

The Question in Life Everyone Must Answer

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Milford Hall, Sr.

Children of men:—

I do not want to be seen in this sermon. I want only to be heard. My one and only desire is to set before my readers Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, — If it may be lawful to call Him a Man — and Him crucified, and not to crucify Him in this sermon; Christ alone, and not Christ and Company. I am only the delivery wagon. When the drayman comes to your home, you are not interested in how it looks; you are much interested in the wares it brings you. You know that some very fine merchandise is sometimes conveyed to you in some weak and shabby vehicles.

So in this sermon, please do not pay too much attention to the dray cart—how much it squeaks, shakes, reels and rocks. Pay no attention to the wrapping and strings. Open up the goods quickly. Actually, I think well of the wares. I am about to tell you something of the greatest thing of life—not mine, not yours alone, but every human's.

Children of men, open up the goods as fast as you can. Our glorious Redeemer once said to His disciples, "Gather up the

fragments that remain, that nothing be lost; and they gathered them together (John 6:12, 13). I also of late have been busily engaged in gathering together a few scattered fragments, and arranging them in due order, so that they might not be lost. I myself enjoyed much pleasure in first forming them; and now, as they are gathered together, I take the liberty of laying them before you, not in a book, but in a booklet, and you can examine them at your leisure and choose and refuse according to the wisdom given unto you by Him who "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5)

To many people, no doubt, these fragments will be coolly received; but to some few they may be a feast. And it was so in the days of the apostles; and hence Paul says "To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the others, the savor of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16). But this matter I can quickly leave in the hands of One with whom it will be safe and well managed, for He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). And in the hands of this holy One of Israel (Isa. 32:23), I have committed much before now, and all is going on well; and as He is the "same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:1), so all will end well, I hope and believe.

The brethren, sisters and friends who may peruse the following pages will, of course, not expect superiority of style or richness of embellishment; for the humble writer has endeavored to clothe his ideas with the most simple, plain, and forcible soul-language that his limited capacities would permit him to do. His aim has been to exhibit the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: for certain it is that nothing short of the truth will profit him or his readers. He has not forgotten that truth is truth even when dressed in homespun; and that truth needs no flowers of speech. How nearly he may have approximated that desirable object, or how far he may have fallen short of it, must be submitted to Him "who

knoweth all things;" and to those who may examine this work, should any read with the view of fault-finding, they may be accommodated, for the author makes no claim to infallibility. Although he attaches no particular importance to the work, he submits to its publication; he willingly submits it to the closest scrutiny: and where there may be error advanced, his wish is that it may be discovered and avoided. It is hereby humbly devoted to the "Children of men," and especially to the brethren and Christian friends of—Milford Hall, Sr.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my grandson, Milford Ray Allen

What Think Ye of Christ

(Matthew 22:42)

All objections to the Christian system are in the last analysis, objections to the doctrine of vicarious atonement. The great controversy between corrupt nature and Almighty God is not whether any or all of the human race shall be saved; but who shall have the glory of salvation ascribed to him. God, or the creature. The pride of man prompts him to say, "The glory of salvation is due to me; for I saved myself." But the great Jehovah justly challenges the glory of salvation to Himself and says, "I will have all the glory thereof: for it is by My sovereign and efficacious grace that men are saved." (Isa. 42:8; Eph. 2:1-10).

Hence the pertinency of the question, "*What think ye of Christ?*" There is a depth in every place of scripture which though it seems to be very plain to the carnal eye, yet the spiritual depth thereof cannot be fathomed without the help of the Spirit of God. There is also a great depth in this question; angels cannot sound the depth thereof; they pry into it, and cannot think enough of Christ; they can never think too much of Him—and what shall *men* say in answer to the question, *What think ye of Christ?*

When, in preaching the gospel, Christ is revealed, people may think of Him, and yet think amiss, unless their thoughts are spiritualized by a supernatural change of the mind and saving illumination of their understanding in the knowledge of Christ. Some natural impressions men have of God as a Lawgiver standing upon terms of obedience with them—but

God in Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, is such a hidden mystery that even when the objective revelation of this mystery is made, without the internal, saving illumination of the knowledge thereof, men CANNOT have any due comprehension of it. It is impossible, in the black state of nature to think upon Christ or spiritual things, in a spiritual manner, as it is for a man that was born blind to judge of colors, or to be taken up with their beauty or luster. "The natural man receives not the things of God; they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). This discerning he cannot have till he be translated out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and till God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).

People then may think of Christ, yet think amiss, without this saving illumination. Therefore the question is not merely concerning the ACT of thinking, but the QUALITY thereof—it is not, Have you any thoughts of Christ: do you ever think of Him! but WHAT think ye of Christ? Think not that thoughts are free any more than your words or actions before God. It is His prerogative to lay hands upon the inner man, and to judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, who is here putting the question to you; and He is the fittest hand, for He knows what way our thoughts are running: He is the WITNESS and will be the JUDGE of your thoughts, which are all under His jurisdiction. Therefore it is His unquestionable right to call you to an account of your thoughts:—thoughts are as visible and evident as actions to Him (Heb. 4:15). He knows our thoughts afar off, even before we conceive them; and thoughts are actions before Him: heart-thoughts are heart-acts, and real deeds in His sight. The adulterous thought is adultery before Him and will be judged as such—the covetous thought is idolatry before Him; the malicious thought is murder; and the unbelieving thought is unbelief; the contemning thought of Christ is contempt itself: He is

an infinite Spirit that sees our thoughts better than men can see our actions.

As God will judge us by the thoughts we have of Christ, so we ought to try and judge ourselves by this rule. They that think much of themselves and little or nothing of Christ, despise Him, and God despises them; therefore the great question is "*What think ye of Christ?*"

The unregenerate are afraid of TRUTH, and are not willing to risk their souls, eternally, upon *another's death*, another's life. They do not THINK well of Christ, in other words. Pride urges all men to be independent. There is in the consciousness of every unregenerate man the idea that you cannot get something for nothing. So he strives to obtain salvation by his own efforts, not knowing that God was, and is completely satisfied through the "work" which Christ accomplished on the Cross. The unrenewed heart finds it very difficult to believe that so great a treasure as the Holy Ghost is obtained by the mere "hearing of faith." He likes to work He likes to say, "Half mine!" He will not be saved for nothing if he can help it. God finds in every man a will to be worked upon, but no man is willing to be worked upon (Rom. 5:12; 8:7; I Cor. 2:14).

Kind reader, the days of Noah have come again. Man has made man his god. It is later than most people think. All the great changes and revolutions now coming in the world are but the turning of the wheels of providence making way for the second personal coming of Christ. Do not the present world-shaking events prove beyond a doubt that we have fallen into the dregs of time, and that the end is nigh, even at our doors? We see according to scripture, that "evil men are waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Man has made man his god! "Cease ye from man!" (Isa 2:22). Said Jesus, "There is none good but One, that is God."

"The lofty heart cannot submit
To cast itself at Jesus' feet;
It scorns in borrowed robe to shine,
Though woven with righteousness divine.

"Proud nature cries with loathing eyes,
'This imputation I despise,'
And from it will pertly start,
Till grace has broken down her heart."

Therefore, the all-important question is: *"What think ye of Christ?"* If you might have perfect health, associations, and all worldly ease and delight, without Jesus, would you accept them on such terms! If with an interest in Jesus you must have bodily suffering, outward disappointment, frustrated hopes, and broken purpose, would you forego Him to get rid of them?

Will this "faith" save me when I come to stand before the throne of the Lamb! Will this "love" give me boldness in the day of judgment! Will this "evidence" serve my turn when I come to die! O Christians, let us be afraid to lie down with that "evidence" in our beds, wherewith we dare not lie down in our graves. Have you ever stood on the same plot of ground with the publican crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Can you call God your Father, Christ your elder Brother, and the blessed Spirit your Friend and Comforter! These are momentous questions which must be answered sooner or later, by every son and daughter of Adam. *"What think ye of Christ? What think ye of Christ?"* We cannot ask ourselves this question too often, neither those with whom we associate or meet. I am not afraid of alarming people too much about their souls: I wish I could hear more crying out: "What must I do to be saved!" under a feeling sense of their lost and ruined condition, and crying earnestly for mercy. What an awful thing to die without

repentance! What God may do for you before you die it is not for me to say, but—

"You that die without repentance,
You must rise when Christ appears;
Rise to hear your dreadful sentence,
While the saints rejoice in theirs.

"You to dwell with fiends eternal,
They with Jesus Christ to reign;
They go into life eternal,
You to everlasting pain."

Again I wish to say with great earnestness, "*What think ye of Christ?*" Give honest answers to these questions: Can a man lift himself up from the ground by pulling upon his own boot-straps! Can Niagara run itself back into Erie! Can a fallen creature make itself unfallen—a serpent change itself back into a seraph, or by an effort of will, cast out a poison which permeates his whole nature! "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots! Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil"(Jer. 13:23). Every apostasy, every heresy will, if probed deep enough, be found to have its evil roots in "the love of money." If a man is not for ANOTHER, for God: he is for "himself," for gain, i.e., MAMMON. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves," said Paul to the Corinthian brethren (2 Cor. 13:5). Let's give ourselves a good "talking-to" betimes!

Our religion should be our steering wheel, but too often it as a spare tire—useful only in a blow-out.

"What think ye of Christ is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,

Unless you think rightly of Him.

As Jesus appears in our view,
As He is beloved or not;
So God is disposed toward you,
And mercy or wrath are your lot.

"Some take Him a creature to be,
A man, or an angel at most:
Sure these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in His blood,
Unless I were sure He is God.

"Some call Him a Savior in word,
But mix their own works with His plan;
And hope He His help will afford,
When they have done all they can;
If doings prove rather too light,
A little, they own, they may fail,
They purpose to make up full weight,
By casting His name in the scale.

"Some style Him the Pearl of great price,
And say He's the Fountain of joys;
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys.

Like Jude, the Savior they kiss
And while they salute Him, betray;
Ah! what will profession like this
Avail in His terrible day!

"If asked what of Jesus I think,
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and strength, and my store;

My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Savior from sin and from thrall;
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my All."

What think ye of Christ? Do you think well of Him! Does your Bible speak well of Him! These are serious questions. Give honest answers to them, courteous reader.

"Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasure while we live;
'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die"

"More needful this than glittering wealth,
Or ought the world bestows;
Not reputation, food or health,
Can give us such repose."

What think ye of Christ? Is He a saving Savior to you! Do you feel your need of Him! This He gives you!

"Vain is all our best devotion,
If on false foundations built;
True religion's more than notion,
Something must be known and *felt*.

Therefore beware of trusting to a little head knowledge; for, depend upon it, that lamp will not stand the appearance of an

angry Judge (Prov. 13:9). "Our lamps are gone out," say the foolish virgins. How should it be otherwise, where there was no oil to feed the flame, no golden pipe of faith to bring it from the bowl of the candlestick! (Zech. 4:2, 3). Thou mayest be so reformed as to deceive many, yea, thou mayest *preach* and *pray* too, and have a deal of zeal and *diligence* about thee; insomuch that thou mayest almost, if not altogether deceive the very elect. But all thy zeal, joy, diligence, and gifts shall wither, "if the root of the matter be not in thee" (Job 19:28). And thou wilt then fall away; for God declares that "a prating fool shall fall" (Prov. 10:8). And then thou will go to sleep in carnal security and insensibility; as it is written, "and while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 25:5). The wise, as well as the foolish slumbered and slept. But the Watchman began to sound an alarm to those in a laodicean church state; and to tell them that the Savior knocked at the door, and was just ready "to come in and see the guests" (Matt. 22:11). The Watchman then began to give them the counsel they had received from the Lord, which was, "That they should buy of Christ gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich; and white raiment, that they might be clothed, and that the shame of their nakedness might not appear; and anoint their eyes with eye-salve, that they might see that the Judge is even at the door" (Rev. 3:18). Jonah-like, the writer exclaims, "Salvation is of the Lord! When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord!" (Jonah 2:7-9).

