

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 19

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A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 19, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

54 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Things New and Old Volume 19
1. Above It All
2. All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 1
3. All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 2
4. All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 3
5. All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 4
6. All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 5
7. Christ Our Living Prize
8. The Christian: His Position and His Work Part 1
9. The Christian: His Position and His Work Part 2
10. The Christian: His Position and His Work Part 3
11. Correspondence
12. Correspondance
13. The Dew of Hermon
14. A Letter to a Friend on Eternal Punishment
15. Extract From a Letter of a Christian Captain
16. Faith
17. Fidelity of a Switch-Tender
18. The Folded Lamb
19. Fragments
20. If the Lord Tarry
21. Israel and the Nations
22. Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled
23. Living by Faith
24. Living Waters
25. Lord, What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?
26. Man's History and God's Due Time
27. Mary, I Love Thee Still
28. Meditation
29. My Treasure, Christ
30. Nothing to Pay, to Do, or to Fear
31. O Wondrous Love!
32. On the Great Exhibition
33. One-Sided Theology
34. Peace
35. Meditations on Practical Christianity
36. Publicly and From House to House
37. Questions: and How to Meet Them
38. The Red Sea

- 39.** Redemption and Purchase
- 40.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 1
- 41.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 10
- 42.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 2
- 43.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 3
- 44.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 4
- 45.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 5
- 46.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 6
- 47.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 7
- 48.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 8
- 49.** Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 9
- 50.** Then Shall Every Man Have Praise of God
- 51.** Till He Come
- 52.** The Voice of God
- 53.** The Way Home

Things New and Old Volume 19

Above It All

I see the crowds of earth go by,
I hear the world's loud trumpet call;
Though through its midst my path should lie,
Yet I must live above it all.
The sorrows of the daily life,
The shadows o'er my path which fall,
Too oft obscure the glory's light,
Until I rise above them all.
Until upon the mountain height,
I stand, my God! with Thee alone,
Bathed in the fullest, clearest Light—
The glory which surrounds the Throne.
Here hushed are all the sounds of earth—
The laugh of pleasure, moan of pain;
The vain deluding shouts of mirth
Here fall upon my ear in vain.
Calm in Thy secret presence, Lord,
I rest this weary soul of mine;
Feed on the fullness of Thy word,
And die to all the things of time.
Learning that word, so wondrous deep—
To live in joy and grief the same—
Weeping, as though we did not weep—
Gaining, as though we did not gain.
Learning to live, through doubt and fear,
Far above every scene below,

With the one thought— “lie is not here”
Throwing a shade on all below.
Oh! take my fevered hands in thine,
And keep me, Master, nearer Thee,
Walking above the things of time,
In closest fellowship with Thee.
With Thee, above the clouds and gloom
That shade and dim this lower life;
Walking with Thee—with Thee alone—
Above the storm, above the strife.
The child of God must walk alone,
If he would live and walk with Thee;
And only to such hearts are known
The joys of Thy blest company.
Along with Thee, O Master! where
The light of earthly glory dies;
Misunderstood by all, I dare
To do what Thine own heart will prize.
Such be my path through life down here—
One long, close, lonely walk with Thee;
Until, past every doubt and fear,
Thy face in light above I see.

All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 1

When once the soul has been brought to feel the reality of its condition before God, the depth of its ruin, guilt, and misery, its utter and hopeless bankruptcy, there can be no rest until the Holy Spirit reveals a full and an all-sufficient Christ to the heart. The only possible answer to our total ruin is God's perfect remedy.

This is a very simple, but a most important truth; and we may say, with all possible assurance, the more deeply and thoroughly the reader learns it for himself the better. The true secret of peace is to get to the very end of a guilty, rained, helpless, worthless self, and there find an all-sufficient Christ, as God's provision for our very deepest need. This truly is rest—a rest which can never be disturbed. There may be sorrow, pressure, conflict, exercise of soul, heaviness through manifold temptations, ups and downs, all sorts of trials and difficulties; but we feel persuaded that when a soul is really brought by God's Spirit to see the end of self, and to rest in a full Christ, it finds a peace which can never be interrupted.

The unsettled state of so many of God's dear people is the result of not having received into their hearts a full Christ, as God's own very provision for them. No doubt this sad and painful result may be brought about by various contributing causes, such as a legal mind, a morbid conscience, a self-occupied heart, bad teaching, a secret hankering after this present world, some little reserve in the heart, as to the claims of God, of Christ, and of eternity. But, whatever may be the producing cause, we believe it will be found, in almost every case, that the lack of settled peace, so common amongst the Lord's people, is the result of not seeing, not believing, what God has made His Christ to be to them, and for them, and that forever.

Now what we propose, in this our opening paper for the year 1876, is to show the anxious reader, from the precious pages of the word of God, that there is treasured up for him in Christ all he can possibly need, whether it be to meet the claims of his conscience, the cravings of his heart, or the exigencies of his path. We shall seek, by the grace of God, to prove that the work of Christ is the only true resting place for the conscience; His Person, the only true object for the heart; His word, the only true guide for the path.

And first, then, let us dwell for a little upon

THE WORK OF CHRIST AS THE ONLY RESTING PLACE FOR THE CONSCIENCE.

In considering this great subject, two things claim our attention: first, what Christ has done for us; secondly, what He is doing for us. In the former we have atonement; in the latter, advocacy. He died for us on the cross. He lives for us on the throne. By His precious atoning death, He has met our entire condition as sinners. He has borne our sins, and put them away forever. He stood charged with all our sins—the sins of all who believe in His name. "Jehovah laid on him the iniquities of us all." (Isa. 53) And again, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. 3:18.

This is a grand and all-important truth for the anxious soul—a truth which lies at the very foundation of the whole christian position. It is impossible that any truly awakened soul, any spiritually enlightened conscience, can enjoy divinely settled peace until this most precious truth is laid hold of in simple faith. I must know, upon divine authority, that all my sins are put away forever out of God's sight; that He Himself has disposed of them in such a manner as to satisfy all the claims of His throne, and all the attributes of His nature; that He has glorified Himself in the putting away of my sins, in a far higher and more wonderful manner than if He had sent me to an everlasting hell on account of them.

Yes, He Himself has done it. This is the very gist and marrow, the heart's core, of the whole matter. God has laid our sins on Jesus, and He tells us so in His holy word, so that we may know it upon divine authority—an authority that cannot lie. God planned it; God did it; God says it. It is all of God, from first to last, and we have simply to rest in it like a little child. How do I know that Jesus bore my sins in His own body on the tree? By the very same authority which tells me I had sins to be borne. God, in His marvelous and matchless love, assures me, a poor guilty, hell-deserving sinner, that He has Himself undertaken the whole matter of my sins, and disposed of it in such a manner as to bring a rich harvest of glory to His own eternal name, throughout the wide universe, in presence of all created intelligence.

The living faith of this must tranquillize the conscience. If God has satisfied Himself about my sins, I may well be satisfied also. I know I am a sinner—it may be the chief of sinners. I know my sins are more in number than the hairs of my head; that they are black as midnight—black as hell itself. I know that any one of these sins, the very least, deserves the eternal flames of hell. I know—because God's word tells me—that a single speck of sin can never enter His holy presence, and hence, so far as I am concerned, there was no possible issue, save eternal separation from God. All this I know, upon the clear and unquestionable authority of that word which is settled forever in heaven.

But oh! the profound mystery of the cross!—the glorious mystery of redeeming love! I see God Himself taking all my sins—the black and terrible category—all my sins, as He knew and estimated them. I see Him laying them all upon the head of my blessed Substitute, and dealing with Him about them. I see all the billows and waves of God's righteous wrath—His wrath against my sins—His wrath which should have consumed me soul and body in hell throughout a dreary eternity; I see them all rolling over the Man who stood in my stead; who represented me before God; who bore all that was due to me: with whom a holy God dealt as He should have dealt with me. I see inflexible justice, holiness, truth, and righteousness dealing with my sins, and making a clear and eternal riddance of them. Not one of them is suffered to pass! There is no connivance, no palliation, no slurring over, no indifference. This could not possibly be, once God Himself took the matter in hand. His glory was at stake; His unsullied holiness, His eternal majesty, the lofty claims of His government.

All these had to be provided for in such wise as to glorify Himself in view of angels, men, and devils. He might have sent me to hell—righteously, justly, sent me to hell—because of my sins. I deserved nothing else. My whole moral being, from its profoundest depths, owns this—must own it. I have not a word to say in excuse for a single sinful thought, to say nothing of a sin-stained life from first to last—yes, a life of deliberate, rebellious, high-handed sin.

Others may reason as they please as to the injustice of an eternity of punishment for a life of sin—the utter want of proportion between a few years of wrong-doing and endless ages of torment in the lake of fire. They may reason, but I thoroughly believe, and unreservedly confess, that for a single sin against such a Being as the God whom I see at the cross, I richly deserved everlasting punishment in the deep, dark, and dismal pit of hell.

I am not writing as a theologian; if I were, it would be a very easy task indeed to bring an unanswerable array of scripture evidence in proof of the solemn truth of eternal punishment. But no; I am writing as one who has been divinely taught the true desert of sin, and that desert I calmly, deliberately, and solemnly declare, is, and can be, nothing less than eternal ex-elusion from the presence of God and the Lamb—eternal torment in the lake that burneth with lire and brimstone.

But—eternal hallelujahs to the God of all grace!—instead of sending us to hell because of our sins, He sent His Son to be the propitiation for those sins. And, in the unfolding of the marvelous plan of redemption, we see a holy God dealing with the question of our sins, and executing judgment upon them in the Person of His well-beloved, eternal, and co-equal Son, in order that the full flood-tide of His love might flow down into our hearts. “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10.

Now this must give peace to the conscience, if only it be received in the simplicity of faith. How is it possible for a person to believe that God has satisfied Himself as to his sins, and not have peace? If God says to us, “Your sins and iniquities I will remember no more,” what could we desire further as a basis of peace for our conscience? If God assures me that all my sins are blotted out as a thick cloud—that they are cast behind His back—forever gone from His sight—should I not have peace? If He shows me the Man who bore my sins on the cross, now crowned at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, ought not my soul to enter into perfect rest as to the question of my sins? Most assuredly.

For how, let me ask, did Christ reach the place which He now fills on the throne of God? Was it as God over all, blessed forever? No; for He was always that. Was it as the eternal Son of the Father? No; He was ever that—ever in the bosom of the Father—the object of the Father’s eternal and ineffable delight. Was it as a spotless, holy, perfect Man—One whose nature was absolutely pure, perfectly free from sin? No; for in that character, and on that ground, He could at any moment, between the manger and the cross, have claimed a place at the right hand of God. How was it then? Eternal praise to the God of all grace! it was as the One who had by His death accomplished the glorious work of redemption—the One who had stood charged with the full weight of our sins—the One who had perfectly satisfied all the righteous claims of that throne on which He now sits.

This is a grand, cardinal point for the anxious reader to seize. It cannot fail to emancipate the heart, and tranquillize the conscience. We cannot possibly behold by faith the Man who was nailed to the tree, now crowned on the throne, and not have peace with God. The Lord Jesus Christ, having taken upon Himself our sins, and the judgment due to them, He could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained unatoned for. To see the sin-bearer crowned with glory is to see our sins gone forever from the divine presence. Where are our sins? They are all obliterated. How do we know this? The One who took them all upon Himself has passed through

the heavens to the very highest pinnacle of glory. Eternal justice has wreathed His blessed brow with a diadem of glory, as the Accomplisher of our redemption—the Bearer of our sins; thus proving, beyond all question, or possibility of a question, that our sins are all put away out of God's sight forever. A crowned Christ, and a clear conscience, are, in the blessed economy of grace, inseparably linked together. Wondrous fact! Well may we chant with all our ransomed powers the praises of redeeming love.

But let us see how this most consolatory truth is set forth in holy scripture. In Rom. 3 we read, “But now the righteousness of God, without law [χωρὶς νόμου], is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom. God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission [or passing over] of sins that are past [in time gone by], through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

Again, in chapter 4, speaking of Abraham's faith being counted to him for righteousness, the apostle adds, “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.” Here we have God introduced to our souls as the One who raised from the dead the Bearer of our sins. Why did He do so? Because the One who had been delivered for our offenses had perfectly glorified Him respecting those offenses, and put them away forever. God not only sent His only-begotten Son into the world, but He bruised Him for our iniquities, and raised Him from the dead, in order that we might know and believe that our iniquities are all disposed of in such a manner as to glorify Him infinitely and everlastingly. Eternal and universal homage to His name!

But we have further testimony on this grand fundamental truth. In Heb. 1 we read such soul-stirring words as these: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners [or in divers measures and modes] spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Our Lord Christ, blessed be His name, would not take His seat on the throne of God, until He had, by the offering of Himself on the cross, purged our sins. Hence a risen Christ at God's right hand is the glorious and unanswerable proof that our sins are all gone, for He could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained. God raised from the dead the selfsame Man on whom He Himself had laid the full weight of our sins. Thus all is settled—divinely, eternally settled. It is as impossible that a single sin can be found on the very weakest believer in Jesus, as on Jesus Himself. This is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but it is the solid truth of God, established in manifold places in holy scripture; and the soul that believes it must possess a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

(To be continued if God permit)

All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 2

Thus far, we have been occupied with that aspect of the work of Christ which bears upon the question of the forgiveness of sins; and we earnestly trust that the reader is thoroughly clear and settled on this grand point. It is assuredly his happy privilege so to be, if only he will take God at His word. "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

If then Christ hath suffered for our sins, should we not know the deep blessedness of being eternally delivered from the burden of those sins? Can it be according to the mind and heart of God that one for whom Christ suffered should remain in perpetual bondage, tied and bound with the chain of his sins, and crying out from week to week, month to month, and year to year, that the burden of his sins is intolerable?

If such utterances are true and proper for the Christian, then what has Christ done for us? Can it be true that Christ has put away our sins, and yet that we are tied and bound with the chain of them? Is it true that He bore the heavy burden of our sins, and yet that we are still crushed beneath the intolerable weight thereof?

Some would fain persuade us that it is not possible to know that our sins are forgiven; that we must go on to the end of our life in a state of complete uncertainty on this most vital and important question. If this be so, what has become of the precious gospel of the grace of God—the glad tidings of salvation? In the view of such miserable teaching as this, what mean those glowing words of the blessed apostle Paul, in the synagogue of Antioch? "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Jesus Christ, dead and risen] is preached [not promised as a future thing, but proclaimed now] the forgiveness of sins; and by him all who believe are [not shall be, or hope to be] justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:38, 39.

If we were resting on the law of Moses, on our keeping the commandments, on our doing our duty, on our feeling as we ought, on our valuing Christ and loving God as we ought, reason would that we should be in doubt and dark uncertainty, seeing we could have no possible ground of assurance. If we had so much as the movement of an eyelash to do in the matter, then verily it would be the very height of presumption on our part to think of being certain.

But, on the other hand, when we hear the voice of the living God who cannot lie, proclaiming in our ears the glad tidings that through His own beloved Son who died on the cross, was buried in the grave, raised from the dead, and seated in the glory—that through Him alone—through Him without anything whatever of ours—through His one offering of Himself once and forever, full and everlasting remission of sins is preached, as a present reality, to be enjoyed now by every soul who simply believes the precious record of God, how is it possible for anyone to continue in doubt and uncertainty? Is Christ's work finished? He said it was. What did He do? He put away our sins. Are they then put away, or are they still on us—which?

Reader, say which? where are thy sins? Are they blotted out as a thick cloud? or are they still lying as a heavy load of guilt, in condemning power on thy conscience? If they were not put away by the atoning death of Christ, they will never be put away. If He did not bear them on the cross, you shall have to bear them in the tormenting flames of hell forever, and ever, and ever. Yes; be assured of it, there is no other way of disposing of this most weighty and momentous question. If Christ did not settle the matter on the cross, you must settle it in hell. It must be so, if God's word be true.

But glory be to God, His own testimony assures us that Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; not merely bring us to heaven when we die, but bring us to God now. How does He bring us to God? Tied and bound with the chain of our sins? with an intolerable burden of guilt on our souls? Nay, verily; He brings us to God without spot or stain or charge. He brings us to God in all His own acceptableness. Is there any guilt on Him? No; there was, blessed be His name, when He stood in our stead, but it is gone—gone forever—cast as lead into the unfathomable waters of divine forgetfulness. He was charged with our sins, on the cross. God laid on Him all our iniquities, and dealt with Him about them. The whole question of our sins, according to God's estimate thereof, was fully gone into and definitively, because divinely settled between God and Christ, amid the awful shadows of Calvary. Yes, it was all done, once and forever there. How do we know it? By the authority of the only true God. His word assures us that we have redemption through the blood of Christ, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace. He declares to us, in accents of sweetest, richest, deepest mercy, that our sins and our iniquities He will remember no more. Is not this enough? Shall we still continue to cry out that we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins? Shall we thus cast a slur upon the perfect work of Christ? Shall we thus tarnish the luster of divine grace and give the lie to the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the scripture of truth? Far be the thought! It must not be so. Let us rather hail with thanksgiving the blessed boon so freely conferred upon us by love divine, through the precious blood of Christ. It is the joy of the heart of God to forgive us our sins. Yes, God delights in pardoning iniquity and transgressions. It gratifies and glorifies Him to pour into the broken and contrite heart the precious balm of His own pardoning love and mercy. He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up, and bruised Him on the cursed tree, in order that He might be able, in per-feet righteousness, to let the rich streams of grace flow forth from His large, loving heart, to the poor, guilty, self-destroyed, conscience-smitten sinner.

But, should it be, that the reader still feels disposed to inquire how he may have the assurance that this blessed remission of sins—this fruit of Christ's atoning work, applies to him, let him hearken to those magnificent words which flowed from the lips of the risen Savior, as He commissioned the earliest heralds of His grace. "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:46, 47.

Here we have the great and glorious commission—its basis, its authority, its sphere. Christ has suffered. This is the meritorious ground of remission of sins. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. But by the shedding of blood, and by it alone, there is remission of sins—a remission as full and complete as the precious blood of Christ is fitted to effect.

But where is the authority? "It is written" Blessed, indisputable authority! Nothing can ever shake it. I know, on the solid authority of the word of God, that my sins are all forgiven, all blotted out, all

gone forever, all cast behind God's back, so that they can never, by any possibility, rise against me.

Finally, as to the sphere. It is "all nations." This includes me, beyond all question. There is no sort of exception, condition, or qualification. The blessed tidings were to be wafted, on the wings of love, to all nations—to all the world—to every creature under heaven. How could I exclude myself from this worldwide commission? Do I question, for a moment, that the beams of God's sun are intended for me? Surely not. And why should I question the precious fact that remission of sins is for me? Not for a single instant. It is for me as surely as though I were the only sinner beneath the canopy of God's heaven. The universality of its aspect precludes all question as to its being designed for me.

And surely if any further encouragement were needed, it is found in the fact that the blessed ambassadors were to "begin at Jerusalem"—the very guiltiest spot on the face of the earth. They were to make the earliest offer of pardon to the very murderers of the Son of God. This the apostle Peter does in those words of marvelous and transcendent grace, "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son, sent him to bless you, by turning away every one of you from your iniquities." Acts 3:26.

It is not possible to conceive anything richer or fuller, or more magnificent than this. The grace that could reach the murderers of the Son of God, can reach any one. The blood that could cleanse the guilt of such a crime can cleanse the vilest sinner outside the precincts of hell.

Anxious reader, do you—can you still hesitate as to the forgiveness of your sins? Christ has suffered for sins. God preaches remission of sins. He pledges His own word on the point. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." What more would you have? How can you any longer doubt or delay? What are you waiting for? You have Christ's finished work and God's faithful word. Surely these ought to satisfy your heart and tranquillize your mind. Do then let us entreat you to accept the full and everlasting remission of all your sins. Receive into your heart the sweet tidings of divine love and mercy, and go on your way rejoicing. Hear the voice of a risen Savior, speaking from the throne of the majesty in the heavens, and assuring you that your sins are all forgiven. Let those soothing accents from the very mouth of God Himself, fall in their enfranchising power upon your troubled spirit, "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." If God thus speaks to me; if He assures me that He will no more remember my sins, should I not be fully and forever satisfied? Why should I go on doubting and reasoning when God has spoken? What can give certainty but the word of God that liveth and abideth forever? It is the only ground of certainty; and no power of earth or hell, human or diabolical, can ever shake it. The finished work of Christ and the faithful word of God are the basis and the authority of full forgiveness of sins.

But, blessed forever be the God of all grace, it is not only remission of sins which is announced to us through the atoning death of Christ. This, in itself, would be a boon and a blessing of the very highest order; and as we have seen, we enjoy it according to the largeness of the heart of God, and according to the value and efficacy of the death of Christ, as God estimates it. But, besides the full and perfect remission of sins, we have also

ENTIRE DELIVERANCE FROM THE PRESENT POWER OF SIN.

This is a grand point for every true lover of holiness. According to the glorious economy of grace, the same work which secures the complete remission of sins has broken forever the power of sin. It is not only that the sins of the life are blotted out, but the sin of the nature is condemned. The believer is privileged to regard himself as dead to sin. He can sing, with a glad heart,

“For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,

And I have died in Thee;

Thou’rt risen, my bands are all untied,

And now thou livest in me.

The Father’s face of radiant grace

Shines now in light on me.”

This is the proper breathing of a Christian. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” This is Christianity. The old “I” crucified, and Christ living in me. The Christian is a new creation. Old things are passed away. The death of Christ has closed forever the history of the old “I;” and hence, though sin dwells in the believer, its power is broken and gone forever. Not only is its guilt canceled, but its terrible dominion completely overthrown.

This is the glorious doctrine of Rom. 6 - 8. The thoughtful student of this most magnificent epistle will observe that, from chapter 3:21 to chapter 5:11, we have the work of Christ applied to the question of sins. And, from chapter v. 12 to the end of chapter viii. we have another aspect of that work, namely, its application to the question of sin—“our old man”—“the body of sin”—“sin in the flesh.” There is no such thing in scripture as the forgiveness of sin. God has condemned sin, not forgiven it—an immensely important distinction. God has set forth His eternal abhorrence of sin, in the cross of Christ. He has expressed and executed His judgment upon it; and now the believer can see himself as linked and identified with the One who died on the cross, and is raised from the dead. He has passed out of the sphere of sin’s dominion into that new and blessed sphere where grace reigns through righteousness. “God be thanked,” says the apostle, “that ye were [once, but now no longer are to be] the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that type of doctrine to which ye were delivered. (Margin.) Being then made free from sin [not merely sins forgiven], ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so, now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Rom. 6:17-22.

Here lies the precious secret of holy living. We are dead to sin; alive to God. The reign of sin is over. What has sin to do with a dead man? Nothing. Well, then, the believer has died with Christ; he was buried with Christ; he is risen with Christ, to walk in newness of life. He lives under the precious reign of grace, and he has his fruit unto holiness. The man who draws a plea from the abundance of divine grace to live in sin, denies the very foundation of Christianity. “How shall we that have died to sin, live any longer therein?” Impossible. It would be a denial of the whole

christian standing. To imagine the Christian as one who is to go on, from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year, sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, is to degrade Christianity and falsify the whole christian position. To say that a Christian must go on sinning because he has the flesh in him is to ignore the death of Christ in one of its grand aspects, and to give the lie to the whole of the apostle's teaching in Rom. 6:8. Thank God, there is no necessity whatever why the believer should commit sin. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." We should not justify ourselves in a single sinful thought. It is our sweet privilege to walk in the light, as God is in the light; and, most surely, when we are walking in the light, we are not committing sin. Alas! we get out of the light and commit sin; but the normal, the true, the divine idea of a Christian is, walking in the light, and not committing sin. A sinful thought is foreign to the true genius of Christianity. We have sin in us, and shall have it so long as we are in the body: but if we walk in the Spirit, the sin in our nature will not show itself in the life. To say that we need not sin, is to state a christian privilege; to say that we cannot sin is a deceit and a delusion.

"Salvation in that Name is found,
Cure for my grief and care;
A healing balm for every wound,
All, all I want is there."

All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 3

From what has already passed before us, we learn that the grand result of the work of Christ in the past is to give us a divinely perfect standing before God. “He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.” He has introduced us into the Divine Presence, in all His own perfect acceptability, in the full credit and virtue of His name, of His Person, and of His work; so that, as the Apostle John declares, “As he is, so are we in this world.” 1 John 4:17.

Such is the settled standing of the very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ. Nor could it possibly be otherwise. It must be either this or eternal perdition. There is not the breadth of a hair between this standing of absolute perfectness before God and a condition of guilt and ruin. We are either in our sins, or in a risen Christ. There is no middle ground. We are either covered with guilt, or complete in Christ. But the believer is declared, by the authoritative voice of the Holy Ghost in scripture, to be “complete in Christ”—“Perfect, as pertaining to his conscience”—“Perfected in perpetuity”—“Clean every whit”—“Accepted in the beloved”—“Made [or become] the righteousness of God in Christ.”

And all this through the sacrifice of the cross. That precious atoning death of Christ forms the solid and irrefragable foundation of the Christian’s standing. “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever sat down on the right hand of God.” A seated Christ is the glorious proof and the perfect definition of the believer’s place in the presence of God. Our Lord Christ, having glorified God about our sins, and borne His judgment on our entire condition as sinners, has conducted us, in living association with Himself, into a place, not only of forgiveness, acceptance, and peace, but of complete deliverance from the dominion of sin—a place of assured victory over everything that could possibly be against us, whether indwelling sin, the fear of Satan, the law, or this present evil world.

Such, we repeat, is the absolutely settled standing of the believer, if we are to be taught by holy scripture. And we earnestly entreat the christian reader not to be satisfied with anything less than this. Let him not any longer accept the muddled teachings of Christendom’s creeds, and its liturgical services, which only drive the soul back into the darkness, distance, and bondage of Judaism—that system which God found fault with, and which He has forever abolished, because it did not meet His holy mind, or satisfy His loving heart, in giving the worshipper perfect peace, perfect liberty, perfect nearness to Himself, and that forever.

We solemnly call upon all the Lord’s people, throughout the various sections of the professing church, to consider where they are, and to see how far they understand and enjoy the true christian position, as set forth in the various passages of scripture which we have quoted, and which might easily be multiplied a hundredfold. Let them diligently and faithfully compare the teachings of Christendom with the word of God, and see how far they agree. In this way they will find how completely the professing Christianity of the present day stands in contrast with the lining teachings of the New Testament; and, as a consequence, souls are robbed of the precious privileges which belong to them as Christians, and they are kept in the moral distance which

characterized the Mosaic economy.

All this is most deplorable. It grieves the Holy Spirit, wounds the heart of Christ, dishonors the grace of God, and contradicts the plainest statements of holy scripture. We are most thoroughly persuaded that the condition of thousands of precious souls at this moment is enough to make the heart bleed; and all this, to a large extent, is traceable to Christendom's teachings, its creeds and its formularies. Where will you find, amid the ordinary ranks of christian profession, a person in the enjoyment of a perfectly purged conscience, of peace with God, of the Spirit of adoption? Is it not true that people are publicly and systematically taught that it is the height of presumption for anyone to say that his sins are all forgiven—that he has eternal life—that he is justified from all things—that he is accepted in the Beloved—that he is sealed with the Holy Ghost—that he cannot be lost, because he is actually united to Christ by the indwelling Spirit? Are not all these christian privileges practically denied and ignored in Christendom? Are not people taught that it is dangerous to be too confident—that it is morally safer to live in doubt and fear—that the very utmost we can look for is the hope of getting to heaven when we die? Where are souls taught the glorious truths connected with the new creation? Where are they rooted and grounded in the knowledge of their standing in a risen and glorified Head in the heavens? Where are they led into the enjoyment of those things which are freely given of God to His beloved people?

Alas! alas! we grieve to think of the only true answer which can be given to such inquiries. The flock of Christ is scattered upon the dark mountains and desolate moors. The souls of God's people are left in the dim distance which characterized the Jewish system. They know not the meaning of the rent veil, of nearness to God, of conscious acceptance in the Beloved. The very table of the Lord is shrouded with the dark and chilling mists of superstition, and surrounded by the repulsive barriers of a dark and depressing legality. Accomplished redemption, full remission of sins, perfect justification before God, acceptance in a risen Christ, the Spirit of adoption, the bright and blessed hope of the coming of the Bridegroom—all these grand and glorious realities—these chartered privileges of the church of God—are practically set aside by Christendom's teachings and religious machinery.

Some, perhaps, may think we have drawn too gloomy a picture. We can only say—and we say it with all sincerity—would to God it were so! We fear the picture is far too true; yea, the reality is far more appalling than the picture. We are deeply and painfully impressed with the fact, that the condition, not merely of the professing church, but of thousands of the true sheep of the flock of Christ, is such, that if we only realized it as God sees it, it would break our hearts.

However, we must pursue our subject, and by so doing furnish the very best remedy that can possibly be suggested for the deplorable condition of so many of the Lord's people.

We have dwelt upon that precious work which our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished for us, in the putting away of all our sins, and in the condemnation of sin, securing for us perfect remission of the former, and entire deliverance from the latter, as a ruling power. The Christian is one who is not only forgiven but delivered. Christ has died for him, and he has died in Christ. Hence he is free, as one who is raised from the dead, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is a new creation. He has passed from death unto life. Death and judgment are behind him, and nothing but glory before him. He possesses an unblotted title and an unclouded prospect.

Now, if all this be indeed true of every child of God—and scripture says it is—what more do we want? Nothing, as to title; nothing, as to standing; nothing, as to hope. As to all these, we have absolute, divine perfection. But then our state is not perfect, our walk is not perfect. We are still in the body, compassed about with manifold infirmities, exposed to manifold temptations, liable to stumble, to fall, and to wander. We are unable of ourselves to think aright thought, or to keep ourselves for one moment in the blessed position into which grace has introduced us. True it is, we have everlasting life, and we are linked to the living Head in heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down to earth, so that we are eternally secure. Nothing can ever touch our life, inasmuch as it is “hid with Christ in God.”

But while nothing can touch our life, or interfere with our standing, yet, seeing that our state is imperfect, and our walk imperfect, our communion is liable to be interrupted, and hence it is that we need the present work of Christ for us.

Jesus lives at the right hand of God for us. His active intervention on our behalf never ceases for a single moment. He has passed through the heavens, in virtue of accomplished atonement, and there He ever carries on His perfect advocacy for us before our God. He is there as our subsisting righteousness, to maintain us ever in the divine integrity of the position and relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us. Thus we read, in Rom. 5:10, “If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” So also, in Heb. 4, we read, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest that has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted, in like manner, without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Again, in chapter vii.: “But this man, because he continueth forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” And in chapter 9: “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Then, in the first epistle of John, we have the same great subject presented under a somewhat different aspect. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not our sins only, but also for the whole world.”

How precious is all this to the true-hearted Christian who is ever conscious—deeply and painfully conscious—of his weakness, need, infirmity, and failure! How, we may lawfully inquire, is it possible for any one, with his eye resting on such passages as we have just quoted, to say nothing of his own self-consciousness, the sense of his own imperfect state and walk, to call in question the Christian’s need of the unceasing ministry of Christ on his behalf? Is it not marvelous that any reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews, any observer of the state and walk of the most advanced believer, should be found denying the application of Christ’s priesthood and advocacy to Christians now?

For whom, let us ask, is Christ now living and acting at the right hand of God? Is it for the world? Clearly not, for He says, in John 17, “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” And who are these? Are they the Jewish remnant? Nay; that remnant is yet

to appear on the scene. Who are they then? Believers, children of God, Christians, who are now passing through this sinful world, liable to fail and to contract defilement every step of the way. These are the subjects of Christ's priestly ministry. He died to make them clean. He lives to keep them clean. By His death He expiated our guilt, and by His life He cleanses us, through the action of the word by the power of the Holy Ghost. "This is he that came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood." We have expiation and cleansing through a crucified Savior. The double stream emanated from the pierced side of Christ, dead for us. All praise to His name!

We have all, in virtue of the precious death of Christ. Is it a question of our guilt? It is canceled by the blood of atonement. Is it a question of our daily shortcomings? We have an Advocate with the Father—a great High Priest with God. "If any man sin." He does not say, "If any man repent." No doubt there is, and must be, repentance and self-judgment. But how are they produced? Whence do they proceed? Here it is: "We have an advocate with the Father." It is His all-prevailing intercession that procures for the sinning one the grace of repentance, self-judgment, and confession.

It is of the very utmost importance for the christian reader to be thoroughly clear as to this great cardinal truth of the advocacy or priesthood of Christ. We sometimes erroneously think that when we fail in our work something has to be done on our part to set matters straight between our souls and God. We forget that, ere we are even conscious of the failure—before our conscience becomes really cognizant of the fact—our blessed Advocate has been to the Father about it; and it is to His intercession we are indebted for the grace of repentance, confession, and restoration. "If any man sin, we have"—what? The blood to return to? No; mark carefully what the Holy Ghost declares. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Why does He say, "the righteous?" Why not the gracious, the merciful, the sympathizing? Is He not all this? Most surely; but not any one of these attributes would be in place here, inasmuch as the blessed apostle is putting before us the consolatory truth, that in all our errors, our sins, and our failures, we have "a righteous" representative ever before the righteous God, the holy Father, so that our affairs can never fall through. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us;" and because He ever liveth, "He is able to save to the uttermost"—right through to the very end—"them that come unto God by him."

What solid comfort is here for the people of God! And how needful for our souls to be established in the knowledge and sense of it. Some there are who have an imperfect sense of the true standing of a Christian, because they do not see what Christ has done for them in the past. Others, on the contrary, have such an entirely one-sided view of the state of the Christian, that they do not see our need of what Christ is doing for us now. Both must be corrected. The former are ignorant of the extent and value of the atonement; the latter are ignorant of the place and application of the advocacy. Such is the perfection of our standing, that the apostle can say, "As he is, so are we in this world." If this were all, we should certainly have no need of priesthood or advocacy. But then, such is our state, that the apostle has to say, "If any man sin." This proves our continual need of the Advocate. And, blessed be God, we have Him continually; we have Him ever living for us. He lives and serves on high.

He is our subsisting righteousness before our God. He lives to keep us always right in heaven, and to set us right when we go wrong upon earth. He is the divine and indissoluble link between our

souls and God.

All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 4

Having, in the three preceding papers of this series, sought to unfold the grand foundation truths connected with the work of Christ for us—His work in the past, and His work in the present—His atonement, and His advocacy; we shall now seek, by the gracious aid of the Spirit of God, to present to the reader something of what the scriptures teach us as to the second branch of our subject, namely, Christ as an object for the heart.

It is a wonderfully blessed thing to be able to say, "I have found an object which perfectly satisfies my heart—I have found Christ." It is this which gives true elevation above the world. It renders us thoroughly independent of the resources to which the unconverted heart ever betakes itself. It gives settled rest. It imparts a calmness and quietness to the spirit which the world cannot comprehend. The poor votary of the world may think the life of the true Christian a very slow, dull, stupid affair indeed. He may marvel how such an one can manage to get on without what he calls amusement, recreation, and pleasure; no theaters—no balls or parties—no concerts—no cards or billiards—no hunts or races—no club or news-room—no cricket or croquet parties.

To deprive the unconverted man of such things would almost drive him to despair or lunacy. But the Christian does not want such things, would not have them. They would be a perfect weariness to him. We speak, of course, of the true Christian, of one who is not merely a Christian in name but in reality. Alas! alas! many profess to be Christians, and take very high ground in their profession, who are, nevertheless, to be found mixed up in all the vain and frivolous pursuits of the men of this world. They may be seen at the communion table on the Lord's Day and at a theater or a concert on Monday. They may be found assaying to take part in some one or other of the many branches of christian work on Sunday, and, during the week, you may see them in the ball-room, at the race-course, or some such scene of folly and vanity.

