorbing and a commanding object in the Person of that blessed One who was nailed to the accursed tree, in order to deliver him, not only from everlasting burnings, but also from this present evil world.

The more we dwell on 1 Thess. 1: 9, the more we are struck with its marvellous depth, fullness, and power. It seems like sinking a shaft into an inexhaustible mine. We have dwelt a little on that very fruitful and suggestive clause, "*Turned to God from idols.*" How much is wrapped up in it! Do we really understand the force and fullness of it? It is a wonderful thing for the soul to be brought to God — to know Him now as our resource in all our weakness and need — the spring of all our joys — our strength and shield — our Guide and Counselor — our all in with all — to be absolutely and completely shut up me to Him, wholly dependent upon Him.

Reader, do you know the deep blessedness of all this in your own soul? If you are a child of God, a truly converted soul, then it is your happy privilege to know it, and you ought not to be satisfied without it. If we are "turned to God," what is it for but to find in Him all we can possibly want for time and eternity? Nothing can ever satisfy the human soul but God Himself. It is not within the compass of earth to meet the cravings of the heart. If we had the wealth of the universe, and all that wealth could procure, the heart would still want more; there would still be an aching void which nothing under the sun could fill.

Look at the history of Solomon. Hear him recording his own experience. "I, the preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

"For in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I said in my heart, Go to, now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it? I

sought in my heart to give myself to wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom, and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits, I made me pools of water, to water there with the wood that bringeth forth trees. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also, I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also, my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, *all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun* " (Ecc. 1-2).

Such is the withering commentary upon all earth's resources as given by the pen of one who had all that earth could give — of one who was allowed to drain to the very dregs every cup of human and earthly pleasure. And what was it all? "Vanity and vexation of spirit." "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." The poor human heart can never be satisfied with the resources of earth. Creature streams can never quench the thirst of the immortal soul. Material things cannot possibly make us truly happy, even if they were permanent. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The truth of this must be proved by every human heart. Sooner or later all must find it out. Men may turn a deaf ear to it now; they may refuse to listen to the Spirit's warning voice; they may vainly imagine that this poor world can yield them substantial comfort and happiness; they may eagerly grasp at its riches, its honours, its distinctions, its pleasures, its material comforts; but they will find out their mistake. And oh, how dreadful to find it out *too late!* How

terrible to open one's eyes in hell, like the rich man in the parable! What human language can set forth the horrors of a soul shut out forever from the presence of God, and consigned to outer darkness, to the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? It is overwhelming to think of it. What will it be to realize it? What will it be to find oneself in the tormenting flames of hell, at the other side of that impassable gulf where a single ray of hope can never break through the deep gloom of eternity?

Oh that men would think of all this in time! that they might flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on the blessed hope set before them in the gospel; that they might "turn to God." But alas! the god of this world blinds their minds, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. He engrosses them with present things — business, money-making, pleasures, cares, lusts, anything and everything but the one thing, in comparison with which all earthly things are but as the small dust of the balance.

But we have digressed from our special theme, to which we must return.

We are particularly anxious to press upon the Christian reader the immense importance of seeking to find all his resources in the living God. We have only for a moment turned aside from this point, in order to sound a warning note in the ear of any unconverted, careless one who may happen to take up this paper. We earnestly entreat the latter to turn to God. We entreat the former to seek a deeper acquaintance with the One to whom, by grace, he has turned. We have the two things before us in penning these papers on the great subject of "conversion." We can truly say, we long to see precious souls converted to God, and we long to see converted souls happy in God.

We are increasingly convinced of the practical importance of Christians proving in their daily life that they have found thorough rest of heart in God. It has immense weight with worldly people. It is a grand point gained when we are able, through grace, to tell the world that we are independent of it; and the only way to do this is to live in the abiding sense of what we have in God. This would impart

a moral elevation to our entire course and character. It would deliver us completely from that strong tendency to lean on human props and to betake ourselves to creature streams which we have all more or less to lament, and which assuredly issue in disappointment to us and dishonour to God.

How prone we are on all occasions to look to our fellow-men for sympathy, succour and counsel instead of looking directly and exclusively to God! This is a serious mistake. It is in principle to forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water. What can we expect? What must be the issue? Barrenness and desolation. Our God, in very faithfulness to us, will cause our fellow-man to fail us, in order that we may learn the folly of leaning upon an arm of flesh.

Hear what the prophet says on this great practical question: "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited."

But mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17).

Oh! reader, it is a grand reality to lean on the arm of the living God — to find in Him our relief and our resource at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. He never fails a trusting heart. He will never disappoint us. He may see fit to keep us waiting for an answer to our call, but the time we spend in waiting is well spent, and when the answer comes our hearts are filled with praise, and we are able to say, "Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men" (Ps. 31: 19).

It is a great thing to be able to trust God before the sons of men, to confess His sufficiency for our every exigency. But it must be a reality, and not mere profession. It is no use to talk of leaning on God while at the same time we are, in one way or another, looking to some poor mortal to help us. This is a sad delusion. But, alas! how often we fall under its power! We adopt the language of dependence upon God, but in reality we are looking to man, and letting him know our wants. We deceive ourselves and dishonour God and the end is disappointment and confusion of face.

Reader, let us look closely and honestly at this matter. Let us see to it that we understand the meaning of those precious words, "Turned to God." They contain the very essence of true happiness and true holiness. When the heart is really turned to God it has found the true, the divine secret of peace, rest and full satisfaction; it finds its all in God, and has no occasion whatever to turn to the creature. Am I in any perplexity? I can look to God for guidance. He has promised to guide me with His eye. What perfect guidance! Can man do better for me? Surely not. God sees the end from the beginning. He knows all the bearings, all the belongings, all the roots and issues of my case. He is an infallible guide. His wisdom is unerring, and, moreover, He loves me perfectly. Where could I find a better guide?

Am I in want? I can go to God about it. He is the Possessor of Heaven and earth. The treasures of the universe are at His disposal. He can help me if He sees it to be good for me; and if not, the pressure will be much better for me than the relief. "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Is not this enough? Why look to a creature stream? Why turn from such a God and go with our wants to a human being? It is in reality giving up, so far, the ground of faith, the life of simple dependence on God. It is actually dishonouring our Father.

If I apply to my fellow for help, it is tantamount to saying that God has failed me. It is really betraying my loving Father who has taken me up, body, soul, and spirit, to do for me for time and eternity. He has pledged Himself to provide for all my wants, be they ever so many, ever so great, ever so varied. "He that spared not

His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us *all things?*"

But we sometimes hear people say that, the Lord has told them, or laid upon their hearts, to apply to some human resource. This is very questionable indeed. It is not at all likely that our God would ever lead us to forsake the fountain of living waters, and betake ourselves to some broken cistern. His Word is, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

True, God uses the creature to meet our need; but this is a totally different matter. The blessed apostle could say, "God who comforteth those that are cast down comforted us by the coming of Titus." Paul was looking to God for comfort, and God sent Titus to comfort him. Had Paul been looking to Titus, he would have been disappointed.

Thus it is in every case. Our immediate and exclusive reference must be to God in all our need. "We have turned *to God* from idols," and hence in every exigency He is our sure resource. We can go to Him for counsel, for succour, for guidance, for sympathy, for all. "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God, for my expectation is from Him. He *only is* my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be moved."

Will this most blessed habit of looking only to God lead us to undervalue the channels through which His precious grace flows to us? The very reverse. How could I undervalue one who comes to me directly from God, as His manifest instrument, to meet my need? Impossible. But I value him as a channel, instead of applying to him as a source. This makes all the difference. We must never forget that true conversion means our being brought to God; and most surely, if we are brought to God, it is in order that we should find in Him a perfect covering for our eyes, a perfect object for the heart, a perfect resource in all our exigencies, from first to last. A truly converted soul is one who is turned from all creature confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations, to find all he wants in the living and true God, and that forever.

Part 7

We are now called to consider a deeply practical point in our subject. It is contained in the clause, "*To serve the living and true God.*" This is full of interest to every truly converted soul, every true Christian. We are called "to serve." Our whole life, from the moment of our conversion to the close of our earthly career, should be characterised by a spirit of true, earnest, intelligent service. This is our high privilege, not to say our hallowed duty. It matters not what our sphere of action may be, what our line of life, or what our calling; when we are converted, we have just got one thing to do, namely, to serve God. If there be anything in our calling which is contrary to the revealed will of God — contrary to the direct teaching of His Word — then we must at once abandon it, cost what it may. The very first step of an obedient servant is to step out of a false position.

Suppose for example the owner of a public house is converted to God. What is he to do? Can he go on with such a business? Can he abide in such a calling *with God*? Can he continue in the sale of that which entails ruin, misery, degradation, death and perdition on thousands and hundreds of thousands? Can he possibly serve the living and true God in the bar of a public house?

We cannot believe it. We may be deemed harsh, severe and narrow, in writing thus. We cannot help that. We must write what we believe to be the truth. We are persuaded that the very first act of a converted public house keeper should be to shut up his shop, and turn his back, with stern decision on such a Godless and horrible calling. To talk of serving God in such an occupation, is, in our judgement, a miserable delusion.

No doubt the same may be said about many other callings, and the reader may be disposed to ask, "What is a Christian supposed to do? How can he get on?" Our answer is simply this;

We are called to serve God, and everything must be tried by this standard. The Christian has to ask himself this one question, "Can I fulfil the duties of this situation to the glory of God?" If not, he must abandon it. If we cannot connect the name of God with our

calling in life, then, assuredly, if we want to walk with God, if we aim at serving Him, if it be our one desire to be found well-pleasing in His sight, then we must give up that calling and look to Him to open some path for us in which we can walk to His praise.

This He will do, blessed be His name. He never fails a trusting soul. All we have to do is to cleave to Him with purpose of heart, and He will make the way plain before us. It may seem difficult at first. The path may appear narrow, rough, lonely; but our simple business is to stand for God, and not to continue for one hour in connection with anything contrary to His revealed will. A tender conscience, a single eye, a devoted heart, will settle many a question, solve many a difficulty, remove many a barrier. Indeed, the very instincts of the divine nature, if only they be allowed to act, will guide in many a perplexity. "The light of the body is the eye; therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light."

When the purpose of the heart is true to Christ, true to His name and cause, true to the service of God, the Holy Spirit opens up the precious treasures of divine revelation to the soul, and pours a flood of living light upon the understanding, so that we see the path of service as clear as a sunbeam before us, and we have only got to tread it with a firm step.

But we must never, for one moment, lose sight of the grand fact that we are converted to the service of God. The outcome of the life which we possess must ever take the form of service to the living and true God. In our unconverted days we worshipped idols, and served divers lusts and pleasures; now, on the contrary, we worship God in the Spirit, and we are called to serve Him with all our ransomed powers. We have turned to God, to find in Him our perfect rest and satisfaction. There is not a single thing in the entire range of a creature's necessities, for time and eternity, that we cannot find in our own most gracious God and Father. He has treasured up in Christ, the Son of His love, all that can satisfy the desires of the new life in us. It is our privilege to have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, and to be so rooted and grounded in love as to be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length

and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Thus filled, satisfied, and strengthened, we are called to dedicate ourselves, spirit, soul, and body, to the service of Christ; to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. We should have nothing else to do in this world. Whatever cannot be done as service to Christ ought not to be done at all. This simplifies the matter amazingly. It is our sweet privilege to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God. We sometimes hear people speak of "a secular calling," as contrasted with what is "sacred." We question the correctness of such a distinction. Paul made tents and planted churches, but in both he served the Lord Christ.

All that a Christian does ought to be sacred, because it is done as service to God. If this were borne in mind, it would enable us to connect the very simplest duties of daily life with the Lord Himself, and to bring Him into them in such a way as to impart a holy dignity and interest to all that we have to do, from morning till night. In this way, instead of finding the duties of our calling a hindrance to our communion with God, we should actually make them an occasion of waiting on Him for wisdom and grace to discharge them aright, so that His holy name might be glorified in the most minute details of practical life.

The fact is that the service of God is a much simpler matter than some of us imagine. It does not consist in doing some wonderful things beyond the bounds of our divinely appointed sphere of action. Take the case of a domestic servant. How can she serve the living and true God? She cannot go about visiting and talking. Her sphere of action lies in the shade and retirement of her master's house. Were she to run about from house to house, she would be actually neglecting her proper work, her divinely appointed business. Harken to the following sound and wholesome words: "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2: 9-10).

Here we see that the servant, by obedience, humility, and honesty can adorn the doctrine of God just as effectually, according to her measure, as an evangelist ranging the world over in the discharge of his high and holy commission.

Again, we read, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as *the servants of Christ*, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing *service*, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. 6).

How lovely is all this! What a fine field of service is opened up for us here! How beautiful this "fear and trembling"! Where do we see it nowadays? Where is the holy subjection to authority? Where the singleness of eye? Where the willing-hearted service? Alas! we see headiness and high-mindedness, self-will, self-pleasing, and self-interest. How must all these things dishonour the Lord, and grieve His Holy Spirit! How needful that our souls should be roused to a sense of what becomes us as those who are called to serve the living and true God! Is it not a signal mercy to every true Christian to know that he can serve and glorify God in the most commonplace domestic duties? If it were not so, what would become of ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians?

We have taken up the case of an ordinary domestic servant in order to illustrate that special line of practical truth now under our consideration. Is it not most blessed for us to know that our God graciously condescends to connect His name and His glory with the very humblest duties that can devolve upon us in our ordinary domestic life? It is this which imparts dignity, interest and freshness to every little act, from morning till night. "Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Here lies the precious secret of the whole matter. It is not working for wages, but serving the Lord Christ, and looking to Him to receive the reward of the inheritance.

Oh that all this were more fully realized and illustrated amongst us! What moral elevation it would give to the entire

Christian life! What a triumphant answer it would furnish to the infidel! What a withering rebuke to all his sneers and cavils! Better by far than ten thousand learned arguments. There is no argument so forcible as an earnest, devoted, holy, happy, self-sacrificing Christian life, and this life can be displayed by one whose sphere of action is bounded by the four walls of a kitchen.

{It is remarkable that both in Eph. 6 and Col. 3 the address to servants is far more elaborate than to any of the other classes. In Titus 2 servants are specially singled out. There is no address to husbands, none to masters, none to children. We do not attempt to account for this, but we cannot help noticing it as a very interesting fact; and most assuredly it teaches us what a very important place is assigned in Christianity to one who, in those early days of the Church's history, occupied the place of a slave. The Holy Ghost took special pains to instruct such an one as to how he was to carry himself in his most trying sphere of work. The poor slave might think himself shut out from the service of God. So far from this, he is sweetly taught that by simply doing his duty as in the sight of God he could adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour, and bring glory to the name of Jesus. Nothing can exceed the grace that shines in this.}

And not only does the practical life of a true Christian afford the very best possible answer to the sceptic and the infidel, but it also meets in a most satisfactory manner the objections of those who talk about works, and insist upon putting Christians under the law, in order to teach them how to live. When people challenge us as to our not preaching up works, we simply ask them, "For what should we preach works?" The unconverted man cannot do any works, save "wicked works," or "dead works." "They that are in the flesh" — unconverted people — "cannot please God." Of what possible use can it be to preach works to such? It can only cast dust in their eyes, blind their minds, deceive their hearts, and send them down to hell with a lie in their right hand.

There must be a genuine conversion to God. This is a divine work from first to last. And what has the converted man got to do? He certainly has not to work for life, because he has it, even life eternal, as God's free gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has not to work for salvation, because he is saved already — "saved in the

Lord with an everlasting salvation." What, then, is he called to do? "To serve the living and true God." How? When? Where? In everything; at all times, and in all places. The converted man has nothing else to do but to serve God. If he does anything else, he is positively untrue, unfaithful to that blessed Lord and Master who, ere ever He called him to serve, endowed him with the life, and the grace, and the power, whereby alone the service can be rendered.

Yes, the Christian is called to serve. Let us never forget this. He is privileged to "present his body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his reasonable [his intelligent] service." This settles the whole question. It removes all difficulties; it silences all objections; it puts everything in its right place. It is not a question of what I am doing, but how I do it — not where I am, but how I conduct myself. Christianity as displayed in the New Testament is the outcome of the life of Christ in the believer; it is Christ reproduced in the Christian's daily life, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Everything the Christian touches, everything he does, everything he says, his whole practical life, from Lord's day morning till Saturday night, should bear the impress and breathe the spirit of that great practical clause on which we have been dwelling — "serving the living and true God." May it be so more and more! May all the Lord's beloved people, everywhere, be really stirred up to seek more earnest, out-and-out, whole-hearted devotedness to Christ and His precious service!

Part 8

The last words of our chapter — 1 Thess. 1 — now claim our attention. They furnish a very striking and forcible proof of the clearness, fullness, depth and comprehensiveness of the apostle's testimony at Thessalonica, and also of the brightness and reality of the work in the young converts in that place. It was not only that they turned from idols to God, to serve the living and true God. This, through grace, they did; and that, too, with uncommon power, freshness, and fervour.

But there was something more; and we may assert, with all possible confidence, that there would have been a grand defect in the conversion and in the Christianity of those beloved disciples if

that had been lacking. *They were converted "to wait for the Son of God from the heavens."*

Let the reader give to this very weighty fact his most devout attention. The bright and blessed hope of the Lord's coming formed an integral part of the gospel which Paul preached, and of the Christianity of those who were converted by his ministry. That blessed servant preached a full gospel. He not only declared that the Son of God had come into the world to accomplish the great work of redemption, and lay the everlasting foundation of the divine glory and counsels, but that He had gone back to the heavens, and taken His seat as the victorious, exalted and glorified Man, at the right hand of the throne of God; and that He is coming again; first, to receive His people to Himself, and conduct them into the very innermost circle of His Father's house — the place prepared for them: and then to come forth *with* them, to execute judgement upon His enemies — gather out of His kingdom all that offend, and all that do iniquity, and set up His glorious dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

All this was included in the precious gospel which Paul preached, and which the Thessalonian converts received. We find an indirect but very interesting intimation of this in a passage in Acts 17, where the inspired writer records what the infidel Jews thought and said about the apostle's preaching. "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, *These that have turned the world upside down* are come hither also; whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, *saying that there is another king, Jesus.*"

Such were the ideas which these poor, ignorant, prejudiced unbelievers gathered from the preaching of the Lord's beloved servants; and we can see in them the elements of great and solemn truths — the complete upturning of the present system of things, and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it

shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezek. 21: 27).

But not only did the Lord's coming and kingdom occupy a prominent place in the *preaching* of the apostle, it also shines brilliantly forth in all his *teaching*. Not only were the Thessalonians converted to this blessed hope, they were built up, established, and led on in it. They were taught to live in the brightness of it every hour of the day. It was not a dry, barren dogma, to be received and held as part of a powerless, worthless creed; it was a living reality, a mighty moral power in the soul — a precious, purifying, sanctifying, elevating hope, detaching the heart completely from present things, and causing it to look out, moment by moment — yes, we repeat it with emphasis, moment by moment — for the return of our beloved Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

It is interesting to notice that in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians there is far more allusion to the Lord's coming than in all the other Epistles put together. This is all the more remarkable inasmuch as they were the very earliest of Paul's Epistles, and they were written to an assembly very young in the faith.

If the reader will just glance rapidly through these two most precious writings, he will find the hope of the Lord's return introduced in every one of the eight chapters, and in connection with all sorts of subjects. For example, in 1 Thess. 1 we have it presented as the grand object to be ever kept before the Christian's heart, let his position or his relationship be what it may — the brilliant light shining at the end of his long pilgrimage through this dark and toilsome world. "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for" — what? The time of their death? No such thing, no allusion to such a thing. Death, for the believer, is abolished, and is never presented as the object of his hope. For what, then, were the Thessalonian disciples taught to wait? "For God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead."

And then mark the beautiful addition! "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." This is the Person for whom we are waiting our precious Saviour; our great Deliverer; the One

who undertook our desperate case; who took, on our behalf, the cup of wrath from the hand of infinite Justice and exhausted it forever; who cleared the prospect of every cloud, so that we can gaze upward into Heaven, and onward into eternity, and see nothing but the brightness and blessedness of His own love and glory, as our happy home throughout the everlasting ages.

Oh, how blessed to be looking out, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight, for the coming of our gracious Deliverer! What a holy reality to be ever waiting for the return of our own loving and beloved Saviour and Lord! How separating and elevating, as we arise each morning to start on our daily course of duty — whatever that duty may be, whether the scrubbing of a floor or the preaching of the gospel — to cherish the bright and blessed hope that, ere the shades of evening gather round us, we may be summoned to ascend in the folds of the cloud of glory to meet our coming Lord!

Is this the dream of a wild fanatic or a visionary enthusiast? Nay, it is an imperishable truth, resting on the very same foundation that sustains the entire fabric of our most glorious Christianity. Is it true that the Son of God has trod this earth of ours in the person of Jesus of Nazareth? Is it true that He lived and laboured here, amid the sins and sorrows of poor, fallen humanity? Is it true that He sighed, and wept, and groaned, under the sense of the widespread desolation which sin had wrought in this world?

Is it true that He went to the cross, and there offered Himself without spot to God, in order to vindicate the Divine Majesty; to answer all the claims of the throne of God; to destroy all the works of the devil; to make a public show of all the powers of hell; to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; to bear the sins of all those who, from the beginning to the end of time, should, through grace, believe in His name?

Is it true that He lay for three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and on the first day of the week rose triumphant from the grave, as the Head of the new creation, and ascended into the heavens, after He had been seen by at least five hundred witnesses?

Is it true that fifty days after His resurrection He sent down the Holy Ghost, in order to fill and fit His apostles to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth? Is it true that from the day of Pentecost to this very hour He has been acting on His people's behalf as an Advocate with the Father, a great High Priest with God; interceding for us in all our failures, sins, and shortcomings, and sympathising with us in all our infirmities and in all our sorrows; and presenting continually our sacrifices of prayer and praise, in all the fragrance of His own glorious Person?

Are all these things true? Yes, thank God, they are all divinely true, all set forth in the pages of the New Testament, with most marvellous fullness, clearness, depth, and power; all rest on the solid foundation of Holy Scripture — a foundation which not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils, can ever touch.

Well, then, the blessed hope of the Lord's coming rests on precisely the same authority. It is not more true that our Lord Jesus Christ lay as a babe in a manger of Bethlehem, that He grew up to man's estate, that He went about doing good, that he was nailed to the cross and laid in the tomb, that He is now seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, than that He will come again to receive His people to Himself. He may come tonight. No one can tell when He will come, but at any moment He may come. The only thing that detains Him is His long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. For eighteen long centuries has He waited in lingering love, mercy, and compassion; and during all that time salvation has been ready to be revealed, and God has been ready to judge; but He has waited, and He still waits, in long-suffering grace and patience.

But He will come, and we should ever live in the hope of His coming. Thus the apostle taught his beloved Thessalonians to live. Thus he lived himself. The blessed hope was intimately bound up with all the habits and feelings of his daily life. Was it a question of reaping the fruit of his labours? Hear what he says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown or rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, *at His comings* He would see them all then and there. No enemy will be allowed to hinder that meeting.

"We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us." Very wonderful! Very mysterious! Yet so it was. Satan hindered an angel of God in the discharge of his business in the days of Daniel; and he hindered an apostle of Christ in the accomplishment of his loving desire to see his brethren at Thessalonica. But, thanks be to God, he will not be able to hinder the joyful meeting of Christ and His saints for which we wait. What a moment that will be! What precious reunions! What sweet recognitions! What affectionate greetings of dear old friends! But, far above all, Himself! His smile! His welcome! His soul-stirring "Well done!"

What a precious, soul-sustaining hope! Need we wonder at the prominent place it occupied in the thoughts and the teachings of the blessed apostle? He recurs to it on all occasions, and in connection with every subject. Is it a question of progress in the divine life and practical godliness? Thus he puts it: "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we do toward you; to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.* "

Let the reader specially mark the last clause of this touching and beautiful quotation. "*With all His saints.*" What admirable wisdom shines here! The apostle was about to touch directly upon an error into which the Thessalonian believers had fallen in reference to their departed friends. They feared that those who had fallen asleep would not participate in the joy of the Lord's coming. This error is completely demolished by that brief sentence, "with *all His saints.*" Not one will be absent from that joyous meeting, that festive scene. Blessed assurance! Triumphant answer to all who would have us believe that none will share the joy of our Lord's coming save those who see this, that, and the other! "With *all his saints,*" spite of their ignorance and their errors, their wanderings and their stumblings, their shortcomings and their failures. Our blessed Saviour, the everlasting Lover of our souls, will not shut any of us out at that blissful moment.

Is all this matchless grace to make us careless? God Forbid! Nay, it is the abiding sense of it which alone can keep us alive to our

holy responsibility to judge everything in us and in our ways which is contrary to the mind of Christ. And not only so, but the hope of our Lord's return, if it be kept bright and fresh in the heart, *must* purify, sanctify and elevate our entire character and course as nothing else can. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

It is morally impossible for any one to *live* in the hope of seeing his Lord at any moment and yet have his heart set upon worldly things — upon money-making, self-indulgence, pleasure, vanity, folly. Let us not deceive ourselves. If we are daily looking out for the Son of God from Heaven, we must sit loose to the things of time and sense.

We may hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming as a mere dogma in the intellect; we may have the entire range of prophetic truth mapped out before our mind's eye, without its producing the smallest effect upon the heart, the character, or the practical life. But it is another thing altogether to have the whole moral being, the entire practical career, governed by the bright and blessed hope of seeing the One who loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in His own most precious blood.

Would there were more of this amongst us! It is to be feared that many of us have lost the freshness and power of our true and proper hope. The truth of the Lord's coming has become so familiar as a mere doctrine that we can flippantly speak of it, and discuss various points in connection with it, and argue with people about it, and all the while our ways, our deportment, our spirit and temper give the lie to what we profess to hold.

But we shall not pursue this sad and humbling side of the subject. May the Lord look upon us, and graciously heal, restore and lift up our souls! May He revive in the hearts of all His beloved people the proper Christian hope — the hope of seeing the bright and Morning Star. May the utterance of the whole heart and the utterance of the whole life be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Here we must close this paper. We had hoped to turn through the two Epistles to the Thessalonians in company with our readers,

in order to prove and illustrate the statement that the hope of the Lord's return was bound up in the heart of the apostle, with all the scenes, circumstances, and associations of Christian life. But we must allow the reader to do this for himself. Sufficient, we trust, has been said to show that true conversion, according to apostolic teaching, cannot stop short of the blessed hope of the Lord's coming.

A truly converted person is one who has turned from idols — has broken with the world — broken with his former self — turned to God, to find in Him all he can possibly want for time and eternity, to serve Him, and Him only — and, finally, "to wait for the Son of God from heaven." Such we conceive to be the true and proper answer to the question, "What is conversion?"

Reader, art *thou* converted? If not, what then? If thou art, does thy life declare it?

1 Timothy 1: 15

Saul of Tarsus

In contemplating the character of this most remarkable man, we may gather valuable principles of gospel truth. He seems to have been peculiarly fitted to show forth, in the first place, what the grace of God *can* do; and, in the second place, what the greatest amount of legal effort *cannot* do. If ever there was a man upon this earth whose history illustrates the truth that "salvation is by grace, without works of law," Saul of Tarsus was that man. Indeed, it is as though God had specially designed to present in this man a living example, first, of the depth from which His grace can rescue a *sinner*; and, secondly, the height from which a *legalist* is brought down to receive Christ. He was at once the very *worst* and the very *best* of men — the chief of sinners and the chief of legalists. He travelled down to the lowest point of human wickedness, and climbed to the loftiest summit of human righteousness. He hated and persecuted Christ in His saints, he was a sinner of sinners; and a Pharisee of the Pharisees in his moral conduct and pride.

Let us, then, in the first place, contemplate him as *the chief of sinners*.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I *am chief*" (1 Tim. 1: 15). Now, note particularly what the Spirit of God declares concerning Saul of Tarsus: that he was the chief of sinners. It is not the expression of Paul's humility, though, no doubt, he was humble under the sense of what he had been. We are not to be occupied with the feelings of an inspired writer, but with the statements of the Holy Ghost who inspired him. It is well to see this.

Very many persons speak of the feelings of the various inspired writers in a way calculated to weaken the sense of that precious truth, the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. They may not mean to do so; but then, at a time like the present, when there is so much of reason, so much of human speculation, we cannot be too guarded against aught that might, even in appearance, militate against the integrity of the Word of God. We are anxious that our

readers should treasure the Scriptures in their hearts' affections, not as the expression of human feelings, however pious and praiseworthy, but as the depository of the thoughts of God. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1: 21).

Hence, therefore, in reading 1 Tim. 1: 15, we are not to think of the feelings of man, but of the record of God, which declares that Paul was "chief of sinners." It is never stated of any one else. No doubt, in a secondary sense, each convicted heart will feel and own itself the guiltiest within its own range of knowledge; but this is quite another matter. The Holy Ghost has declared this of Paul; nor does the fact that He has told us this by the pen of Paul himself interfere with or weaken in the smallest degree, the truth and value of the statement. Paul was the chief of sinners. No matter how bad any one may be, Paul could say, "*I am chief.*" No matter how far from God any one may feel himself to be — no matter how deeply sunk in the pit of ruin — a voice rises to his ear from a deeper point still, "*I am chief.*"

But let us mark the *object* of all this dealing with the chief of sinners. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in *me first*, Jesus Christ might show forth *all* long-suffering, for a *pattern* to them who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." The chief of sinners is in Heaven. How did he get there? Simply by the blood of Jesus; and moreover, he is Christ's "pattern" man. All may look at him and see how they too are to be saved; for in such wise as the "chief" was saved, must all the subordinate be saved. The *grace* that reached the chief can reach all. The blood that cleansed the chief can cleanse all. The title by which the chief entered Heaven is the title for all. Behold in Paul a "pattern of Christ's long-suffering"! There is not a sinner at this side the portal of hell, back-slider or aught else, beyond the reach of the love of God, the blood of Christ, or the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

We shall now turn to the other side of Saul's character, and contemplate him as *the chief of legalists*.

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I

more" (Phil. 3: 4). Here we have a most valuable point. Saul of Tarsus stood, as it were, on the loftiest height of the hill of legal righteousness. He reached the topmost step of the ladder of human religion. He would suffer no man to get above him. His religious attainments were of the very highest order. (See Gal. 1: 14.) "If *any* other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I *more*." Is any man trusting in his temperance? Paul could say, "I *more*." Is any man trusting in his morality? Paul could say, "I *more*." Is any man trusting in ordinances, sacraments, religious services, or pious observances? Paul could say, "I *more*."

All this imparts a peculiar interest to the history of Saul of Tarsus. He lay at the very bottom of the pit of ruin, and he stood on the very summit of the hill of self-righteousness. Deep as any sinner may have sunk, Paul was deeper still. He combined in his own person the very best, and the very worst of men. In him we see, at one view the power of the blood of Christ. and the utter worthlessness of the fairest robe of self-righteousness that ever decked the person of a legalist. Looking at him, no sinner need despair; looking at him, no legalist can boast. If the chief of sinners is in Heaven, I can get there too. If the greatest religionist, legalist, and doer, that ever lived had to come *down* from the ladder of self-righteousness, it is of no use for me to go up.

The guilt of Saul of Tarsus was completely covered by the blood of Christ; and his lofty religious pride and boasting was swept away by a sight of Jesus, and Saul found his place at the pierced feet of Jesus of Nazareth. His guilt was no hindrance, and his righteousness no use. The former was washed away by the blood, and the latter turned into dung and dross by the moral glory of Christ. It mattered not whether it was "I *chief*," or "I *more*." The Cross was the only remedy.

"God forbid," says this chief of sinners and prince of legalists, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6: 14). Paul had just as little idea of trusting in his righteousness as in his crimes. He was permitted to win the laurel of victory in the grand legal struggle with his "equals in his own nation," only that he might fling it, as a withered, worthless thing, at the foot of the Cross.

He was permitted to outstrip all in the dark career of guilt, only that he might exemplify the power of the love of God and the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Saul was no nearer to Christ as the chief of legalists than he was as the chief of sinners. There was no more justifying merit in his noblest efforts in the school of legalism than in his wildest acts of opposition to the name of Christ. He was saved by grace, saved by blood, saved by faith. There is no other way for sinner or legalist.

There is another point in Paul's history at which we must briefly glance, in order to show the practical results of the grace of Christ wherever that grace is known. This will present him to our notice as *the most laborious of apostles*.

If Paul learned to cease working for righteousness, he also learned to begin working for Christ. When we behold on Damascus' road the shattered fragments of this worst and best man — when we hear those pathetic accents emanating from the depths of a broken heart, "Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?" — when we see that man who had left Jerusalem in the mad fury of a persecuting zealot, now stretching forth the hand of blind helplessness to be led like a little child into Damascus, we are led to form the very highest expectations as to his future career; nor are we disappointed.

Mark the progress of that most remarkable man, behold this gigantic labours in the vineyard of Christ; see his tears, his toils, his travels, his perils, his struggles; see him as he bears his golden sheaves into the heavenly garner, and lays them down at the Master's feet; see him wearing the noble bonds of the gospel, and finally laying his head on a martyr's block, and say if the gospel of God's free grace — the gospel of Christ's free salvation, does away with good works? Nay, that precious gospel is the only true basis on which the superstructure of good works can ever be erected.

Morality, without Christ, is an icy morality. Benevolence, without Christ, is a worthless benevolence. Ordinances, without Christ, are powerless and valueless. Orthodoxy, without Christ, is heartless and fruitless. We must get to the end of *self* whether it be a guilty self or a religious self, and find Christ as the satisfying portion

of our hearts, now and for ever. Then we shall be able to say, with truth,

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,

More than all in Thee I find.

And again:

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Thus it was with Saul of Tarsus. He got rid of himself and found his all in Christ; and hence, as we hang over the impressive page of his history, we hear, from the depths of ruin the words, "I am *chief*" — from the most elevated point in the legal system, the words, "*I more*" — and from amid the golden fields of apostolic labour, the words, "I laboured *more abundantly* than they all."

1 Timothy 4:16

"Thyself and the doctrine."

- A word for the workman.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine [or teaching]; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4: 16).

These are solemn and weighty words for all those who labour in the Word and doctrine. They were addressed by the inspired apostle to his beloved son Timothy, and contain most precious instruction for every one who is called of God to minister in the assembly, or to preach the gospel. It is assuredly a very high and holy privilege to be permitted to take part in such a ministry; but it involves a most serious responsibility; and the passage just quoted sets before the workman two deeply important duties — yea, absolutely essential duties, to which he must give his diligent, constant, prayerful attention, if he would be an efficient workman in the Church of God — "a good minister of Jesus Christ." He must take heed to himself; and he must take heed to the teaching.

1. And first, then, let us consider the solemn clause, "*Take heed to thyself.*" We cannot adequately set forth the moral importance of this. It is, of course, important for all Christians; but for the workman pre-eminently so; for to such it is here particularly addressed. He, above all, will need to take heed to himself. He must guard the state of his heart, the state of his conscience, his whole inward man. He must keep himself pure. His thoughts, his affections, his spirit, his temper, his tongue, must all be kept under the holy control of the Spirit and Word of God. He must wear the girdle of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. His moral condition and his practical walk must answer to the truth ministered, else the enemy will most assuredly get an advantage over him.

The teacher ought to be the living exponent of what he teaches. At least this should be his honest, earnest, constant aim. He should ever keep this holy standard before "the eyes of his heart." Alas, the best will fail and come short; but where the heart is true, the

conscience tender, and the fear of God and the love of Christ have their due place, the workman will never be satisfied with anything short of the divine standard for his inward state and his outward walk. It will ever be his earnest desire to exhibit the practical effect of his teaching, and to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4: 12). With this he should ever remember that "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants, for Jesus' sake."

We must never for a moment lose sight of the weighty moral fact that the teacher ought to *live* the truth which he teaches. It is morally dangerous, in the extreme, for a man to teach in public what he does not live in private — dangerous for himself, most damaging to the testimony, and injurious to those with whom he has to do. What can be more deplorable or humiliating than for a man to be characterised by contradicting in his personal history and in his domestic life the truth which he utters in the public assembly? It is simply fearful, and must inevitably lead to the most disastrous results.

Hence, then, may it be the deep-seated, earnest purpose and aim of all those who minister in the Word and doctrine to feed upon the precious truth of God; to make it their own; to live and move and have their being in the very atmosphere of it; to have the inward man strengthened and formed by it; to have it dwelling richly in them, that thus it may flow out in living power, savour, unction and fullness to others.

It is a very poor, yea, a very dangerous thing to sit down to the Word of God as a mere student, for the purpose of preparing lectures or sermons for other people. Nothing can be more deadening or withering to the soul. Mere intellectual traffic in the truth of God, storing up certain doctrines, views and principles in the memory, and giving them out with a certain fluency of speech, is at once deluding and demoralising. We may be drawing water for other people, and all the while be like rusty pipes ourselves. How miserable this is! "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and *drink*," said our blessed Lord. He did not say "*draw*." The true spring and power of all ministry in the Church will ever be found in

drinking for our own souls, not in drawing for others. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." We must abide close to the eternal fountain, the heart of Christ; drink deeply, drink continually. Thus our own souls shall be refreshed and enriched; rivers shall flow for the refreshment of others, and streams of praise ascend to the throne and to the heart of God by Jesus Christ. This is Christian ministry — yea, this is Christianity; all else is utterly worthless.

2. We shall now dwell for a few moments on the second point in our subject, namely, the doctrine, or teaching — for such is the true force of the original word. And oh, how much is involved in this! "Take heed to the teaching." Solemn admonition! What care is needed! What holy watchfulness! What earnest, prayerful, constant waiting upon God for the right thing to say, and the right way to say it! God only knows the state and the need of souls. He knows their capacity. We do not. We may be offering "strong meat" to those who can only bear "milk," and thus do positive mischief. "If any man speak, let him speak as oracles of God." He does not say, *according* to the oracles of God." A man may rise and speak for an hour in the assembly, and every word he says may be in strict accordance with the letter of Scripture, and yet he may not at all speak as an oracle of God — as God's mouthpiece to the people. He may minister truth, but not the needed truth, at the time.

How solemn is all this! How it makes us feel the seriousness of the apostle's admonition, "Take heed to the teaching"! How it sets before us the urgent need of self-emptied dependence upon the power and guidance of the Holy Ghost! Here lies the precious secret of all effective ministry, whether oral or written. We may talk for hours, and write volumes, — and talk and write nothing unscriptural, — but if it be not in the power of the Spirit, our words will prove but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, and our volumes as so much waste paper. We want to lie much at the Master's feet, to drink deeply into His Spirit, to be in fellowship with His heart of love for the precious lambs and sheep of His flock. Then shall we be in a condition of soul to give the portion of meat in due season.

He alone knows exactly what His beloved people really need at all times. We may perhaps feel deeply interested in some special line of truth, and we may judge it to be the right thing for the assembly; but this might be quite a mistake. It is not the truth which interests us, but the truth which the assembly needs, that should be given out; and for this we should ever wait upon our gracious Lord. We should look simply and earnestly to Him, and say, "Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to say to Thy beloved people? Give me the suited message for them." Then would He use us as His channels; and the truth would flow down from His loving heart into our hearts, and forth from us, in the power of His Spirit, into the hearts of His people.

Oh that it were thus with all who speak and write for the Church of God! What results we might look for! — what power! — what manifest progress in the divine life! The true interests of the flock of Christ would then be thought of in all that was spoken or written. Nothing equivocal, nothing strange or startling, would then be sent forth. Nothing but what is sound and seasonable would flow from the lips or the pen. Sound speech that cannot be condemned, that which is good for the use of edifying, would alone be sent forth.

May every beloved workman throughout the length and breadth of the Church of God take home to himself the apostolic admonition, "Take heed to thyself, and to the teaching . . . for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee"!

"Of these things put them in remembrance, testifying earnestly before the Lord, not to have disputes of words, profitable for nothing, to the subversion of the hearers. Strive diligently to present thyself *approved to God*, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2: 14-15).

2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible: Whence is it?

- from heaven or of men?

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16)

Precious words! Would they were more thoroughly understood in this our day! It is of the utmost possible importance that the Lord's people should be rooted, grounded and settled in the grand truth of the plenary inspiration of holy scripture. It is to be feared that laxity as to this most weighty subject is spreading in the professing church to an appalling extent. In many quarters it has become fashionable to pour contempt upon the idea of plenary inspiration. It is looked upon as the veriest childishness and ignorance. It is regarded by many as a great proof of profound scholarship, breadth of mind and original thinking to be able by free criticism to find out flaws in the precious volume of God. then presume to sit in judgement upon the Bible as though it were a mere human composition. They undertake to pronounce upon what is, and what is not, worthy of God. In fact, they do, virtually, sit in judgement upon God Himself. The present result is, as might be expected, utter darkness and confusion, both for those learned doctors themselves and for all who are so foolish as to listen to them. And as for the future, who can conceive the eternal destiny of all those who shall have to answer before the judgement-seat of Christ for the sin of blaspheming the word of God, and leading hundreds astray by their infidel teaching?

We shall not, however, occupy time in dwelling upon the sinful folly of infidels and sceptics — even though called Christians — or their puny efforts to cast dishonour upon that peerless volume which our gracious God has caused to be written for our learning. They will some day or other find out their fatal mistake. God grant it may not be too late! And as for us, let it be our deep joy and consolation to meditate upon the word of God, that so we may ever be discovering some fresh treasure in that exhaustless mine, some new moral glories in that heavenly revelation which speaks to us

with a point and freshness as if it were written expressly for us — written this very day.

There is nothing like scripture. Take, for instance, any human writing of the same date as the Bible; if you could lay your hand on some volume written three thousand years ago what would you find? A curious relic of antiquity, something to be placed in the British Museum side by side with an Egyptian mummy, having no application whatever to us or to our time, a musty document, a piece of obsolete writing, practically useless to us, referring only to a state of society and to a condition of things long since passed away and buried in oblivion.

The Bible, on the contrary, is the book for today. It is God's own book, His perfect revelation. It is His own very voice speaking to each one of us. It is a book for every age, for every clime, for every class, for every condition, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young. It speaks in a language so simple that a child can understand it, and yet so profound that the most gigantic intellect cannot exhaust it. Moreover, it speaks right home to the heart; it touches the deepest springs of our moral being; it goes down to the hidden roots of thought and feeling in the soul; it judges us thoroughly. In a word, it is, as the inspired apostle tells us, "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4: 12.)