Courteous reader:

"Oh, beware of trust ill-grounded,
'Tis but fancied faith at most;
To be cured and not be wounded,

To be saved before you're lost."

Fond self-direction is a shelf;
Thy strength, thy wisdom flee;
When thou art nothing in thyself,
Thou then art close to me."

"Not all the blood of beasts,
On Jewish altars slain;
Can give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away:
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they."

What think ye of Christ? Has the blood of the Lamb been spiritually and supernaturally sprinkled and applied to your soul? "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3). Faith is not a cold, dry assent to the written word of God – true faith produces spiritual feelings. The benefit of His propitiatory sacrifice is only received and enjoyed through FAITH. Jesus said, "If thou canst BELIEVE, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk. 9: 23). Go in peace; thy FAITH hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50). Paul says in Eph. 2:8, 9, "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." I insist upon an experimental knowledge of Christ in the soul as the only relief for poverty, guilt, leprosy, bankruptcy, and damnation. This is, I believe, the true way of preaching Christ crucified, not the mere doctrine of the cross, but a crucified Jesus "experimentally" known to the soul. The blood of the Lamb, spiritually and supernaturally sprinkled and applied, is, I am sure, the only healing balm for a sin-sick soul. "No man can

call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3). Those law-reachers who maintain that a life regulated according to the law will give a title to eternal rewards cannot hold, and honor Christ to be the Son of God, and the Savior of mankind, but merely a prophet, or a divine messenger among men. This is a self-evident fact. Facts are stubborn things that never apologize to anybody. Doctrine therefore, is the necessary foundation of duty; if the theory is not correct, the practice cannot be right. In God's promise, He will have us TRUST, and there rest, and to seek no further.

"Thy whole dependence on Me fix,
Nor entertain a thought;
Thy worthless schemes with Mine to mix
But venture to be nought."

"What think ye of Christ? is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him."

This being the case, the Holy Spirit in removing a sinner's objections—in reducing him from a state of combativeness to one of willing reception—aims from first to last at setting Christ before him. "Casting down imaginations," says the apostle, "and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." My brother, my sister, what you want is the obedience of Christ—the obedience of which Christ is the source and object—the obedience which comes from Christ and terminates on Christ. Christ is the end of Nature's quest and questionings—the all-atoning Christ.

"Oh, beware of trust ill-grounded,
'Tis but fancied faith at most;

To be cured and not be wounded,
To be saved before you're lost."

'Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets the soul at large;
While we can claim one mite our own
We have no full discharge.

The world needs Christ and not the crucifix; the Master and not the 'mother'; indwelling and not indulgences; the ideal and not the idol; the Prince of Peace and not the Pope; Redeemer, repentance, and restitution, and not the rosary; the Son and not the 'sister'; the Bridegroom and not the brother'; the Propitiation and not the priest; the message and not the mass; the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and not gods of gold, silver, wooden and iron gods, 'graven' by human art and thought. (Douay Version or Roman Catholic Version): Acts 19:29; Exodus 20:3-5: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me; thou shalt not make to thyself a graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." God commands us to bear the cross not to worship it; they worship it, but bear it neither corporally nor spiritually. God commands one thing; these idolaters do the contrary. They secretly and habitually practice "shrine worship" at the shrine of self. In the outward cross they glory, but inwardly they worship another god—and stretch out their hands to serve a petted, pitied and pampered self-life. There they bow daily and do obeisance. Self is the root, the branches, the tree of all the evils of our fallen state. "God harden me against myself,

The coward with pathetic voice,

Who craves for ease, and rest and joys.
Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go."

It is no wonder that the succeeding generations of professors have fringed His message, and contaminated it, so that the simplest faith, and the purest, and grandest truth in the whole world has become the most complicated form, and ritual of enforced observances and "Thou shalt nots." He bade men to ignore fear, and forget the frailties of their mortality, and claim the God of Jacob as their Father. My sister, my brother, avoid as you would poison any doctrine that rends, or squeezes the soul dry of vision and hope by the machinery of formalism. Let us then for a few moments fix our eyes on Christ—on Christ in His most central and soul-saving aspect. The law is for the self-righteous, to humble their pride; the gospel is for the lost to remove their despair; the law denounces wrath; the gospel publishes peace; (not what we ought to do, but what Christ has done for us). The law convinces of guilt; the gospel brings an acquittal; the law requirest satisfaction to the very last mite; the gospel declares satisfaction has been made in full.

"The law demands a weighty debt,
And not a single mite will bate;
But gospel sings of Jesus' blood,
And says it made the payment good."

"My soul, no more attempt to draw,
Thy life and comfort from the law;
Fly to the hope the gospel gives,
The man that believe the promise lives!"

The law knows nothing of mercy! (neither gives lust nor power to obey); the gospel knows nothing else. By the law I learn that I am guilty, and depraved before God; but by the gospel I learn that I am justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—by the law I learn that I have ruined myself by sin, and stand exposed to divine vengeance; but by the gospel I learn that Jesus was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him—by the law my legal hopes are destroyed; and by the gospel my believing expectations are raised; by the law I become acquainted with my Father's mind and by the gospel I am furnished with grace to attend to His will—in a word, by the law I am stripped, exposed, condemned, and killed; but by the gospel I am quickened, justified, accepted, and clothed.

Upon a life I did not live;
Upon a death I did not die,
Another's death, Another's life,
I risk my soul eternally.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"In my Surety I am free,
His dear hands were pierced for me;
With His spotless vesture on,
I'm holy as the holy One."

Courteous reader, there are but two methods whereby anyone can be justified; either by a perfect obedience to the law, or because Christ has kept the law in our stead. Candid reader, if we are justified by law, tell me, I pray, what has Christ achieved by His death, by His preaching, by His victory over sin and death?

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

The question then is not that of the human reason, "I think this," "I think that," "I think the other." Sir, God is not at your bar. You are at His. Sir, you will be damned for your thoughts! Let the unrighteous forsake them (Isa. 55:7).

The law was never intended to save, but to show man that it is impossible to save himself.

"The law discovers guilt and sin,
And shows how vile our hearts have been;
Only the gospel can express,
Forgiving love and cleansing grace.

"What curses doth the law denounce,
Against the man that fails but ounce;
But in the gospel Christ appears,
Pardoning the guilt of many years!"

What think ye of Christ? Apostate man claims salvation as a debt, not as an alms. He says, "It doesn't matter what a person believes, so long as he lives right," But here's the catch to this saying: "He will not live right unless he believes right." Back of every noble life there must be real convictions. Silly folk scoff at doctrine. They do not consider Christ, nor His doctrine of life. It is a terrible stroke to nature to think of being stripped of all, and not to have a rag of duty or self-goodness left to look at. But this is God's way of salvation. Was it not for needy, helpless sinners, made so by God's scourging and chastening them, Christ would have no customers. The blessings of grace and glory would, as it were, lie upon His hands.

What think ye of Christ? Jesus said, and the way, the and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). "All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me, and him

that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draw him" (John 6:44). Jesus said, "For if ye believe not that I am He ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). The all-important question is: What think ye of Christ? Are you leaning all your weight upon His everlasting arms! Have all your works failed, and are you getting worse! Where is your faith! Is it in Christ and something else! It is trusting Christ alone? To trust Christ alone is to depend on Him, to definitely and deliberately receive Him. It means to trust Christ alone so utterly and completely that should He fail—there is nothing left. It is not Christ and the church, and Christ and baptism, or Christ and my faith. It is not Christ *and* anything else! "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be *saved*." (Acts 4:12). Every other name drags its votaries down to shame and everlasting contempt. Christ is first, or not at all!

What think ye of Christ? Are you trusting in your own heart! Then you are a fool, says Solomon (Prov. 28:26). Jeremiah says, the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it! (Jer. 17:9 The heart is the little home-born thief. It continually cries, "Look to yourself! Look to yourself! Righteousness bring me to Christ?" Ah, look to yourself, and you will be lost. As long as you look to yourself there is no hope for you. It is not a consideration of what you are, but a consideration of what God is, and "What think ye of Christ?" that can save you. Good old Crisp says, "Righteousness keeps me from Christ; the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Sin makes me come to Jesus when sin is felt, and in coming to Christ the more sin I have the more cause I have to hope for mercy." Self-reliance is inculcated as a moral virtue, and in a certain sense, with due surroundings, it is so. Observations and experience show that it is a considerable force in the world; yet not in the scheme of salvation. The more you know about Christ the less you will be satisfied with yourself and with superficial views of Him. Beware of your desperately

wicked and deceitful heart! Who can know it! I the Lord search the heart (Jer. 17:9, 10). The heart is the great workshop where all sin is wrought before it is exposed to open view. It is the mint where the evil thoughts are coined before they are current in our words and actions: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (Matt. 15:19), that is the nest in which those hornets breed. The heart is the source of sinful words as well as sinful thoughts. They were in the heart before ever they were on the tongue. Every sinner conceives in the heart what he brings forth at the mouth; the heart is the vessel of poisonous liquor, the tongue is but the tap to broach it: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt 12:34). The heart is the forge also where our evil works as well as words, are hammered out; "Out of the heart proceed murders, thefts, and adulteries and fornications" (Matt 15:19).

You will say that murders and thefts are hand sins, and that adulteries and fornications belong to the eye and outward parts of the body, but alas! The heart is the womb wherein they are conceived and bred. The outward parts are but the midwives to deliver the mother of these monsters, and to bring them into the world; "An evil man, out of the evil treasure in his heart bringeth forth evil things" (Matt. 12:35). There is no sin but it is dressed in the drawing room of the heart, before it appears on the-stage of life. It is vain: to go about a holy life till the heart be made holy. The pulse of the hand beats well or ill, according to the state of the heart and the inward vital parts. Our earthly members can never be mortified unless the body of sin and death be destroyed. Therefore, the Holy Ghost calls on men to take away the cause if they would have the affect to cease. "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness" (Jer. 14:14). Cleanse your hearts, ye sinners (James 4:8). First the heart cleansed THEN the hands.

Are you trusting in riches? Then you shall fall, Solomon says (Prov. 11:28). Are you trusting in man? Then you are "cursed," says

Jeremiah (Jer. 17:5). Are you trusting in lying words that cannot profit! Then you are deceived (Jer. 7:8). Are you TRUSTING in the name of your church? Then you are lost forever and ever, unless Christ interceded for you. A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven (John 3:27). "For without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

What think ye of Christ? I daresay, that a number of free-willers, and chance-mongers will read this little book. I fear that all the public assemblies have too many of them. Perhaps, however, even them people, idolaters as they are, may be apt to blame, and indeed with justice, the absurdity of those who worship idols of silver and gold, the work of mens' hands, but let me ask: if it be so very absurd to worship the work of other mens' hands, what must it be to worship the works of our own hands! Perhaps you may say, "God forbid that I should do so." Nevertheless, let me tell you, that trust, confidence, reliance and dependence for salvation are all acts and solemn ones too, of divine worship; and upon whatsoever you depend, whether in whole or in part, for your acceptance with God, and for your justification in His sight, whatsoever you rely upon, and trust in, for the attainment of grace and glory; if it be anything short of God in Christ, you are an idolater to all intents and purposes. Are you trusting in self-righteousness! LOST! "There is none good but God" said Jesus (Matt. 19:17). Are not our best offerings fly-blown with pride and corruption! Our godliest deeds would damn us if they were not cleansed by the atoning blood of Christ. Are you TRUSTING in the name of Christ? Then you are saved. "Daniel was taken out of the den of lions and no manner of hurt was found upon him because he believed (trusted) in his God" (Dan. 6:23).