It is very evident that such persons know nothing of Christ as an object for the heart. Indeed, it is very questionable how anyone with a single spark of divine life in the soul can find pleasure in the wretched pursuits of a godless world. The true and earnest Christian turns away from such things—turns away instinctively. And this, not merely because of the positive wrong and evil of them—though most surely he feels them to be wrong and evil—but because he has no taste for them, and because he has found something infinitely superior, something which perfectly satisfies all the desires of the new nature. Could we imagine an angel from heaven taking pleasure at a ball, a theater, or a racecourse? The bare thought is supremely ridiculous. All such scenes are perfectly foreign to a heavenly being.

And what is a Christian? He is a heavenly man; he is a partaker of the divine nature. He is dead to the world—dead to sin—alive to God. He has not a single link with the world. He belongs to heaven. He is no more of the world than Christ his Lord. Could Christ take part in the amusements, gaieties, and follies of the world? The very idea were blasphemy. Well, then, what of the Christian? Is he to be found where his Lord could not be? Can he consistently take part in things which he knows in his heart are contrary to Christ? Can he go into places, and scenes, and

circumstances in which he must admit his Savior and Lord can take no part? Can he go and have fellowship with a world which hates the One to whom he professes to owe everything?

It may, perhaps, seem to some of our readers that we are taking too high ground. We would ask such, what ground are we to take? Surely christian ground, if we are Christians. Well, then, if we are to take christian ground, how are we to know what that ground really is? Assuredly from the New Testament. And what does it teach? Does it afford any warrant for the Christian to mix himself, in any shape or form, with the amusements and vain pursuits of this present evil world? Let us hearken to the weighty words of our blessed Lord, in John 17 Let us hear from His lips the truth as to our portion, our position, and our path in this world. He says, addressing the Father, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Verses 14-18.

Is it possible to conceive a closer measure of identification than that set before us in these words? Twice over, in this brief passage, our Lord declares that we are not of the world, even as He is not. What has our blessed Lord to do with the world? Nothing. The world has utterly rejected Him, and cast Him out. It nailed Him to a shameful cross, between two malefactors. The world lies as fully and as freshly under the charge of all this, as though the act of the crucifixion took place yesterday, at the very center of its civilization, and with the unanimous consent of all. There is not so much as a single moral link between Christ and the world. Yea, the world is stained with His murder, and will have to answer to God for the crime.

How solemn is this! What a serious consideration for Christians! We are passing through a world that crucified our Lord and Master, and He declares that we are not of that world, even as He is not of it. Hence it follows that in so far as we have any fellowship with the world, we are false to Christ. What should we think of a wife who could sit, and laugh and joke, with a set of men who had murdered her husband? And yet this is precisely what professing Christians do when they mix themselves up with this present evil world, and make themselves part and parcel of it.

It will perhaps be said, "What are we to do? Are we to go out of the world?" By no means. Our Lord expressly says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." In it, but not of it, is the true principle for the Christian. To use a figure, the Christian in the world is like a diver. He is in the midst of an element which would destroy him, were he not protected from its action, and sustained by unbroken communication with the scene above.

And what is the Christian to do in the world? What is his mission? Here it is: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." And again, in John 20:21, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Such is the Christian's mission. He is not to shut himself within the walls of a monastery or a convent. Christianity does not consist in joining a brotherhood or a sisterhood. Nothing of the kind. We are called to move up and down in the varied relations of life, and to act in our divinely-appointed spheres to the glory of God. It is not a question of what we are doing, but of

how we do it. All depends upon the object which governs our hearts. If Christ be the commanding and absorbing object of the heart, all will be right. If He be not, nothing is right. Two persons may sit down at the same table to eat; the one eats to gratify his appetite, the other eats to the glory of God—eats simply to keep his body in proper working order as God's vessel, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the instrument for Christ's service.

So in everything. It is our sweet privilege to set the Lord always before us. He is our model. As He was sent into the world, so are we. What did He come to do? To glorify God. How did He live? By the Father. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John 6:57.

This makes it all so simple. Christ is the standard and touchstone for everything. It is no longer a question of mere right and wrong according to human rules. It is simply a question of what is worthy of Christ. Would He do this or that? Would He go here or there? He left us an example that we should follow his steps; and, most assuredly, we should not go where we cannot trace His blessed footsteps. If we go hither and thither to please ourselves, we are not treading in His steps, and we cannot expect to enjoy His blessed presence.

Christian reader, here lies the real secret of the whole matter. The grand question is just this—Is Christ my one object? What am I living for? Can I say, "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?" Nothing less than this is worthy of a Christian. It is a poor miserable thing to be content with being saved, and then to go on with the world, and live for self-pleasing and self-interest—to accept salvation as the fruit of Christ's toil and passion, and then live at a distance from Himself. What should we think of a child who only cared about the good things provided by his father's hand, and never sought his father's company—yea, preferred the company of strangers? We should justly despise him. But how much more despicable is the Christian, who owes his present and his eternal all to the work of Christ, and yet is content to live at a cold distance from His blessed Person, caring not for the furtherance of His cause—the promotion of His glory!

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 5

If the reader has been enabled, through grace, to make his own of what has passed before our minds in this series of papers, he will have a perfect remedy for all uneasiness of conscience and all restlessness of heart. The work of Christ, if only it be laid hold of by an artless faith, must, of blessed necessity, meet the former; and the Person of Christ, if only He be contemplated with a single eye, must perfectly meet the latter. If, therefore, we are not in the enjoyment of peace of conscience, it can only be because we are not resting on the finished work of Christ; and if the heart is not at ease, it proves that we are not satisfied with Christ Himself.

And yet, alas! how few, even of the Lord's beloved people, know either the one or the other. How rare it is to find a person in the enjoyment of true peace of conscience and rest of heart! In general, Christians are not a whit in advance of the condition of Old Testament saints. They do not know the blessedness of an accomplished redemption. They are not in the enjoyment of a purged conscience. They cannot draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. They do not apprehend the grand truth of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father." They are, as to their experience, under law. They have never really entered into the deep blessedness of being under the reign of grace. They have life. It is impossible to doubt this. They love divine things. Their tastes, their habits, their aspirations, yea, their very exercises, their conflicts, their anxieties, doubts, and fears, all go to prove the existence of divine life. They are, in a way, separated from the world, but their separation is rather negative than positive. It is more because they see the utter vanity of the world, and its inability to satisfy their hearts, than because they have found an object in Christ. They have lost their taste for the things of the world, but they have not found their place and their portion in the Son of God where He now is at the right hand of God. The things of the world cannot satisfy them, and they are not in the enjoyment of their proper heavenly standing, object, and hope; hence they are in an anomalous condition altogether; they have no certainty, no rest, no fixedness of purpose; they are not happy; they do not know their true bearings; they are neither one thing nor the other.

Is it thus with the reader? We fondly hope not. We trust he is one of those who, through infinite grace, "know the things that are freely given them of God," who know that they have passed from death unto life—that they have eternal life; who enjoy the precious witness of the Spirit; who realize their association with a risen and glorified Head in the heavens, with whom they are linked by the Holy Ghost who dwells in them; who have found their object in the Person of that blessed One whose finished work is the divine and eternal basis of their salvation and peace; and who are earnestly looking for the blessed moment when Jesus shall come to receive them to Himself, that where He is they may be also, to go no more out forever.

This is Christianity. Nothing else deserves the name. It stands out in bold and striking contrast with the spurious religiousness of the day, which is neither pure Judaism on the one hand, nor pure Christianity on the other, but a wretched mixture, composed of some of the elements of each,

which unconverted people can adopt and go on with, because it sanctions the lusts of the flesh, and allows them to enjoy the pleasures and vanities of the world to their heart's content. The arch-enemy of Christ and of souls has succeeded in producing an awful system of religion, half-Jewish, half-Christian, combining, in the most artful manner, the world and the flesh, with a certain amount of scripture so used as to destroy its moral force, and hinder its just application. In the meshes of this system souls are hopelessly entangled. Unconverted people are deceived into the notion that they are very good Christians indeed, and going on all right to heaven. And, on the other hand, the Lord's dear people are robbed of their proper place and privileges, and dragged down by the dark and depressing influence of the religious atmosphere which surrounds and almost suffocates them.

It lies not, we believe, within the compass of human language to set forth the appalling consequences of this mingling of the people of God with the people of the world in one common system of religiousness and theological belief. Its effect upon the former is to blind their eyes to the true moral glories of Christianity as set forth in the pages of the New Testament; and this to such an extent, that if any one attempts to unfold these glories to their view, he is regarded as a visionary enthusiast, or a dangerous heretic. Its effect upon the latter is to deceive them altogether as to their true condition, character, and destiny. Both classes repeat the same formularies, subscribe to the same creed, say the same prayers, are members of the same community, partake of the same sacrament, are, in short, ecclesiastically, theologically, religiously one.

It will, perhaps, be said in reply to all this, that our Lord, in His wonderful discourse in Matt. 13, distinctly teaches that the wheat and the tares are to grow together. Yes; but where? In the church? Nay; but "in the field;" and He tells us that "the field is the world." To confound these things is to falsify the whole christian position, and to do away with all godly discipline in the assembly. It is to place the teaching of our Lord in Matt. 13 in opposition to the teaching of the Holy Ghost in 1 Cor. 5.

However, we shall not pursue this subject further just now. It is far too important and too extensive to be disposed of in a brief article like the present. We may, perhaps, discuss it more fully on some future occasion. That it demands the serious consideration of the christian reader we are most thoroughly convinced; bearing, as it does, so manifestly on the glory of Christ, on the true interests of His people, on the progress of the gospel, on the integrity of christian testimony and service, it would be quite impossible to overestimate its importance. But we must leave it for the present, and draw this paper to a close by a brief reference to the third and last branch of our subject, namely,

THE WORD OF CHRIST AS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GUIDE FOR OUR PATH.

If Christ's work suffices for the conscience, if His blessed Person suffices for the heart, then, most assuredly, His precious word suffices for the path. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that we possess in the divine volume of holy scripture all we can ever need, not only to meet all the exigencies of our individual path, but also the varied necessities of the church of God, in the most minute details of her history in this world.

We are quite aware that in making this assertion we lay ourselves open to much scorn and opposition, in more quarters than one. We shall be met on the one hand by the advocates of tradition, and on the other by those who contend for the supremacy of man's reason and will. But

this gives us very little concern indeed. We regard the traditions of men, whether fathers, brothers, or doctors, if presented as an authority, as the small dust of the balance; and as to human reason, it can only be compared to a bat in the sunshine, dazzled by the brightness, and blindly dashing itself against objects which it cannot see.

It is the deepest joy of the Christian's heart to retire from the conflicting traditions and doctrines of men into the calm light of holy scripture; and when encountered by the impudent reasonings of the infidel, the rationalist, and the skeptic, to bow down his whole moral being to the authority and power of holy scripture. He thankfully recognizes in the word of God the only perfect standard for doctrine, for morals, for everything. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be, perfect [ἀρτιος], thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

What more can we need? Nothing. If scripture can make a child "wise unto salvation," and if it can make a man "perfect," and furnish him "thoroughly to all good works," what do we want of human tradition or human reasonings? If God has written a volume for us, if He has graciously condescended to give us a revelation of His mind, as to all we ought to know, and think, and feel, and believe, and do, shall we turn to a poor fellow-mortal—be he ritualist or rationalist—to help us? Far away be the thought! As well might we turn to our fellow-man to add something to the finished work of Christ, in order to render it sufficient for our conscience, or to supply some deficiency in the Person of Christ, in order to render Him a sufficient object for the heart, as to betake ourselves to human tradition or human reason to supply some deficiency in divine revelation.

All praise and thanks to our God, it is not so. He has given us in His own beloved Son all we want for the conscience, for the heart, for the path—for time, with all its changing scenes—for eternity, with its countless ages. We can say, "Thou, O Christ, art all we want; more than all in Thee we find." There is, there could be, no lack in the Christ of God. His atonement and advocacy must satisfy all the cravings of the most deeply exercised conscience. The moral glories, the powerful attractions, of His divine Person must satisfy the most intense aspirations and longings of the heart. And His peerless revelation—that priceless volume contains within its covers all we can possibly need, from the starting-post to the goal of our christian career.

Christian reader, are not these things so? Dost thou not, from the very center of thy renewed moral being, own the truth of them? If so, art thou resting, in calm repose, on Christ's work? Art thou delighting in His Person? Art thou submitting in all things to the authority of His word? God grant it may be so with thee, and with all who profess His name! May there be a fuller, clearer, and more decided testimony to "The All-sufficiency of Christ," till "that day!"

Christ Our Living Prize

Held by that hand of strongest strength,
Wrapt in a robe of love,
Across the desert dark and wild,
We're led by Him above.
The vaults of heaven soon shall ring
With songs of richest praise,
While now the desert places breathe
Of prayer the pilgrims raise.
'Tis Heav'n below! like Heav'n above,
We chant the same sweet strain;
We breathe the fragrance of His love,
And praise the Lamb once "slain."
We feast upon the "Living Bread,"
E'en Heav'n's eternal store;
While oft with weary step, we walk
This sterile desert o'er.
We drink from that sweet stream of love,
Which downward richly flows,
And see the hedge of piercing thorns
Oft blossom like the rose.

The Christian: His Position and His Work Part 1

What is the true position of a Christian? and what has he got to do? are questions of the very deepest practical importance. It is assumed, of course, that he has eternal life: without this one cannot be a Christian at all. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." This is the common portion of all believers. It is not a matter of attainment, a matter of progress, a thing which some Christians have and others have not. It belongs to the very feeblest babe in the family of God as well as to the most matured and experienced servant of Christ. All are possessed of eternal life, and can never, by any possibility, lose it.

But our present theme is not life, but position and work; and in briefly handling it, we shall ask the reader to turn for a moment to a passage in Heb. 13. Perhaps we cannot do better than quote it for him. There is nothing like the plain and solid word of holy scripture.

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Ver. 9-14.)

Here, then, we have one grand aspect of the Christian's position. It is defined by the position of his Lord. This makes it divinely simple; and, we may add, divinely settled. The Christian is identified with Christ. Amazing fact! "As he is, so are we in this world." It is not said, "As he is, so shall we be in the world to come." No; this would not come up to the divine idea. It is, "so are we in this world." The position of Christ defines the position of the Christian.

But this glorious fact tells in a double way; it tells upon the Christian's place before God; and it tells on his place as regards this present world. It is upon the latter that Heb. 13 instructs us so blessedly, and it is that which is now more especially before us.

Jesus suffered without the gate. This fact is the basis on which the apostle grounds his exhortation to the Hebrew believers to go forth without the camp. The cross of Christ closed His connection with the camp of Judaism; and all who desire to follow Him must go outside to where He is. The final breach with Israel is presented, morally, in the death of Christ; doctrinally, in the Epistle to the Hebrews; historically, in the destruction of Jerusalem. In the judgment of faith, Jerusalem was as thoroughly rejected when the Messiah was nailed to the cross, as it was when the army of Titus left it a smoldering ruin. The instincts of the divine nature, and the inspired teachings of scripture, go before the actual facts of history.

“Jesus suffered without the gate.” For what end? “That he might sanctify [or set apart] the people with his own blood.” What follows? What is the necessary practical result? “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

But what is “the camp?” Primarily, Judaism; but, most unquestionably, it has a moral application to every organized system of religion under the sun. If that system of ordinances and ceremonies which God Himself had set up—if Judaism, with its imposing ritual, its splendid temple, its priesthood and its sacrifices, has been found fault with, condemned, and set aside, what shall be said of any or all of those organizations framed by a human hand? If our Lord Christ is outside of that, how much more is He outside of these!

Yes, christian reader, we may rest assured that the outside place, the place of rejection and reproach is that to which we are called, if indeed we would know aught of true fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark the words! “Let us go forth.” Will any Christian say, “No; I cannot go forth. My place is inside the camp. I must work there?” If so, then, your place is clearly not with Jesus, for He is as surely outside the camp as He is on the throne of God. If your sphere of work lies inside the camp, when your Master tells you to go forth, what shall we say for your work? Can it be worth much? Can it have your Lord’s approving smile? It may exhibit His overruling hand, and illustrate His sovereign goodness; but can it possibly have His unqualified approval while carried on in a sphere from which He peremptorily commands you to go forth?

The all-important thing for every true servant is to be found exactly where his Master would have him.

The question is not, “Am I doing a great deal of work? but am I pleasing my Master?” I may seem to be doing wonders, in the way of work; my name may be heralded to the ends of the earth, as a most laborious, devoted, and successful workman; and, all the while, I may be in an utterly false position, indulging my own unbroken will, pleasing myself, and seeking some personal end or object.

All this is very solemn indeed, and demands the consideration of all who really desire to be found in the current of God’s thoughts. We live in a day of much willfulness. The commandments of Christ do not govern us. We think for ourselves, in place of submitting ourselves absolutely to the authority of the word. When our Lord tells us to go forth without the camp, we, instead of yielding a ready obedience, begin to reason as to the results which we can reach by remaining within. Scripture seems to have little or no power over our souls. We do not aim at simply pleasing Christ. Provided we can make great show of work, we think all is right. We are more occupied with results which, after all, may only tend to magnify ourselves, than with the earnest purpose to do what is agreeable to the mind of Christ.

But are we to be idle? Is there nothing for us to do in the outside place to which we are called? Is christian life to be made up of a series of negations? Is there nothing positive? Let Heb. 13 furnish the clear and forcible answer to all these inquiries. We shall find it quite as distinct in reference to our work as it is in reference to our position.

What, then, have we got to do? Two things; and these two in their comprehensive range take in the whole of a Christian’s life, in its two grand aspects. They give us the inner and the outer life of the true believer. In the first place, we read, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to

God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

Is not this something? Have we not here a very elevated character of work? Yes, verily; the most elevated that can possibly engage the energies of our renewed being. It is our privilege to be occupied, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight, in presenting the sacrifice of praise to God—a sacrifice which, He assures us, is ever most acceptable to Him. “Whoso offereth praise,” He says, “glorifieth me.”

Let us carefully note this. Praise is to be the primary and continual occupation of the believer. We, in our fancied wisdom, would put work in the first place. We are disposed to attach chief importance to bustling activity. We have such an overweening sense of the value of doing, that we lose sight of the place which worship occupies in the thoughts of God.

Again, there are some who vainly imagine that they can please God by punishing their bodies. They think that He delights in their vigils, fastings, floggings, and flagellations. Miserable, soul-destroying, God-dishonoring delusion! Will not those who harbor it and act upon it bend their ears and their hearts to those gracious words which we have just penned, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.” True it is, that those words are immediately followed by that grand practical statement, “And to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God.” But still, here, as everywhere, the highest place is assigned to praise, not to work. And, most assuredly, no man can be said to be ordering his conversation aright who abuses his body and renders it unfit to be the vessel or instrument by which he can serve God.

No, reader, if we really desire to please God, to gratify His heart and to glorify His name, we shall give our heart’s attention to Heb. 13:15, and seek to offer the sacrifice of praise, continually. Yes, “continually.” Not merely now and then, when all goes on smoothly and pleasantly. Come what may, it is our high and holy privilege to offer the sacrifice of praise to God.

And oh! how delightful it is to cultivate a spirit of praise and thankfulness! To be always ready to cry, “Hallelujah!” It does so glorify God when His people live in an atmosphere of praise. It imparts a heavenly tone to their character, and speaks more powerfully to the hearts of those around them than if they were preaching to them from morning till night. A Christian should always be happy, always bright with the spirit of praise, always reflecting back upon this dark world the blessed beams of His Father’s countenance.

Thus it should ever be. Nothing is so unworthy of a Christian as a fretful spirit, a gloomy temper, a sour morose-looking face. And not only is it unworthy of a Christian, but it is dishonoring to God, and it causes the enemies of truth to speak reproachfully. No doubt, tempers and dispositions vary; and much allowance must be made in cases of weak bodily health. It is not easy to look pleasant when the body is racked with gout, neuralgia, or rheumatism; and, further, we should be very far indeed from commending anything like levity or the everlasting smile of mere unsubdued nature.

But scripture is clear and explicit. It tells us to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.” How simple! “The fruit of lips!” Is this all? Yes; this is what our God delights in. It is His joy to be surrounded with the praises of hearts filled to overflowing with His abounding goodness. Thus it will be, throughout eternity, in that bright home of love and glory to which we are so rapidly hastening.

And let the reader specially note the words, "By him." We are to offer our sacrifice of praise by the hand of our Great High Priest, who is ever in the presence of God for us. This is most consolatory and assuring to our hearts. Jesus presents our sacrifice of praise to God. It must therefore be ever acceptable. We may safely believe that we should not know our sacrifice if we could see it laid on the altar by the priestly hand of the Great Minister of the sanctuary. It goes up to God, not as it proceeds from us, but as it is presented by Him. Divested of all the imperfection and failure attaching to us, it ascends to God in all the fragrance and acceptancy belonging to Him. The feeblest note of praise, the simple "Thank God!" is perfumed with the incense of Christ's infinite preciousness. This is unspeakably precious; and it should greatly encourage us to cultivate a spirit of praise. We should be "continually" praising and blessing God. A murmuring or fretful word should never cross the lips of one who has Christ for his portion, and who stands identified with that blessed One in His position and His destiny.

But we must draw this paper to a close by a rapid glance at the other side of the Christian's work. If it is our privilege to be continually praising and blessing God, it is also our privilege to be doing good to man. "But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." We are passing through a world of misery, of sin and death and sorrow. We are surrounded by broken hearts and crushed spirits, if we would only look them out.

Yes; this is the point; if we would only look them out. It is easy for us to close our eyes to such things, to turn away from, to "forget" that there are such things always within reach of us. We can sit in our easy chair, and speculate about truth, doctrines, and the latter of scripture; we can discuss the theories of Christianity, and split hairs about prophecy and dispensational truth, and, all the while, be shamefully failing in the discharge of our grand responsibilities as Christians. We are in imminent danger of forgetting that Christianity is a living reality. It is not a set of dogmas, a number of principles strung together on a thread of systematized divinity, which unconverted people can have at their fingers' ends. Neither is it a set of ordinances to be gone through, in dreary formality, by lifeless, heartless professors. No; it is life—life eternal—life implanted by the Holy Ghost, and expressing itself in those two lovely forms on which we have been dwelling, namely, praise to God and doing good to man.

Such was the life of Jesus when He trod this earth of ours. He lived in the atmosphere of praise; and He went about doing good.

And He is our life, and He is our model on which the life is to be formed. The Christian should be the living expression of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not a mere question of leading what is called a religious life, which very often resolves itself into a tiresome round of duties which neither yield "praise" to God nor one atom of "good" to man. There must be life, or it is all perfectly worthless. "The kingdom of God is not meat or drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." Rom. 14:17, 18.

Beloved christian reader, let us earnestly apply our hearts to the consideration of these great practical truths. Let us seek to be Christians not merely in name but in reality. Let us not be distinguished as the mere vendors of peculiar "views." Oh! how worthless are views! How utterly profitless is discussion! How wearisome are theological hair-splittings! Let us have life, light, and love. These are heavenly, eternal, divine. All else is vanity. How we do long for reality in this world

of sham—for deep thinkers and earnest workers in this day of shallow talkers!

Note.—The reader will find it profitable to compare Heb. 13:13-16 with 1 Pet. 2:4-9. “Let us go forth therefore unto him,” says Paul. “To whom coming,” says Peter. Then we have “The holy priesthood” offering up spiritual sacrifices of praise. And “The royal priesthood” doing good and communicating—“showing forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The two scriptures give us a magnificent view of fundamental, devotional, and practical Christianity.

The Christian: His Position and His Work Part 2

We must ask the reader to open his Bible and read Heb. 10:7-24. In it he will find a very deep and marvelous view of the Christian's position and his work. The inspired writer gives us, as it were, three solid pillars on which the grand edifice of Christianity rests. These are, first, the will of God; secondly, the work of Christ; and, thirdly, the witness of the Holy Ghost, in scripture. If these grand realities be laid hold of in simple faith, the soul must have settled peace. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that no power of earth or hell, men or devils, can ever disturb the peace which is founded upon Heb. 10:7-17.

Let us then, in the first place, dwell, for a few moments, on the manner in which the apostle unfolds, in this magnificent passage,

THE WILL OF GOD.

In the opening of the chapter, we are instructed as to the utter inadequacy of the sacrifices under the law. They could never make the conscience perfect—they could never accomplish the will of God—never fulfill the gracious desire and purpose of His heart. "The law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins."

Let the reader carefully note this. "The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." He does not say—"No more consciousness of sin." There is an immense difference between these two things; and yet, it is to be feared, they are often confounded. The Christian has, alas! the consciousness of sin in him, but he ought to have no conscience of sins of him, inasmuch as he is purged once and forever, by the precious blood of Christ.

Some of the Lord's people have a habit of speaking of their continual need of applying to the blood of Christ, which, to say the least of it, is by no means intelligent, or in accordance with the accurate teaching of holy scripture. It seems like humility; but, we may rest assured, true humility can only be found in connection with the full, clear, settled apprehension of the truth of God, and as to His gracious will concerning us. If it be His will, that we should have "no more conscience of sins," it cannot be true humility, on our part, to go on, from day to day, and year to year, with the burden of sins upon us. And, further, if it be true that Christ has borne our sins and put them away, forever—if He has offered one perfect sacrifice for sins, ought we not to know, assuredly, that we are perfectly pardoned and perfectly purged? Is it—can it be, true humility to reduce the blood of Christ to the level of the blood of bulls and of goats? But this is what is virtually done, though, no doubt, unwittingly, by all who speak of applying continually to the blood of Christ. One reason why God found fault with the sacrifices under the law was, as the apostle tells us, "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." This, blessed be His name, was not according to His mind. He desired that every trace of guilt and every remembrance of it should be

blotted out, once and forever; and hence it cannot be His will that His people should be continually bowed down under the terrible burden of unforgiven sin. It is contrary to His will; it is subversive of their peace, and derogatory to the glory of Christ and the efficacy of His one sacrifice.

One grand point of the inspired argument, in Hebrews 10, is to show that the continual remembrance of sins and the continual repetition of the sacrifice go together; and therefore, if Christians now are to have the burden of sins constantly on the heart and conscience, it follows that Christ should be offered again and again, which were a blasphemy. His work is done, and hence our burden is gone—gone forever. “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified [or set apart] by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once.”

Here we are conducted, in the most distinct and forcible manner, to the eternal source of the whole matter, namely, the will of God—the purpose and counsel formed in the divine mind, before the foundation of the world, before any creature was formed, before sin or Satan existed. It was the will of God, from all eternity, that the Son should, in due time, come forth and do a work which was to be the foundation of the divine glory and of all the counsels and purposes of the Trinity.

It would be a very grave error indeed to suppose that redemption was an afterthought with God. He had not, blessed be His holy name, to sit down and plan what He would do, when sin entered. It was all settled beforehand. The enemy, no doubt, imagined that he was gaining a wonderful victory when he meddled with man in the garden of Eden. In point of fact, he was only giving occasion for the display of God’s eternal counsels in connection with the work of the Son. There was no basis for those counsels, no sphere for their display in the fields of creation. It was the meddling of Satan—the entrance of sin—the ruin of man that opened a platform on which a Savior-God might display the riches of His grace, the glories of His salvation, the attributes of His nature, to all created intelligences.

There is great depth and power in those words of the eternal Son, “In the volume of the book it is written of me.” To what “volume” does He here refer? Is it to Old Testament scripture? Surely not; the apostle is quoting from the Old Testament. What then is the volume? It is nothing less than the roll of God’s eternal counsels in which the “vast plan” was laid, according to which, in the appointed time, the eternal Son was to come forth and appear on the scene, in order to accomplish the divine will, vindicate the divine glory, confound the enemy utterly, put away sin, and save ruined man in a manner which yields a richer harvest of glory to God than ever He could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation.

All this gives immense stability to the soul of the believer. Indeed it is utterly impossible for human language to set forth the preciousness and blessedness of this line of truth. It is such rich consolation to every pious soul to know that One has appeared in this world to do the will of God—whatever that will might be. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” Such was the one undivided purpose and object of that perfect human heart. He never did His own will in anything. He says, “I

came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” It mattered not to Him what that will might involve to Himself, personally. The decree was written down in the eternal volume that He should come and do the divine will; and, all homage to His peerless name! He came and did it perfectly. He could say, “A body hast thou prepared me.” “Mine ears hast thou opened.” “I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” Isa. 1:3-6.

But this leads us, in the second place, to contemplate

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

It was ever the delight of the heart of Jesus to do His Father’s will and finish His work. From the manger at Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, the one grand object that swayed His devoted heart was the accomplishment of the will of God. He perfectly glorified God, in all things. This, blessed be God, perfectly secures our full and everlasting salvation, as the apostle, in this passage, so distinctly states. “By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once.”

Here our souls may rest, beloved reader, in sweetest peace and unclouded certainty. It was the will of God that we should be set apart to Himself, according to all the love of His heart, and all the claims of His throne; and our Lord Christ, in due time, in pursuance of the everlasting purpose as set forth “in the volume of the book,” came forth from the glory which He had with the Father, before all worlds, to do the work which forms the imperishable basis of all the divine counsels and of our eternal salvation.

And—forever be His name adored! —He has finished His work. He has perfectly glorified God in the midst of the scene in which He had been so dishonored. At all cost He vindicated Him and made good His every claim. He magnified the law and made it honorable. He vanquished every foe, removed every obstacle, swept away every barrier, bore the judgment and wrath of a sin-hating God, destroyed death and him that had the power of it, extracted its sting, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, He gloriously accomplished all that was written in the volume of the book concerning Him; and now we see Him crowned with glory and honor, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, He traveled from the throne to the dust of death, in order to accomplish the will of God, and having done so, He has gone back to the throne, in a new character and on a new footing. His pathway from the throne to the cross was marked by the footprints of divine and everlasting love; and His pathway from the cross back to the throne is sprinkled by His atoning blood. He came from heaven to earth to do the will of God, and, having done it, He returned to heaven again, thus opening up for us “a new and living way” by which we draw nigh to God, in holy boldness and liberty, as purged worshippers.

All is done. Every question is settled. Every barrier is removed. The veil is rent. That mysterious curtain which, for ages and generations, had shut God in from man, and shut man out from God, was rent in twain, from top to bottom, by the precious death of Christ; and now we can look right

up into the opened heavens and see on the throne the Man who bore our sins, in His own body, on the tree. A seated Christ tells out, in the ear of faith, the sweet emancipating tale that all that had to be done is done—done forever—done for God—done for us. Yes; all is settled, now, and God can, in perfect righteousness, indulge the love of His heart, in blotting out all our sins and bringing us nigh unto Himself in all the acceptance of the One who sits beside Him on the throne.

And let the reader carefully note the striking and beautiful way in which the apostle contrasts a seated Christ in heaven with the standing priest on earth. “Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever [εἰς τὸ διηνεκές—in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever [in perpetuity] them that are sanctified.”

This is uncommonly fine. The priest, under the Levitical economy, could never sit down, for the obvious reason that his work was never done. There was no seat provided in the temple or in the tabernacle. There is remarkable force and significance in the manner in which the inspired writer puts this. “Every priest”—“standeth daily”—“offering oftentimes”—“the same sacrifices”—“which can never take away sins.” No human language could possibly set forth, more graphically, the dreary monotony and utter inefficacy of the Levitical ceremonial. How strange that, in the face of such a passage of holy scripture, Christendom should have set up a human priesthood, with its daily sacrifice! —a priesthood, moreover, not belonging to the tribe of Levi, not springing from the house of Aaron, and therefore having no sort of divine title or sanction. And, then as to the sacrifice, it is, according to their own admission, a sacrifice without blood, and, therefore, a sacrifice without remission, for, “Without shedding of blood, there is no remission.” Heb. 9:22.

Hence, Christendom’s priesthood is a daring usurpation, and her sacrifice a worthless vanity—a positive lie—a mischievous delusion. The priests of whom the apostle speaks in Heb. 10 were priests of the tribe of Levi and of the house of Aaron—the only house, the only tribe ever recognized of God as having any title to assume the office and work of a priest upon earth. And, further, the sacrifices which the Aaronic priests offered were appointed by God, for the time being; but they never gave Him any pleasure, inasmuch as they could never take away sins; and they have been forever abolished.

Now, in view of all this, what shall we say of Christendom’s priests and Christendom’s sacrifices? What will a righteous Judge say to them? We cannot attempt to dwell upon such an awful theme. We can merely say, alas! alas! for the poor souls that are deluded and ruined by such antichristian absurdities. May God in His mercy deliver them and lead them to rest in the one offering of Jesus Christ—that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. May many be led to see that a repeated sacrifice and a seated Christ are in positive antagonism. If the sacrifice must be repeated, Christ has no right to His seat and to His crown—God pardon the very penning of the words! If Christ has a divine right to His seat and to His crown, then to repeat a sacrifice is simply a blasphemy against His cross, His name, His glory. To repeat, in anyway, or under any form whatsoever, the sacrifice is to deny the efficacy of Christ’s one offering, and to rob the soul of anything like an approach to the knowledge of remission of sins. A repeated sacrifice and perfect remission are an absolute contradiction in terms.

But we must turn, for a moment, to the third grand point in our subject, namely,

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

This is of the deepest possible moment for the reader to understand. It gives great completeness to the subject. How are we to know that Christ has, by His work on the cross, absolutely and divinely accomplished the will of God? Simply by the witness of the Holy Ghost in scripture. This is the third pillar on which the Christian's position rests, and it is as thoroughly divine and, therefore, as thoroughly independent of man as the other two. It is very evident that man had nothing to do with the eternal counsels of the Trinity—nothing to do with the glorious work accomplished on the cross. All this is clear; and it is equally clear that man has nothing to do with the authority on which our souls receive the joyful news as to the will of God, and the work of Christ, inasmuch as it is nothing less than the witness of the Holy Ghost.

We cannot be too simple as to this. It is not, by any means, a question of our feelings, our frames, our evidences, or our experiences—things interesting enough in their right place. We must receive the truth solely and simply on the authority of that august Witness who speaks to us in holy scripture. Thus we read, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Here, then, we have fully before us the solid foundation of the Christian's position and the Christian's peace. It is all of God, from first to last. The will, the work, and the witness are all divine. The Lord be praised for this glorious fact! What should we do, what would become of us, were it otherwise? In this day of confusion, when souls are tossed about by every wind of doctrine—when the beloved sheep of Christ are driven hither and thither, in bewilderment and perplexity—when ritualism with its ignorant absurdities, and rationalism with its impudent blasphemies, and spiritualism with its horrible traffic with demons, are threatening the very foundations of our faith, how important it is for Christians to know what those foundations really are, and that they should be consciously resting thereon!

(To be concluded in our next, if the Lord will.)

The Christian: His Position and His Work Part 3

We would recall for a moment to the reader's attention the third point in our subject, namely, "The witness of the Holy Ghost in scripture." We feel it to be of too much importance to be dismissed with such a cursory glance as we were able to give it at the close of our last paper.

It is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of settled peace that the heart should rest solely on the authority of holy scripture. Nothing else will stand. Inward evidences, spiritual experiences, comfortable frames, happy feelings, are all very good, very valuable, and very desirable; indeed we cannot prize them too highly in their right place. But, most assuredly, their right place is not at the foundation of the christian position. If we look to such things as the ground of our peace, we shall very soon become clouded, uncertain, and miserable.

The reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this point. He must rest like a little child upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word. It is blessedly true that "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." And again, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." All this is essential to Christianity; but it must, in no wise, be confounded with the witness of the Holy Ghost, as given to us in holy scripture. The Spirit of God never leads any one to build upon His work as the ground of peace, but only upon the finished work of Christ, and the unchangeable word of God; and we may rest assured that the more simply we rest on these the more settled our peace will be, and the clearer our evidences, the brighter our frames, the happier our feelings, the richer our experiences. In short, the more we look away from self and all its belongings, and rest in Christ, on the clear authority of scripture, the more spiritually minded we shall be; and the inspired apostle tells us that "to be spiritually minded (or, the minding of the Spirit) is life and peace." The best evidence of a spiritual mind is child-like repose in Christ and His word. The clearest proof of an un-spiritual mind is self-occupation. It is a poor affair to be trafficking in our evidences, or our anything. It looks like piety, but it leads away from Christ—away from scripture—away from God; and this is not piety or faith, or Christianity.

We are intensely anxious that the reader should seize, with great distinctness, the importance of committing his whole moral being to the divine authority of the word of God. It will never fail him. All else may go, but "the word of our God shall stand forever." Heart and flesh may fail. Internal evidences may become clouded; frames, feelings, and experiences may all prove unsatisfactory; but the word of the Lord, the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the clear voice of holy scripture, must ever remain unshaken. "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto us."

Thus much, then, as to the divine and everlasting basis of the Christian's position, as set forth in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. Let us, now, see what this same scripture tells us of the Christian's work, and of the sphere in which that work is to be carried on.

The Christian is brought into the immediate presence of God, inside the veil, into the holiest of all. This is his proper place, if indeed we are to listen to the voice of scripture. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which

he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Our God, blessed be His holy name, would have us near unto Himself. He has made out for us a title clear and indisputable in “the blood of Jesus.” Nothing more is needed. That precious blood stands out before the eye of faith in all its infinite value. In it alone we read our title. It is not the blood and something else, be that something what it may. The blood constitutes our exclusive title. We come before God in all the perfect efficacy of that blood which rent the veil, glorified God as to the question of sin, canceled our guilt according to all the demands of infinite holiness, silenced, forever, every accuser, every foe. We enter by a new and living way—a way which can never become old or dead. We enter by the direct invitation, yea, by the distinct command of God. It is positive disobedience not to come. We enter to receive the loving welcome of our Father’s heart; it is an insult to that love not to come. He tells us to “come boldly,”—to “draw near” with full unclouded confidence—a boldness and confidence commensurate with the love that invites us, the word that commands us, and the blood that fits and entitles us. It is offering dishonor to the eternal Trinity not to draw near.

Reader, is all this, think you, understood and taught in Christendom? Say, do Christendom’s creeds, confessions, and liturgical services harmonize with apostolic teaching in Heb. 10? Alas! alas! they do not. Nay, they are in direct antagonism; and the state of souls, accordingly, is the very reverse of what it ought to be. In place of “draw near” it is keep off. In place of liberty and boldness, it is legality and bondage. In place of a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, it is a heart bowed down beneath the intolerable burden of unforgiven sin. In place of a great High Priest seated on the throne of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption, we have poor mortal—not to say sinful—priests standing from week to week, all the year round in wearisome routine, actually contradicting, in their barren formularies, the very foundation truths of Christianity.

How truly deplorable is all this! And then the sad condition of the Lord’s dear people, the lambs and sheep of that precious flock for which He died! It is this that so deeply affects us. It is of little use attacking Christendom. We quite admit this; but we yearn over the souls of God’s people. We long to see them fully delivered from false teaching, from Judaism, legalism, and every other ism that robs them of a full salvation and a precious Savior. We long to reach them with the clear and soul-satisfying teachings of holy scripture, so that they may know and enjoy the things that are freely given to them of God. We can truly say there is nothing which gives us such painful concern as the state of the Lord’s dear people, scattered upon the dark mountains and desolate moors; and one special object for which we desire to live is to be the instrument of leading them into those green pastures and beside those still waters where the true Shepherd and Bishop of their souls longs to feed them, according to all the deep and tender love of His heart. He would have them near Himself, reposing in the light of His blessed countenance. It is not according to His mind or His loving heart that His people should be kept at a dim cold distance from His presence, in doubt and darkness. Ah! no; reader, His word tells us to draw near—to come boldly—to appropriate freely—to make our very own of all the precious privileges to which a Father’s love invites us, and a Savior’s blood entitles us.

“Let us draw near.” This is the voice of God to us. Christ has opened up the way. The veil is rent, our place is in the holiest of all, the conscience sprinkled, the body washed, the soul entering intelligently into the atoning value of the blood, and the cleansing, sanctifying power of the word—its action upon our habits, our ways, our associations, our entire course and, character.

All this is of the very utmost practical value to every true lover of holiness—and every true Christian is a lover of holiness. “The body washed with pure water” is a perfectly delightful thought. It sets forth the purifying action of the word of God on the Christian’s entire course and character. We must not be content with having the heart sprinkled by the blood; we must also have the body washed with pure water.

And what then? “Let us holdfast the profession of our hope (ἐλπίδος) without wavering (for he is faithful that promised).” Blessed parenthesis! We may well hold fast, seeing He is faithful. Our hope can never make ashamed. It rests, in holy calmness, upon the infallible faithfulness of Him who cannot lie, whose word is settled forever in heaven, far above all the changes and chances of this mortal life, above the din of controversy, the strife of tongues, the impudent assaults of infidelity, the ignorant ravings of superstition—far away above all these things, eternally settled in heaven is that word which forms the ground of our “hope.”

It well becomes us, therefore, to hold fast. We should not have a single wavering thought—a single question—a single misgiving. For a Christian to doubt is to cast dishonor upon the word of a faithful God. Let skeptics, and rationalists, and infidels doubt, for they have nothing to believe, nothing to rest upon, no certainty. But for a child of God to doubt, is to call in question the faithfulness of the divine Promiser. We owe it to His glory, to say nothing of our own peace, to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.” Thus may it be with every beloved member of the household of faith, until that longed-for moment “when faith and hope shall cease, and love abide alone.”

But there is one more interesting branch of christian work at which we must glance ere closing this paper. “Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works.”

This is in lovely moral keeping with all that has gone before. The grace of God has so richly met all our personal need—setting before us such an array of precious privileges—an opened heaven—a rent veil—a crowned and seated Savior—a great High Priest—a perfectly purged conscience—boldness to enter—a hearty welcome—a faithful Promiser—a sure and certain hope—having all these marvelous blessings in full possession, what have we got to do? To consider ourselves? Nay verily; this were superfluous and sinfully selfish. We could not possibly do so well for ourselves as God has done for us. He has left nothing unsaid, nothing undone, nothing to be desired. Our cup is full and running over. What remains? Simply to “consider one another;” to go out in the activities of holy love, and serve our brethren in every possible way; to be on the lookout for opportunities of doing good; to be ready for every good work; to seek in a thousand little ways to make hearts glad; to seek to shed a ray of light on the moral gloom around us; to be a stream of refreshing in this sterile and thirsty wilderness.

These are some of the things that make up a Christian’s work. May we attend to them! May we be found provoking one another, not to envy and jealousy, but to love and good works; exhorting one another daily; diligently availing ourselves of the public assembly, and so much the more, as we

see the day approaching.

May the Holy Spirit engrave upon the heart of both writer and reader these most precious exhortations so thoroughly characteristic of our glorious Christianity—"Let us draw near"—"Let us hold fast"—"Let us consider one another!"

Correspondence

1. "H. C. W.," Cheltenham. Thanks for your letter. We do not question for a moment the truth of what you say as to Mr. Pearsall Smith's personal love to Christ, or his desire to raise the spiritual tone of Christians. And, further, we may add the expression of our full conviction that God has used him to call attention to much neglected truth. But, at the same time, we are persuaded that he has not only, as you say, "made some errors in judgment, and used slipshod phrases which might convey a different meaning to the hearer from that which he understands himself," but that he has failed to bring out the precious truth unfolded in Rom. 6. That he has taught much precious truth we fully admit—truth found largely in other writings which are comparatively little known: but he has taught not a little error as well. As to the blessing which you yourself have received, we heartily thank God for it; and we earnestly pray that you may be thoroughly rooted, grounded, and settled on God's foundation, namely, Christ Himself, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Keep close to Him, dear friend—yea, abide in Him. Be at His side, and then you will be on His side.

2. "A Perplexed One," Jersey. Scripture distinctly teaches that the believer will never come into judgment at all. 2 Cor. 5:10 declares that all shall be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, believers and unbelievers—not, of course, at the same time. But how will believers be manifested? In all the perfectness of Christ Himself. Are they to be judged? Assuredly not. Their judgment is past forever. It was executed at the cross. If there was a single atom of sin or guilt left unatoned for in the death of Christ, a single question left unsettled, a single thing—no matter what—that has to be judged, then, most assuredly, we shall be eternally damned. But no, dear friend, it is all settled—blessedly, divinely, eternally settled; and all who believe on the Son of God have passed from death unto life, and shall not come into judgment. (John 5:24.) Thus much as to the person of the believer. It is as impossible that he can come into judgment, as that Christ Himself can. The members can no more be judged than the Head. No doubt our work shall be tested. "The day shall declare it." It shall be tried by fire, and all the wood, hay, and stubble will be burnt up. And, further, when we stand in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, we shall look back with an enlightened gaze over the whole of our career, and see, as we never saw before, our mistakes, our follies, our sins, our infirmities, our mixed motives. But we shall see also, as we never saw before, the fullness of the grace of God, and the efficacy of the blood of Christ. With regard to Matt. 12:36, 37, it teaches us that "men will have to give account for every idle word." So also, in Heb. 9:27 we read, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." But the believer is taken completely off the ground of judgment, inasmuch as Christ was judged in his stead; and hence, instead of looking for judgment, he is looking for the Savior. Is all this precious grace to make us lax and careless? May we speak idle words because we are not to be judged? Far away be the horrible thought! Nay, dear friend, it is just because we believe that Jesus was judged in our stead, and that we shall never, can never, come into judgment, that therefore we judge ourselves day by day, and refuse to justify in ourselves a single sinful thought. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" It is our holy privilege to reckon ourselves "dead to

sin.” We have passed through death and judgment, in the Person of our Substitute, and “we have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.” (John 4:17.) Here lies the grand secret of our peace—the secret of our deliverance from the power of sin—the secret of all holy living. May the Spirit of God expound and apply it in power to your heart, and then you will cease to be “A Perplexed One.”

3. “M. L. C.,” Cheltenham. We are not to do evil that good may come.

4. “H. J. D.,” Crediton. There is a place at the table of the Lord for every member of the body of Christ, provided always that there be nothing in doctrine or walk to disqualify. If anything more be required for admission to the table than the ability to cry, “Abba, Father,” that is, the Spirit of adoption, it is not the Lord’s table at all, but the table of a sect.

5. “W. R. L.,” Paddington. We most assuredly believe that the collection at the Lord’s table is an integral and most blessed part of the worship and communion of the assembly. Some, we are sorry to say, look upon it as an interruption: but we cannot so regard it. We believe 1 Cor. 16:2 is the divine authority for the collection on the first day of the week. The inspired apostle had been dwelling upon the most sublime and precious truth at the close of chapter 15, and we may be sure he deemed it no interruption to communion or worship to pen the words, “Now concerning the collection.” Why should we deem it an interruption, when the Lord puts, as it were, His box or basket into our hands, and asks us to contribute to His cause? It is the most suited opportunity we have, as an assembly, of so doing. Besides, it is morally comely—yea, it is simple righteousness—to contribute. How is the rent to be paid? How are all the expenses to be met? And then the Lord’s poor, and the Lord’s work at home and abroad. How are these to be met? Is it not a holy privilege for all to have fellowship? And what more suited occasion than when we are seated at the table of our Lord, feasting, in holy communion, upon the rich provision of His love? Some may, perhaps, object that the words, “Let everyone of you lay by him in store,” militate against the idea of a public collection. But why say, “on the first day of the week” if it were merely a private matter? We believe that laying by in store sets forth the calm, deliberate, devoted nature of the offering. We should determine, before the Lord in secret, what we are able to give; and then in the public assembly, in full communion, deposit our offering in the Lord’s treasury, remembering that His eye is upon us. We greatly fear, dear friend, that some of us are sadly deficient in reference to the collection. We forget the words, “everyone of you,” and “as God hath prospered him.” We come and avail ourselves of the room and its accommodation—the assembly and its privileges; but we do not consider how all these things are to be provided. And this is simply taking the very lowest possible view of the matter. Were we merely to view it as a question of common righteousness, we are morally bound to contribute, according to our means, to the expenses of the place where we meet, and where we enjoy the very richest and rarest privileges that Christians can taste upon earth. We have no right to suppose that one, or two, or more wealthy members of the assembly will defray all the expenses. To act on such a supposition as this is to deny our individual responsibility, and surrender a most precious privilege. We have long felt that, did we only consider that the box on the Lord’s table is His treasury, out of which He pays the rent of the room for His people to meet in, and out of which He would meet the need of His poor, and the demands of His work, we should have more correct ideas “concerning the collection.” No doubt, those who take it upon them to manage the Lord’s money need much grace and wisdom; and they should seek to act in full fellowship with grave and godly brethren in the distribution of the offerings

of the assembly. All this is most important; but for anyone to assert that the collection at the Lord's table is an interruption to worship and communion, is, in our judgment, a very doubtful evidence of spirituality of mind, or largeness of heart.

Correspondence

6. "C. H.," Tottenham. We do not feel it to be for edification to discuss the subject of your note; and we should advise you to refrain from such discussion.

7. "W. H.," Torpoint. Wait patiently on the Lord to open your way to His table. He may see it right to exercise your faith, but He never fails a trusting heart. Most assuredly you ought not willingly absent yourself from the table of your Lord, or from the assembly of His people. We must not yield to the reasonings and objections of mere nature. "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." May the Lord guide and strengthen you!

8. "Learner," Sutton. As to fact, we are in Egypt; as to experience, we are in the wilderness; in spirit and by faith, we are in Canaan. We are not yet come unto the rest.

9. "J. G.," Aberdeen. Your question is entirely one of individual conscience. Where the heart is really true to Christ and bound for glory, the question of investment will never be raised, or if raised, will be very speedily and definitely answered. Read Luke 12:22-40.

10. "A deeply distressed One," Birmingham. We can only help you by prayer. Your case, though a truly deplorable one, is not beyond the reach of the almighty grace of God. He can restore your soul, and lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Look to Him in true self-judgment. Do not limit His grace. Jesus ever liveth to make intercession. God, in His abundant mercy, grant you full restoration!

11. "A. B.," Staffordshire. It would not promote edification to discuss your question. Let each one study the New Testament, in the spirit of these words, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

12. "R. F.," Ballymena. We believe "the angel" is the mystic representative of the assembly before the eye of Christ. He passes from the angel to the assembly as though they were interchangeable terms. You will notice this throughout the seven addresses.

13. "A. and E.," Isle of Wight. "Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve" (Matt. 26:20.) So also Mark 14:17. Again, in Luke 22:14, "When the hour was come, he sat down and the twelve apostles with him." Furthermore, Judas is distinctly mentioned as taking part in the feast and asking a question. And then not merely at the passover, but at the supper, our Lord says, "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." We do not see how anyone can question the fact of the presence of Judas at the supper. His character was only known to the Lord. His fellow apostles did not seem to have any suspicion of him. But then to argue from this case that we ought to countenance known evil at the Lord's table, is simply wicked. To say that we may have traitors at the table, for aught we know, is to confess our own weakness; but to say that we ought to have known traitors, is perfectly shocking to any holy mind.

14. "Frater," Cheltenham. Our Lord Jesus Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Can we trace His footsteps into a field of battle? We are called to walk even as He has walked. Is it walking like him to go to war? Alas! we fail in many things; but if we are asked if it be

right for a Christian to go to war, we can only answer the question by a reference to Christ. How did He act? What did He teach? Did He ever take the sword? Did He come to destroy men's lives? Did He not say, "He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword?" And again, "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." How do such words comport with going to war? But some will say, "what would become of us if all were to adopt such principles?" We reply, If all were to adopt those heavenly principles, there would be no more war, and hence we should not need to fight. But it is not our business to reason as to the results of obedience; we have only to obey the word of our blessed Master and walk in His steps, and if we do so, we shall, most assuredly, not be found going to war. Persons sometimes quote our Lord's words, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one," as affording a sanction for going to war; but any simple mind can see that they have nothing to do with the question. They refer to the altered condition of things on which the disciples would have to enter when the Lord should be taken. While He was with them, they had lacked nothing; but now they would have to face, in His absence, the full brunt of the world's opposition. In short, the words have an entirely spiritual application. Again, much use is sought to be made of the fact that the centurion in Acts 10, was not told to resign his commission. It is not the way of the Spirit of God to put people under a yoke. He does not say to the newly converted soul, "you must give up this or that." The grace of God meets a man where he is, with a full salvation, and then it teaches him how to walk by presenting the words and ways of Christ in all their sanctifying and formative power. But again it is said, "Does not the apostle in 1 Cor. 7 tell us to abide in the calling wherein we are called?" Yes; with this powerfully qualifying clause, "Abide with God." This makes a material difference. Suppose a hangman is converted, could he abide in his calling? It will be said that this is an extreme case. Granted: but it is a case in point, inasmuch as it proves the fallacy of the reasoning on 1 Cor. 7. It proves that there are callings in which one could not possibly "abide with God." Finally, then as to your question, dear friend, we have simply to inquire, "Is it abiding with God, or walking in the footsteps of Christ to go to war?" If it be, let Christians do so; if not—what then?

15. "P.." Kent. Thanks for your kind note. We have very recently replied to your questions on 1 Pet. 3:19.

Correspondance

16. "D. W. S.," Illinois. Your kind and encouraging letter has come to hand, and we beg to tender our best thanks for it. We cannot but deeply regret that any one calling himself a pastor should be so fearfully deluded as to hold up, as you say, such men as Socrates and Confucius. You ask us to say briefly what we think as to this. We confess, dear friend, we have neither time nor inclination for such subjects. It is enough to make the heart bleed to think of immortal souls subject to the teaching of men who can dare to occupy their hearers with heathen philosophers instead of with the precious word of God.

17. "Young Christian," Belfast. We recognize no membership, save that of the body of Christ—no society or association save the church of God. But you must see this for yourself, in the word of God, and then you will not need to ask your question. A mere yea or nay from us could be of no value whatever to you.

18. "J. J.," Montreal. Most assuredly, we are privileged to count on the fulfillment of Matt. 18:20. It is a grand resource in the midst of the ruin and confusion around us. 2 Cor. 3:17, 18, distinctly teaches the lordship of the Holy Ghost. He dwells in the church collectively, 1 Cor. 3:16; and individually, 1 Cor. 6:10. See also Eph. 2:22.

19. "T. O. L.," Dayton, Ohio. In Gal. 5:9, the apostle in speaking of bad doctrine, uses the very same form of words as, in 1 Cor. 5:6, he applies to bad conduct. But the bad doctrine in question affected the very foundation of Christianity. So also in 2 John 10, the apostle calls upon the elect lady to shut her door against anyone who brought not the true doctrine of Christ. If a man denies Christ we cannot own him; nay, to salute him or wish him God speed, would make us partakers of his evil deeds. What is the difference between a teacher of fundamental error and one who knowingly receives him or wishes him God speed? Does the law distinguish between a traitor and one who knowingly conceals him? Could you have fellowship with a man who denies the Person or the work of Christ? Is it not very striking to notice how much more alive people are as to bad morals than bad doctrine? A scandalous liver is justly rejected; but a man may deny the deity, or the eternal Sonship of Christ, and be received and honored in the highest circles of so-called christian society. A man who picks his neighbor's pocket is justly sent to the treadmill; but a man may blaspheme the Son of God, and yet be looked upon as a respectable Christian! How is this? Because man thinks more of himself and his respectability than he does of Christ. But then, dear friend, who would think, for a moment, of placing fundamental truth on a level with such a question as baptism, or the interpretation of a text? To do so would be the very height of folly. If a man holds the truth as to Christ, and is seeking to live according to it, we can give him the right hand of fellowship, although we may not agree with him as to baptism or many minor points. Difference of judgment on minor questions, is a proof of human weakness: but if that difference be allowed to rise into undue prominence, it is a proof of Satan's power. When Christ is our absorbing and commanding object, all minor differences soon find their level.

20. "J. E. M.," Hampstead. 1 Cor. 7:12, 25, 26, 40, is no less inspired than any other portion of holy scripture. There is no such thing as a difference in the degree of inspiration. Whether the apostle gives a direct commandment from the Lord, or his own spiritual counsel, he is equally inspired in the one case as in the other. We must distinguish between revelation and inspiration. All scripture is given by inspiration of God; but we could not say that everything given in scripture is a revelation of God. We have the sayings of all sorts of men, the words of Satan and such-like. The Holy Ghost has inspired men to tell us these sayings; but the sayings are not divine revelation. So it is in 1 Cor. 7. There were direct commandments of the Lord in reference to the subject of marriage; and there were cases as to which there was no such commandment, but the apostle gives his own spiritual judgment; we have both by inspiration. To cede, for a moment, that any one part of scripture is a whit less inspired than any other, is in reality to deprive us of the word of God altogether. For who is to draw the line? No; no, dear friend, we must jealously guard against this. We must earnestly hold fast the grand truth that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." If men are to sit in judgment upon the Bible, they are sitting in judgment upon God Himself; and in result they will have no Bible, no Christ, no God. This is simply what the devil is aiming at.

21. "J. K. B.," Bishop Auckland. As to your first question, you cannot do better than procure a copy of the book entitled "The Sufferings of Christ." Read it and judge for yourself. The writer to whom you refer tells you the book contains some unsound statements. We tell you it contains profound and precious truth. What are you to do? Get the book; read it carefully; compare its statements with the word of God; judge for yourself. As to your second question, if any assembly were to make it essential to communion that persons should see eye to eye on the subject of baptism, we could not own such an assembly as on the ground of the Church of God.

22. "A. A. A." Your question is rather out of our province. You must wait on the Lord for guidance.

23. "G.," Bromley. Mark 8:38, obviously refers to the actual coming of Christ, "in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Chapter 9:1, on the contrary, refers to the transfiguration, which was a sample of the kingdom of God, and which some of His disciples were permitted to see.

Correspondence

24. "W. S.," Derby. Suffering with Christ is the result of our identification with Him. "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17) So also, chapter 15:18-20. Suffering for Christ is more the result of devotedness to Him. Phil. 1:29, BE.

25. "H. E. B.," London. Yours is only one of the numberless cases that have come under our notice, during the last 36 years, illustrating the truly deplorable effect of mere theology, whether high, low, or moderate. What a mercy, dear friend, for such as you, that God never puzzles people about their souls. The devil is sure to do so, if he can; and he is never better pleased than when he can make use of theology and religiousness to accomplish his end. He cares not what he uses, provided he can keep the soul from Christ. We earnestly recommend you to fling, far and forever, away from you all the puzzling statements of men—the bewildering dogmas of divinity—the conflicting opinions of theologians, and hearken to the gracious words of a Savior-God, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Where, we would ask those friends of yours, are we told in scripture that, “we must continue a long time in an anxious state of mind?” How long are we to continue? Who is to prescribe? We fully believe in the abiding necessity of repentance—the deep and thorough judgment of ourselves. But we are not saved by our repentance but by the precious atoning blood of Christ. None can so fully value a lifeboat as a drowning man; but it is the lifeboat that saves him and not his feelings as to his danger, or as to the value of the lifeboat. We are not to build upon the depth, intensity, or duration of our repentance, but upon the finished work of Christ.

Again, you say your friends do not believe in sudden conversions. Then they would not believe in the conversion of the woman of Samaria, of the thief on the cross, or of Saul of Tarsus; for, most assuredly, all three were what would be called sudden conversions. The fact is, it is not a question of the suddenness of the conversion at all; it is simply a question of the genuine work of God’s Spirit in the soul, revealing Christ by the word, and causing the heart to believe in Him for salvation and peace. It is the Christ I reach, and not the way I reach Him that saves my soul and satisfies my heart. Nothing can be more miserable or depressing than this occupation with our own experience so sadly characteristic of both the high and low schools of doctrine. It is a common saying that extremes meet; and its truth is illustrated by the fact that Calvinism and Arminianism, though so unlike, both meet in the one point of self-occupation.

Finally then, dear friend, let us assure you, on the holy authority of the New Testament, that there is nothing whatsoever to hinder your resting, at once and forever, in the amazing love of God to you as a sinner, on the finished work of Christ, and on the imperishable testimony of the Holy Ghost. Turn your back, with decision, on schools of divinity, and think of the loving heart of God, the precious blood of Jesus, and the clear and tranquilizing record of the blessed Spirit, in the holy scriptures. Then will your peace flow as a river, and your heart, your lips, and your life will praise and magnify the God of your salvation.

26. “J. D.” Man consists of “spirit, soul, and body.” When scripture speaks of the spirit of a beast, it means the mere animal life. When man was created, “The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” This was peculiar to man. Here we have the solid basis of the truth of the immortality of the soul. The Lord be praised for your precious testimony to the beauty, the harmony, and the value of holy scripture I May you go on to know more of these things, and to bear witness to them in the face of all the infidel attacks upon the peerless Volume of Inspiration!

27. “H. H.,” Devizes. Surely, dear friend, if it be contrary to the Spirit of Christ, for a Christian to go to law, it must be equally so to employ a society to do so on his behalf. If it be right to go to law, let it be done openly and honestly. If it be wrong, why attempt to do it by proxy? We note what you say of the “Letters,” and the paper on “One-sided Theology.” The Lord will guide as to their publication. We desire to bless His name for what you say as to their usefulness.

28. “A Perplexed One.” You have our fullest sympathy in all your mental exercise. We believe you are perfectly right in refusing to be present where a woman undertakes to speak or pray in public. The spirit and teaching of the New Testament are against any such practice. “Silence” is enjoined on the woman in public, or in the presence of a man. As to 1 Cor. 11, you have nothing about the assembly until verse 17, where a new subject is introduced; and, as you truly remark, the Spirit of God cannot contradict Himself. He cannot, in one place, tell a woman to keep silence, and, in

another, tell her to break it. It is, at once, contrary to God and contrary to nature, for a woman to come forward as a public speaker. She is to illustrate the proper place of the church—subjection—not teaching. The church does not teach—ought not to teach—she is false if she does. “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach.” This is the spirit and genius of popery. To say that the church hath power to decree, enact, or teach, is apostasy. The church is taught by the word of God. She is to obey and be in subjection. She ought to be the pillar and ground of the truth—to hold and maintain the truth, but never teach. Such is the invariable teaching of the New Testament, as to the church of which the woman should be the illustration.

It will perhaps be said in reply, that God uses the preaching and praying of women, for the blessing of souls. Well, what does this prove? The Tightness of female preaching? No; but the sovereign goodness of God. Were we to argue from the fact of the divine blessing, what might we not be led to approve? God is sovereign, and may work where and by whom He pleases; we are servants and must do what He tells us. In the time of the awakening in Ulster, in 1859, souls were smitten in Roman Catholic chapels, in the presence of the sacrifice of the mass. Does that prove popery to be right? Nay, it only proves that God is good. To reason from results may lead us into the grossest error. It ought to be sufficient, for everyone who bows to the authority of scripture, to know that the Holy Ghost strictly commands the woman to keep silence, in public assembly. And truly we may say, “Doth not even nature itself teach” the moral unfitness of a woman’s appearing in a pulpit or on a platform? Unquestionably. There are many and varied ways in which women can “labor in the gospel” without the unseemliness of public preaching. We are not told how “those women labored” with the blessed apostle; but, most assuredly, it was not by speaking in public.

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

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

Correspondence

29. “Three Young Believers,” Guernsey. “Fathers” are those who are matured in the divine life. “Young men” are those in whom the divine life is in full vigor. We fondly hope that our three young friends, if left here, may go steadily on to be young men and fathers.

30. “A. M. H.,” Kent. Eph. 1:13 teaches us that the sealing of the Spirit is consequent upon believing in Christ. “In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Scripture distinguishes between quickening and sealing. The Holy Ghost quickened us when we were dead in sins. He sealed us when, through grace, we believed on the Son of God. The Spirit is the seal which God puts upon those who believe in His Son, as dead, risen, and

glorified. The interval between the quickening and the sealing may be moments, months, or years; but there is an interval. We believe that every quickened soul is sure to be a sealed one, for God never leaves His work undone. How often do you see people in a low, legal, doubting state, going about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting to God's righteousness, full of fears and questionings. They are in Rom. 7 They do not know accomplished redemption. They are not delivered. They are quickened, but not sealed. Persons in this state know nothing about the one body. They are virtually in the condition of Old Testament saints. It is sad to have to say it, but we believe that the great majority of Christians throughout Christendom are in this condition.

31. "S. P.," Jersey. To "cherish a foolish thought" is most assuredly grieving to that Holy Spirit whereby we are sealed. But if we judge the foolish thought it does not disturb our communion. There is a vast difference between treating evil thoughts as intruders, and providing them with furnished lodgings.

32. "A Young Bible Header," London. John 20:23 refers to the administrative action of an assembly in discipline. See 1 Cor. 5 for the retaining of sin, and 2 Cor. 2:6-8 for the remitting of it. It is not official. It is not addressed to apostles, but to disciples. It does not touch the soul's eternal relation with God, but its present relation to the assembly.

33. "W. S.," Aurora, Illinois. Accept our warmest thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter. It is curious that we have very recently replied to your query as to 1 Cor. 7; we do not, therefore, refer to it here. You will no doubt have seen the answer ere this reaches you.

34. "G. B.," Otley. In the various passages in Heb. 11 to which you refer, there is no preposition in the original. It is simply "τῆς πίστεως," which may be rendered, "in faith," or "by faith." Luke 16:1-9 teaches us to use this world's riches—should they come into our hands—in the service of God, with our eye fixed on the everlasting habitations. Riches do not properly belong to a Christian. His place and portion are heavenly; but if, in the providence of God, he happens to possess them, he should use them in the promotion of the cause of Christ. 1 Tim. 6:19 explains Luke 16:9. If riches be not used in this way, they are a positive curse to a Christian.

35. "M. B.," Monkstown. You cannot be at any loss to know whence such an infidel thought proceeds. It is from the father of lies. Treat it as such. Judge it, and reject it utterly. It seems strange that after knowing the Lord for forty years, as you say, you should, even for a moment, be troubled by the suggestion of one whom you know to be "a liar from the beginning." Ask a poor ignorant man at the back of a mountain, how he knows that the sun shines. Ask a simple believer how he knows that the Bible is the word of God. He will tell you he has felt its power. Has not the Holy Ghost given you to feel the power of the word of God? If God cannot make me know that it is He who speaks to me in His word, who else can? Were we merely to believe in the divine inspiration of the scriptures from human testimony—be that testimony ever so powerful—it would not be faith at all. I believe what God says, because He says it, not because of any human authority. If all the fathers that ever wrote, all the doctors that ever taught, all the councils that ever sat—all the angels in heaven, and all the saints upon earth—were to agree in declaring that the Bible is the word of God, and that we were to believe on their testimony, it would not be divinely-given faith. And, on the other hand, were all to agree in declaring that the Bible is not the word of God, it should not for a moment shake our confidence in that peerless revelation. Fling back, then, dear friend, at once into the enemy's teeth his foul and blasphemous suggestion, and

repose, like a little child, in the love and truth of that blessed One whom you have known for so many years.

36. "E. B." Brighton. Scripture plainly draws a distinction between "sin" and "sins." It tells us in Rom. 8 that God has "condemned sin" in the cross. "The body of sin is destroyed." It is because God has thus condemned sin that He can righteously forgive us our sins. We may forgive a child a wrong thing said or done; but we do not, and cannot, forgive the naughty disposition which led him to do or say the wrong thing; we condemn it, and would have him to condemn it likewise. The more you consider this subject in the light of the New Testament, the more you will see its immense importance. Can you find a single passage in the entire compass of the New Testament that speaks of the forgiveness of sin? Hundreds of passages speak of the forgiveness of sins. You may depend upon it, dear friend, there is no distinction in scripture without a difference. We may think it unimportant, but the Holy Ghost is wiser than we are.

Correspondence

37. "Evangelist" London. The life of faith, in its every stage, its every step, is, and must be, intensely individual. No one can act faith for another; and no one ought to dare to intrude upon another's path. We may and ought to encourage one another to trust God—to strengthen each other's hands in God; but for anyone to counsel another to do this or that, unless there be distinct faith for it, is, in our judgment, a very grave mistake indeed. Hence, dear friend, if you are not thoroughly clear in your own soul as to whether it would be, as you say, "faith or folly" to abandon your present position, we should strongly recommend you to pause. It is a serious thing to go beyond your depth—to feel the surgings of the tide of circumstances, if your feet are not on the rock. We have no fears on God's side of the question. He never fails a trusting heart. But, from the style and tone of your letter, we should have great fears for you. Could you imagine Abraham asking anyone if it would be "faith or folly" for him to leave Ur of the Chaldees? Could you conceive Moses asking if it would be "faith or folly" for him to leave the court of Pharaoh? Of course, we most fully believe that your position would be a false one for us; and that to abandon it would be true wisdom; but you must see this for yourself. You must have it from God, and act before Him, else it will all end in confusion and disaster. "Never go before your faith and never lag behind your conscience." This is a most excellent maxim. May we all be enabled to act upon it! The Lord bless, guide, and keep you!

38. "W. B.," Notting Hill. We conclude, from what you say, that your own mind is ill at ease in reference to the matter about which you ask counsel; and we would therefore recommend you not to do anything with a doubtful mind. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Look to the Lord for guidance in this thing. See if you can do it to His glory; and if not, lay it aside. It must be between your own soul and the Lord. Oh, nothing with a doubtful mind. How precious to be able to bring everything, great or small, to Him!

89. "A Young Learner," London. 1 John 1:7 teaches us that the proper sphere of the "life" which we possess is "the light." It is there we are to walk. It is our privilege to be always in the light as God is in the light; and it is only as believers walk in the light that they have fellowship one with another. If one Christian is walking in the light and another is not, they may have intercourse, but they have no fellowship. The new man can only live in the light. It is his proper element. To take him out of it is like taking a fish out of water. Our true place is in the light, and the more we dwell there, the

more clearly and fully we enter into the precious truth that “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” The light of God’s presence makes manifest that there is not a single speck of sin upon us. We have sin in us; but none on us, because Christ who had no sin in Him had all ours on Him, on the cross; but He has, by His precious death, put all away and brought us into the divine presence without a single stain. And then, when we fail, as alas! we do—when we sin in thought, word, or deed, the blessed Advocate, “Jesus Christ the righteous,” goes to the Father about it; and the other Advocate, the Holy Ghost in us, causes us to feel the sin and confess it to God who is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Thus our communion is restored. Thank God there is no need why we should sin. “These things write we unto you that ye sin not.” But alas! we are liable to sin; and “If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” God be praised for all this marvelous grace, and rich provision for our every need!