And then mark the marvellous comprehensiveness of its range. It deals as accurately and forcibly with the habits and customs, the manners and maxims of the nineteenth century of the Christian era as with those of the very earliest ages of human existence. It displays a perfect acquaintance with man in every stage of his history. The London of to-day and the Tyre of three thousand years ago are mirrored with like precision and faithfulness on the sacred page. Human life in every stage of its development is portrayed by a master hand in that wonderful volume which our God has graciously penned for our learning.

What; a privilege to possess such a book! to have in our hands a divine revelation! to have access to a book, every line of which is given by inspiration of God! to have a divinely given history of the past, the present and the future! Who can estimate aright such a privilege as this?

But then this book judges man — judges his ways — judges his heart. It tells him the truth about himself. Hence man does not like God's book. An unconverted man would vastly prefer a newspaper or a sensational novel to the Bible. He would rather read the report of a trial in one of our criminal courts than a chapter in the New Testament.

Hence, too, the constant effort to pick holes in God's blessed book. Infidels, in every age and of every class, have laboured hard to find out flaws and contradictions in holy scripture. The determined enemies of the word of God are to be found, not only in the ranks of the vulgar, the coarse and the demoralised, but amongst the educated, the refined and the cultivated. Just as it was in the days of the apostles, "Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," and "Devout and honourable women " — two classes so far removed from each other, socially and morally — found one point in which they could heartily agree, namely, the utter rejection of the word of God and of those who faithfully preached it. (Compare Acts 13: 50 with Acts 17: 5.) So we ever find that men who differ in almost everything else agree in their determined opposition to the Bible. Other books are let alone. Men care not to point out defects in Virgil, in Horace, in Homer or Herodotus; but the Bible they cannot endure, because it exposes them and tells them the truth about themselves and the world to which they belong.

And was it not exactly the same with the living Word — the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was here among men? Men hated Him because He told them the truth. His ministry, His words, His ways, His whole life was a standing testimony against the world; hence their bitter and. persistent opposition: other men were allowed to pass on; but He was watched and waylaid at every turn of His path. The great leaders and guides of the people "sought to entangle him in his talk," to find occasion against Him in order that they might deliver Him to the power and authority of the

governor. Thus it was during His marvellous life; and at the close, when the blessed One was nailed to the cross between two malefactors, these latter were let alone; there were no insults heaped upon them; the chief priests and elders did not wag their heads at them. No; all the insults, all the mockery, all the coarse and heartless vulgarity — all was heaped upon the divine Occupant of the centre cross.

Now it is well we should thoroughly understand the real source of opposition to the word of God — whether it be the living Word or the written word. It will enable us to estimate it at its real worth. The devil hates the word of God — hates it with a perfect hatred, and hence he employs learned infidels to write books to prove that the Bible is not the word of God, that it cannot be, inasmuch as there are mistakes and discrepancies in it; and not only so, but in the Old Testament we find laws and institutions, habits and practices unworthy of a gracious and benevolent Being.

To all this style of argument we have one brief and pointed reply; of all these learned infidels we simply say, they know nothing whatever about the matter. They may be very learned, very clever, very deep and original thinkers, well made up in general literature, very competent to give an opinion on any subject within the domain of natural and moral philosophy, very able to discuss any scientific question. Moreover, they may be very amiable in private life, estimable characters, kind, benevolent and philanthropic, beloved in private and respected in public. All this they may be, but being unconverted, and not having the Spirit of God, they are wholly unfit to form, much less to give, a judgement on the subject of holy scripture. If any one wholly ignorant of astronomy were to presume to sit in judgement on the principles of the Copernican system, these very men of whom we speak would, at once, pronounce him utterly incompetent to speak, and unworthy to be heard on such a subject. In short, no one has any right whatever to offer an opinion on a matter with which he is unacquainted. This is an admitted principle on all hands, and therefore its application in the case now before us cannot justly be called in question.

Now the inspired apostle tells us, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, that, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the

Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned." This is conclusive. He speaks of man in his natural state, be he ever so learned, ever so cultivated. He is not speaking of any special class of men; but simply of man in his unconverted state, man destitute of the Spirit of God. Some may imagine that the apostle refers to man in a state of barbarism, or savage ignorance. By no means; it is simply man in nature, be he a learned philosopher or an ignorant clown. He cannot know the things of the Spirit of God. How then can he form or give a judgement as to the word of God? How can he take it upon him to say what is, or what is not worthy of God to write? And if he is audacious enough to do so — as alas! he is — who will be foolish enough to listen to him? His arguments are baseless; his theories worthless; his books only fit for the waste paper basket. And all this, be it observed, on the universally admitted principle above stated, that no one has any title to be heard on a subject of which he is wholly ignorant.

In this way we dispose of the whole tribe of infidel writers. Who would think of listening to a blind man on the subject of light and shade? And yet such a man has much more claim to be heard than an unconverted man on the subject of inspiration. Human learning, however extensive and varied, human wisdom, however profound cannot qualify a man to form a judgement upon the word of God. No doubt a scholar may examine and collate MSS. simply as a matter of criticism; he may be able to form a judgement as to the question of authority for any particular reading of a passage; but this is a different matter altogether from an infidel writer undertaking to pronounce judgement upon the revelation which God has, in His infinite goodness given to us. We maintain that no man can do this. It is only by the Spirit who Himself inspired the holy scriptures that those scriptures can be understood and appreciated. The word of God must be received upon its own authority. If man can judge it or reason upon it, it is not the word of God at all. Has God given us a revelation or has He not? If He has it must be absolutely perfect in every respect; and being such, it must be entirely beyond the range of human judgement. Man is no more competent to judge scripture than he is to judge God. The scriptures judge man, not man the scriptures.

This makes all the difference. Nothing can be more miserably contemptible than the books which infidels write against the Bible. Every page, every paragraph, every sentence only goes to illustrate the truth of the apostle's statement, that "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned." Their gross ignorance of the subject with which they under take to deal is only equalled by their self-confidence. Of their irreverence we say nothing, for who would think of looking for reverence in the writings of infidels? We might perhaps look for a little modesty, were it not that we are fully aware of the bitter *animus* which lies at the root of all such writings, and renders them utterly unworthy of a moment's consideration.

Other books may have a dispassionate examination: but the precious book of God is approached with the foregone conclusion that it is not a divine revelation; because, forsooth, infidels tell us that God could not give us a written revelation of His mind.

How strange! Men can give us a revelation of their thoughts; and infidels have done so pretty plainly; but God cannot. What folly! What presumption! Why, we may lawfully inquire, could not God reveal His mind to His creatures? Why should it be thought a thing incredible? For no reason whatever, but because infidels would have it so. The wish is in this case assuredly father to the thought. The question raised by the old serpent in the garden of Eden nearly six thousand years ago has been passed on from age to age by all sorts of sceptics, rationalists and infidels, namely, "Hath God said?" We reply with intense delight, Yes, blessed be His holy name, He has spoken — spoken to us. He has revealed His mind; He has given us the holy scriptures. "*all scripture is given by inspiration. of God*, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect [*artios*], thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And again, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; Rom. 15: 4.)

The Lord be praised for such words! They assure us that all scripture is given of God, and that all scripture is given to us. Precious link between the soul and God! What tongue can tell the

value of such a link? God has spoken — spoken to us. His word is a rock against which all the waves of infidel thought dash themselves in contemptible impotency, leaving it in its own divine strength and eternal stability. Nothing can touch the word of God. Not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined can ever move the word of God. There it stands in its own moral glory, spite of all the assaults of the enemy, from age to age. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." What remains for us? Just this, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Here lies the deep secret of peace. The heart is linked to the throne, yea, to the very heart of God by means of His most precious word, and is thus put in possession of a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. What can all the theories, the reasonings and the arguments of infidels effect? Just nothing. They are esteemed as the dust of the summer threshing floor. To one who has really learnt through grace to confide in the word of God — to rest on the authority of holy scripture, all the infidel books that ever were written are utterly worthless, pointless, powerless; they display the ignorance and terrible presumption of the writers;

but as to the scripture, they leave it just where it ever has been and ever will be, "settled in heaven, as immovable as the throne of God.

[In referring to infidel writers, we should bear in mind that by far the most dangerous of such are those calling themselves Christians. In our young days, whenever we heard the word "infidel" we at once thought of a Tom Paine or a Voltaire; now, alas! we have to think of so-called bishops and doctors of the professing church. Tremendous fact!]

The assaults of infidels cannot touch the throne of God neither can they touch His word; and blessed be His name, neither can they touch the peace that flows through the heart that rests on that imperishable foundation. "Great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." "The word of our God shall stand for ever." "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth

away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1: 24, 25.)

Here we have the same precious golden link again. The word which has reached us in the form of glad tidings is the word of the Lord which endureth for ever: and hence our salvation and our peace are as stable as the word on which they are founded. If *all* flesh is as grass, and *all* the glory of man as the flower of grass, then what are the arguments of infidels worth? They are as worthless as withered grass or a faded flower; and the men who put them forth and those who are moved by them will find them to be so sooner or later. Oh! the sinful folly of arguing against the word of God — arguing against the only thing in all this world that can give rest and consolation to the poor, weary human heart — arguing against that which brings the glad tidings of salvation to poor lost sinners — brings them fresh from the heart of God!

But we may perhaps here be met by the question so often raised, and which has troubled many and led them to fly for refuge to what is called "The authority of the church." The question is this, "How are we to know that the book which we call the Bible is the word of God?" Our answer to this question is a very simple one, it is this, The One who has graciously given us the blessed book can give us also the certainty that the book is from Him. The same Spirit who inspired the various writers of the holy scriptures can make us know that those scriptures are the very voice of God speaking to us. It is only by the Spirit that any one can discern this. As we have already seen, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." If the Holy Spirit does not make us know and give us the certainty that the Bible is the word of God, no man or body of men can possibly do it: and, on the other hand, if He does give us the blessed certainty we do not need the testimony of man.

We freely admit that on this great question a shadow of uncertainty would be positive torture and misery. But who can give us certainty? God alone. If all the men upon earth were to agree in their testimony to the authority of holy scripture; if all the councils that ever sat, all the doctors that ever taught, all the fathers that ever wrote were in favour of the dogma of plenary inspiration; if the

universal church, if every denomination in Christendom were to assent to the truth that the Bible is in very deed the word of God; in a word, if we had all the human authority that could possibly be had in reference to the integrity of the word of God, it would be utterly insufficient as a ground of certainty; and if our faith were founded on that authority it would be perfectly worthless. God alone can give us the certainty that He has spoken in His word; and blessed be His name, when He gives it all the arguments, all the cavillings, all the quibblings, all the questionings of infidels, ancient and modern, are as the foam on the water, the smoke from the chimney top, or the dust on the floor. The true believer rejects them as so much worthless rubbish and rests in holy tranquillity in that peerless revelation which our God has graciously given us.

It is of the very last possible importance for the reader to be thoroughly clear and settled as to this grave question if he would be raised above the influence of infidelity on the one hand and superstition on the other. Infidelity undertakes to tell us that God has not given us a book — revelation of His mind — could not give it. Superstition undertakes to tell us that even though God has given us a revelation yet we cannot be assured of it without man's authority nor understand it without man's interpretation. Now it is well to see that by both alike we are deprived of the precious boon of holy scripture. And this is precisely what the devil aims at. He wants to rob us of the word of God; and he can do this quite as effectually by the apparent self-distrust that humbly and reverently looks to wise and learned men for authority as by an audacious infidelity that boldly rejects all authority, human or divine.

Take a case. A father writes a letter to his son at Canton, a letter full of the affection and tenderness of a father's heart. He tells him of his plans and arrangements, tells him of everything that he thinks would interest the heart of a son — everything that the love of a father's heart could suggest. The son calls at the post-office in Canton to inquire if there is a letter from his father. He is told by one official that there is no letter, that his father had not written and could not write, could not communicate his mind by such a medium at all, that it is only folly to think of such a thing. Another official comes forward and says, "Yes, there is a letter here for you, but you

cannot possibly understand it; it is quite useless to you, indeed it can only do you positive mischief inasmuch as you are quite unable to read it aright. You must leave the letter in our hands, and we will explain to you such portions of it as we consider suitable for you." The former of these two officials represents infidelity; the latter, superstition. By both alike would the son be deprived of the longed-for letter — the precious communication from his father's heart. But what, we may inquire, would be his answer to these unworthy officials? A very brief and pointed one we may rest assured. He would say to the first, "I know my father can communicate his mind to me by letter, and that he has done so." He would say to the second, "I know my father can make me understand his mind far better than you can." He would say to both, and that too with bold and firm decision, "Give me up at once my father's letter; it is addressed to me, and no man has any right to withhold it from me."

Thus, too, should the simple-hearted Christian meet the *insolence* of infidelity and the *ignorance* of superstition — the two special agencies of the devil, in this our day, in setting aside the precious word of God. "My Father has communicated His mind, and He can make me understand the communication." "All scripture is given by *inspiration of God*." And "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written *for our learning*." Magnificent answer to every enemy of God's precious and peerless revelation, be he rationalist or ritualist!

We feel it to be our sacred duty, as most surely it is our high privilege, to press upon all to whom we have access the immense importance, yea, the absolute necessity of the most uncompromising decision on this point. We must faithfully maintain at all cost the divine authority, and therefore the absolute supremacy and all-sufficiency of the word of God at all times, in all places, for all purposes. We must hold to it that the scriptures having been given of God are complete in the very highest and fullest sense of the word; that they do not need any human authority to accredit them or any human voice to make them available; they speak for themselves and carry their credentials with them. All we have to do is to believe and obey, not to reason or discuss. God has spoken: it is ours to hearken and yield an unreserved and reverent obedience.

Never was there a moment in the history of the church of God in which it was more needful to urge home on the human conscience the necessity of implicit obedience to the word of God. It is, alas! but little felt. Professing Christians for the most part seem to consider that they have a right to think for themselves, to follow their own reason, their own judgement, or their own conscience. They do not believe that the Bible is a divine and universal guide-book. They think there are very many things in which we are left to choose for ourselves. Hence the almost numberless sects, parties, creeds and schools of thought. If human opinion be allowed at all, then as a matter of course one man has as good a right to think as another; and thus it has come to pass that the professing church has become a proverb and a byword for division.

And what is the sovereign remedy for this widespread disease? Here it is, *absolute and complete subjection to the authority of holy scripture*. It is not men going to scripture to get *their* opinions and their views confirmed, but going to scripture to get the mind of God as to everything, and bowing down their whole moral being to divine authority. This is the one pressing need of the day in which our lot is cast — reverent subjection, in all things, to the supreme authority of the word of God. No doubt there will be a variety in our measure of intelligence, in our apprehension and appreciation of scripture; but what we specially urge upon all Christians is that condition of soul, that attitude of heart expressed in those precious words of the psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." This, we may rest assured, is grateful to the heart of God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Here lies the true secret of moral security. Our knowledge of scripture may be very limited; but if our reverence for it be profound, we shall be preserved from a thousand errors, a thousand snares. And then there will be steady growth. We shall grow in the knowledge of God, of Christ and of the written word. We shall delight to draw from those living and exhaustless depths of holy scripture, and to range through those green pastures which infinite grace has so freely thrown open to the flock of Christ. Thus shall the divine life be nourished and strengthened; the word of God will

become more and more precious to our souls, and we shall be led by the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost into the depth, fullness, majesty and moral glory of holy scripture. We shall be delivered completely from the withering influences of all mere systems of theology, high, low or moderate — a most blessed deliverance! We shall be able to tell the advocates of all the schools of divinity under the sun that, whatever elements of truth they may have in their systems, we have in divine perfectness in the word of God; not twisted and tortured to make them fit into a system, but in their right place in the wide circle of divine revelation which has its eternal centre in the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 3:17.

"That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:17).

"The man of God."

The sentence which we have just penned occurs in Paul's second Epistle to his beloved son Timothy — an epistle marked, as we know, by intense individuality. All thoughtful students of scripture have noticed the striking contrast between the two Epistles of Paul to Timothy. In the first, the church is presented in its order, and Timothy is instructed as to how he is to behave himself therein. In the second, on the contrary, the church is presented in its ruin. The house of God has become the great house, in the which there are vessels to dishonour as well as vessels to honour; and where, moreover, errors and evils abound — heretical teachers and false professors, on every hand.

Here, then, it is, in this epistle of individuality, that the expression, "The man of God" is used with such obvious force and meaning. It is in times of general ruin, failure, declension, and confusion that the faithfulness, devotedness, and decision of the individual man of God are specially called for. And it is a signal mercy for such an one to know that, spite of the hopeless failure of the church, as a responsible witness for Christ, on this earth, it is the privilege of the individual to tread as lofty a path, to taste as deep communion, and to enjoy as rich blessings, as ever were, or could be known, in the church's brightest and palmiest days.

This is a most encouraging and consolatory fact — a fact established by many infallible proofs, and set forth in the very passage from which our heading is taken; and which we shall here quote, at length, for the reader — a passage of singular weight and power.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in

Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good: works."* 2 Timothy 3:17.

{*The reader should be informed that the word which is rendered "perfect," in the above passage, occurs but this once in the entire New Testament. It is (*artios*) and signifies ready, complete well fitted as an instrument with all its strings, a machine with all its parts, a body with all its limbs, joints, muscles, and sinews. The usual word for "perfect" is (*telios*) which signifies the reaching of the moral end, in any particular thing.}

Here we have "the man of God," in the midst of all the ruin and confusion, the heresies and moral pravities of the last days, standing forth in his own distinct individuality, "perfect and throughly furnished unto all good works." And, may we not ask, what more could be said in the church's brightest days? It we go back to the day of Pentecost itself, with all its display of power and glory, have we anything higher or better, or more solid than that which is set forth in the words "perfect and throughly furnished unto all good works?"

And is it not a signal mercy for anyone who desires to stand for God, in a dark and evil day, to be told that, spite of all the darkness, all the evil, all the error and confusion, he possesses that which can make a child wise unto salvation, and make a man perfect and throughly furnished unto all good works? Assuredly it is; and we have to praise our God for it, with full and overflowing hearts. To have access, in days like these, to the eternal fountain of inspiration, where the child and the man can meet and drink and be satisfied — that fountain so clear that you cannot see its depth, and so deep that you cannot reach the bottom — that peerless, priceless volume which meets the child at his mother's knee, and makes him wise unto salvation; and meets the man in the most advanced stage of his practical career and makes him perfect and fully furnished for exigency of every hour. However, we shall have occasion, ere we close this paper, to look, more particularly, at "the man of God," and to consider what is the special force and meaning of this term. That there is very much more involved in it than is ordinarily understood, we are most fully persuaded.

There are three aspects in which man is presented in scripture; in the first place, we have man in nature, secondly, a man in Christ; and, thirdly, we have, the man of God. It might perhaps be thought that the second and third are synonymous; but we shall find a very material difference between them. True, I must be a man in Christ before I can be a man of God; but they are, by no means, interchangeable terms.

Let us then, in the first place, contemplate

MAN IN NATURE.

This is a very comprehensive phrase indeed. Under this title, we shall find every possible shade of character, temperament, and disposition. Man, on the platform of nature, graduates between two extremes. You may view him at the very highest point of cultivation, or at the very lowest point of degradation. You may see him surrounded with all the advantages, the refinements and the so-called dignities of civilised life; or you may find him sunk in all the shameless and barbarous customs of savage existence. You may view him in the almost numberless grades, ranks, classes, and castes into which the human family has distributed itself.

Then again, in the self-same class or caste you will find the most vivid contrasts, in the way of character, temper, and disposition. There, for example, is a man of such an atrocious temper that he is the very horror of every one who knows him. He is the plague of his family circle, and a perfect nuisance to society. He can only be compared to a porcupine with all his quills perpetually up; and if you meet him once you will never wish to meet him again. There, on the other hand, is a man of the sweetest disposition and most amiable temper. He is just as attractive as the other is repulsive. He is a tender, loving, faithful husband; a kind, affectionate, considerate father; a thoughtful liberal master; a kindly, genial neighbour; a generous friend, beloved by all, and justly so; the more you know him the more you must like him, and if you meet him once you are sure to wish to meet him again.

Further, you may meet on the platform of nature, a man who is false and deceitful, to the very heart's core, He delights in lying,

cheating, and deception. Even where there is no object to be gained or interest to be served, he would rather tell a lie than the truth. He is mean and contemptible in all his thoughts, words, and ways; a man to whom all who know him would like to give as wide a berth as possible. And, on the other hand, you may meet a man of high principle, frank, honourable, generous, and upright; one who would scorn to tell a lie, or do a mean action, whose reputation is unblemished — his character unexceptionable. His word would be taken for any amount; he is one with whom all who know him would be glad to have dealings; an almost perfect natural character; a man of whom it might be said, he lacks but one thing.

Finally, as you pass to and fro on nature's platform, you may meet the atheist who affects to deny the existence of God; the infidel who denies God's revelation; the sceptic and — the rationalist who disbelieves everything. And, on the other hand, you will meet the superstitious devotee who spends his time in prayers and fasting, ordinances, and ceremonies; and who feels sure he is earning a place in heaven by a wearisome round of religious observances that actually unfit him for the proper functions and responsibilities of domestic and social life. You may meet men of every imaginable shade of religious opinion, high church, low church, broad church, and no church; men who, without a spark of divine life in their souls, are contending for the powerless forms of a traditionally religion.

Now, there is one grand and awfully solemn fact common to all these various classes, castes, grades, shades, and conditions of men who Occupy the platform of nature, and that is there is not so much as a single link between them and heaven — there is no link with the Man who sits at the right hand of God — no link with the new creation. They are without Christ and without hope. They are unconverted. They have not rotten eternal life. As regards God, and Christ, and eternal life, and heaven, they all — however they may differ, morally, socially, and religiously — stand on one common ground; they are far from God — they are out of Christ — they are in their sins — they are in the flesh — they are of the world — they are on their way to hell

This being the case, it follows as a necessary and terrible consequence, that, underneath the platform of nature, and right in front of all who stand thereon, there are the flames of an everlasting hell. There is really no getting over this, if we are to listen to the voice of holy scripture. False teachers may deny it. Infidels may pretend to smile contemptuously at the idea; but scripture is plain — as plain as plainness itself. It speaks in manifold places, of a fire that NEVER shall be quenched, and of a worm that shall never die.

It is the very height of folly for anyone to seek to set aside the plain testimony of the word of God on this most solemn and weighty subject. Better far to let that testimony fall, with all its weight and authority, upon the heart and conscience — infinitely better to flee from the wrath to come than to attempt to deny that it is coming, and that, when it does come, it will abide for ever — yes, for ever, and for ever, and for ever! Tremendous thought! — overwhelming consideration! May it speak, with living power, to the soul of the unconverted reader, leading him to cry out, in all sincerity, “What is to be done?”

Yes, here is the question, “What must I do to be saved?” The divine answer is wrapped up in the following words which dropped from the lips of two of Christ's very highest and most gifted ambassadors. “Repent and be converted,” said Peter to the Jew. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house,” said Paul to the Gentile. And again, the latter of these two blessed messengers, in summing up his own ministry, thus defines the whole matter, “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How simple! But how real! How deep! How thoroughly practical! It is not a nominal, national head belief. It is not saying, in mere flippant profession, “I believe.” Ah! no; it is something far deeper and more serious than this. It is much to be feared that a large amount of the professed faith of this our day is deplorably superficial. There are vast numbers of those who throng our preaching rooms and lecture halls who are, after all, but wayside and stony ground hearers. The plough has never passed over them. The fallow ground has never been broken up. The arrow of conviction

has never pierced them through and through. They have never been smashed to pieces — turned inside out — thoroughly revolutionised. The preaching of the gospel to all such is just like scattering precious seed on the hard asphalt, the pavement, or the beaten highway. It never penetrates. It does not enter into the depths of the soul; the conscience is not reached; the heart is not affected. The seed lies on the surface and is carried away by the first passing breeze.

Nor is this all. It is also much to be feared that many of the preachers of the present day, in their efforts to make the gospel simple, lose sight of the eternal necessity of repentance, and the essential necessity of the action of the Holy Ghost, without which so-called faith is a mere human exercise and passes away like the vapours of the morning, leaving the soul still in the region of nature, satisfied with itself, daubed with the untempered mortar of a merely human gospel that cries peace, peace, where there is no peace, but the most imminent danger.

All this is very serious, and should lead the soul into profound exercise. We want the reader to give it his grave and immediate consideration. We would put this pointed question to him, which we entreat him to answer, "*Have you got eternal life?*" Say, dear friend, *have you?* "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." Grand reality! If you have not got this, you have nothing. You are still on that platform of nature of which we have spoken so much. Yes, you are still there, no matter though you were the very fairest specimen to be found there — amiable, polished, affable, frank, generous, truthful, upright, honourable, attractive, beloved, learned, cultivated, and even pious after a merely human fashion. You may be all this, and yet not have a single pulsation of eternal life in your soul.

This may sound harsh, stern, and severe. But it is true; and you will find out its truth sooner or later. We want you to find it out *now*. We want you to see that you are a thorough bankrupt, in the fullest sense of that word. A deed of bankruptcy has been filed against you in the high court of heaven. Here are its terms, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Have you ever pondered these words? Have you ever seen their application to yourself. So long as you are

unrepentant, unconverted, unbelieving, you cannot do a single thing to please God — not one. “In the flesh” and “on the platform of nature” mean one and the same thing; and so long as you are there and thus, you cannot please God. “You must be born again” — renewed in the very deepest springs of your being, unrenewed nature is wholly unable to see and unfit to enter the kingdom of God. You must be born of water and of the Spirit — that is by the living word of God, and of the Holy Ghost. There is no other way by which to enter the kingdom. It is not by self-improvement but by new birth, we reach the blessed kingdom of God. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh;” and “the flesh profiteth nothing,” for “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

How distinct is all this! How pointed! How full! How personal! How earnestly we desire that the unawakened or undecided reader should, just now, take it home to himself, as though he were the only individual upon the face of the earth. It will not do to generalise — to rest satisfied with saying, “We are all sinners.” No; it is an intensely individual matter. “You must be born again.” If you again ask, “How?” hear the divine response from the lips of the Master Himself, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Here is the sovereign remedy, for every poor broken-hearted, conscience-smitten, hopelessly ruined, hell-deserving sinner — for every one who owns himself lost — who confesses his sins, and judges himself — for every weary, heavy laden, sin-burdened soul — here is God's own blessed promise. Jesus died, that you might live. He was condemned, that you might be justified. He drank the cup of wrath, that you might drink the cup of salvation. Behold Him hanging on yonder cross for thee. See what He did for thee. Believe that He satisfied, on your behalf, all the claims — the infinite and everlasting claims of the throne of God. See all your sins laid on Him — your guilt imputed to Him — your entire condition represented and disposed of by Him. See His atoning death answering perfectly for all that was or ever could be brought against you. See Him rising from the dead, having accomplished all. See Him ascending into the heavens, bearing in His divine Person the

marks of His finished atonement. See Him seated on the throne of God, in the very highest place of power. See Him crowned with glory and honour. Believe in Him there, and you will receive the gift of eternal life — the seal of the Holy Ghost — the earnest of the inheritance. You will pass off the platform of nature — you will be “A man in Christ.”

PART 2.

To all whose eyes have been opened to see their true condition, by nature — who have been brought under the convicting power of the Holy Ghost — who know aught of the real meaning of a broken heart and a contrite spirit — to all such it must be of the deepest possible interest to know the divine secret of rest and peace. If it be true — and it is true, because God says it — that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” — then how is any one to get out of the flesh? How can he pass off the platform of nature? How can he reach the blessed position of those to whom the Holy Ghost declares, “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit?”

These are momentous questions, surely. For, be it thoroughly known and ever remembered, that no improvement of our old nature is of any value whatsoever, as to our standing before God. It may be all very well, so far as this life is concerned, for a man to improve himself, by every means within his reach, to cultivate his mind, furnish his memory, elevate his moral tone, advance his social position. All this is quite true, so true as not to need a moment's argument.

But, admitting, in the fullest manner, the truth of all this, it leaves wholly untouched the solemn and sweeping statement of the inspired apostle that “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” There must be a new standing altogether, and this new standing cannot be reached by any change in the old nature — by any doings — any sayings — any feelings — ordinances of religion, prayers, alms or sacraments. Do what you will with nature and it is nature still. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh;” and do what you will with flesh you cannot make it spirit. There must be a new life — a life flowing from the new man, the last Adam, who has become, in resurrection, the Head of a new race.

How is this most precious life to be had? Hear the memorable answer — hear it, anxious reader hear it and live. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24.

Here we have a total change of standing — a passing from death to life — from a position in which there is not so much as a single link with heaven — with the new creation — with the risen Man in glory, into a position in which there is not a single link with the first man — with the old creation — and this present evil world. And all this is through believing on the Son of God — not saying we believe, but really, truly, heartily, believing on the Son of God — not by a head belief, a nominal, notional, intellectual faith — but by believing with the heart.

Thus only does any one become A MAN IN CHRIST.

Every true believer is a man in Christ. Whether it be the convert of yesterday or the hoary-headed saint of fifty or sixty years' standing as a Christian, each stands in precisely the same blessed position — he is in Christ. There can be no difference here. The practical state may differ immensely; but the positive standing is one and the same. As on the platform of nature, you may meet with every imaginable shade, grade, class, and condition, though all having one common standing; so on the new, the divine, the heavenly platform, you may meet with every possible variety of practical condition: the greatest possible difference in intelligence, experience, and spiritual power, while all possessing the same standing before God, all being in Christ. There can be no degrees as to standing, whatever there may be as to state. The convert of yesterday, and the hoary headed father in Christ are both alike as to standing. Each is a man in Christ, and there can be no advance upon this. We sometimes hear of "The higher Christian life;" but, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a higher or a lower Christian life, inasmuch as Christ is the life of every believer. It may be that those who use the term mean a right thing. They probably refer to the higher stages of the Christian life — greater nearness to God — greater likeness to Christ — greater power in the Spirit — more devotedness — more separation from the world — more entire

consecration of heart to Christ. But all these things belong to the question of our state, not to our standing. This latter is absolute, settled, unchangeable. It is in Christ, nothing less, nothing more, nothing different. If we are not in Christ, we are in our sins; but if we are in Christ, we cannot possibly be higher, as to standing.

If the reader will turn with us, for a few moments, to 1 Corinthians 15:45-48, he will find some powerful teaching on this great foundation truth. The apostle speaks here of two men, "the first and the second." And let it be carefully noted that the second Man is, by no means, federally connected with the first, but stands in contrast with him — a new, independent, divine, heavenly source of life in Himself. The first man has been entirely set aside, as a ruined, guilty, outcast creature. We speak of Adam federally — as the head of a race. Personally, Adam was saved by grace; but if we look at him from a federal standpoint, we see him a hopeless wreck.

The first man is an irremediable ruin. This is proved by the fact of a second Man, for truly we may say of the men as of the covenants, "If the first had been found faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." But the very fact of a second Man being introduced demonstrates the hopeless ruin of the first. Why a second, if aught could be made of the first? If our old Adam nature was, in any wise, capable of being improved, there was no need of something new. But "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Romans 8, Galatians 6.

There is immense moral power in all this line of teaching. It sets forth Christianity in vivid and striking contrast with every form of religiousness under the sun. Take Judaism or any other that ever was known or that now exists in this world, and what do you find it to be? Is it not invariably something designed for the testing, trying, improvement, or advancement of the first man? Unquestionably.

But what is Christianity? It is something entirely new — heavenly — spiritual — divine. It is based upon the cross of Christ, in the which the first man came to his end — where sin was put away — judgement borne — the old man crucified and put out of

God's sight for ever, so far as all believers are concerned. The cross closes, for faith, the history of the first man. "I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle. And again, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

Are these mere figures of speech, or do they set forth, in the mighty words of the Holy Ghost, the grand fact of the entire setting aside of our old nature, as a thing utterly worthless and condemned? The latter, most assuredly, blessed be God. Christianity starts, as it were, from the open grave of the second Man, to pursue its bright career onward to eternal glory. It is, emphatically, a new creation in which there is not so much as a single shred of the old thing — for "all things are of God." And if "all things" are of God, there can be nothing of man.

What rest! What comfort! What strength! What moral elevation! What sweet relief for the poor burdened soul that has been vainly seeking, for years perhaps, to find peace in self-improvement! What deliverance from the wretched thralldom of legality, in all its phases, to find out the precious secret that my guilty, ruined, bankrupt self — the very thing that I have been trying, by every means in my power, to improve, has been completely and for ever set aside — that God is not looking for any amendment in it — that He has condemned it and put it to death in the cross of His Son! What an answer is here to the monk, the ascetic, and the ritualist! Oh! that it were understood in all its emancipating powers This heavenly, this divine, this spiritual Christianity. Surely were it only known in its living power and reality, it would deliver the soul from the thousand and one forms of corrupt religion whereby the arch-enemy and deceiver is ruining the souls of untold millions. We may truly say that Satan's masterpiece — his most successful effort against the truth of the Gospel, against the Christianity of the New Testament — is seen in the fact of his leading unconverted people to take and apply to themselves ordinances of the Christian religion, and to profess many of its doctrines. In this way he blinds their eyes to their own true condition, as utterly ruined, guilty, and undone; and strikes a deadly blow at the pure Gospel of Christ. The best piece that was ever put upon the "old garment" of man's ruined nature is

the profession of Christianity; and, the better the piece, the worse the rent. See Mark 2:21.

Let us bend an attentive ear to the following weighty words of the greatest teacher and best exponent of true Christianity the world ever saw. "For I through law am dead to law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Mark this, "I — not I — but Christ." The old "I" — "crucified." The new "I" — Christ. "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:19, 20.

{*The reader will distinguish between the expression "in the flesh" as used in Galatians 2:20, and in Romans 8:8, 9. In the former, it simply refers to our condition as in the body. In the latter, it sets forth the principle or ground of our standing. The believer is in the body, as to the fact of his condition; but he is not in the flesh as to the principle of his standing. But very often the expression "in the flesh," is synonymous with being "in the body." We need to ponder more deeply the words of scripture.}

This, and nothing else, is Christianity. It is not "the old man" — the first Adam — nature, becoming religious, even though the religion be the profession of the doctrines, and the adopting of the ordinances of Christianity. No; it is the death, the crucifixion, the burial of the old man — the old I — the old nature, and becoming a new man in Christ. Every true believer is a new man in Christ. He has passed clean out of the old creation — standing — the old estate of sin and death, guilt and condemnation; and he has passed into a new creation-standing — into a new estate of life and righteousness in a risen and glorified Christ — the Head of the new creation — the last Adam.

Such is the position and unalterable standing of the very feeblest believer in Christ. There is absolutely no other standing for any Christian. I must either be in the first man or in the second. There is no third man, for the second Man is the last Adam. There is no middle ground. I am either in Christ, or I am in my sins. But if I am in Christ, I am as He is before God. ' As he is so are we, in this world." He does not say, "As he was" but "as he is." That is, the

Christian is viewed by God as one with Christ, in every respect — His Deity, of course, excepted, as being incommunicable. That blessed One stood in the believer's stead — bore his sins, died his death, paid his penalty, represented him, in every respect; took all his guilt, all his liabilities, all that pertained to him as a man in nature, stood as his substitute, in all the verity and reality of that word, and having divinely met his case, and borne his judgement, He rose from the dead, and is now the Head, the Representative, and the only true definition of the believer before God.

To this most glorious and enfranchising truth, holy scripture bears the amplest testimony. The passage which we have just quoted from Galatians is a most vivid, powerful, and condensed statement of it. And if the reader will turn to Romans 6. he will find further evidence. We shall quote some of the weighty sentences.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Far be the thought. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also of resurrection. Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:1-11.

Reader, mark, especially, these words in the foregoing quotation — "We that are dead" — "We are buried with him" — "Like as Christ was raised even so we also" — "Our old man is crucified with him" — "Dead with Christ" — "Dead indeed unto sin." Do we really understand such utterances? Have we entered into their real force and meaning? Do we, in very deed, perceive their application

to ourselves. These are searching questions for the heart; but they are needful. The real doctrine of Romans 6 is but little apprehended. There are thousands who profess to believe in the atoning virtue of the death of Christ, but who do not see aught therein beyond the forgiveness of their sins. They do not see the crucifixion, death, and burial of the old man — the destruction of the body of sin — the condemnation of sin — the entire setting aside of the old system of things belonging to their first Adam condition — in a word their perfect identification with a dead and risen Christ. Hence it is that we press this grand and all-important line of truth upon the attention of the reader. It lies at the very base of all true Christianity, and forms an integral part of the truth of the Gospel.

Let us hearken to further evidence on the point. Hear what the apostle saith to the Colossians: "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men, [such as] touch not, taste not, handle not" — thus it is that human ordinances speak to us, telling us not to touch this, not to taste that, not to handle the other, as if there could possibly be any divine principle involved in such things — "which all are to perish with the using;" and which, "have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. *For ye are dead*, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Here, again, let us inquire how far we enter into the true force, meaning, and application of such words as these — "*Why as though living in the world,*" &c.? Are we living in the world or living in heaven — which? The true Christian is one who has died out of this present evil world. He has no more to do with it than Christ. "Like as Christ even so we." He is dead to the law — dead to sin: alive in Christ — alive to God — alive in the new creation. He belongs to heaven. He is enrolled as a citizen of heaven. His religion, his politics, his morals are all heavenly. He is a heavenly man walking on the earth, and fulfilling all the duties which belong to the varied relationships in which the hand of God has placed him, and in which

the word of God most fully recognises him, and amply guides him, such as husband, father, master, child, servant, and such like. The Christian is not a monk, an ascetic, or a hermit. He is, we repeat, a heavenly, spiritual man, in the world, but not *of* it. He is like a foreigner so far as his residence here is concerned. He is in the body, as to the fact of his condition; but not in the flesh as to the principle of his standing. He is *a man in Christ*.

Ere closing this article, we should like to call the reader's attention to 2 Corinthians 12. In it he will find, at once, the *positive standing* and the *possible state* of the believer. The standing is fixed and unalterable as set forth in that one comprehensive sentence — "A man in Christ." The state may graduate between the two extremes presented in the opening and closing verses of this chapter. A Christian may be in the third heaven, amid the seraphic visions of that blessed and holy place; or he may, if not watchful, sink down into all the gross and evil things named in verses 20, 21.

It may be asked, "Is it possible that a true child of God could ever be found in such a low moral condition?" Alas! alas! reader, it is indeed possible. There is no depth of sin and folly into which a Christian is not capable of plunging, if no; kept by the grace of God. Even the blessed apostle himself, when he came down from the third heaven, needed "a thorn in the flesh" to keep him from being "exalted above measure." We might suppose that a man who had been up in that bright and blessed region could never again feel the stirrings of pride. But the plain fact is that even the third heavens cannot cure the flesh. It is utterly incorrigible, and must be judged and kept under, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, else it will cut out plenty of sorrowful work for us.

Still, nothing can touch the believer's standing. He is in Christ, for ever — justified, accepted, perfect in Him, and never can be anything else. And, moreover, he must ever judge his state by his standing, never his standing by his state. To attempt to reach the standing by my state is *legalism*, to refuse to judge my state by the standing is *antinomianism*. Both — though so diverse one from the other — are alike false — alike opposed to the truth of God — alike offensive to the Holy Ghost — alike removed from the divine idea of "A Man in Christ."

PART 3.

Having considered the deeply interesting questions of "a man in nature" and "a man in Christ," it remains for us, now, to dwell for a little, in the third and last place, on the thoroughly practical subject suggested by the title of this paper, namely, THE MAN OF GOD.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that every Christian is a man of God. Even in Paul's day — in the days of Timothy, there were many who bore the Christian name who were very far indeed from acquitting themselves as men of God, that is, as those who were really God's men, in the midst of the failure and error which, even then, had begun to creep in.

It is the perception of this fact that renders the Second Epistle to Timothy so profoundly interesting. In it we have what we may call ample provision for the man of God, in the day in which he is called to live — a dark, evil, and perilous day, most surely, in which all who — will live godly must keep the eye steadily fixed on Christ Himself — His Name — His Person — His word, if they would make any headway against the tide.

It is hardly possible to read Second Timothy without being struck with its intensely individual character. The very opening address is strikingly characteristic. "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."

What glowing words are these! How affecting to hearken thus to one man of God pouring the deep and tender feelings of his great, large, loving heart into the heart of another man of God! The dear apostle was beginning to feel the chilling influence that was fast creeping over the professing church. He was tasting the bitterness of disappointed hopes. He found himself deserted by many who had once professed to be his friends and associates in that glorious work to which he had consecrated all the energies of his great soul. Many were becoming "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, and of his prisoner." It was not that they altogether ceased to be Christians, or abandoned the Christian profession; but they turned their backs upon Paul, and left him alone in the day of trial.

Now, it is under such circumstances that the heart turns, with peculiar tenderness, to individual faithfulness and affection. If one is surrounded, on all hands, by true hearted confessors — by a great cloud of witnesses: — a large army of good soldiers of Jesus Christ — if the tide of devotedness is flowing around one and bearing him on its bosom, he is not so dependent upon individual sympathy and fellowship.

But, on the other hand, when the general condition of things is low — when the majority prove faithless — when old associates are dropping off, it is then that personal grace and true affection are specially valued. The dark background of general declension throws individual devotedness into beautiful relief.

Thus it is in this exquisite Epistle which now lies open before us. It does the heart good to hearken to the breathings of the aged prisoner of Jesus Christ who can speak of serving God from his forefathers with a pure conscience, and of unceasing remembrance of his beloved son and true yoke fellow.

It is specially interesting to notice that, both in reference to his own history and that of his beloved friend, Paul goes back to facts of very early date — facts in their own individual path — facts prior to their meeting one another, and prior to what we may call their church associations — important and interesting as these things most surely are in their place. Paul had served God, from his forefathers, with pure conscience, before he had known a fellow Christian. This he could continue to do though deserted by all his Christian companions. So also, in the case of his faithful friend, he says, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice: and I am persuaded that in thee also."

This is very touching and very beautiful. We cannot but be struck with such references to the previous history of those beloved men of God. The "pure conscience" of the one, and "the unfeigned faith" of the other, indicate two grand moral qualities which all must possess if they would prove true men of God in a dark and evil day. The former has its immediate reference, in all things, to the one living and true God; the latter draws all its springs from Him. That

leads us to walk *before* God; this enables us to walk *with* Him. Both together are indispensable in forming the character of the true man of God.

It is utterly impossible to over-estimate the importance of keeping a pure conscience before God, in all our ways. It is positively invaluable. It leads us to refer everything to God. It keeps us from being tossed hither and thither by every wave and current of human opinion. It imparts stability and consistency to the entire course and character. We are all in imminent danger of falling under human influence — of shaping our way according to the thoughts of our fellow man — of adopting his cue, and mounting his hobby.