Jesus Christ is not a pasteboard king, with royal titles, but not without authority. He sits upon His holy hill, invested with all power to captivate the hearts of His subjects and execute His threatened

vengeance on His adversaries. And where He brings men under the sway of His sceptre He bestows the blessings of His kingdom. The Holy Spirit as a Comforter is granted; the peace passing all understanding is God's love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. These jewels are only dug out of gospel mines, and only set in the breast of gospel subjects. And where they are well set, Jesus Christ becomes exceeding dear to such. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11). While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: "Those thou gavest Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scriptures might be fulfilled" (John 17:12). "I have finished the work which thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4).

The spirit that would this truth withstand,
Would pull God's temple down;
Wrest Jesus' sceptre from His hand,
And spoil Him of His crown.

Dear reader, read the Douay or Roman Catholic, as well as the King James Version of the Holy Scriptures, and see for yourself that Christ, and not man, is the Savior of sinners. The writer is a plain man, and believes it is extremely wicked to reverse the translation of the Holy Scriptures, as it were, either in our words, or by deeds.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"Keep silence all created things,
And wait your Maker's nod;
My soul stands trembling while she sings
The honors of her God.
"Life, death and hell and worlds unknown
Hang on His firm decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."

"He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. I am the bread of life. I come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, or the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the Father's will that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life" (John 6:35-40?l.).

"With Him His members on the tree,
Fulfilled the law's demands;
'Tis I in them, and they in Me,
For thus the union stands."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"All that He did and all that He bare,
He gives us as our own to share;
And hope, and joy and peace begin,
For Christ has won and man shall win."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear His pardoning voice;
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Peter said in Acts 4:11,12: "This is the stone (Jesus Christ) that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no

other Name under heaven given by which we must be saved." (I am using now the Douay, or Roman Catholic Version of the Scriptures). In another place: (1 Tim. 2:5), their own Bible says: "For there is one God; and one Mediator between God and man, Himself man, Christ Jesus." Again their own Bible (the Douay version) says: "But He, (Christ) because He continues FOREVER, has an EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD. Therefore He is able at all times to save those who come to God through Him, since He lives always to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24, 25. I Peter 2:7 says, "A stone which the builders rejected has become the HEAD of the corner." 1 John 2:1 says, "But if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just." Notice the word Advocate, not Advocates.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Colossians 1:18, 19 says, "He is the Head of His body, the Church." Eph. 5:23 says, "Christ is the Head of the Church."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Peter himself denies being the stone, or Rock upon which the Church is built (Acts 2:24-30; 8:22-24; 10:25, 26; Pet, 2: 7, 8; 1:19). Paul, writing to the Ephesian Church, says, "You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Corner Stone" (Eph. 2:20) (Douay version—or Roman Catholic Bible quoted).

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Are you trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then you are happy (Prov. 16:20). David said, "My heart is fixed trusting in the Lord (Psalm 112:7). Paul said, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which

raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9). Are you trusting to yourself? Then you are an infidel.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Are you trusting in your own righteousness? Then, you are condemned already. John 3:18 says, "He that believeth not on Him is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the NAME of the only begotten SON of God." What think ye of Christ, is the test! Who Son is He? "If ye believe not that I am He, (the Son of God) ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). No man can live right unless he believes aright. Are you trusting in your own self-righteous self? Then you are unclean, and as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). The law is for the self-righteous, to humble their pride the gospel is for the lost (to those where life and death hang upon His coming) to remove their despair. In the gospel proper there are "neither claims, nor commands, nor duties, nor threatenings." It brings salvation; it does not exact or demand it. The "doctrine of grace" brings salvation to all those who feel utterly lost from a sound sense of their need of Him. The Bible nowhere says that the natural man unaided and undrawn can come to Christ. In all Scripture there is not one indicative assertion of freewill. All invitations are "if," "if" "if." These assert no ability. To tell a man that he may have a book "if" he pay \$5 is not to give him \$5. It is only saying he may have it "if." "If thou wilt" shows the difference between the law and the gospel. The law says, "Do it"; the gospel, "I will do it for you." The law says, "if." The gospel says, "It is done." The Old Testament set before us a requirement and a reward, with a chasm between them; the gospel fills the chasm—it fills it with Christ and His cross. Do you want Him! Do you desire Him: Do you wish to be saved? If you desire it God has chosen you to it!

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak.

'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek.'

Then you may be—then you are elected—your very willingness and your wish show that God has been working upon you and working in love. If you long for salvation, then God has chosen you to it. If you desire it, with your whole heart, He has chosen you to it. If you believe God—trust Christ—then you are already elected—your faith is proof that Jesus died for you: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13); being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6); The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isa 9:7), In the gospel which we get from the Book of the Lord, and which we preach is this: for all His people, **Jesus Christ stands a Substitute.**

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Are you **trusting** in the **ten commandments** (and the other one hundred and ten commandments which men have manufactured out of them) to save you? Then you are lost in the arid growths of mere morality, even though very zealous of God in your own self-righteous way. You are lost because, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified (Romans 3:20). There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God (Rom. 3:10-11). There is none good, save one, that is God (Lk. 18:19). What think ye of Christ? All the good works of the best of men that ever lived would make but a **rotten foundation** for them if they were to place reliance thereon. **Human merit is a foundation of sand.** Genuine praise cannot be offered unto God, while saucy merit roosts in man. "But I have had special feelings and excitements," says one; "I have been lifted up." Yes, you may have been crushed down to hell's door, and lifted up to heaven's gate, **but there is nothing in excitements which can be a ground of hope.** Throw all such rubbish away! "Oh, but" exclaims another, "I have confidence that I am saved, for

I had a wonderful dream." There is not the slightest reliance for salvation but what is fixed on Christ alone, and I do invite and entreat you, if any of you have **any hope which goes beyond Christ** or besides Christ, **get rid of it, throw it** on the **dung** hill, and loathe it as an **insult to God**. Do as the man did with the **bad bank note**. When he found it was a forgery he burned it and ran away as fast as he could, for fear anybody should ever think the note had been in his possession. So if you are trusting in anything that is not of Christ, burn your faith and run away from it, for it is a false confidence, and will work ill to your soul.' Let your faith cry, "NONE but Christ," for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Col. 3:11).

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Whose Son is He? Do I honor Him by trusting in Him! Or do I reject, and dishonor Him by trusting in myself, the law, or the NAME of my church! So long as I myself, am still something, Christ cannot be **everything**. It is trusting Christ alone! It is to **depend on Him definitely and deliberately receive Him**. It means to trust Christ alone so utterly and completely that should He fail—there is nothing left. Only the *name* of the Lord is a strong tower and saves (Prov. 8:10).

A church membership does not make a Christian any more than owning a piano makes a musician. It is a very common case with people to make Christ half a Savior; relying upon Him, and upon themselves; saying they are to be saved by works and faith. This is very untrue, and betrays a carnal heart. This is to say that Christ is a workman who has begun to build a building and needs Moses to help finish it. Is this trusting Christ for all! What think ye of Christ? **This is perverting the gospel.** To mix law and gospel not only clouds the knowledge of grace, it cuts out Christ altogether. Either Christ must live and the law perish, or the law

remains and Christ must perish; Christ and the law cannot dwell side by side in the conscience.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

It is either grace or law. To muddle the two is to eliminate the gospel entirely. This is the white devil of spiritual sin and is more dangerous than the black devil of carnal sin, because the wiser, the better men are without Christ, the more they are likely to ignore and oppose the gospel. For, if they— *works* and *merit*—may avail, what needed the Son of God to be given for our sins!

Many who have escaped the rocks of gross sin have been cast away on the sands of self-righteousness. WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

How could it stand with the wisdom of God to leave the success of the death of Christ in the will of depraved sinners?

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"God's law as holy scripture saith,
Brings in its ministration—death;
His gospel shows how life is given.
And ruined sinners are brought to heaven.

God's law puts sinners to the test,
A killing letter at the best:
Gospel opens covenant-love,
Gives grace below and bliss above.

God's law brings condemnation nigh,
'The soul that sinneth it shall die;'
His gospel says we're justified

By grace, through Jesus crucified."

Only the acts of a Christian are truly good and acceptable to God, because they are done in faith, with a cheerful heart out of gratitude to Christ. James says, Seest thou *how* (in what degree or extent) faith wrought with (prompted) his works, and by works was faith made perfect? (James 2:22).

The **world's teachers**, who know nothing experimentally of the *undeserved mercy* of God, have unanimously agreed that man must build the ladder by which we rise from this lowly earth to the vaulted skies. **Mercy deserved ceases to be mercy** and must take the name of justice losing both its name and nature. They say, by their doctrine, that Jesus will save you if He can; or He will save you, provided you will do something to merit His grace. Gospel ministers say, He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou? (Dan. 4:35). Yea, true ministers say, "He can save you if He will: God's grace makes us willing!" (Psa. 110:3). David said, "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in thy courts" (Psa. 65:4).

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Courteous reader, can you honestly say with Laban of old, "I have learned by *experience* that the Lord hath blessed me for thy (another's) sake"? (Gen. 30:27). If not, then your religion is a cheap counterfeit one!

"The uttermost of law demands,
My glorious Surety paid;
The uttermost of heaven's commands,
He has for me obeyed."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"In Him I stand completely just,
His heart, is my abode;
Though in Him, at best, but dust,
In Him, I've power with God.

"One with Christ? forever one!
Debts are paid, and work is done;
Grace and glory both are given,
And we are on our way to heaven."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Candid reader, are you on your way to heaven? Is Christ your Way? Let us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not!

"I'll sing of Jesus' uttermost,
Because it meets my case;
And when I join the heavenly host,
This theme shall fill the place."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

When I mention faith-without-works" preaching, I do so in respect of justification, for we are justified by faith alone without works. There is, dear reader, no real contradiction between James and Paul on the subject of faith and works. James says faith is dead without works. Paul says works are dead without faith. Both are right. James in opposition to dead orthodoxy; Paul in opposition to self-righteous legalism. James does not demand works *without* faith, but works *prompted* by faith; while Paul on the other hand likewise declares a faith worthless which is without love, though it

removes mountains. **James looks mainly at the fruit. Paul at the root.** Paul solves the difficulty in one phrase: faith working by love (Gal. 5:6). James maintains the absolute necessity of living faith, and Paul emphasizes the value of good works as evidencing our faith. Good works have nothing to do with our justification in His sight. We are justified by faith alone, as saith holy Scripture: "by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8, 9). Notwithstanding *good works* have their proper place: **they justify our faith though not our persons;** they follow it, and evidence our justification in the sight of men.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Is He a saving Savior to you, courteous reader, or is He a weak, and "trying" One?

What think ye of Christ? is the all-important question!

It is true there are many who exalt *humanity* of Jesus and who make His Sermon on the Mount the focus of their faith rather than the parable of the "Prodigal Son," yet these people are in danger of being lost in the arid growth of mere morality. This parable is called the pearl and crown of all the parables of Scripture. It is indeed a divine epitome of the wanderings of man, and the love of God, such as no literature has ever equaled, such as no ear of man has ever heard elsewhere. I wish to give my view of it; if God peradventure, will bless it to encourage some poor wandering, and *wondering* prodigal to give God no rest in his prayers, as well as to discourage blind self-righteous souls from trusting in *selfism*, but to turn from their native rags and ruin to God, and live for ever and ever.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"Christ as my Days-Man deigns to stand
Between my soul and God;
Upon both parties lays His hand,
Presenting precious blood.