40. “A reader of “Things New and Old” Exeter. In the reply as to woman’s preaching, there is not the most remote reference to the blessed work of Sunday-school teaching. God forbid that any one should think for a moment that we could pen a line calculated to discourage a christian woman from such an interesting service, provided she be fitted for it, and can engage in it without interfering with necessary home duties. We cannot but think that if you will only read the answer again, with any measure of care, you will see that your letter was quite uncalled for. We consider Sunday-school teaching to be just one of the very things in which “women can labor in the gospel.” It is not speaking in assembly. It is not teaching or usurping authority over a man; but teaching children the word of God. It is not assuming the place of a public speaker—so unseemly for a woman. In short, it is a work in which she can most suitably and blessedly engage; and we can say, with a full heart, may God’s richest blessing rest on all who are so engaged!

41. “C. H.,” Dorchester. We heartily thank you for your kind and encouraging letter, and for your faithfulness in calling our attention to the very questionable expression in the poetry for May, 24 “Thy robe of innocence.” No doubt, the writer considered the child irresponsible. This, together with strong affection and poetic license, must account for the mistake. But it by no means excuses us for allowing it to pass. We fully own failure in editorial faithfulness, and we shall have the entire stanza omitted in our next edition.

Note. —We have, once more, to request our Correspondents not to send us stamped envelopes, as we cannot undertake to send direct replies. And, further, many of our friends are in the habit of looking for answers “in next month’s number.” This is often impossible. We received a letter dated April 25, requesting an answer in our May issue. The fact is, our copy for May was in the printer’s hands three weeks before the date of our Correspondent’s letter.

Correspondence

42. “L. M. W.,” Cheltenham. We beg you will accept our warmest thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter. We cannot say anything as to the publication of the volume to which you refer. The Lord will guide. We do not feel ourselves, in any way, bound to go on with the series. We simply look to God about it. We trust this reply will suffice to meet the many inquiries made as to our “Notes.”

43. "L. B.," London. "The Jew," as such, is bound to fulfill the law, or else to meet the curse pronounced upon "every man who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." But where is the Jew that can meet God on the ground of law—moral or ceremonial? Did you ever hear or know of one who could claim blessing on the ground of perfect obedience? It will be said, "There is mercy;" yes, but not under law. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy." Law and mercy are two different things. If a man can fulfill the law, he does not need mercy; and if he has not fulfilled the law, it has no mercy for him. What remains? Simply to take the place of a poor, ruined, self-destroyed, guilty sinner. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." What then? "In me is thy help." But on whom has this help been laid? On One mighty to save, even the Messiah of Israel—Him of whom Isaiah speaks in the following well-known passage: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his bruising we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Here, dear friend, the repentant Jew may find the true ground of deliverance from the curse of the law. Christ was made a curse by hanging on a tree. "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "And all who believe in Him are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Nor this only; they are delivered from the law as a rule or principle, being counted dead to it by the death of Christ.

This, in no wise, interferes with Jer. 31:36, 37, to which you refer. It has nothing to say to the question. If "the Jew embraces Christianity" he ceases to be a Jew, and takes his stand on the new ground where there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Christ. This leaves wholly untouched the promises and purposes of God to Israel which shall all be fulfilled—literally and infallibly fulfilled, in due time. "All Israel shall be saved." The scriptures teem with the evidence of this grand truth. Not one jot or tittle of the promises made to the fathers can fail. To quote the proofs would demand a volume. We cannot add more in our limited space, save to say that if you will apply your heart to the study of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, you will find a very full and satisfactory reply to your question, "What passages of scripture tend to release the Jew from ceremonial observance?" If he believes in Jesus, he is dead to the law; if he does not, he will be damned by the law.

44. "M. H. P.," Somerset. Your question has a very legal ring about it. We are certainly responsible for what we profess to know and hold; but if your soul thirsts, as you say, to know more of Jesus, surely the more you can hear of Him the better. No doubt, we shall ever have to judge ourselves for our shortcoming in carrying out the truth we profess to know; and the more we know, the more

searching must be our self-judgment. But we must never forget, dear friend, that we live under the reign of grace. Glorious, enfranchising fact! The Lord be praised for it! May we enter, more fully, into its sweetness, blessedness, and power! Thanks for the lines sent by J. P.

45. "I. R." Accept our thanks for your kind letter. We must refer you to our publisher for a reply to your proposal. We have not yet received the "Highway Papers" which you so kindly sent.

46. "J. H.," Haltree. In John 20 Mary illustrates the present relation of the church with Christ. We do not know Him after the flesh. We are linked with Him, not as the Messiah on earth, but as a heavenly Christ. Thomas, on the other hand, represents the Jew who must see, in order to believe. In Matt. 28 which, as you know, presents our Lord in His Jewish relations, we find the women holding Him by the feet, teaching us, in the most blessed manner, that He will yet resume His links with Israel, according to the promises made to the fathers. We must remember that the church forms no part of the ways of God with Israel and the earth.

47. "E. C.," London. We never solicit contributions for this magazine. If any of the Lord's servants feel led to send us a paper, we shall most thankfully accept it, and, if suitable, insert it.

Correspondence

48. "W. L.," Paddington. The inspired apostle James tells us that "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Does not this answer the question as to faith? Some may, perhaps, have a difficulty as to Eph. 2:8—"By grace are ye saved, through faith, and this (το■το) not of yourselves, the gift of God;" but to us it is perfectly clear that "faith," like every other good and perfect gift, is from God. "All men have not faith," or, as it should be read, "Faith is not of all." If faith be not the gift of God, it is only an exercise of the human mind, and, as such, perfectly worthless. Faith is a divine reality wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost. It grasps the revelation of God, and thus links the heart with Him in a divine way. It is all of God, from first to last. "All things are of God" in the new creation. Blessed be His holy name for the assurance! Were it not so—were there the weight of a feather, or the movement of an eyelash, of ours in the whole matter, it would spoil all.

49. "A Reader of Things New and Old," Jersey. We have not seen the book to which you refer; and, judging from the extract which you have sent us, we have no desire to see it. We heartily and reverently believe in the plenary inspiration of the holy scriptures, given of God in the Hebrew and Greek languages. No doubt errors are found in various versions, copies, and translations. We speak only of the scriptures as given of God. Oh, dear friend, what an unspeakable comfort to have a divine revelation! What should we do, whither should we turn, if we were left to men's thoughts on the subject? What a poor affair it would be for us if we had to look to men to accredit the word of God! They would very soon rob us of its authority and value. What impudent presumption for poor worms of the earth to dare to sit in judgment upon the word of God! —to pronounce upon what is and what is not worthy of God! If God cannot make us understand His word, if He cannot give us the assurance that it is He Himself who speaks to us in holy scripture, what are we to do? Can man manage the matter better? He seems to think so; but we have very grave doubts on the subject. If God cannot make us understand His word, no man can; if He does, no man need. "We should earnestly counsel you, dear friend, to fling aside all such books, however highly commended. Alas! alas! it seems to be the fashion now-a-days, in quarters where

we should least expect it, to commend in most glowing terms all sorts of infidel books, and blasphemous attacks upon the word of God and the Person of Christ. We cannot but judge it to be a very great mistake indeed for Christians to read such books, unless they are called and fitted of God to expose them. Would you read a book entitled, "A treatise wherein it is sought to be proved that two and three do not make five?" We hardly think you would. If God has graciously given you to rest by faith upon His eternal word, what more do you want? Assuredly, infidel books cannot help you. God is His own interpreter in scripture as well as in providence. Would you think of turning to some skeptical or rationalistic book to help you in the solution of the mysteries of God's government? We trust not. Then why turn to such for a judgment as to inspiration? We cannot refrain from quoting for you that magnificent passage in 2 Tim. 3: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect (■πτιος), thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We greatly fear, dear friend, you were not under the cover of the shield of faith while perusing this book of which you speak; but we earnestly pray that your precious soul may be enabled to fling off, with calm decision, any dark and skeptical suggestions which maybe troubling you, and to return to its sacred rest in the eternal stability of divine revelation. God grant it, in His infinite mercy!

50. "H. B. K.," Kingstown. Your difficulty as to Luke 12:35, 36 arises from introducing into it a line of thought which does not belong to it. There is nothing about the church in the passage. Disciples are exhorted to be like unto men that wait for their Lord. This should be our attitude. The passage applies to Christians now. Returning from the wedding, or, as in another place, returning from a far country, presents no difficulty whatever if you only see the true bearing of the exhortation.

51. "J. O. K.," New York. There is a short tract, entitled, "Prayer in its Proper Place," which may perhaps meet the need. It can be had of our publisher.

52. "A Sister in Christ." There is surely a difference between "failure" in laying hold of a divine privilege, and "sin" against a positive command of God. The two things are plainly distinguishable, though in many cases they are one and the same.

53. "J. B.," Kingstown. Repentance involves the moral judgment of ourselves under the action of the word of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the discovery of our utter sinfulness, guilt, and ruin, our hopeless bankruptcy, our undone condition. It expresses itself in these glowing words of Isaiah—"Woe is me; I am undone;" and in that touching utterance of Peter—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Repentance is an abiding necessity for the sinner, and the deeper it is the better. It is the plowshare entering the soul, and turning up the fallow ground. The plowshare is not the seed, but the deeper the furrow, the stronger the root. We delight in a deep work of repentance in the soul. We fear there is far too little of it in what is called revival work. Men are so anxious to simplify the gospel, and make salvation easy, that they fail to press upon the sinner's conscience the claims of truth and righteousness. No doubt salvation is as free as the grace of God can make it. Moreover, it is all of God, from first to last. God is its source, Christ its channel, the Holy Ghost its power of application and enjoyment. All this is blessedly true; but we must never forget that man is a responsible being—a guilty sinner—imperatively called upon to repent and turn to God. It is not that repentance has any saving virtue in it. As well might we assert

that the feelings of a drowning man could save him from drowning; or that a man could make a fortune by a deed of bankruptcy filed against him. Salvation is wholly of grace; it is of the Lord in its every stage and every aspect. We cannot be too emphatic in the statement of all this; but at the same time we must remember that our blessed Lord and His apostles did constantly urge upon men, both Jews and Gentiles, the solemn duty of repentance. No doubt there is a vast amount of bad teaching on the subject, a great deal of legality and cloudiness, whereby the blessed gospel of the grace of God is sadly obscured. The soul is led to build upon its own exercises instead of on the finished work of Christ—to be occupied with a certain process, on the depth of which depends its title to come to Jesus. In short, repentance is viewed as a sort of good work, instead of its being the painful discovery that all our works are bad, and our nature incorrigible. Still, we must be careful in guarding the truth of God; and, while utterly repudiating Christendom's false teaching on the important subject of repentance, we must not run into the mischievous extreme of denying its abiding and universal necessity.

54. "H. R.," Faversham. We may be able to notice your communication in our next. Our friends must not always expect replies. We do not hold ourselves at all responsible to answer all the questions that are sent us.

Correspondence

55. "S. T. A." Scripture is totally silent on the subject of your letter; but the Spirit, if waited upon, will most assuredly guide in this as in everything else. We feel disposed to judge that the person who breaks the bread ought also to give thanks for the cup. It is one service. But we do not dare to lay down a rule. A person might have spiritual power to give thanks for the bread, and fail as to the cup; but we have never seen aught of the kind. The Lord is sufficient for all. Let us only wait on Him.

56. "W. M.," Staffordshire. Thanks for your truly kind letter. Heb. 10:20, 27, like chapter 6:4-6, is a solemn warning against the deliberate abandonment of Christ, on the part of those who had professed to give up Judaism and embrace Christianity. It is well for us all to give heed to every warning voice which the Holy Spirit causes to fall on our ears; although we know, thank God, the eternal security of the very least of Christ's members. It is interesting to notice that the most solemn warnings of this epistle are closely connected with the strongest expressions of assurance and confidence. Compare chapter 4:1, with verse 10; chapter 6:4-6, with verse 7; chapter 10:26, 27, with verse 39.

57. "C. J. H.," Leeds. 3 John 1:7 evidently applies to such as go forth in the Lord's service. Those, of whom the apostle speaks, felt it to be their happy privilege to make the gospel of Christ without charge. They took nothing of the Gentiles. The scripture has nothing to do with persons receiving kindness from their unconverted relatives. This latter must be taken up, in each case, upon its own merits.

58. "W. P.," Shanghai. Your interesting letter has come to hand, for which we tender many thanks. May the Lord lead you on in His own blessed ways; and make you an effectual workman in His vineyard!

Correspondence

59. "J. C." Stonehouse. The case in question is one for the judgment of the local brethren. It is utterly impossible to lay down a general rule as to reception at the Lord's table. Each case must be taken up on its own merits; and we must, all of us, wait on the Lord for spiritual wisdom and grace.

60. "A. R.," Grangemouth. "The Lord God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Here we have the solid basis of the truth of the immortality of the soul. The Fall in nowise touched this. Man was marked off from all the orders of creation by the possession of an immortal soul. "He became a living soul." There never can come a moment in which the human soul shall cease to exist. Fallen or unfallen, innocent or guilty, converted or unconverted the soul is immortal.

But "eternal life" is another thing altogether. It belongs only to those that believe in the Son of God. To quote the scriptures in proof would be impossible here, and we trust there is no need. The Soul that is "born again" by the word and Spirit of God gets a new nature and new life, and this life is in the Son of God. His soul is not a bit more immortal than the soul of the unconverted man; but he has a new life altogether, and stands upon a new footing. He is in Christ and Christ is in him.

Your question as to John 1, 29 and 1 John 2:2 is a very important one but we have repeatedly gone into it. It will help you much to distinguish between Christ as the propitiation for the whole world, and as the substitute for His people. The two goats in Lev. 16 typify Him in these two aspects of His work. The Lord's lot fell upon one. This was Christ the propitiation. The people's lot fell upon the other. This was Christ the substitute. John 1:29 refers to the former. "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." See also Heb. 9:26. Christ did a work on the cross in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be obliterated from the whole creation. The full result of this work will not be seen until the new heavens and the new earth shall shine forth as the eternal abode of righteousness. It is in virtue of Christ's propitiatory work that God has been dealing in mercy and goodness with the world and with man, from the Fall down to the present moment. He has sent His sunshine and His rain upon the earth, He has filled men's hearts with food and gladness. He has been dealing in patience and long-suffering with the human family. And, further, it is in virtue of the same propitiatory sacrifice that the evangelist goes forth with a world-wide gospel, to proclaim it in the ears of every creature under heaven. He cannot go and tell every creature that Christ died as his substitute, but he can tell him that He died as a propitiation; and when, through grace, the soul believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he can learn the further tranquillizing truth that He died as a substitute, and bore all his sins in His own body on the tree. See Heb. 9:28—"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"—all His people. In verse 26 we read, "He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Christ is never said to have borne the sins of the world. It is utterly false doctrine—it is universalism. He bore the sins of His people, and He has done a work in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be abolished throughout the wide universe of God.

These distinctions, dear friend, are of the utmost importance. Scripture maintains them. Theology confounds them, and confounds souls in consequence.

61. "K. B.," Durham. An evangelist is one who possesses a bona fide gift from Christ, the Head of the church. If a man has not this gift he is not an evangelist, though able to speak ever so fluently. We believe there is one feature which invariably characterizes a true evangelist, namely, an intense love for souls—a thirsting for their salvation, in order that Christ may be magnified. The

glory of Christ must ever be the ruling object with every workman, whatever be his gift. We believe the evangelist ought to look for results—ought confidently to expect them, just as the husbandman looks for the fruit of his labor. He may have to exercise “long patience,” but he should fully count on God for results. An evangelist is, of necessity, more or less, a traveler. The world is his sphere; but the Lord will ever guide those who simply wait on Him, having no will of their own, no personal aim or object.

As to giving up our calling, provided it be a godly one, it is a most serious matter indeed, demanding grave consideration, and most distinct guidance from God. If He calls us to this, He will most surely sustain us, for He will be no man’s debtor. He never fails a trusting heart. But we must be very clear indeed as to the divine call, else we shall break down. We have known several who threw up their occupation in order to give themselves to the Lord’s work; but the sequel proved—and that in a very humiliating way, that they were not called of God to enter upon that line of things. But no one can be a rule for another. Each one must walk before his Lord in this as in all besides. He is a most gracious Master; and even though we make mistakes, we can cast ourselves in fullest confidence on His unfailing goodness; and where the heart is true to Him, all is sure to come right in the end.

May He guide and bless you, dear friend, and use you abundantly according to the earnest desire of your heart!

62. “W. H. M.,” near Saffron Walden. We entirely agree with our beloved friend, “W. K.,” as to receiving Christians at the table of their Lord. Any other mode or principle of action is not according to the truth of the unity of the body. There is a place at the Lord’s table for every member of the body of Christ, provided always that the proper discipline of the assembly does not call for exclusion. There are two things which must never be lost sight of, in connection with the question of reception at the Lord’s table, and these are, first, the grace which will not allow of the exclusion of any who ought to be admitted; secondly, the holiness which cannot allow the admission of any who ought to be excluded. If these things were allowed to act in the assembly, we should not have so much discussion and practical difficulty in the matter of reception.

63. “E. M. B.,” Rochdale. Thanks for your note and the accompanying papers.

64. “H.,” Ontario. You are quite right, dear friend, in standing with firm decision on God’s ground. If we build again the things which we destroyed, we make ourselves transgressors. If they were right, why destroy them? If wrong, why build them again? But we have to remember those precious words of the apostle, “Let all your things be done in charity”—words so eminently fitted to qualify what had gone before, “Quit you like men; be strong.” One of the special difficulties of the day is to combine a wide heart with a narrow path. Truth narrows the path, grace enlarges the heart. May we all know the due action of both—their adjusting power over the whole course and character!

65. “S. G.” “Flesh” is the evil principle, the old man, the body of sin. “Nature” is recognized, and even admitted as a teacher. “Doth not even nature itself teach you?” says the apostle. “Jesus beholding the young ruler, loved him,” although, so far as scripture informs us, there was nothing in him but nature—amiable nature if you please, but nature. All our relationships are in nature—husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister. To be without natural affection is

one of the marks of the apostasy of the last days. But nature has to be watched, though not ignored. Flesh has not only to be watched, but judged and ignored—reckoned dead. This distinction is of great importance, specially for those of us who are prone to be one-sided. We have to bless God every day, for the adjusting power of His word. Would that—we realized it more fully!

66. “J. McK.,” Glasgow. Accept our hearty thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter. We can only bless God with a full heart for what you tell us. To Him be universal and everlasting praise!

As to the matter about which you seek counsel, it is entirely a question for the conscience of the individual workman. Of course, if it be the matter of placing a board at the door of the room where the assembly meets, it must be done in fellowship. But where others are not involved, the workman should feel perfectly free to adopt any means which may seem to him to be lawful, of making known the preaching of the gospel. We deeply respect conscience. We thoroughly recognize individual responsibility. We believe the church of God affords a platform sufficiently broad to admit of every variety of workman. Each should be left free, so long as he does not traverse any great fundamental principles. We desire to keep as wide as we possibly can of all narrowness, all mere quibbling and hairsplitting. May the Lord deliver us from all such!

67. “G. B.,” Stonehouse. We cannot lay down any general rule as to such cases. Pain, sickness, lunacy, death, are all under the hand of Him with whom we have to do. He uses sickness, sometimes to correct, sometimes to prevent. Each one has to learn for himself the divine object in any particular trial or affliction. Cases of lunacy among the Lord’s people, are most solemn, mysterious and humbling. We must leave all these things with Him who can make no mistakes.

“We comprehend Him not;

But earth and heaven tell,

God sits as sovereign on the throne,

And ruleth all things well.”

68. “W. P.,” Alnwick. Scripture is silent as to such details, and hence we cannot lay down any rule; but we may give our judgment, which must go for what it is worth. The money collected at the Lord’s table belongs to Him; and we believe He expects that those who take charge of it shall be wise, gracious, and faithful in their stewardship. No one individual should take upon himself the exclusive management of such a solemn and important business. There should be full loving conference and fellowship on the part of those in whom the assembly can place confidence. Those who have charge of the money should keep an accurate account of the collection and expenditure of each week; and this account should not only be open to the inspection of the brethren, but it should be, from time to time, duly laid before them.

As to the objects to which the Lord’s money should be applied, there need be no difficulty. All righteous claims on the assembly should first be met—for we must be just before we are generous; then the Lord’s poor should be attended to; and finally, His work in its various departments, as may be agreed upon in conference.

We cannot but judge, dear friend, that we all need to have our hearts stirred up, our understanding enlightened, and our consciences exercised as to the matter of the collection. We do not give as we might and as we ought. Our hearts are narrow, and our notions crude. We can find means during the week for a good deal of self-indulgence, for the purchase of many things which we could do without, and yet when the Lord puts His box into our hands at His table, our offerings are poor indeed. Then we are troubled with crotchets and questions which ought never to be heard among spiritual or even sensible people. The collection at the Lord's table, on the Lord's day, is a beautiful and an integral part of our worship. It is the special occasion in which we can, in holy fellowship, pour our offerings into His treasury. We greatly dislike boxes placed at the door when the public are admitted to hear the word of God. It seems to us very much like setting a man to stand with a box or plate in order to collect money from all who pass in. But this is only our judgment.

69. "G. E.," Aylesbury. We most fully agree with every line of your letter. The love of money and the love of dress are, we greatly fear, eating out the spiritual life of thousands, and ruining the testimony. Let us judge ourselves. Let us watch and pray. May the Lord keep us in the moral shelter of His holy presence! It will not do for us, dear friend, to dwell inordinately on the progress of evil; it is very depressing and withering. Our resource is in the living God. He can deliver us from every evil work, and preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom. All praise to His name!

70. "L. L.," Chelmsford. Mark 16:17, 18, was literally fulfilled in the apostolic day. We are not warranted to expect a continuance of such signs; and thanks be to God, we do not need such signs for the confirmation of our faith, which reposes on the eternal stability of the word of God—the holy scriptures. As to John 21:25, we understand it to mean simply this, that the finite could not contain the record of the infinite.

71. "B. V.," Jersey. You surely cannot have read Jas. 2:1 with any attention. The apostle exhorts his brethren not to connect two such incongruous things as "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ," and "respect of persons." To stop at the first clause, as you do, would make nonsense of the passage or worse. Pardon our severity; but we do not at all like the tone of your letter. We are not aware of your ever having had a reply from us before on any subject, much less one couched in such terms as you quote.

72. "H. B.," Faversham. Any good theological dictionary will furnish you with the desired information.

Correspondence

73. "A. K.," Dumbarton. Gal. 6:6 teaches that those who receive instruction in the things of God should communicate, in all good things, with those whom God uses to instruct them, provided, of course, that there is need. The passage seems simple enough.

74. "M. M. M.," Aberystwith. We are much interested in the contents of your letter. You have our fullest sympathy in your work. We have forwarded your request to the beloved friend referred to in your letter; and we have no doubt he will attend to it with his usual promptness. It is the joy of his heart to circulate the truth of God in every way.

75. "D. W.," Derry. There are two ways of looking at your question. The apostle Paul, preaching to the Athenians says, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God." (Acts 17:29.) He is here, of course, speaking of God as the Creator. Looking at the question from a christian standpoint, we are only the children of God by being born again, by His word and Spirit. It is to this latter, no doubt, that the minister you name refers, and he is perfectly right. It is most necessary when handling any question, to look at it in all its aspects and bearings. In this way we avoid narrowness and one-sidedness.

76. "A Reader," London. We believe in the forgiveness of sins on the authority of the word of God; and the more simply we "believe," the more clearly we shall "see," the more distinctly we shall "know," and the more deeply we shall "feel."

77. "A Clergyman's Wife." We thank you heartily for your kind and encouraging letter. You will find in our papers on "The All-sufficiency of Christ," (now published separately) some remarks on the subject to which you refer.

78. "C. F.," Hawkesbury Upton. It is quite sufficient for us, dear friend, that scripture teaches on the one hand, that faith is the gift of God; and on the other, that man is a responsible being. We believe both; to reconcile them is none of our business; they are already reconciled inasmuch as they are taught in the word. We have repeatedly gone into this subject, as you must be aware, being as you say, "A constant reader." See an article entitled, "Responsibility and Power," vol. 17 page 57.

79. "Miss M.," Yokohama, Japan. We deeply sympathize with you, dear friend, in all your exercises, and we earnestly entreat the Lord to sustain, comfort, and bless you. But we do not feel called to enter the field of controversy with infidel writers either at home or abroad. We leave this work to other and abler hands. As to infidel books, we hold them in such utter contempt that we never read them. We consider the best thing to do with all such is to put them in the fire.

80. "A Constant Reader," United States. We cannot understand how any one calling himself a christian parent can adopt such a system of harsh and cruel treatment towards his children. It can only result in making them liars and infidels. They will tell lies to escape the strap; and they will despise the religion which stands connected with such inordinate severity. Such treatment as you describe is more worthy of a cruel slave-master than of a christian parent. No doubt, there are cases in which some little discipline is necessary; but it should be administered in such a way as to convince the child that it is only for his good, and not the fruit of bad temper, or of arbitrary severity. The rod should be most reluctantly lifted. It should be the very last resource. In short, the christian parent should ever keep before him as his model his heavenly Father's dealings with himself. Now, does He inflict punishment for confessed sin? The thought were blasphemy. He only chastens in love, and in order to make us partakers of His holiness. It grieves Him to have to use the rod. "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." This should be the christian parent's pattern. We do not believe in the everlasting whipping system. It only hardens and brutalizes. And we would further add, dear friend, that the father and the mother should be wholly one in the administration of discipline. For a child to have to appeal to one parent to shield him from the other, reveals a condition of things in the domestic circle perfectly shocking to every well-regulated mind. The father and mother should not have a single divergent thought in reference to the system of training. They should appear before their children as one authority—one influence. The firmness

of the father and the tenderness of the mother should be so sweetly blended as that their joint action might be felt in the entire system of training. But how is all this to be realized? By the parents being much on their knees together before God. This is the true secret of domestic training. If the father and mother do not pray together, they will not act together; and if they do not act together, the education of the children must suffer. May the Lord in His infinite goodness help all christian parents to discharge aright their high and holy functions, so that His name may be glorified in the households of His people!

81. "M. A." You are quite right in your judgment as to Cain's sacrifice. It was a sacrifice without blood, and "without shedding of blood there is no remission." We are not surprised at Unitarian or Socinian opposition to the doctrine of atonement; but we believe scripture.

82. "F. L. J.," London. Rom. 11 teaches us most distinctly that "all Israel shall be saved," and that not by being brought into the church, but, after the church has left the scene and gone to heaven. "The fullness of the Gentiles" must not be confounded with "the times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21. The former refers to the gathering out for blessing. The latter refers to the ripening for judgment. Israel shall be saved and blessed, as a nation, in their own land, according to the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

83. "W. N.," Battersea. God's probationary dealings with man closed with the cross. Till then, God had been testing man in various ways. He had tried him without law, under the law, under government, by the prophets, by the living ministry of Christ; but all in vain. Man was incorrigible. He crucified the Lord of glory. The cross closed forever the history of the first man; but it forms the basis of that new creation in which all things are of God. Hence, therefore, those who speak of man as being under probation are eighteen centuries behind.

84. "M. A. L.," Harrogate. Thanks for your note and the sweet lines.

85. "E. A. R.," Nenagh. It is wrong for a Christian to be "discontented;" but it is not wrong to wait on God to open your way to the assembly of His people and to the table of your Lord.

86. "S. J. L.," Malvern. Sunday-school work is so entirely individual in its character that all who engage in it must take it up in direct responsibility to the Lord, and pursue it with energy and firm purpose of heart, regardless of human thoughts. If we listen to every crotchet and quibble of the day, we shall never get on. We look upon Sunday-school teaching as a most blessed work, and we have written on the subject again and again. We would exhort you, dear friend, to go on with your precious service, looking only to your Lord for guidance, help, and encouragement. As a general rule, we judge it better if possible, to have a separate room for the Sunday-school. It renders you more independent, and takes away occasion from those who seek to raise objections to its being held in the assembly's room.

The Dew of Hermon

The expression at the head of this paper has, it seems, long proved “a geographical puzzle” to some. But to one who has the mind of Christ it is no puzzle, but a most striking and beautiful figure. Hermon is the very loftiest peak in all the land of Palestine, and from its snowy cap, when all the surrounding country is parched, the refreshing dew descends upon the mountains of Zion; and this is one of the figures used by the Holy Ghost to illustrate the beauty and pleasantness of brethren dwelling together in unity. Let us quote the entire psalm.

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

Here we have two lovely illustrations of unity among brethren. It is like ointment descending from the head of the high priest to the skirts of his garment; and it is like the dew descending, in refreshing power, from Hermon’s snowy top.

How truly delightful! And yet they are but figures used to set forth the divine idea of unity among brethren. But how is the unity to be promoted? By living sufficiently near to our great priestly Head to catch the fragrant ointment as it descends from Him—to be living so near the Man in the glory as that the refreshing dew of His grace may drop upon our souls, thus rendering us fragrant and fruitful to His praise.

This is the way to dwell in unity with our brethren. It is one thing to talk about unity, and another thing altogether to dwell in it. We may profess to hold “the unity of the body,” and “the unity of the Spirit”—most precious and glorious truths surely—and all the while be really full of selfish strife, party spirit, and sectarian feeling, all of which are entirely destructive of practical unity. If brethren are to dwell together in unity, they must be receiving the ointment from the Head, the refreshing showers from the true Hermon. They must live in the very presence of Christ, so that all their points and angles may be molded off, all their selfishness judged and subdued, all their own peculiar notions set aside, all their cues and crotchets flung to the winds. Thus there will be largeness of heart, breadth of mind, and depth of sympathy. Thus we shall learn to bear and forbear. It will not then be loving those who think with us and feel with us as to some pet theory or other. It will be loving and embracing “all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.”

The blessed Head loves all His members, and if we are drinking into His Spirit, if we are learning of Him, we shall love all likewise. No doubt, those who keep His commandments enjoy His special love—the love of complacency; and so we cannot but specially love those in whom we trace most of His blessed Spirit. But this is a totally different thing from loving people because they adopt our line of truth, or our peculiar views. It is Christ, and not self; and this is what we want, if we are to “dwell together in unity.”

Look at that charming picture presented in Phil. 2. There truly we see, first of all, the divine Head Himself, and from Him the ointment descending to the skirts of His garments. Where did Paul get the grace to enable him to be ready to be poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice of his brethren? What was it that made Timothy care for other people? What led Epaphroditus to put his life in his hand to supply his brethren's lack? What is the one grand answer to all these questions? Simply this: these beloved servants of Christ lived so in their Master's presence, and drank so deeply into His Spirit, they dwelt so near the Man in the glory, that the fragrant ointment, and the refreshing dew, fell upon their souls abundantly, and made them channels of blessing to others.

This, beloved christian reader, be assured of it, is the grand secret of getting on together. If brethren are to dwell together in unity, they must have the "ointment" and the "dew" dropping continually upon them. They must live close to Christ, and be occupied with Him, so that they may show forth His virtues, and reflect His blessed image.

And then, what joy to be enabled, in any little measure, to refresh the heart of God! He delights to see His children walking in love. It is He who says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Surely this ought to stir our hearts to seek in every possible way to promote this lovely unity. It should lead us to sink self and all its belongings, to surrender everything that might tend in any measure to alienate our hearts from Christ, or from one another. The Holy Ghost exhorts us to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Let us remember this. It is the unity of the Spirit, not the unity of the body, we are to keep in the uniting bond of peace. This will cost us something. The word "endeavoring" shows that it cannot be done without sacrifice. But the One who so graciously exhorts us to the service will ever supply the needed grace. The ointment and the dew will flow down from Him in refreshing power, knitting our hearts together in holy love, and enabling us to deny ourselves, and surrender everything which might tend to hinder that true unity which we are imperatively called upon to maintain.

A Letter to a Friend on Eternal Punishment

Beloved Friend,

I have been thinking a good deal of late, on the last verse of the third chapter of John. It seems to me to furnish a most powerful answer to two of the leading heresies of this our day, namely Universalism on the one hand; and Annihilationism, on the other: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The deniers of eternal punishment, as you are fully aware, are divided into two classes, each differing from the other very materially. Some profess to believe that all will, ultimately, be restored and brought into everlasting felicity: these are the Universalists. Others, again, are of opinion that all who die out of Christ are annihilated, soul and body—made an end of thoroughly—will perish like the beast.

Now, I think you will agree with me in the thought that John 3:36, completely demolishes both these fatal errors. It meets the Universalist by the sweeping and conclusive statement that the unbeliever "Shall not see life." It entirely sets aside the notion of all being restored and eternally saved. Those who refuse to believe the Son, shall die in their sins, and never see life.

But, were this all, the Annihilationist might say, "Exactly so; that is just what I believe. None but those who believe in the Son shall live eternally. Eternal life is only in the Son, and hence, all who die out of Christ shall perish, soul and body, they shall be made an end of."

Not so, says the Holy Ghost. It is quite true they shall not see life; but—tremendous fact! "The wrath of God abideth on him." This, beyond all question, gives a flat contradiction to annihilationism. If the wrath of God is to abide upon the unbeliever, it is utterly impossible he can be made an end of. Annihilation and abiding wrath are wholly incompatible. We must either erase the word "abiding" from the inspired page, or abandon completely the notion of annihilation, to hold the two is out of the question.

Of course, I am merely now referring to this one passage of holy scripture; and truly it is enough, of itself, to settle any mind that simply bows to the voice of God, as to the solemn question of eternal punishment. But here, my beloved friend, is just the point. Men will not submit to the teaching and authority of holy scripture. They presume to sit in judgment upon what is and what is not worthy of God to do. They imagine that people may live in sin, in folly, in rebellion against God, and in the neglect of His Christ, and after all, go unpunished. They take upon them to decide that it is inconsistent with their idea of God to allow such a thing as eternal punishment. They attribute to the government of God what we should consider a weakness in any human government, namely, an inability to punish evil doers.

But ah! the word of God is against them. It speaks of "unquenchable fire"—of an "undying worm"—of a "fixed gulf"—of "abiding wrath." What, I would ask, is the meaning of such words, in

the judgment of any honest unprejudiced mind? It may be said that these are figures. Granted that the “fire,” the “worm” and the “gulf” are figures but figures of what? Of something ephemeral—something which must, sooner or later, have an end? Nay; but something which is eternal, if anything is eternal. If we deny eternal punishment, we must deny an eternal anything, inasmuch as it is the same word which is used in every instance to express the idea of endless continuance. There are about seventy passages in the Greek New Testament where the word “everlasting” occurs. It is applied amongst many other things to the life which believers possess, and to the punishment of the wicked, as in Matt. 25:46. Now, upon what principle can anyone attempt to take out the six or seven passages in which it applies to the punishment of the wicked, and say that in all these instances it does not mean forever; but that in all the rest it does? I confess this seems to me perfectly unanswerable. If the Holy Ghost, if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had thought proper to make use of a different word, when speaking of the punishment of the wicked from what He uses when speaking of the life of believers, I grant you there might be some basis for an objection.

But no; we find the same word invariably used to express what everybody knows to be endless; and therefore if the punishment of the wicked be not endless, nothing is endless. They cannot, consistently, stop short with the question of punishment, but must go on to the denial of the very existence of God Himself.

And indeed I cannot but believe that here lies the real root of the matter. The enemy desires to get rid of the word of God, of the Spirit of God, the Christ of God, and God Himself; and he craftily begins by introducing the thin end of his fatal wedge, in the denial of eternal punishment; and when this is admitted the soul has taken the first step on the inclined plane which leads down to the dark abyss of atheism.

This may seem strong, harsh and ultra; but it is my deep and thorough conviction; and I feel most solemnly impressed with the necessity of warning all our young friends against the danger of admitting into their minds the very shadow of a question or doubt as to the divinely established truth of the endless punishment of the wicked in hell. The unbeliever cannot be restored, for scripture declares “he shall not see life.” Moreover, he cannot be annihilated, for scripture declares that “the wrath of God abideth upon him.”