All this is destructive of the character of the man of God. If you take your tone from your fellow; if you suffer yourself to be formed in a merely human mould; if your faith stands in the wisdom of man; if your object is to please men, then instead of being a man of God, you will become a member of a party or clique. You will lose that lovely freshness and originality so essential to the individual servant of Christ, and become marked by the peculiar and dominant features of a sect.

Let us carefully guard against this. It has ruined many a valuable servant. Many who might have proved really useful workmen in the vineyard, have failed completely through not maintaining the integrity of their individual character and path. They began with God. They started on their course in the exercise of a pure conscience, and in the pursuit of that path which a divine hand had marked out for them. There was a bloom, a freshness, and a verdure about them, most refreshing to all who came in contact with them. They were taught of God. They drew near to the eternal fountain of holy scripture and drank for themselves. Perhaps they did not know much; but what they did know was real because they received it from God, and it turned to good account for "there is much food in the tillage of the poor."

But, instead of going on with God, they allowed themselves to get under human influence; they got truth second-hand, and became the vendors of other men's thoughts; instead of drinking at the fountain head, they drank at the streams of human opinion; they lost

originality, simplicity, freshness, and power, and became the merest copyists, if not miserable caricatures. Instead of giving forth those "rivers of living water" which flow from the true believer in Jesus, they dropped into the barren technicalities and cut and dry common-places of mere systematised religion.

Beloved Christian reader, all this must be sedulously guarded against. We must watch against it, pray against it, believe against it, and live against it. Let us seek to serve God, with a pure conscience. Let us live in His own immediate presence, in the light of His blessed countenance, in the holy intimacy of personal communion with Him, through the power of the Holy Ghost. This, we may rest assured, is the true secret of power for the man of God, at all times, and under all circumstances. We must walk with God, in the deep and cherished sense of our own personal responsibility to Him. This is what we understand by a pure conscience."

But will this tend, in the smallest degree, to lessen our sense of the value of true fellowship — of holy communion with all those who are true to Christ? By no means; indeed it is the very thing which will impart power, energy, and depth of tone to the fellowship. If every "man in Christ" were only acquitting himself thoroughly as "a man of God," what blessed fellowship there would be! what heart work! what glow, what unmistakable power! How different from the dull formalism of a merely nominal assent to certain accredited dogmas of a party, on the one hand, and from the mere *esprit de corps* of cliquism, on the other.

There are few terms in such common use and so little understood as "fellowship." In numberless cases, it merely indicates the fact of a nominal membership in some religious denomination — a fact which furnishes no guarantee whatsoever of living communion with Christ, or personal devotedness to His cause. If all who are nominally "in fellowship" were acquitting themselves thoroughly as men of God, what a very different condition of things we should be privileged to witness!

But what is fellowship? It is, in its very highest expression, having one common object with God, and taking part in the same portion; and that object — that portion is Christ — Christ known

and enjoyed through the Holy Ghost. This is fellowship with God. What a privilege! What a dignity! What unspeakable blessedness! To be allowed to have a common object and a common portion with God Himself! To delight in the One in whom He delights! There can be nothing higher, nothing better, nothing more precious than this. Not even in heaven itself shall we know aught beyond this. Our own condition will, thank God, be vastly different. We shall be done with a body of sin and death, and be clothed with a body of glory. We shall be done with a sinful, sorrowful, distracting world, where all is directly opposed to God and to us, and we shall breathe the atmosphere — the pure and exhilarating atmosphere of that bright and blessed world above. But, in so far as our fellowship is concerned, it is now as it shall be then, "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" — "In the light," and by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus much as to our fellowship with God. And, as regards our fellowship one with another, it is simply as we walk in the light, as we read, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) We can only have fellowship one with another as we walk in the immediate presence of God. There may be a vast amount of mere intercourse without one single particle of divine fellowship. Alas! alas! a great deal of what passes for Christian fellowship is nothing more than the merest religious gossip — the vapid, worthless, soul-withering chit-chat of the religious world, than which nothing can be more miserably unprofitable. True Christian fellowship can only be enjoyed in the light. It is when we are individually walking with God, in the power of personal communion, that we really have fellowship one with another, and this fellowship consists in real heart enjoyment of Christ as our one object — our common portion. It is not heartless traffic in certain favourite doctrines which we receive to hold in common. It is not morbid sympathy with those who think, and see, and feel with us, in some favourite theory or dogma. It is something quite different from all this. It is delighting in Christ, in common with all those who are walking in the light. It is attachment to Him — to His Person — His Name — His word — His cause — His people. It is joint consecration of heart and soul to that blessed One

who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and brought us into the light of God's presence, there to walk with Him and with one another. This and nothing less is Christian fellowship; and where this is really understood it will lead us to pause and consider what we say when we declare, in any given case, "such an one is in fellowship."

But we must proceed with our Epistle, and there see what full provision there is for the man of God, however dark the day may be in which his lot is cast.

We have seen something of the importance — yea rather we should say, the indispensable necessity of "a pure conscience," and "unfeigned faith," in the moral equipment of God's man. These qualities lie at the very base of the entire edifice of practical godliness which must ever characterise the genuine man of God.

But there is more than this. The edifice must be erected as well as the foundation laid. The man of God has to work on amid all sorts of difficulties, trials, sorrows, disappointments, obstacles, questions, and controversies. He has his niche to fill, his path to lead, his work to do. Come what may, he must serve. The enemy may oppose; the world may frown; the church may be in ruins around him; false brethren may thwart, hinder, and desert; strife, controversy, and division may arise and darken the atmosphere; still the man of God must move on, regardless of all these things, working, serving, testifying, according to the sphere in which the hand of God has placed him, and according to the gift bestowed upon him. How is this to be done? Not only by keeping a pure conscience and the exercise of an unfeigned faith — priceless, indispensable qualities! but, further, he has to hearken to the following weighty word of exhortation — "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

The gift must be stirred up, else it may become useless if allowed to lie dormant. There is great danger of letting the gift drop into disuse through the discouraging influence of surrounding circumstances. A gift unused will soon become useless; whereas, a gift stirred up and diligently used grows and expands. It is not

enough to possess a gift, we must wait upon the gift, cultivate it, and exercise it. This is the way to improve it.

And observe the special force of the expression, "Gift of God." In Ephesians 4 we read of "the gift of Christ," and there, too, we find all the gifts, from the highest to the lowest range, flowing down from Christ the risen and glorified Head of His body the church. But in 2 Timothy, we have it defined as "the gift of God." True it is — blessed be His holy name! — our Lord Christ is God over all, blessed for ever, so that the gift of Christ is the gift of God. But we may rest assured there is never any distinction in scripture without a difference; and hence there is some good reason for the expression "gift of God. "We doubt not it is in full harmony with the nature and object of the Epistle in which it occurs. It is "the gift of God" communicated to "the man of God "to be used by him notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the professing church, and spite of all the difficulty, darkness, and discouragement of the day in which his lot is cast.

The man of God must not allow himself to be hindered in the diligent cultivation and exercise of his gift, though everything seems to look dark and forbidding, for "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." Here we have "God" again introduced to our thoughts, and that, too, in a most gracious manner, as furnishing His man with the very thing he needs to meet the special exigence of his day — "The Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Marvellous combination! Truly, an exquisite compound after the art of the apothecary! Power, love and wisdom! How perfect! Not a single ingredient too much. Not one too little. If it were merely a spirit of power, it might lead one to carry things with a high hand. Were it merely a spirit of love, it might lead one to sacrifice truth for peace' sake; or indolently to tolerate error and evil, rather than give offence. But the power is softened by the love; and the love is strengthened by the power; and, moreover, the spirit of wisdom comes in to adjust both the power and the love. In a word, it is a divinely perfect and beautiful provision for the man of God — the very thing he needs for "the last days" so perilous, so difficult, so full of all sorts of perplexing questions and apparent contradictions.

If one were to be asked what he would consider most necessary for such days as these? surely he should, at once, say, "power, love, and soundness of mind." Well, blessed be God, these are the very things which He has graciously given to form the character, shape the way, and govern the conduct of the man of God, right on to the end.

But there is further provision and further exhortation for the man of God. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." In Pentecostal days, when the rich and mighty tide of divine grace was flowing in, and bearing thousands of ransomed souls upon its bosom; when all were of one heart and one mind when those outside were overawed by the extraordinary manifestations of divine power, it was rather a question of partaking of the triumphs of the gospel, than its afflictions. But in the days contemplated in 2 Timothy, all is changed. The beloved apostle is a lonely prisoner at Rome; all in Asia had forsaken him; Hymeneus and Philetus are denying the resurrection; all sorts of heresies, errors, and evils are creeping in; the landmarks are in danger of being swept away by the tide of apostasy and corruption.

In the face of all this, the man of God has to brace himself up for the occasion. He has to endure hardness; to hold fast the form of sound words; he has to keep the good thing committed to him; to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; to keep himself disentangled — however he may be engaged; he must keep himself free as a soldier; he must cling to God's sure foundation; He must purge himself from the dishonourable vessels in the great house; he must flee youthful lusts, and *follow* righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. He must avoid foolish and unlearned questions. He must turn away from formal and heartless professors. He must be thoroughly furnished for all good works, perfectly equipped through a knowledge of the holy scriptures. He must preach the word; be instant in season and out of season. He must watch in all things; endure afflictions; and do the work of an evangelist.

What a category for the man of God! Who is sufficient for these things? Where is the spiritual power to be had for such works? It is

to be had at the mercy-seat. It is to be found in earnest, patient, believing, waiting upon the living God, and in no other way. All our springs are in Him. We have only to draw upon Him. He is sufficient for the darkest day. Difficulties are nothing to Him, and they are bread for faith. Yes, beloved reader, difficulties of the most formidable nature are simply bread for faith, and the man of faith can feed upon them and grow strong thereby. Unbelief says, "There is a lion in the way;" but faith can slay the strongest lion that ever roared along the path of the Nazarite of God. It is the privilege of the true believer to rise far above all the hostile influences which surround him — no matter what they are, or from whence they spring — and, in the calmness, quietness, and brightness of the divine presence, to enjoy as high communion, and taste as rich and rare privileges as ever were known in the church's brightest and palmiest days.

Let us remember this. Every man of God will need to remember it. There is no comfort, no peace, no strength, no moral power, no true elevation to be derived from looking at the ruins. We must look up out of the ruins to the place where our Lord Christ has taken His seat, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Or rather — to speak more according to our true position — we should look down from our place in the heavens upon all the ruins of earth. To realise our place in Christ, and to be occupied in heart and soul with Him, is the true secret of power to carry ourselves as men of God. To have Christ ever before us — His work for the conscience, His Person for the heart, His word for the path, is the one grand, sovereign, divine remedy for a ruined self — a ruined world — a ruined church.

But we must close. Very gladly would we linger, in company with the reader, over the contents of this most precious 2 Timothy. Truly refreshing would it be to dwell upon all its touching allusions, its earnest appeals, its weighty exhortations. But this would demand a volume, and hence we must leave the Christian reader to study the epistle for himself, praying that the eternal Spirit who indicted it may unfold and apply it, in living power to his soul, so that he may be enabled to acquit himself as an earnest, faithful, whole-hearted man of God and servant of Christ, in the midst of a scene of hollow profession, and heartless worldly religiousness.

May the good Lord stir us all up to a more thorough consecration of ourselves, in spirit, soul, and body — all we are and all we have — to His service! We think we can really say we long for this — long for it, in the deep sense of our lack of it — long for it, more intensely, as we grow increasingly sick of the unreal condition of things within and around us.

O beloved Christian, let us earnestly, believingly, and perseveringly cry to our own ever gracious God to make us more real — more whole-hearted — more thoroughly devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Bible — Its Sufficiency and Supremacy.

Some, we are aware, would fain persuade us that things are so totally changed since the Bible was penned, that we need other guidance than that which its precious pages supply. They tell us that society is not what it was; that the human race has made progress; that there has been such a development of the powers of nature, the resources of science and the appliances of philosophy, that to maintain the sufficiency and supremacy of the Bible, at such a point in the world's history as the nineteenth century of the Christian era, can only be regarded as childishness, ignorance, or imbecility.

Now, the men that tell us these things may be very clever and very learned; but we have no hesitation whatever in telling them that, in this matter, "they do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." We certainly do desire to render all due respect to learning, genius, and talent, whenever we find them in their right place, and at their proper work; but when we find them lifting their proud heads above the Word of God; when we find them sitting in judgement, and casting a slur upon that peerless revelation, we feel that we owe them no respect whatever; yea, we treat them as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to shake those eternal pillars on which the faith of God's people has ever rested. We cannot listen for a moment to men, however profound in their reading and thinking, who dare to treat God's book as though it were man's book, and speak of those pages that were penned by the All wise, Almighty, and Eternal God, as though they were the production of a shallow and short-sighted mortal.

It is important that the reader should see clearly that men must either deny that the Bible is the Word of God, or admit its sufficiency and supremacy in all ages, and in all countries all stages and conditions of the human race. Grant us but this, that God has written a book for man's guidance, and we argue that that book must be amply sufficient for man, no matter when, where, or how we find him. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . that the man of God may be perfect (Gr) throughly furnished unto all good works"

(2 Tim. 3:16-17). This, surely, is enough. To be perfect and thoroughly furnished, must needs render a man independent of all the boasted powers of science and philosophy, falsely so called.

We are quite aware that, in writing thus, we expose ourselves to the sneer of the learned rationalist, and the polished and cultivated philosopher. But we are not very careful about this. We greatly admire the answer of a pious, but, no doubt, very ignorant woman to some very learned man who was endeavouring to show her that the inspired writer had made a mistake in asserting that Jonah was in the whale's belly. He assured her that such a thing could not possibly be, inasmuch that the natural history of the whale proved it could not swallow anything so large.

"Well," said the poor woman, "I do not know much about natural history; but this I know, that if the Bible were to tell me that Jonah swallowed the whale I would believe it."

Now, it is quite possible many would pronounce this poor woman to have been under the influence of ignorance and blind credulity; but, for our part, we should rather be the ignorant woman, confiding in God's Word, than the learned rationalist trying to pick holes in it. We have no doubt as to who was in the safer position.

But, let it not be supposed that we prefer ignorance to learning. Let none imagine that we despise the discoveries of science, or treat with contempt the achievements of sound philosophy. Far from it. We honour them highly in their proper sphere. We could not say how much we prize the labours of those learned men who have consecrated their energies to the work of clearing the sacred text of the various errors and Corruptions which, from age to age, had crept into it, through the carelessness or infirmity of copyists, taken advantage of by a crafty and malignant foe. Every effort put forth to preserve, to unfold, to illustrate, and to enforce the precious truth of Scripture, we most highly esteem; but, on the other hand, when we find men making use of their learning, their science, and their philosophy, for the purpose of undermining the sacred edifice of divine revelation, we deem it our duty, to raise our voice, in the clearest and strongest way, against them, and to warn the reader, most solemnly, against their baneful influence.

We believe that the Bible, as written in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, is the very word of the only wise and the only true God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, who saw the end from the beginning, and not only the end, but every stage of the way. We therefore hold it to be nothing short of positive blasphemy to assert that we have arrived at a stage of our career in which the Bible is not sufficient, or that we are compelled to travel outside its covers to find ample guidance and instruction for the present moment, and for every moment of our earthly pilgrimage. The Bible is a perfect chart, in which every exigency of the Christian mariner has been anticipated. Every rock, every sand-bank, every shoal, every strand, every island, has been carefully noted down. All the need of the Church of God, its members, and its ministers, has been most fully provided for. How could it be otherwise if we admit the Bible to be the Word of God? Could the mind of God have devised, or His finger sketched an imperfect chart? Impossible. We must either deny the divinity or admit the sufficiency of The Book. We are absolutely shut up to this alternative. There is not so much as a single point between these two positions. If the book is incomplete, it cannot be of God; if it be of God it must be perfect. But if we are compelled to betake ourselves to other sources for guidance and instruction, as to the path of the Church of God, its members or its ministers, then is the Bible incomplete, and being such, it cannot be of God at all.

What then are we to do? Whither can we betake ourselves? If the Bible be not a divine and therefore all-sufficient guide-book, what remains? Some will tell us to have recourse to tradition. Alas! what a miserable guide. No sooner have we launched out into the wide field of tradition than our ears are assailed by ten thousand strange and conflicting sounds. We meet, it may be, with a tradition which seems very authentic, very venerable, well worthy of respect and confidence, and we commit ourselves to its guidance; but, directly we have done so, another tradition crosses our path, putting forth quite as strong claims on our confidence, and leading us in quite an opposite direction. Thus it is with tradition. The mind is bewildered, and one is reminded of the assembly at Ephesus, concerning which we read that, "Some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused." The fact is, we want a

perfect standard, and this can only be found in a divine revelation, which, as we believe, is to be found within the covers of our most precious Bible. What a treasure! How we should bless God for it! How we should praise His name for His mercy in that He hath not left His Church dependent upon the *igni fatuas* of human tradition, but upon the steady light of divine revelation! We do not want tradition to assist revelation, but we use revelation as the test of tradition. We should just as soon think of bringing out a rush-light to assist the sun's meridian beams, as of calling in human tradition to aid divine revelation.

But there is another very ensnaring and dangerous resource presented by the enemy of the Bible, and alas! accepted by too many of the people of God, and that is expediency, or the very attractive plea of doing all the good we can, without due attention to the way in which that good is done. The tree of expediency is a wide-spreading one, and yields most tempting clusters. But remember, its clusters will prove bitter as wormwood in the ends. It is, no doubt, well to do all the good we can; but let us look well to the way in which we do it. Let us not deceive ourselves by the vain imagination that God will ever accept of services based upon positive disobedience to His Word. "It is a gift," said the elders, as they boldly walked over the plain commandment of God, as if He would be pleased with a gift presented on such a principle. There is an intimate connection between the ancient "corban" and the modern "expediency," for "there is nothing new under the sun." The solemn responsibility of obeying the Word of God was got rid of under the plausible pretext of "corban," or "it is a gift" (Mark 7: 7-13).

Thus it was of old. The "corban" of the ancients justified, or sought to justify, many a bold transgression of the law of God; and the "expediency" of our times allures many to outstep the boundary line laid down by divine revelation.

Now, we quite admit that expediency holds out most attractive inducements. It does seem so very delightful to be doing a great deal of good, to be gaining the ends of a large hearted benevolence, to be reaching tangible results. It would not be an easy matter duly to estimate the ensnaring influences of such objects, or the immense difficulty of throwing them overboard. Have we never been tempted

as we stood upon the narrow path of obedience, and looked forth upon the golden fields of expediency lying on either side, to exclaim, "Alas! I am sacrificing my usefulness for an idea"? Doubtless; but then what if it should turn out that we have the very same foundation for that "idea" as for the fundamental doctrines of salvation? The question is, What is the idea? Is it founded upon "Thus saith the Lord"? If so, let us tenaciously hold by it, though ten thousand advocates of expediency were hurling at us the grievous charge of narrow-mindedness.

There is immense power in Samuel's brief but pointed reply to Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord! Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam15: 22). Saul's word was Sacrifice." Samuel's word was "Obedience." No doubt the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen were most exciting. They would be looked upon as substantial proofs that something was being done; while on the other hand, the path of obedience seemed narrow, silent, lonely, and fruitless. But oh! those pungent words of Samuel! "to obey is better than sacrifice." What a triumphant answer to the most eloquent advocates of expediency! They are most conclusive — most commanding words. They teach us that it is better, if it must be so, to stand, like a marble statue, on the pathway of obedience, than to reach the most desirable ends by transgressing a plain precept of the Word of God.

But let none suppose that one must be like a statue on the path of obedience. Far from it. There are rare and precious services to be rendered by the obedient one — services which can only be rendered by such, and which owe all their preciousness to their being the fruit of simple obedience. [What a pattern of this we have in our blessed Lord! who for thirty years lived here in retirement, known by men only as "the carpenter" (Mark 6: 3), but known by, and the delight of, the Father, as the Holy One of God, the perfect meat-offering of Lev. 6: 19-33 — wholly burnt upon the altar. [ED.] True, they may not find a place in the public record of man's bustling activity; but they are recorded on high, and they will be published at the right time. As a dear friend has often said to us, "Heaven will be the safest and happiest place to hear all about our

work down here." May we remember this, and pursue our way, in all simplicity, looking to Christ for guidance, power, and blessing. May His smile be enough for us. May we not be found looking askance to catch the approving look of a poor mortal whose breath is in his nostrils, nor sigh to find our names amid the glittering record of the great men of the age. The servant of Christ should look far beyond all such things. The grand business of the servant is to obey. His object should not be to do a great deal, but simply to do what he is told. This makes all plain; and, moreover, it will make the Bible precious as the depository of the Master's will, to which he must continually betake himself to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. Neither tradition nor expediency will do for the servant of Christ. The all-important inquiry is, "What saith the Scriptures."

This settles everything. From the decision of the Word of God there must be no appeal. When God speaks man must bow. It is not by any means a question of obstinate adherence to a man's own notions. Quite the opposite. It is a reverent adherence to the Word of God. Let the reader distinctly mark this. It often happens that, when one is determined, through grace, to abide by Scripture, he will be pronounced dogmatic, intolerant and imperious; and, no doubt, one has to watch over his temper, spirit, and style, even when seeking to abide by the Word of God. But, be it well remembered, obedience to Christ's commandments is the very opposite of imperiousness, dogmatism, and intolerance. It is not a little strange that when a man tamely consents to place his conscience in the keeping of his fellow, and to bow down his understanding to the opinions of men, he is considered meek, modest, and liberal; but let him reverently bow to the authority of the holy Scripture, and he will be looked upon as self-confident, dogmatic, and narrow-minded. Be it so. The time is rapidly approaching when obedience shall be called by its right name, and meet its recognition and reward. For that moment the faithful must be content to wait, and while waiting for it, be satisfied to let men call them whatever they please. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

But we must draw to a close, and would merely add, in conclusion, that there is a third hostile influence against which the lover of the Bible will have to watch, and that is rationalism — or

the supremacy of man's reason. The faithful disciple of the Word of God will have to withstand this audacious intruder, with the most unflinching decision. It presumes to sit in judgement upon the Word of God — to decide upon what is and what is not worthy of God — to prescribe boundaries to inspiration. Instead of humbly bowing to the authority of Scripture, which continually soars into a region where poor blind reason can never follow, it proudly seeks to drag Scripture down to its own level. If the Bible puts forth aught which, in the smallest degree, clashes with the conclusions of rationalism, then there must be some flaw. God is shut out of His own book if He says anything which poor blind, perverted reason cannot reconcile with her own conclusions — which conclusions, be it observed, are not infrequently the grossest absurdities.

Nor is this all. Rationalism deprives us of the only perfect standard of truth, and conducts us into a region of the most dreary uncertainty. It seeks to undermine the authority of a Book in which we can believe everything, and carries us into a field of speculation in which we can be sure of nothing. Under the dominion of rationalism the soul is like a vessel broken from its safe moorings in the haven of divine revelation, to be tossed like a cork upon the wild watery waste of universal scepticism.

Now we do not expect to convince a thorough rationalist, even if such a one should condescend to scan our unpretending pages, which is most unlikely. Neither could we expect to gain over to our way of thinking the decided advocate of expediency, or the ardent admirer of tradition. We have neither the competency, the leisure, nor the space, to enter upon such a line of argument as would be required were we seeking to gain such ends as these. But we are most anxious that the Christian reader should rise up from the perusal of this volume with a deepened sense of the preciousness of his Bible. We earnestly desire that the words, *'The Bible: its sufficiency and supremacy,'* should be engraved, in deep and broad characters, upon the tablet of the reader's heart.

We feel that we have a solemn duty to perform, at a moment like the present, in the which superstition, expediency, and rationalism are all at work, as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to sap the foundations of our holy faith. We owe it to that

blessed volume of inspiration, from which we have drunk the streams of life and peace, to bear our feeble testimony to the divinity of its every page — to give expression, in this permanent form to Our profound reverence for its authority, and our conviction of its divine sufficiency for every need, whether of the believer individually, or the church collectively. We press upon our readers earnestly to set a higher value than ever upon the Holy Scriptures, and to warn them, in most urgent terms, against every influence, whether of tradition, expediency, or rationalism, which might tend to shake their confidence in those heavenly oracles. There is a spirit abroad, and there are principles at work, which make it imperative upon us to keep close to Scripture — to treasure it in our hearts — and to submit to its holy authority.

May God the Spirit, the Author of the Bible, produce, in the writer and reader of these lines, a more ardent love for that Bible! May He enlarge our experimental acquaintance with its contents, and lead us into more complete subjection to its teachings in all things, that God may be more glorified in us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

2 Timothy

PROVISION FOR PERILOUS TIMES

(Read 2 TIMOTHY)

It is of the greatest importance for the servant of Christ in all ages to have a clear, deep, abiding, influential sense of his position, his path, his portion and his prospects — a divinely wrought apprehension of the ground which he is called to occupy, the sphere of action which is thrown open to him, the divine provision made for his comfort and encouragement and strength and guidance, and the brilliant hopes held out to him. There is considerable danger of our being allured into a mere region of theory and speculation, of opinion and sentiment, of dogmas and principles. The freshness of first love is frequently lost by contact with the men and things of what may be called “the religious world.” The lovely freshness of early personal Christianity is often destroyed by a wrong use of the machinery of religion, if we may be allowed to use such a term.

In the kingdom of nature, it frequently happens that some stray seed has dropped into the ground, taken root and sprung up into a tender plant. The hand of man had nothing to do with it. God planted it, watered it and made it grow. He assigned it its position, gave it its strength and covered it with beautiful freshness. By and by, man intruded upon its solitude and transplanted it to his own artificial enclosure, there to wither and droop. Thus it is too often with the plants of God's spiritual kingdom. They are often injured by man's rude hand. They would be far better if left to the sole management of the Hand that planted them. Young Christians frequently suffer immensely from not being left to the exclusive training of the Holy Spirit and the exclusive teaching of Holy Scripture. Human management is almost sure to stunt the growth of God's spiritual plants. It is not that God may not use men as His instruments in watering, culturing and caring for His precious plants. He assuredly may and does, but then, it is *God's* culture and care, not man's. This makes all the difference. The Christian is God's plant. The seed which produced him was divine. It was directed and planted by God's own hand, and that same hand must be allowed to train it.

Now, what is true of the individual believer is equally true of the Church as a whole. In 1 Timothy, the Church is looked at in its original order and glory. It is there viewed as “the House of God,” “the Church of the living God,” “the pillar and ground of the truth.” Its officebearers, its functions and its responsibilities are there minutely and formally described. The servant of Christ is instructed as to the mode in which he is to conduct himself in the midst of such a hallowed and dignified sphere. Such is the character, such the scope and object of Paul's First Epistle to Timothy.

But in the Second Epistle, we have something quite different. The scene is entirely changed. The house which in the first epistle was looked at in its rule, is here contemplated in its ruin. The Church as an economy set up on the earth, had like every other economy, utterly failed. Man fails in everything. He failed amid the beauty and order of Paradise. He failed in that favored land “that flowed with milk and honey, the glory of all lands.” He failed amid the rare privileges of the gospel dispensation, and he will fail amid the bright beams of millennial glory. Compare Genesis 3; Judges 2; Acts 20: 29; 3 John 9; Revelation 1: 2 and 20: 7-9.

The remembrance of this will help us in understanding 2 Timothy. It may very properly be termed “a divine provision for perilous times.” The apostle seems to be weeping over the ruins of that once beautiful structure. Like the weeping prophet, he beholds “the stones of the sanctuary poured out in the top of every street.” He calls to remembrance the tears of his beloved Timothy. He is glad to have even one sympathizing bosom into which to pour his sorrows. All who were in Asia had turned away from him. He was left to stand alone before Caesar's judgment seat. Demas forsook him. Alexander the coppersmith did him much evil. All around him, so far as man was concerned, looked gloomy and dark. He begs of his beloved Timothy to bring him his cloak, his books and his parchments. All is strongly marked. “Perilous times” are anticipated. “A form of godliness without the power” — the mantle of profession thrown over the grossest abominations of the human heart — men not able to endure sound doctrine, heaping to themselves teachers after their own lusts, having itching ears which must needs be tickled by the fabulous and baseless absurdities of the

human mind. Such are the features of 2 Timothy. Who can fail to notice them? Who can fail to see that our lot is cast in the very midst of the evils and dangers here contemplated? Is it not well to have a clear perception of these things? Why should we desire to blind our eyes to the truth? Why deceive ourselves with vain dreams of increasing light and spiritual prosperity? Is it not far better to look the true condition of things straight in the face? Assuredly; and so much the more when the selfsame epistle which so faithfully points out “the perilous times,” fully unfolds the divine provision.

Why should we imagine that man under the Christian dispensation would prove any better than man under all the dispensations which have gone before, or under the millennial dispensation which is yet to follow? Would not analogy, even in the absence of direct and positive proof, lead us to expect failure under this present economy as well as under all the others? If we, without exception, find judgment at the close of all the other dispensations, why should we look for anything else at the close of this? Let my reader ponder these things and then accompany me while I seek by the grace of God to unfold some of the divine provisions for “perilous times.”

I do not attempt to expound this most touching and interesting epistle in detail. This would be impossible in this short article. I shall merely single out one point from each of the four chapters into which the epistle has been divided. These are, first, “unfeigned faith” (2 Tim. 1: 5); secondly, “the sure foundation” (2 Tim. 2: 19); thirdly, “the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3: 15); and fourthly, “the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4: 8). The man who knows anything of the power of these things, is divinely provided for “perilous times.”

First, as to “the unfeigned faith” — that priceless possession. The apostle says, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” Here we have something above and beyond

everything ecclesiastical — something which one must have before he is introduced to the Church, and which will stand good though the Church were in ruins around him. This unfeigned faith connects the soul immediately with Christ in the power of a link which must of necessity be prior to all ecclesiastical associations, however important they may be — a link which shall endure when all earthly associations shall have been dissolved forever. We do not get to Christ through the Church. We get to Christ first, and then to the Church. Christ is our life, not the Church. No doubt, church fellowship is most valuable, but there is something above and beyond it, and it is of that something that “unfeigned faith” takes possession. Timothy had this faith dwelling in him before ever he entered the house of God. He was connected with the God of the house previous to his manifested association with the house of God.

It is well to be clear as to this. We must never surrender the intense individuality which characterizes “unfeigned faith.” We must carry it with us through all the scenes and circumstances, the links and associations of our Christian life and service. We must not traffic in mere church position or build upon religious machinery or be borne up by a routine of duty, or cling to the worthless props of sectarian sympathy or denominational preference. Let us cultivate those fresh, vivid and powerful affections which were created in our heart when first we knew the Lord. Let the beautiful blossom of our spring-time be succeeded, not by barrenness and sterility, but by those mellow clusters which spring from realized connection with the root.

Too often it is otherwise. Too often the earnest, zealous, simple-hearted young Christian is lost in the bigoted, narrow-minded member of a sect, or the intolerant defender of some peculiar opinion. The freshness, softness, simplicity, tenderness and earnest affection of our young days are rarely carried forward into the advanced stages of vigorous manhood and mature old age. Very frequently, one finds a depth of tone, a richness of experience, of moral elevation in the early stages of the Christian life which too soon gives place to a chilling formalism in one's personal ways, or a mere energy in the defense of some barren system of theology. How

rarely are those words of the Psalmist realized, "They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Ps. 42: 14).

The truth is, we all want to cultivate more diligently an "unfeigned faith." We want to enter with more spiritual vigor, into the power of the link which binds us, individually, to Christ. This would render us "fat and flourishing," even in old age. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." We suffer materially by allowing what is called Christian fellowship to interfere with our personal connection and communion with Christ. We are far too prone to substitute fellowship with man for fellowship with God — to walk in the footsteps of our fellow, rather than in the footsteps of Christ — to look around rather than upward for sympathy, support and encouragement.

These are not the fruits of "unfeigned faith." Quite the opposite. That faith is as blooming and vigorous amid the solitudes of a desert as in the bosom of an assembly. Its immediate, all-engrossing business is with God Himself. "It endures as seeing Him who is invisible." It fixes its earnest gaze upon things unseen and eternal. "It enters into that within the veil." It lives amid the unseen realities of an eternal world. Having conducted the soul to the feet of Jesus, there to get a full and final forgiveness of all its sins through His most precious blood, it bears it majestically onward through all the windings and labyrinths of desert life, and enables it to bask in the bright beams of millennial glory.

Thus much as to this first precious item in the divine provision for "perilous times" — this "unfeigned faith." No one can ever get on without it, let the times be peaceful or perilous, easy or difficult, rough or smooth, dark or bright. If a man be destitute of this faith, deeply implanted and diligently cultivated in him, he must sooner or later break down. He may be urged on for a time by the impulses of surrounding circumstances and their influence. He may be propped up and borne along by his co-religionists. He may float down along the stream of religious profession. But most assuredly, if he be not possessed of "unfeigned faith," the time is rapidly approaching when it will be all over with him forever. The "perilous times" will

soon rise to a head. Then will come the awful crisis of judgment, from which none can escape except the happy possessors of “unfeigned faith.” God grant my reader may be one of these! If so, all is eternally safe.

Secondly, we shall now consider “the sure foundation.” “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2: 9). In the midst of all the “trouble,” the “hardness,” the “striving about words,” the “profane and vain babblings,” the errors of “Hymenaeus and Philetus” — in the midst of all these varied features of the “perilous times,” how precious to fall back upon God’s sure foundation. The soul that is built upon this, in the divine energy of “unfeigned faith,” is able to resist the rapidly rising tide of evil — is divinely furnished for the most appalling times. There is a fine moral link between the unfeigned faith in the heart of man and the sure foundation laid by the hand of God. All may go to ruin. The Church may go to pieces and all who love the Church may have to sit down and weep over its ruins, but there stands that imperishable foundation laid by God’s own hand, against which the surging tide of error and evil may roll with all its fury and have no effect, except to prove the eternal stability of that Rock and of all who are built thereon.

“The Lord knoweth them that are His.” There is abundance of false profession, but the eye of Jehovah rests on all those who belong to Him. Not one of them is, or ever can be forgotten by Him. Their names are engraven on His heart. They are as precious to Him as the price He paid for them, and that is nothing less than the “precious blood” of His own dear Son. No evil can befall them. No weapon formed against them can prosper. “The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” What rich, what ample provision for “perilous times!” Why should we fear? Why should we be anxious? Having “unfeigned faith within and God’s foundation beneath, it is our happy privilege to pursue, with tranquilized hearts, our upward and onward way in the assurance that all is and shall be well.

“I know My sheep,” He cries,

“My soul approves them well:

Vain is the treacherous world's disguise,

And vain the rage of hell.”

It has been well said that the seal on God's foundation has two sides. One bears the inscription, “The Lord knoweth them that are His”; the other, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The former is as peace-giving as the latter is practical. Let the strife and confusion be ever so great, let the storm rage and the billow arise, let the darkness thicken, let all the powers of earth and hell combine, “the Lord knoweth them that are His.” He has sealed them for Himself. The assurance of this is calculated to maintain the heart in profound repose, let the “times” be ever so “perilous.”

But, let us never forget that each one who “names the name of Christ” is solemnly responsible to “depart from iniquity” wherever he finds it. This is applicable to all true Christians. The moment I see anything that deserves the epithet of “iniquity,” be it what or where it may, I am called upon to “depart from” that thing. I am not to wait till others see with me, for what may seem to be “iniquity” to one, may not seem to be so to another. Hence, it is entirely a personal question. “Let every one.” The language used in this epistle is very personal, very strong, very intense. “If a man purge himself.” “Flee also youthful lusts.” “From such turn away.” “Continue thou.” “I charge thee.” “Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions.” “Of whom be thou aware also.” These are solemn, earnest, weighty words — words which distinctly prove that our lot is cast in times when we must not lean upon the arm or gaze upon the countenance of our fellow.

We must be sustained by the energy of an “unfeigned faith” and by our personal connection with the “sure foundation.” Thus shall we be able, let others do or think as they will, to “depart from iniquity,” to “flee youthful lusts.” We shall be able to “turn away” from the adherents of a powerless “form of godliness,” wherever we find them, and to “beware” of every “Alexander the coppersmith.”* If we permit our feet to be moved from the rock, if we surrender ourselves to the impulse of surrounding circumstances and

influences, we shall never be able to make headway against the special forms of evil and error in these "perilous times."

{*I suppose there has never been a "Nehemiah" without a "Sanballat," or an "Ezra" without a "Rehum;" or a "Paul" without an "Alexander."}

Our third point is "the Holy Scriptures" — that precious portion of every "man of God." "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly* furnished unto *all* good works" (2 Tim. 3: 14-17). Here we have rich provision for "perilous times." We need a thorough knowledge of the One from "whom we have learned" an accurate, personal, experimental acquaintance with "Holy Scripture," that pure fountain of divine authority, that changeless source of heavenly wisdom which even a child may possess, and without which a wise man must err.

If a man be not able to refer all his thoughts, all his convictions, all his principles to God as their living source, to Christ as their living center, and to "the Holy Scriptures" as their divine authority, he will never be able to get on through "perilous times." A second-hand faith will never do. We must hold truth directly from God, through the medium and on the authority of "the Holy Scriptures." God may use a man to show me certain things in the Word, but I do not hold them from man but from God. It is "knowing of *whom* thou hast learned." When this is the case I am able, through grace, to get on through the thickest darkness and through all the devious paths of this wilderness world. Inspiration's heavenly lamp emits a light so clear, so full, so steady, that its brightness is only made the more manifest by the surrounding gloom. "The man of God" is not left to drink of the muddy streams that flow along the channel of human tradition. With the vessel of "unfeigned faith," he sits beside the ever-gushing fountain of "Holy

Scripture” to drink of its refreshing waters to the full satisfaction of his thirsty soul.

It is worthy of remark that, although the inspired apostle was fully aware when writing his first epistle, of Timothy's “unfeigned faith” and of his knowledge from childhood's earliest dawn of “the Holy Scriptures,” yet he does not allude to these things until, in his second epistle, he contemplates the appalling features of the “perilous times.” The reason is obvious. It is in the very midst of the perils of “the last days” that one has the most urgent need of “unfeigned faith” and “the Holy Scriptures.” We cannot get on without them. When all around is fresh and vigorous — when all are borne onward as by one common impulse of genuine devotedness — when every heart is full to overflowing of deep and earnest attachment to the Person and cause of Christ — when every countenance beams with heavenly joy — then it is comparatively easy to get on.

But the condition of things contemplated in 2 Timothy is the very reverse of all this. It is such, that unless one is walking closely with God in the habitual exercise of “unfeigned faith” — in the abiding realization of the link which connects him indissolubly with “the foundation of God” — and in clear, unquestionable, accurate knowledge of “the Holy Scriptures,” he must make shipwreck. This is a deeply solemn consideration, well worth my reader's undivided, prayerful attention. The time has arrived when each one must follow the Lord according to his measure. “What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.” These words fall on the ear with unique power as one seeks to make his way amid the ruins of everything ecclesiastical.

Let me not be misunderstood. It is not that I would detract in the smallest degree from the value of true church fellowship or from the divine institution of the Assembly and all the privileges and responsibilities attaching thereto. Far be the thought. I most fully believe that Christians are called to seek the maintenance of the very highest principles of communion. Moreover, we are warranted from the epistle which now lies open before us, to expect that, in the darkest times, the “purged vessel” will be able to “follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2: 22).

All this is plain and has its due place and value, but it in no wise interferes with the fact that each one is responsible to pursue a path of holy independence, without waiting for the approval, sympathy, support, or company of his fellow. True, we are to be deeply thankful for brotherly fellowship when we can get it on true ground. Of such fellowship no words can tell the worth. Would that we knew more of it! The Lord increase it to us a hundred fold! But let us never stoop to purchase fellowship at the heavy price of giving up all that is “lovely and of good report.” May the name of Jesus be more precious to our hearts than all beside. And may our happy lot be cast on earth with all those who *truly* love His name, as it shall be throughout eternity in the regions of unfading light and purity, above.

Fourthly, a closing word as to “the crown of righteousness.” “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also who love His appearing” (2 Tim. 4: 6-8). Here, the venerable pilgrim takes his stand on the summit of the spiritual Mount Pisgah and with undimmed eye, surveys the bright plains of glory. He sees the crown of righteousness glittering in the Master's hand. He looks back over the course which he had run, and over the battlefield whereon he had fought. He stands on the confines of earth and in the very midst of the ruins of that Church whose rise and progress he had watched with such intense eagerness, and over whose decline and fall he had poured forth the tears of tender though disappointed affection, and he fixes his eye on the goal of immortality which no power of the enemy can prevent his reaching in triumph. Whether it were by Caesar's axe that he was to reach that goal or by any other means, it mattered not to one who was able to say, “*I am ready.*” What true greatness! What moral grandeur! What noble elevation is here!

Yet there was nothing of the ascetic in this incomparable servant, for though his vision was filled with the crown of righteousness, though he is ready to step like a conqueror into his triumphal chariot, he nevertheless feels it perfectly right to give

detailed directions about his cloak and books. This is divinely perfect. It teaches us that the more vividly we enter into the glories of heaven, the more faithfully shall we discharge the functions of earth. The more we realize the nearness of eternity, the more effectively shall we order the things of time.

Such, beloved reader, is the ample provision made by the grace of God for “the perilous times” through which you and I are now passing. “Unfeigned faith” — “The sure foundation” — “The Holy Scriptures” — and “The crown of righteousness.” May the Holy Spirit lead us into a deep sense of the importance and value of these things! May we love the appearing of Jesus and earnestly look out for that cloudless morning when “the righteous Judge” shall place a diadem of glory upon the brow of each one who really loves His appearing!

Titus 2: 11-14

THE GRACE OF GOD

This lovely and familiar passage of Holy Scripture occurs in the midst of a number of exhortations adapted to various classes of people in reference to their conduct and character. Aged men, aged women, young men, young women and servants are to be exhorted as to their proper conduct in their respective conditions.

But lest we should be tempted to place these exhortations upon a legal basis, the inspired apostle breaks forth in one of the most magnificent and comprehensive statements of the gospel which is anywhere to be found in the Sacred Volume. "The grace of God" and that alone, must be the foundation of all Christian conduct and character. Legality in all its forms and workings is most hateful to the Spirit of God. The robe of self-righteousness with which man attempts to cover his sins, is more unsightly in God's view than the very blackest sin that could be committed. Nothing can be accepted of God but that which flows from His own grace in our hearts.