"Christ is my Rock, on Him, I build,
My life, my hope, my all;
His promises shall be fulfilled;
He will not let me fall."

There is only one Rock to build good hopes on, and that is not Peter, as the Pope says, neither is it the sacraments as the old Roman beast's cubs tell us, but the merits of the Lord, Jesus. All the hopes of man is in the man Christ Jesus. If we believe in Him, we are saved, for it is written "he that believeth in Him hath everlasting life." Mind he has it now, and it is everlasting, so that there is no danger of losing it (John 3.15; 11:25, 26; Rom. 6:14). The moral of this parable makes it strikingly clear that there are two ways in which a person may destroy and waste his life. One is to disregard our duties, causing pain and sorrow to our families, fathers and mothers, and hurt to our friends and associates, killing ourselves, and marring our finer nature. But the other is just as bad, if not worse. God loves a cheerful giver but hates a selfish hoarder. Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves.

"That man may last, but never lives,
Who much receives but nothing gives;
Whom none can love, whom none can thank,
Creation's blot, Creation's blank."

God loves a cheerful giver. Thou shalt serve thyself by every bit of service which thou renderest. Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself. Pride and

covetousness have no bounds; the more they have the more they want. Those who find no pleasure, neither giving any to anyone give Him a constant insult. However punctual their actions, their hearts are far from God. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

Said Jesus, "Ye pay tithes of mint and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the judgment, mercy and faith" (Matt. 23:23). In other words, He said: "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter; ye love the upper most seats in the synagogue, and greetings in the markets; woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men who walk over them (Lk. 11:44).—you are very careful to give exactly one-tenth of your incomes to the Temple, but in your hearts you are pinching your pennies—you have omitted mercy, judgment and faith; you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within you are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness (Matt. 23:27). You neglect the supreme duty of man to leave the world more cheerful and better because you have passed through it. **God is a good and liberal Giver, but you are miserable misers;** your philosophy is that of the priest and Levite: "What's mine is my own; I will keep it"; and not of the good Samaritan: "What's mine is yours; I will share it." Your spirits are an offense to Me; you live chained lives; you are unwilling to face the truth; you refuse to seek God's way of salvation; you are unwilling to be saved the Jesus way; you want to be *everything* and Jesus *nothing*, instead of being nothing and Jesus everything; you do not think well of Christ?

"His gospel saith we're justified
By grace, through Jesus crucified."

In the parable of the prodigal son, as Jesus told it, there are the two lost sons—not just one—as I see it. The prodigal was flagrantly

wicked, ungrateful, a ne'er-do-well, a reckless run-away, lost through hot passion, and wild living; he begged his inheritance from his father because he did not want to wait for it. The other son was morally obedient, well pleased with himself—even to the point of boasting to his father, yet lost through dull respectability—yes, the very self-righteous, spiritually. How base and inhuman! Alas, for the envy which the elder brother, in the true self-righteous spirit of the Pharisee, exhibited! How base and inhuman! **Prosperity is a more refined and severe test of character than adversity**, as one hour of summer sunshine produces greater corruption than the longest winter day. Human wealth, human grandeur, human literature all naturally producing human loftiness, satisfies a Laodicean professor, who is neither cold nor hot, and seemeth to be rich, but is poor, having a head full of knowledge, and a heart full of mammon. The most striking feature in the Prodigal's character is his *ingratitude*. Instead of being grateful for his daily bread and his shelter beneath his father's roof, and for all the comforts and privileges he enjoys, he claims fortune as a "right," saying, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." It is sad to consider, when God is most **liberal** in remembering us, we are most **ungrateful to forget God**. Now, therefore, that we may know how to put a due estimate upon mercies, God often cuts us short that we may learn to prize that by want, which our foolish, unthankful hearts slighted in the enjoyment. Thus the Prodigal, who while yet at home, could despise the rich and well furnished table of his father, when God sent him to school to the swine-trough, could value the bread that the servants did eat; "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough, and to spare!" (Lk. 15:17). He would have been glad of the reversion of broken meat that was cast into the common basket. We can hardly learn humility and tenderness enough except through suffering. David's pen never wrote more sweetly than when dipped in the ink of affliction. The hot furnace is Christ's workhouse, the most excellent vessels of honor are formed therein. Affliction is God's forge

wherein he roasts and softens the iron heart. There is no dealing with the iron while it remaineth in its own native coldness and hardness; put it into the fire, make it red hot there, and you may stamp upon it any figure or impression you please. "God maketh my heart soft," saith Job (Job 23:16). Melted vessels are impressive to any form. So it is with the heart of man; naturally it is colder and harder than the northern iron; and that native indurations is much increased by the sunshine of prosperity, and the patience of God towards sinners; the iron sinew will rather break than bend. It is the hot furnace, or the showers of adversity, only which can make it operable and impressive to God's counsels; which course therefore, God resolveth on; I will melt them and try them (Jer. 9:7). Truly God sees it absolutely necessary to exercise us with a severe discipline, that He may endear Jesus Christ to our hearts; and seclude us from the world, that we may study and improve His fulness. **Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions.**

"Afflictions make us see
What else would 'scape our sight."

As the law is our schoolmaster, so afflictions is an usher to the law; affliction brings us to the law, and the law brings us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). How tragic, yet true, we never resolve exclusively for Christ, till, with the Prodigal we are whipped home stark naked to our father's house. Suffering is a choice instrument for shaping character, and without its touch the most delicate chasing upon the vessel would be impossible.

"The tree that never had to fight
For sun, sky, air, and light,
That stood out in the open plain,
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king,
But lived and died a scrubby thing."

Those whom God loves He takes to pieces; and then puts them together again. We rise in glory as we sink in pride. Behold while men fill themselves with the mercies of God, they can neglect the God of their mercies. The Prodigal took his money, and went into a far country; forlorn, he was a pitiable object when he came shuffling home a wreck. Behold the lost, lean, ill-looking Prodigal, bowed in shame, with a battered bag, slowly wending his way to his father's home! How tragic, yet true people go to the devil with full pockets, but never turn to God till hunger hits them. You have to shoot many men's eyes out before they can see; you have to crack their heads before they can think; knock them down before they can stand; break their hearts before they can sing; and bankrupt them before they can be rich. We *grow* more in lean years than in fat years. **In fat years we put it in our pockets; in lean years we put it in our hearts.** Listen to the testimony of some shining examples: David said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have kept Thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psa. 119:71). Paul said, "I did many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). By correction God taketh down the pride of man's heart.

"Our hearts are fastened to the world,
By strong and various ties;
But every sorrow cuts a string,
And urges us to rise!"

Whoever heard of a calf weaning itself, voluntarily! Afflictions are as nails, driven by the hand of grace, which crucify us to the world. The husbandman ploughs his lands, and the gardener prunes his trees, to make them fruitful. The jeweller cuts and polishes his diamonds to make them shine the brighter. The refiner flings his gold into the furnace, that it may come out the purer. And God

afflicts His people to make them better. To thank God for mercies," is the way to increase them; "to thank Him for miseries," is the way to remove them.

There is no greater obstruction to saving knowledge than pride and self-opinion, whereby man either thinks he knoweth enough, or, that not worth the learning which God teacheth; therefore is it proclaimed before the world, "Hear and give ear, be not proud; for the Lord hath Spoken" (Jer. 13:15). Such a masterpiece of obduration is the heart of man, that it stands like a mountain before the word, and can not be moved, till God comes with His instruments of affliction, and digging down those mountains (as it is proclaimed before the gospel, Lk. 3:5) casteth them into a level; and then God may stand, as it were, upon even ground, and talk with man. This pride of heart speaketh loud in the wicked, and whispereth too audibly even in the godly; it is a folly bound up even in the hearts of God's children till correction driveth it out; and the proud stomach being broken, the poor bleeding wretch cries out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do!" O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither therefore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue (Exodus 4:10). O, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house (Judges 6:15). Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God (Jer. 31:18). But notice that it was not until after their miraculous conversion from their cruel self-righteous selves that they "confessed" their wrong doing, living, and nothingness. Even our sinless Savior learned obedience through suffering. The elder son stayed at home, stuck by his stuff, prim, critical, and proper as you please, but as hard as nails, unforgiving, and so cold and formal it made one to be gloomy to be around him. No wonder his brother went away! Alas! For the envy and coldness which the elder brother, in the true self-righteous

spirit of the Pharisee exhibited! How base and inhuman! The real Christian can not feel anything but joy when a sinner is brought to Christ. He himself is a sinner who has found mercy, and glad indeed is he when others find it, too. The next most striking feature of the Prodigal's character, is his greed and haste: he begged his kind father to give him his portion of goods that falleth to him. **This is our spirit by nature. (All men without exception have a fallen nature inherited from our fallen first parents, who ate us out of house and home. Gen. 3:2-19).** Instead of being overwhelmed with a sense of God's wonderful goodness, we conceive ourselves entitled to further gifts. But behold the consequence of the conduct—the Prodigal comes to poverty. He has "spent all." and to make matters worse for him "no man gave unto him." It is well when we discover before death that we have spent all, that we have wasted our hopes and affection upon the world and have no lasting satisfaction in return. But what will be the despair of those who never discover their poverty until they are removed to the place where the uttermost farthing is required, where not one drop of water is granted? Perhaps the Prodigal in the clays of his revelry looked forward to the time when he should have spent all; and he may have intended then to enter some service that would have preserved him from want. But God defeated his design, and caused a mighty famine to arise at the very moment when he was destitute. How easily God can disappoint the sinner and blast all his devices! The thoughtless companions of his mirth remembered not the Prodigal in his distress. No man gave unto him. Those who had gladly partaken of his riotous feast forsook him in his poverty. Accomplices in guilt are not comforters in sorrow. Can the world console the sin-sick sinner in want and in sickness? Can it receive him to glory after death? God greatly blessed the Prodigal's affliction to his soul. He came to himself. The bee fertilizes the flower it robs. God not only designs the end, but the *means* of the end in His infinite wisdom and power. If God promises riches the way there is poverty; whom He

loveth He chasteneth; whom He exalteth He casteth down; whom he saveth, He damneth first; He bringeth no man to heaven except He send him to hell first; whom He loveth he chasteneth; when He buildeth, He casteth all down first; He is no patcher; He cannot build on another's foundation; if He promises life, He slayeth first; when He buildeth, He casteth all down first; He will not work till all be past remedy, and brought into such a case that man may see how that His hand, His power, His mercy, His goodness, and truth hath wrought altogether. Surprising wisdom! His first act when light dawned on his darkness, was to converse with himself. When it is dark enough you can see the stars. In the midst of his distressing thoughts a ray of hope broke in. The remembrance of parental kindness raised an idea in his wondering mind that possibly he might yet be received at the home from whence he had wondered; and at least be saved from perishing. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants" (V. 18, 19). Applying the language of this to the history of the sinner coming to God, we here reach the point where, though the Holy Ghost has done much for the awaked one—discovering his need, and enlightening his mind, directing his will, and producing conviction—the work of grace is not yet complete. The sinner is now deeply conscious of his own utter unworthiness but not yet has he learned of the marvelous grace of God which more than meets his deep need. This comes out in the fact that the highest conception that the mind of the returning Prodigal rose to, was that of being made one of the hired servants. He is still legalistic, though through grace, in the way. Oh, how legalistic the mind of man is! How tenaciously he clings to his own performances! How strenuously he will contend for the need of bringing in his own works! He will not be saved for *nothing*, if he can help it! A hired servant is one who has to work for all he gets. The change had come at last, and what a change (the goodness of God had led him to repentance)! Couched in terms of such exquisite simplicity and power as if it were expressly framed for all

heart broken penitents. Not only did he resolve to go, but he went—went promptly, too, suffering in his soul, moving him to obey. The grieving and kind-hearted father no sooner saw his returning son a great way off than regardless of his age, and dignity, he ran, his white hairs flowing in the winds, to meet him, and instead of upbraiding him for his faults, "fell on his neck and kissed him," giving every evidence, according to the custom of the East, of a cordial and welcome reception. How keen are love's eyes! The kind and happy father ordered: the fatted calf to be brought in. Make a feast, he cried. For this my son which was gone has come back; he was dead to decency and idealism. Now he has cleaned up his thinking and is alive again.