Oh! my beloved friend, how much better and wiser and safer it would be for our fellow men to flee from the wrath to come than to deny that it is coming, or that when it does come it will be eternal.

Ever, believe me,

Most affectionately yours,

C. H. M.

Extract From a Letter of a Christian Captain

“You will be pleased to bear that I received the tracts, &c, quite safely; and distributed them with much prayer for the Lord’s blessing on them—to His own praise and glory. I may almost say, they are literally sent all over the world. Some were sent to New Zealand; Queensland; Sydney; the interior parts of Australia. Some were put on board steamers and sailing ships going to different parts of the world, to people of all classes and denominations.

“I do not mention these things boastingly; but that you may know that your labor in packing and sending the tracts has not been in vain. I shall be very pleased to receive some more, if you have any to spare; as I have so many opportunities of distributing them among classes not often reached by the evangelist, and who, from the nature of their occupation (seamen) have not the same privileges as others.”

We give the foregoing with the earnest hope that it may encourage our readers to pack up all their superfluous tracts, and forward them to our dear friend Mr. Hartridge. The Lord is largely using the agency of tracts and books, all over the world; and it seems a sad mistake for us, in highly favored England, to allow these precious things to lie useless in our drawers and on our shelves, when thousands in far off lands would be only too glad to receive them. We do not even ask the reader to spend a penny on a new tract. We merely want him to send just such as are lying useless beside him. May the Lord stir us all up as to this service!

C. H. M.

Faith

A poor old negro woman in one of the West Indian Islands was once in great poverty. Times were hard; she was sickly, and unable to work; and, what distressed her most, her shoes were so bad that she could not go to meetings without getting her feet wet, which always made her ill. She was one who could say with truth, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord;" and when Sunday came round again, her heart sank within her because the weather was wet, and she had no hope of getting to the meeting-house. But she said, "My blessed Massa say, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; so I dare take up my old shoes,' and, kneeling down, I say, 'O, Massa Jesus, look upon my old shoes; do, my Massa, dem all broke; me cannot go to meeting tomorrow; do, my Massa, help me!' I put 'em down, my heart quite light; I know dat Jesus see, em, dat enough. In de ebening someone come to de door, rap, rap. 'Who's dare? me say. 'It's me, mammy,' says Mr. D.'s boy. 'Massa sent dis parcel for you.' When de boy gone, me open do parcel, and what should be in it but a pair of new shoes! Me know dat Jesus sent 'em and my heart too much glad. O, how me praise Him!"

This simple faith is what we need; this is what honors God, and brings blessing.

Fidelity of a Switch-Tender

A switch-tender had just taken his place to change the track in order to turn a train which was in sight, so as to prevent a collision with another train from an opposite direction. At this critical moment, on turning his head, he discovered his little boy playing on the track of the advanced engine. He might spring to the rescue and remove him safely, but then he would not have time to turn the switch, and hundreds of lives might be lost by his neglect. In an instant his resolution was taken. "Lie down!" he shouted to his boy, and the child, happily accustomed to obedience, promptly threw himself on the ground and the whole train thundered over him, the passengers little dreaming how much their safety had cost that father. The trembling father rushed forward fearing to find only a mangled corpse, but no words can express his joy at seeing his child alive and unharmed. The next day the Emperor having heard of the circumstance, sent for the man, and presented him the medal of honor for his bravery.

The above is extracted from the Berlin Volksblatt. In order to comprehend how a train could pass over a boy and he remain unharmed, the reader must know that the locomotive used in England and on the Continent of Europe does not have a "cow-catcher" affixed, as in America.

It is an example of faithfulness rarely met with. To attend to his post was in all probability to lose his son, but the switch-tender gave the preference to the lives of the passengers, rather than the life of his child. It is joyful to know that he did not lose his child, but that he took him up again unharmed.

The incident is pregnant with illustration of the means by which God has made a way for the salvation of sinners. Here is the whole world rushing madly on to perdition. How can the switch be turned that will guide them from the track that leads to hell, to the track that leads to everlasting life? God must give up His Son! If the switch-tender had saved his child, the passengers would have been lost, and if God had allowed that bitter cup to pass from the Lord Jesus, every one of us would inevitably have perished. But He did not; "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." The man commanded his child to lie down, and he obeyed. Thus also the Lord Jesus "humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And the result is salvation to us. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The passengers little dreamed how much their safety had cost that father. And do you know how much your safety has cost God? By virtue of the cross, God has been long-suffering towards you as yet. He lingers still, waiting to be gracious. He has not passed by yet.

'Twas sweet that cry, 'He passes by,'

But sweeter still, He lingers nigh.

Can you reflect on the infinite cost to God of salvation, and yet spurn such mercy? Oh, remember, there is a switch which leads to everlasting life or everlasting misery, according to the way in which

it is turned, and that is the cross. God has given His Son, but on your acceptance or rejection of Him, depends your happiness or woe for eternity. There is no middle path, you cannot remain neutral here. Accept of a crucified Christ, and you are saved; reject Him, and that very cross becomes your judgment. Awake! awake! O sleeper! awake to the reality of your position; awake to the reality of the cross. If those passengers whose destruction or safety depended on the turning of that switch had known in what a balance their safety hung, all depending on whether that father should save his son or them, would their hearts not have thrilled and their breathing suspended as they realized their critical position? And, oh, my reader, that you would realize the position that you are in! If your eyes were but open to that awful gulf into which you are plunging, and on the other hand, the wonderful love of God in giving His Son that you might not perish! If you were this moment taking the final step that should land you into the outer darkness, would you not desire salvation? And who knows but that this may be your last?

A few days ago several men lost their lives in a moment by the explosion of a boiler, within a stone's throw of where I am writing. It took but a moment for them to pass into the realities of eternity!

Dreamer, with soul unsaved, Awake!

Or thou wilt surely die;

Down in the deep and burning lake

The Christless soul must lie.

Madman, who slumberest on a mast,

That rocks above the deep,

Will nothing but the judgment

Arouse thee from thy sleep?

Dreamer, awake! a moment more,

And in the western sky

Thy sun will set, thy day be o'er,

God passed forever by.

We rejoice to know that this father took up his child again unharmed; and it is joy to know, too, that God has received His Son again by resurrection, and has now exalted Him to His right hand to give repentance and remission of sins. And that Son having accomplished the work of salvation, sends down from the glory a final, loving message to the poor sinner; it is: "Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"Freely He gives; His love, all else excelling,

Bids thee now comic!

'Tis God's command, thy fears and doubts expelling;

' Yet there is room!

Welcome, poor, weary one,

Lost, ruined, and undone,

Jesus, thy life has won!

Come, sinner, come!"

C. H. B.

(Extracted from "The Evangelist.")

The Folded Lamb

“He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them his bosom.”—Isa. 40:11.

Rest, for the little sleeper!
Joy for the ransom'd soul!
Peace for the lonely weeper,
Dark though the waters roll!
Weep for the little sleeper;
Weep, it will ease thy heart,
Though the dull pain be deeper
Than with the world to part.
Mighty the conflict o'er her!
How could she face the foe?
Bugged the road before her!
How could the weak one go?
She could not climb the mountain;
She could not face the foe
Lying between Life's Fountain,
And this dark vale below.
But the kind Shepherd found her,
Laid her upon His breast,
Folded His arms around her,
Hushed her to endless rest.
He bore her up the mountain,
He trampled down the foe,
He laid her by Life's Fountain,
Whence the still waters flow.
Joy for the little sleeper,

The gentle, timid lamb,
Safe with her tender keeper!
Could there be sweeter balm?
As the dread hour came nearer,
Closer the tendrils clung,
Growing each moment dearer,
Though the heart's core was wrung.
Oh! what are earth's best pleasures,
Sick'ning the woe-struck heart?
What all its joys and treasures,
When with the lov'd we part?
But the long-wish'd-for token,
Earnest of peaceful rest,
Binds up the heart that's broken,
Soothes the distracted breast.
Do not, then, droop in sadness,
Dark though the night may be;
There's a bright morn of gladness,
Mourner, reserved for thee!
Yet shall the lov'd one greet thee,
Smiling in Heav'n's own light,
Joying once more to meet thee
Where there can be no blight.
Grieve not with hopeless sorrow,
Jesus has felt thy pain;
Thy child He did but borrow,
He'll bring her back again.
Peace, little loving sleeper,
Close to thy Saviors side,

Housed with thy tender Keeper,
Safe—for “the Lord has died!”

Fragments

“Give me the eye which can see God in all, and the hand which can serve Him with all, and the heart which can bless Him for all.”

“The reason why the men of the world think so little of Christ is, they do not look at Him. Their backs being turned to the sun, they only see their own shadows, and are therefore wholly taken up with themselves; while the true disciple, looking only upwards, sees nothing but his Savior, and learns to forget himself.”

If the Lord Tarry

My beloved Friend,

Since our last conversation, I have been thinking a good deal of the subject which was then before us; and the more I think of it, the more disposed I am to doubt the moral fitness of the use so frequently made of the sentence which stands at the head of my letter. I have never been able to adopt the phrase, either in writing or speaking. In fact, it is not according to scripture, though it seems, of late years, to have become a favorite expression with many christian people who, I feel assured, desire to speak and act as in the divine presence, and according to the direct teaching of holy scripture.

I trust I need not assure you, my friend, that in raising an objection to this special form of speech, I would not, for a moment, even seem to weaken in any heart, the sense of the nearness of the Lord's coming—that most blessed hope which ought, each day, to become brighter and brighter in the vision of our souls. Far be the thought! That hope abides, in all its moral power, and, in no wise, depends on the using or not using any set form of words.

But then supposing I say, "If the Lord tarry, I mean to go to London next week," I make my going to London dependent upon the Lord's tarrying, whereas, He may tarry, and yet it may not be His will that I should go at all; and hence I ought to place all my movements, all my actions, all my plans, under the commanding influence of my Lord's will.

Is not this in direct accordance with scripture? What does the inspired apostle James say on the point? "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that." Jas. 4.

Here, the Spirit of God furnishes us with the proper form of words to be used in all our acts and ways; and surely we cannot find anything better than what He graciously deigns to give. "If the Lord will" includes everything which is to regulate our movements, whether the Lord is pleased to tarry or not.

But in writing this I have no thought, I assure you, of judging any one in his use of any particular phrase. I am merely giving you my reasons for not adopting the formulary in question. And I may just add, in conclusion, that whether we say, "If the Lord tarry," or "If the Lord will," we should ever seek, most earnestly, to be in the present power of the words we use, and thus avoid everything bordering, in the most remote degree, upon mere empty phraseology or religious cant. May the Lord make us very real, in all our words and ways!

Ever, my beloved friend,

Most affectionately yours,

C. H. M.

Israel and the Nations

It would greatly tend to give clearness and definiteness to missionary effort to keep fully before our minds God's original purpose in sending the gospel to the Gentiles, or nations. This we have stated in the most distinct manner in Acts 15 "Simeon hath declared," says James, "how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."

Now nothing can be simpler than this. It affords no warrant whatsoever for the idea so persistently held by the professing church, namely, that the whole world is to be converted by the preaching of the gospel. Simeon knew quite well that such was not God's object in visiting the Gentiles; but simply to take out of them a people for His name. The two things are as distinct as any two things can be—indeed they stand in direct opposition. To convert all the nations is one thing; to take out of the nations a people is quite another.

The latter, and not the former, is God's present object. It is what He has been doing since the day that Simon Peter opened the kingdom of heaven to the Gentile in Acts 10; and it is what He will continue to do until the moment so rapidly approaching, in which the last elect one is gathered out, and our Lord shall come to receive His people unto Himself.

Let all missionaries remember this. They may rest assured it will not clip their wings, or cripple their energies; it will only guide their movements, by giving them a divine aim and object. Of what possible use can it be for a man to propose as the end of his labors something wholly different from that which is before the mind of God? Ought not a servant seek to do his master's will? Can he expect to please his master by running directly counter to his clearly expressed object?

Now, clearly, it is not God's purpose to convert the world by the preaching of the gospel. He only means "to take out a people." True it is, blessedly true, that all the earth shall yet be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. There is no question as to this. All scripture bears witness to it. To quote the passages would literally fill a volume. All Christians are agreed on this point, and hence there is no need to adduce evidence.

But the question is, how is this grand and glorious result to be brought about? Is it the purpose of God to use the professing church as His agent, or a preached gospel as His instrument, in the conversion of the world? Scripture says No; and says it with an emphasis and a clearness which ought to sweep away every doubt and difficulty.

And here let it be distinctly understood that we delight in all true missionary effort. We heartily wish God's speed to every true missionary—to everyone who has left home, and kindred, and friends, and all the comforts and privileges of civilized life, in order to carry the glad tidings of salvation into the dark places of the earth. And, further, we desire to render hearty thanks to God for all that has been accomplished in the fields of foreign mission; though we cannot by any means approve the mode by which the work is carried on, or the great root principle of missionary societies. We consider there is a lack of simple faith in God, and of subjection to the authority of Christ, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. There is too much of mere human machinery, and looking to the world

for aid.

But all this is beside our present mark. We are not now discussing the principle of missionary organization, or the various appliances adopted for the carrying on of missionary operation. The point with which we are occupied in this brief paper is this—will God make use of the professing church to convert the nations? We ask not, has He done so? for, were we to put the question thus, we should receive an unqualified negative from all the ends of the earth. What! Christendom convert the world! Alas! alas! she is herself the darkest moral blot in the universe of God, and a grievous stumbling-block in the pathway of both Jew and Gentile. The professing church has been at work for eighteen long centuries; and what is the result? Let the reader take a glance at a missionary map, and he will see in a moment. Look at those large patches of black, designed to set forth the dismal regions over which heathenism bears sway. Look at the red, the green, the yellow, setting forth popery, the Greek church, Mahometanism. And where is—we say not true Christianity, but even mere nominal Protestantism? That is indicated by those tiny spots of blue which, if all put together, would make but a very small fraction indeed. And as to what this Protestantism is in its best estate we need not now stop to inquire.

But, we ask, is it the revealed purpose of God to make use of the professing church in any way to convert the nations? If it be so, we admit at once that, spite of the most discouraging appearances, we must believe and hope. We freely grant that the true way in which to test any principle is not by results, but simply by the word of God.

What, then, say the scriptures on the great question of the conversion of the nations? Take, for example, the lovely psalm that stands at the head of this paper. It is but one proof among a thousand, but it is a most striking and beautiful one, and we need hardly say it perfectly harmonizes with the testimony of all scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. We cannot refrain from giving it at full length to the reader.

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

Here, then, the simple truth shines before us with remarkable force and beauty. It is when God shall have mercy upon Israel—when He shall cause His light to shine upon Zion—then, and not until then, will His way be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations. It is through Israel, and not through the professing church, that God will yet bless the nations.

That the “us” of the foregoing psalm refers to Israel, no intelligent reader of scripture needs to be told. Indeed, as we all know, the great burden of the psalms, the prophets, and the entire of the Old Testament, is Israel. There is not a syllable about the church from cover to cover of the Old Testament. Types and shadows there are in which—now that we have the light of the New Testament—we can see the truth of the church prefigured. But without that light no one could, by any possibility, find the truth of the church in Old Testament scripture. That great mystery was, as the inspired apostle tells us, “hid”—not in the scriptures, for whatever is contained in the scriptures

is no longer hid, but revealed—but it was “hid in God and was not, and could not, be revealed until Christ, being rejected by Israel, was crucified, and raised from the dead. So long as the testimony to Israel was pending, the doctrine of the church could not be unfolded. Hence, although at the day of Pentecost we have the fact of the church, yet it was not until Israel had rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost in Stephen that a special witness was called out in the person of Saul, to whom the doctrine of the church was committed. We must distinguish between the fact and the doctrine; indeed it is not until we reach the last chapter of the Acts that the curtain finally drops upon Israel; and Paul, the prisoner at Borne, fully unfolds the grand mystery of the church which from ages and generations had been hid in God, but was now made manifest. Let the reader ponder Romans 16:25, 26; Ephesians 3:1-11; Colossians 1:24-27.

We cannot attempt to go fully into this glorious subject here; indeed, to refer to it at all is a digression from our present line. But we deem it needful just to say thus much, in order that the reader may fully see that Psalm 67 refers to Israel; and, seeing this, the whole truth will flow into his soul that the conversion of the nations stands connected with Israel, and not with the church. It is through Israel, and not through the church, that God will yet bless the nations. It is His eternal purpose that the seed of Abraham, His friend, shall yet be pre-eminent in the earth, and that all nations shall be blessed in and through them. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.” Zech. 8:23.

There is no need to multiply proofs. All scripture bears witness to the truth that God’s present object is not to convert the nations, but to take out of them a people for His name; and, further, that when these nations shall be brought in—as they most assuredly shall—it will not be by the instrumentality of the church at all, but by that of the restored nation of Israel.

It would be an easy and a delightful task to prove from the New Testament, that, previous to the restoration and blessing of Israel, and therefore, previous to the conversion of the nations, the true church of God, the body of Christ, shall have been taken up to be forever with the Lord, in the full and ineffable communion of the Father’s house; so that the church will not be God’s agency in the conversion of the Jews as a nation, any more than in that of the Gentiles. But we do not desire at this time to do more than establish the two points above stated, which we deem of much interest and importance in reference to the grand object of missionary operations. When missionary societies propose for their object the conversion of the world, they propose a palpable mistake. And when Christendom imagines that she is to be God’s instrument in converting the nations, it is simply a delusion and an empty conceit. Hence, therefore, let all who go forth as missionaries see that they are ruled in their blessed work by a divine object, and, further, that they are pursuing that object in a divinely-appointed way.

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

Musing alone, half sadly
Waiting the coming year:
Link'd with hopes for the future,
Thoughts of the past more dear.
Memories rich in mercy—
Sunshine too bright to last:
Ah! there are speechless yearnings
Circling around that past.
But with soft, holy soothing
Rises o'er all one voice,
Breathing a new year's message,
Bidding thy soul rejoice.
Now by His Spirit speaking
Hear thy Lord's word to thee—
"Let not your heart be troubled
Only—believe in ME."
Standing thus on its threshold,
Watching the dawning year:
Looking off all to Jesus,
Hush'd be each doubt and fear.
All through the hidden future,
Plann'd by a Father's love—
God, thine own God, shall lead thee
Safe to the Home above.
Yes, though the path be trial,
Gladness, or toil, or care,

The arch of covenant promise
Spans it still everywhere.
Here on the new year's portal,
Jesus hath traced for thee—
“Let not your heart be troubled,
Only—believe in ME.”

Living by Faith

“The just shall live by faith.” This weighty statement occurs in the second chapter of the prophet Habakkuk; and it is quoted by an inspired apostle in three of his epistles, namely, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, with a distinct application in each. In Rom. 1:17, it is applied to the great question of righteousness. The blessed apostle declares himself not “ashamed of the gospel,” For it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, on the principle of faith, to faith; as it is written “The just shall live by faith.”

Then, in the third of Galatians, where the apostle is seeking to recall those erring assemblies to the foundations of Christianity, he says, “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, for The just shall live by faith.”

Finally, in the tenth of Hebrews, where the object is to exhort believers to hold fast their confidence, we read, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith.” Here we have faith presented not only as the ground of righteousness, but as the vital principle by which we are to live, day by day, from the starting-post to the goal of the christian course. There is no other way of righteousness—no other way of living, but by faith. It is by faith we are justified and by faith we live. By faith we stand; and by faith we walk.

Now, this is true of all Christians; and all should seek to enter into it fully. Every child of God is called to live by faith. It is a very grave mistake indeed to single out certain individuals who happen to have no visible source of temporal supplies, and speak of them as though they alone lived by faith. According to this view of the question, ninety-nine out of every hundred

Christians would be deprived of the precious privilege of living by faith. If a man has a settled income; if he has a certain salary; if he has what is termed a secular calling by which he earns bread for himself and his family, is he not privileged to live by faith? Do none live by faith save those who have no visible means of support? Is the life of faith to be confined to the matter of trusting God for food and raiment?

Who would cede aught so monstrous? It seems to us a complete lowering of the life of faith to confine it to the question of temporal supplies. No doubt, it is a very blessed and a very real thing to trust God for everything; but the life of faith has a far higher and wider range than mere bodily wants. It embraces all that, in anywise, concerns us in body, soul, and spirit. To live by faith is to walk with God; to cling to Him; to lean on Him; to draw from His exhaustless springs; to find all our resources in Him; and to have Him as a perfect covering for our eyes, and a satisfying object for our hearts. To know Him as our only resource, in all difficulties and all our trials. It is to be absolutely, completely, and continually, shut up to Him; to be un-dividedly dependent upon Him, apart from and above every creature confidence, every human hope, and every earthly

expectation.

Such is the life of faith. Let us see that we understand it. It must be a reality or nothing at all. It will not do to talk about the life of faith; we must live it; and in order to live it, we must know God practically—know Him intimately, in the deep secret of our own souls. It is utterly vain and delusive to profess to be living by faith and looking to the Lord, when, in reality, our hearts are looking to some creature resource. How often do people speak and write about their dependence upon God to meet certain wants, and by the very fact of their making it known to a fellow mortal, they are, in principle, departing from the life of faith. If I write to a friend, or publish to the church, the fact that I am looking to the Lord to meet a certain need, I am virtually off the ground of faith in that matter. The language of faith is this, “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.” To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being, is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor done to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and God, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to Him.

This is serious work, and it demands our most solemn attention. God deals in realities. He can never fail a trusting heart. But then He must be trusted. It is of no possible use to talk about trusting Him when our hearts are really looking to creature streams. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith?” Empty profession is but a delusion to the soul and a dishonor to God. The true life of faith is a grand reality. God delights in it, and He is glorified by it. There is nothing in all this world that so gratifies and glorifies God, as the life of faith. “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!” Psalm 31:19.

Beloved reader, how is it with you in reference to this great question? Are you living by faith? Can you say, “The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me?” Do you know what it is to have the living God filling the whole range of your soul’s vision? Is He enough for you? Can you trust Him for everything—for body, soul, and spirit—for time and eternity? Or are you in the habit of making known your wants to man, in any one way? Is it the habit of your heart to turn to the creature for sympathy, succor, or counsel?

These are searching questions; but we entreat you not to turn away from them. Be assured it is morally healthful for our souls to be tested faithfully, as in the very presence of God. Our hearts are so terribly treacherous that when we imagine we are leaning upon God, we are really leaning upon some human prop. Thus God is shut out, and we are left in barrenness and desolation.

And yet it is not that God does not use the creature to help and bless us. He does so constantly: and the man of faith will be deeply conscious of this fact, and truly grateful to every human agent that God uses to help him. God comforted Paul by the coming of Titus; but had Paul been looking to Titus, he would have had but little comfort. God used the poor widow to feed Elijah, but Elijah’s dependence was not upon the widow, but upon God. Thus it is in every case.

Living Waters

Why not of that living fountain
Flowing from the heart of God,
Should the thirsty sinner, tasting,
Drink, and leave sin's heavy load?
Rise, poor heart! The fountain's open;
Christ hath died upon the tree;
All the powers of hell are shaken,
Grace flows down from God to thee.
God Himself the source, the fountain,
Christ the way the waters flow,
By the Spirit, down from heaven,
To the thirsty heart below.
Now's the time, the time accepted,
Now to thee God's light hath shone;
Christ, God's love hath manifested;
He the finished work hath done.
Rise, poor heart! The river's flowing,
Haste, delay not! Yet there's room!
Hear! oh hear the kind beseeching
"Whosoever thirsts may come."

Lord, What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?

My Master and Lord!

I long to do some work, some work for Thee,

I long to bring some lowly gift of love

For all Thy love to me!

The harvest fields are white—

Send me to gather there some scattered ears;

I have no sickle bright; but I can glean,

And bind them in with tears.

I would not choose my work;

The field is Thine, my Father and my Guide:

Send Thou me forth; oh, send me where Thou wilt,

So Thou be glorified!

I need Thy strength, O Lord;

I need the quiet heart, the subject will;

I need the patient faith that makes no haste,

The love that follows still.

And if Thou wilt not send,

Then take my will and bend it to Thine own,

Till, in the peace no restless thought can break,

I wait with Thee alone.

It is not hard to wait—

To lean my weariness on Thee for rest:

To feel, in suffering or in service still

My Father's choice is best.

I said, "It is not hard

And yet—and yet—Father, forgive Thy child,

And through my souls deep tumult let me hear
Thy whisper low and mild.
The darkness is not light,
The "chastening is not joy;" this is Thy word,
O Savior, one with us in tears and pain,
Our Jesus and our Lord.
Yet choose Thou still for me
The harvest toil, amid the noonday heat,
Where I may gather fruit that shall not die,
And lay it at Thy feet;
Or the slow, silent hours,
When I must wait, and suffer, and be still,
And in the patience which I learn from
Thee Accept Thy perfect will.

Man's History and God's Due Time

Romans 5:6-11

In these few verses we have not only the great truth of the death of Christ, but also of the love of God for the sinner. The connection of verse 5 with verse 6 is evident. "For" indicates that we are the objects of God's love, for Christ died for us. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Here, the reasoning of the apostle, the way he links these precious truths together, is beautiful and assuring. He proves that the Christian's hope can never be disappointed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to him. The love of God, the work of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, give abundant assurance of the believer's blessing, whatever may be the troubles of the way. The wheels of his soul have been set in motion by tribulation, patience, experience, and hope; but that which sustains the believer in the midst of the trials of this life can never fail. Disappointment would cover him with shame. But the love of God, as re-suiting in the cross of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, is the ground of his confidence, the full assurance of his hope. "And hope maketh not ashamed," says the apostle, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

"To God our weakness clings through tribulation sore,

And seeks the covert of His ways till all be o'er.

And when we've run the race, and fought the faithful fight,

We hope to see Him face to face with saints in light."

Thus we have in verse 5 the love of God in us—His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; and in verse 6 we have the love of God for us; for when destitute of all strength, "Christ died for us." What a picture for faith to contemplate! What a treasure for the heart to cherish! What a stronghold in the day of trial! —the love of God as come into our hearts through the presence of the Holy Ghost there, and also publicly manifested in the gift, the work, the resurrection, and the glory of the Savior. And notice also that this is the first passage which speaks of the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts, or of the Holy Spirit being given to us. But God's due time was come for the full revelation of His love, both subjectively and objectively.

Although God knew from the beginning what man was, and what man would be, He allowed Him to be fairly tested under every possible circumstance in which he could be placed. In the patience of God he was under a state of probation for four thousand years. Surely this was trial enough! But what was the re-suit? That there was nothing good in man—that he was essentially ungodly—that he was unable to do anything towards his own deliverance from divine wrath, even with ordinances and ceremonies of divine appointment, as under the law—that he was like the man at the pool of Bethesda, who had no strength to take advantage of the troubling of the waters. But it may be interesting to trace for a moment the whole history of man, from the garden of Eden to the

cross of Christ, where it ends, and which was God's due time for the outflow of His love, and for the accomplishing of His purposes, especially as to the church.

In the garden man was innocent; he was made in the image of God, after His own likeness; surrounded with every favor and blessing, and enjoying the kindness of God, without knowing good or evil, righteousness or holiness. He had no conscience till after he sinned; before that he could not have understood what good and evil meant. Righteousness discriminates between right and wrong; holiness loves purity, and abhors evil; but Adam knew nothing of such distinctions, he was formed to understand and obey God. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This was the command of God, and a test for Adam. He gave him but one command, and one of easy observance, and both Adam and Eve knew that the Lord who so loved them had a right to their obedience. Had he been told that it would be a moral evil to eat of the fruit of that tree, he might have said, What does that mean? But he knew that God had forbidden it, and that all depended on that command. We know what happened. Man listened to the tempter, believed his lie, forfeited the favor of God in eating the forbidden fruit, and in the presumptuous hope of being as gods, knowing good and evil. Thus man disobeyed, sinned, fell, and was driven from the garden of Eden, and the fair creation was laid under the withering curse of sin.

Man, alas! fallen and guilty, had now a conscience, but it was a bad one. He knew good and evil, but it was to be under the power of evil, and to know that he had lost the happiness which he once enjoyed with God and with all around him. His innocence was gone, and all the sweet enjoyments of that state gone—gone forever; though God, in mercy, had something infinitely sweeter and better in store for him, through the Second Man, the last Adam, head of God's new creation, which can never be laid in ruins.

Thus we see that conscience was acquired by the fall. That which has been such an important element in the whole history of man, which has so affected his responsibility in all the relationships of this life, and in his responsibility to God, came in by sin. But in place of man being humbled thereby, we find the skeptic deifying himself because of his conscience; he professes to believe in no other law, to own no higher authority, to bow to no other tribunal, than conscience. Nevertheless, the place which conscience occupies in the ways of God in grace with the sinner is unspeakably important, and will be noticed by-and-by.

MAN AN OUTCAST.

Adam is now outside of Eden as lost and ruined, but not without hope. The Seed of the woman was announced as the bruiser of the serpent's head, the destroyer of his power, and the deliverer of the fallen pair. We doubt not that, through grace, they laid hold on the blessed hope thus set before them by their merciful Creator. But though the subjects of God's saving grace, the helpless objects of His compassion, they had now, in addition to body, soul, and spirit, what scripture calls "the flesh"—a perverse will—the carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be. This is the dreadful evil which was infused into man's nature when he took of the forbidden fruit in obedience to Satan. It was then that the enemy dropped this deadly poison of unbelief into the heart of his victim, and which, in process of time, and with the increase of the human family, filled the whole earth with corruption and violence, and brought in

the flood on the world of the ungodly.

This is the sin, the sin of universal man—the sin of Jew and Gentile, of believer and unbeliever—the root-sin of all others. And yet how little the most enlightened Christian may sometimes think of it. But what is it? It is the principle of distrust in God, and re-suits in every form of self-will; that I like my own way, and not God's; that I am determined to have my own will, and my own way, whether God wills it or not. Whenever there is this strong desire to have what we wish, the voice of the tempter is listened to. He suggests many reasons to prove that this something which we so crave after is right in itself, and so blinds the mind as to God's will on the subject. This is the very essence of sin, and the root of all other sins, because it proceeds from the unbelieving thought, that we can do better for ourselves than God is disposed to do for us, therefore we reckon not on Him, wait not for Him, but take things into our own hand, and pursue our own way. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" is the language of self-will—the worst sin of the prodigal son. His wish was to get away from his father's house, his father's will, his father's ways, and revel in his own.

This is "the flesh," that evil thing which Adam knew nothing of before the Fall, but the moment sin entered it displayed itself. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." Guilt on the conscience causes man to tremble at the sound of God's voice. Self-convicted of departure from Him, they sought to veil their nakedness from their own eyes, and then to hide themselves from Him. This dread, this distrust, of God is the sad inheritance which the primeval pair have bequeathed to all their posterity, but from which, thank God, every believer is delivered through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Adam. There, on the cross, as a man and a sinner—a child of the first Adam—he comes to his end. He dies to sin in Christ's death, and is raised to newness of life in His resurrection.

GOVERNMENT IN THE HAND OF MAN.

After the deluge, which closed the scene of man's wickedness on the earth, and the first period of his history, the dispensational ways of God begin. The principle of government in the hand of man is now introduced. It does not appear that there was either law or government in the antediluvian world; man was left to himself, and this brought out his lawlessness. But God remembered mercy, and gave many testimonies to His grace in such individual cases as Abel, Enoch, and Noah, besides the wonderful type of deliverance through Christ in the ark which Noah was so long in preparing.

God now makes a covenant with the earth. When Noah went forth from the ark, he built an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings thereon. From this beautiful figure of the sacrifice of Christ, Jehovah smelled a sweet savor, and assures mankind that the earth would never again be visited with a universal deluge. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease ... And God said, this is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth."

These principles, now established on sacrifice, will be infallibly maintained throughout the different ages, until Jesus, after having glorified God in government for thousand years, “shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father: when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power.” 1 Cor. 15:24.

But, alas! scarcely had the sword of human government been entrusted to Noah, than it fell dishonored from his hand. His humiliating failure proved that he could not govern himself. This fresh trial of man only shows what is always true—that in all things man utterly fails, and comes short of the glory of God. The Noahic dispensation closes with a new form of evil—the worship of false gods; and the God of glory calls but one man into the place of separation, makes him the depository of promise, and the root of the olive-tree.

Man’s History and God’s Due Time

Romans 5:6-11

In tracing the sad history of man so far, we have seen his trial and failure in the garden of Eden, with the revelation of divine mercy through Christ the woman’s seed. But man’s perverse will, not corrected by conscience, not restrained by government, nor bowed in gratitude for the promised Deliverer, only sinned more and more, until, as we read, “the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” All flesh had corrupted his way, and the deluge destroyed the world of the ungodly. But grace again shines. The ark rests on Ararat, God’s new ground after the execution of judgment. Hence we have in type the Holy Spirit and worship, founded on the sacrifice of Christ; the heart of God finds perfect rest, He sets His bow in the cloud, which embraces both the sea and the dry land, and millennial blessing is shadowed forth.

But, alas! the failure of Noah resulted in the boldest sin of man—idolatry. Corruption and violence characterized the first period, idolatry the second period, of the history of man. The aim of this sin is to dethrone the living God, set up a dumb idol, and then fall down and worship it.

THE PERIOD OF PROMISE.

It is Very evident from scripture that before God called out Abram the great sin of idolatry was prevalent among men, even among the descendants of Shem, the line of the chosen family. Joshua, in his final charge to the tribes and elders of Israel, tells them that their fathers who dwelt on the other side of the flood—that is, the river Euphrates—were idolaters. “And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abram, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods.” (Josh. 24:2) This was the craft of Satan, and the most daring act of man’s rebellion against the authority of God. From other scriptures we learn that these gods were demons. “They sacrificed unto devils, not to God—to gods whom they knew not—to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared.” The apostle, referring to this passage, observes, “But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” (Deut. 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20.) No language can describe the moral degradation to which man, through the subtlety of Satan, had now fallen. That which he calls his religion is his greatest folly, and his deepest sin. Demons have taken the place of the true God in his mind, and have the ascendancy over him. He bows down to a dumb idol, but Satan is behind it to receive his homage. What dreadful wickedness! we may well exclaim; and how can God bear

with it? But have we not many idolaters around us even in Christendom, so-called? Many who will bow down to a piece of rotten wood, alleged to be part of the true cross, who never bowed the knee in faith to Him who died for sinners there? And may there not be an element of it nearer ourselves than we are aware of? Any object taking the place of Christ in the heart of the Christian is his idol. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21.

In Gen. 12 we are introduced to an entirely new order of things in the history of man. God's link with the old world, with mankind as hitherto, through the worship of false gods, is completely broken. It is no longer man as such, but a man called of God to the place of separation, without disturbing the world's arrangements, and to know His thoughts and purposes of blessing, even to all the families of the earth. This is infinitely more precious than all that man had lost, as the full accomplishment of these purposes depended solely on the faithfulness of God.

Stephen, in his noble address to the Jewish council, refers to the call of God as the basis and glory of their existence as a distinct people. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran. And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee." Having thus called Abram, and led him out from Ur of the Chaldees, and brought him to Himself—to the place of separation from the idolatrous world—He makes him the depository of promise—"in thee." It is a definite promise to Abram alone, who now becomes a new root, the father of the faithful, and the channel of universal blessing.