Now in the Scripture before us, the reader will find three distinct points — the salvation which grace brings, the lessons which grace teaches, and the hope which grace presents. First, as to:

The Salvation Which Grace Brings

This is a grand cardinal point. To be uncertain or obscure as to this, must involve uncertainty and obscurity in everything. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared." (See the marginal reading.) This is clear and conclusive enough. The very first thing that grace does for the lost sinner is to save him unconditionally, perfectly and eternally. It does not ask him to be anything but what he is. It does not ask him to give anything. It brings him salvation on the ground of his being lost. It is only as a lost one that I need salvation, and the more I feel myself to be lost, the more clearly I see my title to that full and free salvation which the grace of God brings. Salvation is intended for the lost. If, therefore, I am lost, salvation applies itself to me, just as distinctly as though I were the only lost sinner in the whole world.

Observe the immense breadth of this word “lost.” It takes in all. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, savage and civilized, moral and immoral, religious and irreligious — all are comprehended under this one title, “lost.” It is well to see this clearly. Men make distinctions and necessarily so. Social life has its distinctions. Law and equity maintain their distinctions which must be duly recognized by every well regulated mind. Society awards to the chaste, the sober and the moral a respect which it justly withholds from the wicked, the drunkard and the unprincipled. But once we get into the presence of the grace of God, all these distinctions are swept away and all are looked at on one common ground as *lost*. The most respectable member of society and the vilest outcast are both in the same condition as regards themselves: they are both lost; they both need salvation; and the grace of God brings salvation to the one as well as the other.

Be it well remembered that the poor broken-hearted outcast is nearer to the salvation which grace brings, than is the cold hearted self-sufficient moralist. See Matthew 21: 31. If the law of God could bring salvation, then the case would be quite the reverse. But the law never brought salvation to anyone because no one could keep it. But grace brings salvation to all because all need it. It is no longer confined to the Jews. The Sun has risen far above the Jewish horizon and poured His blessed beams over “all the world” so “every creature under heaven” may bask in the light thereof. Such is the wide aspect of “the grace of God” which leaves wholly untouched the grand question of God's eternal counsels and God's moral government. God has His counsels and God displays His mysterious wisdom in government. This must never be forgotten, nor does it interfere with the precious truth that “the grace of God bringeth salvation *unto* all” and “the righteousness of God is unto all.” The inspired apostle is speaking of the *wide aspect* of these things, not of their final result — a great and important distinction.

It must be obvious to my reader that the term “*all*” necessarily includes him. It could not possibly be otherwise. If he be not included, then it follows that there is someone for whom the grace of God has not brought salvation, but the Holy Spirit expressly declares that it brings salvation unto all. This must satisfy the most anxious

soul as to the question so often raised, “How am I to know that salvation is intended for me?” Is anyone excluded? Is not salvation brought to all? Does not this term comprehend every anxious inquirer? Unquestionably! The declaration of the inspired writer is that “The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared.” This is as plain as a sunbeam.

Men may reject this salvation. Regretfully, they do reject it, but that can never touch the question of the wide aspect of that grace which shines with undimmed luster in the gospel and brings a full and free salvation *unto* all. Their guilt in rejecting it flows from the fact that it is freely offered. If they could not get it, where would be their guilt in not having it? Where the righteous judgment in punishing men for not receiving what was never intended for them? (2 Thess. 1: 6-10). True it is that God is sovereign, but it is equally true that man is responsible. Are we called to reconcile these things? *No, they are reconciled already inasmuch as both are taught in the Word.* All we have to do is believe them.

But let us inquire what is included in the salvation which the grace of God brings? The answer is, Everything. Salvation is a precious box containing all I want for time and eternity. It includes salvation from the future consequence of sin and from its present power. To be a divinely-saved person — a person saved by the grace of God, saved by the blood of Christ as every believer is — involves entire deliverance from wrath, from hell, from Satan, from everything that could possibly be against me. A man whom God has saved is surely safe from all. There is nothing doubtful about God's salvation; it is all settled. There is no delay; it is all finished. We have neither to wait for it nor to add to it, but to receive it now and enjoy it forever. The mighty tide of grace rolls down from the very throne of God and bears upon its bosom a full salvation for me. I receive it as a free gift; I bow my head and worship, and go on my way rejoicing.

We shall now proceed to consider

The Lessons Which Grace Teaches

Grace is a teacher as well as a savior, but it never begins to teach me until it has saved me. It is well to see this. Before ever it asks me to hearken to its pure and holy lessons, it brings me a salvation as free as the air we breathe. It is as a divinely-saved person I enter the precincts of the school of grace. Grace teaches only the saved. All its pupils are saved. Grace as a savior seeks only the lost. Grace as a teacher instructs only the saved. This makes all plain and puts everything in its right place. We must never place unsaved persons in the school of grace. Such have no capacity to learn its holy lessons. There must be a proper material, a proper capacity. This capacity is included in the salvation which grace brings me. I am a debtor to grace both for the lesson which I learn and the capacity to learn it. I owe all to grace. Grace seeks me and finds me in my lost estate; it saves me with an everlasting salvation and introduces me as a saved person to the sphere in which its hallowed instructions are imparted. Grace does not teach those who are dead; it quickens them. It does not teach those who are guilty; it cleanses them. It does not teach those who are condemned; it justifies them. It is as quickened, cleansed and justified that I become the pupil of grace. The very first thing that grace does for the lost sinner is to bring him salvation, and when he receives this salvation it teaches him to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”

I desire that my reader be clear as to this. If he be as yet in an unsaved state, let him understand that the grace of God brings him salvation as a present thing. Moreover, until he has accepted this free gift, he is wholly unable to understand or take in the lessons which grace teaches. If grace is to be his teacher, he must be saved to be a pupil. This simple fact gives the death-blow to all legality, to all human righteousness, to all man's pretensions. If none can comprehend the lessons which grace teaches except those who have accepted the salvation which grace brings, then, assuredly, our language must ever be, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory.”

Let us look particularly at the lessons which grace teaches. It teaches us to deny everything unlike God and all desire after this present world. It teaches us how we are to live. The law could never

do this. Law tells us how we *ought* to live, but it does not teach us. It neither gives us the lesson to learn nor the capacity to learn it. It does not bring us salvation. The law could never have any saved pupils because it does not save the lost, but condemns them for being lost. No doubt men ought to keep the law, and if they were right they would, but they are not right. Quite the opposite, they are wrong, totally, irremediably wrong, hopelessly lost, and in this condition grace brings them salvation. Christ the Savior is our Teacher, not Moses the lawgiver. May we learn His lessons! May we sit at His feet in all quietness and drink in His hallowed instructions!

These instructions arrange themselves under three distinct heads as suggested by the words “soberly, righteously and godly.”

Soberly refers to the inner circle of one's own heart. It simply means *with inward self-government* — a most comprehensive expression. The grace that saves me teaches me to exercise a holy government over self. I am to govern my thoughts, govern my tongue, govern my temper — govern them, not in order to be saved, but because I am saved. The One who teaches me to exercise this government has saved me before ever He commenced His course of instruction. It is as a saved person that I submit my whole moral being to the wholesome control of my heavenly Teacher. The law could not teach me to govern my nature. It condemns me, root and branch, throws me overboard and leaves me there. Grace follows me, saves me and endows me with a new nature, and seals me with the Holy Spirit so I can exercise myself in self-government.

And be it observed that this self-government is totally different from anything that human philosophy or the energy of an untamed will could ever produce. These things might enable me to subdue some of the accessories of “self” while the parent stem was left wholly untouched. But “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” gives me victory over self in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive term. Full victory over all the evil that dwells in me is as much a part of “salvation” as deliverance from hell. Regretfully, we fail to make use of this victory. Through spiritual indifference and unbelief we fail to possess ourselves practically of that full salvation which grace has brought us, but that in no wise

alters the truth of the matter. If I am a saved man I should live as a saved man in every respect. And how is this to be done? By faith. “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2: 4; Gal. 3: 11; Heb. 10: 38). I can only exercise inward self-government by faith.

The second grand lesson which grace teaches me as to my practical life is to live “*righteously*.” This contemplates me not merely in the inner circle of my own moral being, but in the midst of the circumstances and relationships of the scene around me — that outward world in which I am called to live and move from day to day. My divine Teacher not only instructs me as to the government of myself, but also as to the government of all my transactions with my fellow man. Here, too, I am to remember that my teacher is the grace that saved me. I must never forget this. If the resources of philosophy or the energy of a strong will might enable me to exercise a kind of inward self-government, so also the principles of a lofty morality or that pride which rejects a wrong action, might lead me to seek the maintenance of an unblemished reputation in all my transactions with my fellow men. But all this leaves me unsaved. Philosophy cannot save me and therefore it cannot teach me. Morality cannot save me and therefore it cannot teach me.

It is “the grace of God” that alone can save me, and it is that same grace which alone can teach me. Hence, if I see a person who professes to be saved, giving way to bad temper, indulging in passion or enslaved by a habit, I infer that that person has not learned practically the first great lesson of his divine Teacher. And if I see a person who professes to be saved, yet not guiding his affairs with discretion, but getting into debt and indulging in extravagance, I infer that he has not learned the second great lesson of his divine Teacher. Let us not be deceived with vain words. If the legalist is silenced by the *freeness* of the salvation which grace brings, the antinomian* is silenced by the *purity* of the lessons which grace teaches. “These things are good and profitable unto men.” The gospel meets everything. It meets the lost sinner with a full salvation and it meets the saved sinner with the purest and most perfect lessons — lessons of holy self-government and practical righteousness.

{*One who holds that under the gospel dispensation, the moral law is no obligation because faith alone is necessary for salvation; one who rejects an established morality (Webster).}

But there is a third lesson which grace teaches its saved pupils. It teaches them to live “*godly*.” This opens up our relations with the world above. There is great force, beauty and completeness in these words used by the inspired apostle. They present to us three great circles in which we are called to act: the world within, the world without and the world above. They must be all taken together to see their divine beauty. There is really nothing left out. All we can possibly want to learn is taught in the school of grace if we will only accept the lessons. Let us bear in mind that the surest proof of our having received the salvation which grace brings, is our learning the lessons which grace teaches — those hallowed lessons of inward self-government, practical righteousness and true godliness. May God the Holy Spirit make us to understand the fullness and freeness of the salvation, and the purity and elevation of the lessons so we may more distinctly apprehend, in the third and last place,

The Hope Which Grace Presents

The apostle speaks of it as “a blessed hope,” and surely nothing can be more blessed than “The appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” This is the proper hope of the believer. And he is taught to look for it by the selfsame grace that has brought him salvation and that teaches him how to carry himself in reference to the world within, the world without and the world above. “The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Ps. 84).

Now there are three things in reference to this “blessed hope” which I desire that my reader clearly understand — title, capacity and moral condition. Our *title* is furnished by the blood of the cross; the *capacity* is furnished by the Holy Spirit; and the *moral condition* is founded upon our learning and exhibiting the holy lessons taught in the school of grace.

Reader, permit me to ask you if, when the subject of Christ's *appearing* is introduced, you ever feel a sort of difficulty or reserve

in your mind? Would you be afraid to see Jesus? Would you rather put off the moment of His coming? Do you feel yourself not quite ready? If so, it may be you are not yet able to “read your title clear” or you are not cultivating a spiritual capacity, or your moral condition is not such as would naturally introduce you to that scene of glory for which we are privileged daily to look. These are points of immense importance — points to which my reader should give deep and prayerful attention. If there be cloudiness as to my title; if I am doubtful as to the salvation which grace brings, or if I am backward in learning the lessons which grace teaches; if there is defectiveness in spiritual capacity or if my general moral tone and character is not formed by the holy lessons of grace, I shall not be in an attitude of waiting for the glory before us. It is well to see this in all its clearness, point and power. If we are the recipients of grace and the expectants of glory, should not our lives exhibit the moral power of these things? Should they not have their proper effect in the formation of our character? Unquestionably. “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.” If I expect to be with Jesus and like Jesus by and by, I shall seek to be as much with Him and as much like Him as possible.

May the Lord work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight and bring out in all our ways a more faithful exhibition of the divine life! The language with which our Scripture closes is eminently calculated to awaken in our souls the most intense desire after these things. Indeed, I cannot conclude this paper without quoting this noble passage at full length, praying the Holy Spirit to apply it in much power to the heart and conscience of both the writer and the reader.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us [what a price! what objects!] that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people of possession, zealous of good works.”

“The day of glory bearing

Its brightness far and near,
The day of Christ's appearing
We now no longer fear.

He once a spotless victim
For us on Calv'ry bled;
Jehovah did afflict Him,
And bruised Him in our stead.

To Him by grace united,
We joy in Him alone;
And now by faith delighted,
Behold Him on the throne.

Then let Him come in glory,
Who comes His saints to raise,
To perfect all the story
Of wonder, love and praise.”

Hebrews 3:1

"Holy Brethren"

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus" (Heb. 3: 1).

"And let us *consider* one another, to provoke unto love and good works" (Heb. 10: 24).

The two passages we have just penned, are very intimately connected. Indeed, they are bound together by the simple fact, that the inspired writer makes use of the same word in each; and, further, that this word occurs only in these two places throughout the whole of this marvellous treatise.

[The English word, "consider," occurs four times throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews: but it represents three different Greek words. In Hebrews 7: 4, "Consider how great this man was." Here the word is *theoreite*, which occurs in its various inflections about 56 times in the Greek Testament, but only in this one instance is it rendered by the word "consider." Its simple and general meaning is to "see" and "perceive."

Again, in Hebrews 12: 3, we have, "Consider Him who endured such contradiction," etc. Here the word is *analogisasthe* which occurs only in this place throughout the entire New Testament, and expresses the idea of comparison or analogy.

But in the two verses which stand at the head of this paper, the word is *katanoeo*, which has an intensive force, and signifies an earnest application of the mind.]

We are to consider Jesus; and we are to consider all those who belong to Him, wherever they are. These are the two grand departments of our work. We are to apply our minds diligently to Him and to His interests on the earth, and thus be blessedly delivered from the miserable business of thinking about ourselves or

our own interests: a morally glorious deliverance, most surely, for which we may well praise our glorious Deliverer.

However, before proceeding to the great subjects which we are called to consider, we must dwell, for a little, on the wonderful title bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon all believers — all true Christians. He calls them, "holy brethren." This, truly, is a title of great moral dignity. He does not say, we *ought to be* holy. No; he says we *are*. It is a question of the title or standing of every child of God on the face of the earth. No doubt, having through sovereign grace this holy standing, we ought to be holy in our walk; our moral condition ought ever to answer to our title. We should never allow a thought, word, or act, in the smallest degree inconsistent with our high position as "holy brethren." Holy thoughts, holy words, holy actings are alone suited to those upon whom infinite grace has bestowed the title of "holy brethren. "

Let us never forget this. Let us never say, never think, that we cannot maintain such a dignity, or live up to such a standard. The very same grace which has bestowed upon us the dignity, will ever enable us to support it; and we shall see, in the progress of this paper, how this grace acts — the mighty moral means used to produce a practical walk in accordance with our holy calling.

But let us inquire on what does the apostle ground the title of "holy brethren"? It is of all possible importance to be clear as to this. If we do not see that it is wholly independent of our state, our walk, or our attainments, we can neither understand the position nor its practical results. We may assert with all confidence, that the very holiest walk that ever was exhibited in this world, the highest spiritual state that ever was attained, could never form the basis of such a position as is set forth in the title of which we speak. Nay, more; we are bold to affirm that not even the work of the Spirit in us, blessedly essential as it is in every stage of the divine life, could entitle us to enter upon such a dignity. Nothing in us, nothing of us, nothing about us, could ever form the foundation of such a standing as is set forth in the title "holy brethren. "

On what then is it grounded? Hebrews 2:11 furnishes the reply. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are

ad of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Here we have one of the most profound and comprehensive statements of truth contained within the covers of the divine volume. Here we see how we become "holy brethren"; even by association with that blessed One who went down into death for us, and who, in resurrection, has become the foundation of that new order of things in which we have our place; the Head of that new creation to which we belong; the Firstborn among the many brethren of whom He is not ashamed, inasmuch as He has placed them on the same platform with Himself, and brought them to God not only in the perfect efficacy of His work, but in all His own perfect acceptability and infinite preciousness. "The Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one."

[It is a fact of deepest interest, that, to "Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils," was granted the privilege of announcing to the disciples the glad tidings of the new and wondrous relationship into which they were introduced. "Go to *My brethren*," said the risen Saviour, "and say unto them, I ascend unto *My Father* and *your Father*; and to *My God* and *your God* ." It is John who, by the Holy Ghost, records this profoundly interesting fact.

Never before had such an announcement been made. But now the great work was done, the battle over, the victory gained, the foundation of the new edifice laid; and Mary Magdalene was made the herald of the most glorious tidings that ever fell on mortal ears.]

Wonderful words! let the reader ponder them. Let him specially note the vast, yea, the immeasurable difference between these two words "Sanctifier and sanctified." Such was our blessed Lord, personally, intrinsically, in His humanity, that He was capable of being the Sanctifier. Such were we personally, in our moral condition, in our nature, that we needed to be sanctified. But — eternal and universal homage to His name! — such is the perfection of His work, such the "riches" and the "glory of His grace" that it can be said, "As He is so are we in this world" — "the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one" — all on one common ground, and that for ever.

Nothing can exceed this as to title and standing. We stand in all the glorious results of His accomplished work, and in all the acceptance of His Person. He has linked us with Himself, in resurrection-life, and made us sharers of all He has and all He is as man — His deity, of course is incommunicable.

But let us note very particularly all that is involved in the fact that we *needed to* be "sanctified." It sets forth in the clearest and most forcible manner the total, hopeless, absolute ruin of every one of us. It matters not, so far as this aspect of the truth is concerned, who we were or what we were in our personal history or our practical life. We may have been refined, cultivated, amiable, moral, and, after a human fashion, religious; or we may have been degraded, demoralised, depraved, the very scum of society. In a word, we may have been morally and socially as far apart as the poles; but inasmuch as all needed to be sanctified, the highest as well as the lowest, ere we could be addressed as "holy brethren," there is evidently "no difference." The very worst needed nothing more, and the very best could do with nothing less. Each and all were involved in one common ruin, and needed to be sanctified, or set apart, ere we could take our place amongst the "holy brethren."

And now, being set apart, we are all on one common ground; so that the very feeblest child of God on the face of the earth belongs as really and truly to the "holy brethren" as the blessed apostle Paul himself. It is not a question of progress or attainment, precious and important as it most surely is to make progress, but simply of our common standing before God, of which the "Firstborn" is the blessed and eternal definition.

But we must here remind the reader of the vast importance of being clear and well grounded as to the relationship of the "First-born" with the "many brethren." This is a grand foundation-truth, as to which there must be no vagueness or indecision. Scripture is clear and emphatic on this great cardinal point. But there are many who will not listen to Scripture. They are so full of their own thoughts that they will not take the trouble to search and see what Scripture says on the subject. Hence you find many maintaining the fatal error that incarnation is the ground of our relationship with the First-born. They look upon the Incarnate One as our "Elder Brother," who, in

taking human nature upon Him, took us into union with Himself, or linked Himself on to us.

Now such an error involves most frightful consequences. In the first place, it involves a positive blasphemy against the Person of the Son of God — a denial of His absolutely spotless, sinless, perfect manhood. He blessed be His name, was such in His humanity that the angel could say to the virgin of Him, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." His human nature was absolutely holy. As a man He knew no sin. He was the only man that ever lived of whom this could be said. He was unique. He stood absolutely alone. There was, there could be, no union with Him in incarnation. How could the Holy and the unholy, the Pure and the impure, the Spotless and the spotted ever be united? Utterly impossible! Those who think or say they could, do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures or the Son of God.

Further: those who speak of union in incarnation are most manifestly the enemies of the cross of Christ; for what need was there of the cross, the death or the blood of Christ, if sinners could be united to Him in incarnation? Surely none whatever. There was no need of atonement, no need of propitiation, no need of the substitutionary sufferings and death of Christ, if sinners could be united to Him without them.

Hence we see how entirely this system of doctrine is of Satan. It dishonours the Person of Christ, and sets aside His precious atonement. And in addition to all this, it overthrows the teaching of the entire Bible on the subject of man's guilt and ruin. In short, it completely sweeps away the great foundation truths of our glorious Christianity, and gives us instead a Christless, infidel system. This is what the devil has ever been aiming at; it is what he is aiming at still; and thousands of so-called Christian teachers are acting as his agents in the terrible business of seeking to abolish Christianity. Tremendous fact for all whom it may concern!

Let us reverently harken to the teaching of Holy Scripture on this great subject. What mean those words which fell from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are repeated for us by God the Holy Ghost, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it

abideth alone"? Who was this corn of wheat? Himself, blessed be His holy name. He had to die in order to "bring forth much fruit." If He was to surround Himself with His "many brethren," He had to go down into death in order to take out of the way every hindrance to their eternal association on the new ground of resurrection. He, the true David, had to go forth single-handed to meet the terrible foe, in order that He might have the deep joy of sharing with His brethren the spoils of His glorious victory. Eternal hallelujahs to His peerless name!

There is a very beautiful passage bearing upon our subject in Mark 8. We shall quote it for the reader: "And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must *suffer* many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He spake that saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him." In another Gospel we are told what Peter said: "Pity Thyself, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." Mark the Lord's reply; mark His attitude: "But when He had turned about and *looked on His disciples*, He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

This is perfectly beautiful. It not only presents a truth to the understanding, but lets in upon the heart a bright ray of the moral glory of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, eminently calculated to bow the soul in worship before Him. "He turned and looked upon His disciples." It is as though He would say to His erring servant, "If I adopt your suggestion, if I pity myself, what will become of these?" Blessed Saviour! He did not think of Himself.

"He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," well knowing what awaited Him there. He went to the cross, and there endured the wrath of God, the judgement of sin, all the terrible consequences of our condition, in order to glorify God with respect to our sins, and that He might have the ineffable and eternal joy of surrounding Himself with the "many brethren" to whom He could, on resurrection ground, declare the Father's name. "*I will declare Thy name unto My brethren.*" He looked forward to this from amid the awful shadows of Calvary, where He was enduring for us what no created intelligence can ever fathom. If ever He was to call us

"brethren," He must *all alone* meet death and judgement on our behalf.

Now why all this if incarnation was the basis of our union or association? Is it not perfectly plain that there could be no link between Christ and us save on the ground of accomplished atonement? How could there be a link with sin unatoned for, guilt uncanceled, the claims of God unanswered? Utterly impossible. To maintain such a thought is to fly in the face of divine revelation and sweep away the very foundations of Christianity; and this, as we very well know, is precisely what the devil is ever aiming at.

[*We do not mean that union with Christ as Head of the body is taught in Heb. 2:11. For the unfolding of that glorious truth we must look elsewhere. It comes not within the range of the Epistle to the Hebrews. See Eph. 1: 22-23; Eph. 5: 30. But whether we view Him as Head of the body, or as the First-born among many brethren, Scripture most distinctly and emphatically teaches us that His death on the cross was absolutely essential to our union, or association, with Christ. No *death no union*. The corn of wheat had to fall into the ground and die, in order to bring forth much fruit. Stupendous fact! Glorious truth! Profound mystery.]

However, we shall not pursue the subject further here. It may be that the great majority of our readers are thoroughly clear and settled on the point, and that they hold it as a great cardinal and essential truth. Still, we feel it of importance just now to bear a very distinct testimony to the whole Church of God on this most blessed subject. We feel persuaded that the error which we have been combating — the notion of union with Christ in incarnation — forms an integral part of a vast infidel and antichristian system which holds sway over thousands of professing Christians, and is making fearful progress throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. It is the deep and solemn conviction of this that leads us to call the attention of the beloved flock of Christ to one of the most precious and glorious subjects that could possibly occupy their hearts, namely, their title to be called "holy brethren."

We shall now turn for a few moments to the exhortation addressed to the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

As we have already observed, we are not exhorted *to be* holy brethren: we are *made* such. The place and the portion are ours through infinite grace, and it is on this blessed fact that the inspired apostle grounds his exhortation, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus."

The titles bestowed on our blessed Lord in this passage present Him to our hearts in a very wonderful manner. They take in the wide range of His history from the bosom of the Father down to the dust of death; and from the dust of death back to the throne of God. As the Apostle, He came from God to us; and as the High Priest, He has gone back to God for us. He came from Heaven to reveal God to us, to unfold to us the very heart of God, to make us know the precious secrets of His bosom.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

What a marvellous privilege to have God revealed to us in the Person of Christ! God has spoken to us in the Son. Our blessed Apostle has given us the full and perfect revelation of God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (John 1; 2 Cor. 4).

All this is unspeakably precious. Jesus has revealed God to our souls. We could know absolutely nothing of God if the Son had not come and spoken to us. But — thanks and praise to our God! — we can say with all possible certainty, "*We know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

We can now turn to the four Gospels; and as we gaze upon that blessed One who is there presented to us by the Holy Ghost, in all that lovely grace which shone out in all His words, and works, and ways, we can say, That is God. We see Him going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; we see Him healing the sick cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, feeding the hungry, drying the widow's tears, weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, and say That is God. Every ray of moral glory that shone in the life and ministry of the Apostle of our confession was the expression of God. He was the brightness of the divine glory, and the exact impression of the divine essence.

Thou art the everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son
God manifest, God seen and heard
The Heavens' beloved One.

In Thee most perfectly expressed
The Father's self doth shine
Fullness of Godhead too; the Blest
Eternally Divine.

How precious is all this to our souls! To have God revealed in the Person of Christ, so that we can know Him, delight in Him, find all our springs in Him, call Him Abba Father walk in the light of His blessed countenance have fellowship with Him and with His Son Jesus Christ, know the love of His heart, the very love wherewith He loves the Son — what deep blessedness! what fullness of joy! How can we ever sufficiently praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His marvellous grace in having introduced us into such a sphere of blessing and privilege, and set us in such a wondrous

relationship with Himself in the Son of His love! Oh, may our *hearts* praise Him! May our *lives* praise Him! May it be the one grand aim and object of our whole moral being to magnify His name!

We must now turn for a little to another great branch of our subject. We have to "consider the High Priest of our confession." This, too, is fraught with richest blessing for every one of the "holy brethren." The same blessed One who, as the Apostle, came to make Him known to our souls, has gone back to God for us. He came to speak to us about God; and He is gone to speak to God about us. He appears in the presence of God for us; He bears us upon His heart continually; He represents us before God to maintain us in the integrity of the position into which His precious atoning work has introduced us. His blessed priesthood is the divine provision for our wilderness path. Were it merely a question of our standing or title, there would be no need of priesthood; but inasmuch as it is a question of our actual state and practical walk, we could not get on for one moment if we had not our great High Priest ever living for us in the presence of God.

Now there are three most precious departments of our Lord's priestly service presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first place we read, in chap. 4, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, except sin."

Christian reader, only think of the deep blessedness of having One at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens who is *touched* with the feeling of your infirmities, who enters into all your sorrows, who feels for you and with you in all your exercises, trials, and difficulties! Think of having a Man on the throne of God — a perfect human heart, One on whom you can count in all your weakness, heaviness, and conflict; in everything, in short, except sin! With this, blessed be His name, He can have no sympathy.

But oh, what pen, what human tongue, can adequately set forth the deep, deep blessedness of having a Man in the glory whose

heart is with us in all the trials and sorrows of our wilderness path! What a precious provision! What a divine reality! The One who has all power in Heaven and on earth now lives for us in Heaven. We can count on Him at all times. He enters into all our feelings in a way that no earthly friend could possibly do. We can go to Him and tell him things which we could not name to our dearest friend on earth, inasmuch as none but He can fully understand us.

Our great High Priest understands all about us. He has passed through every trial and sorrow that a perfect human heart could know. Hence He can perfectly sympathise with us, and He delights to minister to us in all our seasons of sorrow and affliction, when the heart is crushed and bowed beneath a weight of anguish which only He can fully enter into. Precious Saviour! Most merciful High Priest! May our hearts delight in Thee! May we draw more largely upon the exhaustless springs of comfort and consolation that are found in Thy large and loving heart for all Thy tried, tempted, sorrowing, suffering brethren here below!

In Hebrews 7:25 we have another very precious branch of our Lord's priestly work, and that is His intercession — His active intervention on our behalf, in the presence of God. "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

What comfort is here for all the "holy brethren"! What strong consolation! What blessed assurance! Our great High Priest bears us upon His heart continually before the throne. All our affairs are in His blessed hands, and can never fall through. He lives for us, and we live in Him. He will carry us right through to the end. Men speak about "the final perseverance of the saints." Scripture speaks of the final perseverance of our divine and adorable High Priest. Here we rest. He says to us, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

"If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by *the death of His Son*," (the only possible way in which we could be reconciled) "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" — that is, His life up in Heaven. He has made Himself responsible for every one of the "holy brethren," to bring them through all the difficulties, trials, snares, and temptations of the

wilderness, right home to glory. Universal and everlasting homage to His blessed name!

We cannot, of course, attempt to go elaborately into the great subject of priesthood in a paper like this; we can do little more than touch upon the three salient points indicated above, and quote for the reader the passages of Scripture in which those points are presented.

In Hebrews 13: 15 we have the third branch of our Lord's service for us in the heavenly sanctuary. "By *Him*, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."

What a comfort to know that we have One in the presence of God to present our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving! How sweetly it encourages us to bring such sacrifices at all times! True, they may seem very poor, very meagre, very imperfect; but our great High Priest knows how to separate the precious from the vile; He takes our sacrifices, and presents them to God in all the perfect fragrance of His own Person and ministry. Every little breathing of the heart, every utterance, every little act of service, goes up to God, not only divested of all our infirmity and imperfection, but adorned with all the excellency of the One who ever liveth in the presence of God, not only to sympathise and intercede, but also to present our sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise.

All this is full of comfort and encouragement. How often have we to mourn over our coldness, barrenness, and deadness, both in private and in public! We seem unable to do more than utter a groan or a sigh. Well, Jesus — it is the fruit of His grace — takes that groan or that sigh, and presents it to God in all His own preciousness. This is part of His present ministry for us in the presence of our God, a ministry which He delights to discharge — blessed be His name! It is His joy to bear us upon His heart before the Throne. He thinks of each one in particular, as if He had but that one to think of.

It is wonderful; but so it is. He enters into all our little trials and sorrows, conflicts and exercises, as though He had nothing else

to think of. Each one has the undivided attention and sympathy of that large, loving heart, in all that may rise in our passage through this scene of trial and sorrow. He has gone through it all. He knows, as we say, every step of the road. We can discern His blessed footprints all across the desert; and look up through the opened heavens and see Him on the throne, a glorified Man, but the same Jesus who was down here upon earth — His circumstances changed, but not His tender, loving, sympathising heart: "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Such then, beloved Christian, is the great High Priest, whom we are exhorted to "consider." Truly we have all we want in Him. His sympathy, perfect; His intercession, all-prevailing; His presentation of our sacrifices, ever acceptable. Well may we say, "We have all, and abound."

In conclusion, let us glance for a moment at the precious exhortation in Hebrews 10:24: "Let us *consider* one another, to provoke unto love and good works."

How morally lovely is the connection! The more attentively we consider Him, the more we shall be fitted and disposed to consider all who belong to Him, whoever and wherever they may be. Show us a man full of Christ, and we will show you a man full of love, and care, and interest for every member of the body of Christ. It must be so. It is simply impossible to be near Christ, and not have the heart filled with the sweetest affections for all that belong to Him. We cannot consider Him without being reminded of them, and led out in service, prayer, and sympathy, according to our little measure.

If you hear a person talking loudly of his love for Christ, his attachment to Him and delight in Him, and, all the while, having no love for His people — no readiness to spend and be spent for them, no self-sacrifice on their behalf — you may be sure it is all hollow, worthless profession. "Hereby perceive we the love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word,

neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth." And again, "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also" (1 John 3: 16-18; 1 John 4: 21).

These are wholesome words for all of us. May we apply our hearts most diligently to them! May we, by the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost, be enabled to respond with all our hearts, to these two weighty and needed exhortations, to "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession," and to "Consider one another!" And let us bear in mind, that the proper consideration of one another will never take the form of prying curiosity, or unwarrantable *espionage* — things which can only be regarded as the curse and bane of all Christian society. No; it is the very reverse of all this. It is a loving, tender care, expressing itself in every form of refined, delicate, and seasonable service — the lovely fruit of true communion with the heart of Christ.

Hebrews 6

TWO IMPOSSIBLES

There are few who have set out to follow the Lord Jesus who have not, at some time or other, gone through painful exercise of heart in connection with the opening verses of Hebrews 6. While, in the long run, they have no reason to regret the exercise, yet it is always needful to distinguish between the Spirit's using a scripture to search us, and Satan's abusing it to stumble us. Searching is good for us. It is most healthful. We all need it, and we have to be thankful when we get it, but we are so prone to be light and superficial and to retire from anything that probes the conscience.

Still, we have not the slightest doubt that many true and earnest souls, many to whom Hebrews 6: 4-6 has no application whatever, have been stumbled and discouraged through not understanding the true force and bearing of the passage. It is to help such that we pen the following, for we can truly say there is no work in which we have a more intense interest than in taking the stumbling-blocks out of the way of God's beloved people. We feel most fully assured it is work which He delights to have done, inasmuch as He has given express commandment to His servants to do it. We have just to take care lest, in our desire to remove the stumbling-blocks, we should in any wise disturb the landmarks. May the blessed Spirit graciously help us to a right understanding of this sadly misunderstood passage of Holy Scripture!

So we inquire who are they of whom the inspired writer speaks in verses 4-6 — those of whom he declares, “It is impossible to renew them again to repentance?” A correct answer to this question will remove much of the difficulty felt in respect to this portion of Hebrews. In reaching this answer there are two things to be borne in mind. First, in verses 1 and 2 there is not a single feature belonging to Christianity as distinct from Judaism; secondly, in verses 4 and 5 there is not a single expression that rises to the height of the new birth or the sealing of the Spirit.

Let us quote the apostle's words: "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," or as the margin reads it, "The word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms or washings, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment."

Now it must be plain to the reader that the apostle could never exhort those professing Hebrew Christians to *leave* anything belonging to Christianity. There is not a single fact in that glorious economy from first to last — not a single stone in that glorious superstructure from foundation to topstone; not a single principle in that magnificent system from beginning to end — that we could afford to leave or dispense with for a moment. What is the grand foundation of Christianity? The cross. And what are its two characteristic facts? A Man glorified in heaven and God dwelling in man on the earth. Could we leave these? God forbid! To whom or to what should we go? It is impossible that we could leave or give up a single fact, feature or principle of our glorious Christianity.

What then are we to leave in Hebrews 6: 1-2? Simply those elements of truth contained in the Jewish system which, in so far as they possessed any permanent value, are reproduced in Christianity, but *as a system* were to be abandoned forever. Where is there a word unique to Christianity in this passage? Can we not see at a glance that the apostle has Judaism before his mind? It is this he exhorts his brethren to leave and to go on to Christianity which he here calls "perfection."

It is a commonly believed idea that the words "Let us go on to perfection" refer to our leaving the earlier stages of the divine life and getting on to the higher. This is a total mistake. As to what is called "the higher Christian life," there is in reality no such thing. If there be a higher life, there must be a lower one, but we *know* that Christ is our life, the life of each, the life of all. There cannot be anything higher than that. The merest babe in Christ has as high a life as the most matured and profoundly-taught member of the Church of God.

There is *progress* in the divine life, growth in grace, faith growing exceedingly. All this we own most fully and would charge ourselves to seek after it most earnestly. But it is not the subject of Hebrews 6: 1-2. It is not a question of going from one form in the school of Christ to another, but of leaving the school of Moses to enter fully, heartily and intelligently into the school of Christ. It is not a question of going from one stage of Christian life to another, but of abandoning Judaism to go on to Christianity. We could not abandon a single atom of Christianity without abandoning Christ Himself, for He is the foundation, the source, the center, the spring of it all.

But the reader may feel disposed to ask, Have we not got "repentance, faith, resurrection and eternal judgment" in Hebrews 6: 1-2? * True, but only as elements of the Jewish system. There is not a word about "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ", not a word about Christ at all. It is simply Judaism, to which some of the Hebrew professors were in danger of returning, but from which the apostle earnestly urges them to go on.

{*Resurrection, as seen in Christianity, is not merely "resurrection of the dead," but, "resurrection from *among* the dead."}

Let us now turn for a moment to verses 4 and 5. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come (of the coming millennial age), if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

The reader will notice that, as in verses 1 and 2, we have not a single clause specially characteristic of Christianity. Also in verses 4 and 5, we have not a single clause that rises to the height of the new birth or the sealing of the Holy Spirit. A person might be all that is here spoken of and yet never have been born again, never sealed by the Holy Spirit. How many thousands have been "enlightened" by the gospel without being converted by it! Wherever the gospel has been preached, wherever the Bible has been received and read, an enlightening influence has gone forth, altogether irrespective of any

saving work wrought in souls. Look at the nations of Europe since the Reformation. In all those countries that have received the Bible, we see the moral effect produced in the way of intelligence, civilization and refinement, apart altogether from the question of the conversion of individual souls. On the other hand those countries which have refused the Bible, exhibit the depressing results of ignorance, moral darkness and degradation. In a word, there may be enlightenment of the understanding without any divine work in the conscience or in the heart.

But what means the “tasting the heavenly gift?” Does not this imply the new birth? By no means. Many have gotten a taste of the new, the heavenly things set forth in the glorious gospel of God, and yet never have passed from death unto life, never have been broken down before God about their sins — never have received Christ into their hearts. *Tasting* of the heavenly gift and passing by new birth into the heavenly kingdom, are totally different things.

Also many were made “*partakers* of the Holy Spirit” so as to speak with tongues, prophesy and the like, who nevertheless were never born of the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost, His presence pervaded the whole Assembly. His power was felt by all, converted or unconverted. The word rendered “*partakers*” does not express intelligent fellowship. This makes it all the more clear that there is not the slightest thought of new birth or sealing.

Further, as to “*tasting* the good Word of God,” do we not all know too well that unconverted people can in a certain sense enjoy the Word of God and have a measure of delight in hearing a full, free gospel preached? Have we not often heard persons who furnished no evidence of divine life, speak in highly appreciative terms of what they call the savory doctrines of grace? There is a wide and very material difference indeed between a person *tasting* the good Word of God and the Word of God entering the soul in living, quickening, convicting and converting power.

Finally, a person might *taste* “the power of the coming age” — the age when Messiah will set up His kingdom. He might heal diseases and cast out demons; he might take up serpents and drink

poison; he might speak with tongues. He might do all these things and yet never have been born again. "Thus," as a recent writer has solemnly and forcibly put it, "we may fairly give the fullest force to every one of these expressions. Yet, write them out ever so largely, they fall short both of the new birth and of sealing with the Holy Spirit. There is everything except inward spiritual life in Christ or the indwelling seal of it. One may have the very highest endowments and privileges in the way both of meeting the mind and also of exterior power, and yet all may be given up and the man become so much more the enemy of Christ. Indeed such is the natural result. It had been the mournful fact as to some. They had fallen away. Hence renewal to repentance is an impossibility — declared to be so by the authoritative and conclusive testimony of the Holy Spirit — "seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God and put him to an open shame."

Why impossible? The case supposed is not anyone who ever possessed a single spark of divine life in his soul; no, nor yet anyone with the very feeblest desire after Christ or one atom of true repentance or desire to flee from the wrath to come. The case is of persons, after the richest proof and privilege, turning aside as apostates from Christ, to take up Judaism once more. As long as that course is pursued, there cannot be repentance. Supposing a man had been the adversary of Messiah here below, as for example, Paul himself, the very writer of the epistle. There was still the opening for him of grace from on high. It was possible that the very man that had slighted Christ here below, might have his eyes opened to see and receive Christ above, but this abandoned, there is no fresh condition in which He could be presented to men. Those who rejected Christ in the fullness of His grace and in the height of His glory in which God had set Him as Man before them — not merely on earth, but in heaven as attested by the Holy Spirit sent down from the ascended and glorified Man on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens — what was there to fall back upon? What possible means to bring them to repentance after that? There is none. What is there but Christ coming in judgment?""*

{*Lectures Introductory to Paul's Epistles," by W. Kelly.}

For one who, from amid the full blaze of gospel light and privilege, could deliberately go back to the darkness of Judaism, there remains nothing but hopeless impenitence, hardness of heart, judicial blindness and eternal judgment.

It is not, be it carefully observed, a child of God falling into sin and getting at a distance from God. Such an one will, most surely, be brought back and restored, though it may be through sore affliction under the chastening hand of God. It is not an anxious soul earnestly seeking the way of life and peace. It is not the case of a poor soul ignorant and out of the way. To none of these does the “impossible” of Hebrews 6: 4 apply. There is not a single anxious, earnest soul beneath the canopy of heaven whose case is impossible. There is just one case that approaches awfully near to Hebrews 6: 4 and that is one who has gone on sinning against light, refusing to act on the plain Word of God, knowingly and deliberately resisting the truth because of the consequences of acting upon it.

This is indeed most solemn. No one can take it upon him to say at what depths of darkness, blindness and hardness of heart, a case of this kind may arrive. It is a terrible thing to trifle with light and to go on with what we know to be wrong because of worldly advantage, to please friends, to avoid persecution and trial, or for any reason whatsoever. “Give glory to the Lord your God before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness” (Jer. 13: 16).

Having sounded this warning note for any whose case may need it, we close this part of our subject by presenting to any troubled soul whose eye may scan these lines, that precious word at the very end of the inspired volume — a word issuing forth from the very heart of God and the heart of Christ, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*.”

Let us now look at other warnings and consolations. In reading the Epistle to the Hebrews, we can hardly fail to notice the way in which the most solemn words of warning stand side by side with words of deepest comfort and consolation. Thus, for example, Hebrews 4 opens with “Let us therefore fear,” and closes with “Let

us therefore come boldly.” When we think of who we are, what we are and where we are, we have reason to fear. But when we think of God — His grace, His goodness, His tender mercy, His faithfulness — we may cherish the most fearless confidence. When we think of the world with all its dangers, temptations and snares, we may well be on our guard. But when we think of “the throne of grace” with its exhaustless provisions, and of our most merciful, faithful and sympathizing High Priest, we can draw near with holy boldness and find an ample supply to meet our deepest need.

So also in Hebrews 10, we have the same striking contrast of the warning voice and the sweet words of comfort and encouragement. Harken to the former. “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

How awfully solemn is all this! How searching! Should we seek to blunt the edge of the warning? God forbid! We should only see that it has its true direction, its proper application. Can it ever touch an anxious inquirer or a true-hearted, earnest follower of Christ? Assuredly not, except indeed that it may deepen the earnestness of the follower and quicken the pace of the inquirer, for only see, reader, how close the word of comfort and encouragement stands to the awful note of warning and admonition. “But call to remembrance the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better

and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Thus we see how the inspiring Spirit connects, in this epistle, the most precious consolation with the most solemn warning. Both are needed and therefore both are given, and it will be our wisdom to seek to profit from both. We need never be afraid to trust Scripture. If we find a difficulty, in stead of puzzling over it, let us quietly wait on God for further light, meanwhile calmly resting in the assurance that no one part of the Word of God can ever contradict another. All is in the most perfect harmony. The apparent discrepancies are entirely owing to our ignorance. Hence, instead of putting forth our gratuitous efforts to reconcile things, we should just allow each passage of Scripture to come home in all its moral force to the heart and conscience, and produce its divinely-appointed result in the formation of our character.