"Man like a silly sheep doth often stray,
Not knowing of his way,
Blind deserts and the wilderness of sin
He daily travels in;
There's nothing will reduce him sooner than
Afflictions to his pen.
He wanders in the sunshine, but in rain
And stormy weather hastens home again."

There were high doings in that house that day, and every one enjoyed them except the older son. He was angry, jealous, pouting, and self-pitying. The long sunshine of prosperity had so dried and hardened his heart that he would not even go into the house to welcome his starving home-sick brother back home. He sulked, and chided his good father, and went not in to make merry with his happy brother. In other words, he was quite willing for Jesus to be King only so long as he was allowed to be *Prime Minister*. He ceased not to accuse, belittle, and condemn his brother, saying, in effect, "Where do I come in! I have stayed at home; I have worked, saved and have never had a good time; lo, these many years, do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy

commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, which has devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. This irresponsible rake and bankrupt has had nothing but good times and now, when he comes home after having run through his money, they give him a party. How unsuited is all this haste, and extravagance in killing and drying the fatted calf to welcome this spendthrift back home! What more insane than quick stepping music, and insiring sounds to greet this runagate, and beggared prodigal back home! *Distracted! Wasteful! Partiality! Outré.* Where do I come in? I've worked, slaved, and saved, but look now! It's all wrong! I don't like it! It's outrageous!"

Kind reader, *selfishness* cripples us more than paralysis. We may think we can be happy by striving, gouging, griping, working, worrying, grinding, grudging, and hogging to save up a lot of money, and not sharing our joys with others, but way down in our hearts there is a crack in our conscience that will not heal up, and grow a scab of cheerfulness over it. Prosperity is more pleasant than profitable to us. Though in show it looks like a fair summer, yet it is indeed a wasting winter, and spendeth all the fruit we have reaped in the harvest of sanctified affliction. We are never in greater danger than in the sunshine of prosperity. Enjoyments beget confidence; confidence brings forth carelessness; carelessness makes God withdraw and gives opportunity to Satan to work unseen. And thus, as armies after victory growing secure, are oft surprised; so are we oft after our spiritual advancements thrown down: To be always indulged of God and never to taste of trouble, is rather a token of God's neglect than of His tender love. 'Tis hard to keep close to God in prosperity, when we have much of this world to live upon and content ourselves with. The world steals away our hearts from God, gives so few opportunities for the exercise of the life of faith, and such advantages to a life of sense, wears off the sense of our dependence on God, and need thereof,

so that when we are put to it by affliction, we are ready to miscarry ere we can recover our weapon or hold. The greater the load of human sorrow, and want you can get in your arms, the easier you can climb the great hill of fame. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body (Hebrews 13:3). The father did not defend the younger son, but he rebuked the elder, that was what pained the self-satisfied members of the crowd to whom Jesus related the story. The story pointed at them too plainly; there are more ways than just one in which a person may waste and lose his life, the story said, if effect. In all literature there are no more scorching words than His denunciations of the self-righteous, cheerless, Pharisees who rejected His message of hope, and teaching that life is God's gift to His people (not a bargain offered), to be enjoyed, not a penance to be served. That was the message of Christ—that God is good,—much larger and better than any of us have ever ventured to believe—not a contrary and angry Creator, who had failed to control His creation, and was now ready to destroy it all. Not a strict judge exacting impersonal justice upon all living. Not a cruel tyrant who must be cringed to, and bowed to in order to receive the least favor or mercy. Not a rigid book-keeper watching every thought, word, and action weighing them against the "penances" and striking cold hard balances. Not any of these pettish things—never, never, like these—but a saving Savior, a wonderful friend, who taught and exemplified love, faith and mercy all His short lifetime. He was a joy-loving Savior, who preached happiness wherever He went. Then came the end, and almost before the innocent blood had dried on the cross, the distortion began. He who had condemned ceremonies and forms was made the idol of formalism. He who had come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to sacrifice His life a ransom for many was now charged with being a hard taskmaster. Men fled and hid themselves in monasteries—dens of devils— they lashed themselves with scorges; they harassed their skins with rough clothes, and bellowed

that they were following Jesus Christ—of Him who loved the people, who collected children about Him in His journeys, who celebrated the calling of a new follower with a feast in which everybody in the neighborhood joined! In effect, He taught His followers, "you are lords of the Universe—equal to the angels—children of God; be of good cheer; I am the good Shepherd; I lay down my life for the sheep; I am the door of the sheep; whoever climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and rober; the best is yet to be."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

God will not sell deliverance, but freely gives it to those who see themselves altogether unworthy of His honor. The unregenerate sinner likes to reason thus: forgiveness of sin and salvation are grand gifts, but to obtain them I must merit them through my own good works. And the devil says, "Amen!" Notice the elder son's self-commendation: "I have done this, that and the other good thing "; also notice his griping and fussing with his kind father. In return his father tried to reason with his elder son saying, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found." This parable is most strikingly dramatic—full of pathos and pity—the most wonderful story every penned by man; a silent sermon. In the distance is a little home. The father, apparently, watching for his wild, wandering boy, seeing him afar off rushed to meet him. The father had never ceased to watch and hope; he saw the boy coming a long way down the road, ran to meet him, threw his arms around his dusty shoulders, kissed his forehead, and bare him in triumph to the front door. What a meeting! A hat and a crude staff are thrown to the ground a few yards from this meeting; the boy in his anxiety to meet his father hurriedly discarding them. Imagine the two in the most poignant embrace. You can almost see the father kissing his wandering boy, and almost hear those written words: "This is my son who was dead, and is alive again; he was

lost, and is found." Yes you can almost hear the repenting Prodigal's honest confession: I "have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more *worthy* to be called thy son." A man learns much from defeat—little from victory. Does this not prove conclusively that that poor returning Prodigal had a felt sense of his father's pardoning love, and condescending mercy in his breast before he confessed his faults so grievingly?

Such faith and love in the heart is the cause of real repentance, and not the results of it. Faith is salvation in the germ. But suppose, on the other hand, the father had treated the Prodigal surily and coldly when he saw him coming back? Would it have produced the same effects—filial love and obedience in his son's breast? I say "No" a million times. He probably would have begged to his father, through a slavish fear—and confessed his wrongs for black policy's sake, yet that warm love toward his father would have been absent; he would have dreaded his father and shunned his company, don't you think? Now he really and truly loved him, trusted him, and felt he was a good and gracious father, and wanted to be near him, and obey him. There are sinners who are good through fear, and are monsters at heart: people who give service, and their money, but who refuse to be merciful, just and kind. Note that it is *after* and not before the kiss of reconciliation that his honest confession takes place. In other words, he is now willing to take the place of a lost sinner before God. For the more a sinner knows and tastes of the love of God, the more he grieves ever to have sinned against that love: That is what real repentance is. That is why the sinner repents and turns to God: the "ray of hope breaks in," and the light and love of God enter his soul producing action. Then follows the evidence that the Prodigal is received with rejoicing. Mark the train of blessings he received: his rags were exchanged for the family costume; the best robe was put upon him; the ring of acceptance was placed on his finger—the sign, token, and pledge of pardon and reconciliation which would

remind him both of his wanderings and adoption. Shoes were placed on his feet to show that he was received as a son and not as a hired servant, and to serve as an emblem of fatherly and never-ending love. A banquet was prepared. The tidings of the returned Prodigal were soon spread abroad; the neighbors and friends were invited to share in the thrilling joy that the "dead" was alive, and the "lost" was found. What a contrast! The unconverted man began to be in want, through underserved mercy, and the unconditional love of God. Converted, he began to be happy. What was the difference between the two sons? There was no difference at all as both were very wicked as we shall plainly see; but their sins were of a different nature. The Prodigal son was full of the black devil of carnal sin, whilst the elder son was full of the white devil of spiritual sin. The Prodigal was no worse in heart, it seems to me than the elder son. Both were very wicked by nature—dead in sin—and far from God; yea, very dead to the light and life of God.

The angry, boasting, self-righteous, unforgiving, fussing, and pouting elder son stood in need of conversion from his self-righteous self just as badly (if not more so) as the Prodigal from his carnal self. Notice how tenaciously he clings to his own performance, bragging, in effect: "Half mine!" the poor Prodigal begged all the time. The elder son asked for nothing for himself which he did not claim he deserved. In other words, he asked God for nothing, but was telling Him how good he was and what he was doing for Him—he was well pleased with himself and all he did. He loved himself as nothing else under the sun: so even his best deeds were but refined forms, as filthy rages of his secret selfishness. He stretched out his hands to serve a pitied, petted, pampered, and proud self-life; he worshipped at the shrine of self. He claims everything from his father as a debt, and not as an alms. He wants to pay for it! He is not willing to return a pauper—a nobody He was critical, proud and independent! He professed his goodness; the Prodigal confessed his badness; the elder was high on profession

but low on confession; the Prodigal lay low at mercy's door listening; the elder stood in his father's face and talked; and he trusted not in his father's wisdom, mercy and righteousness; he stood firm in his starchiness for justice; the Prodigal (in his heart and feelings) sat at his father's feet hoping for mercy and pardon. The Prodigal was low on profession but high on confession; the elder son railed in his father's face; the Prodigal wailed in his arms; he believed in, and trusted his father, truly feeling the need of mercy and forgiveness; the elder was all out-shine, but no in-shine; the Prodigal was all in-shine and no out-shine. In short, the elder son was a windy professor; the Prodigal was an humble possessor.

Dear reader, don't forget the elder son's impenitence, and unbelief in his kind hearted father's wisdom, goodness, mercy, and steer clear of unbelief, unrighteousness, and fighting against His love. It should be noted that throughout he is carefully pictured as being on the outside. Notice how self-conceited and envious the elder son was! The father's glad welcoming of his lost son home, and his not approving of the elder son's conduct did not cause the elder son to be wicked, but it only brought forth the wickedness and viciousness of his already proud and fallen nature. Temptations and occasions put nothing into a man, but only draw out what was in him before. The greatest problem of man is man himself, not his politics, or his sociology, or his economies. Man, (God's greatest masterpiece) is the most intelligent of all creatures—and is the most ignorant and most wasteful of himself. One of the greatest defects of human nature is to go to extremes. Notice the opposite extremes manifested in these two brothers! This truth appears very plainly all through the Bible, The generality of mankind is either very wicked openly, as the Prodigal son, or very wicked inwardly, as the elder son.