The period of promise now begins. "And I will make of thee," said Jehovah, "a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This marks a great change in the ways of God with mankind. It is not merely the revelation of a deliverer, or of conscience judging between good and evil, or of government in the hand of man; but it is God Himself interfering, and revealing His purposes of blessing, and that, just because He is pleased to bless, and to express His love in blessing to fallen man. The promise is positive, absolute, and unconditional: the sphere of its application embraces all the families of the earth, and its full accomplishment is dependent only on the faithfulness of God. It has been delayed, we know, through the failure of man, but God will yet prove His faithfulness in the face of the whole world, by a stream of blessing which will overflow all Jewish limits and cover all lands, according to the promise which in grace He made to Abram.

It may be well to notice here the order in which the promises were given, and the special occasions chosen of God for the revelation of His purposes.

1. The promise of blessing to the Gentiles is given to Abram alone in Gen. 12, not to Abraham and his seed when numbers are expressed. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

2. This promise was confirmed to the seed—to Isaac, type of Christ—see Gen. 22:18. The apostle, referring to this passage, says, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The distinction between the "many" and the "one" is clearly defined after the offering of Isaac. There can be no real blessing to the soul, or separation to God, but through death—the death of the true Isaac. There is no deliverance from sin and the world but by the solemn article of death. This chosen type of God's own love, not only in the gift, but in the death, of

His beloved Son, throws fresh light on the dealings of God with lost man at this period of his history. Compared with this, all other types but feebly express the Father's love in not sparing His Son, and His perfect grace in meeting the whole need of man. It is the grand central truth of our faith, and the basis of divine reasoning. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The lesser is included in the greater, and all is secured to faith in the gift of His Son. "He that hath the Son hath life." Nothing can be lacking when the Son is possessed. Rom. 8:32 John 5:12.

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are fully carried out in figure by the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice, and the substitution of the ram as a burnt-offering in his stead. Abraham receives back his son, his only son, from the dead in a figure, which shadows forth the risen Christ after the accomplishment of His sacrifice. The promises immediately follow. "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Gen. 22:15-18.

Here it is not difficult to distinguish between Jewish and Christian blessing, especially if we consider the use which the apostle makes of this passage in the Epistle to the Galatians. The numerous seed possessing the gate of their enemies refers to the Jews, as the descendants of Abraham, and in the place of exaltation in the earth, and of supremacy over their enemies. When the seed is spoken of without allusion to numbers, Christ is meant, as typified by Isaac, offered up in sacrifice, and risen again, and there we have the blessing of the Gentiles. The promise is twofold. Exaltation and supremacy in the earth is never promised to the Gentiles—only to the Jews. In the millennial age, all the glowing descriptions with which both the Old and the New Testament abound, as to the Israel of the future day, shall be fully accomplished. Thus will the Jews be blessed in the coming age in their own land, and under the scepter of their own Messiah. But the Christian is blessed in and with a risen Christ. He will reign with Him, not under Him, and shine in the same glory forever and forever.

Such will be the glorious results of the unconditional promises of God to Abraham and to his seed. But it must all be in connection with Him who died and rose again. Death is the only principle and power of separation from the world to God, and the only foundation of blessing. Before Jesus died we hear Him saying to the woman of Canaan, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" but this He will say no more. In resurrection He is free to bless all who come unto Him, all who believe in Him, even according to the fullest purpose of the God of all grace. Every covenant condition has been fulfilled by Him, every covenant promise has been secured by Him; God has been glorified, sin has been blotted out, redemption has been accomplished, and righteousness established. Both Jew and Gentile have now only to believe, and become fellow-heirs with Him of all the promises of God. Nothing is withheld from faith. Blessed forever are all they who put their trust in Jesus. 4' Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." Rom. 15:8-9.

O ye that faint and die, arise and live, Sing, ye whom all things have a charge to bless; If He is faithful, who hath sworn to give, Then be ye faithful also to possess.

Take thy whole portion with thy masters mind, Toil, hindrance, hardness, with His valor take; And think how short a time thy heart may find To labor, or to suffer for His sake.

Man's History and God's Due Time

Romans 5:6-11

Before speaking of the period of law, it may be profitable to notice two or three circumstances in connection with the response of Abraham to the call of God. It would have disturbed the thread of our narrative to have introduced them before, but we are unwilling to pass them by altogether. They have a loud voice for us, and are full of wholesome and solemn warning.

Reflections on the call of Abraham.

Abraham, like the unbeliever now, was living in the midst of the evil of the old world, and his family worshipping idols, when God called him. What light may have been communicated to Abraham as to the state of things in Ur of the Chaldees, when the God of glory appeared unto him, we are not told, but now all was plain: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." Here he is called to separate himself from all that connected him with his natural position on the earth, and to obey the call of God, on the ground of faith in His word.

Nothing could be more simple. But did Abraham obey in simplicity? Far from it. His first step was a false one. He left his country, but not his kindred; or perhaps they did not, or would not, leave him. Abraham was soon involved in family difficulties and family trials. How constantly we find this same kind of hindrance in the case of young converts now! Sometimes it may be in the way of manifested opposition, and sometimes from their concealment of God's call, or, in other words, of their own conversion, their decision of heart for Christ, lest they should displease those who are opposed to the truth. But things could not thus go on happily. Conscience accuses, they are ill at ease; the truth, sooner or later, must come out; or, as in the case of Abram, death may be sent to close the scene of perplexities, if not of unfaithfulness. Thus we read, "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan: and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran." Gen. 11:31, 32.

Surely this was failure at the very outset. Terah takes the lead, Abram is a mere follower; but God had said to Abram not to Terah, "Get thee out." This was nature, not faith in the promise and word of Jehovah. It may seem amiable for a son so to yield to his father, but it was an influence counter to the call of God. Obedience to God, not subjection to his father's will, was Abram's duty at that moment. So long as Terah lived, no progress was made; they dwelt at Haran, but this was not the land of promise. At length, however, God interfered. The natural hindrance is removed by the father's death. Government takes its course, though its steps may appear slow. Grace also appears, and triumphs. The pilgrim pursues his journey, and enters the land of Canaan. Lot goes with him, though he had not been called, but he proved a great encumbrance to Abram, only,

being his nephew, he was subject to him, and God allowed it.

SEPARATION TO GOD THE PATH OF BLESSING.

From the days of Adam to Abraham it does not appear that men of piety, such as Enoch, who walked with God, were called to break with nature and the world—their country and their kindred; but from the days of Abraham, even until now, the principle of separation from the world to God is the only recognized path of blessing. As for the Christian now, his place is defined; his Savior and Lord, as dead, risen, and ascended, is the measure, character, and power of his separation from the world, and of his nearness to God. Speaking of His disciples, He says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” And again He says, “If any man serve me;” what is he to do? Seek to be an attractive public speaker? a great worker? a useful Christian? No; however good these aspects of service may be—and in many cases they are happily combined with the most faithful discipleship—such is not the way the Master describes the service which He most appreciates: “If any man serve me, let him follow me”—follow me in my path of rejection as to this world, and in my path of obedience as to the will of God. Follow me through the dark hour, the uplifted cross, and the execration of the world—follow me, through death and resurrection, into the new creation of God. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” To keep the eye on the Master, to mark His footsteps, and only do the things which we believe He has given us to do, is our most acceptable service, and will be rewarded with double honor. “And where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” John 12:17

This is the grace and goodness of the heavenly Master. How many true and faithful followers He has whose names are never heard of here, but who will have their own place and their own reward in the coming kingdom. The true Philadelphian, who has but “little strength” now, will be made a pillar in the temple of God ere long; and of those who have not denied His name—where human names are thought so much of—He says, “And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.” These exceeding great and precious promises are made to those whom He describes as having “little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” The call of Abraham was to separate him from his father’s house and his native country, that he might belong to God, and walk in communion with Him in the promised land. But the Christian is called to fellowship with Christ in heavenly places, and this necessarily separates him in heart and soul from all that is earthly or worldly in his surroundings, even though it may assume the fascinating form of natural affection or relative duties. Everything must be judged in the light of his heavenly calling, and of his heavenly relations to Christ. Faithfulness to Him as one that is espoused is the first and all-commanding consideration of every Christian. This relationship seems to have been in the mind of the great apostle when writing to the Corinthians, where he says, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtily, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Cor. 11:2, 3.

Need we say how few there are who ever think of such a relationship, of such thorough separation and how many there are who allow family or mere natural influence to hinder them from obeying

implicitly the call of God, or from following His word after their conversion? Thousands of young converts are ruled by what their friends say, without ever consulting the word of God. The conversion may be genuine, and friends may mean well, but God is robbed of His glory, and the young believer of his blessing. Haran, not Canaan, becomes the dwelling-place. But there is no advancement in spiritual things, divine ground has not been taken, and the full blessing of salvation is unknown. Substance is increased, and souls are born in Terah's family at Haran, but there is neither tent nor altar. Until we see the call of God to be paramount there can be no true separation of heart to Him, or looking into His word as our only sure guide in all divine things. Every truly converted soul has been as really called of God as Abram was, and has to do as directly with Him, only in a much more blessed way, so that our answer to His call ought to be all the more complete and unhesitating. We are brought near to God in Christ, nearer than ever Abraham was.

With the prophet of old we are ready to exclaim, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" For God, we know, can never lower His standard to that of man's shortcomings; He cannot alter His word, and unless we are content to come to the place which He has shown to us, we must go without the full blessing of His call. Eighteen hundred years ago the apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, earnestly prays to God that they may know what the hope of His calling is, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The Lord grant that this prayer may be answered in the experience of many in our own day. We know of nothing so essential to the peace, joy, and unclouded happiness of the believer as the knowledge of what God has separated us from, and what He has called us to through the power of the Holy Spirit. May we not, then be unduly influenced by our families and our friends, but give good heed to the word, to the voice of God which calls us to arise, to leave our position in nature on the earth, and follow the Lord fully, according to His own revealed will; it is the very opposite of fanaticism so to do, as we own no guide in spiritual things but the written word of God.

THE CANAANITE AND FAMINE IN THE LAND.

After the death of Terah, Abram was free to pursue his journey. Now he acts according to the word of the Lord. "And Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." He reached the land of Canaan, but he did not find it a place of rest, according to the full purpose of the God of glory: "The Canaanite was then in the land." But God reveals Himself to the true heir, and points out the inheritance which his seed would enjoy when there should be no Canaanite in the land. And Abram, now in his heavenly position, erects an altar in the presence of his enemies, worships God in faith, and enjoys communion with Him in these revelations of His grace. "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him." Gen. 12:6, 7.

Abram is now in his right place, and, as a consequence, God reveals Himself unto him. "There he builded an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him." This is the place, and this is the power, of true worship. We must be on divine ground as worshippers before the Holy Spirit is free to reveal the glories of Christ to our souls. Canaan is the type of the heavenly places where we now are in Christ Jesus; and our worship ought to be characterized by these two things—I am on the ground

which God has called me to, and in the conscious enjoyment of His presence as the spring and power of heavenly worship.

In verse 8 we have the other grand feature of the man of faith—the tent. This was the symbol of his pilgrim character. But, notwithstanding these exalted privileges and blessings, he is overcome, and fails sadly, from the pressure of circumstances. “And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there.” Alas, how many have failed under the pressure of circumstances! But this is just the kind of trial to test the genuineness of faith, especially as to its object. If the living God be the object of our faith, He can never fail us, whether the famine rages in our social or in our ecclesiastical circumstances. But it does not appear that Abram even sought divine guidance on this occasion, or spread out his circumstances before the Lord, but goes of his own will into the place of danger; “for the famine was grievous in the land.” This is the only reason given for his going to the world for help instead of the living God. But such, alas! is man, man all through, man in every position, man under every possible circumstance; he is ever found to be utterly wanting before God, and to fail in the very grace in which he was called to excel.

Man’s History and God’s Due Time

Romans 5:6-11

We have now clearly seen, from God’s dealings with Abraham and his seed, that the blessing of both Jew and Gentile is secured by promises, and that, too, without the question of man’s condition as a sinner being raised. Abraham knew nothing of law, or of conditions on his part, as the ground of the promise being fulfilled. It was by unconditional promise that God gave to him the inheritance. “To Abraham and to his seed were the promises made.” It was purely of grace on the part of God, and His faithfulness will perform in due time all He has promised.

But man utterly failed to understand, to appreciate, grace as the ground of God’s dealings towards him, and being naturally self-righteous, terms were proposed which raised the question of law-righteousness, and claimed it on the part of God the period of law.

Four hundred and thirty years after the date of promise the law was given. Redemption having been prefigured by the slain lamb in Egypt, and the passage of the Red Sea, the children of Israel journeyed to the wilderness of Sinai. Then, alas! insensible of their mercies, they gave up the ground of grace, and entered into covenant with God, on the ground of their own competency, to keep the law. Thus it happened.

“In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came, and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, “All that

the Lord hath spoken we will do” Exodus 19:1-8.

Up till this time all was grace. The murmurs and the unbelief of the people only served to show the riches of God’s grace, and His tender mercy towards His poor failing people. But here the course of grace formally terminates, and obedience to the law is made the condition of blessing. This was a great change, a most important epoch, in man’s history. How fully all this proves what man’s state of mind really was as to the things of God!

1. It proves that the preciousness of grace—so priceless to every Christian that knows it—had never truly entered the heart of the Jew. In place of leaving the promised blessing to rest simply on the infallibility of the Promiser, they vainly preferred to rest it on condition of their own obedience to the law. Never was man’s self-righteousness—the legality of the human heart—more fatally manifested than here, for the law worked wrath, and brought men under the curse, because of their utter failure. Had that unspeakably, inconceivably, precious thing, grace, been appreciated, they would all have cried out as with the heart of one man, “May we have no such terms proposed to us, O Lord; no such responsibility laid upon us. We dare not place ourselves under such conditions, we should certainly lose our blessing. Thy grace, O Lord, is our only hope as sinners.” But no, they undertook to do all that the Lord had spoken.

2. Their conduct at Sinai also proves that they had no just sense of their own weakness in the sight of God, and no proper knowledge of His righteousness and holiness. Grace, grace without rebuke, is the only ground on which the sinner can stand, the only plea he can urge, and the only refuge in which he can find a shelter.

“Grace is a mine of wealth

Laid open to the poor;

Grace is the sovereign spring of health;

‘Tis life for evermore.”

WHY THE LAW WAS GIVEN.

But why, it may be asked, were such terms proposed to Israel, when they had no strength to keep them? God saw that it would be good and wholesome for man to know the truth about himself, and the nature and extent of God’s claims upon him; and for this end He gave the law. It was the perfect standard of what God required of man, of what man ought to be, and the prohibition of that to which he was strongly inclined. The ten commandments, for the most part, are like an interdict on the human will. “Thou shalt not.”.... “Thou shalt not” is the stern, prohibitory voice of the moral law.

It will now be seen that the office of the law was to detect and register man’s deeds, and put in evidence his character as a transgressor. “Wherefore then serveth the law?” says the apostle; “it was added because of transgression.” From the fall, down to the promulgation of the law at Sinai, man had been left to prove what his fallen nature is without the restraints of law: after that period, we see what he becomes when subjected to an authority which forbids and opposes the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Without law men were lawless, under law they are law-breakers; and when Christ came, full of grace and truth, Him they rejected and crucified.

But to return to the question. "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression." Not because of sin, observe, but because of transgression. It is important to mark the difference. Again, the apostle says, "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound." Not, of course, that sin might abound. God could never sanction anything that would cause sin to abound. But what is the difference? some may inquire. Sin is the lawlessness of the flesh, a much deeper and wider thing than transgression. Sin was in man from the fall, but transgression is the violation of a known and positive law. Who filled the world with corruption and violence? And who afterward filled it with idolatry? Sinners, most assuredly. But this was before the law entered, and they are not called transgressors. "For where no law is there is no transgression." The apostle does not say, observe, "Where no law is there is no sin." This he could not say, for sin was as much in man before the law was given as after. At the same time let us not forget that all transgression is sin, though sin in its root and principle is never called transgression; it is not necessarily the violation of law.

Through the subtlety of Satan, some have endeavored to mystify the apostle's reasoning, and affirm that where there is no law there is no sin. This is a most ruinous doctrine, entirely opposed to all scripture, and intended by the enemy to encourage men in doing their own will. We know that the natural tendency of the human heart is to do its own will, in spite of God, if it can. Thus Cain went and built a city, and established himself and his family, outside the presence of God. This was sin—the lawlessness of the flesh—and long before anything was heard of law as given by Moses. "Whosoever committeth sin," according to the literal reading of 1 John 3:4, "committeth lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." Thus it was that God saw it to be necessary and important to introduce a law that would put man thoroughly to the test, place in evidence his real condition as a sinner, and raise the question of righteousness on the part of God. It never was intended that the law should bring man into blessing; that was infallibly secured by promise through the seed of Abraham; for man, being already a sinner, and loving sin, the holy law of God could only prove him guilty, and condemn him to its penal sanction. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. 3:10.

THE OBJECT OF THE LAW MISUNDERSTOOD.

Many excellent Christians, we are sorry to add, through the blinding power of Satan, completely mistake the real object of the law. Hence they look to it as the rule of life. This is a subtle snare of the enemy to draw away the heart from Christ, and back into the world. For the law has its place in this life, not in heaven. We cannot take the law as the rule of life without being on the world's, or Satan's, ground; and there he has blinding power. The blessed Lord Jesus, now in heaven, is the only rule of life for the Christian. The law, because of man's sinful condition, must be to him the rule of death. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The apostle first experienced in his soul death by the law, then death to the law, and then in grace beyond it, life in a risen Christ—alive unto God. Communion with a heavenly Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost, is the rule of a Christian's life. "For me to live is Christ," says the apostle. We may often come short of our divine standard, but to be content with a lower one is fatal to our practical Christianity. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." Thus we have the two apostles in perfect harmony on this grand practical subject. Need we wonder, then, that so many Christians are harassed with doubts and fears, when we know that the

law—which never fails to curse the sinner—is their object, in place of Christ, who never fails to bless, and to bless abundantly, all who put their trust in Him?

The law looked on to Christ. “It was added because of transgression, till the seed [Christ] should come, to whom the promise was made.” This explains the character and the limits of the legal period in the history of God's dealings with man. It was the wholesome discovery to man himself of his real condition, that his conscience might be exercised, and that he might be well assured that there was no hope for him as a lost sinner but through faith in Christ, the heir of all the promises. For “the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Gal. 3; Rom. 4 Cor. 3

For man “under sin” there cannot be one ray of hope apart from Christ as the crucified One. He is the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. He died, the just One in the room of the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. He magnified God's law which man had broken, and endured its awful sanction, which man had incurred. Having fully met every claim of heaven, the accomplishment of all the promises is established in His Person. It is only by His precious blood that guilt can be removed from the conscience, so that the believer can say in holy triumph, “no more conscience of sins.” There is no such thing on the face of the whole earth as a good conscience, a peaceful mind, a happy heart, a holy path, apart from that blessed One. As the stars disappear before the rising sun, so all thoughts, all schemes, all doings, all epochs, all dispensations, as shadows flee away before the bright, effulgent, transcendent glories of the once lowly, but now exalted, Christ of God. He is the perfect covering for the eyes, the filling up, the overflowing of the human heart. All, all, is gone for man save Himself. His death shuts the door on all the previous positions proposed to man. It writes death, absolute death, on the first man. His whole history is summed up and closed in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Man, the Lord from heaven.

Forget not, then, O my reader, that where thou now art, as thou now art, without waiting to do something, or to be something, look to Jesus.

“There is life in a look to the crucified One,

There is life at this moment for thee.”

Every other door of hope is closed against thee, and closed forever. There is no salvation for any soul of man but through faith in Him. Oh, momentous truth! Thy soul may be quivering in the balance, a mighty struggle may be going on; who is to gain the victory? Christ or Satan? It must be the one or the other. There is no middle path or place; it must either be Christ and the full salvation of God, or Satan and the endless torments of hell. Oh, suffer not the enemy to deceive thee, to thy eternal ruin, by the attractions of this present evil world; there is no time to lose; look to Jesus at once, believe in Jesus at once, give thy heart to Jesus at once, surrender thy whole self to Jesus at once, take up thy cross, which is death to the world, and follow Jesus at once; then shall thy soul be saved, thy heaven secured, and thy eternal, unmingled, happiness far, far, beyond the reach of every foe. “But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Eph. 2:13.

Man's History and God's Due Time

Romans 5:6-11

The history of man, from Adam to Christ, may also be viewed as the history of God's grace and goodness in His dealings towards him. Condemned, indeed, we know rebellious man to be, but still, in patience infinite, God's grace lingers over him. The sentence, long pronounced, is not yet executed. But every day that sentence is suspended must be owned as another day's grace to the world. There was no such lingering love shown to the rebel angels; their punishment was immediate and irremediable. But man! Oh, living, abiding miracle of grace! is still borne with, and still allowed to prosper in this life, though he continues to despise the grace, and rebel against the Majesty, of heaven; but the awful consequences of his unbelief will surely come, though the day of reckoning may be delayed. Thus the history of man is twofold: unbelief and apostasy on his part from the beginning, and patient grace and unwearied goodness on the part of God. We will now consider

Man's responsibility under law.

Without attempting to trace or estimate the conduct of man, the Jew, as under law, from Sinai to the cross, we will briefly consider it as set forth by the Lord Himself in His parable of the householder.

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." Here the Lord draws a picture of the love that has been shown, and the care that has been taken, in Jehovah's dealings with Israel. But, alas! man utterly fails; God is dishonored in every way—in His law, His authority, and His grace. It is Adam and Eve over again; the same old story of human responsibility ending in total ruin. The parable of our Lord answers perfectly to the song of the prophet in Isa. 5, where he sings of the goodness of God, and the transgressions of His people. Moses also, in his magnificent song (Deut. 32), celebrates the riches of God's sovereign grace in blessing to His people Israel, and their sins and ingratitude, for which they would be sorely punished, but afterward restored to their own land, and all the nations rejoicing with them. We turn for a moment to the lovely song of Isaiah.

"Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." This was God's tender care of Israel. He had blessed them with all temporal blessings in a pleasant land, the Lord separated them to Himself, surrounded them with His favors, gave them His law, or, as the apostle says, "To them pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." Nothing was lacking on God's part; but the nation, as a whole, had departed from Him, transgressed the covenant, and wholly corrupted their ways. And now the appeal of Jehovah to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah is full of the most melting grace and tenderness. "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked

that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes.” But there was no fruit meet for God under the law; with man on the ground of responsibility there is nothing but failure, and as law must take its course, judgment follows. “And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste.” Man’s sin and God’s judgment is the sad song, or lamentation, of all the prophets.

But dark though the picture of the prophet be, and unrelieved by one ray of grateful love, there are deeper and darker lines in the one drawn by the blessed Lord. He has to portray His own death as man’s answer to God for all the favors and blessings He had lavished upon him since the day he fell in Eden. He has to refer to one servant after another being sent in the patience of God, and all meeting with the same treatment from the husbandmen. Every possible means had been tried to obtain fruit from the vineyard, but all in vain. Only one solitary hope remained. “They will reverence my son.” All know what happened, and what followed. “But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.”

This was more than withholding the fruit of the vineyard—more than robbing God of His dues—more than resisting Moses, or stoning the prophets; it was “the fullest outbreak of rebellious hatred, when tested by the presence of the Son of God in their midst. Probation is over; the question of man’s state, and of God’s efforts to get fruit from His vineyard is at an end.... Thus the death of Christ is viewed in this parable, not as the groundwork of the counsels of God, but as the climax of man’s sin, and the closing scene of his responsibility.”

Such was man, man under law, the holy law of God. Provoked by the restraints which the law put on his self-will, the evil that was there and at work manifested itself in the most open, daring, contempt of God’s authority. The truth of man’s moral state was now fully revealed, the law entered that the offense might abound. Do we not see many around us daily, but especially on the Lord’s day, sinning with a high hand—sinning openly, unblushingly, in trading, in seeking their own pleasure, on the first day of the week and that, not in ignorance, but in contempt of the known and acknowledged authority of God? But the law was given that man might know the truth about himself, and about the claims of God in righteousness; both have been fully discussed, and all is in evidence now. Insensible as the Jews were to their sad condition, they condemn the husbandmen, and thus bear witness against themselves. “When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their season.”

THE MORAL HISTORY OF MAN CLOSED IN THE CROSS.

Thus closed the trial of man, of the Jew, of the first Adam. Four thousand years of probation had run their course. And what is the result of this long trial? Most humiliating to the pride and vanity of man—to the religious imagination and the reasoning powers of self-righteous, self-sufficient man. The law brought out, and demonstrated in a variety of ways and conduct, what man really is. Not what man might or should have been, as men talk, but what man is as God proved. When tried by a divine standard, and under the most favorable circumstances, no good thing is found in fallen man, but the presence of every principle of evil. Search has been made, and the human heart is

found to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? is the challenge; I, the Lord, is the answer. None can fathom the depths of its wickedness but Himself. But in the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ, man's sin rose to its highest height.

The presence of perfect love and goodness in the Person of the blessed Lord, brought out the bitter enmity of the heart against God, and demonstrated, beyond a question, that man was utterly incorrigible.

We have now reached the end of man's history, as under trial before God. His moral history closes in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. After that, God will never trust him again. Henceforth man is to be dealt with as morally dead. Therefore it is that the intelligent believer can say in good truth, As a man and a sinner, a child of the first Adam, I came to my end on the cross of Christ. But to unfold this grand truth would lead us into the sixth chapter: our present object is to connect the moral history of man with God's "due time," or, in other words, with the gospel of the grace of God.

The cross was the grand turning-point in the ways of God with lost man. From that period grace reigns. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." All blessing must now flow through Christ as dead and risen, and be received by faith, according to the word of the Lord. This has been essentially true from the beginning, but now that man is fully manifested, God takes His place more openly as the Savior of the lost. Now the language of God in the gospel is— "I cannot trust in you; you must trust in me."

Mary, I Love Thee Still

A number of years ago a young woman left her home in the country to occupy a situation in a large town. Her widowed mother was very unwilling to part with her. She could not bear the thought of her daughter being separated from her, in the midst of strangers, surrounded by innumerable temptations, with no friends at hand to sympathize or advise. At last she consented, though with many misgivings and fears, and Mary left the home of her childhood and girlhood, to enter upon her duties in her new sphere of labor. Week after week warm and affectionate letters were interchanged, and anxiously and eagerly read again and again.

Time passed on, and the mother began to notice that her daughter's letters were not so satisfactory as formerly. They began to get shorter and less affectionate, until eventually she stopped writing altogether. The poor widow's heart sank within her. She did not know what to do, and, in her strait, cast her burden upon her "Burden Bearer." Day after day she prayed that He would guard and protect her girl.

Sad tidings reached the mother's ears from the distant city: she heard that her daughter had forsaken the paths of virtue and purity and was leading a life of sin and shame.

On receipt of this mournful intelligence, she determined to seek her prodigal child and bring her back. She at once set out to the scene of her daughter's degradation. On reaching it, she endeavored to ascertain where she lived, but this was a difficult matter, as she had left her former lodgings.

Day and night into every conceivable place did the poor, heart-broken mother go in search of her erring child.

The language of her heart was:

"Come Home! Come Home! from the sorrow and blame,

From the sin and the shame and the tempter that smiled,

O prodigal child, Come Home! O Come Home!"

After a number of days of fruitless search, she purposed returning, when a new thought flashed across her mind. She went to a photographer's and got her portrait taken. Having secured a number of copies, she went to the principal public-houses and asked permission to hang them on the walls. It was considered a very strange request, but seeing she was a respectable person, permission was granted. Sometime after the daughter with a dissolute companion walked into one of them. Her attention was attracted to the likeness on the wall. She said, "That looks like my mother." She went nearer and examined it more closely. "It's just my mother," she exclaimed in amazement. At the foot of it she perceived that there was something written. She looked at it and at once recognized the familiar handwriting, but was not prepared for the thought expressed in the words:

“Mary, I love thee still!”

She could not stand this. She was prepared for up-braidings and reproaches, and expected nothing else; but to think that her mother had actually been searching for her in her haunts of sin and folly, and was willing to receive her back to the home of her childhood, just as she was—she could not understand it—and as she thought over the words, “ Mary, I Love Theo Still,” the days of her childhood and innocency came up before her, all the hallowed home associations; her mother’s prayers, tears, and loving counsels; and as she reflected on the difference between what she then was, and what she now was, she completely broke down. The awful folly and sin of her evil ways were clearly and vividly brought up before her, and she at once determined to leave her companions in sin and go back to her mother. When she arrived great was the joy of the widow at the unexpected arrival of the long-lost daughter; and better far, there was “joy in the presence of the angels of God;” for she became a humble follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear, unsaved reader, you cannot help feeling interested in this touching story of a mother’s love, and the manifestations of it, in her desire to rescue her daughter from sin and degradation. A mother “may forget” her offspring, but God cannot forget poor lost sinners on their way to eternal destruction. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. —Evangelist, New York, May.

Meditation

“My meditation of HIM shall be sweet.” Psalm 104:34.

I journey through a desert drear and wild,

Yet is my heart by such sweet thoughts beguiled

Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,

That I forget the sorrows of the way.

Thoughts of His love, the root of every grace

Which finds in this poor heart a dwelling place,

The sunshine of my soul, than day more bright,

And my calm pillow of repose by night.

Thoughts of His sojourn in this vale of tears:

The tale of love unfolded in those years

Of sinless sufferings and patient grace,

I love again and yet again to trace.

Thoughts of His glory: on the cross I gaze,

And there behold its sad yet healing rays;

Beacon of hope, which lifted up on high

Illumes with heavenly light the tear-dimmed eye.

Thoughts of His coming—for that joyful day

In patient hope I watch and wait and pray;

The dawn draws nigh, the midnight shadows flee;

O what a sunrise will that advent be!

Thus while I journey on, my Lord to meet,

My thoughts and meditations are so sweet

Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,

That I forget the sorrows of the way.

My Treasure, Christ

Gate of my heart, fly open wide,—
Shrine of my heart, spread forth;
The treasure will in thee abide,
Greater than heaven and earth:
Away with all this poor world's treasures,
And all this vain world's tasteless pleasures,
My treasure is in heaven;
For I have found true riches now,
My treasure, Christ, my Lord, art Thou,
Thy blood so freely given!
This treasure ever I employ,
This ever aid shall yield me;
In sorrow it shall be my joy,
In conflict it shall shield me;
In joy the music of my feast;
And when all else has lost its zest,
This manna still shall feed me;
In thirst my drink, in want my food,
My company in solitude,
To comfort and to lead me!
Death's poison cannot harm me now,
Thy blood new life bestowing;
My shadow from the heat art Thou,
When the noontide is glowing;
And when by inward grief opprest,
My aching heart in Thee shall rest,

As tired head on the pillow.
Should storms of persecution toss,
Firm anchored by Thy saving cross,
My bark rests on the billow!
And when at last Thou leadest me
Into Thy joy and light,
Thy blood shall clothe me royally,
Making my garments white;
Thou shalt place upon my head the crown,
And lead me to the Father's throne,
And raiment fit provide me;
Till I by Him to Thee betrothed,
By Thee in bridal costume clothed,
Stand as a bride beside Thee!

Nothing to Pay, to Do, or to Fear

Nothing to pay? No, not a whit;

Nothing to do? No, not a bit:

All that was needed to do or to pay,
Jesus has done it His own blessed way.

Nothing to do? No, not a stroke;

Gone is the captor, gone is the yoke:
Jesus at Calvary severed the chain,
And none can imprison His free-man again.

Nothing to fear? No, not a jot;

Nothing within? No, not a spot:
Christ is my peace, and I've nothing at stake,
Satan can that neither harass nor shake.

Nothing to settle? All has been paid,

Nothing to anger? Peace has been made;
Jesus alone is the sinner's resource,
Peace He has made by the blood of His cross.

What about judgment? I'm thankful to say,
Jesus has met it and borne it away;
Drank it all up when He hung on the tree,
Leaving a cup full of blessing for me.

What about terror? It hasn't a place
In a heart that is filled with a sense of His grace;
My peace is divine, and it never can cloy,
And that keeps my heart running over with joy.

Nothing of guilt? No, not a stain,

How could the blood let any remain?

My conscience is purged, and my spirit is free—
Precious that blood is to God and to me!
What of the law? Ah, there I rejoice,
Christ answered its claims and silenced its voice:
The law was fulfilled when the work was all done,
And it never can speak to a justified one.
What about death? It hasn't a sting:
The grave to a Christian no terror can bring,
For death has been conquer'd, the grave has been spoil'd
And every foeman and enemy foiled.
What about feelings? Ah! trust not to them,
What of my standing? "Who shall condemn?"
Since God is for me, there is nothing so clear,
From Satan and man I have nothing to fear.
What of my body? Ah! that I may bring,
To God, as a holy acceptable thing,
For that is the temple where Jesus abides,
The temple where God by His Spirit resides.
Nothing to pay? No, thanks be to God,
The matter is settled, the price was THE BLOOD,
The blood of the victim, a ransom divine—
Believe it, poor sinner, and peace shall be thine.
What am I waiting for? Jesus my Lord,
To take down the tent and roll up the cord,—
To be with Himself in the mansion above,
Enjoying forever His infinite love.

O Wondrous Love!

Yes, He has come
Down from His peerless home,
Has laid His former glory by;
Relinquished, for a while, heaven's joy,
To taste of earth without alloy—
O wondrous love!
And He has been
Upon this barren scene;
The Father's heart has open laid,
The Father's precious will obeyed,
And reconciliation made—
O wondrous love!
And He has died,—
The Lamb, the Crucified;
Has borne the culprit's fearful doom,
'Mid heaven and earth's commingling gloom,
Has lain within the silent tomb—
O wondrous love!
He rose again
From death's dark cold domain;
And, in that all-victorious hour,
He broke death's stern resistless power,
Dispell'd its cloud, no more to lower—
O wondrous love!
And for His own
Now fills your azure throne.

Heaven's pearly gates were thrown aside,
When He arose who once had died;
The Lamb, once slain, now glorified—
O wondrous love!
He'll come again,
And prove our hope not vain;
We wait the moment, oh, so fair;
To rise and meet Him in the air;
His heart, His home, His throne to share—
O wondrous love!

On the Great Exhibition

Ha! you burst of crystal splendor,
Sunlight, starlight, blent in one;
Starlight set in arctic azure,
Sunlight from the burning zone!
Gold and silver, gems and marble,
All creation's jewelry;
Earth's uncovered waste of riches,
Treasures of the ancient sea,
Heir of glory,
What is that to thee and me?
Farthest cities pour their riches,
Farthest empires muster here,
Art her jubilee proclaiming
To the nations far and near.
From the crowd in wonder gazing,
Science claims the prostrate knee
This her temple, diamond-blazing,
Shrine of her idolatry—
Heir of glory,
What is that to thee and me?
Listen to her tale of wonder,
Of her plastic potent spell;
'Tis a big and braggart story,
Yet she tells it fair and well.
She the gifted, gay magician,
Mistress of earth, air and sea;

This majestic apparition,
Offspring of her sorcery,
Heir of glory,
What is that to thee and me?
What to that for which we're waiting,
Is this glittering earthly toy?
Heavenly glory, holy splendor,
Sum of grandeur, sum of joy,
Not the gems that time can tarnish,
Not the hues that dim and die,
Not the glow that cheats the lover,
Shaded with mortality.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me.
Not the light that leaves us darker,
Not the gleams that come and go,
Not the mirth whose end is madness,
Not the joy whose fruit is woe;
Not the notes that die at sunset,
Not the fashion of a day:
But the everlasting beauty,
And the endless melody.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me.
City of the pearl-bright portal,
City of the jasper wall,
City of the golden pavement,
Seat of endless festival.
City of Jehovah, Salem,

City of eternity,
To thy bridal-hall of gladness,
From this prison would I flee.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me.
Ah! with such strange spells around me
Fairest of what earth calls fair, —
How I need thy fairer image,
To undo the siren snare!
Lest the subtle-serpent tempter
Lure me with his radiant lie;
As if sin were sin no longer,
Life were no more vanity.
Heir of glory,
What is that to thee and me?
Yes, I need thee, heavenly city,
My low spirit to upbear;
Yes, I need thee—earth's enchantment!
So beguile me with their glare.
Let me see thee—then these fetters
Break asunder—I am free;
Then this pomp no longer chains me,
Faith has won the victory.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me.
Soon, where earthly beauty blinds not,
No excess of brilliance palls,
Solemn city of the holy,
We shall be within thy walls!