Read such words as “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them to Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.” It is our sweet privilege to take them in, in all their divine simplicity and heavenly clearness, and rest in them in calm confidence. There is no difficulty, no obscurity, no vagueness about them. All Christ's sheep are as safe as He can make them, as safe as He is Himself. The hand that would touch them must touch Him. They are divinely and eternally secure. Persons may imagine or profess themselves to be His sheep, who are not so in reality. They may fall away from their mere profession, bring much reproach on the cause of Christ, cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of honest inquirers by leading them to think that true Christians can fall away and be lost. All this may be true, but it

leaves wholly untouched the precious and most comforting words of our good and faithful Shepherd, *that His sheep have eternal life and shall never — can never — perish*. No passage of Holy Scripture can, by any possibility, contradict the plain statement of our Lord.

But then there are other passages designed to search the conscience, to make us watchful, to produce holy circumspection in our ways, to lead us to judge ourselves, to induce self-denial. Take the following weighty and most searching scripture: “Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9: 24-27).

Now, will anyone attempt to place 1 Corinthians 9 in opposition to John 10? Far be the thought! What then? We are simply to receive both in all their divine force and allow them to act upon us according to the divine purpose in giving them to us — the latter on our hearts for comfort and consolation; the former on our consciences for admonition and warning! How terrible it would be for anyone to say or to think that, because he is a sheep of Christ, he may walk in self-indulgence since he can never perish — that he need not seek to keep his body under, but may give loose rein to his desires, because nothing can separate him from the love of Christ! Surely such an one would afford most sad evidence that he is anything but a sheep of the flock of Christ.

But we must return to Hebrews 6 and dwell for a moment upon our second “Impossible.” The first, as we have seen, had respect to man; the second has respect to God. Man, with the very highest advantages, with the very rarest privileges, with the most powerful array of evidence, will turn his back upon God and Christ. He will deliberately apostatize from Christianity, give up the truth of God, go back into darkness, and plunge into a condition from which the Holy Spirit declares “it is impossible to renew him again to repentance.”

But as usual in this marvelous epistle, the “strong consolation” stands in close and most gracious proximity to the awful warning. And, blessed be God, this same strong consolation is designed for us in connection with the very smallest measure of living faith in the Word of God. It is not a question of great attainments in knowledge, experience or devotedness; no, it is simply a matter of having even that measure and character of faith and earnestness pictured by the man-slayer as he flew to the city of refuge to escape the avenger of blood. How precious is this for every true and earnest soul! The very feeblest spark of divinely-given faith secures eternal life, strong consolation and everlasting glory, because “it is impossible for God to lie.” He cannot and will not deny Himself, blessed forever be His name! He has pledged His word and added His oath, the “two immutable things.” Where is the power, human or demonic, that can touch these two things?

We close with another quote from William Kelly, from his “Lectures Introductory to Paul's Epistles.”

Another point of interest which may be remarked here in Hebrews 6 is the intimation at the end, compared with the beginning of the chapter. We have seen the highest external privileges — and they were merely external — not only the mind of man, as far as it could, enjoying the truth, but the power of the Holy Spirit making the man an instrument of power, not a subject of grace, even though it be to his own shame and deeper condemnation afterwards. In short, man may have the utmost conceivable advantage and the greatest external power, even of the Spirit of God Himself, and yet all come to nothing.

How solemnizing! But the very same chapter which affirms and warns of the possible failure of every advantage, shows us the weakest faith that the whole New Testament describes coming into the secure possession of the best blessings of grace. How consolatory! How truly encouraging! Who but God could have dictated that this same chapter should depict the weakest faith that the New Testament ever acknowledges? What can look feebler, what more desperately pressed, than a man fleeing for refuge? It is not a soul as coming to Jesus; it is not as one whom the Lord meets and blesses on the spot, but here is a man hard-pushed, fleeing for

his very life (evidently a figure drawn from the man-slayer fleeing from the avenger of blood), yet eternally saved and blessed according to the acceptance of Christ — the very lowest character of faith met by the very fullest, richest and most permanent blessing!

There was no reality found in the persons referred to in verses 4 and 5, though so highly favored. Hence, as there was no conscience before God, no sense of sin, no clinging to Christ, that everything came to nought. But here, in the end of the chapter, there is the fruit of faith, feeble indeed and sorely tried, but in the light that appreciates the judgment of God against sin. Hence, although it be only fleeing in an agony of soul for refuge, what is it that God gives to one in such a state? Strong consolation, and that which enters within the veil. Impossible that the Son should be shaken from His place on the throne of God. And it is as impossible that the very least and weakest believer should come to any hurt whatsoever! The weakest of saints is more than conqueror.

Well may we exclaim, in view of all this surpassing grace, “Hallelujah!” Beloved Christian reader, may our whole life be spent in praising our ever blessed and most gracious Savior-God!

Hebrews 9

Christian perfection: What is it?

There are few thoughtful students of the New Testament who have not, at some time or another, felt a little perplexed as to the real force and application of the word "perfect," which is of frequent occurrence. This word is used in such a variety of connections that it is deeply important we should be clear as to what the Holy Ghost means by it in each particular case. We believe the context will, generally speaking, guide as to a right understanding of the just sense and application of the word in any given passage.

We are aware that the subject of "Christian perfection" has given rise to much theological strife and controversy; but we must at the outset assure our readers that it is not by any means our intention to take up the question in a controversial way; we shall merely seek to bring under their notice the various passages in the New Testament in which the word "perfect" occurs, or at least some of the leading instances of its use, trusting the Lord to use what He may give us to write, for the glory of His name and the profit of those precious souls for whom we ever desire to write. We shall not trace the word in the order in which it occurs, but rather in that order which the real need of the soul would naturally suggest. In this way we shall find that the first great aspect of Christian perfection is presented to us in the ninth verse of the ninth chapter of Hebrews, and may be denominated *perfection as to the state of the conscience*.

"Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service *perfect* [*teleiosai*] as pertaining to the conscience." The apostle, in this passage, is drawing a contrast between the sacrifices under the Mosaic economy, and the sacrifice of Christ. The former could never give a perfect conscience, simply because they were imperfect in themselves. It was impossible that the blood of a bullock or of a goat could ever give a perfect conscience. It might avail for a day, a month, or a year, but no longer. Hence, therefore, the conscience of a Jewish worshipper was never perfect. He had not, if we may use the expression, reached his moral end as to the

condition of his conscience. He could never say that his conscience was perfectly purged, because he had not yet reached a perfect sacrifice.

With the Christian worshipper, however, it is different. He has, blessed be God, reached his moral end. He has arrived at a point, so far as the state of his conscience is concerned, beyond which it is utterly impossible for him to go. He cannot get beyond the blood of Jesus Christ. He is perfect as to his conscience. As is the sacrifice, so is the conscience that rests thereon. If the sacrifice is imperfect, so is the conscience. They stand or fall together. Nothing can be simpler, nothing more solid, nothing more consolatory, for any awakened conscience. It is not at all a question of what I am; *that* has been fully and forever settled. I have been found out, judged, and condemned in myself. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good." I have got to the end of myself, and there I have reached the blood of Christ. I want no more. What could be added to that most precious blood? Nothing. I am perfect, as to the state of my conscience. I do not want an ordinance, a sacrament, or a ceremony, to perfect the condition of my conscience. To say so, to think so, would be to cast dishonour upon the sacrifice of the Son of God.

The reader will do well to get a clear and firm hold of this foundation-point. If there be any darkness or uncertainty as to this, he will be wholly unable to understand or appreciate the various aspects of "Christian perfection" which are yet to pass in review before us. It is quite possible that many pious people fail to enjoy the unspeakable blessing of a perfect conscience by reason of self-occupation. They look in at self, and not finding aught there to rest upon — who ever did? — they deem it presumption to think of being perfect in any respect whatever. This is a mistake. It may be a pious mistake, but it is a mistake. Were we to speak of perfection in the flesh (what many, alas, are vainly aiming at), then, verily, true piety might recoil with just horror from the presumptuous and silly chimera.

But, thank God, our theme is not perfection in the flesh, through any process of improvement, moral, social, or religious. This would be poor, dreary, depressing work indeed. It would be setting us to look for perfection in the old creation, where sin and death reign. To

look for perfection amid the dust of the old creation were a hopeless task. And yet how many are thus engaged! They are seeking to *improve man and mend the world* and yet, with all this, they have never reached, never understood — yea, they actually deny — the very first and simplest aspect of Christian perfection, namely, perfection as to the state of the conscience in the presence of God.

This latter is our thesis, and we want the anxious reader to understand it in its simplicity, in order that he may see the solid foundation of his peace laid down by the very hand of God Himself. We want him, ere he lays aside this paper, to enter into the joyful sense of sins perfectly forgiven, and his conscience perfectly purged by the blood of Jesus. The entire matter hinges upon the question of the sacrifice. What has God found in that sacrifice? Perfection. Well, then, that perfection is for you, anxious one, and you should at once and forever enjoy it.

Remember, it is not a question as to what you are, nor yet as to what you think about the blood of Christ. No, the question is, What does God think about the blood of His own Son? This makes all so clear. Say, is it clear to you? Can you now rest in it? Is your conscience set free by being brought in contact with a perfect sacrifice? Oh that it may be so! May God's Spirit now show you the fullness and perfectness of Christ's atoning work with such clearness, vividness and power that your whole being may be emancipated, and your heart filled with praise and thanksgiving!

It makes the heart bleed to think of the thousands of precious souls kept in darkness and bondage when they ought to be walking in the light and liberty which flow from a perfectly purged conscience. So many things are mixed up with the simple testimony of the Word and Spirit of God as to the value of Christ's work that it is wholly impossible for the heart to get liberated. You will get a little bit of Christ, and a little bit of self; a little bit of grace, and a little bit of law; a little bit of faith, and a little bit of works. Thus the soul is kept hovering between confidence and doubt, hope and fear, just as one or other of the ingredients predominates in the mixture, or happens to be tasted at the moment. How rare is the gem of full, free, present, and eternal salvation! We would fain cause that gem to sparkle in all its divine and heavenly lustre under the gaze of the

reader at this moment. Then shall the chains of his spiritual bondage drop off. If the Son shall make him free he shall be free indeed, and thus be able to rise in the power of this freedom and trample the legal system beneath his feet.

The more we ponder the question now before us — and we have pondered it a good deal — the more we are convinced that the true secret of all the error, confusion and perplexity in which so many are involved in reference to it will be found in the fact that they do not clearly understand death and resurrection — the new birth — the new creation. Were this grand truth only laid hold of in power it would make all clear as to the state of the conscience. So long as I am seeking to tranquilize my conscience by efforts after self-improvement, so long I must be either miserable or self-deceived. It does not matter in the least what means I adopt in carrying on the process; the issue must be one and the same. If I attempt to take up the profession of Christianity for the purpose of bettering *self*-improving nature or mending my condition in the old creation — I must be a total stranger to the bliss of a perfect conscience. "All flesh is as grass." The old creation lies under the withering influences of sin and its curse. A risen Christ is the Head of the new creation — "the beginning of the creation of God" — "the first-begotten from among the dead" (*ek ton nekron*)

Here in very deed is perfection for the conscience. What more do I want? I see the One who hung upon the cross, charged with the full weight of all my sins, now crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God, amid the full blaze of Heaven's majesty. What can be added to this? Do I want ordinances, rites, ceremonies, or sacraments? Surely not. I dare not add aught to the death and resurrection of the eternal Son of God. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper symbolise and celebrate that grand reality; and, so far, they are precious to the Christian — most precious. But when, instead of being used to symbolise and celebrate death and resurrection, they are used to displace it — used as patches upon the old creation, as crutches for the old man — they must be regarded as a snare, a curse, from which may the Lord deliver the souls of His people!

We would fain dwell upon this our first point because of its immense importance in this day of ordinances, traditional religion, and self-improvement. We should like to ponder it — to elaborate, illustrate, and enforce it — in order that the reader may get a clear, full, bold grasp of it. But we look to God the Holy Ghost to do His own work in this matter; and if He will graciously bring the heart under the power of the truth which has been so feebly unfolded, then indeed will there be both ability and leisure to look at the second great aspect of Christian perfection, namely, *perfection as to the object of the heart*.

Here, again, we are ushered into the new creation. Christ died to give me a perfect conscience. He lives to give me a perfect object. But it is very clear that until I have tasted the deep blessedness of the former, I can never be properly occupied with the latter. I must have a perfect conscience ere my heart can be at leisure to go out after the Person of Christ. How few of us really taste the sweetness of communion with a risen Christ! How little do any of us know of that fixedness of heart upon Him as our one paramount, engrossing, undivided object! We are occupied with our own things. The world creeps in, in one way or another; we live in the region of nature; we breathe the atmosphere — the dark, heavy, murky atmosphere — of the old creation; self is indulged; and thus our spiritual vision becomes dimmed, we lose our sense of peace, the soul becomes disturbed, the heart unhinged, the Holy Ghost grieved, the conscience exercised. Then the eye is turned in upon self and back upon its actings. The time that else might be spent in holy and happy occupation with our Object is, and must be, devoted to the business of self-judgement — heavy, but needed work! — in order to get back into the enjoyment of what we should never have lost, even a perfect conscience.

Now, the moment the eye is turned off from Christ darkness must set in — oftentimes darkness that may be felt. It is only as the eye is single that the body is full of light. And what is a single eye but having Christ for our one object? It is thus that light divine pours in upon us, until every chamber of our moral being becomes lighted up, and we become lights for others, "as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." In this way the soul is kept happily free

from obscurity, perplexity, and anxiety. It finds all its springs in Christ. It is independent of the world, and can move on, singing —

Salvation in that name is found,

Cure for my grief and care;

A healing balm for every wound:

All, all I want is there.

It is impossible for words to convey the power and blessedness of having Jesus ever before the heart as an object. It is perfection, as we have it in Philippians 3: 15, where the apostle says, "Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect (teleioi)*, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be differently minded (*heteros*). God shall reveal even this unto you." When Christ stands before the heart as our absorbing and satisfying object, we have reached our moral end so far as an object is concerned; for how can we ever get beyond the Person of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Impossible. We cannot get beyond the blood of Christ, for the conscience; neither can we get beyond the Person of Christ, for the heart; we have therefore reached our moral end in both; we have perfection as to the state of the conscience, and as to the object of the heart.

Here, then, we have both peace and power — peace for the conscience, and power over the affections. It is when the conscience finds sweet repose in the blood that the emancipated affections can go forth and find their full play around the Person of Jesus. And oh, what tongue can tell, what pen unfold, the mighty moral results of gazing upon Christ? "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3: 18). Observe, "*Beholding . . . are changed.*" There is no legal bondage — no restless effort — no anxious toiling. We gaze, and gaze, and — what then? Continue to gaze, and as we gaze we become morally assimilated to the blessed Object, through the transforming power of the Holy Ghost. The image of Christ is engraved upon the heart, and

reflected back in ten thousand ways in our practical career, from day to day.

Reader, remember, this is the only true idea of Christianity. It is one thing to be a religious man, it is quite another to be a Christian. Paul was a religious man before his conversion; but he was a Christian afterwards. It is well to see this. There is plenty of religion in the world, but, alas, how little Christianity! And why? Simply because Christ is not known, not loved, not cared for, not sought after. And even where His work is looked to for salvation — where His blood is trusted for pardon and peace — how little is known or thought of Himself! We are ready enough to take salvation through the death of Jesus, but oh, how far off do we keep from His blessed Person! How little does He get His true place in our hearts! This is a serious loss. Indeed, we cannot but believe that the pale, flickering light of modern profession is the fruit of habitual distance from Christ, the central sun of Christianity. How can there possibly be light, heat, or fruitfulness, if we wander amid the gloomy vaults and dark tunnels of this world's pleasures, its politics, or its religion? It is vain to expect it. And even where we make salvation our object — when we are occupied with our spiritual condition, feeding upon our experiences and looking after our frames and feelings — we must become weak and low, inasmuch as these things are certainly not Christ.

There are many who, as we say, have retired from the world, have given up its balls, its parties, its theatres, its exhibitions its concerts, its flower shows, its numberless and nameless vanities, who, nevertheless, have not found their object in a risen and glorified Christ. They have retired from the world, but have gone in upon themselves. They are seeking an object *in their religion*; they are engrossed with forms of pietism; they are feeding upon the workings of a morbid conscience or a superstitious mind; or they are trafficking in the experience of yesterday. Now, these persons are just as far from happiness — as far from the true idea of Christianity, as the poor pleasure-hunters of this world. It is quite possible to give up pleasure-hunting and become a religious mope — a morbid, melancholy mystic — a spiritual hypochondriac What do I gain by the change? Nothing; unless, indeed, it be a vast amount

of self-deception. I have retired from the world around, to find an object in the world within — a poor exchange!

How different is this from the true Christian! There he stands, with a tranquilized conscience and an emancipated heart, gazing upon an object that absorbs his whole soul. He wants no more. Talk to him about this world's pleasure? Ask him, has he been to this or that exhibition? What is his calm and dignified reply? Will he merely tell you of the sin, the harm, of such things? Nay; what then? "I have found my *all* in Christ. I have reached my moral end. I want no more." This is the Christian's reply. It is a poor affair when we come to talk of the harm of this or that. It often happens that persons who speak thus are occupied, not with Christ, but with their own reputation, their character, their consistency with themselves. Of what use is all this? Is it not self-occupation, after all? What we want is to keep the eye fixed on Christ; then the heart will follow the eye, and the feet will follow the heart. In this way our path will be as the shining light, shining more and more until it becomes lost in the blaze of the perfect and everlasting day of glory.

May God, in His infinite mercy, grant to the writer and reader of these pages to know more of what it is to have reached our moral end, both as to the state of the conscience and as to the object of the heart!

In considering the subject of Christian perfection, it might seem sufficient to say that the believer is perfect in a risen Christ: "Complete in Him which is the head of all principality and power." This, surely, comprehends everything. Nothing can be added to the completeness which we have in Christ. All this is blessedly true; but does it not still hold good that the inspired writers use the word "perfect" in various ways? And is it not important that we should understand the sense in which the word is used? This, we presume, will hardly be questioned. We cannot suppose for a moment that any thoughtful reader of Scripture would be satisfied to dismiss the matter without prayerfully seeking to understand the exact force and just application of the word in each particular passage in which it occurs. It is plain that the word "perfect" in Heb. 9: 9 is not applied in the same way as it is in Phil. 3: 15. And is it not right — is it not profitable — is it not due to our own souls and to the sacred volume

— to seek, through grace, to understand the difference? For our part, we cannot question it; and in this confidence we can happily pursue our examination of the subject of Christian perfection by calling the reader's attention, in the third place, to *perfection in the principle of our walk*.

This is unfolded to us in Matt. 5: 48: "Be ye therefore perfect (*teleioi*), even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "How," it may be asked, "can we be perfect as our Father which is in Heaven? How can we reach to such an elevated point as this? How can we attain to so lofty a standard? We can understand our being perfect as to the conscience, inasmuch as this perfection is based upon what Christ has done for us. And we can also understand our being perfect as to the object of the heart, inasmuch as this perfection is based upon what Christ is to us. But to be perfect as our Father in Heaven seems entirely beyond us."

To all this it may be said that our blessed Lord does not ask us to do impossibilities. He never issues a command without furnishing the needed grace to carry it out. Hence therefore, when He calls upon us to be perfect as our Father, it is plain that He confers upon us a holy privilege, that He invests us with a high dignity, and it is our place to seek to understand and appropriate both the one and the other.

What, then, is meant by our being perfect as our Father in Heaven? The context of Matt. 5: 48 furnishes the answer: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that (*hopos*) ye may be the children (*huiioi*) of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Here we have a lovely phase of Christian perfection, namely, perfection in the principle of our walk. We are called to walk in grace toward all, and in so doing to imitators of God as dear children. Our Father sends His sunshine and His showers even upon

His enemies. He deals in grace with all. This is our model. Are we formed upon it?

Search and see. Are you perfect in the principle of your walk? Are you dealing grace with your enemies and those who are in your debt? Are you demanding your rights? Are you, in principle, taking your fellow by the throat, and saying, "Pay me that thou owest?" If so, you are not "perfect as your Father." He is dealing in grace, and you are dealing in righteousness. Were He to act as you are acting, the day of grace would close, and the day of vengeance open. Had He dealt with you as you are now dealing with others, you should long since have been in that place where hope is unknown.

Let us ponder this. Let us see to it that we are not misrepresenting our heavenly Father. Let us aim at perfection in the principle of our daily walk. It will cost us something. It may empty the purse, but it will fill the heart; it may contract our pecuniary resources, but it will enlarge our spiritual circle. It will bring us into closer contact and deeper fellowship with our heavenly Father. Is not this worth something? Truly it is. Would that we felt its worth more deeply! Would that we felt more of the dignity conferred upon us in our being called to represent, in this evil, selfish, dark world, our heavenly Father, who pours in rich profusion His blessings upon the unthankful and the unholy. There is no use in preaching grace if we do not act it. It is of little avail to speak of God's dealing in long-suffering mercy if we are dealing in high-handed justice.

But, it may be said by some, "How ever could we carry out such a principle? We should be robbed and ruined. How could business be carried on if we are not to enforce our rights? We should be imposed upon and plundered by the unprincipled and the designing." This is not the mode in which to arrive at a just conclusion on our point. An obedient disciple never says, "How?" The question is, "Does the Lord Jesus call upon me to be perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect?" Assuredly. Well, then, am I aiming at this when I summon my fellow-creature to a bar of justice? Is this like my Father? Is this what He is doing? No; blessed be His name! He is on a throne of grace. He is reconciling the world. He is not imputing trespasses. This is plain enough. It only needs full subjection of heart. Let us bow our souls beneath the weight of this most glorious

truth. May we gaze upon this most lovely aspect of Christian perfection, and seek to aim at the attainment of it.

If we pause to reason about results, we shall never reach the truth. What we want is, that moral condition of soul that fully owns the power and authority of the Word. Then, though there may be failure in detail, we have always a touchstone by which to test our ways, and a standard to which to recall the heart and conscience. But if we reason and argue — if we deny that it is our privilege to be perfect in the sense of Matt. 5: 48 — if we justify our going to *law* when our Father is not going to law, but acting in the most unqualified *grace*, we deprive ourselves of that perfect model on which our character and ways should ever be formed.

May God the Holy Spirit enable us to understand, to submit to, and carry out in practical life, this perfect principle! It is most lamentable to see the children of God adopting in daily life a course of acting the direct opposite of that adopted by their heavenly Father. We ought to remember that we are called to be His moral representatives. We are His children by spiritual regeneration, but we are called to be His sons in moral assimilation to His character and practical conformity to His ways. "Do good to them that hate you . . . *that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven.*" Striking words! In order to our being morally and characteristically the sons of God, we are called to do good to our enemies. This is what He does, and we are called to be like Him. Alas, how little we enter into this! How unlike we are! Oh for a more faithful representation!

Time and space would fail us to dwell, as we should like to do, upon this deeply practical part of our subject; we must therefore pass on, in the fourth place, to the consideration of *perfection in the character of our service.*

"I have not found thy works perfect (*pepleromena*) before God" (Rev. 3: 2). The English reader should be informed that the word here rendered "perfect" is not the same as that used in the three passages already referred to. It is usually translated "fulfilled" — "finished" — "accomplished." Its use in reference to the works of the church of Sardis teaches us a deeply solemn and heart-searching

lesson. There was a name to live; but the works were not fulfilled under the immediate eye of God. There is nothing more dangerous to a Christian than to have "*a name.*" It is a positive snare of the devil.

Many a professor has fallen by means of being occupied with a name. Many a useful servant has been destroyed by the effort to keep up a name. If I have gotten a reputation in any department of service — as an active evangelist — a gifted teacher — a clear and attractive writer — a man of prayer — a man of faith — a person of remarkable sanctity, or great personal devotedness — a benevolent person — a name for anything, in short — I am in imminent danger of making shipwreck. The enemy will lead me to make my reputation my object instead of Christ. I shall be working to keep up a name instead of the glory of Christ. I shall be occupied with the thoughts of men instead of doing all my work under the immediate eye of God.

All this demands intense watchfulness and rigid censorship over myself. I may be doing the most excellent works, but if they are not fulfilled in the presence of God they will prove a positive snare of the devil. I may preach the gospel — visit the sick — help the poor — go through the entire range of religious activity — and never be in the presence of God at all. I may do it for a name — do it because others do it, or expect me to do it. This is very serious. It demands real prayer — self-emptiness — nearness to and dependence upon God — singleness of eye — holy consecration to Christ. Self continually intrudes upon us. Oh this self, self, self, even in the very holiest things; and all the while we may appear to be very active and very devoted. Miserable delusion! We know of nothing more terrible than to have a religious name without spiritual life, without Christ, without a sense of God's presence possessing the soul.

Reader, let us look closely into this. Let us see that we begin, continue, and end our work under the Master's eye. This will impart a purity and a moral elevation to our service beyond all price. It will not cripple our energy, but it will tend to raise and intensify our action. It will not clip our wings, but it will guide our movements. It will render us independent of the thoughts of men, and fully deliver us from the slavery of seeking to maintain a name, or keep up a

reputation — miserable, degrading bondage! May the good Lord grant us full deliverance from it! May He give us grace to fulfil our works, whatever they may be, few or many, small or great, in His own blessed presence!

Having said thus much in reference to the *character* of our service, we shall close with a few lines on *perfection in our equipment for service*.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be *perfect* (ἄριος) thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17). Here, again, we have a different word, and one which only occurs in this one place in the entire New Testament. It is most expressive. It signifies *present readiness* for any exigency. The man who is acquainted with, and subject to the Word of God, is ready for every emergency. He has no need to go and cram for an occasion — to consult his authorities — to make himself up on a point. He is *ready now*. If an anxious inquirer comes, he is ready; if a curious inquirer comes, he is ready; if a sceptic comes, he is ready; if an infidel comes, he is ready. In a word, he is always ready. He is perfectly equipped for every occasion.

The Lord be praised for all these aspects of Christian perfection! What more do we want? Perfection as to the conscience; perfection in object; perfection in walk; perfection in the character of service; perfection in our equipment. What remains? What wait we for? Just this — perfection in glory — perfect conformity in spirit, and soul, and body, to the image of our glorified Head in Heaven!

May the Lord so work on our hearts by His Spirit, producing that which is well-pleasing in His sight, that we may stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God!"

Hebrews 9: 24-28.

The Three Appearings

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation."

[The English reader should be informed that the three words which are rendered in the above passage "appear" are not the same in the original Greek. But our object is to deal with the facts set forth rather than with the words employed.]

The foregoing passage sets before us three great facts in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It speaks of what we may venture to call three distinct appearings, namely, an appearing in the past; an appearing in the present; and an appearing in the future. He *hath* appeared in this world to do a certain work; He *doth* appear in Heaven to carry on a certain ministry; and He *shall* appear in glory. The first is Atonement; the second is Advocacy; the third is the Advent.

First, then, let us dwell for a few moments on THE ATONEMENT, which is here presented in its two grand aspects, first, Godward; and secondly, usward. The apostle declares that Christ hath appeared "to put away *sin*", and also "to bear the *sins* of many." This is a distinction of the utmost importance, and one not sufficiently understood or attended to. Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has glorified God in reference to the question of sin in its very broadest aspect. This He has done altogether irrespective of the question of persons or the forgiveness

of the sins of individuals. Even though every soul, from the days of Adam down to the very last generation, were to reject the proffered mercy of God, yet would it hold good that the atoning death of Christ had put away sin-had destroyed the power of Satan-had perfectly glorified God, and laid the deep and solid foundation on which all the divine counsels and purposes can rest for ever.

It is to this fact that the Baptist refers in these memorable words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the *sin* of the world" (John 1:29). The Lamb of God has wrought a work in virtue of which every trace of sin shall be obliterated from the creation of God. He has perfectly vindicated God in the very midst of a scene in which He had been so grossly dishonoured, in which His character had been traduced and His majesty insulted. He came to do this at all cost, even at the sacrifice of Himself. He sacrificed Himself in order to maintain, in view of Heaven, earth, and hell, the glory of God. He has wrought a work by the which God is infinitely more glorified than if sin had not entered at all. God shall reap a richer harvest by far in the fields of redemption than ever He could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation.

It is well that the reader should deeply ponder this glorious aspect of the atoning death of Christ. We are apt to think that the very highest view we can take of the cross is that which involves the question of our forgiveness and salvation. This is a grave mistake. That question is divinely settled, as we shall seek to show; for the less is always included in the greater. But let us remember that our side of the atonement is the less, God's side of it the greater. It was infinitely more important that God should be glorified than that we should be saved. Both ends have been gained, blessed be God, and gained by one and the same work, the precious atonement of Christ; but we must never forget that the glory of God is of far greater moment than the salvation of men; and further, that we never can have so clear a sense of the latter as when we see it flowing from the former. It is when we see that God has been perfectly and for ever glorified in the death of Christ, that we can really enter into the divine perfectness of our salvation. In point of fact, both are so intimately bound up together that they cannot be separated; but still God's part in the cross of Christ must ever get its own proper pre-

eminence. The glory of God was ever uppermost in the devoted heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this He lived, for this He died. He came into this world for the express purpose of glorifying God, and from this great and holy object He never swerved a moment from the manger to the cross. True it is-blessedly true-that in carrying out this object He has perfectly met our case; but the divine glory ruled Him in life and in death.

Now it is on the ground of atonement, looked at in this its higher aspect, that God has been dealing with the world in patient grace, mercy and forbearance for well nigh six thousand years. He sends His rain and His sunbeams upon the evil and upon the good, upon the just and the unjust. It is in virtue of the atonement of Christ-though despised and rejected-that the infidel and the atheist live, and enjoy God's daily mercies; yea, the very breath that they spend in opposing the revelation and denying the existence of God they owe to Him in whom they live, move, and have their being. We speak not here, by any means, of the forgiveness of sins, or of the soul's salvation. This is another question altogether, and to it we shall refer presently. But, looking at man in reference to his life in this world, and looking at the world in which he lives, it is the Cross which forms the basis of God's merciful dealing with both the one and the other.

Furthermore, it is on the ground of the atonement of Christ, in the same aspect of it, that the evangelist can go forth "*into all the world, and preach glad tidings to every creature.*" He can declare the blessed truth that God has been glorified as to sin-His claims satisfied-His majesty vindicated-His law magnified-His attributes harmonised. He can proclaim the precious message that God can now be just and yet the justifier of any poor ungodly sinner that believes in Jesus. There is no hindrance, no barrier of any kind whatsoever. The preacher of the gospel is not to be cramped by any dogmas of theology. He has to do with the large, loving heart of God, which, in virtue of atonement, can flow forth to every creature beneath the canopy of Heaven. He can say to each and to all-and say it without reserve-"Come!" Nay, more, he is bound to "*beseech*" them to come. "*We pray* you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Such is the proper language of the evangelist, the herald of

the cross, the ambassador of Christ. He knows no less a range than the wide, wide world; and he is called to drop his message into the ear of every creature under heaven.

And why? Because "Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He has, by His most precious death, changed completely the ground of God's dealings with man and with the world, so that, instead of having to deal with them on the ground of sin, He can deal on the ground of atonement.

Finally, it is in virtue of the atonement, in this broad and lofty aspect, that every vestige of sin, and every trace of the serpent shall be obliterated from the wide universe of God. Then shall be seen the full force of that passage above referred to, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (1 John 2: 2)

Thus much as to what we may call the primary aspect of the atoning death of Christ-an aspect which cannot be too thoughtfully studied. A clear understanding of this weighty point would tend to remove a great deal of difficulty and misunderstanding in reference to the full and free preaching of the gospel. Many of the Lord's honoured servants find themselves hindered in the presentation of the glad tidings of salvation, simply because they do not see this wide aspect of the atonement. They confine the death of Christ merely to its bearing upon the sins of God's elect; and they therefore deem it wrong to preach the gospel to all, or to invite, yea to beseech and entreat, all to come.

Now, that Christ did die for the elect, Scripture distinctly teaches in manifold places. He died for the elect nation of Israel, and for the elect Church of God-the bride of Christ. But Scripture teaches more than this. It declares that "He died for all" (2 Cor. 5: 14); that "He tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2: 9). There is no need whatever for seeking to avoid the plain force and meaning of these and kindred statements of inspiration. And further, we believe it to be quite wrong to add our own words to God's words in order to reconcile them with any particular system of doctrine. When Scripture affirms that Christ died for all, we have no right to add the words, "the elect." And when Scripture states that Christ "tasted death for every man," we have no right to say, "every elect man." It

is our place to take God's Word as it stands, and reverently bow to its authoritative teaching in all things. We can no more systematise God's Word than we can systematise God Himself. His Word, His heart, and His nature, are quite too deep and comprehensive to be included within the limits of the very broadest and best constructed human system of theology that was ever framed. We shall, ever and anon, be discovering passages of Scripture which will not fall in with our system. We must remember that God is love, and this love will tell itself out to all without limit. True, God has His counsels, His purposes, and His decrees; but it is not these He presents to the poor lost sinner. He will instruct and interest His saints about such things; but to the guilty, heavy-laden sinner, He presents His love, His grace, His mercy, His readiness to save, to pardon, and to bless.

And let it be well remembered that the sinner's responsibility flows out of what is *revealed*, and not out of what is *secret*. God's decrees are secret; His nature, His character, Himself is revealed. The sinner will not be judged for rejecting what he had no means of knowing. "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and I men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3: 19).

We are not writing a theological treatise; but we do feel it to be a matter of the gravest moment to press upon the reader that his responsibility as a sinner, is based upon the fact that the aspect of the salvation of God, and of the atonement of Christ, is most distinctly and decidedly "unto all," and not merely to a certain number of the human family. The glorious message is sent forth into all into all the world. Every one who hears it is invited to come. This is grounded upon the fact that Christ has put away sin—that the blood of atonement has been carried into the presence of God—that the barrier which sin presented has been flung down and abolished, and now the mighty tide of divine love can flow freely forth to the very vilest of the sons of men.

Such is the message; and when any one through grace believes it he can be further told that not only has Christ put away sin, but that also He has borne his *sins*—the actual sins of all His people—of all who believe in His name. The evangelist can stand up in the midst of assembled thousands, and declare that Christ has put away sin—

that God is satisfied-that the way is open for all; and he can whisper the same in the ear of each and every sinner under Heaven. Then, when any one has bowed down to this testimony-when the repentant, broken; hearted, self-judged sinner receives the blessed record-he can be further taught that his *sins* were all laid on Jesus, all borne and for ever put away by Him when He died on the cross.

This is the plain doctrine of Hebrews 9: 26, 28; and we have a striking type of it in the two goats of Leviticus 16. If the reader will just turn to the passage he will find there, first, the *slain* goat; and secondly the *scape*-goat. The blood of the slain goat was brought into the sanctuary and sprinkled there. This was a type of Christ putting away sin. Then the high priest, on behalf of the congregation confessed all their sins upon the head of the scape-goat, and they were borne away into a land not inhabited. This was a type of Christ bearing the sins of His people. The two goats, taken together, give us a full view of the atonement of Christ, which, like the righteousness of God in Romans 3, is "unto all, and upon all them that believe."

All this is most simple. It removes many difficulties out of the way of the earnest seeker after peace. These difficulties arise in many cases from the conflicting dogmas of theological systems, and have no foundation whatever in Holy Scripture. There, all is as plain and as clear as God can make it. Each one who hears the message of God's free love is bound, not to say invited, to receive it; and judgement will, most assuredly, fall upon each and all who refuse or neglect the proffered mercy. It is utterly impossible for any one who has ever heard the gospel, or ever had the New Testament in his hand, to get rid of the awful responsibility that rests upon him to accept God's salvation. Not a single soul will have to say, I could not believe, because I was not one of the elect, and did not get power to believe. No one will ever dare to say or even to think this. If any could take such ground, then where were the force or the meaning of the following burning words?-"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1: 7-8). Will any one ever be punished for not obeying the gospel if he is not responsible to yield

that obedience? Most assuredly not. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

But does God send His gospel to people merely to place them under responsibility and increase their guilt? Far be the monstrous thought! He sends His gospel to the lost sinner in order that he may be saved, for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. All, therefore, who perish shall have none but themselves to blame.

It is of the very last importance that the reader should be established in the knowledge and practical sense of what the atonement of Christ has accomplished for all who simply trust in Him. It is, we need hardly say, the only basis of peace. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. It is, therefore, impossible that any question as to sin or guilt can ever arise. All has been "once and for ever" settled by the atoning death of the Lamb of God. True it is, alas, how true!-we all have sin in us; and we have, daily and hourly, to judge ourselves and judge our ways. It will ever hold good of us, so long as we are in a body of sin and death, that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." But then nothing can ever touch the question of our soul's perfect and eternal acceptance. The conscience of the believer is as completely purged from every soil and stain as will be the whole creation by-and-by. If it were not so, Christ could not be where He now is. He has entered into the presence of God, there to appear for us.

This leads us in the second place to consider THE ADVOCACY. Very many souls are apt to confound two things which, though inseparably connected, are perfectly distinct, namely, advocacy and atonement. Not seeing the divine completeness of the atonement, they are in a certain way looking to the advocacy to do for them what the atonement has done. We must remember that though as to our standing we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, yet as to the actual fact of our condition we are in the body. We are in spirit and by faith seated in heavenly places in Christ; but yet we are actually in the wilderness, subject to all sorts of infirmities, liable to fail and err in a thousand ways.

Now it is to meet our present actual state and wants that the advocacy, or priesthood, of Christ is designed. God be praised for the blessed provision! As those who are in the body passing through the wilderness, we need a great High Priest to maintain the link of communion, or to restore it when broken. Such a One we have, ever living to make intercession for us; nor could we get on for a single moment without Him. The work of atonement is never repeated; the work of the Advocate is never interrupted. When once the blood of Christ is applied to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost the application is never repeated. To think of a repetition is to deny its efficacy and to reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats. No doubt people do not see this, and most assuredly they do not mean it; but such is the real tendency of the thought of a fresh application of the blood of sprinkling. It may be that persons who speak in this way really mean to put honour upon the blood of Christ, and to give expression to their own felt unworthiness; but, in truth, the best way to put honour upon the blood of Christ is to rejoice in what it has done for our souls; and the best way to set forth our own unworthiness is to feel and remember that we were so vile that nothing but the death of Christ could avail to meet our case. So vile were we that nothing but His blood could cleanse us. So precious is His blood that not a trace of our guilt remains. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Thus it stands in reference to the very feeblest child of God whose eye scans these lines. "All sins forgiven." Not a trace of guilt remains. Jesus is in the presence of God for us. He is there as a High Priest before God-as an Advocate with the Father. He has by His atoning death rent the veil-put away sin-brought us nigh to God in all the credit and virtue of His sacrifice, and now He lives to maintain us by His advocacy in the enjoyment of the place and privileges into which His blood has introduced us.

Hence the apostle says, "If any man sin, we have"-what? The blood? Nay, but "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The blood has done its work, and is ever before God according to its full value in His sight. Its efficacy is ever the same. But we have sinned; it may be only in thought; but even that thought is quite enough to interrupt our communion. Here is where advocacy

comes in. If it were not that Jesus Christ is ever acting for us in the sanctuary above, our faith would most assuredly fail in moments in the which we have in any measure yielded to the voice of our sinful nature. Thus it was with Peter in that terrible hour of his temptation and fall: Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted (or restored), strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22: 21, 32).

Let the reader note this. "I have prayed for thee, that"-What? Was it that he might not fail? Nay, but that, having failed, his faith might not give way. Had Christ not prayed for his poor, feeble servant, he would have gone from bad to worse, and from worse to worst. But the intercession of Christ procured for Peter the grace of true repentance, self-judgement and bitter sorrow for his sin, and finally complete restoration of his heart and conscience, so that the current of his communion-interrupted by sin, but restored by advocacy-might flow on as before.

Thus it is with us when, through lack of that holy vigilance which we should ever exercise, we commit sin: Jesus goes to the Father for us. He prays for us; and it is through the efficacy of His priestly intercession that we are convicted and brought to self-judgement, confession, and restoration. All is founded on the advocacy, and the advocacy is founded on the atonement.

And here it may be well to assert, in the clearest and strongest manner possible, that it is the sweet privilege of every believer not to commit sin. There is no necessity whatever why he should. "My little children," says the apostle, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." This is a most precious truth for every lover of holiness. *We need not sin.* Let us remember this. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [or, practise sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3: 9).

This is the divine idea of a Christian. Alas, we do not always realise it! but that does not, and cannot, touch the precious truth. The divine nature, the new man, the life of Christ in the believer cannot possibly sin, and it is the privilege of every believer so to walk as that nothing but the life of Christ may be seem The Holy Ghost

dwells in the believer on the ground of redemption, in order to give effect to the desires of the new nature, so that the flesh may be as though it did not exist, and nothing but Christ be seen in the believer's life.

It is of the utmost importance that this divine idea of Christian life should be seized and maintained. People sometimes ask the question, Is it possible for a Christian to live without committing sin? We reply in the language of the inspired apostle, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (1 John 2: 1). And again, quoting the language of another inspired apostle, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6: 2) The Christian is viewed by God as "dead to sin"; and hence, if he yields to it he is practically denying his standing in a risen Christ. Alas, alas, we do sin, and hence the apostle adds, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

This gives wonderful completeness to the work on which our souls repose. Such is the perfect efficacy of the atonement of Christ that we have one Advocate with us in order that we may not sin, and another Advocate with the Father if we do sin. The word rendered "Comforter" in John 14: 16 is rendered "advocate" in 1 John 3: 1. We have one divine Person caring for us here, and we have another divine Person caring for us in Heaven, and all this on the ground of the atoning death of Christ.

Will it be said that in writing thus we furnish a license for committing sin? God forbid! We have already declared, and would insist upon, the blessed possibility of living in such unbroken communion with God-of walking so in the Spirit-of being so filled and occupied with Christ-as that the flesh, or the old nature, may not appear. This we know is not always the case. "In many things we all offend," as James tells us. But no right-minded person, no lover of holiness, no spiritual Christian, could have any sympathy with those who say we must commit sin. Thank God, it is not so. But what a mercy it is to know that when we do fail there is One at the right hand of God to restore the broken link of communion! This He does by producing in our souls, by His Spirit who dwells in us-that "other

Advocate"-the sense of failure, and leading us into self-judgment and true confession of the wrong, whatever it be.