How tragic, yet true! Poor Adam-ruined sinner, flee to the hills of salvation! "Look unto Me and be ye saved," saith God, "for I am God and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

This precious and matchless parable of the Prodigal Son belongs naturally to Luke. Its literary charm, its tender beauty, its deep human interest, its breadth of sympathy, its perfect picture of the grace and love of God, all are in peculiar accord with the purpose and genius of this gospel. The parable is linked with two others, the teachings of which it includes and completes: the parables of the "Lost Sheep" and the "Lost Coin." The occasion of all three parables was the censure passed by the Pharisees upon Jesus because of His association with social outcasts and His cordial welcome to penitent sinners. Jesus rebuked His enemies by shoving that it is natural to rejoice in the recovery of a lost sheep or a lost coin or a lost son: much more, then, must God rejoice in the recovery of a lost soul. Evidently they who fail to share His joy must be out of sympathy and fellowship with Him. The first parable reveals the love of God in depicting His compassion for the distress and helplessness of the sinner. The second shows how precious a lost soul is in the sight of the loving God. Both of them picture his yearning and patient effort for the recovery of the sinner and his abounding joy in the restoration of the lost. The statement that "there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance," is not to be interpreted too literally. It does not mean that God finds more satisfaction in a repentant sinner than in a sinless saint.

Jesus was referring here definitely to the penitent publicans and to the self-righteous Pharisees. God did not take delight in the sins of the former, nor did he regard the state of the latter as perfect,

even taking the Pharisees at their best regarding them as faithful to the laws of God. Whatever its motive, morality is always better than lawlessness and impurity. However, a repentant sinner who understands the grace and mercy of God, experimentally, is always more pleasing to him than the Pharisees, proud, critical, and unloving, however correct he may be in his moral behavior. This truth is made more plain in the parable of the prodigal son. Here we have perfectly described the experience of the repentant sinner and also the unsympathetic attitude of the disdainful Pharisee. The first is represented in the story by the Prodigal and the second by the conduct of his elder brother.

In describing the waywardness of this younger son, Jesus gave a complete picture of the character and consequences of sin. Some have thought that the parable of the Lost Sheep indicates that sin is due in part to ignorance and folly and that the parable of the Lost Coin shows that it may be occasioned by misfortune and accident. The parable of the Prodigal Son, however, that it is usually due to willful choice and to a desire for indulgence. Its results are sketched in appalling colors. We are shown all its disillusion, suffering, slavery, and despair. As a picture of the inevitable consequences of sin, no touch could be added to the scene of the prodigal in the far country when he had spent all, when the famine had arisen, when he had sold himself to feed swine and was unable to be satisfied even with the coarse food he was providing for beasts. Nor is there any more beautiful picture of repentance than was drawn when the Master described the Prodigal as "he came to himself," his sin had not been mere folly, it had been madness. He remembered a former time of joy and plenty in his early home. He realized his present desperate need; he resolved to arise and go to his father. Most of all, he saw his offense had been not only against a loving, earthly parent but against God, and that he was wholly undeserving of fellowship with his father. **Repentance is not only sorrow for sin; it is an**

acknowledgement that the offense has been committed against a holy God: it is a chancre of heart toward him, and a resolution for a new life which manifests itself in definite action "He arose and came to his father."

Strictly speaking, this is the end of the parable of the Prodigal son. In another sense the most beautiful part immediately follows. It is a description of the matchless love shown by God to every repentant soul. The father had never ceased to love the Prodigal or to hope and yearn for his return, he had been eagerly looking for his wayward son. The first sight of the Prodigal filled his heart with compassion: he "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." The Prodigal was ready to confess his fault, but the father scarcely heard his words as he commanded the servants to "bring forth quickly the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on, his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry." **It is a picture not only of pardon but of complete restoration.** It assures the sinner that as he turns to God he will be received into the closest fellowship of a son and heir and that his return will give joy to the heart of God who will regard him as one that was dead, and is alive again," as on who was lost, and is found. The picture of the elder son is exquisitely sketched. It was unquestionably intended to describe the loveless Pharisees who envied the joy of the repentant publicans and sinners. It furthermore brings a message to all persons in every age to whom religion is merely a matter of unwilling obedience and of loveless faithfulness to the laws of God. It depicts souls out of fellowship with God, feeling no real joy in his service and sharing none of his gladness in the salvation of lost souls.

The elder brother knew nothing of the experience of a true son. He was merely a slave. When the Prodigal returned he was not watching with his father, he was "in the field"; when he learned that his brother had been welcomed to the home he was filled with

anger. He refused to enter the house and when his father came out to entreat him, he accused him of partiality and unkindness. His words described admirably the self-righteousness of the Pharisees: "I never transgressed a commandment of thine"; they also show how little he appreciated his true privileges: "thou never gavest me a kid." The reply of his father intimates the possibilities which he never had appreciated and the privileges which he never had enjoyed, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine." It had always been possible for the Pharisees to enjoy the grace and mercy and the love of God; but to them religion had been a burdensome round of rites and duties. It had given no satisfaction, no gladness to their hearts.

Something of their experience is paralleled even by Christians of the present day. Failing to appreciate the gracious pardon of God and his willingness to supply every spiritual need, forgetting the possibility of living in daily communion and fellowship with him, knowing nothing of his joys in the salvation and repentance of lost souls, they are seeking in their own strength, wearily and joylessly, to do the things that they believe to be right and to obey the commands of God, but their lives are like those of servants, not like the free, joyous experience of true sons.

Possibly the most artistic touch of the parable is its abrupt close. We do not know whether the elder son yielded to the entreaty of his father or not. It was an appeal to the Pharisees; would they accept the grace of God and further His plans for the salvation of the lost, or would they continue to criticize and envy the repentant sinner? Shall we live as servants or as sons? Mere reformation differs just as much from regeneration as white-washing any old rotten house differs from taking it down and building it anew. Reformation is but varnished hypocrisy unless it proceeds from grace. Too many are trying to cleanse the soul of its stains by washing it with the tears of sorrow; scrubbing it with the soap of

good resolves; rubbing it with the chamois of morality. Man is the only creature that persists in changing the order of the world. What he can't understand he rejects, and if interfered with starts to destroy. Of all the creatures that God has made, man is the only one that persists in changing the order of the world! The birds, the beasts, the plants, the flowers and the trees. "they continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for they are all Thy servants" (Psa. 119:91). Man may destroy a plant, but he is powerless to force it into disobedience to the laws given it by the common Creator. "If," says one, "man would employ it for his use, he must carefully pay attention to its wants and ways, and bow his own proud will to the humblest grass at his feet. Man may forcibly obstruct the path of a growing twig but it turns quietly aside, and moves patiently and irresistibly on its own appointed way." Do what he may, turf will not grow in the tropics, nor the palm bear its fruit in a cold climate. Rice refuses to thrive out of watery swamps, or cotton to form its fleece of snowy fibers where the rain can reach them. Some of the handsomest flowers in the world, and stranger still some of the most juicy and succulent with which we are acquainted, adorn the arid and desolate sands of the Cape of Good Hope, and will not flourish elsewhere. If you twist the branch of a tree so as to turn the under surface of its leaves towards the sky, in a very little while all those leaves will turn down and assume their appointed position. This process will be performed sooner or later, according to the heat of the sun and the flexibility of the leaves, but none the less it will surely take place. You cannot induce the Sorrowful tree of India to bloom by day, or cause it to cease all the year round from loading the night air with the rich perfume of its orange-like flowers. The philosopher need not go far to find the secret of this. The Psalmist declares it when, speaking of universal nature, he says, "hath established them forever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass; He hath given them a law which shall not be broken" (Psa. 148:6). Truly it is said in another Psalm (119:91) "They continue this day according to Thine

ordinances; for all are Thy servants." Willful man may dare to defy his Maker, and set at nought His wise and merciful commands; but not so all nature besides. Well, indeed, is it for us that His other works have not erred after the pattern of our rebellion; that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, with all their accompanying provision, have not ceased! To the precepts imposed upon vegetation when first called into being on creation's third day, it still yields implicit submission, and the tenderest will die rather than transgress.

What an awful contrast to this is the conduct of man, God's greatest masterpiece, endowed with reason and a never-dying soul, yet too often ruining his health; wasting and destroying his mental power; defiling his immortal spirit, and, in a word, madly endeavoring to frustrate every purpose for which he was framed. The greatest need of man in his highest cultural attainments is to be saved from him self, lest he through avarice and wickedness of his own heart destroy both himself and his neighbor. We are afraid of *truth*. Man will wrangle over Christianity, write for it, fight for it, die for it, anything but live for it. He prays to God on Sunday, but preys upon his fellowman on week days—hypocrisy on Sunday, hocus-pocus on week days. All the unregenerate make *their* will, not His will, the governing and overriding principle. They run the universe and not He. It breaks down the exclusive walls of heaven and leaves the godless universe to roll, like a deluge, over God's prostrate sceptre and throne. **A God with His hands tied is no God.** A God who cannot exercise a sovereign prerogative based upon justice is no God.

He is little—smaller than the Governor of the state of New Jersey, who can pardon or refuse to grant pardon for reasons sufficient to himself. Man is long on talk but short on acts; long on praying, short on paying. As a talker, man travels in an airplane: faster than the wind; as an actor, he rides in an oxcart; yet he does get along,

somehow. Snakes crawl, birds fly, fish swim, dogs run, but man talks himself forward. It is said out of eleven million words spoken by man in a year five million are "I," "me," and "mine." Most of our time is spent watching other people, hearing what they say, wondering what they think. We seldom watch ourselves, and rarely ever get the "low-down" or the "high-up" about the person closest to us. Come! Come! Lord Jesus, Come! Save us from our selfish selves! Remember dark Calvary!

Solomon said, "The eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20). In Eccles. 1:8 the Scripture saith: "The eye of man is not satisfied, with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

The things most forbidden we always desire,
And things most denied we seek to acquire.

"As a rule, man's a fool;
When its hot he wants it cool,
When its cool he wants it hot;
Always wanting what is not—
As a rule—man's a fool."

Sinner, this is God's description of thee by nature (Psa. 39:5; 62:9; 51:5; Jn 3:3; 6:44; Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 8:6-8; 1 Cor. 2:14; Jas. 4:5). Man is conceived and born in sin. What can he do!

Nature is sunk and fallen; and nature's creed is this: "I see and I approve the better path, but take the worse." Freewill was ruined in Eden. Everything of itself in this world goes backward and downward if left to itself. There is not a single indicative assertion of freewill in the whole Bible. Arminians represent the universe as the governess of God, instead of representing God as the Governor of the universe. Man is the only creature that persists in changing the order of the world. The birds, the animals, the flowers, have

their tasks—and they carry them out. But man is never satisfied. He wants to dominate, and when he is interfered with he starts to destroy. Man himself is his greatest problem!

"Madness by nature reigns within,
The passions burn and rage,
Till God's own Son with skill divine,
The inward fire assuage.

"We lick the dust, we grasp the wind,
And solid good despise;
Such is the folly of the mind,
Till Jesus makes us wise."

Self can never overcome self. How tragic, yet true, that we must be led through the very valley of "strip-all" before we die to self.

"God is a tower without a stair
And His perfection loves despair."

Oh, the folly and futility of self-effort! Self can never cast out self. You may have tried to pray all night, or to "pray through" in order to "get the blessing." How often you have been filled with disgust and shame and secret weeping over your *inward wrongness!* But in spite of all your agonizing and strivings you find your resolutions only so many ropes of sand. Self can never cast our self! There's no finding rest in creature merit. They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright! Nothing was ever be achieved without Christ? To become exceeding sinful in our own eyes bring us to Paul's heartrending cry: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" (Rom. 7:24). What is the matter? Wherein is our trouble? We have proceeded on the wrong basis. We have missed God's way of victory over sin: by grace, through Jesus crucified. We do not read in the Scriptures anywhere

that the *blind "accepted"* their sight, but "received" it (Matt. 11:5; Jn. 6:45; Isa. 35:4, 5; 29:18; 42:7).