There beside your crystal river,
There beside life's wondrous tree,
There with naught to cloud or sever,
Ever with the Lamb to be.
Heir of glory,
That shall be for thee and me.

One-Sided Theology

We have received a long letter from America, furnishing a very striking proof of the bewildering effect of one-sided theology. Our correspondent is evidently under the influence of what is styled the high school of doctrine. Hence, he cannot see the rightness of calling upon the unconverted to “come,” to “hear,” to “repent,” or to “believe.” It seems to him like telling a crab tree to bear some apples in order that it may become an apple tree.

Now, we thoroughly believe that faith is the gift of God, and that it is not according to man’s will or by human power, in any shape or form. And further, we believe that not a single soul would ever come to Christ if not drawn, yea, compelled, by divine grace so to do; and therefore all who are saved, have to thank the free and sovereign grace of God for it; their song is, and ever shall be, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.”

All this we believe not as part of a certain system of doctrine, but as the revealed truth of God. But, on the other hand, we believe, just as fully, in the solemn truth of man’s moral responsibility, inasmuch as it is plainly taught in scripture, though we do not find it amongst what are called “The five points of the faith of God’s elect.” We believe these five points, so far as they go; but they are very far indeed from containing the faith of God’s elect. There are wide fields of divine revelation which this stunted and one-sided system does not touch upon, or even hint at, in the most remote manner. Where do we find the heavenly calling? Where the glorious truth of the church as the body and bride of Christ? Where, the precious sanctifying hope of the coming of Christ to receive His people to Himself? Where have we the grand scope of prophecy opened to the vision of our souls, in that which is so pompously styled, “The faith of God’s elect?” We look in vain for a single trace of them in the entire system to which our American friend is attached.

Now, can we suppose, for a moment, that the blessed apostle Paul would accept as “The faith of God’s elect” a system which leaves out that glorious mystery of the church of which he was specially made the minister? Suppose any one had shown Paul “The five points” of Calvinism, as a statement of the truth of God, what would he have said? What! “The whole truth of God”—“The faith of God’s elect”—“All that is essential to be believed”—and yet not a syllable about the real position of the church—its calling, its standing, its hopes, its privileges! And not a word about Israel’s future! A complete ignoring, or at best a thorough alienation, of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. The whole body of prophetic teaching subjected to a system of spiritualizing, falsely so called, whereby Israel is robbed of their proper portion, and Christians dragged down to an earthly level. And all this is presented to us, with the loftiest pretensions, as “The faith of God’s elect.”

Thank God it is not so. He, blessed be His name, has not confined Himself within the narrow limits of any school of doctrine, high, low, or moderate. He has revealed Himself. He has told out the deep and precious secrets of His heart. He has unfolded His eternal counsels, as to the church, as to Israel, the Gentiles, and the wide creation. Men might as well attempt to confine the ocean in

buckets of their own formation as to confine the vast range of divine revelation within the miserable enclosures of human systems of doctrine. It cannot be done, and it ought not to be attempted. Better far to fling aside all systems of theology and schools of divinity, and come like a little child to the eternal fountain of holy scripture, and there drink in the living teachings of God's Spirit.

Nothing is more damaging to the truth of God, more withering to the soul, or more subversive of all spiritual growth and progress than mere theology, high or low,—Calvinistic or Arminian. It is impossible for the soul to make progress beyond the boundaries of the system to which it is attached. If I am taught to regard "The five points" as "The faith of God's elect," I shall not think of looking beyond them; and then a most glorious field of heavenly truth is shut out from the vision of my soul. I am stunted, narrow, one-sided; and not only so, but I am in danger of getting into that hard, dry state of soul which results from being occupied with mere points of doctrine instead of with Christ. A disciple of the high school of doctrine will not hear of a world-wide gospel—of God's love to the world—of glad tidings to every creature under heaven. He has only gotten a gospel for the elect. On the other hand, a disciple of the low or Arminian school will not hear of the eternal security of God's people. They are only safe as long as they continue faithful. Their salvation depends partly upon Christ, and partly upon themselves. According to this system, the song of the redeemed should be changed, Instead of "Worthy is the Lamb," we should have to add, "and worthy am I." We may be saved to-day, and lost to-morrow. All this is most miserable. It grossly dishonors God, and robs the Christian of all true peace.

We do not write to offend the reader. Nothing is further from our thoughts. We are dealing not with persons, but with schools of doctrine and systems of divinity which we would, most earnestly, entreat our beloved readers to abandon, at once, and forever. Not one of them contains the full, entire truth of God. There are certain elements of truth in all of them; but the truth is neutralized by the error; and even if we could find a system which contains, so far as it goes, nothing but the truth, yet if it does not contain the whole truth, its effect upon the soul is most pernicious, because it leads a person to plume himself on having the truth of God when, in reality, he has only laid hold of a one-sided system of man.

Then again we rarely find a mere disciple of any school of doctrine who can face scripture as a whole. Favorite texts will be quoted, and continually reiterated; but a large body of scripture is left almost wholly unappropriated. For example, take such passages as the following, "But now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30.) And again, "Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2) So also, in 2 Peter, "The Lord.... is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (Chap. 3:9.) And, in the very closing section of the volume, we read, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Are these passages to be taken as they stand? or are we to introduce qualifying or modifying words to make them fit in with our system? The fact is, they set forth the largeness of the heart of God, the gracious activities of His nature, the wide aspect of His love. It is not according to the loving heart of God that any of His creatures should perish. There is no such thing set forth in scripture as any decree of God consigning a certain number of the human race to eternal damnation. Some may be judicially given over to blindness because of deliberate rejection of the light. (See Rom. 9:17; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26, 27; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12; 1 Pet. 2:8.) All who perish will have

only themselves to blame. All who reach heaven will have to thank God.

If we are to be taught by scripture we must believe that every man is responsible according to his light. The Gentile is responsible to listen to the voice of creation. The Jew is responsible on the ground of the law. Christendom is responsible on the ground of the full orb'd revelation contained in the whole word of God. If God commands all men, everywhere to repent, does He mean what He says, or merely all the elect? What right have we to add to, or alter, to pare down, or to accommodate the word of God? None whatever.

Let us face scripture as it stands, and reject everything which will not stand the test. We may well call in question the soundness of a system which cannot meet the full force of the word of God as a whole. If passages of scripture seem to clash, it is only because of our ignorance. Let us humbly own this, and wait on God for further light. This, we may depend upon it, is safe moral ground to occupy. Instead of endeavoring to reconcile apparent discrepancies, let us bow at the Master's feet and justify Him in all His sayings. Thus shall we reap a harvest of blessing and grow in the knowledge of God and His word as a whole.

A few days since, a friend put into our hands a sermon recently preached by an eminent clergyman belonging to the high school of doctrine. We have found in this sermon, quite as much as in the letter of our American correspondent, the effects of one-sided theology. For instance, in referring to that magnificent statement of the Baptist in John 1:29, the preacher quotes it thus, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the whole world of God's chosen people."

Header, think of this. "The world of God's chosen people!" There is not a word about people in the passage. It refers to the great propitiatory work of Christ in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be obliterated from the wide creation of God. We shall only see the full application of that blessed scripture in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. To confine it to the sin of God's elect can only be viewed as the fruit of theological bias. There is no such expression in scripture as "Taking away the sin of God's elect." Whenever God's people are referred to we have the bearing of sins—the propitiation for our sins—the forgiveness of sins. Scripture never confounds these things; and nothing can be more important for our souls than to be exclusively taught by scripture itself, and not by the warping, stunting, withering dogmas of one-sided theology.

We sometimes hear John 1:29 quoted, or rather misquoted by disciples of the low school of doctrine in this way, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." If this were so, no one could ever be lost. Such a statement would furnish a basis for the terrible heresy of universal salvation. The same may be said of the rendering of 1 John 2:2, "The sins of the whole world." This is not scripture but fatally false doctrine, which we doubt not our translators would have repudiated as strongly as any. Whenever the word "sins" occurs, it refers to persons. Christ is a propitiation for the whole world. He was the substitute for His people.

Note.—It is deeply interesting to mark the way in which scripture guards against the repulsive doctrine of reprobation. Look, for example, at Matt. 25:34. Here, the King, in addressing those on His right hand, says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Contrast with this the address to those on His left hand: "Depart from me ye cursed (He does not say 'of my Father') into everlasting fire, prepared (not for you, but) the

devil and his angels.” So also, in Rom. 9 In speaking of the “vessels of wrath,” he says “fitted to destruction”—fitted not by God surely, but by themselves. On the other hand, when he speaks of the “vessels of mercy, he says, “which he had afore prepared unto glory.” The grand truth of election is fully established; the repulsive error of reprobation, sedulously avoided.

Peace

In the passage which stands at the head of this paper we have the word “peace,” in a twofold sense, first, as applied to the inner life; and, secondly, to the outer life of the christian disciple. “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side.”

Here we have peace in its blessed application to the inner life. All was finished. The battle was fought, the victory gained. The Conqueror was in their midst—the true David, with the head of the Philistine in His hand. All possible ground of anxiety was forever removed. Peace was made, and established on a basis which could never be moved. It was utterly impossible that any power of earth or hell could ever touch the foundation of that peace which a risen Savior was now breathing into the souls of His gathered disciples. He had made peace by the blood of His cross. He had met every foe. He had encountered the marshaled hosts of hell, and made a show of them openly. The full tide of Jehovah’s righteous wrath against sin had rolled over Him. He had taken the sting from death, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, the triumph was gloriously complete; and the blessed Victim at once presents Himself to the eyes and to the hearts of His beloved people, and sounds in their ears the precious word “peace.”

And then mark the significant action. “He showed them his hands and his side.” He brings them into immediate contact with Himself. He reveals His Person to their souls, and shows them the unequivocal tokens of His cross and passion—the wondrous marks of accomplished atonement. It is a risen Savior, bearing in His body the marks of that death through which He had passed for His people.

Now this is the secret of peace. It is a great deal more than knowing that our sins are forgiven, and that we are justified from all things, blessed as all this assuredly is. It is having before our souls—before the eye of our faith—the Person of a risen Christ, and receiving from His own lips the sweet message of “peace.” It is having in our hearts that holy sense of deliverance which springs from having the Person of the Deliverer distinctly presented to our faith. It is not merely that we know we are forgiven and delivered, but our hearts are livingly engaged with the One who has done it all, and we gaze by faith upon the mysterious marks of His accomplished work. This is peace for the inner life.

But this is not all. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” Here we have the outer life of the Christian. It is all, from first to last, wrapped up in this one grand fact, he is sent into the world, as Jesus was sent by the Father. It is not a question of what he has to do, or where he has to go. He is one sent by Jesus, even as Jesus was sent by the Father; and ere he starts on this high and holy mission, his risen Lord ensures him perfect peace as to every scene and circumstance of his whole career.

What a mission! What a view of the life of a Christian! Do we at all enter into it? Let no one suppose for a moment that all this applies only to apostles. This would be a grand mistake. The passage on which we are dwelling does not speak of apostles. It speaks of “disciples,” a term which surely applies to all the children of God. The very feeblest disciple is privileged to know himself as one sent into this world as Jesus was sent of the Father. What a model to study! What a place it gives us! What an object to live for! How it settles everything! It is not a question of “views”—of opinions, dogmas, or principles—of ordinances or ceremonies. No, thank God; it is something quite different. It is life and peace—life in a risen Savior, and peace for that life, both inward and outward. It is gazing upon a risen Savior, and starting from His feet to serve Him in this world, as He served the Father.

And be it remembered that all this has a direct bearing upon the very youngest disciple in all the church of God. We earnestly press this upon the reader, because some would have us to believe that it is something official, something which applied only to the apostles. Those who urge this idea build much on verse 23. But the fact is, the apostles never undertook to forgive sins in an official way. This passage has no such bearing; it refers to the discipline of an assembly of disciples, acting by the Holy Ghost, in the name and on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, when the assembly at Corinth put away from among them the evil-doer, it was a retaining of sins. And when they received him back, on the ground of his repentance, it was a remitting of sins.

Such is the simple meaning of John 20:23. It does not touch the soul’s eternal relation to God, but only its present relation to the assembly. Hence we should not allow ourselves to be robbed of the precious teaching of the entire passage through any false application of a particular clause.

Meditations on Practical Christianity

Verse 9. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." The apostle now enters a wider field, and looks at the Christian's path more generally. Hitherto we have been meditating on the position of the Christian as a member of the body of Christ, and the ministries of love which flow from that blessed relationship; but the apostle does not stop here; Christianity must have a broader range; and now his exhortations bear not so much on the church collectively, as on the Christian individually. This we may call practical Christianity. In all places, under all circumstances, and in every sphere of life, he is exhorted to the discharge of all christian duties, and that not merely in outward form, but according to the Spirit and truth of the divine precept.

"Let love be without dissimulation." This is the first of the apostle's general admonitions, and may be considered the foundation and summary of all the others. He who shines in this grace will abound in every good work. But here, on the threshold of this fresh line of truth, thou mayest well pause for a little, O my soul, and meditate on a love that is free from all dissimulation and guile. Wondrous sight in a world of hollow pretense! But where is it to be found in practical exercise, thou wilt inquire? God only is its source; "for love is of God." It is Himself; God is love; not merely loving, but love. And should not His children be the expression of His nature—of His moral character? "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." And faith goes on to say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Here, mark well, my soul, the true character of communion, and the power of walking in love. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God; and God in him" This is christian communion, but who could explain it? Still, the Christian should be a genuine expression of the real spirit and character of that love in which he dwells. He is formed, sustained, and perfected in love. 1 John 4:7-19.

In this portion of the word, we have divine love manifested in the conversion of the sinner, the communion of the saint, and in his complete conformity to Christ forever. Love meets him as a lost sinner, makes him like Christ, fits him for communion with God while here, and perfects him for the coming day of judgment, so that he has nothing to fear. He sees his way clear into the glory beyond the tribunal of Christ, where love alone remains, for heaven is its home.

Surely then, thou wilt say, the exhortation of the apostle is a most reasonable one. "Let love be without dissimulation." What else could a Christian be but pure hearted in his love. He dwells at the fountain of eternal love, feeds upon it, delights in it, and ought to be its full and fair reflection. What could excuse him for allowing a feigned, dissembling love to take the place and usurp the name of christian affection? A love so high in its source, so divine in its nature, so pure in its character, should be guarded by us with all holy jealousy. It is surely of the very deepest moment, that every Christian should be true before God, in the expression and the assertion of his love towards others, whether within or outside the church. To mislead, or gain an advantage over others, by a fair but false profession of love, has a character of iniquity peculiarly its own. The

corruption of that which is so pure in its source, is an evil which we should constantly and diligently watch against.

But was there need for such an exhortation in the apostle's day, and is there need in ours? Alas, alas, what is it that Christians so fail in as the truthful expression in words of the inmost state of the heart? So few speak or write exactly what they are. Only one could say in answer to the question, "Who art thou?... Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." He could appeal to His words and say, "I am what I speak." There never was in His words the appearance of what He was not; He was absolutely, and in every particular, what He said. (John 8:25.) But of none, save the blessed Jesus, could this be said. So deceitful is the human heart, and so false is the world, that nothing but the Holy Spirit, revealing Christ to our souls through the word, and enabling us to walk in the light as God is in the light, keeps us even as believers from departing from the truth, from slipping into misrepresentation, from saying what we are not, and what we mean not.

Know then, O my soul, and fail not to remember, that the apostle declares that only to be genuine love which is sincere and free from all guile. Nothing is more common in society generally than the manifestation of love where even an opposite disposition exists. But the Christian is to be far, far above all such hollow pretensions. Jesus is the truth, and so should His disciple also be. Self-judgment is especially called for here. Naturally we are unreal. But everyone can best judge for himself whether he entertains any feeling in his heart contrary to the outward manifestation of affection. It is quite true that habit may mislead without any intention to deceive; such as the common amenities of life, the inscriptions, the contents, and the signatures of our letters. Still, we must have respect to truth in the heart even when so much form prevails. It is only in the light that we are free from selfishness and dissimulation. May the Lord ever keep us there for His own name's sake.

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." There is an intimate connection between the first and the last two members of this verse—unfeigned love, hating evil, cleaving to good. Where love is real, there must be the abhorrence of evil—especially if that evil touches the object of our affections—and the most persevering devotion to the injured one. To reach the full meaning of this verse, we must rise to Christ. He is before the mind of the Spirit, and of faith. In the Old Testament (Isa. 1:16, 17) we read, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." The language in the New is much stronger; Christ is in question. The words to abhor and to cleave to, express the highest degree of hatred on the one hand, and the most devoted attachment on the other.

Every doctrine or movement, in what is called the religious world, which tends to set aside the claims, or in any way to obscure the glory of Christ, is to be avoided by us as an evil that we abhor. So says the word of God; but what says the religious world? Any person daring so to speak, would be denounced as uncharitable, narrow, and bigoted. Scarcely any term of reproach would be strong enough to express their abhorrence of his views. The one sanctions and encourages what the other abhors, and both are Christians. Which is right? Who is to judge? The word of God. Let the reader examine and decide in the light of that word alone.

The plausible sentiment that proposes to sink all outward differences amongst Christians, to love as brethren, and to work together for the advancement of the gospel, is latitudinarian in its character, and really means a spirit of indifference towards unsound doctrine, and false views of the Person of Christ. Nothing can be worse in principle: but we are told that the end justifies the

means. So have the Catholics said for more than a thousand years. "Good, in the eyes of the Papacy, meant what was good for the church; Evil, whatever was bad for the church." The difference between modern Laodiceanism and ancient Catholicism is small in principle. Neither has Christ as its one, grand, exclusive object.

May the Lord give us grace to make Himself our standard and center, and neither the church nor the gospel, blessed as they are, and dear to our hearts, in their own subordinate place to Him.

Meditations on Practical Christianity

Verse 10. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." The love spoken of in the previous verse is probably love to all men; here brotherly love is particularly specified. The teaching of the Spirit in this verso seems to be, that Christians should cherish for each other, as brethren in Christ, a love as sincere and tender as if they were the nearest relatives. And this love is to be manifested, not merely in repaying the attentions of others, but in anticipating them in acts of respect and kindness. All Christians are brethren, but as they belong to different families in this life, and called by different names, there is nothing to distinguish them but brotherly love. If this fails, what is left? Our Father is in heaven. He who loves the Father, loves the brethren also. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begot, loveth him also that is begotten of him. 1 John 5:1.

But here, on a point of such practical importance, and one so difficult to practice, it may be well for thee, my soul, to pause, and inquire what the difference is between brotherly love and brotherly kindness. The apostle says, in writing to the Hebrews, "Let brotherly love continue." But he nowhere says, Let brotherly kindness continue. "Love never faileth." Kindness must in some cases. A brother, through the power of Satan, may be walking disorderly, or he may fall into error, and so become a proper subject of discipline; towards such a one our conduct must be changed, though our love remains the same, or even stronger. The mind of the Lord on this point is plainly given: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.....For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.....If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed, yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (Rom. 16; 2 Thess. 3) The persons here spoken of are still in communion; hence the difficulty in cherishing brotherly love, and at the same time exercising a wholesome discipline towards them. When it comes to a case of excommunication, the perplexity is less, but our love should be none the less. See Second Epistle of St. John.

"In honor preferring one another." Instead of waiting, as we often do, for others to notice us, before we notice them, we should strive to be beforehand with them in the manifestation of our christian respect, or "honor." There is in some a false modesty, in others a secret pride, which leads them to slip quickly out of a meeting, thereby preventing those from speaking to them who gladly would. And this having been continued for some time, the brethren are complained of as cold, and as showing no love to strangers. But, pray, who is at fault? Let the word of the Lord decide. In honor preferring one another simply means, to go before, to lead, to set an example. The meaning is not exactly to esteem others better than ourselves, as in Phil. 2:3, important as such lowliness of mind is, the mind that was in Christ Jesus; but rather that we should seek to take the lead in these comely ways of our Father's house. And the heart that meditates most deeply on the love of Christ

to usward, will be the first to feel that our love to the brethren is not to be governed by cold formalities, but by the measure and pattern of His love to us. Acts of kindness, the expression of sympathy, fellowship, whether in joy or in sorrow, forbearance, long-suffering, charity, are to be among the many fruits of the Spirit which should abound for the refreshment and blessing of our brethren in Christ.

Verse 11. “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” The apostle, unwearied, continues his favorite theme of love. Now it is love in activity, in earnestness. Not merely love to all men, or love to the brethren, but the energy of love, as service to the Lord. The exhortation refers to religious activity, not to the active performance of our secular vocations, as many have supposed, and as the word, “business,” in our text naturally suggests. At the same time, whatever the Christian does, whether it be as to things temporal or spiritual, he should not be slothful, or indulge in indolence, but in every duty manifest a spirit of zeal and devotedness. “In spirit fervent” is the Lord’s word; as it was said of Apollos— “This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord.” Acts 18:25.

“Serving the Lord.” Here we are supplied with the blessed motive to both diligence and zeal. And this is a motive which is easily carried about with us, and easily applied. Is this I propose to do—is the place I propose to go to—service to my Lord and Master? Is He saying, Do—go? Must I do this, must I go there, because the Lord would have me? This is a test, as well as a motive. “Is it service to the Lord?” We are expected to walk by faith with Him, to refer everything to Him, to consider ourselves as wholly and at all times His servants. Nothing is too great or too small for Him. We may confer with Him, not only as to our christian service, but as to our worldly employments, engagements, and difficulties.

Speakest thou thus, my soul, of thine own experience, or writest thou as from a book? Valueless, and worse, a mockery, and soon over, would all such writing and speaking be, were it not the living experience of one who is at home with the Lord as with none else. What heart in the universe has been so revealed unto us as the heart that willingly shed its blood to fit us for His holy presence, and that God, in us and by us, might be glorified? He loved me, He gave Himself for me, entitles me to the full benefit of His love, to the full benefit of His death. Yes, the believer is entitled in grace to claim the full benefit of His love, of His death. What a privilege! What a portion! Happy they who know it, believe it, enjoy it, and draw from it day by day light and strength for their path and service. And now the precept is the law of liberty—“Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.” Col. 3:23, 24.

Verse 12. “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” The beautiful moral connection of the three members of this verse is very apparent. In hope rejoicing, in suffering patient, in prayer persevering. The hope of the Lord’s coming is the most effectual means of producing patience under present trials. The contemplation of the coming One, of His adorable Person, of our union with Him, of meeting Him in the air, of being introduced by Him into the house of many mansions, of seeing Him face to face, of hearing His voice, of beholding His glory, of knowing more fully the realities of His love and grace. Surely such contemplations are divinely fitted to soothe the troubled mind, and to sweeten the bitterness of sorrow. If we reckon, as the apostle did, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory

which shall be revealed in us, we shall not be wanting in patience.

O bright, celestial morn, hasten thy coming, when the dim glass shall be removed, and when we shall see Him as He is. Now the cup of sorrow goes round. It is passed from lip to lip, from heart to heart, from family to family, and many of the children of that day are now passing through the valley of the shadow of death. Days and nights of weary watching, the loving, tender heart suspended between hope and fear; but the parting comes. All is silent. The last sigh has been heaved, and the last tear shed. Another saint has been welcomed to the paradise of God.

“Then, as advance the shades of night,

Long-plumed, she takes her homeward flight;

But as she mounts, I saw her fling

A beam of glory from her wing—

A moment—to my aching sight

Lost in the boundless fields of light.”

Hope has received a fresh inspiration. The dear departed is on before; we shall meet again. The grave must yield up its prey; the sea must give up its dead; and all be caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. O morning of re-unions! The circle to be broken no more forever. The morning song begins; all catch the flying joy, and roll round the rapturous hosanna, worthy the Lamb that was slain!

“Oh! ‘tis all brightness yonder, no clouds nor din,

But joy, and peace, and gladness, and rest from sin;

Oh! ‘tis all glory yonder, for Christ is there,

In blest effulgence shining beyond compare.”

“Continuing instant in prayer” Meanwhile, come what may, we fall back upon the great resource of the soul— communion with God, in prayer persevering. We have spoken of a love that makes all service easy, of a hope that sheds its bright radiance over the gloomy day; and now we are exhorted to live near to God, and draw all needed support from Him, while waiting for His Son from heaven. Hope and patience, and all other virtues, can only be nourished by that character of intercourse with God which is here described as “continuing instant in prayer.” It is directly the opposite of every element of formality. To be continual, fervent, persevering, alone answers to the divine injunction. No duty can be well done, and no service rightly performed, without this kind of prayer.

The apostle, of course, cannot mean by this that we are always to be in the attitude of prayer. This would be impossible. Many of God’s praying ones have to spend the greater part of their time in the company of the prayerless; and sometimes we may be on a journey, where we have no opportunity for private or secret prayer. Still, if we are living and walking with God in the true spirit of prayer, the lifting up of the heart to Him may not be less frequent, though less orderly.

But here, my soul, thou seemest inclined to ask a question. If the believer is already pardoned, accepted, and has all things in Christ, what is it that he has to pray for so constantly? Should not praise and thanksgiving rather fill his heart? Prayer will seldom be offered without being mingled with praise. "Prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving," will generally be combined; but praise and prayer are quite distinct. Praise is that which we offer to God; prayer is the expression of our dependence upon Him for the supply of all our need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Praise is the re-ascending to God of the grace that has come down to us in answer to prayer; so that the more we abound in prayer, the richer and higher will be our note of praise.

But there is nothing, let me assure thee, in the whole life and ways of a Christian that can be safely separated from prayer. It thus becomes a test of what he may or may not do. That which he cannot do prayerfully, that on which he cannot ask the divine blessing, should be left undone. Were this test more faithfully applied, Christians would make fewer mistakes, to say nothing of error and evil. The grand end and object of prayer is to keep the soul in constant communion with God, by cultivating the habit of referring everything to Him. In this way our knowledge of God is daily increased, so that we can count on Him for the answers to our prayers, without either signs or tokens of the answer. We reckon upon Himself; confidence is created by the knowledge which He has given us of His grace and love. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" What an answer, what a rebuke, to all our doubts and fears is in this noble text! Who could doubt the reality, the extent, of God's love to us, and the deep and tender interest of His heart in all that concerns us, with this grand truth before the mind, beaming with a divine effulgence under our own eyes? Dear and precious to God, above all other objects, as His own Son ever was, He spared Him not, but for us delivered Him up for three-and-thirty long years, to humiliation, suffering, and death. What must the heart be made of that could doubt the goodness of God, after such an expression of His love for us all—the whole family of faith?

But all goes with Him. Apart from Him there is no blessing. Every lesser is included in the greater blessing. Had Rebekah refused to be the wife of Isaac, she could not have been a fellow-heir with him of the large fortunes of Abraham. When united to Christ by faith, we are fellow-heirs with Him of every blessing which divine love can give, and every blessing is measured by God's gift of His own Son. What a privilege to know Christ! Who could count the number and the greatness of the Christian's blessings in Him? May the Lord, in His sweet mercy, lead everyone who reads these pages to lay hold on Christ by faith as the unspeakable gift of God, and the Savior of mankind. Without an interest in Christ all is lost. Every man and woman born must either have Christ's place in heaven, or their own in hell. Let the reader decide now; which is it to be—thine or His? His will be the best in heaven, thine the worst in hell. Decide, then, O my reader, decide now, at once and forever. The Lord grant it.

But to return to our subject.

The Christian should have a large heart. He has more than himself to think of and pray for. He has the ear and the arm of the living God, and he is to use them for the help and blessing of his household, his surroundings, and belongings, the church, and the workmen of God, the gospel, the poor and needy, the whole family of affliction, and all mankind. Many are the directions and promises in God's word connected with prayer, which we cannot here enumerate; but the principal

attributes of all acceptable prayer are confidence, fervor, and perseverance; always remembering that it must be in accordance with the word, and by the Spirit of God. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.... And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him..... Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.....All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Eph. 6:18 John 5:14, 15; Matt. 21:22; John 14:13, 14.

"There is a power which man can wield,
When mortal aid is vain;
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,
That listening ear to gain.
That power is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne,
And moves the hand which moves the world
To bring deliverance down."

Meditations on Practical Christianity

Verse 13. "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." Communicating to the necessity of saints; and the duty of hospitality, are subjects on which we have little to say. In almost every case, circumstances must govern, as to the exercise of these virtues; and such circumstances are best known to the individual himself: we have not to judge. But whatever we do, either in communicating or in hospitality, should be done before the Lord and for His sake. The poor are a part of His legacy to the church. "For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." Much might be said as to the highly artificial state of modern life, as throwing many difficulties in the way of carrying out the apostolic precept; still, it is always good to ascertain the mind of the Lord; and follow the wisdom of scripture, rather than the conventionalities of men.

The truth of God hangs beautifully and perfectly together. A link cannot be removed without being missed. The understanding of one truth makes another plain. Unless we have entered into the truth of the "one body," the exhortation before us must be a burden and not a privilege. Hence the murmurings and complainings of the numerous poor. All Christians are saints, and all are members of the body of Christ; and we all know that the members of the same body have the same interests, sympathies, feelings, and destinies. On this principle we take part in the necessities of saints, or should do, regarding them as our own. The poor brethren are thus made joint partakers of the substance of their richer brethren. On this text one of the commentators observes: "the apostle thus intimates that we ought to supply the wants of poor brethren with as much care as if we were assisting ourselves." And this, we may add, would be nothing more than the fragrant fruits of the love enjoined in verses 9,10.

Reflections. —We may learn from this passage, 1. That from the nature of the precept to communicate to the poor, it is perfectly clear that there was no general custom among the first Christians of a community of goods. 2. That it is only to the necessities of the saints that the rich are commanded to communicate of their substance. What love may delight to do in distributing its riches, great or small, is left to the hearts and consciences of those who have the means. While the Lord makes the most just and tender appeals for the poor, He guards the rich. The indolent, in strongest terms, He condemns. Such is the fullness and wisdom of scripture. “This we command you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” While it is one of our most sacred christian privileges to communicate to those who have need, according to our ability, it would be a violation of the word of God to support the idle. (2 Thess. 3:6-15.) 3. The management of money from the earliest times has been surrounded with difficulties. “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.” (Acts 6:1.) The Lord give grace to those who have, and to those who have not. The Lord was rich and the Lord was poor, and unless we have Him before us as our divine model, we shall do nothing rightly.

“Given to hospitality” The value which the early Christians set upon this virtue is plain, from Paul’s mentioning it as among the requisite qualifications of a bishop. “Given to hospitality”—following after hospitality. In Titus it is, “A lover of hospitality.” Not only are we to practice it, but to seek opportunities of thus manifesting our love to the brethren. And that, not only to those we know and love, but to strangers, brethren coming from a distance. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2.

According to our modern notions, and the habits of our English homes, we limit the meaning of the word to social, convivial, intercourse among neighbors. In the days of the apostles it had a much wider and even an opposite meaning. It was one of the most sacred duties of the Christian, but often one of extreme danger. In times of persecution it was a high crime to entertain the excommunicated. And, as many of the faithful were banished from their own country for the Lord’s sake, it became a special privilege to receive them, and a service to the Lord never to be forgotten. (Matt. 25) It was also a duty of necessity in those early times as places of public entertainment were unusual. In the East, such houses are still rarely to be met with, and the ancient custom of hospitality continues to be there regarded as one of the most sacred institutions of the country.

But notwithstanding the change of times and customs, it is still our duty, our privilege, to entertain strangers, and to assist them in their business, like Phoebe of old. No change in the habits of men, the customs of nations, or the edicts of tyrants, can ever set aside, or weaken the authority of the word of the Lord, or of any one of His precepts for the ordering of the ways of His people. May we walk by faith, not by sight or habit. And may the Lord’s own light shine more and more from the living pages of His holy word, for our faith and guidance in all things.

Verse 14. “Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not.” The apostle now introduces the Christian into an entirely new line of practical Christianity. His whole life and ways are to be characterized by blessing, not cursing. This precept carries us far beyond the power of nature. And it is only in proportion to the Christian’s conformity to the good and perfect will of God, that he is enabled to manifest this practical grace towards his enemies. He has been exhorted to the

exercise of love and benevolence among his brethren in Christ; but now he must go a step further, and bless, but never curse, even his enemies who are persecuting him. To possess this spirit, and to practice this precept, is to be a heaven-born child of God. "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. 5:44, 45.

This is surely a noble calling, and most ennobling to the Christian. He is a child of the ever-blessed God; he is blessed with all spiritual blessings; his present and future is unmingled blessing, and he is called while here to imitate his heavenly Father, in returning blessing for cursing. The whole history of popery flashes across the mind while meditating on these few words; but that evil system meets its utter condemnation here. "Bless your enemies," says God. "No," says popery, "Anathematize them both in this life and for evermore. It was by cursing, not blessing, that it reached such heights of power during the middle ages. But, on the other hand, thousands of God's martyred saints have spent their last breath in the flames in praying for their persecutors.

Speaking of the papacy as distinct from the true saints of God in the Catholic church, it must be manifest to all that notwithstanding its high pretensions to piety, it is essentially infidel. For example, "Marriage is honorable in all," says the word of God. "No," says Rome, "It is not only dishonorable, but a soul-damning sin for a priest to marry." Still, the word of God is there: "honorable" not in some, but "in all;" priest as well as people. Again, "Let the tares grow with the wheat until the harvest," says the Lord. "No," says Rome; "the tares of heresy must be rooted out by fire and sword." And so in many other things, which it would be out of place to pursue here. We return to our meditations on the truth of God before us, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."

The repetition of the precept adds greatly to its divine energy and importance. We must look at it fairly, however difficult to obey in its true sense. It is the peculiar privilege of the Christian to pray for all men; friends and enemies. God has given him this place of honor here—to bless others by means of his prayers. He should be like a vessel from which flow the precious blessings of Christ to the enriching of many around him. So far from wishing or praying that evil may overtake our persecutors, we must sincerely pray to the Lord to pardon and bless them. Nature would return evil for evil, and cherish vindictive feelings; but grace says, following the example of the blessed Lord and His martyr Stephen, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Verse 15. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." We have been exhorted to the exercise of love, the discharge of the duties of benevolence, the forgiveness of enemies, and now we are admonished to sympathize in the joys and sorrows of our fellow-men, but especially of our fellow-Christians. These are the comely ways of the household of faith. Being rooted and grounded in love, these graces naturally flow forth as from their native fountain. What could possibly be more unlike the spirit of Christianity than a selfish indifference to all interests but our own! How much more like the blessed Master is the Christian who enters into the joys and sorrows of others as if they were his own. This is the true expression of the communion of saints—the unselfishness of those who are walking in the light of God's own presence—the only place where we lose our selfishness. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship

one with another.” Outside of His presence we are selfish; in His presence we feel and act in the divine nature.