We say "*true confession*," for it must be this if it be the fruit of the Spirit's work in the heart. It is not lightly and flippantly saying we have sinned, and then as lightly and flippantly sinning again. This is most sorrowful and most dangerous. We know nothing more hardening and demoralising than this sort of thing. It is sure to lead to the most disastrous consequences. We have known cases of persons living in sin and satisfying themselves by a mere lip confession of their sin, and then going and committing the sin again and again; and this has gone on for months and years, until God in His faithfulness caused the whole thing to come out openly before others.

All this is most dreadful. It is Satan's way of hardening and deceiving the heart. Oh that we may watch against it, and ever keep a tender conscience! We may rest assured that when a true-hearted child of God is betrayed into sin the Holy Ghost will produce in him such a sense of it-will lead him into such intense self-loathing, such an abhorrence of the evil, such thorough self-judgement in the presence of God-as that he cannot lightly go and commit the sin again. This we may learn from the words of the apostle when he says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and"-mark this weighty clause-"*to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Here we have the precious fruit of the double advocacy. It is all presented in its fullness in this part of the First Epistle of John. If any man sin, the blessed Paraclete on high intercedes with the Father, pleads the full merits of His atoning work, prays for the erring one on the ground of His having borne the judgement of that very sin. Then the other Paraclete acts in the conscience, produces repentance and confession, and brings the soul back into the light in the sweet sense that the sin is forgiven, the unrighteousness cleansed, and the communion perfectly restored. "He restoreth my soul: *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness* for His name's sake" (Ps. 23: 3).

We trust the reader will be enabled to understand this great fundamental truth. Many, we are aware, find it difficult to reconcile the idea of intercession with the truth of a perfect atonement. If, say

they, the atonement is perfect, what need is there of intercession? If the believer is made as white as snow by the blood of Christ-so white that the Spirit of God can dwell in his heart-then what does he want of a priest? If by one offering Christ has perfected for ever all them that are sanctified, then what need have these perfected and sanctified ones of an advocate? Surely we must either admit the thought of an imperfect atonement or deny the need of advocacy?

Such is the reasoning of the human mind, but such is not the faith of Christians. Scripture does most surely teach us that the believer is washed as white as snow; that he is accepted in the Beloved-complete in Christ-perfectly forgiven and perfectly justified through the death and resurrection of Christ; that he can never come into judgement, but is passed from death unto life; that he is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit-not in the old creation, but in the new-not a member of the first Adam, but of the last; that he is dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to the law, because Christ has died, and the believer has died in Him. All this is largely unfolded and constantly insisted upon by the inspired writers. Scores of passages might easily be quoted in proof, were it needful.

But then there is another aspect of the Christian which must be taken into account. He is not in the flesh as to the ground of his standing, but he is in the body as to the fact of his condition. He is in Christ as to his standing, but he is also in the world as to the fact of his existence. He is surrounded by all sorts of temptations and difficulties, and he is in himself a poor feeble creature full of infirmities, not sufficient even to think anything as of himself. Nor is this all. Each true Christian is ever ready to acknowledge that in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. He is saved, thank God, and all is eternally settled; but then he has, *as a saved one*, to get through the wilderness; he has to labour to enter into God's rest, and here it is that priesthood comes in. The object of priesthood is not to complete the work of atonement, inasmuch as that work is as perfect as the One who accomplished it. But we have to be carried through the wilderness and brought into the rest that remains for the people of God, and for this end we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. His sympathy and succour are ours, and we could not get on for one

moment without them. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and by His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary He sustains us day by day in the full credit and value of His atoning work. He lifts us up when we fall, restores us when we wander, repairs the link of communion when snapped by our carelessness. In a word, He appears in the presence of God for us, and there carries on an uninterrupted service on our behalf, in virtue of which we are maintained in the integrity of the relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us.

Thus much as to the atonement and advocacy. It only remains for us to treat of the advent. We wish specially to remind the reader that in treating of the death of Christ we have left wholly untouched one grand point therein, namely, our death in Him. This we may, if God permit, go into on another occasion. It is immensely important as the power of deliverance from indwelling sin as well as from this present evil world and from the law. There are many who merely look to the death of Christ for pardon and justification, but they do not see the precious and emancipating truth of their having died in Him and their deliverance in consequence from the power of sin in them. This latter is the secret of victory over self and the world, and of deliverance from every form of legality and mere fleshly pietism.

Thus we have glanced at two of the weighty subjects presented to us in the closing verses of Heb. 9, namely, first, the precious atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ in its two aspects; and secondly, His all-prevailing advocacy at God's right hand for us. It only remains for us to consider in the third place HIS ADVENT, which is here presented to us in immediate connection with those great foundation truths which have already engaged our attention, and which, moreover, are held and prized by all true Christians. Is it true that Christ hath appeared in this world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? and to bear the sins of the many who though grace put their trust in Him? Is it true that He has passed into the heavens and taken His seat on the throne of God, there to appear for us? Yes, blessed be God, these are grand, vital and fundamental verities of the Christian faith. Well, then, it is equally true that He shall appear again, apart from the question of sin, unto salvation. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the

judgement: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time apart from sin unto salvation."

Here, then, we have the matter most definitely stated. As truly as Christ hath appeared on this earth-as truly as He lay in the manger of Bethlehem-was baptised in the waters of Jordan-was anointed with the Holy Ghost-was tempted of the devil in the wilderness-went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil-groaned, and wept, and prayed in Gethsemane-hung upon Calvary's accursed tree, and died, the Just for the unjust-was laid in the dark, silent tomb-rose victorious on the third day-ascended into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for His people-*so* truly shall He appear ere long in the clouds of Heaven to receive His people to Himself. If we refuse one we must refuse all. If we question one we must question all. If we are unsettled as to one we must be unsettled as to all, inasmuch as all rest upon precisely the same basis, namely, the Holy Scriptures. How do I know that Jesus *hath* appeared? Because Scripture tells me so. How do I know that He *doth* appear? Because Scripture tells me so. How do I know that He *shall* appear? Because Scripture tells me so.

In a word, then, the doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of the Advocacy, and the doctrine of the Advent all rest on one and the same irrefragable foundation, namely, the simple declaration of the Word of God, so that if we receive one we must receive all.

How is it then that while the Church of God in all ages has held and prized the doctrines of atonement and advocacy, she has practically lost sight of the doctrine of the advent? How comes it to pass that while the first two are regarded as essential, the last is deemed non-essential? Nay, we may go further and say, how is it that while a man who does not hold the first two is regarded as a heretic, and justly so, yet the man who holds the last is by many regarded as hardly sound in the faith or sane in intellect?

What answer can we give to these questions? Alas! the Church has ceased to look for her Lord. Atonement and advocacy are held because they concern us; but the advent has been virtually let slip, although it so deeply concerns Him. It is due to the One who

suffered and died on this earth that He should reign; to the One who wore a crown of thorns that He should wear a crown of glory; to the One who humbled Himself to the very dust of death that He should be exalted and that every knee should yet bow before Him.

Most surely this is so; and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will see to it and bring it to pass in His own appointed time. "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110; Heb. 1). The moment is rapidly approaching when that blessed One who is now hidden from the eyes of men shall appear in glory. Every eye shall see Him. As surely as He hung upon the cross and is now seated on the throne, so surely shall He appear in glory.

Seeing these things are so, art thou among the number of "those that look for Him"? This is a solemn question. There are those who look for Him and there are those who do not. Now it is to the former that He shall appear unto salvation. He will come and receive His people unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also (John 14). These are His own loving words, spoken at the moment of His departure for the solace and comfort of His sorrowing disciples. He counted on their being troubled at the thought of His leaving them, and He seeks to comfort them by the assurance of His coming back. He does not say, Let not your hearts be troubled, for you shall soon follow Me. No; but "I will come again."

This is the proper hope of the Christian. Christ is coming. Are we ready? Are we looking for Him? Do we miss Him? Do we mourn His absence? It is impossible that we can be in the true attitude of waiting for Him if we do not feel His absence. He is coming. He may be here to night. Ere another sun arises the voice of the archangel and the blast of the trumpet may be heard in the air. And what then? Why then the sleeping saints-all who have departed in the faith of Christ-all the redeemed of the Lord whose ashes repose in the graveyards and cemeteries around us or in the mighty depths of the ocean-all these shall rise. The living saints shall be changed in a moment, and all shall ascend up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15: 51-54; 1 Thess. 4: 13-1 Thess. 5: 11).

But what of the unconverted-the unbelieving-the unrepentant-the unprepared? What of all such? Ah! this is a question of awful solemnity. It makes the heart sink to reflect upon the case of those who are still in their sins-of those who have turned a deaf ear to all the entreaties and all the warnings which God in His long-suffering mercy has sent to them from week to week and year to year-of those who have sat under the sound of the gospel from their earliest days, and who have become, as we say, gospel-hardened. How dreadful will be the condition of all such when the Lord comes to receive His own! They shall be left behind to fall under the deep and dark delusion which God will assuredly send upon all who have heard and rejected the gospel. And what then? What is to follow this deep and dark delusion? The deeper and darker damnation of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Oh! shall we not sound a note of alarm in the ears of our fellow-sinners? Shall we not more earnestly and solemnly warn them to flee from the wrath to come? Shall we not seek by word and deed-by the double testimony of the lips and the life-to set before them the weighty fact that "the Lord is at hand"? May we feel it more deeply, and then we shall exhibit it more faithfully. There is immense moral power in the truth of the Lord's coming if it be really held in the heart and not merely in the head. If Christians only lived in the habitual expectation of the advent it would tell amazingly upon the unconverted around them. May the Holy Ghost revive in the hearts of all God's people the blessed hope of their Lord's return, that they may be as men that wait for their Lord, that when He cometh and knocketh they may open unto Him immediately!

Hebrews 10; Hebrews 13:9-16

Inside the Veil, Outside the Camp.

The power of our path — of our walk in this world, is the understanding, through the Holy Ghost, of our identification with Christ in all our ways, and our being set in the world to manifest Him, not merely to know that we have salvation, and the purging of our consciences through His most precious blood. The testimony of a Christian bears this character, he is treading in the footsteps of Christ. "To me, to live is Christ:" again, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." That puts each of us in the place of responsibility as to our ways, our habits, our feelings, and objects. Are we realizing the responsibility of living Christ? That is really what the Church of God is set in the world for — to be the expression of Christ in His absence. A Christian's conscience often satisfies itself with handing to the unconverted man the Bible, so that he may read what Christ was; but this is not the object for which Christ has left us here. — "*Ye* are the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Are we such an epistle as persons can read? It is not a person's coming to me, and saying, What is your creed? What views do you hold? and the like. If I am not an expression of the ways and feelings of Christ, I am a stumbling-block, rather than otherwise. The Christian should be the living, breathing expression of Christ — of the principles, features, graces, of the character of Christ. Alas! the whole of Christianity is often made to consist in a set of opinions: one gets his place and is characterized by what opinions he holds. We are called upon necessarily to live the Christ in whom we believe; we are one with Him, and are called to show forth what He is. But the whole power, by which I am to act and to show that, is the understanding that I am one with Him.

There are two great stages of Christ's path, and of the believer's, as identified with Him, presented to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The first ends (Heb. 10) where the soul is set in "the holiest." Up to that the Holy Ghost is conducting us along, step by step; there He sets us down in this blessed place, "having boldness to enter into the

holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."

The power of intelligent devotedness is the understanding of the perfect purging of our consciences. Many do not understand this; they are aiming at getting it, and that is a complete reversing of God's order. I have a purged conscience; I go on, not to obtain it, but because I have it. How do I get it? Not by anything that I have done, by my frames or feelings, as a matter of attainment or experience; the Holy Ghost teaches us that it is by the blood of Jesus

He shows the glory of the person of Christ, as contrasted with angels and with Moses; that of His priesthood as contrasted with Aaron's; that of His sacrifice, as contrasted with the sacrifices under the law. And what is the result? We have a purged conscience. He has set us down *within the veil*. It is not what one Christian has, and what another is struggling after, but the common platform of all — we *all* have a purged conscience. Some suppose that the blood of Christ has put away our sins before conversion; and then, as to what becomes of those after, they are met by the priesthood of Christ; but this is not what He says: it is by the blood of Christ; we are within the holiest with a perfectly-purged conscience, with "no more conscience of sins." It is just worthy of the sacrifice of Christ to put me in possession of this, and nothing short of it; *all* my sins, not some of them, blotted out. There, where the High Priest could go in once every year, and only then, the simplest believer is set down.

When one comes to deal closely with souls, one discovers what doubts, clouds, fears, and anxieties, have possession of and distress them. If the blood of Christ does anything for us, it sets us there without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near," etc. There is no difference here between apostle and others; the apostle Paul and the thief on the cross: in other words, all alike have a common place within the veil.

The priesthood of Christ comes in to maintain me practically where the blood of Christ has set me. As in the expression in the Epistle of John, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous [Jesus Christ is at God's right hand

on all principles of righteousness], and He is the propitiation [the mercy-seat] for our sins." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is a much easier thing for a child to ask for pardon for some fault than to confess it. We may be asking for pardon for any special sin, and we have no Scripture warrant to know that it is put away; but when we confess it, it is a matter of *faith* to know that it is put away. I am speaking now of a believer: were it the question of an unconverted person, the blood of Christ meets that. God is "faithful and just (not gracious and merciful merely), to forgive us our sins," etc. The moment I have judged myself about it, I am entitled to know that it is gone.

What a very wondrous place to set the believer in at the very outset of his course of discipleship! — washed from his sins, his conscience purged, set down in the unclouded sense of the light of God's own countenance! But what to do? to rest there? No; that is the foundation on which the superstructure of practical devotedness is based. Legalism and antinomianism are alike met. What does the system of legalism say? You must work yourself up into this place of acceptance. The gospel says, Christ has put me there. I never could get there; the law has proved that. When God gave the law, what was He doing? "You shall do this," "You shall not do that," brought out what man's heart was; it was impossible he could do what God was telling him he ought to do, and impossible he should not be what God was telling him not to be: — "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." I can never, by works of law, get into the holiest of all. I am put there as the result of what Christ has accomplished for me on the cross; and this is stated at the very outset of the epistle: "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high " (Heb. 1: 3). Why does it say "sat down"? To evidence the completion of the work. Aaron never sat down; there was no seat prepared for the priest, either in the tabernacle or the temple.

What does antinomianism lead men to say? "I have it, I possess it all in Christ," and there it ends. But no! the gospel puts me there, to run the blessed race that is set before me, in ardent, earnest breathing of the soul to become like Christ.

If the first division sets me down *within the holiest*, the second places me *without the camp*. I find Christ, as it regards my conscience, "inside the veil." I find Christ, as it regards my heart, "outside the camp."

It does not become us to take only the comfort which flows from our knowing Christ to be within the veil — the comfort His sacrifice gives us, I must seek practical identification with Him outside the camp. Christ within the veil tranquillizes my conscience. Christ outside the camp quickens, energizes my soul to run more devotedly the race set before me. "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought *into the sanctuary* by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, *unto Him without the camp*, bearing His reproach" (ver. 11-13). No two points are morally more remote than *inside the veil* and *outside the camp*, and yet they are brought together here. Inside the veil was the place where the shekinah of God's glory dwelt; outside the camp the place where the sin-offering was burned — no place gives such an idea of distance from God as that. It is blessed to know that the Holy Ghost presents to me Jesus filling up all that is between these two points. I have nothing to do whatever with the camp. The camp was the place of ostensible profession (in type, the camp of Israel; in antitype, the city of Jerusalem). Why did Christ suffer without the gate? In order to show the setting aside of the mere machinery of Israel's outward profession.

We may be clear as to the work of Christ being done for us (and God forbid there should be a cloud cast across the blessedness of that), knowing the conscience to be made perfect; but is tranquility of conscience all I want? is there no responsibility? is Christ's voice from within the veil all? has He no voice outside the camp? It will be found that, after all, the joy, peace, liberty, flowing from our hearing Christ's voice inside the veil, is very much dependent on our listening to His voice outside the camp. Those who know most of suffering with Him, and bearing His reproach, will know most of the blessedness of His place within the veil. Our conduct, our ways, our path through the earth, must be tested by Christ. — "Would Christ be

there? would Christ do this?" The Holy Ghost must be grieved if the saint pursues a course contrary to that which Christ would have pursued; and then the soul must be lean. How can a grieved Spirit testify of Christ — how can He give the soul the comfort and joy and peace of His testimony to Him? How can I be enjoying Christ if I am not walking in company with Him? We know that we cannot enjoy the company of a person unless we are where that person is — where then is Christ? "Outside the camp." — "Let us go forth, therefore, unto *Him* without the camp, bearing *His* reproach." This is not to go forth to men, or to opinions, to a church, or to a creed, but to Christ Himself. We are not of the world — why? Because Christ is not of the world; the measure of our separation from the world is the measure of Christ's separation. "For here have we no continuing city;" do our hearts seek one? — some set of circumstances or the like, a something on which to lean? Are we saying, as it were, "Oh do leave me something"? like Lot pleading for Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" do not take it all away, "is it not a little one; and my soul shall live!" Lot's was a heart going out after a little of the world still. When the heart is filled with Christ it can give up the world, there is no difficulty in doing it then. The mere saying, "Give up this," or "give up that," to one loving the world, will be of no avail; what I have to do is to seek to minister to that soul more of Christ.

I am outside the camp, I am seeking a city that is to come, I am waiting for Him who is to come. In this condition, of dislodgement from the world and from its system, I find myself in two positions — one towards God, and the other towards man. The first, "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (ver. 15). The second, the lovely development of the spirit of active benevolence of the next verse, "But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (ver. 16).

I am within the veil with Christ, — outside the camp in the world, "bearing His reproach;" and, whilst thus delivered from the profession around me, that is not of Him, I am engaged in worship and doing good to all.

In regard to my hope, it is not, as people say, the "holding the doctrine of the second advent," but "waiting for God's Son from

heaven." This is not a dead, dry doctrine. If we are really waiting for God's Son from heaven, we shall be sitting loose to the world.

I *have* Christ for my soul's need, and I am only "waiting for God's Son from heaven," for Christ to come from heaven to take His Church unto Himself, that where He is we may be also, and that may be this night. I am not looking for antichrist, for signs, for movements amongst the nations, but for this one holy, happy thing, I am waiting for God's Son from heaven. Oh do not let us be inconsistent, do not let us contradict that — seeking to grasp Christ with one hand, and hold fast the world with the other. If we know our position "within the veil," we must know our position "outside the camp," reproached, it may be, scorned, hated, suspected, of all who are not outside, but in the joy of fellowship with Him. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also then shall appear with Him in glory."

Hebrews 13:9-14

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Hebrews 13:9-14.

The Christian: His position and his work.

What is the true position of a Christian? and what has he got to do? are questions of the very deepest practical importance. It is assumed, of course, that he has eternal life: without this one cannot be a Christian at all. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." This is the common portion of all believers. It is not a matter of attainment, a matter of progress, a thing which some Christians have and others have not. It belongs to the very feeblest babe in the family of God, as well as to the most matured and experienced servant of Christ. All are possessed of eternal life, and can never, by any possibility, lose it.

But our present theme is not life, but position and work; and in briefly handling it, we shall ask the reader to turn for a moment to a passage in Hebrews 13. Perhaps we cannot do better than quote it for him. There is nothing like the plain and solid word of holy scripture.

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought

into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Verse 9-14.

Here, then, we have one grand aspect of the Christian's position. It is defined by the position of his Lord. This makes it divinely simple; and, we may add, divinely settled. The Christian is identified with Christ. Amazing fact "As he is so are we in this world." It is not said, "As he is, so shall we be in the world to come." No; this would not come up to the divine idea. It is, "so are we *in this world*." The position of Christ defines the position of the Christian.

But this glorious fact tells in a double way; it tells upon the Christian's place before God; and it tells on his place as regards this present world. It is upon the latter that Hebrews 13. instructs us so blessedly, and it is that which is now more especially before us.

Jesus suffered without the gate. This fact is the basis on which the apostle grounds his exhortation to the Hebrew believers to go forth without the camp. The cross of Christ closed his connection with the camp of Judaism; and all who desire to follow Him must go outside to where He is. The final breach with Israel is presented, morally, in the death of Christ; doctrinally, in the Epistle to the Hebrews; historically, in the destruction of Jerusalem. In the judgment of faith, Jerusalem was as thoroughly rejected when the Messiah was nailed to the cross, as it was when the army of Titus left it a smouldering ruin. The instincts of the divine nature, and the inspired teachings of scripture, go before the actual facts of history.

"Jesus suffered without the gate." For what end? "That he might sanctify [or set apart] the people with his own blood." What follows? What is the necessary practical result? "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

But what is "the camp?" Primarily, Judaism; but, most unquestionably, it has a moral application to every organized system of religion under the sun. If that system of ordinances and ceremonies which God Himself had set up — if Judaism, with its

imposing ritual, its splendid temple, its priesthood and its sacrifices, has been found fault with, condemned, and set aside, what shall be said of any or all of those organizations framed by a human hand? If our Lord Christ is outside of that, how much more is He outside of these?

Yes, Christian reader, we may rest assured that the outside place, the place of rejection and reproach is that to which we are called, if indeed we would know aught of true fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark the words "Let us go forth." Will any Christian say, "No; I cannot go forth. My place is inside the camp. I must work there?" If so, then, your place is clearly not with Jesus, for He is as surely outside the camp as He is on the throne of God. If your sphere of work lies inside the camp, when your Master tells you to go forth, what shall we say for your work? Can it be worth much? Can it have your Lord's approving smile? It may exhibit His overruling hand, and illustrate His sovereign goodness; but can it possibly have His unqualified approval while carried on in a sphere from which He peremptorily commands you to go forth?

The all-important thing for every true servant is to be found exactly where his Master would have him. The question is not, "Am I doing a great deal of work? but am I pleasing my Master? I may seem to be doing wonders in the way of work; my name may be heralded to the ends of the earth, as a most laborious, devoted, and successful workman; and, all the while, I may be in an utterly false position, indulging my own unbroken will, pleasing myself, and seeking some personal end or object.

All this is very solemn indeed, and demands the consideration of all who really desire to be found in the current of God's thoughts. We live in a day of much wilfulness. The commandments of Christ do not govern us. We think for ourselves, in place of submitting ourselves absolutely to the authority of the word. When our Lord tells us to go forth without the camp, we, in stead of yielding a ready obedience, begin to reason at to the results which we can reach by remaining within. Scripture seems to have little or no power over our souls. We do not aim at simply pleasing Christ. Provided we can make great show of work, we think all is right. We are more occupied with results which, after all, may only tend to magnify

ourselves, than with the earnest purpose to do what is agreeable to the mind of Christ.

But are we to be idle? Is there nothing for us to do in the outside place to which we are called? Is Christian life to be made up of a series of negations? Is there nothing positive? Let Hebrews 13 furnish the clear and forcible answer to all these inquiries. We shall find it quite as distinct in reference to our work as it is in reference to our *position*.

What, then, have we got to do? Two things; and these two in their comprehensive range take in the whole of a Christian's life in its two grand aspects. They give us the inner and the outer life of the true believer. In the first place, we read, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise of God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

Is not this something? Have we not here a very elevated character of work? Yes, verily; the most elevated that can possibly engage the energies of our renewed being. It is our privilege to be occupied, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight, in presenting the sacrifice of praise to God — a sacrifice which, He assures us, is ever most acceptable to Him. "Whoso offereth praise," He says, "glorifieth me."

Let us carefully note this. Praise is to be the primary and continual occupation of the believer. We, in our fancied wisdom, would put work in the first place. We are disposed to attach chief importance to bustling activity. We have such an overweening sense of the value of doing, that we lose sight of the place which worship occupies in the thoughts of God.

Again, there are some who vainly imagine that they can please God by punishing their bodies. They think that He delights in their vigils, fastings, floggings, and flagellations. Miserable, soul-destroying, God dishonouring delusion! Will not those who harbour it and act upon it bend their ears and their hearts to those gracious words which we have just penned, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me?" True, it is, that those words are immediately followed by that grand practical statement, is And to him that ordereth his

conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God." But still, here, as every where, the highest place is assigned to praise, not to work. And, most assuredly, no man can be said to be ordering his conversation aright who abuses his body and renders it unfit to be the vessel or instrument by which he can serve God.

No, reader, if we really desire to please God, to gratify His heart and to glorify His name, we shall give our heart's attention to Hebrews 13:15, and seek to offer the sacrifice of praise, *continually*. Yes, "continually." Not merely now and then, when all goes on smoothly and pleasantly. Come what may, it is our high and holy privilege to offer the sacrifice of praise to God.

And oh! how delightful it is to cultivate a spirit of praise and thankfulness! To be always ready to cry, "Hallelujah" It does so glorify God when His people live in an atmosphere of praise. It imparts a heavenly tone to their character, and speaks more powerfully to the hearts of those around them than if they were preaching to them from morning till night. A Christian should always be happy, always bright with the spirit of praise, always reflecting back upon this dark world the blessed beams of His Father's countenance.

Thus it should ever be. Nothing is so unworthy of a Christian as a fretful spirit, a gloomy temper, a sour morose-looking face. And not only is it unworthy of a Christian but it is dishonouring to God, and it causes the enemies of truth to speak reproachfully. No doubt, tempers and dispositions vary; and much allowance must be made in cases of weak bodily health. It is not easy to look pleasant when the body is racked with gout, neuralgia, or rheumatism; and, farther, we should be very far indeed from commending anything like levity or the everlasting smile of mere unsubdued nature.

But scripture is clear and explicit. It tells us to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." how simple "*The fruit of lips!*" Is this all? Yes; this is what our God delights in. It is His joy to be surrounded with the praises of hearts filled to overflowing with His abounding goodness. Thus it will be throughout eternity, in that bright home of love and glory to which we are so rapidly hastening.

And let the reader specially note the words, "*By Him.*" We are to offer our sacrifice of praise by the hand of our Great High Priest, who is ever in the presence of God for us. This is most consolatory and assuring to our hearts. Jesus presents our sacrifice of praise to God. It must therefore be ever acceptable. We may safely believe that we should not know our sacrifice if we could see it laid on the altar by the priestly hand of the Great Minister of the sanctuary. It goes up to God, not as it proceeds from us, but as it is presented by Him. Divested of all the imperfection and failure attaching to us, it ascends to God in all the fragrance and acceptance belonging to Him. The feeblest note of praise, the simple "Thank God" is perfumed with the incense of Christ's infinite preciousness. This is unspeakably precious: and it should greatly encourage us to cultivate a spirit of praise. We should be "continually" praising and blessing God. A murmuring or fretful word should never cross the lips of one who has Christ for his portion, and who stands identified with that blessed One in His position and His destiny.

But we must draw this paper to a close by a rapid glance at the other side of the Christian's work. If it is our privilege to be continually praising and blessing God, it is also our privilege to be doing good to man. "But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." We are passing through a world of misery, of sin and death and sorrow. We are surrounded by broken hearts and crushed spirits, if we would only look them out.

Yes; this is the point; *if we would only look them out.* It is easy for us to close our eyes to such things, to turn away from — to "forget" that there are — such things always within reach of us. We can sit in our easy chair, and speculate about truth, doctrines, and the letter of scripture; we can discuss the theories of Christianity, and split hairs about prophecy and dispensational truth, and, all the while, be shamefully failing in the discharge of our grand responsibility as Christians. We are in imminent danger of forgetting that Christianity is a living reality. It is not a set of dogmas, a number of principles strung together on a thread of systematized divinity, which unconverted people can have at their fingers' ends. Neither is it a set of ordinances to be gone through, in dreary

formality, by lifeless, heartless professors. No; it is life — life eternal — life implanted by the Holy Ghost, and expressing itself in those two lovely forms on which we have been dwelling, namely, praise to God and doing good to man. Such was the life of Jesus when He trod this earth of ours. He lived in the atmosphere of praise; and He went about doing good.

And He is our life, and He is our model on which the life is to be formed. The Christian should be the living expression of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not a mere question of leading what is called a religious life, which very often resolves itself into a tiresome round of duties which neither yield "praise" to God nor one atom of "good" to man. There must be *life*, or it is all perfectly worthless. "The kingdom of God is not meat or drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." Romans 14:17, 18.

Beloved Christian reader, let us earnestly apply our hearts to the consideration of these great practical truths. Let us seek to be Christians not merely in name but in reality. Let us not be distinguished as the mere vendors of peculiar "*views*." Oh! how worthless are views! How utterly profitless is discussion! How wearisome are theological hair-splittings! Let us have life, light, and love. These are heavenly, eternal, divine. All else is vanity. How we do long for reality in this world of sham — for deep thinkers and earnest workers in this day of shallow talkers!

NOTE. — The reader will find it profitable to compare Hebrews 13:13-16 with 1 Peter 2:4-9. "Let us go forth therefore unto him," says Paul. "To whom coming," says Peter. Then we have "The holy priesthood" offering up spiritual sacrifices of praise. And "The royal priesthood" doing good and communicating — "showing forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." The two scriptures give us a magnificent view of fundamental, devotional, and practical Christianity.

PART 2.

We must ask the reader to open his Bible and read Hebrews 10:7-24. In it he will find a very deep and marvellous view of the Christian's position and his work. The inspired writer gives us, as it were, three solid pillars on which the grand edifice of Christianity rests. These are, first, *the will of God*; secondly, *the work of Christ*; and, thirdly, *the witness of the Holy Ghost*, in scripture. If these grand realities be laid hold of in simple faith, the soul must have settled peace. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that no power of earth or hell, men or devils, can ever disturb the peace which is founded upon Hebrews 10:7-17.

Let us then, in the first place, dwell, for a few moments, on the manner in which the apostle unfolds, in this magnificent passage,

THE WILL OF GOD.

In the opening of the chapter, we are instructed as to the utter inadequacy of the sacrifices under the law. They could never make the conscience perfect — they could never accomplish the will of God — never fulfil the gracious desire and purpose of His heart. "The law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because *the worshippers once purged* should have had *no more conscience of sins.*"

Let the reader carefully note this. "The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." He does not say — "No more *consciousness of sin.*" There is an immense difference between these two things; and yet, it is to be feared, they are often confounded. The Christian has, alas! the consciousness of *sin in him*, but he ought to have no conscience of *sins on him*, inasmuch as he is purged once and for ever, by the precious blood of Christ.

Some of the Lord's people have a habit of speaking of their continual need of applying to the blood of Christ, which, to say the least of it, is by no means intelligent, or in accordance with the accurate teaching of holy scripture. It seems like humility; but, we may rest assured, true humility can only be found in connection with

the full, clear, settled apprehension of the truth of God, and as to His gracious will concerning us. If it be His will, that we should have "no more conscience of sins," it cannot be true humility, on our part, to go on, from day to day, and year to year, with the burden of sins upon us. And, further, if it be true that Christ has borne our sins and put them away, for ever — if He has offered one perfect sacrifice for sins, ought we not to know, assuredly, that we are perfectly pardoned and perfectly purged?

Is it — can it be, true humility to reduce the blood of Christ to the level of the blood of bulls and of goats? But this is what is virtually done, though, no doubt, unwittingly, by all who speak of applying continually to the blood of Christ. One reason why God found fault with the sacrifices under the law was, as the apostle tells us, "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." This, blessed be His name, was not according to His mind. He desired that every trace of guilt and every remembrance of it should be blotted out, once and for ever; and hence it cannot be His will that His people should be continually bowed down under the terrible burden of unforgiven sin. It is contrary to His will; it is subversive of their peace, and derogatory to the glory of Christ and the efficacy of His one sacrifice.

One grand point of the inspired argument, in Hebrews 10, is to show that the continual remembrance of sins and the continual repetition of the sacrifice go together; and therefore, if Christians now are to have the burden of sins constantly on the heart and conscience, it follows that Christ should be offered again and again, which were a blasphemy. His work is done, and hence our burden is gone — gone for ever.

"It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the

first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified [or set apart] by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once*."

Here we are conducted, in the most distinct and forcible manner, to the eternal source of the whole matter, namely, the will of God — the purpose and counsel formed in the divine mind, before the foundation of the world, before any creature was formed, before sin or Satan existed. It was the will of God, from all eternity, that the Son should, in due time, come forth and do a work which was to be the foundation of the divine glory and of all the counsels and purposes of the Trinity.

It would be a very grave error indeed to suppose that redemption was an after thought with God. He had not, blessed be His holy name, to sit down and plan what He would do, when sin entered. It was all settled beforehand. The enemy, no doubt, imagined that he was gaining a wonderful victory when he meddled with man in the garden of Eden. In point of fact, he was only giving occasion for the display of God's eternal counsels in connection with the work of the Son. There was no basis for those counsels, no sphere for their display in the fields of creation. It was the meddling of Satan — the entrance of sin — the ruin of man that opened a platform on which a Saviour-God might display the riches of His grace, the glories of His salvation, the attributes of His nature, to all created intelligences.

There is great depth and power in those words of the eternal Son, "In the volume of the book it is written of me." To what "volume" does He here refer? Is it to Old Testament scripture? Surely not; the apostle is quoting from the Old Testament. What then is the volume? It is nothing less than the roll of God's eternal counsels in which the "vast plan" was laid, according to which, in the appointed time, the eternal Son was to come forth and appear on the scene, in order to accomplish the divine will, vindicate the divine glory, confound the enemy utterly, put away sin, and save ruined man in a manner which yields a richer harvest of glory to God than ever He could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation.

All this gives immense stability to the soul of the believer. Indeed it is utterly impossible for human language to set forth the

preciousness and blessedness of this line of truth. It is such rich consolation to every pious soul to know that One has appeared in this world to do the will of God — whatever that will might be. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Such was the one undivided purpose and object of that perfect human heart. He never did His own will in anything. He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." It mattered not to Him what that will might involve to Himself, personally. The decree was written down in the eternal volume that He should come and do the divine will; and, all homage to His peerless name! He came and did it perfectly. He could say, "A body hast thou prepared me." "Mine ears hast thou opened."

"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Isaiah 1:3-6.

But this leads us, in the second place, to contemplate

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

It was ever the delight of the heart of Jesus to do His Father's will and finish His work. From the manger at Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, the one grand object that swayed His devoted heart was the accomplishment of the will of God. He perfectly glorified God, in all things. This, blessed be God, perfectly secures our full and everlasting salvation, as the apostle, in this passage, so distinctly states. "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once."

Here our souls may rest, beloved reader, in sweetest peace and unclouded certainty. It was the will of God that we should be set apart to Himself, according to all the love of His heart, and all the claims of His throne; and our Lord Christ, in due time, in pursuance of the everlasting purpose as set forth "in the volume of the book,"

came forth from the glory which He had with the Father, before all worlds, to do the work which forms the imperishable basis of all the divine counsels and of our eternal salvation.

And — for ever be His name adored — He has finished His work. He has perfectly glorified God in the midst of the scene in which He had been so dishonoured. At all cost He vindicated Him and made good His every claim. He magnified the law and made it honourable. He vanquished every foe, removed every obstacle, swept away every barrier, bore the judgment and wrath of a sin-hating God, destroyed death and him that had the power of it, extracted its sting, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, He gloriously accomplished all that was written in the volume of the book concerning Him; and now we see Him crowned with glory and honour, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

He travelled from the throne to the dust of death, in order to accomplish the will of God, and having done so, He has gone back to the throne, in a new character and on a new footing. His pathway from the throne to the cross was marked by the footprints of divine and everlasting love; and His pathway from the cross back to the throne is sprinkled by His atoning blood. He came from heaven to earth to do the will of God, and, having done it, He returned to heaven again, thus opening up for us "a new and living way" by which we draw nigh to God, in holy boldness and liberty, as purged worshippers.

All is done. Every question is settled. Every barrier is removed. The veil is rent. That mysterious curtain which, for ages and generations, had shut God in from man, and shut man out from God, was rent in twain, from top to bottom, by the precious death of Christ; and now we can look right up into the opened heavens and see on the throne the man who bore our sins, in His own body, on the tree. A seated Christ tells out, in the ear of faith, the sweet emancipating tale that all that had to be done is done — done for ever — done for God — done for us. Yes; all is settled, now, and God can, in perfect righteousness, indulge the love of His heart, in blotting out all our sins and bringing us nigh unto Himself in all the acceptance of the One who sits beside Him on the throne.

And let the reader carefully note the striking and beautiful way in which the apostle contrasts *a seated Christ in heaven with the standing priest on earth*. "Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever [*eis to dienekes* — in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever [in perpetuity] them that are sanctified."

This is uncommonly fine. The priest, under the Levitical economy, could never sit down, for the obvious reason that his work was never done. There was no seat provided in the temple or in the tabernacle. There is remarkable force and significance in the manner in which the inspired writer puts this. "*Every priest*" — "standeth daily" — "offering oftentimes" — "the same sacrifices" — "which can never take away sins." No human language could possibly set forth, more graphically, the dreary monotony and utter inefficacy of the Levitical ceremonial. How strange that, in the face of such a passage of holy scripture, Christendom should have set up a human priesthood, with its daily sacrifice! — a priesthood, moreover, not belonging to the tribe of Levi, not springing from the house of Aaron, and therefore having no sort of divine title or sanction. And, then as to the sacrifice, it is, according to their own admission, a sacrifice without blood, and, therefore, a sacrifice without remission, for, "Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Hebrews 9:22.

Hence, Christendom's priesthood is a daring usurpation, and her sacrifice a worthless vanity — a positive lie — a mischievous delusion. The priests of whom the apostle speaks in Hebrews 10. were priests of the tribe of Levi and of the house of Aaron — the only house, the only tribe ever recognised of God as having any title to assume the office and work of a priest upon earth. And, further, the sacrifices which the Aaronic priests offered were appointed by God, for the time being; but they never gave Him any pleasure, inasmuch as they could never take away sins; and they have been for ever abolished.

Now, in view of all this, what shall we say of Christendom's priests and Christendom's sacrifices? What will a righteous Judge say to them? We cannot attempt to dwell upon such an awful theme. We can merely say, alas! alas! for the poor souls that are deluded and ruined by such antichristian absurdities. May God in His mercy deliver them and lead them to rest in the one offering of Jesus Christ — that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. May many be led to see that a repeated sacrifice and a seated Christ are in positive antagonism.

If the sacrifice must be repeated, Christ has no right to His seat and to His crown — God pardon the very penning of the words! If Christ has a divine right to His seat and to His crown, then to repeat a sacrifice is simply a blasphemy against His cross, His name, His glory. To repeat, in any way, or under any form whatsoever, the sacrifice is to deny the efficacy of Christ's one offering, and to rob the soul of anything like an approach to the knowledge of remission of sins. A repeated sacrifice and perfect remission are an absolute contradiction in terms.

But we must turn, for a moment, to the third grand point in our subject, namely,

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

This is of the deepest possible moment for the reader to understand. It gives great completeness to the subject. How are we to know that Christ has, by His work on the cross, absolutely and divinely accomplished the will of God? Simply by the witness of the Holy Ghost in scripture. This is the third pillar on which the Christian's position rests, and it is as thoroughly divine and, therefore, as thoroughly independent of man as the other two. It is very evident that man had nothing to do with the eternal counsels of the Trinity — nothing to do with the glorious work accomplished on the cross. All this is clear; and it is equally clear that man has nothing to do with the authority on which our souls receive the joyful news as to the *will of God*, and *the work of Christ*, inasmuch as it is nothing less than the *witness of the Holy Ghost*.

We cannot be too simple as to this. It is not, by any means, a question of our feelings, our frames, our evidences, or our experiences — things interesting enough in their right place. We must receive the truth solely and simply on the authority of that august Witness who speaks to us in holy scripture. Thus we read, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Here, then, we have fully before us the solid foundation of the Christian's position and the Christian's peace. It is all of God, from first to last. The *will*, the *work*, and the *witness* are all divine. The Lord be praised for this glorious fact! What should we do, what would become of us, were it otherwise? In this day of confusion, when souls are tossed about by every wind of doctrine — when the beloved sheep of Christ are driven hither and thither, in bewilderment and perplexity — when ritualism with its ignorant absurdities, and rationalism with its impudent blasphemies, and spiritualism with its horrible traffic with demons, are threatening the very foundations of our faith, how important it is for Christians to know what those foundations really are, and that they should be consciously resting thereon!

PART 3.

We would recall for a moment to the reader's attention the third point in our subject, namely, "The witness of the Holy Ghost in scripture." We feel it to be of too much importance to be dismissed with such a cursory glance as we were able to give it at the close of our last paper.

It is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of settled peace that the heart should rest *solely* on the authority of holy scripture. Nothing else will stand. Inward evidences, spiritual experiences, comfortable frames, happy feelings, are all very good, very valuable, and very desirable; indeed we cannot prize them too highly in their right place. But, most assuredly, their right place is not at the foundation of the Christian position. If we look to such things as the

ground of our peace, we shall very soon become clouded, uncertain, and miserable.

The reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this point. He must rest like a little child upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word. It is blessedly true that "He that believeth hath the witness in himself" And again, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." All this is essential to Christianity; but it must, in no wise, be confounded with the witness of the Holy Ghost, as given to us in holy scripture. The Spirit of God never leads any one to build upon His work as the ground of peace, but only upon the finished work of Christ, and the unchangeable word of God; and we may rest assured that the more simply we rest on these the more settled our peace will be, and the clearer our evidences, the brighter our frames, the happier our feelings, the richer our experiences.

In short, the more we look away from self and all its belongings, and rest in Christ, on the clear authority of scripture, the more spiritually minded we shall be; and the inspired apostle tells us that "to be spiritually minded (or, the minding of the Spirit) is life and peace." The best evidence of a spiritual mind is child-like repose in Christ and His word. The clearest proof of an unspiritual mind is self-occupation. It is a poor affair to be trafficking in *our* evidences, or *our* anything. It looks like piety, but it leads away from Christ — away from scripture — away from God; and this is not piety or faith, or Christianity.

We are intensely anxious that the reader should seize, with great distinctness, the importance of committing his whole moral being to the divine authority of the word of God. It will never fail him. All else may go, but "the word of our God shall stand for ever." Heart and flesh may fail. Internal evidences may become clouded; frames, feelings, and experiences may all prove unsatisfactory; but the word of the Lord, the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the clear voice of holy scripture, must ever remain unshaken. "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto us."

Thus much, then, as to the divine and everlasting basis of the Christian's position, as set forth in the tenth chapter of the epistle to

the Hebrews. Let us, now, see what this same scripture tells as of the Christian's work, and of the sphere in which that work is to be carried on.