Things and persons "receive" but cannot "accept." Jesus said, "the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him" (Jn. 14:17). Moreover, He said, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (Jn. 6:44). And, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (Jn. 14:6). The King James version of the Scriptures says these things about "fallen man's" ability to come unaided and undrawn to God. So does the Douay or Roman Catholic versions), the very same thing. (The writer is a reader of both versions). To accept, or choose implies some active force and power of discrimination and selection which a dead sinner does not possess. To receive, on the contrary is passive rather than active in its force (Eph. 2:1-5; John 1:12; Matt. 20:31; Mark 10:52; Lk. 18:42, 43; Jn. 9:11-18; Acts 9:18; 22:13; Rom. 8:15). To "receive" describes simply the act of taking. To accept, the taking cordially (heartily, affectionately), or for the purpose for which a thing is offered. It is only by intelligent forces outside of itself, either human or divine, that there is ever any development in plants or animals, or man: None can come to Jesus, except the Father draw them (Jn. 6:44). Yet sinners do not perish, because they cannot come, but because they will not come. Jesus says, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life" (Jn. 5:40). Man's ruin lieth wholly in his own perverse will. He cannot come because he will not; help enough is provided were he willing; but he will not heartily accept Christ as his only Prophet, Priest, and King; his heart will not submit to be wholly saved by grace through faith. Men perish because they will not come to Jesus; yet if they have a will to come, it is God who works the *will* in them; grace, electing grace, both draws the will and keep it steady; and to grace be all the praise. Salvation is of the Lord! Damnation is of the man! Man in his natural standing in this vain world is too proud to be saved for *nothing!* Self is the principle, motive, or end, of every

action by a natural man. He will not to accept salvation as an alms, but chooses to work it out and cry, "Half mine:" He wants no drawings of God's Spirit; he is wise enough to draw himself; nor needs a shepherd's care to fetch him to the fold, he is strong enough to fetch himself; nor can he bear the to say, "I have chosen you," for he is old enough to choose for himself. He can climb into the fold by his own nimble legs, and keep himself there by his own ready wit; no thanks to the Shepherd. And he looks and talks so bravely, one is almost grieved to the Shepherd say, "A climber is a thief" (Jn. 10:1) and by that word condemn him to the gallows. It is almost as difficult to convince men of their spiritual decays as it is to recover them from them. You can not help many people, for there are not many people willing to be helped on the inside. They are trying to be personal saviors. No one can truly bear the doctrine of grace the unconditional promise of faith—until he cannot bear himself.

Until men know themselves better, they will care very little to know Christ at all. Such is the rank our Redeemer holds in our esteem, that we never resort to Him, but in the last instance, when all creatures have failed to succour us. Remember Saul of Tarsus; David, Jonah, Jeremiah, the Prodigal son; Jacob and all the rest of the worthies. Remember the poor woman who "suffered much of many physicians, spending all she had," but never came to Jesus until she was "nothing bettered but rather grew worse" (Mk. 5:26). Read Rom. 8:5; Psa. 39:5; I Cor. 2:14.

Now in obedience to the Biblical injunction: "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the power of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:25, 26), the writer of this, is warning the people that, the

great, hour hand on the dial of time has almost moved around; the prophecy of Daniel, "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased; the power of the holy people scattered," is fulfilling right before our eyes. (Dan. 12). Jesus' words, "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring: men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth" are also being fulfilled beyond dispute. We are warned when these things begin to come to pass, to look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh (Lk. 21:25-28). "The lion hath roared, who will not fear! The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy!" (Amos 3:8). The days of Noah have come again; the earth is filled with violence; the wickedness of man is great in the earth (Gen. 6:1-11; Matt. 24:37-39). Flee from the wrath to come! Constantly plead the promises with God in prayer. He has thereby bound Himself to His people, as with a knot under His hand. Go with it therefore to God, firmly depending upon His faithfulness; He will acknowledge His own handwriting and answer your demands accordingly. Rest yourself, therefore, upon God, wait patiently for Him, being assured He will not be unmindful of His promise; but leave it to His infinite wisdom to fulfill it in that way and at that time He sees best. But remember the promises of God do not discharge from, but encourage and oblige to the diligent use of all proper and lawful means. Christ hath promised food and raiment, but the slothful and careless must not expect the benefit of that promise. The same may be said of the spiritual blessings promised. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Let the Christian live a life of faith upon the promises. A great part of the riches of the nation at this day consists in credit that is given to notes, bonds, assignments, etc. I am sure the riches of the Christian lie chiefly in the assignments he has under God's hand of the most valuable blessings both of this and a better life. Let him then know how to

value these as the truest riches, and to make use of them upon all occasions; he will find no want of any good thing. If he has it not in hand, in the promise whenever he needs it. So that he may live, entirely free from solicitude and anxious care, committing himself and all his concerns to that God who careth for him.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST

All false religion adds to life's burdens as it teaches there is something to be done by the creature to appease their gods. The Bible shows itself divine, by showing a diviner way. It shoves man from the platform and replaces him by a substitute –what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ has done wholly. Adam lies dead and we in him lie dead in trespasses and sins—Christ stand on resurrection ground—and faith, a single, simple solitary act of faith—by one bound transports us to His side. Adam disobeyed the law; we disobey it. God insists that we keep it perfectly. He cannot insist on anything less. We cannot keep it perfectly. Then Christ does it for us. Christ all His human life was under the law, keeping the law to make us a record. He earned heaven for us on the principle, "Do this and live"—Christ DID and we plead His merit. I get heaven simply on the ground of Christ's performances—His righteous life. His obedience reckoned mine, is my obedience.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST

The Bible doctrine is that Christ makes up all liabilities, for us to God-ward. All, "all our righteousness is but filthy rags and He is all our righteousness. "By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). The one act which saves us is a simple risk and venture on Christ. This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. (John 6:29). Christ is the Father's gift to His

elect family. He is their portion and inheritance forever. I cannot, dare not, offer Christ, propose Christ, recommend Christ, as a bargain to be obtained by your repenting (which is itself the gift of God), believing, moralizing, seeking, bearing good fruits, or the like. This would be to tell Him face to face that we won't accept His gift, that we are wiser and richer than He, and mean to purchase for ourselves. As a ruined sinner, with nothing to present to God, that our glorious Maker, as a present only hath bestowed this free gift. *Men are believers because they are elected; not elected because they are believers.* Jesus said, "Ye believe not because you are not of My sheep" (Jn. 10:26). Why didst thou pursue me when I fled thee with such aversion; and had fled thee forever, if thou hadst not compelled me to return?

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST

The Bible proves itself to be divine because in it we have God's thought higher than man's thought; His way abolishing ours in salvation. The Bible proves itself divine because in it we are taught that we are saved out and out, by simple suspense on Another—that, to Godward, Christ is all in all and no man anything at all. As the old Puritans put it, Jesus was all. His lifetime gathering and beating small the golden threads with which to weave the seamless robe of an imputed righteousness, and in His death He dipped that robe in the vermilion of His blood.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

The business of Christ's blood is to wash our bad works out, and to wash our good works clean.

"This spotless robe the same appears,
When ruined nature sinks in years;
No age can change its glorious hue;

The robe of Christ is ever new.

"When on the cross the Savior died,
God's holy law was satisfied;
My debts He paid, my sins He bore,
And Justice now demands no more."

Oh, life of life, death of death! O Jesus, what harmony dwells in Thy name! Where were my hopes but for a Redeemer's merits and atonement! How desperate, how undone my condition! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Oh, heavens, move more fast! Oh time, run, run, and hasten the marriage day! Oh joy unspeakable and glorious. Christ does not seal a blank charter to our souls. Thou are engaged by thy own tremendous Name for my security. Transporting assurance! What further security can I ask? What security can I wish beyond eternal veracity? The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but thy kindness shall not depart, nor the covenant of thy peace be broken. Shall the sparks of divine love be extinguished, and immortal enmity succeeds? And shall I who was once blessed with thy favor become the object of thy wrath and indignation? It is impossible; for thou art not a man, that thou shouldst lie; or as the son of man that thou shouldst repent. Hath He said and shall He not do it! or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Sweet Jesus, take wide steps! Oh, world's wonder! Oh, when will we meet! Mystery of the ages! O Lord, never let me see another king! Glory, glory to our King! Oh, to be moving quickly and swimming over head and ears in Christ's love! Oh, for help to set my crowned King on high! Oh, my short arms cannot fathom His love! Lord Jesus, work a miracle! Oh, what would I give to have hands and arms to grip strongly, and fold heartsomely about

Christ's neck, and to have my claim made good with real possession! Oh, that we were out of ourselves, and dead to this world, and this world dead and crucified to us! My faith hath no bed to sleep upon, but Omnipotence!

"When Jesus teacher stood,
He asked the Jewish race;
What think ye of the Christ of God?
His person, work and grace?

"Right thoughts of Jesus make
The soul on His rely;
While such as Christ the Lord mistake,
Deceive themselves and die.

"The highest thoughts they can,
Angels on Him employ;
And those who think Him only man.
He will at last destroy.

"But if the saints be asked,
What they of Jesus think,
They all exclaim, with creed unmasked,
He is our meat and drink.

"He is our God and King,
Our Surety, Guide and Friend;
Him we adore, of Him we sing,
On Him we will depend."

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"Poor sinner, think and think again,
What an unbelieving world you're living in;

Think not well of thyself, nor reformation,
But forget thyself into the great salvation.

"Sinner, stay, on the gospel plan;
Behold, the God of love unfold;
The glories of His dying pains,
For ever telling, yet untold.

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him;
This He gives you! this He gives you!
'Tis the Spirit's glimmering beam.

"Tinkling sounds of disputation,
Naked knowledge all is vain;
Every soul that gains salvation,
Must and shall be *born again*."

Life is a gift to be enjoyed—not a penance to be served. Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep; I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands" (John 10:11, 28). This quotation is from the King James Version of the Holy Scriptures. Now for the benefit of any reader; who prefers the Douay, or Roman Catholic version of the Scriptures, I quote from Jonah 10:11, 27, 28: "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep; My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me. And I give them everlasting life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand." Kind reader, whether I have made you glad, or mad, I beseech thee to search the Scriptures, like the noble Bereans, to see whether these things be so. What think ye of

Christ? Faith may dance because Christ singeth: "Be of good cheer! I am the way, the truth and the life! I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward! I am the door of the sheep! Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest! I lay down My life for the sheep! I dwell in the high and holy place, with Him also that is of a *contrite* and humble spirit! I am the first, I am also the last! Come ye to the waters, buy and eat; yea, come without money and without PRICE! Ho, everyone that thirsts come! I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do! All Mine is Thine, and Thine is Mine! Rejoice forevermore! I'll never leave thee!"

ACROSTIC

My, oh my, what a strange creature am I!
I sometimes sing, and sometimes cry;
Lord, let neither wind nor stormy main
Force back my shattered bark
Oh, give me grace to fight like Paul,
Restore my soul from every fall
Dear Jesus, sanctify every loss and thrall!
Hear me, Lord, when I pray and weep;
Ah, Lord, with tardy step I creep!
Let Thy light shine on me all the way;
Lord, be Thou my shield, strength and stay.
Savior of sinners deign on me to shine;
Reveal the path of life *divine*.