The Christian is brought into the immediate presence of God, inside the veil, into the holiest of all. This is his proper place, if indeed we are to listen to the voice of scripture. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a *new* and *living* way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; *let us draw near* with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Our God, blessed be His holy name, would have us near unto Himself. He has made out for us a title clear and indisputable in "*the blood of Jesus*." Nothing more is needed. That precious blood stands out before the eye of faith in all its infinite value. In it alone we read our title. It is not the blood and something else, be that something what it may. The blood constitutes our exclusive title. We come before God in all the perfect efficacy of that blood which rent the veil, glorified God as to the question of sin, cancelled our guilt according to all the demands of infinite holiness, silenced, for ever, every accuser, every foe. We enter by a new and living way — a way which can never become old or dead. We enter by the direct invitation, yea, by the distinct command of God. It is positive disobedience not to come. We enter to receive the loving welcome of our Father's heart; it is an insult to that love not to come. He tells us to "come boldly" — to "draw near" with full unclouded confidence — a boldness and confidence commensurate with the love that invites us, the word that commands us, and the blood that fits and entitles us. It is offering dishonour to the eternal Trinity not to draw near.

Reader, is all this, think you, understood and taught in Christendom? Say, do Christendom's creeds, confessions, and liturgical services harmonise with apostolic teaching in Hebrews 10? Alas! alas! they do not. Nay, they are in direct antagonism; and the state of souls, accordingly, is the very reverse of what it ought to be. In place of "draw near" it is keep off. In place of liberty and

boldness, it is legality and bondage. In place of a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, it is a heart bowed down beneath the intolerable burden of unforgiven sin. In place of a great High Priest seated on the throne of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption, we have poor mortal — not to say sinful — priests standing from week to week, all the year round in wearisome routine, actually contradicting, in their barren formalities, the very foundation truths of Christianity.

How truly deplorable is all this! And then the sad condition of the Lord's dear people, the lambs and sheep of that precious flock for which He died! It is this that so deeply affects us. It is of little use attacking Christendom. We quite admit this; but we yearn over the souls of God's people. We long to see them fully delivered from false teaching, from Judaism, legalism, and every other *ism* that robs them of a full salvation and a precious Saviour. We long to reach them with the clear and soul-satisfying teachings of holy scripture, so that they may know and enjoy the things that are freely given to them of God.

We can truly say there is nothing which gives us such painful concern as the state of the Lord's dear people, scattered upon the dark mountains and desolate moors; and one special object for which we desire to live is to be the instrument of leading them into those green pastures and beside those still waters where the true Shepherd and Bishop of their souls longs to feed them, according to all the deep and tender love of His heart. He would have them near Himself, reposing in the light of His blessed countenance.

It is not according to His mind or His loving heart that His people should be kept at a dim cold distance from His presence, in doubt and darkness. Ah! no; reader, His word tells us to draw near — to come boldly — to appropriate freely — to make our very own of all the precious privileges to which a Father's love invites us, and a Saviour's blood entitles us.

"Let us draw near." This is the voice of God to us. Christ has opened up the way. The veil is rent, our place is in the holiest of all, the conscience sprinkled, the body washed, the soul entering intelligently into the atoning value of the blood, and the cleansing,

sanctifying power of the word — its action upon our habits, our ways, our associations, our entire course and character.

All this is of the very utmost practical value to every true lover of holiness — and every true Christian is a lover of holiness. "The body washed with pure water" is a perfectly delightful thought. It sets forth the purifying action of the word of God on the Christian's entire course and character. We must not be content with having the heart sprinkled by the blood; we must also have the body washed with pure water.

And what then? "*Let us hold fast* the profession of our hope (elpidos) without wavering (for he is faithful that promised)." Blessed parenthesis! We may well hold fast, seeing He is faithful. Our hope can never make ashamed. It rests, in holy calmness, upon the infallible faithfulness of Him who cannot lie, whose word is settled for ever in heaven, far above all the changes and chances of this mortal life, above the din of controversy, the strife of tongues, the impudent assaults of infidelity, the ignorant ravings of superstition — far away above all these things, eternally settled in heaven is that word which forms the ground of our "hope."

It well becomes us, therefore, to hold fast. We should not have a single wavering thought — a single question — a single misgiving. For a Christian to doubt is to cast dishonour upon the word of a faithful God. Yet sceptics, and rationalists, and infidels doubt, for they have nothing to believe, nothing to rest upon, no certainty. But for a child of God to doubt, is to call in question the faithfulness of the divine Promiser. We owe it to His glory, to say nothing of our own peace, to "hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." Thus may it be with every beloved member of the household of faith, until that longed-for moment "when faith and hope shall cease, and love abide alone."

But there is one more interesting branch of Christian work at which we must glance ere closing this paper. "*Let us consider one another*, to provoke unto love and to good works."

This is in lovely moral keeping with all that has gone before. The grace of God has so richly met all our personal need — setting

before us such an array of precious privileges — an opened heaven — a rent veil — a crowned and seated Saviour — a great High Priest — a perfectly purged conscience — boldness to enter — a hearty welcome — a faithful Promiser — a sure and certain hope — having all these marvellous blessings in full possession, what have we got to do? To consider ourselves? Nay verily; this were superfluous and sinfully selfish. We could not possibly do so well for ourselves as God has done for us. He has left nothing unsaid, nothing undone, nothing to be desired. Our cup is full and running over. What remains? Simply to "consider one another;" to go out in the activities of holy love, and serve our brethren in every possible way; to be on the look out for opportunities of doing good; to be ready for every good work; to seek in a thousand little ways to make hearts glad; to seek to shed a ray of light on the moral gloom around us; to be a stream of refreshing in this sterile and thirsty wilderness.

These are some of the things that make up a Christian's work. May we attend to them! May we be found provoking one another, not to envy and jealousy, but to love and good works; exhorting one another daily; diligently availing ourselves of the public assembly, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.

May the Holy Spirit engrave upon the heart of both writer and reader these most precious exhortations so thoroughly characteristic of our glorious Christianity — "*Let us draw near*" — "*Let us hold fast*" — "*Let us consider one another!*"

The veil is rent: — our souls draw near

Unto a throne of grace;

The merits of the Lord appear,

They fill the holy place.

His precious blood has spoken there

Before and on the throne:

And His own wounds in heaven declare,
The atoning work is done.

'Tis finish'd! — here our souls have rest
His work can never fail:
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,
We pass within the veil.

Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood,
Before the throne we prostrate fall
And worship Thee, O God!

1 Peter 1:2

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied (1 Peter 1:2).

Sanctification: What is it?

To minister peace and comfort to those who, though truly converted, have not laid hold of a full Christ, and who, as a consequence, are not enjoying the liberty of the gospel, is the object we have in view in considering the important and deeply-interesting subject of sanctification. We believe that very many of those, whose spiritual welfare we desire to promote, suffer materially from defective, or erroneous, ideas on this vital question. Indeed, in some cases, the doctrine of sanctification is so entirely misapprehended as to interfere with the truth of the believer's perfect justification before God.

For example, we have frequently heard persons speak of sanctification as a progressive work, in virtue of which our old nature is to be made gradually better; and, moreover, that until this process has reached its climax, until fallen and corrupt humanity has become completely sanctified, we are not fit for heaven.

Now, so far as this view of the question is concerned, we have only to say that both scripture and the truthful experience of all believers are entirely against it. The word of God never once teaches us that the Holy Ghost has for His object the improvement either gradual or otherwise, of our old nature — that nature which we inherit, by natural birth, from fallen Adam. The inspired apostle expressly declares that, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. 2:14) This one passage is clear and conclusive on the point. If "the natural man" can neither "receive" nor "know" "the things of the Spirit of God," then how can that "natural man" be sanctified by the Holy Ghost? Is it not plain that to speak of "the sanctification of our

nature" is opposed to the direct teaching of 1 Corinthians 2:14? Other passages might be adduced to prove that the design of the Spirit's operations is not to improve or sanctify the flesh, but there is no need to multiply quotations. An utterly ruined thing can never be sanctified. Do what you will with it, and it is ruined; and, most assuredly, the Holy Ghost did not come down to sanctify a ruin, but to lead the ruined one to Jesus. So far from any attempt to sanctify the flesh, we read that "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." (Gal. 5:17) Could the Holy Ghost be represented as carrying on a warfare with that which He is gradually improving and sanctifying? Would not the conflict cease so soon as the process of improvement had reached its climax? But does the believer's conflict ever cease so long as he is in the body?

This leads us to the second objection, to the erroneous theory of the progressive sanctification of our nature, namely, the objection drawn from the truthful experience of all believers. Is the reader a true believer? If so, has he found any improvement in his old nature? Is it a single whit better now than it was when he first started on his Christian course? He may, through grace, be able to subdue it more thoroughly; but it is nothing better. If it be not mortified, it is just as ready to spring up and show itself in all its vileness as ever. "The flesh" in a believer is in no wise better than "the flesh" in an unbeliever. If this be forgotten, it would be hard to calculate the result. If the Christian does not bear in mind that *self* must be judged, he will soon learn, by bitter experience, that his old nature is as bad as ever; and, moreover, that it will be the very same to the end.

It is difficult to conceive how any one who is led to expect a gradual improvement of his nature, can enjoy an hour's peace, inasmuch as he cannot but see, if he only looks at himself in the light of God's holy word, that there is not the smallest change in the true character of his own heart, that his heart is so deceitful and desperately wicked as when he walked in the moral darkness of his unconverted state. his own condition and character are, indeed, greatly changed by the possession of a new, yea, a "divine nature," and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to give effect to its desires;

but the moment the old nature is at work, he finds it as opposed to God as ever. We doubt not but that very much of the gloom and despondency, of which so many complain, may be justly traced to their misapprehension of this important point of sanctification. They are looking for what they can never find. They are seeking for a ground of peace in a sanctified nature instead of in a perfect sacrifice — in a progressive work of holiness instead of in a finished work of atonement. They deem it presumptuous to believe that their sins are forgiven until their evil nature is completely sanctified, and, seeing that this end is not reached, they have no settled assurance of pardon, and are therefore miserable. In a word, they are seeking for "a foundation" totally different from that which Jehovah says He has laid, and, therefore, they have no certainty whatever. The only thing that ever seems to give them a ray of comfort is some apparently successful effort in the struggle for personal sanctity. If they have had a good day — if they are favoured with a season of comfortable communion, if they happen to enjoy a peaceful devotional frame, they are ready to cry out, "Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; I shall never be moved." (Ps. 30)

But, ah! these things furnish a sorry foundation for the soul's peace. They are not Christ; and, until we have Christ, we have *nothing*; but when we get Him we get *all*. The soul that has really got hold of Christ is desirous indeed of holiness; but if intelligent of what Christ is to him, he has done with all thoughts about sanctified nature. He has found his all in Christ, and the paramount desire of his heart is to grow into His likeness. This is true, practical sanctification.

It frequently happens that persons, in speaking of sanctification, mean a right thing, although they do not express themselves according to the teaching of holy scripture. There are many also, who see one side of the truth as to sanctification, but not the other; and, although we should be sorry to make any one an offender for a word, yet it is always most desirable, in speaking of any point of truth, and especially of so vital a point as that of sanctification, to speak according to the divine integrity of the word. We shall, therefore, proceed to quote for our readers a few of the leading passages from the New Testament in which this doctrine is

unfolded. These passages will teach us two things, namely, what Sanctification is, and how it is effected.

The first passage to which we would call attention is 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and *righteousness*, and sanctification, and redemption." Here we learn that Christ "is made unto us" all these four things. God has given us, in Christ, a precious casket, and when we open that casket with the key of faith, the first gem that glitters in our view is "wisdom;" the second is "righteousness;" the third is "sanctification;" and the fourth is "redemption." We have them all in Christ. As we get one so we get all. And how do we get one and all? By faith. But why does the apostle name redemption last? Because it takes in the final deliverance of the body of the believer from under the power of mortality, when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall either raise it from the tomb, or change it, in the twinkling of an eye. Will this act be progressive? Clearly not; it will be done "in the twinkling of an eye." The body is in one state now, and "in a moment" it will be in another. In the brief point of time expressed by the rapid movement of the eyelash, will the body pass from corruption to incorruption; from dishonour to glory; from weakness to power. What a change! It will be immediate, complete, eternal. divine.

But what are we to learn from the fact that "sanctification" is placed in the group with "redemption?" We learn that what redemption *will be* to the body, that sanctification *is* now to the soul. In a word, sanctification, in the sense in which it is here used, is an immediate, a complete, an eternal, a divine work. The one is no more progressive than the other. The one is as immediate as the other. The one is as complete and as independent of man as the other. No doubt, when the body shall have undergone the glorious change, there will be heights of glory to be trodden, depths of glory to be penetrated, wide fields of glory to be explored. All these things shall occupy us throughout eternity. But, then the work which is to fit us for such scenes will be done in a moment. So also is it, in reference to sanctification, the practical results of the thing will be continually developing themselves; but the thing itself, as spoken of in this passage, is done in a moment.

What an immense relief it would be to thousands of earnest, anxious, struggling souls to get a proper hold of Christ as their sanctification. How many are vainly endeavouring to work out a sanctification for themselves! They have come to Christ for righteousness after many fruitless efforts to get a righteousness of their own; but they are seeking after sanctification in a different way altogether. They have gotten "righteousness without works," but they imagine that they must get sanctification with works. They have gotten righteousness by faith, but they imagine they must get sanctification by effort. Thus it is they lose their peace. They do not see that we get sanctification in precisely the same way as we get righteousness, inasmuch as Christ "is made unto us" the one as well as the other. Do we get Christ by effort? No; by faith. It is; "to him that worketh not." (Rom. 4:5) This applies to all that we get in Christ. We have no warrant whatever to single out from 1 Corinthians 1:30, the matter of "sanctification," and place it upon a different footing from all the other blessings which it unfolds. We have neither wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, nor redemption in ourselves; nor can we procure them by aught that we can do; but God has made Christ to be unto us all these things. In giving us Christ, He gave us all that is in Christ. The fullness of Christ is ours, and Christ is the fullness of God.

Again, in Acts 26:18, the converted Gentiles are spoken of as "receiving forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith." Here, faith is the instrument by which we are said to be sanctified, because it connects us with Christ. The very moment the sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ he becomes linked with Him. He is made one with Him, complete in Him, accepted in Him. This is true sanctification and justification. It is not a process. It is not a gradual work. It is not progressive. The word is very explicit. It says, "them which *are* sanctified by faith which is in me." It does not say, "which *shall be* sanctified, or "which are being sanctified." If such were the doctrine it would have been so stated.

No doubt, the believer grows in the knowledge of this sanctification, in his sense of its power and value, its practical influence and results, the experience and enjoyment of it. As "the

truth" pours its divine light upon his soul, he enters into a more profound apprehension of what is involved in being "set apart" for Christ, in the midst of this evil world. All this is blessedly true; but the more its truth is seen, the more clearly we shall understand that sanctification is not merely a progressive work, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, but that it is one result of our being linked to Christ, by faith, whereby we become partakers of all that He is. This is an immediate, a complete, and an eternal work. "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." (Ecc. 3:14) Whether He justifies or sanctifies, "it shall be for ever." The stamp of eternity is fixed upon every work of God's hand: "nothing can be put to it," and, blessed be His name, "nothing can be taken from it.

There are passages which present the subject in another aspect, and which may require a fuller consideration hereafter. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 the apostle prays for the saints whom he addresses, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here, the word is applied to a sanctification admitting of degrees. The Thessalonians had, along with all believers, a perfect sanctification in Christ; but as to the practical enjoyment and display of this, it was only accomplished in part, and the apostle prays that they may be wholly sanctified.

In this passage, it is worthy of notice, that nothing is said of "the flesh." Our fallen, corrupt nature is always treated as a hopelessly ruined thing. It has been weighed in the balance, and found wanting. It has been measured by a divine rule and found short. It has been tried by a perfect plummet and proved crooked. God has set it aside. Its "end has come before him." He has condemned it and put it to death. It is crucified, dead, and buried. To adduce proofs would demand a volume. Are we, then, to imagine for a moment, that God the Holy Ghost came down from heaven for the purpose of exhuming a condemned, crucified, and buried nature, so that He might sanctify it? The idea has only to be named to be abandoned for ever by every one who bows to the authority of scripture. The more closely we study the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the

entire New Testament, the more closely we shall see that the flesh is wholly unmendable. It is, absolutely, good for nothing. The Spirit does not *sanctify* it, but He enables the believer to *mortify* it. We are told to "*put off* the old man." This precept would never have been delivered to us if the object of the Holy Ghost were the sanctification of that "old man."

We trust that no one will accuse us of entertaining a desire to lower the standard of personal holiness, or to weaken the soul's earnest aspirations after a growth in that purity for which every true believer must ardently long. God forbid! If there is one thing above another which we desire to promote in ourselves and others, it is intense personal purity — an elevated tone of practical sanctity — a whole-hearted separation from moral evil, in every shape and form. For this we long, for this we pray, in this we desire to grow daily, and hourly.

But then we are fully convinced that a superstructure of true, practical holiness can never be erected on a legal basis; and hence it is that we press 1 Corinthians 1:30 upon the attention of our readers. It is to be feared that many who have, in some measure abandoned the legal ground, in the matter of "righteousness" are yet lingering thereon for "sanctification." We believe this to be the mistake of thousands, and we are most anxious to see it corrected. The passage before us would, if simply received into the heart by faith, entirely correct this serious mistake.

All intelligent Christians are agreed as to the fundamental truth of "Righteousness without works." All freely and fully admit that we cannot, by any efforts of our own, work out a righteousness for ourselves before God. But it is not just so clearly seen that righteousness and sanctification are put upon precisely the same ground in the word of God. We can no more work out a sanctification than we can work out a righteousness. We may try it, but we shall, sooner or later, find out that it is utterly vain. We may vow and resolve; we may labour and struggle; we may cherish the fond hope of doing better tomorrow than we have done today; but, in the end, we must be constrained to see, and feel, and own, that as regards the matter of sanctification, we are as completely "without

strength" as we have already proved ourselves to be in the matter of righteousness.

And, oh! what sweet relief to the one who has been stumbling along the path of personal holiness to find after years of unsuccessful struggle, that the very thing he longs for is treasured up in Christ, and is ready to his hand this moment. even a complete sanctification to be enjoyed *by faith!* Such an one may have been battling with his habits, his lusts, his tempers, his passions; he has been making the most laborious efforts to subdue his flesh and grow in inward holiness, but alas! he has failed. He finds, to his deep sorrow, that he is not holy, and yet he reads that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12) Not, observe, without a certain measure, or attainment in holiness, but without the thing itself; which every Christian has, from the moment he believes, whether he knows it or not. Perfect sanctification is as fully included in the word "salvation" as is "wisdom, righteousness, or redemption." He did not get Christ by effort, but by faith; and when he laid hold on Christ he received all that is in Christ. Hence, therefore, he has only to look to Jesus by faith, for the subjugation of his lusts, passions, tempers, habits, circumstances, and influences. He must look to Jesus for all. He can no more subdue a single lust than he could cancel the entire catalogue of his sins, work out a perfect righteousness, or raise the dead. "Christ is all and in all." Salvation is a golden chain which stretches from everlasting to everlasting, and every link of that chain is Christ. It is all Christ from first to last.

All this is as simple as possible. The believer's standing is in Christ, and if in Christ for one thing, he is in Christ for all. I am not in Christ for righteousness, and out of Christ for sanctification. If I am a debtor to Christ for righteousness, I am equally debtor to Him for sanctification. I am not a debtor to legality for either the one or the other. I get both by grace, through faith, and all in Christ. Yes all — all in Christ. The moment the sinner comes to Christ, and believes on Him, he is taken completely off the old ground of nature; he loses his old level standing and all its belongings, and is looked at as in Christ. God only sees him in Christ, and as Christ. He becomes one with Christ for ever. "As he is, so are we in this

world." (1 John 4) Such is the absolute standing, the settled and eternal position, of the very feeblest babe in the family of God. There is but one standing for every child of God, every member of Christ. Their knowledge, experience, power, gift, and intelligence, may vary; but their standing is one. Whatever of righteousness or sanctification they possess, they owe it all to their being in Christ; consequently, if they have not gotten a perfect sanctification, neither have they gotten a perfect righteousness. But 1 Cor 1:30 distinctly teaches that Christ "*is made*" both one and the other to all believers. It does not say that we have righteousness and "*a measure of sanctification.*" We have just as much scripture authority for putting the word "measure" before righteousness as before sanctification. The Spirit of God does not put it before either. Both are perfect, and we have both in Christ. God never does anything by halves. There is no such thing as a half justification. Neither is there such a thing as a half sanctification. The idea of a member of the family of God, or of the body of Christ, wholly justified, but only half sanctified, is at once opposed to scripture, and revolting to all the sensibilities of the divine nature.

It is not improbable that very much of the misapprehension which prevails in reference to sanctification, is justly traceable to the habit of confounding two things which differ very materially, namely, standing and walk, or position and condition. The believer's standing is perfect, eternal, unchangeable, divine. His walk is imperfect, fluctuating, and marked with personal infirmity. His position is absolute and unalterable. His practical condition may exhibit manifold imperfections, inasmuch as he is still in the body, and surrounded by various hostile influences which affect his moral condition, from day to day. If then, his standing be measured by his walk, his position by his condition, what he is in God's view by what he is in man's the result must be false. If I reason from what I am in myself, instead of from what I am in Christ, I must, of necessity, arrive at a wrong conclusion.

We should look carefully to this. We are very much disposed to reason upwards from ourselves to God, instead of downwards from God to us. We should bear in mind that

"Far as heaven's resplendent orbs

Beyond earth's spot extend,

As far my thoughts, as far my ways,

Your ways and thoughts transcend."

God can only think and speak of His people, and act toward them, too, according to their standing in Christ. He has given them this standing. He has made them what they are. They are His workmanship. Hence, therefore, to speak of them as half justified would be a dishonour cast upon God; and to speak of them as half sanctified would be just the same.

This train of thought conducts us to another weighty proof drawn from the authoritative and conclusive page of inspiration, namely, 1 Corinthians 6:11. In the verses preceding, the apostle draws a fearful picture of fallen humanity, and he plainly tells the Corinthian saints that they had been just like that. "such were some of you." This is plain dealing. These are no flattering words — no daubing with untempered mortar — no keeping back the full truth as to nature's total and irretrievable ruin. "Such were some of you: but ye *are* washed, but ye *are* sanctified, but ye *are* justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

What a striking contrast between the two sides of the apostle's "*but!*" On the one side, we have all the moral degradation of man's condition; and, on the other side, we have all the absolute perfectness of the believer's standing before God. This, truly, is a marvellous contrast; and be it remembered that the soul passes, in the twinkling of an eye, from one side to the other of this "*but.*" "*Such were* some of you: but ye *are,*" now, something quite different. The moment in which they received Paul's gospel, they were "washed, sanctified, and justified." They were fit for heaven; and had they not been so, it would have been a slur upon the divine workmanship.

"Clean every whit; thou saidst it, Lord;

Shall one suspicion lurk?

Thine, surely, is a faithful word,

And Thine a *finished work*."

This is divinely true. The most inexperienced believer is "clean every whit," not as a matter of attainment, but as the necessary result of being in Christ. "We are in Him that is true." (1 John 5) Could any one be in Christ, and at the same time, be only half sanctified? Assuredly not. He will, no doubt, grow in the knowledge and experience of what sanctification really is. He will enter into its practical power; its moral effects upon his habits, thoughts, feelings, affections, and associations: in a word, he will understand and exhibit the mighty influence of divine sanctification upon his entire course, conduct, and character. But, then, he was as completely sanctified, in God's view, the moment he became linked to Christ by faith, as he will be when he comes to bask in the sunlight of the divine presence, and reflect back the concentrated beams of glory emanating from the throne of God and of the Lamb. He is in Christ now; and he will be in Christ then. His sphere and his circumstances will differ. His feet shall stand upon the golden pavement of the upper sanctuary, instead of standing upon the arid sand of the desert. He will be in a body of glory, instead of a body of humiliation; but as to his standing, his acceptance, his completeness, his justification, and sanctification, all was settled the moment he believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God — as settled as ever it will be, because as settled as God could make it. All this seems to flow as a necessary and unanswerable inference from 1 Cor 6:11.

It is of the utmost importance to apprehend, with clearness, the distinction between a truth and the practical application and result of a truth. This distinction is ever maintained in the word of God. "*Ye are sanctified*." Here is the absolute truth as to the believer, as viewed in Christ, and as the fruit of an eternally-perfect work. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it." (Eph. 5:25, 26) "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." (1 Thess. 5:23) Here we have the practical application of the truth to the believer, and its results in the believer.

But how is this application made, and this result reached? By the Holy Ghost, through the written word. Hence we read, "Sanctify

them through thy truth." (John 17) And again, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2:13) So also, in Peter, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit." (1 Peter 1:2) The Holy Ghost carries on the believer's practical sanctification on the ground of Christ's accomplished work; and the mode in which He does so is by applying to the heart and conscience the truth as it is in Jesus. He unfolds the truth as to our perfect standing before God in Christ, and by energising the new man in us, He enables us to put away everything incompatible with the perfect standing. A man who is "washed, sanctified, and justified," ought not to indulge in any unhallowed temper, lust, or passion. He should "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." It is his holy and happy privilege to breathe after the very loftiest heights of personal sanctity. His heart and his habits should be brought and held under the power of that grand truth that he is perfectly "washed, sanctified, and justified."

This is true practical sanctification. It is not any attempt at the improvement of our old nature. It is not a vain effort to reconstruct an irretrievable ruin. No; it is simply the Holy Ghost, by the powerful application of "the truth," enabling the new man to live, and move, and have his being in that sphere to which he belongs. Here there will, undoubtedly, be progress. There will be growth in the moral power of this precious truth — growth in spiritual ability to subdue and keep under all that pertains to nature — a growing power of separation from the evil around us — a growing meetness for that heaven to which we belong, and toward which we are journeying — a growing capacity for the enjoyment of its holy exercises. All this there will be, through the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost, who uses the word of God to unfold to our souls the truth as to our standing in Christ, and as to the walk which comports with that standing. But let it be clearly understood that the work of the Holy Ghost in practical sanctification, day by day, is founded upon the fact that believers "*are* sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." (Heb. 10:10) The object of the Holy Ghost is to lead us into the knowledge, the experience, and the practical exhibition of that which was true of us in Christ the very

moment we believed. As regards this, there is progress; but our standing in Christ is eternally complete.

"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John 17:17) And again, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." (1 Thess. 5:23) In these passages, we have the grand practical side of this question. Here we see sanctification presented, not merely as something absolutely and eternally true of us in Christ, but also as wrought out in us, daily and hourly, by the Holy Ghost through the word. Looked at from this point of view, sanctification is, obviously, a progressive thing. I should be more advanced in personal holiness in the year 1861 than I was in the year 1860. I should, through grace, be advancing, day by day, in practical holiness. But what, let me ask, is this? What, but the working out in me of that which was true of me in Christ, the very moment I believed? The basis upon which the Holy Ghost carries on the *subjective* work in the believer, is the *objective* truth of his eternal completeness in Christ.

Again, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14) Here, holiness is presented as a thing to be "followed after" — to be attained by earnest pursuit — a thing which every true believer will long to cultivate.

May the Lord lead us into the power of these things! May they not dwell as doctrines and dogmas in the region of our intellect, but enter into and abide in the heart, as sacred and powerfully influential realities! May we know the sanctifying power of the truth (John 17:17), the, sanctifying power of faith (Acts 26:18); the sanctifying power of the name of Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Cor. 6:11); the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost (1 Peter 1:2); the sanctifying grace of the Father. (Jude 1.)

And, now, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, world without end Amen.

C.H.M.

1 Peter 1:5, 4:5, Luke 12:40, Matthew 25:10

"Ready"

We want the reader to dwell for a few moments on the little word "ready." If we mistake not, he will find it to be a word of immense depth and suggestive power, as used by the Holy Ghost in Scripture. We shall just now refer to four passages in which our word occurs; and may the One who penned these passages be pleased to open and apply them in divine power and freshness to the heart of both writer and reader.

1. And first we shall turn to 1 Peter 1: 5, where it is used in connection with the word "salvation." Believers are said to be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, *ready* to be revealed in the last time."

Here, then, we are taught that salvation is ready to be revealed at this moment; for we are, as John tells us, in "the last times." And be it noted that salvation as here used is not to be confined to the mere matter of the *soul's* deliverance from hell and perdition: it refers, rather, to the deliverance of the *body* of the believer from the power of death and corruption. In short, it takes in all that stands in anywise connected with the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We already possess the salvation of our souls, as we are told in the very context from which our text is taken. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.... Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you *at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

Thus we learn in the clearest way that the "salvation ready to be revealed" is linked on to "the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is confirmed, were confirmation needful, by Hebrews 9: 28, where we read, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, apart from sin, unto *salvation.*"

From all this we learn that the salvation which is ready to be revealed is at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this

we are taught, as Christians, to look at any moment. There is literally nothing so far as God is concerned, nothing so far as the work of Christ is concerned, nothing so far as the testimony of the Holy Ghost is concerned, to hinder our hearing "the shout of the archangel and the trump of God" this very night, this very hour. All is done that needed to be done. Atonement is made, redemption is accomplished, God has been glorified by the work of Christ, as is proved by the fact of Christ's present place on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. From the moment that our Lord Christ took His seat upon that throne, it could always be said that "salvation is *ready* to be revealed."

But it could not have been said before. Salvation could not be said to be ready until the divine groundwork thereof was laid in the death and resurrection of the Saviour. But when once that most glorious work of all works was accomplished, it could at any moment be said that "salvation is ready to be revealed." "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110: 1).

2. The apostle Peter gives us another instance and application of our word in 1 Peter 4: 5, where he refers to some "who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Here the word stands before us in a form of awful solemnity. If on the one hand it be true that salvation is ready to be revealed for the everlasting joy of God's redeemed, it is equally true on the other hand that judgement is ready to take its course, for the everlasting misery of those who neglect God's proffered salvation. [As regards the solemn subject of eternal punishment, we shall just refer the reader to three passages of Scripture which establish the truth of it beyond all question: Mark 9: 43-48, the fire is *unquenchable*, and the worm *never dies*; Luke 16: 26, the great gulf is *fixed*; John 3:36, the wrath of God *abideth*] The one is as true, and as pointed, and as forcible, as the other. There is nothing to wait for in respect to the judgement, any more than there is in respect to the salvation. The one is as "*ready*" as the other.

God has gone to the utmost in demonstrating His grace; and man has gone to the utmost in demonstrating his guilt. Both have

reached their climax in the death of Christ; and when we see Him crowned with glory and seated on the throne, we have the most powerful evidence that could possibly be afforded that nothing remains but for salvation to be revealed on the one hand, and for judgement to take its course on the other.

Hence it follows that man is no longer under probation. It is a grand mistake for any one to think so. It falsifies man's entire position and state. If I am under probation — if God is still testing me; if He is even now occupied in testing whether I am good for aught; if I am capable of producing any fruit for Him — if this be indeed the case, then it is not and cannot be true that "He is ready to judge." Nature is not ripe for judgement so long as a probationary process is pending, if there is yet something to wait for ere judgement can take its course.

But no; we feel bound to press upon you the fact that the period of your probation is over forever, and the period of God's long-suffering is nearly run out. It is of the utmost importance to seize this truth. It lies at the very foundation of the sinner's position. Judgement is actually impending. It is "ready" at this moment to fall upon the head of the unrepentant — the reader of these lines, should he be one of them. The entire history of human nature — of man, of the world — has been wound up and closed forever. The cross of Christ has made perfectly manifest the guilt and ruin of the human race. It has put an end to man's probationary season; and from that solemn hour until now the true position of the world as a whole, and of each individual sinner — man, woman, and child — has been that of a culprit tried, found guilty, and condemned, but the sentence not executed. This is the present awful position of the unconverted, unbelieving reader.

Dear Friend, wilt thou not think of this? Fellow immortal soul, wilt thou not, even this very moment, bend the undivided attention of thy soul to this eternal question? We must speak plainly and pointedly. We feel in some small degree the awfulness of the sinner's state and prospect, in view of these weighty words, "*ready to Judge.*" We are convinced that the present is a moment which calls for serious and faithful dealing with the souls of our readers. We do not, as God is our witness, want to write essays or sermons;

we want to reach souls. We want the reader to be assured of this; that he is not now reading an article on a religious subject prepared for some literary purpose, but a solemn appeal made to his heart and conscience in the immediate presence of "Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

3. But this leads us to the third passage of Holy Scripture in which our weighty motto occurs. The reader will find it in Luke 12: 40: "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

If salvation is "ready" to be revealed, and if judgement is "ready" to be executed, what becomes us but to be "ready" also?

And in what does this readiness consist? How are we to be ready? It strikes us that there are two things included in the answer.

First, we must be "ready" in *title*; and, secondly, we must be "ready" in our moral *state* — ready in conscience, and ready in heart. The one is founded upon the work of Christ *for* us; the other is connected with the work of the Spirit *in* us. If we are simply resting by faith on the finished work of Christ, if we are leaning exclusively on what He has done and what He is, then are we in very truth ready in title, and we may rest assured of being with Him when He comes.

But, on the other hand, if we are leaning upon our fancied goodness, upon any righteousness which we think we possess, upon not having done any harm to any one, upon our not being worse than some of our neighbours, upon our church-membership, upon our attention to the ordinances of religion; if we are leaning upon any or all of these things, or if we are adding these things to Christ, then we may be assured we are not ready in title, not ready in conscience. God can accept nothing, absolutely nothing, as a title, but Christ. To bring aught else is to declare that Christ is not needful: to bring aught besides is to affirm that He is not enough. But God has borne ten thousand testimonies to the fact that we can do with nothing less, and that we want nothing more, than Christ. Hence, therefore, Christ is our all-essential and all-sufficient title.

But, then, there is such a thing as professing to be ready in title while at the same time we are not ready in our moral condition or practical state. This demands our gravest attention. There is a vast amount of easy-going evangelical profession abroad at the present moment. The atmosphere is permeated by the rays of gospel light. The darkness of the Middle Ages has been chased away by the brightness of a free gospel and an open Bible.

We are thankful for a free gospel and an open Bible. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is a fearful amount of laxity, unsubduedness, and self-indulgence going hand in hand with the evangelical profession of the day. We notice with the deepest anxiety many young professors who have, or seem to have, a very clear insight, so far as the intellect goes, into the truth of the sinner's title, who, if we are to judge from their style, deportment, and habits, are not "ready" in their moral condition — in the real state of their hearts. We are at times, we must confess, sadly cast down when we see our young friends decking their persons in the vain fashions of a vain and sinful world; feeding upon the vile literature that issues in such frightful profusion from the press; and actually singing vain songs and engaging in light and frivolous conversation. It is impossible to reconcile such with "Be ye also ready."

We may perhaps be told that these things are externals, and that the grand point is to be occupied with Christ. It may be said — it has been said — "Provided we have Christ in our hearts, it does not matter what we have on our heads or in our hands." We reply, "If we really have Christ in our hearts, it will regulate what we put on our heads and take into our hands; yea, it will exert a *manifest* influence upon our whole deportment and character."

We should like to ask some of our young friends this question: "Would you like the Lord Christ to come and find you reading a love-story, or singing a song?" We feel assured you would not. Well, then, let us, in the name of the Lord, see to it that we do not engage in anything which does not comport with our being "*ready*."

We specially urge this upon the young Christian reader. Let this question be ever before us, "Am I ready? — ready in title, ready in state, ready in conscience, ready in heart?" The times are really

very solemn, and it behoves us to think seriously of our true state. We feel persuaded that there is a lack of real, godly heart-exercise amongst us. There are, we fear, many — God only knows how many — who are not ready; many who would be taken aback and terribly surprised by death or the coming of the Lord. There are things said and done by those who occupy the very highest platform of profession which we dare not indulge in if we are really *looking* for the Lord.

God grant that the reader may know what it is to be ready in title and ready in state; that he may have a purged conscience and a truly exercised heart. Then he will be able to enter into the meaning of the fourth and last passage, to which we call his attention. It occurs in Matt. 25: 10.

4. "And while they [the foolish virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were *ready* went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut."

How solemn! How awfully solemn! Those who were *ready* went in, and those who were not ready were shut out. Those who have life in Christ, who are indwelt by the Holy Ghost, will be ready. But the mere professor — the one who has truth in the head and on the lip, but not in the heart; who has the lamp of profession, but not the Spirit of life in Christ — will be shut out into outer darkness — in the everlasting misery and gloom, the eternal monotony of hell.

Let us, as we take a solemn leave of you, put this question home to your very inmost soul, "ART THOU READY?"

1 Peter 2:9.

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

The Christian Priesthood.

We want the reader to open his bible and read 1 Peter 2:1-9. In this lovely scripture he will find Three words on which we shall ask him to dwell with us for a little. They are words of weight and power — words which indicate three great branches of practical Christian truth — words conveying to our hearts a fact which we cannot too deeply ponder, namely, that Christianity is a living and divine reality. It is not a set of doctrines, however true; a system of ordinances, however imposing; a number of rules and regulations, however important. Christianity is far more than any or all of these things. It is a living, breathing, speaking, active, powerful reality — something to be seen in the every-day life — something to be felt in the scenes of personal, domestic history, from hour to hour — something formative and influential — a divine and heavenly power introduced into the scenes and circumstances through which we have to move, as men, women, and children, from Sunday morning till Saturday night. It does not consist in holding certain views, opinions, and principles, or in going to this place of worship or that.

Christianity is the life of Christ communicated *to* the believer — dwelling in him — and flowing out *from* him, in the ten thousand little details which go to make up our daily practical life. It has nothing ascetic, monastic, or sanctimonious about it. It is genial, cordial, lightsome, pure, elevated, holy, heavenly, divine. Such is the Christianity of the New Testament. It is Christ dwelling in the believer, and reproduced, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the believer's daily practical career. This is Christianity — nothing else, nothing less, nothing different.

But let us turn to our three words; and may the Eternal Spirit expound and apply their deep and holy meaning to our souls!

And first, then, we have the word "living." "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up."

Here we have what we may call the foundation of Christian priesthood. There is evidently an allusion here to that profoundly interesting scene in Matthew 16 to which we must ask the reader to turn for a moment.

"When Jesus was come into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?* And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

{*Let the reader note this title, "Son of man." It is infinitely precious. It is a title indicating our Lord's rejection as the Messiah, and leading out into that wide, that universal sphere over which He is destined, in the counsels of God, to rule. It is far wider than Son of David, or Son of Abraham, and has peculiar charms for us, inasmuch as it places Him before our hearts as the lonely, outcast stranger, and yet as the One who links Himself in perfect grace with us in all our need — One whose footprints we can trace all across this dreary desert. "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And yet it is as Son of man that He shall, by-and-by, exercise that universal dominion reserved for Him according to the eternal counsels of God. See Daniel 7.}

There was endless speculation, simply because there was no real heart-work respecting the blessed One. Some said this, some said that; and, in result, no one cared who or what He was; and hence He turns away from all this heartless speculation, and puts the pointed question to His own, "But whom say ye that I am?" He desired to know what they thought about Him — what estimate their hearts had formed of Him. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the *living* God."

Here we have the true confession. Here lies the solid foundation of the whole edifice of the Church of God and of all true practical Christianity — "Christ the Son of the *living* God." No more dim shadows — no more powerless forms — no more lifeless ordinances

— all must be permeated by this new, this divine, this heavenly life which has come into this world, and is communicated to all who believe in the name of the Son of God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock *I will build* my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Now, it is evidently to this magnificent passage that the apostle Peter refers in the second chapter of his first epistle, when he says, "To whom coming, as unto a *living* stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as *living* stones [the same words], are built up," &c. All who believe in Jesus are partakers of His risen, victorious *rock* life. The life of Christ, the Son of the *living* God, flows through all His members, and through each in particular. Thus we have the living God, the *living* Stone, and *living* stones. It is all life together — life flowing down from a living source, through a living channel, and imparting itself to all believers, thus making them living stones.

Now, this life having been tried and tested, in every possible way, and having come forth victorious, can never again be called to pass through any process of trial, testing, or judgment whatsoever. It has passed through death and judgment. It has gone down under all the waves and billows of divine wrath, and come forth, at the other side, in resurrection, in divine glory and power — a life victorious, heavenly, and divine, beyond the reach of all the powers of darkness. There is no power of earth or hell, men or devils, that can possibly touch the life which is possessed by the very smallest and most insignificant stone in Christ's assembly. All believers are built upon the living Stone, Christ; and are thus constituted living stones. He makes them like Himself, in every respect, save of course, in His incommunicable Deity. Is he a living Stone? They are living stones. Is He a precious Stone? They are precious stones. Is he a rejected Stone? They are rejected stones — rejected, disallowed of men. They are, in every respect, identified with Him. Ineffable privilege!

Here, then, we repeat, is the solid foundation of the Christian priesthood — the priesthood of all believers. Before any one can offer up a spiritual sacrifice, he must come to Christ, in simple faith, and be built on Him, as the foundation of the whole spiritual building. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture (Isa. 28:16), Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded."

How precious are these words! God Himself has laid the foundation, and that foundation is Christ, and all who simply believe in Christ — all who give Him the confidence of their hearts — all who rest satisfied with Him, are made partakers of His resurrection life, and thus made living stones.

How blessedly simple is this! We are not asked to assist in laying the foundation. We are not called upon to add the weight of a feather to it. God has laid the foundation, and all we have to do is to believe and rest thereon; and He pledges His faithful word that we shall never be confounded. The very feeblest believer in Jesus has God's own gracious assurance that he shall never be confounded — never be ashamed — never come into judgment. He is as free from all charge of guilt and every breath of condemnation as that living Rock on whom he is built.

Beloved reader, are you on this foundation? Are you built on Christ? Have you come to Him as God's living stone, and given Him the full confidence of your heart? Are you thoroughly satisfied with God's foundation? or are you seeking to add something of your own — your own works, your prayers, your ordinances, your vows and resolutions, your religious duties? If so, if you are seeking to add the smallest jot or tittle to God's Christ, you may rest assured, you will be confounded. God will not suffer such dishonour to be offered to His tried, elect, precious chief — corner Stone. Think you that He could allow aught, no matter what, to be placed beside His beloved Son, in order to form, with Him, the foundation of His spiritual edifice? The bare thought were an impious blasphemy. No; it must be Christ alone. He is enough for God, and He may well be enough for us; and nothing is more certain than that all who reject, or neglect, turn away from, or add to, God's foundation, shall be covered with everlasting confusion.