APPENDIX

THE PRESENT TRUTH

(2 Peter 1:12)

To what end is the gospel to be preached universally to all, if some particular and determinate persons only can receive it! To which we answer: That the counsel of God concerning election is secret. The minister knows not who are the objects of it, and therefore he must preach to all according to his commission. Election is the rule of God's conduct and not ours. The Lord deals in this as in the matter of lots. Saul was appointed to be King, yet all Israel must come together, and lots must be cast on the whole nation, as if the person was undetermined. It must be preached to all whether they will forbear (Ezek. 2:5; 3:11; Matt. 28:19; 2 Tim. 2:23-26; Acts 13:48; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

Many suppose that in preaching the gospel it is necessary to tell them that Christ died for him, and that if Christ did not actually atone for the sins of every individual the gospel cannot be preached at all. But this is very erroneous. The gospel declares that Christ died for the guilty, and that the most guilty who believe it shall be saved. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners.

The gospel does not tell every individual to whom it is addressed, that Christ died for him, but that if he believes he shall be saved. This is a warrant to preach the gospel unto all men; and it is only as he is a believer that it is known to any man that Christ died for him individually. To preach the gospel then to every man, and call

on every one to believe and be saved, is quite consistent, as it is a truth that whosoever believes shall be saved. If the most guilty of the human race believe in Jesus, there is the most perfect certainty that he shall be saved. If any man is straitened in preaching the gospel, and finds a difficulty in calling on all men to believe, except he can at the same time tell them that Christ died for every individual of the human race, he does not clearly understand what the *gospel is* *It is the good news that Christ died for the most guilty that believe*, not that He died for every individual, whether he believes or not. To the truth that every man shall be saved who believes there is no exception. If there are any sins that will never be pardoned, they imply that the individuals guilty of them will never believe; for if they believe they will be saved. Whatever, then, the sin against the Holy Ghost may be supposed to be, it implies final unbelief; and the best way to relieve those persons who may think they are guilty of this sin, is not to labor and make them understand what the sin against the Holy Ghost is, but to make them see that, if they now believe, they cannot have ever committed the unpardonable sin. To suppose that any believe who will not be saved is to suppose a contradiction in the word of God. The difficulty of those who feel themselves restrained in exhorting sinners to believe the gospel, on the ground that the atonement of Christ was not made for all, is the same as that which is experienced by some who, believing the doctrine of election, suppose it inconsistent to exhort all indiscriminately to believe the gospel, since it is certain that they who are not chosen to eternal life will never be saved. In this they err. The gospel, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, is to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. It is certain, however, that they for whom Christ did not die, and who do not belong to the election of grace, will not believe. These are secret things which belong to God, to be revealed in their proper time. But the gospel is the fan in Christ's hand who, by means of it, will thoroughly purge his floor, separating those who are His sheep from the rest

of the world lying in the wicked one. He has therefore commanded it to be preached to all men; and by it those will be discovered for whom His atonement was made, and whom God hath chosen from the foundation of the world, and predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself. We are not, then, to inquire first, either for ourselves or others, for whom Christ died, and who are chosen to eternal life, before we determine to whom the gospel is to be preached; but preach it to all, with the assurance that whoever believes it shall receive the remission of sins. In believing it, we ascertain for ourselves that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and that God from the beginning hath chosen us to salvation, through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. The atonement of Christ is of infinite value and the reason why all men are not saved-by it, is not for want of its being of sufficient value, but because it was not made for all. In itself, it was sufficient to make atonement for the sins of all mankind, had it been so intended.

All are invited to rely upon it for pardon and acceptance, as freely and fully as if they knew that God designed it for them from all eternity; and all who thus rely upon it shall experience the blessing of its efficacy and infinite value. In the proclamation of the gospel, no restriction is held forth respecting election and reprobation. No difference is announced between one sinner and another. All Adam's children are called: "Unto you O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men."

A fisher who stands upon the shore and plunges his net into the sea at large is not so fanatic as to think of catching all the fish in the sea, though he casts the net indiscriminately. So when a Christian minister spreads the gospel net, he preaches to all who come within the sphere of his address, not with the expectation of catching all, but of catching as many as God shall please; knowing

that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can bring souls into the net and effectually catch them for Jesus Christ.

The New Testament scriptures are replete with instances of the gospel being preached to all men, every creature, in every place. Seeing that the Apostles were cast out, whipped, stoned, imprisoned, and even killed, in many places by the impenitent is proof positive that they preached according to the Master's commission—to every creature—even to the hazarding of their lives. In one place it is said that as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48). In another place, that Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel, to the people and when they returned to Jerusalem they rehearsed to the church how God opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles, and what He had done by them and with them (Acts 14:27; 15:4, 12). Still in another place, upon hearing Peter preach the gospel, three thousand souls were pricked in their hearts, and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" (Acts 2:27). Were these not all unbelievers before hearing the gospel preached! Still at another time, the people upon hearing John and Peter's preaching many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand (Acts 4:4). Were not these five thousand souls *unbelievers before hearing the word preached! This is all conclusive proof that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*; and was preached to the unbelieving, seeing that some of the multitude believed, and some believed not (Rom. 1:16). To cap the climax, when Christ prayed for His disciples, said: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe *on Me through their word*" (John 17:20). Paul said to the Corinthians, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus, I have *begotten* you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye

stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:1). To the Thessalonians, said he, "Whereunto He called you *by* our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14). To Philemon he wrote: "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds" (Philemon 10). The ambassadors for Christ must preach thee gospel to "every creature." Duties are ours, but events are the Lord's Acts 2:37; 13:48; 8:22-24; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Jas. 1:18; I Pet. 1:23).

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Notice that Peter called Paul "beloved brother," but Paul called Timothy, "My own son in the faith"; "my dearly beloved son" (2 Pet. 3:15; I Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:2). Ananias called Saul, "Brother Saul" (Acts 9:17). There is a distinction worthy of notice. Notice the difference between the words, *Brother* and *Son*. Truth conquers all things. Don't be afraid of truth! Rightly divide the word of truth!

If a minister (or believer), is constrained by the love of God—if his work is in accordance with God's will, and in obedience to His word it will be very successful. And inasmuch as it is not done by him, but by the Lord *Himself*, though by his instrumentality, it will be reckoned as gold, silver, and precious stones and rewarded accordingly. The Lord's word must be done by the Lord Himself—not by us with His help, but "by Him through *us*." The Apostles preached the gospel boldly and successfully, "the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following"; that men should repent (not reform) and believe the gospel (Acts 11:20, 21; Mark 1:15; 6:12; 16:20; Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:1-4). That which the seed of wheat brings forth is wheat; but that which the gospel brings forth is not gospel but faith. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

"When Jesus teacher stood,
He asked the Jewish race;
What think ye of the Christ of God
His person, work, and grace?

The Lord's spokesman did not allow the fear of being called Arminians by the extremists to run them from the truth as it is in Jesus. The Apostles neither got too high above the common style of divine decrees nor so low as to be dipped in Arminianism. They knew that "faith cometh by hearing," yet not exclusively by hearing with the outward ear. They knew that the word without the Spirit is dead, being alone. They knew also that many a man is by the Holy Spirit convinced of sin who never heard a passage in the Bible in his life; but the Spirit of the Word is applied to his conscience; and whether the Spirit AND the letter, or the Spirit only, the effect is the same. The man has a sense of sin and of the wrath of God on account thereof in the one case as much as in the other. They did not limit the Holy One of Israel as nearly all the religious world do today. Listen to this, taken from a modern Confession of Faith: "That the gospel is to be preached publicly as a statement of Bible truth, and as a witness of Jesus Christ and for His praise, and for the comfort and instruction of *regenerated* persons, but *deny* that it is an offer of salvation to anyone, or contains any commands or obligations for the *unregenerate* to believe that Jesus is their Savior." The above statement is diametrically opposite to what Jesus commanded, and His Apostles did (Mk. 16:20; Luke 9:6; Acts 14:27; 15:4, 12; 2::t7-47; 4:4 17:30; 21:28; 13:48; 28:22; 1 Cor. 4:17). The Apostles knew it was not in their hands to whom they should preach, but to preach the gospel to all men, leaving it in God's hands to make His own application of the word sown. They could sing in truth:

"God moves in mysterious ways,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the seas,
And rides upon the storm."

Let's preach the gospel—glad tidings of great joy—that Christ paid it all, whether men hear or whether they forbear. Scripture everywhere teaches that man is responsible for his condemnation, but Christ alone is responsible for his salvation. In other words, that "if any man be saved it is God's will that saves him; if any man be damned it is his own will that damns him." God made man and man has made himself a sinner, and man himself must take the consequences of that. God made man "upright," but he has "sought out many inventions." God is the Creator of the being of the wicked, yet is not the *infuser* of their sin. Mystery! Mystery! Grace! Grace, which gave my soul a Hiding Place!

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud,
Like a swift flying meteor, a fast moving cloud;
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

"'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of the breath
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death;
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud."

Ministers of the gospel of Christ must draw the bow at a venture; sow the Seed (the Word of God) in the morning, and in the evening withhold not their hands; for they know not whether both alike shall be good (Eccl. 11:16). Duties are ours, but events are the Lord's. Scripture says, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow" (Eccl. 11:4). God will that we care not to know what will come. In

His promises only will He have us to trust, and there rest and seek no further.

Courteous Reader, my heart, I think, is open to embrace every one of every sect, who truly loves and follows the Lord Yes, as Christ. The whole household of faith are my brethren, and some care has been taken not to give any of them a needless offence. In matters not fundamental, let every one see with his own eyes, and judge for himself, as God enables him. This book is not written to deprecate any set of Christians, but to sink the creature to his real standard of worthlessness and helplessness, and to *exalt* the Savior in the hearts of His people, that they may trust in Him, love, and obey Him. Man's emptiness, and Christ's fulness, are my topics; and these topics are not suited to the relish of depraved nature, which loveth gilding and varnish to hide a base metal. The more we feel our own misery, the more we learn to value Jesus; and the more we know of Him, the more we shall trust in Him; and the more we can trust Him, the more we shall love and obey Him. To *know* Jesus, was the top of Paul's ambition, and is the joy and crown of each believer; it is the pinnacle of human glory: and according to the Lord's own account, it is eternal *life*.

Our Father has determined that Christ shall be all and we nothing. To accomplish this, experimentally, He undoes our work. When we have been washing with nitre and soap, He plunges us in the ditch; He turns us upside down. This is hard work, and while the process is going on, we think it must be for destruction, for we appear to grow worse and worse. But in truth it is for salvation—to show ourselves to ourselves. Oh, what a blessed exchange! It is worth being spoiled in all the labor of our hands, and marred in our best things, to possess such a treasure. There can be no drinking of the living waters while we have a price in our hand, be it much or little; No buying the gospel wine and milk while we have any money; no "triumphing in the Lord our righteousness," while we are hunting

about for shreds of our own and sewing them together. All this is Christ rejecting and God-dishonoring. If we be anything, or have anything, Jesus cannot be *everything*; and if He be not *everything*, He is nothing at all. Do you want Christ? Do you desire Him? Are you miserable without Him? Do you think well of yourself? God forbid!

All do-gooders are trying to cleanse the soul of its stains with the tears of sorrow; scrubbing it with the soap of good resolves; rubbing it with the chamois of morality. Man rebels, he struggles against God. He is determined not to be saved—for nothing—if he can help it!

"Stop, poor mortals, stop and think
Before you further go;
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe!"

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Do you feel the need of Him? Oh, to have the single eye which looks to Jesus only! Then would our whole body be "full of light." The reason we do not desire, and enjoy Him more and more is because we seek Him not aright, but seek peace in ourselves. With a love of benevolence God loves the whole world. But there is a difference between God's love of benevolence and God's love of relationship and union. I may have a true love for my neighbors, but I have but one wife. I may love my neighbor's children, but I have a special regard for my own. God loves His own with an everlasting love!

"Immortal love no end can know,
Though clouds surround His face;
All Israel must to glory go,

As trophies of His grace.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

Milford Hall, Sr.