But, having glanced at the foundation, let us look at the superstructure. This will lead us to the second of our three weighty words. "To whom coming as unto a . . . living stone ye also, as *living* stones, are built up a spiritual house, an *holy* priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

All true believers are holy priests. They are made this by spiritual birth, just as Aaron's sons were priests in virtue of their natural birth. The apostle does not say, *Ye ought to be* living stones, and, *Ye ought to be* holy priests. He says *ye are* such. No doubt, being such, we are called upon to act accordingly; but we must be in a position before we can discharge the duties belonging to it. We must be in a relationship before we can know the affections which flow out of it. We do not become priests by offering priestly sacrifices. But being, through grace, made priests, we are called upon to present the sacrifice. If we were to live a thousand years twice told, and spend all that time working, we could not work ourselves into the position of holy priests; but the moment we believe in Jesus — the moment we come to Him in simple faith — the moment we give Him the full confidence of our hearts, we are born anew into the position of holy priests, and are then privileged to draw nigh and offer the priestly sacrifice. How could any one, of old, have constituted himself a son of Aaron? Impossible. But being born of Aaron, he was thereby made a member of the priestly house. We speak not now of capacity, but simply of the position. This latter was reached not by effort, but by birth

And now, let us inquire as to the nature of the sacrifice which, as holy priests, we are privileged to offer. We are "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." So also in Hebrews 13:15, we read, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

Here, then, we have the true nature and character of that sacrifice which, as holy priests, we are to offer. It is praise — "praise to God continually." Blessed occupation! Hallowed exercise! Heavenly employment! And this is not to be an occasional thing. It is not merely at some peculiarly favoured moment, when all looks bright and smiling around us. It is not to be merely amid the glow and

fervour of some specially powerful public meeting, when the current of worship flows deep, wide, and rapid. No; the word is, "praise *continually*." There is no room, no time for complaining and murmuring, fretfulness and discontent, impatience and irritability, lamenting about our surroundings, whatever these may be, complaining about the weather, finding fault with those who are associated with as whether in public or in private, whether in the congregation, in the business, or in the family circle.

Holy priests should have no time for any of these things. They are brought nigh to God, in holy liberty, peace, and blessing. They breathe the atmosphere and walk in the sunlight of the divine presence, in the new creation, where there are no materials for a sour and discontented mind to feed upon. We may set it down as a fixed principle — an axiom — that whenever we hear any one pouring out a string of complaints about circumstances and about his neighbours, such an one is not realising the place of holy priesthood, and, as a consequence, not exhibiting its practical fruits. A holy priest is always happy, always bright, always praising God. True, he may be tried in a thousand ways; but he brings his trials to God in communion, not to his fellow-man in complaining. "hallelujah" is the proper utterance of the very feeblest member of the Christian priesthood.

But we must now look, for a moment, at the third and last branch of our present theme. This is presented in that highly expressive word "royal." The apostle goes on to say, "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a *royal* . . . priesthood that ye should show forth the virtues [see margin] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

This completes the lovely picture of the Christian priesthood.* As *holy* priests, we draw nigh to God, and present the sacrifice of praise. As *royal* priests we go forth among our fellow-men, in all the details of practical daily life, to show forth the virtues — the graces — the lovely moral features of Christ. Every movement of a royal priest should emit the fragrance of the grace of Christ.

{*The intelligent reader does not need to be told that all believers are priests, and, further, that there is no such thing as a

priest upon earth save in the sense in which all true Christians are priests. The idea of a certain set of men, calling themselves priests in contrast with the people - a certain caste distinguished by title and dress from the body of Christians, is not Christianity at all, but Judaism or worse. All who read the bible and bow to its authority are thoroughly clear as to these things.}

Mark, again, the apostle does not say, "*Ye ought to be* royal priests." He says "*ye are*;" and as such we are to show forth the virtues of Christ. Nothing else becomes a member of the royal priesthood. To be occupied with myself; to be taking counsel for my own ease, my own interest, my own enjoyment, to be seeking my own ends, and caring about my own things, is not the act of a royal priest at all. Christ never did so; and I am called to show forth His virtues. He, blessed be His name, grants to His people, in this the time of His absence, to anticipate the day when He shall come forth as a Royal Priest, and sit upon His throne, and send forth the benign influence of His dominion to the ends of the earth. We are called to be the present expression of the kingdom of Christ — the expression of Himself.

And let none suppose that the actings of a royal priest are to be confined to the matter of *giving*. This would be a grave mistake. No doubt, a royal priest will give, and give liberally if he has it; but to limit him to the mere matter of communicating would be to rob him of some of the most precious functions of his position. The very man who penned the words on which we are dwelling said on one occasion — and said it without shame, "Silver and gold have I none;" and yet at that very moment, he was acting as a royal priest, by bringing the precious virtue of the Name of Jesus to bear on the impotent man. (Acts 3) The blessed Master Himself, we may safely affirm, never possessed a penny; but He went about doing good, and so should we, nor do we need money to do it. Indeed it very often happens that we do mischief instead of good with our silver and gold. We may take people off the ground on which God has placed them, namely, the ground of honest industry, and make them dependent upon human alms. Moreover, we may often make hypocrites and sycophants of people by our injudicious use of money.

Hence, therefore, let no one imagine that he cannot act as a royal priest without earthly riches. What riches are required to speak a kindly word — to drop the tear of sympathy — to give the soothing genial look? None whatever save the riches of God's grace — the unsearchable riches of Christ, all of which are laid open to the most obscure member of the Christian priesthood. I may be in rags, without a penny in the world, and yet carry myself blessedly as a royal priest, by diffusing around me the fragrance of the grace of Christ.

But, perhaps, we cannot more suitably close these few remarks on the Christian priesthood, than by giving a very vivid illustration drawn from the inspired page — the narrative of two beloved servants of Christ who were enabled, under the most distressing circumstances, to acquit themselves as holy and royal priests.

Turn to Acts 16:19-34. Here we have Paul and Silas thrust into the innermost part of the prison at Philippi, their backs covered with stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks, in the darkness of the midnight hour. What were they doing? murmuring and complaining? Ah, no. They had something better and brighter to do. Here were two really "living stones," and nothing that earth or hell could do could hinder the life that was in them expressing itself in its proper accents.

But what, we repeat, were these living stones doing? these partakers of the rock life — the victorious — resurrection life of Christ — how did they employ themselves? Well, then, in the first place, as holy priests they offered the sacrifice of praise to God. Yes, "at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God." How precious is this! How morally glorious! How truly refreshing! What are stripes or stocks, or prison walls, or gloomy nights, to living stones and holy priests? Nothing more than a dark background to throw out into bright and beautiful relief the living grace that is in them. Talk of circumstances! Ah! it is little any of us know of trying circumstances. Poor things that we are, the petty annoyances of daily life are often more than enough to cause us to lose our mental balance. Paul and Silas were really in trying circumstances; but they were there as living stones and holy priests.

Yes, reader, and they were there as royal priests, likewise. How does this appear? Certainly not by scattering silver and gold. It is not likely the dear men had much of these to scatter. But oh! they had what was better, even "the virtues of him who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And where do these virtues shine out? In those touching words addressed to the gaoler, "*Do thyself no harm.*" These were the accents of a *royal* priest, just as the song of praise was the voice of a holy priest. Thank God for both! The voices of the holy priests went directly up to the throne of God and did their work there; and the words of the royal priests went directly to the gaoler's hard heart and did their work there. God was glorified and the gaoler saved by two men rightly discharging the functions of "*the Christian priesthood.*"

2 Peter 1:6

SELF-CONTROL

The word “temperance” in 2 Peter 1: 6 means a great deal more than what is usually understood by that term. It is customary to apply the word “temperance” to a habit of moderation in reference to eating and drinking. No doubt it fully involves this, but it involves much more. Indeed, the Greek word used by the inspired apostle may be rendered “self-control.” It gives the idea of one who has *self* habitually well reined in.

This is a rare and admirable grace, diffusing its hallowed influence over one's entire course, character and conduct. It not only bears directly upon one or two or twenty selfish habits, but upon self in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive and most odious term. Many a one who would look with proud disdain upon a glutton or a drunkard, may himself fail every hour in exhibiting the grace of self-control. True it is that gluttony and drunkenness should be ranked with the very vilest and most demoralizing forms of selfishness. They must be regarded as among the most bitter clusters that grow on that widespread tree. But self is a tree and not a mere branch of a tree or a cluster on a branch, and we should not only judge self when it works, but control it that it may not work.

Some may ask, “How can we control self?” The answer is blessedly simple: “I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4). Have we not gotten salvation in Christ? Yes, blessed be God, we have. And what does this wondrous word include? Is it mere deliverance from the wrath to come? Is it merely the pardon of our sins and the assurance of exemption from the lake that burns with fire and brimstone? It is far more than these, precious and priceless though they be. In a word, “salvation” implies a full and hearty acceptance of Christ as my “wisdom” to guide me out of folly's dark and devious paths, into paths of heavenly light and peace; as my “righteousness” to justify me in the sight of a holy God; as my “sanctification” to make me practically holy in all my ways; and as my “redemption” to give me final deliverance from all the power of death, and entrance upon the eternal fields of glory.

Hence, it is evident that “self-control” is included in the salvation which we have in Christ. It is a result of that practical sanctification with which divine grace has endowed us. We should carefully guard against the habit of taking a narrow view of salvation. We should seek to enter into all its fullness. It is a word which stretches from everlasting to everlasting and takes in, in its mighty sweep, all the practical details of daily life. I have no right to talk of salvation of my soul in the future while I refuse to know and exhibit its practical bearing upon my conduct in the present. We are saved, not only from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but as fully from the power, the practice and the love of it. These things should never be separated, nor will they be by anyone who has been divinely taught the meaning, the extent and the power of that precious word “salvation.”

Now, in presenting to my reader a few practical sentences on the subject of self-control, I shall contemplate it under the three following divisions, namely the thoughts, the tongue and the temper. I take it for granted that I am addressing a saved person. If my reader be not that, I can only direct him to the one true and living way, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16). Put your whole trust in Him and you shall be as safe as He is Himself. Now I shall proceed to deal with the practical and much-needed subject of self-control.

First, as to our thoughts and the habitual government thereof. I suppose there are few Christians who have not suffered from evil thoughts — those troublesome intruders upon our most profound privacy, those constant disturbers of our mental repose that so frequently darken the atmosphere around us and prevent us from getting a full, clear view upward into the bright heaven above. The Psalmist could say, “I hate vain thoughts.” No wonder. They are truly hateful and should be judged, condemned and expelled. Someone, in speaking of the subject of evil thoughts, has said, “I cannot prevent birds from flying over me, but I can prevent their alighting upon me. In like manner, I cannot prevent evil thoughts being suggested to my mind, but I can refuse them a lodging therein.”

But how can we control our thoughts? No more than we could blot out our sins or create a world. What are we to do? Look to Christ. This is the true secret of self-control. He can keep us, not only from the lodging, but also from the *suggestion* of the evil thoughts. We could no more prevent the one than the other. He can prevent both. He can keep the vile intruders, not only from getting in, but even from knocking at the door. When the divine life is in energy — when the current of spiritual thought and feeling is deep and rapid, when the heart's affections are intensely occupied with the Person of Christ — vain thoughts do not trouble us. It is only when spiritual indolence creeps over us that evil thoughts — vile and horrible issue — come in upon us. Then our only resource is to look straight to Jesus. We might as well attempt to cope with the marshalled hosts of hell, as with a horde of evil thoughts. Our refuge is in Christ. He is made unto us sanctification. We can do all things through Him. We have just to bring the name of Jesus to bear upon the flood of evil thoughts, and He will most assuredly give full and immediate deliverance.

However, the more excellent way is to be preserved from the suggestions of evil by the power of pre-occupation with good. When the channel of thought is decidedly upward, when it is deep and well formed, free from all curves and indentations, then the current of imagination and feeling, as it gushes up from the deep fountains of the soul, will naturally flow onward in the bed of that channel. This is unquestionably the more excellent way. May we prove it in our own experience. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4: 8-9). When the heart is fully engrossed with Christ, the living embodiment of all those things enumerated in verse 8, we enjoy profound peace, unruffled by evil thoughts. This is true self-control.

Secondly, as to the tongue, that influential member so fruitful in good, so fruitful in evil — the instrument whereby we can either give forth accents of soft and soothing sympathy or words of bitter

sarcasm and burning indignation. How deeply important is the grace of self-control in its application to such a member! Mischief, which years cannot repair, may be done by the tongue in a moment. Words which we would give the world to recall, may be uttered by the tongue in an unguarded moment. Hear what the inspired apostle says on this subject: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3: 2-8).

Who then can control the tongue? "No man" can do it, but Christ can, and we have only to look to Him in simple faith. This implies both the sense of our own utter helplessness and His all-sufficiency. It is utterly impossible that we could control the tongue. As well might we attempt to stem the ocean's tide, the mountain torrent or the Alpine avalanche. How often, when suffering under the effects of some blunder of the tongue, have we resolved to command that unruly member somewhat better next time, but our resolution proved to be like the morning cloud that passes away, and we had only to retire and weep over our lamentable failure in the matter of self-control. Why was this? Simply because we undertook the matter in our own strength or at least without a sufficiently deep consciousness of our own weakness. This is the cause of constant failure. We must cling to Christ as a babe clings to its mother. Not that our clinging is of any value; still we must cling. Thus alone can we successfully bridle the tongue. Let us remember at all times the solemn searching words of the same apostle James, "If any one (man, woman or child) among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is

vain” (James 1: 26). These are wholesome words for a day like the present when there are so many unruly tongues abroad. May we have grace to attend to these words! May their holy influence appear in our ways!

The third point to be considered is the temper, which is intimately connected with both the tongue and the thoughts. Indeed, all three are very closely linked. When the spring of thought is spiritual and the current heavenly, the tongue is only the active agent for good, and the temper is calm and unruffled. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith regulates everything. Without Him, all is worse than worthless. I may possess and exhibit the self-command of a Socrates and all the while be wholly ignorant of the “self-control” of 2 Peter 1: 6. The latter is founded on “faith;” the former on philosophy — two totally different things. We must remember that the word is “Add to your faith.” This puts faith first as the only link to connect the heart with Christ, the living source of all power. Having Christ and abiding in Him, we are enabled to add “courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.” Such are the precious fruits that flow from abiding in Christ. But I can no more control my temper than my tongue or my thoughts, and if I set about it, I shall be sure to break down every hour. A mere philosopher without Christ may exhibit more self-control as to tongue and temper than a Christian, if he abides not in Christ. This ought not to be and would not be if the Christian simply looked to Jesus. It is when he fails in this that the enemy gains the advantage. The philosopher without Christ seems to succeed in the great business of self-control only that he may be the more effectively blinded as to the truth of his condition and carried headlong to eternal ruin. But Satan delights to make a Christian stumble and fall, only that he may thereby blaspheme the precious name of Christ.

Christian reader, let us remember these things. Let us look to Christ to control our thoughts, our tongue and our temper. Let us “give all diligence.” Let us think how much is involved. “If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath

forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” This is deeply solemn. How easy it is to drop into a state of spiritual blindness and forgetfulness! No amount of knowledge, either of doctrine or the letter of Scripture, will preserve the soul from this awful condition. Nothing but “the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” will avail. This knowledge is increased in the soul by “giving all diligence to add to our faith” the various graces to which the apostle refers in the above eminently practical and soul-stirring passage. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Jude, Malachi

THE CLOSING SCENES OF MALACHI AND JUDE

In comparing these two inspired writings, we find many points of similarity and many points of contrast. Both the prophet and apostle portray scenes of ruin, corruption and apostasy. The former is occupied with the ruin of Judaism, the latter with the ruin of Christendom. The prophet Malachi, in his opening sentences, gives with uncommon vividness the source of Israel's blessing and the secret of their fall. "I have loved you, saith the Lord." Here was the grand source of all their blessedness, all their glory, all their dignity. Jehovah's love accounts for all the brighter glories of Israel's past and all the brighter glories of Israel's future. On the other hand, their bold and infidel challenge, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" accounts for the deepest depths of Israel's present degradation.

To put such a question, after all that Jehovah had done for them from the days of Moses to the days of Solomon, proved a condition of heart insensible to the very last degree. Those who, with the marvelous history of Jehovah's actings before their eyes, could say, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" were beyond the reach of all moral appeal. Therefore, we need not be surprised at the prophet's burning words. We are prepared for such sentences as the following: "If then I be a father, where is My honor? and if I be a master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests that despise My name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy name?" There was the most thorough insensibility both as to the Lord's love and as to their own evil ways. There was the hardness of heart that could say, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" and "Wherein have we wronged Thee?" And all this with the history of a thousand years before their eyes — a history overlapped by the unexampled grace, mercy and patience of God, a history stained from first to last with the record of their unfaithfulness, folly and sin.

But let us hearken to the touching remonstrances of the grieved and offended God of Israel. "Ye offer polluted bread upon Mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee? In that ye

say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts... who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? Neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even His meat is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord.”

Here then we have a sad and dreary picture of Israel's moral condition. The public worship of God had fallen into utter contempt. His altar was insulted, His service despised. As to the priests, it was a mere question of money. As to the people, the whole thing had become a weariness, an empty formality, a dull and heartless routine. There was no heart for God. There was plenty of heart for gain. Any sacrifice, however maimed and torn, was deemed good enough for the altar of God. The lame, the blind and the sick, the very worst that could be had, such as they would not dare to offer to a human governor, was laid on the altar of God. And if a door was to be opened or a fire kindled, it must be paid for. No pay, no work. Such was the lamentable condition of things in the days of Malachi. It makes the heart sick to contemplate it.

But, thanks and praise be to God, there is another side of the picture. There were some rare and lovely exceptions to the gloomy rule — some striking and beautiful forms standing out in relief from the dark background. It is truly refreshing in the midst of all this venality and corruption, coldness and hollowness, barrenness and heartlessness, pride and stoutness of heart, to read such words as these: “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another;

and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.”

How precious is this brief record! How delightful to contemplate this remnant in the midst of the moral ruin! There is no pretension or assumption, no attempt to set up anything, no effort to reconstruct the fallen economy, no affected display of power. Here is felt-weakness and a looking to Jehovah. This is the true secret of all real power. We need never be afraid of conscious weakness. It is impressive strength that we have to dread and shrink from. “When I am weak, then am I strong” is ever the rule for the people of God — a blessed rule, most surely. God is to be counted upon always. We may lay it down as a great root principle that, no matter what may be the actual state of the professing body, individual faith can enjoy communion with God according to the very highest truth of the dispensation.

This is a grand principle to grasp and hold fast. Let the professing people of God be ever individuals who judge and humble themselves before God, who can enjoy His presence and blessing without hindrance or limit. Witness the Daniels, the Mordecais, the Ezras, the Nehemiahs, the Josiahs, the Hezekiahs, and scores of others who walked with God, carried out the highest principles and enjoyed the rarest privileges of the dispensation, when all lay in hopeless ruin around them. There was a passover celebrated in the days of Josiah such as had not been known from the days of Samuel the prophet (2 Chr. 35: 18). The feeble remnant, on their return from Babylon, celebrated the feast of tabernacles, a privilege which had not been tasted since the days of Joshua the son of Nun (Neh. 8: 17). Mordecai, without ever striking a blow, gained as splendid a victory over Amalek as that achieved by Joshua in the days of Exodus 17 (Esther 6: 11-12). In the book of Daniel we see earth's proudest monarch prostrate at the feet of a captive Jew.

What do all these cases teach us? What lesson do they tell out in our ears? Simply that the humble, believing and obedient soul is permitted to enjoy the very deepest and richest communion with God, in spite of the failure and ruin of God's professing people and the departed glory of the dispensation in which his lot is cast.

Thus it was in the closing scenes of Malachi. All was in hopeless ruin, but that did not hinder those who loved and feared the Lord from getting together to speak about Him and to muse upon His precious name. True, that feeble remnant was not like the great congregation which assembled in the days of Solomon, from Dan to Beersheba, but it had a glory unique to itself. It had the divine presence in a way no less marvelous though not so striking. We are not told of any "book of remembrance" in the days of Solomon. We are not told of Jehovah's hearkening and hearing. Perhaps it may be said, there was no need. Be it so, but that does not dim the luster of the grace that shone upon the little band in the days of Malachi. We may boldly affirm that Jehovah's heart was as refreshed by the loving breathings of that little band as by the splendid sacrifice in the days of Solomon's dedication. Their love shines out all the brighter in contrast with the heartless formalism of the professing body, and the corruption of the priests.

"And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts."

We shall now briefly glance at the epistle of Jude. Here we have a still more appalling picture of apostasy and corruption. It is a familiar saying among us, that the corruption of the best thing is the worst corruption. Hence it is that the Apostle Jude spreads before us a page so very much darker and more awful than that presented by the prophet Malachi. It is the record of man's utter failure and ruin under the very highest and richest privileges which could be conferred upon him.

In the opening of his solemn address, the apostle lets us know that it was laid upon his heart “to write unto us of the common salvation.” This would have been his far more delightful task. It would have been his joy and his refreshment to expand upon the present privileges and future glories wrapped up in the comprehensive folds of that precious word “salvation.” But he felt it “needful” to turn from this more congenial work to fortify our souls against the rising tide of error and evil which threatened the very foundations of Christianity. “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should *earnestly contend for the faith* which was once delivered unto the saints.” All that was vital and fundamental was at stake. It was a question of earnestly contending for the faith itself. “For there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is far worse than anything we have in Malachi. There it was a question of the law, as we read, “Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” But in Jude it is not a question of forgetting the law, but of actually turning into sensualness the pure and precious grace of God, and denying the Lordship of Christ. Therefore, instead of dwelling upon the salvation of God, the apostle seeks to fortify us against the wickedness and lawlessness of men. “I will therefore,” he says, “put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

All this is most solemn, but we cannot dwell upon the dark features of this scene: space does not allow it. Besides, we rather desire to present to the Christian reader the charming picture of the Christian remnant given in the closing lines of this most searching scripture. As in Malachi we have amid the helpless ruin of Judaism, a devoted band of Jewish worshipers who loved and feared the Lord

and took sweet counsel together, so in Jude, amid the more appalling ruins of Christian profession, the Holy Spirit introduces a company whom He addresses as “Beloved.” These are “sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” These He solemnly warns against the varied forms of error and evil which were already beginning to make their appearance, but have since assumed such formidable proportions. To these He turns, with the most exquisite grace, and addresses the following exhortation, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

Here we have divine security against all the dark and terrible forms of apostasy — “the way of Cain, the error of Baalam, the gainsaying of Core, the murmurers and complainers, the great swelling words, the raging waves, the wandering stars, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.” The “beloved” are to “build themselves up on their most holy faith.”

Let the reader note this. There is not a syllable here about an order of men to succeed the apostles, not a word about gifted men of any sort. It is well to see this and to bear it ever in mind. We hear a great deal of our lack of gift and power, of our not having pastors and teachers. How could we expect to have much gift or power? Do we deserve them? Regretfully we have failed and sinned and come short. Let us own this and cast ourselves upon the living God who never fails a trusting heart.

Look at Paul's touching address to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20. To whom does he there commend us in view of the passing away of apostolic ministry? Is there a word about successors to the apostles? Not one, unless indeed it be the “grievous wolves” of which he speaks or those men who were to arise in the very bosom of the Church, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. What then is the resource of the faithful? “I commend you *to God and to the Word of His grace*, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

What a precious resource! Not a word about gifted men, valuable as such may be in their right place. God forbid we should

in any way depreciate the gifts which, in spite of all the failure and sin, our gracious Lord may see fit to bestow upon His Church. But still it holds good that the blessed apostle, in taking leave of the Church, commends us not to gifted men, but to God Himself and the Word of His grace. Hence it follows that, let our weakness be ever so great, we have God to look to and to lean upon. He never fails those who trust Him. There is no limit whatsoever to the blessing which our souls may taste, if only we look to God in humility of mind and childlike confidence.

Here lies the secret of all true blessedness and spiritual power — humility of mind and simple confidence. There must on the one hand be no assumption of power, and on the other, we must not, in the unbelief of our hearts, limit the goodness and faithfulness of our God. He can and does bestow gifts for the building up of His people. He would bestow much more if we were not so ready to manage for ourselves. If the Church would but look more to Christ her living Head and loving Lord, instead of to the arrangements of men and the methods of this world, she would have a very different tale to tell. But if we, by our unbelieving plans and our restless efforts to provide a machinery for ourselves, quench, hinder and grieve the Holy Spirit, need we marvel if we are left to prove the barrenness and emptiness, the desolation and confusion of all such things? Christ is sufficient, but He must be proved, He must be trusted, He must be allowed to act. The platform must be left perfectly clear for the Holy Spirit to display thereon the preciousness, the fullness, the all-sufficiency of Christ.

But it is precisely in this very thing we so remarkably fail. We try to hide our weakness instead of owning it. We seek to cover our nakedness by a drapery of our own providing, instead of confiding simply and entirely in Christ for all we need. We grow weary of the attitude of humble patient waiting. We are in haste to put on an appearance of strength. This is our folly and our grievous loss. If we could only be induced to believe it, our real strength is to know our weakness and cling to Christ in absolute faith from day to day.

It is to this most excellent way that the apostle Jude exhorts the Christian remnant in his closing lines. “Ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith.” These words set forth the

responsibility of all true Christians to be found together instead of being divided and scattered. We are to help one another in love, according to the measure of grace bestowed and the nature of the gift communicated. It is a mutual thing — ”building up yourselves.” It is not looking to an order of men, nor is it complaining of our lack of gifts, but simply each doing what he can to promote the common blessing and profit of all.

The reader will notice the four things which we are exhorted to do, namely “Building,” “Praying,” ”Keeping,” ”Looking.” What blessed work is here! Yes, and it is work for all. There is not one true Christian on the face of the earth who cannot fulfill any or all of these branches of ministry. Indeed every person is responsible so to do. We can build ourselves up on our most holy faith, we can pray in the Holy Spirit, we can keep ourselves in the love of God, and while doing these things we can look out for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be asked, “Who are the beloved? To whom does the term apply?” Our answer is, “To whomsoever it may concern.” Let us see to it that we are on the ground of those to whom the precious title applies. It is not *assuming* the title, but *occupying* the true moral ground. It is not empty profession, but real possession. It is not claiming the name, but being the thing.

Nor does the responsibility of the Christian remnant end here. It is not merely of themselves they have to think. They are to cast a loving look and stretch forth a helping hand beyond the circumference of their own circle. “And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” Who are the “some?” and who are the “others?” Is there not the same beautiful undefinedness about these as there is about the “Beloved?” These latter will be at no loss to find out the former. There are precious souls scattered up and down amid the appalling ruins of Christendom, “some” of them to be looked upon with tender compassion, “others” to be saved with godly fear, lest the “beloved” should become involved in the defilement.

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that, in order to pluck people out of the fire, we must go into the fire ourselves. This would never do. The best way to deliver people from an evil position *is to be thoroughly out of that position myself*. How can I best pull a man out of a morass? Surely not by going into the morass, but by standing on firm ground and from there lending him a helping hand. I cannot pull a man out of anything unless I am out myself. If we want to help the people of God who are mixed up with the surrounding ruin, the first thing for ourselves is to be in thorough and decided separation. The next thing is to have our hearts brimful and flowing over with tender and fervent love to all who bear the precious name of Jesus.

Here we must close, and in doing so we shall quote for the reader that blessed doxology with which the apostle sums up his solemn and weighty address. “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” We have a great deal about “falling” in this epistle -Israel falling, angels falling, cities falling, but blessed be God, there is One who is able to keep us from falling, and it is to His holy keeping we are committed.

Revelation 1: 5-7.

Pre-Millennial Doctrine or Waiting for the Son?

In a day like the present, when knowledge on every question is so widely diffused, it is most needful to press upon the conscience of the Christian reader the vast distinction between merely holding the *doctrine* of the Lord's second coming and actually waiting for His appearing (1 Thess. 1: 10). Many, alas! hold and, it may be, eloquently preach, the doctrine of a second advent who really do not know *the Person* whose advent they profess to believe and preach. This evil must be faithfully pointed out and dealt with. The present is an age of knowledge — of religious knowledge; but oh! knowledge is not life, knowledge is not power — knowledge will not deliver from sin or Satan, from the world, from death, from hell. Knowledge, I mean, short of the knowledge of God in Christ. One may know a great deal of Scripture, a great deal of prophecy, a great deal of doctrine, and, all the while, be dead in trespasses and sins.

There is, however, one kind of knowledge which necessarily involves eternal life, and that is the knowledge of God, as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. "This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17: 3). Now, it is impossible to be living in the daily and hourly expectation of "the coming of the Son of Man," if the Son of Man be not experimentally known. I may take up the prophetic record, and by mere study, and the exercise of my intellectual faculties, discover the doctrine of the Lord's second coming, and yet be totally ignorant of Christ, and living a life of entire alienation of heart from Him.

How often has this been the case! How many have astonished us with their vast fund of prophetic knowledge — a fund acquired, it may be, by years of laborious research, and yet, in the end, proved themselves to have been displaying unhallowed light — light not acquired by prayerful waiting upon God! Surely the thought of this should deeply affect our hearts and solemnise our minds and lead us to inquire whether or not *we* know the blessed Person who, again and again, announces Himself as about to "come quickly"; else, if we

know Him not, we may find ourselves of the number of those addressed by the prophet in the following startling words: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light? even very dark and no brightness in it?" (Amos 5: 18-20)

Matthew 2 furnishes us with a very striking illustration of the difference between mere prophetic knowledge of Christ-between the exercise of the intellect on the letter of Scripture, and the drawings of the Father to the Person of Christ. The wise men, manifestly led by the finger of God, were in true and earnest search of Christ, and they found Him. As to scriptural knowledge, they could not, for a moment have competed with the chief priests and scribes; yet what did the scriptural knowledge of the latter do for them? Why, it rendered them efficient instruments for Herod, who called them together for the purpose of making use of their Biblical knowledge in his deadly opposition to God's Anointed. They were able to give him chapter and verse, as we say. But, while they were assisting Herod by their knowledge, the wise men were, by the drawings of the Father, making their way to Jesus. Blessed contrast! How much happier to be a worshipper at the feet of Jesus, though with slender knowledge, than to be a learned scribe, and a heart cold, dead, and distant from that blessed One! How much better to have the heart full of lively affection for Christ than to have the intellect stored with the most accurate knowledge of the letter of Scripture!

What is the melancholy characteristic of the present time? A wide diffusion of scriptural knowledge with little love for Christ, and little devotedness to His work; abundant readiness to quote Scripture, like the scribes and chief priests, but little purpose of heart, like the wise men, to open the treasures and present to Christ the willing offerings of a heart filled by the sense of what He is. What we want is personal devotedness, and not the mere empty display of knowledge. It is not that we would undervalue scriptural knowledge; God forbid, if that knowledge be found in connection with genuine discipleship. But if it be not, I ask, of what value is it?

None whatever. The most extensive range of knowledge, if Christ be not its centre, will avail just nothing; yea, it will, in all probability, render us more efficient instruments in Satan's hand for the furthering of his purposes of hostility to Christ. An ignorant man can do but little mischief; but a learned man, without Christ, can do a great deal.

The verses which stand at the head of this paper present to us the divine basis on which to found all scriptural knowledge, more especially prophetic knowledge. Before any one can utter his hearty amen to the announcement, "Behold He cometh with clouds," he must, without any question, be able to join in the blessed burst of praise, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." The believer knows the One who is coming, because He has loved him, and washed him from his sins. The believer expects the everlasting Lover of his soul. The meek and lowly One who served, suffered, and was emptied down here, will speedily come in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory, and *all* who know Him will welcome Him with glad hosannahs — they will be able to say, "This is the Lord, *we have waited for* Him, we will rejoice and be glad in His salvation." But, alas! there are, it is to be feared, very many who hold and argue about the Lord's coming who are not waiting for Him at all, who are living for themselves in the world, and "mind earthly things." How terrible to be found talking about the Lord's coming, and yet, when He does come, *to be left behind!* Oh! think of this; and if you are really conscious that you know not the Lord, then let me entreat of you to behold Him shedding His precious blood to wash you from your sins, and learn to confide in Him, to lean upon Him, to rejoice in Him and *in Him alone*.

But if you can look up to Heaven, and say, "Thank God, I do know Him, and I am waiting for Him," then let me remind you of what the Apostle John says, as to the practical result of this blessed hope. "Every man that hath this hope *in him*, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Yes, this must ever be the result of waiting for the Son from Heaven; but not at all so of the mere prophetic doctrine. Many of the most impure, profane and ungodly characters, that have made their appearance in the world, have held, in theory, the second advent of Christ; but they were not *waiting for the Son*, and therefore

they did not, and could not purify themselves. It is impossible that any one can be waiting for Christ's appearing, and not make efforts after increased holiness, separation, and devotedness of heart: "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that watcheth." Those who know the Lord Jesus Christ, and love His appearing, will daily seek to shake off everything contrary to their Master's mind; they will seek to become more and more conformed to Him in all things. Men may hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and yet grasp the world and the things thereof with great eagerness; but the true hearted servant will ever keep his eye steadily fixed on his Master's return, remembering His blessed words, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 3).

What a day will that be when the Saviour appears!

How welcome to those who have shared in His present rejection.

A crown incorruptible then will be theirs —

A rich compensation for suffering and loss.

[STEM Publishing: The writings of C. H. Mackintosh](#): Simon Peter - His life and its lessons.

Revelation 1:5, 6

The Love of Jesus.

In looking at Revelation 1: 5, 6, we can trace the following actings of love: first, love *thinks* of its objects. This marks the motive in operation to be unaffectedly pure, for when the heart regales itself by meditating on its object, it seeks not to be noticed, to be praised or exalted for thinking of its object; its reward is found in the very thought itself — a reward, a pleasure with which nothing can compare.

Secondly, love *visits* its object. It could not be content with merely thinking: the same principle that leads love to *think* with pleasure, induces it to *visit* its object; and, moreover, we can trace the same purity, elevation, and disinterestedness, in the visit as in *the thought*. It does not *think* upon its object in order to please or attract the attention of any one, neither does it *visit* in order to effect such ends; it has *its own real, substantial* enjoyment, both in thinking of and visiting *its object*.

Thirdly, love *suffers* for its object. It rests not satisfied with merely *thinking* of, or *visiting* its object — it *must suffer*. In order to exhibit itself in all its reality and intensity, love must put itself to cost for its object; it must spend and be spent, not because it expects a return, but simply because *it will* express itself in a way not to be mistaken. Love never thinks of what it may reap for itself in thus suffering. No: it simply contemplates *its object*, in thinking of, visiting, and suffering for it.

Fourthly, love *exalts* its object. This is the highest point. In the exaltation of its object, love sees the fruit of previous thought, visitation, and suffering. Hence, loves feels exquisite happiness in exalting its object, for in so doing, it reaps the wished-for harvest.

Let us now apply the above blessed characteristics of love to the Lord Jesus, and see how His love exhibited all of them. Did not He ponder in His own eternal mind His much-loved Church before the foundation of the world? Yes, truly, "His gracious eye surveyed us ere stars were seen above." Did He rest satisfied with merely

thinking about us? No: He laid aside all His glory; He came down into this cold, heartless world, as into a vast quarry, from whence He hoped to hew out stones for the temple. He made His way down into this "*rough valley*" of ours, which had "neither been eared nor sown." "The day-spring from on *high* hath *visited us*;" but He did not rest satisfied with coming down to look at us in our misery and degradation; He determined to *suffer* for us, to groan, to bleed, to die for us; He hath washed us in "*His own blood*," which marks the intensity of His suffering for us. What, then, was all this for? Why those ineffable sufferings of Jesus? Why the groans and bloody sweat in the garden? Why the mysterious hour of profound darkness, together with the cry, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Simply that the love of Jesus might *exalt* its object. And He has exalted His object, yea, to the highest point of elevation: "He hath made us kings and priests unto God."

Thus we have seen how the love of Jesus has *thought of, visited, suffered for, and exalted* its object: this is for our comfort. But then we should remember that if we love Jesus, *we too* will often like to *think* of Him, to contemplate His grace, ponder over His perfections; moreover, we will pay frequent *visits* to the secret of His sanctuary, not to gain a name as persons of much prayer, but simply to indulge the desires of our hearts after Him "who is the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Again, we shall be ready to *suffer* for Him, not in order to commend ourselves to our brethren as persons of great energy and zeal, but to express the high estimation in which we hold His blessed Person. Finally, it will be our constant effort to *exalt* Him in every place; our constant cry will be, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Let us earnestly pray for such a deep tide of Divine love in our poor, cold, narrow, selfish hearts, as will make our service not the mere spurt of imperfect zeal, kindled by the unhallowed spark of human opinion, but the calm, steady, constant flow of unalterable affection for Jesus — that affection which has its primary joy in *pondering* over its object, ere it comes forth as an *actor* or a *sufferer* in *His cause*.

"Come, saints, praise the Lamb, His mercies proclaim,

And lift up your heads and sing of His name;

His love to the Church, which He purchased with blood,
To make her His bride and the temple of God."

Revelation 3:3, 11

Our Standard and Our Hope.

There are two very important principles presented in Revelation 3: 3, 11, which are profoundly interesting, but clear, simple, easily grasped, and full of power, when understood — two distinct things which characterise the overcomer. The first is the truth that has been communicated; and the second, the hope that is set before us.

We find these two things illustrated in Israel's history, and in the history of the Church of God — what He has given us, and what is held out before us. These two things are to form your character and mine. We are not to be influenced by the character of things around, or the present condition of the people of God; but we are to be influenced by what God *has* given, and what He *will* give. We are apt to be discouraged and disheartened by the state of things around, and to surrender everything because of the ruin, and thus get paralysed; but if you get hold of these two things, or rather if they get hold of you, they will enable you to stem the tide and to be an overcomer. You are to remember what you have received and heard, and cherish the hope of glory.

We have Protestantism before us in Sardis. You must always distinguish between a work of the Spirit of God and the state of things resulting from it through man's interference, human management, earthly machinery, stereotyping the form when the power was gone. The Reformation was a distinct work of the Spirit of God, a wave of spiritual power. Protestantism is the powerless form which, through human weakness and Satan's craft, has followed that glorious season of divine visitation.

Fifty years ago there was a very distinct movement of the Spirit of God, which drew many out of the enclosures of Christendom. But what use has been made of it? When the energy, freshness, and bloom of the Spirit had departed, what followed, in many cases? Why, people slipped into what may be called dead brethrenism, and there is nothing worse than that, because the

corruption of the best thing is the worst corruption. What is our moral safeguard? Simply to hold fast what we have received, and to live in the blessed hope of Christ's coming, to realize in our own souls the power of what God has given and what He will give.

We find illustrations of this in Old Testament times. All the great reformatory movements in Israel were characterised by this very thing. It was so in Jehoshaphat's time, and in Hezekiah's time. The Lord calls back His people to the original standard, to what they had received at the first. Hezekiah goes back to Moses, as his authority to maintain the divine standard in the celebration of the Passover. Many might have said, Oh, it is all hopeless; your national unity is gone. Even Solomon had left abominations behind him. The devil suggests to lower the standard because of the ruin; but Hezekiah did not listen to that. He was an overcomer. A tide of blessing rolled in, such as had not been known since the days of Solomon (2 Chr. 30).

So, again, in the days of Josiah: a child was on the throne; a woman filling the prophetic office; Nebuchadnezzar almost at the gates. What did Josiah do? The book of the law was read. Instead of lowering the standard on account of the state of things, he acted on the Word of God; that was his standard of action, and he kept the Passover in the first month. The result was, there had not been such a Passover since the days of Samuel.

Thus was it with Hezekiah and Josiah; and we have a still more beautiful example of it in Ezra and Nehemiah. In those days a feast was kept which had not been observed since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. It was reserved for that poor, little remnant to keep that feast. They were overcomers; they went back to God, and to what He had given at the beginning.

Again, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego gained a magnificent victory when they refused to eat the king's meat. They would not yield one hair's breadth. Were not they overcomers? They might have said, God in His governmental dealings has sent us into captivity; why should we refuse to eat the king's meat? But no! they were enabled to hold up the standard of God in the midst of the ruin around.

It was the same with Daniel. He stood in unshaken faithfulness, and gained a splendid victory. It was not to make a show that he opened his windows, and prayed towards Jerusalem, but to maintain the truth of God; he prayed towards God's centre, and he was called the servant of the living God. If these had surrendered, they would have lost their victories, and God would have been dishonoured.

All this bears upon us in a very distinct way, in the midst of Protestantism. It makes the Word of God of unspeakable value to us. It is not a question of setting up our own opinion or authority, but we are called on to maintain the truth of God, and nothing else; and if you do not get hold of that, you do not know where you are. It might have been said to Josiah, when he broke down the high places built by Solomon (2 Kings 23: 13), Who are you, to set yourself up against Solomon, and the institutions set up by a great man like him? But it was not a question of Josiah *versus* Solomon, but of God *versus* error.

And now, as to our second great principle, namely, that our character is also to be formed by what is before us — the coming of the Lord. But mark here, the church of Sardis, instead of being cheered by the Church's proper hope, the bright and Morning Star, is warned, "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." This is how He will come upon the world — as a thief. We belong to the region of light; our proper hope is the Morning Star, which is only seen by those who are watching during the night. The reason why Sardis is warned, instead of cheered by the hope of His coming, is, that it has sunk down to the world's level: low, lifeless, sapless Christianity; and it will overtake them as a thief.

This is what Protestantism is threatened with, and what you are threatened with, if you let yourself go down with the stream, like a dead fish. The Lord is awakening the hearts of His people to a deeper sense of this. He is giving them to see that nothing will do, save downright reality. If we have not this, we have nothing. It is one thing to have doctrines in the mind, and another thing altogether to *have* Christ in the heart and Christ in the life.

He is coming for *me*, and I have to watch for the bright and Morning Star. Now let my heart rise up, and overcome the condition of things around. If I find saints in that condition, I seek to rouse them out of it. If you want to instruct saints, you must bring them back to the truth you have received, what God gave at the beginning. Build on what God has given you, and on the hope that is set before you. I find it a great thing to say to any one, Are you prepared to abandon everything that will not bear the test of the Word of God — to take your stand on that?

Hold fast the standard of the truth of God, and do not accept anything less; even though you may be alone. If a regiment were cut to pieces, and only one man left, if he hold the colours, the dignity of the regiment is maintained. It is not a question of results, but of being true to Christ, to be really alive in a scene which is characterised by having "a name to live, while dead." We want something more than mere profession. Even the breaking of bread may become an empty formality. We want more power and freshness, more living devotedness to the Person of Christ. We are called to overcome. The hearing ear is found only with the overcomer increasingly. May our hearts be stirred up to desire it.