There is nothing so much to be deplored, so much to be guarded against, as the disposition that keeps a watchful eye over its own interests, but is blind and unbelieving to the interests of others. The Christian is saved by grace, he stands by grace, and ought to be the witness of grace in his spirit, words, and ways, at all times, and in all things, from the least to the greatest. His speech is to be always with grace, seasoned with salt. Grace is never to be absent; the whole bearing of the Christian is to be in grace, and “always.” Salt to be introduced occasionally. The needed faithful word must not be withheld; but even then grace must shine. (Col. 4:6.) If we would faithfully express the spirit of the blessed Master, we must be gracious and generous in word and deed, and that, as far as possible, without partiality. But we shall soon find out that in nothing are we so feeble as in sympathy. The blessed One of John 11 only can fully meet the need in sympathy.

These are homely thoughts for thy meditation, O my soul. Could they not be more accurately defined? thou sayest. No, nothing can define thy path in grace but the eye and the heart of Christ ever with thee. He must be before thee as thy pattern. Thy work can never be correct if thy model is not perfect. Hast thou learned to feel the joys and sorrows of others, as though they were thine own? Look again at thy Model; read, study, meditate on the unselfish love, the boundless grace, and the tender sympathy of thy Lord and Master in the Gospels. See Him there, in the majesty of divine goodness, yet meek and lowly in heart, supplying the poor with bread, and stooping in perfect grace to the fallen, the friendless, and the outcast. In all this He hath left us an example that we should walk in His steps.

May the Lord give thee, my soul, and all of us, to know more of that true christian fellowship, which weeps with them that weep, and rejoices with them that do rejoice. There is really nothing more Christ-like, because there is nothing more unselfish, than genuine sympathy. Does the welfare and happiness of others inspire us with joy? Do their afflictions and necessities affect us with sorrow—with a sympathetic sorrow that can only find relief in relieving the necessities, and in filling the heart with gladness that was bowed down with sorrow? May it ever be ours, to heighten the joy and to lessen the sorrows of others.

Meditations on Practical Christianity

Verse 16. “Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.” The apostle now presses and amplifies the important question of harmony among Christians, but especially among those who are locally united as the assembly of God. “Be of the same mind one toward another.” This plainly means that in the things of God there ought to be oneness of mind amongst His children. But we are here addressed as the children of faith, as those whose thoughts and affections, whose motives and objects are formed and governed by the word of God. When this is the case, there must be concord; the word of God being one; but whenever it is a question of human opinions, there must be discord, for each one will have his own opinion.

Oh, how shall we bewail the absence of unity even among the children of faith, who profess to own no authority in divine things but the word of God! We may indeed take up a sore lamentation, for even in the most scriptural communities, the wretched will of man, not content with the word of

God, broaches new thoughts, and ere long presses with vehement zeal its fully formed theories. Personal influence must then take the place of the word of God, and as each mind must necessarily give the new idea its own complexion, the original thought will be multiplied into as many forms as the minds that have received it. Such are the fearful, but unavoidable, consequences of departure from the word of God. If the Master held fast by what was plainly written, surely so should the disciple. "It is written—it is written" was the silencing prefix to the tempter. "God says—God says," should preface all we advance on divine subjects. Nothing is easier than to quote scripture when we have it, but nothing is more difficult when it is not there.

We are aware that many speak of essentials and non-essentials, but there are no such distinctions in the word of God. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and what He has written for us can never be non-essential. But all theories and observances springing from the human mind, however garnished with scripture, are not only non-essential, but dishonoring to the word of God and ruinous to faith. Our ancestors, the Reformers, clung tenaciously to many of the traditions of the old religion; but seeing it was wrong to hold them as traditions, and not willing to give them up, they searched for scriptures to justify their holding these loved relics. They found them in Borne, and then sought scripture to sanction them. In this way many things were imported into the christian church from the worship of pagans in the third and fourth centuries; and into the Reformed churches from popery in the sixteenth. And even those Christians who have left all human for divine ground, may have brought more loved relics with them than they are aware of.

The Spirit's unity is "One body;" but human opinions have formed bodies innumerable. Scripture assumes that Christians are endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit—the unity of the Spirit's forming; and so presses unity of feelings, objects, and interests. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...." "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, have the same love, being of one accord, of one mind...." "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Rom. 15:5, 6; Phil. 2:2 Cor. 13:11.

What meaneth—thou mayest well inquire, my soul—what meaneth this often-repeated precept, with so many of a kindred nature? "Be of the same mind one toward another." Rather, far, would we not answer. The heart sinks in shame, that a precept so becoming the children of one family, one hope, one destiny, should have been in all ages so utterly disregarded. And why? Pray why? Certainly not from zeal in pressing home the plain, simple word of God; that will stand on its own integrity and authority; but the self-importance which our own conceptions when promulgated give us, leads us on to a character of zeal which overlooks all other questions. Hast thou ever seen a man rise into a great heat from earnestly pressing the word of God home to the conscience? Possibly not. But how often hast thou seen the disciple of some supposed new light when closely questioned give way to anger, and, it may be, wind up in fierce contention. But the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of the Lord.

Return, O my soul, to the word of God. Reverently bow to that holy word; receive nothing into the chambers of thy heart that thou findest not there. Have nothing to care for or contend for but Christ and His will, so far as thou knowest it. When that which is beyond thy comprehension is pressed upon thee as of great importance, calmly listen, inquire, take it into the divine presence, and if it be

of God, embrace it and hold it from Him. But if it be not of God, if it is not in His word, it is nothing to thee. See that thou holdest nothing from man; neither contend with thy brethren as to details which affect not the grand, solid foundations of christian communion.

“Mind not high things, but condescend, to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.” The great idea in the first clause of the verse is amplified in the last three. Mutual disagreement is to be avoided on all occasions, and a spirit of kindness and union to be carefully cherished. And, inasmuch as there can be no greater hindrance to unity and love than pride, he now exhorts the saints not to be ambitious, but humble, and to watch against self-conceit.

It is natural for man to be aspiring to things above him, and to look with a measure of contempt on lowly persons and lowly pursuits. But the Christian must judge himself as to how far this worldly spirit has been mortified within him. We are cautioned against setting our minds on high things; or allowing our minds to be occupied with them; but rather, as the apostle says, “Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.’ It is difficult for the best of Christians to cast off completely the influence of rank and station in this life. Nothing seems to have a more tenacious grasp on the natural mind. It dies not but with the death of the body.

The phrase, “condescend to men of low estate,” is not considered by the critics a happy one. It means rather to associate with them. The idea of condescension is quite contrary both to the teaching of the Lord and His servant; for it supposes the maintenance of worldly superiority in our own hearts, because it means showing kindness to the lowly in a patronizing way. “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.” Luke 22:25-27.

What a contrast to the self-exalting and disdainful spirit of the world! How blessed to see it exemplified in the human path of the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, and enjoined by a servant of His whose qualities of mind and heart have found few, if any, equals among men! Nowhere, perhaps, where they let out their thoughts and feelings, can one find the very opposite so painfully as among the Rabbis. Their scorn for the unlettered poor is unbounded. But indeed it is too natural to man as such. Hence we have exhortations to Christians. “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk even as he walked.”

The meaning of the last clause, “Be not wise in your own conceit,” is intimately connected with what has been already said. Still, every word of scripture has its own place, its meaning, its own application. Self-conceit, not infrequently, is the offspring of weakness and ignorance. The mind becomes inflated from a fancied superiority to those around us, the opinions of the lowly are disregarded, and self-confidence naturally follows. So far as this species of pride manifests itself among Christians, the prosperity of the church is destroyed, and the blessing of the individual effectually hindered. May the Lord give us the spirit of a little child, humble, docile, dependent. “Be not wise in thine own eyes,” says the wise man; “fear the Lord and depart from evil...” “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes,” says the prophet, “and prudent in their own sight.” Pro. 3:7; Isa. 5:21.

Meditations on Practical Christianity

Verse 17. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men." The apostle, having enjoined the christian duties of the brotherhood, now forbids the smallest indulgence in a contrary spirit towards any one. Nothing is more natural to man than to return evil for evil. It has been observed that those of the most indolent and passive dispositions may be aroused to the strongest feelings of revenge, under the sense of injuries, real or supposed. This is the old nature, not the new: law, not grace: the first, not the last Adam. But, whose are we? Whom do we follow? Which is it, law or grace? The Christian is called to be a witness, not of the first, but of the second man; not of law, but of grace. He is to be the witness of grace for His absent Lord in this selfish, self-seeking world. If he falls from the exercise of this christian virtue, he may be ensnared by the enemy to show a spirit of revenge and retaliation.

How lovely, how heavenly, are the ways of grace! but oh! think, meditate, my soul, on the offensive, contemptible ways of wretched self. Seek, O seek, to be like Him, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed." (1 Pet. 2:23, 24.) Did He bear my sins in His own body on the tree? Did He die for me and put them all away? And shall I, who have been freely forgiven ten thousand talents, unmercifully insist on the last farthing being paid of the hundred pence owing to me by my fellow-servant? Could anything be more unseemly in the eyes of Heaven? But surely, thou wilt say, none who know Christ could ever cherish this spirit. None who are walking in the light and the joy of His presence; but if we are not living in the enjoyment of this grace ourselves, we shall be but poor witnesses of it to others. Nothing short of living, abiding, daily communion with the blessed Lord and His grace, will keep us above the temptations of making everything minister to the aggrandizement of self.

If professing Christians were to be tried by this test—returning good for evil, acting in grace—how many who have assumed that fair name would be found to have no real claim to it. But forget not, my soul, the word on which thou art meditating: "Recompense to no man"—no man, whatever he may be—"evil for evil." And remember also, that thou canst not belong in this world and engaged in its affairs, without having this grace brought into exercise. The golden rule, "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you" is much too equitable, much too heavenly, in its character, for this world. Nevertheless, the Christian must walk so as to please Christ and to be a true witness of His Spirit, if he should suffer earthly loss.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men" The critics tell us that our translation of this verse is not very happy, as it suggests an idea foreign to the meaning of the Greek. Paul does not mean to direct us to make provision for ourselves or families in an honest manner, which is probably the sense commonly attached to the passage by the English reader; but to act in such a manner as to command the confidence and good opinion of men. In this view, the connection of this with the preceding member of the verse is obvious." We must not recompense evil for evil, but act in such a way as to commend ourselves to the consciences of all men." That transparency of character and conduct in providing things good or comely, which raises the Christian far above the idea of suspicion, seems to be the true sense of this interesting clause. We may have heard Christians say when spoken to about something that seemed rather crooked, "Well, I have a good conscience myself on that point, and I don't care what anyone else thinks of me." But this spirit is entirely contrary to the spirit of the precept before us, which literally means, "above suspicion

before all men.” And this agrees with the word of the apostle to the Thessalonians: “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” The very opposite of the artifice so often used in order to gain our object. It is not enough that we abstain from what we know to be wrong, but we ought to avoid everything that would be a ground of just suspicion. Thus Paul wished others to be associated with him in the distribution of the alms of the church, “having regard to what was right, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” 2 Cor. 8:20, 21.

How wonderful, we may well exclaim, is the wisdom, the fullness, and the minuteness of scripture! What phase, what intricacy, what secrecy, what subtlety of character, does it not lay bare in the open light of heaven! It is easy being a Christian in the church; even a negative one, if quiet and peaceable, may pass muster well; but oh! how difficult it is to be a true Christian in the world, and in all the activities of practical life! Oh, to be above all just ground of suspicion even by the unbelieving, suspicious world! Lord, help! Keep us near to thyself; keep us looking at every word and acting in the light of thy presence; may our prayer be constantly ascending; may thy grace be constantly descending; maintain us thus in communion that we may be strengthened day by day. Preserve thy many children, O Lord, from the ten thousand snares by which they are surrounded; may they not do their work to be seen of men, but may they be careful in all their ways to avoid that which would bring a reproach upon thy holy name. And if at any time they may be falsely accused, may they have grace to commit themselves to thee, Lord, who judgest righteously.

Verse 18. “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” All who know what human nature is, what the affairs of life are, know the difficulty of living at peace with all men. The apostle acknowledges the difficulty and limits the injunction by saying, “If it be possible.” But the precept is plain and the duty most important; and the believer, notwithstanding the difficulty, is to do all in his power to live at peace with all men. “As much as lieth in you”—as to what is of you, as far as depends on you, live in the spirit of peace with all. The Christian is called, not only to preserve peace, but to be a peace-maker; and a blessing of peculiar honor and dignity belongs to all such. “Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.” To recompense evil for evil necessarily leads to contention and strife, while peace is the happy fruit of a forgiving disposition.

But her, again, my soul, thou must weigh up things. Consider, I pray thee, that from the wickedness of those by whom thou art surrounded, this may sometimes be impossible; but let nothing fail on thy part; ever guard against giving any occasion to anyone to complain of thee. Living near to God is the surest way of living in peace with men; for when a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Avoid the snare of courting the favor and the praise of men, for this will surely lead thee to unfaithfulness in thy testimony. Some, in this way, may think themselves possessed of the spirit of peace; but it is rather a spirit of selfish in differed se to the claims of Christ, and the salvation of our neighbors.

Much as thou art to seek after peace and pursue it, neither truth nor principle must be sacrificed to maintain it, either with the world or with Christians. The love of popularity is a great snare to many; even a Peter might be drawn aside for a moment by it; but Paul could not have peace on such terms. (Gal. 2) The great apostle, much as he loved peace and desired it, knew very little of it during the whole period of his life, because of his faithfulness. But though he had little outward peace, he was kept in perfect peace with God, because his mind was stayed on Him. May we all

know this solid, lasting peace with God, which the world neither can give nor take away.

Meditations on Practical Christianity

Verse 19. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." This is a kindred precept to the previous injunction, not to render evil for evil: still, it is varied and amplified. The Christian, under any provocation, must never avenge himself; we must leave that matter to God, who, in His own good time, will certainly avenge His "dearly beloved." Nothing can be more touching and beautiful than these terms of endearment. Just when provoked and excited to retaliation by wicked and unreasonable men, the voice of tenderest love is heard rising above the strife of human passions: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath." Retire from the scene; give place to my government, because of the injury you have received. It is my prerogative to punish. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." See Deut. 32:35.

The knowledge of God, as the avenger of His people's wrongs, is not intended to awaken in our hearts the smallest desire that the divine vengeance should overtake our enemies. This we must watch against as a secret desire, for we are prone to count on the divine vengeance falling on those who have injured us; and such expectations are closely allied to the hope that it may come. This must be guarded against; it is natural to us, and bordering on the principles of the world. It is a most unhappy thing to be dwelling, either in our own minds, or in conversation with others, on the injuries—supposed or real—which we have received. How much happier to forget them, and commit ourselves and all our affairs into the hands of the Lord. To advance in arms against our enemies; to watch for their halting; to wait our opportunity to give out what we have been nursing within; to exaggerate their failures, that they may receive double for their sins; to rejoice inwardly when we think they have been repaid in their own coin, is to indulge a spirit entirely contrary to the mind of the Lord in the passage before us, and to the whole genius of Christianity. To the Lord alone rightfully belongs the prerogative of vindicating the innocent, and of punishing the guilty.

If this be the true meaning of our precept, and the word of the Lord can never be broken, what shall be the vengeance of God, ere long, on those who are constantly injuring, slandering, and persecuting the children of God—who make them the butt of their ridicule and the objects of their jest and reproach? The injuries which they have sought to inflict on the unoffending disciples of Christ shall recoil upon themselves ten-thousand fold. How little such people think of the awfully solemn fact, that wrath and vengeance belong to God!

But thou hast first to look to thyself, my soul; for who amongst us can say, No malice dwells in my heart; no desire to see an enemy fall; no secret rejoicing at the humiliation of a rival; no tendency to be my own avenger? Ah, no, these things are all deeply rooted in thy natural heart, and nothing but the faith that commits all into the Lord's hands can keep them from being openly manifested. What, then, am I to do with an enemy when he is before me? Hear the word of the Lord.

Verse 20. "Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" The true Christian, notwithstanding his inoffensive walk, may have enemies, but he must not be the enemy of any man. Such is his position of grace in this world. He is called by the loftiest motives to be the true friend of all mankind. Instead of being his own avenger, he bends before the storm, looking to God, and seeks to render good service to his

enemy in his need and distress. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." He not only abstains from vengeance, he manifests love. How truly sublime is the standard of the grace of God for His children's ways! He returns good for evil, kindness for injury, blessing for cursing. The expressions, feed him and give him drink, are figurative of all the duties of benevolence. By these means he seeks to conquer the enmity of his persecutors, and even change them into his friends.

"For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." Amongst the many interpretations which have been given of this somewhat difficult passage, we accept the one most generally received, and which best suits the whole context. To heap coals of fire on an enemy's head is to care for him, feast him, and treat him kindly, as the most effectual means of subduing him, of melting him down. Whoever conquered an enemy's heart by revenge? How many have been conquered by love? What was it that dissolved the hardness of our unyielding hearts? A Savior's love. "Let the effort be tried," says Charles Bridges; "surround the intractable metal beneath and above; not only putting it over the fire, but heaping coals of fire upon it. Few hearts are so obdurate as not to melt under the energy of patient, self-denying, burning love. If thine enemy will not recompense thee for all the good done to him, concern not thyself with that. The Lord shall reward thee. The God of love will honor His own image in His own children."

Few hearts, we believe, in ordinary life are so hard as to be able permanently to resist the influence of such love: but those who have read the exterminating wars of the papacy, and the rooting out of heresy by fire and sword, know well that the heart of Jezebel knows no relenting, but only grows harder and colder in the presence of beseeching, weeping, bleeding love. The hearts of the men of Jezebel, as one has said, "are sheathed in the triple iron of pride, cruelty, and bigotry;" and, we may add, can never be penetrated by the most overwhelming scenes of human love or suffering. But as the burning coals of returning good for evil, and the most patient kindness, have failed to melt them, they must answer to God, to whom wrath and vengeance belong. Those who refuse to be subdued by a love that burns like coals of fire, must suffer the burning wrath of God forever. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup. Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire: into deep pits, that they rise not again." Psalm 11:6; 140:10.

Thus we see that true christian kindness brings matters to a point. If the persecutor is softened, broken down, by the grace of the persecuted, so much the better for both; the end is gained; all is happy. But if he harden himself, and despise the patience and love that returns good for evil, his guilt is increased, and his judgment is of God.

Meditations on Practical Christianity

Verse 21. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This short verse should be the Christian's motto through life. How beautiful, how heavenly, how unselfish, how Christ-like, when displayed in all its practical effects on the many details of real life! How God-like, who overcame all our evil with His good in Christ our Lord! "And now he would have us to be imitators of him in this grace, which wins the victory in his sight and to our own consciousness, even when we may seem most down-trodden before the world. For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith—faith working by love." 1 John 5:4.

The burden of this beautiful chapter of precepts is plain. We are never to conquer evil by evil, but to treat our enemies with kindness. In the world we shall often have to experience evil in some form, but we must never allow ourselves to be provoked to the indulgence of a spirit of retaliation. The first display of temper is defeat; the enemy has gained a victory. Men in general suppose that to resent an injury is only to show a proper spirit. But the Christian's rule is Christ; not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good.

Reflections on practical christianity.

We may search all the books of the most admired writers in the world; we may examine every code of morals, ancient and modern; but where shall we find such maxims as have just been the theme of our meditations? How unlike all human thoughts, laws, and systems! And even where the letter of the human law may correspond with the divine, the grand motive to its observance is wanting. The men of the world could not possibly understand the motives by which these duties of love are enjoined; such speak of what are called the laws of honor. The Christian may forget—alas! the great majority seem to have forgotten altogether—that these precepts of love naturally flow from the great doctrine of salvation by grace, and that he is thereby created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and ought to be their living expression. We may be very self-complacent over some small matter in which we made a fair show of returning good for evil, or at least in ceasing to quarrel with our fellow-Christian; but did we “put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:12, 13.) It is natural to be well pleased with ourselves when we have taken no active part in the dispute, but mere negatives are infinitely below the sublime thought of the position and aggressive love of Christ in His disciples. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6.) This is the Christian's standard, and God will never lower it to suit the selfishness of man.

The harmony between the Old and the New Testament on this great subject of christian morals is perfect. Love in all ages must be the same as to its nature; it is too expressive in its character to be satisfied with mere negatives, or bare desires. The natural man would as soon think of cutting off his right hand as stretching it out to feed an enemy in distress; but not so the true disciple of Jesus, who died for His enemies.

We have a fine instance of this divine love in operation in the prophet Elisha; 2 Kings 6:21, 22. The Syrians, who had been smitten with blindness, were led by the prophet into the midst of Samaria. The king of Israel, judging this to be a favorable opportunity to be revenged on his enemies, exclaimed, “My father, shall I smite them, shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he made great provision for them; and when they had eaten and drank he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.” This was Godlike; this was divine; but most foreign to every thought of the king of Israel. “Shall I smite them, shall I smite them?” being repeated, argues a readiness to shed blood on the part of the king. “Never,” says Bishop Hall, in his Contemplations on this passage, “Never did the king of Israel see a more pleasing sight than so many Syrian throats at his mercy.....But the charitable prophet soon

gives an angry prohibition of slaughter. Thou shalt not smite them.... If it be victory thou aimest at, overcome them with kindness. Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink.”

“Oh, noble revenge of Elisha, to feast his persecutors! to provide a table for those who had provided a grave for him! These Syrians came to Dothan full of bloody purposes to Elisha: he sends them to Samaria full of good cheer and jollity. Thus, should a prophet punish his pursuers. No vengeance but this is heroic, and fit for christian imitation. The king of Israel hath done that by his feast which he could not have done by his sword. The bands of Syria will no more come by way of ambush or incursion into the bounds of Israel.”

We have another equally noble example of the power of love in the most degenerate times of Judah. 2 Chron. 28:1-15. The prophet, Oded, met the children of Israel carrying into captivity two hundred thousand of their brethren, the children of Judah and Jerusalem, including women, sons, and daughters. But in place of slavery, through the touching appeals of the Lord’s prophet, they were all set at liberty, and not only at liberty, but with every mark of tender affection. “And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, to their brethren; then they returned to Samaria.”

We will only notice one other passage in the Old Testament, the one from which the apostle quotes, showing clearly that both were inspired by the same Spirit, and that the one stamps the other with divine authority. “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.” (Prov. 25:21, 22.) Having dwelt at some length on the general bearing of this text, we would now conclude our reflections by earnestly entreating all our readers not to entertain the thought, so common, that all these precepts are impracticable; that they are only ideal, something to be admired, but never to be actually practiced. This is unbelief, the suggestion of Satan, the language of the world and of our own corrupt hearts. Rather let us adopt the language of the apostle, and say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me;” and surely this among the rest. May the Lord Himself give us to drink deeply into His blessed spirit, so that the duty which now appears to be an impossible task, a heavy cross, may become our pleasure, our delight, our willing service. Philippians iv. 13; 1 Peter 3:8, 9.

Publicly and From House to House

The sentence which we have just penned is taken from Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, as recorded in Acts 20. It is a very suggestive sentence, and sets forth in a most forcible manner the intimate connection between the work of the teacher and that of the pastor. "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you," says the blessed apostle, "but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."

Paul was not only an apostle; he combined, in a truly marvelous manner, the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher. The two last-named are closely connected, as we may learn from Eph. 4:11; and it is of the very utmost importance that this connection should be understood and maintained. The teacher unfolds truth; the pastor applies it. The teacher enlightens the understanding; the pastor looks to the state of the heart.

The teacher supplies the spiritual nutriment; the pastor sees to the use that is made of it. The teacher occupies himself more with the word; the pastor looks after the soul. The teacher's work is, for the most part, public; the pastor's work chiefly in private. When combined in one person, the teaching faculty imparts immense moral power to the pastor, and the pastoral element imparts affectionate tenderness to the teacher.

The reader must not confound a pastor with an elder or bishop. The two things are totally distinct. Elder and bishop are frequently interchangeable, but pastor is never confounded with either. Elder is a local charge; pastor is a gift. We have nothing about elders or bishops in 1 Cor. 12 and 14, or Eph. 4, though in these scriptures we have the fullest unfolding of the subject of gifts. We must carefully distinguish between gift and local charge. Elders or bishops are for rule and oversight. Teachers and pastors are to feed and edify. An elder may be a teacher or pastor, but he must keep the two things distinct. They rest upon a different footing altogether, and are never to be confounded.

However, our object in this brief article is not to write a treatise on ministry, or to dwell elaborately upon the difference between spiritual gift and local charge, but simply to offer to our readers a few words on the immense importance of the pastoral gift in the church of God, in order that they may be stirred up to earnest prayer to the great Head of the church, that He may graciously be pleased to shed forth this precious gift more abundantly in our midst. We are not straitened in Him. The treasury of spiritual life is not exhausted; and our Lord Christ loves His church, and delights to nourish and cherish His body, and to supply its every need out of His own infinite fullness.

That there is urgent need of pastoral care throughout the length and breadth of the church of God, few can deny who know what pastorship is, and who are at all acquainted with the true condition of the church. How rare is the true spiritual pastor! It is easy to take the name, and assume the office; but, in point of fact, pastorship is neither a name nor an office, but a living reality—a divinely-imparted gift—something communicated by the Head of the church for the growth and blessing of His members. A true pastor is a man who is not only possessed of a real spiritual gift,

but also animated by the very affections of the heart of Christ toward every lamb and sheep of His blood-bought flock.

Yes, we repeat it, “every lamb and sheep.” A true pastor is a pastor all over the world. He is one who has a heart, a message, a ministry, for every member of the body of Christ. Not so the elder or bishop. His is a local charge, confined to the locality in the which such charge is entrusted. But the pastor’s range is the whole church of God, as the evangelist’s range is the wide, wide world. In New Zealand, in London, in Paris, or Canton, a pastor is a pastor, and he has his blessed work everywhere. To imagine a pastor, as confined to a certain congregation to which he is expected to discharge the functions of evangelist, teacher, elder, or bishop, is something altogether foreign to the teaching of the New Testament.

But, ah! how few real pastors are to be found in our midst! How rare is the pastor’s gift, the pastor’s heart! Where shall we find those who duly combine the two grand and important elements contained in the heading of this paper—“Publicly and from house to house?” A man may, perhaps, give us a brief address on the Lord’s day, or a lecture on some week-day; but where is the “house to house” side of the question? Where is the close, earnest, diligent looking after individual souls, from Monday morning till Saturday night? Very often it happens that the public teaching shoots completely over the head; it is the house to house teaching that is sure to come home to the heart. How frequently it happens that something uttered in public is entirely misunderstood and misapplied, until the loving pastoral visit during the week supplies the true meaning and just application.

Nor is this all. How much there is in a pastor’s range that the public teacher never can compass! No doubt public teaching is most important; would we had ten thousand times more of it than we have. The teacher’s work is invaluable, and when mellowed by the deep and tender affection of a pastor’s heart, can go a great way indeed in meeting the soul’s manifold necessities. But the loving pastor who earnestly, prayerfully, and faithfully goes from house to house, can get at the deep exercises of the soul, the sorrows of the heart, the puzzling questions of the mind, the grave difficulties of the conscience. He can enter, in the profound sympathy of an affectionate heart, into the ten thousand little circumstances and sorrows of the path. He can kneel down with the tried, the tempted, the crushed, and the sorrowing one, before the precious mercy-seat, and they can pour out their hearts together, and draw down sweet consolation from the God of all grace and the Father of mercies.

The public teacher cannot do this. No doubt, if, as we have said; he has something of the pastoral element in him, he can anticipate in his public address a great deal of the soul’s private exercises, sorrows, and difficulties. But he cannot supply the house to house ingredient. He cannot fully meet the soul’s individual need. This is the pastor’s holy work. It seems to us that a pastor is to the soul what a doctor is to the body. He must be able to feel the spiritual pulse. He must understand disease and medicine. He must be able to tell what is the matter, and what remedies to apply. Alas! how few proper doctors there are. Perhaps they are as rare as proper pastors. It is one thing to take the title, and another thing to do the work.

Christian reader, we earnestly entreat you to join us in fervent believing prayer to God to raise up true pastors amongst us. We are in sad need of them. There is great dearth indeed, both of teachers and pastors. The sheep of Christ are not fed and cared for. We are occupied so much

with our own affairs, that we have not time to look after the beloved flock of Christ. And even on these occasions, when the Lord's people assemble in public, how little there is for their precious souls! What long barren pauses! —the silence of poverty! What aimless hymns and prayers! How little leading of the flock through the green pastures of holy scripture, and by the still waters of divine love! And then, all through the week, no loving pastoral call, no tender solicitous inquiry after soul or body. There seems to be no time. Every moment is swallowed up in the business of providing for ourselves and our families. It is, alas! the old sad story—"All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." How different it was with the blessed apostle! He found time to make tents, and also to "teach publicly and from house to house." He was not only the great apostle, ranging over continents and planting churches, but he was also the loving pastor, the tender nurse, the skilful spiritual physician.

Let no one suppose that we advocate idleness. The Lord preserve us from any such moral mischief! We believe there is nothing like abundance of healthful occupation. Indeed, the apostle himself afforded a living example of this, by working with his hands the thing which is good, that he might not be chargeable to any.

But for all that he found time to teach, preach, and pastorize. He had a heart for Christ and for His body, the church, and for every member of that body. Here lies the real secret of the matter. It is wonderful what a loving heart can accomplish. If I really love the church, I shall desire its blessing and progress, and seek to promote these according to my ability.

May the Lord raise up in the midst of His people pastors and teachers after His own heart—men filled with His Spirit, and animated by a genuine love for His church—men competent and ready to teach—"publicly and from house to house."

Questions: and How to Meet Them

July, 1876

My beloved Friend,

I have been very much interested of late in looking at the excellent way in which John the Baptist met the various questions which came before him; for, alas! there were questions in his day, as there are in ours.

What I specially refer to now is presented to us in chapters 1 and 3 of John's Gospel.

The first question which this dear and honored servant of Christ was called to answer had respect to himself, and of this he makes very short work indeed. "This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?"

It is ever unwelcome to any right-minded person to be asked to speak about himself. So, I doubt not, John found it. He readily told them that he was not the Messiah, that he was not Elias; yea, that he was not even the prophet. But they would have a positive answer. "They said unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?" Little indeed had he to say of himself. "I" had a very small place in John's thoughts. "A voice." Was this all? Yes; this was all. The Spirit in the prophet had spoken; John quotes the words, and there he leaves it. Blessed servant! Honored witness! Would we had more of thy excellent spirit!—more of thy method of answering questions!

But these Pharisees were not satisfied. John's self-biding spirit was entirely beyond them. "They asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, neither the prophet?"

Here again the Baptist makes short work. "John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you whom ye know not. He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

Thus, as to himself, he was merely a voice. And, as to his work, he baptized with water, and he was only too glad to retire behind that blessed One whose shoe's latchet he felt himself utterly unworthy to unloose.

This is uncommonly fine. I feel assured, my beloved friend, that the lovely spirit displayed by this most illustrious servant of Christ is what you earnestly covet for yourself. And I think I am one with you herein. I do long to know more and more of this self-hiding—this losing sight of self and its doings—this retiring spirit. Truly it is much needed in this day of egotistical boast and pretension.

But turn with me for a moment to John 3. Here we have another kind of question. It is not now about himself or his work, but about purifying. "There arose a question among some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came to John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all

come to him.”

Now this was a mistake, for “Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.” But this is not the point here. What strikes me is John’s mode of settling all questions, right or wrong. He finds a perfect solution for all in the presence of his Lord. “John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.”

How true! How simple! How perfectly obvious! What a complete settlement of every question! If a man has anything at all, whence did it, whence could it, come? Surely only from heaven. What a perfect cure for strife, envy, jealousy, and emulation! “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” What a tale this tells of earth and of man! What a record it bears to heaven and to God! Not one atom of good on earth but what comes from heaven. Not an atom of good in man but what comes from God. Why, then, should any one boast, or be jealous, or envious? If all goodness is from above, let there be an end of all strife, and let all hearts go up in praise to “the Father of lights.”

Thus it was the Baptist met the questions of his day. He let all the questioners know that their questions had but little interest for him. And, more than that, he let them know where all his interests lay. This blessed servant found all his springs in the Lamb of God, in His precious work—in His glorious Person. The voice of the Bridegroom was enough for him, and, having heard that, his joy was full. The question of purifying might be interesting enough in its place, and no doubt, like all other questions, it had its right and its wrong side; but for John, the Bridegroom’s voice was enough. In His presence he found a divine answer to every question—a divine solution of every difficulty. He looked up to heaven, and saw every good thing coming from thence. He looked into the Bridegroom’s face, and saw every moral glory centered there. This was enough for him. Why trouble him with questions of any kind—questions about himself or his work, or about purifying? He lived far beyond the region of questions in the blessed presence of his Lord, and there he found all his heart could ever need.

Now, my much-loved friend, it seems to me that you and I would do well to take a leaf out of John’s book as regards all this. I need not remind you that in this our day there are questions agitating men’s minds. Yes, and some of us are called to account for not expressing ourselves more decidedly on some at least of these questions. But, for my part, I believe the devil is doing his utmost to alienate our hearts from Christ and from one another by questions. We ought not to be ignorant of his devices. He does not come openly, and say, “I am the devil, and I want to divide and scatter you by questions.” Yet this is precisely what he is seeking to do.

Now, it matters not whether the question be right or wrong in itself; the devil can make use of a right question just as effectively as of a wrong one, provided he can succeed in raising that question into undue prominence, and causing it to come between our souls and Christ, and between us and our brethren. I can understand a difference in judgment, on various minor questions. Christians have differed about such for many long centuries, and they will continue to differ until the end of time. It is human weakness. But when any question is allowed to assume undue prominence, it ceases to be mere human weakness, and becomes a wile of Satan. I may have a very decided judgment on any given point, and so may you. But what I long for now is a thorough sinking of all questions, and a rejoicing together in hearing the Bridegroom’s voice, and going on together in the light of His blessed countenance. This will confound the enemy. It will

effectually deliver us from prejudice and partiality, from cliques and coteries. We shall then measure one another, not by our views of any particular question, but by our appreciation of the Person of Christ, and our devotion to His cause.

In a word, my beloved and valued friend, what I long for is that you and I, and all our dear brethren throughout the whole world, may be characterized by a deep-toned, thorough, devotion to the name, and truth, and cause of Christ. I long to cultivate broad sympathies, that can take in every true lover of Christ, even though we see not eye to eye on all minor questions. At best “we know but in part and we can never expect people to agree with us about questions. But if Christ be our one absorbing object, all other things will assume their right place, their relative value, their proper proportions. “Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect (as many as have Christ for their one object), be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise (or differently, τερως) minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule (Christ), and mind the same thing” (Christ). The moment anything else but Christ is introduced as a rule to walk by, it is simply the work of the devil. Of this I am as sure as that I hold this pen in my hand.

May the Lord keep us all close to Himself, walking together, not in sectarianism, but in true brotherly love, seeking the blessing and prosperity of all who belong to Christ, and promoting in every possible way His blessed cause, until He come!

Ever most affectionately yours,

C. H. M.

The Red Sea

“And I shall see the Bed Sea that the Israelites crossed over long ago,” said a child to a friend when leaving Australia for England.

“And I shall sail upon the great blue deep,

Far, far away!

Where the great waves across the ocean sweep,

As if at play.

“And oh! how I shall love to travel o’er

That same Red Sea,

Where Israel walked to reach the distant shore,

From danger free.

“And might I gather but one pearly shell,

From that far coast,

Where overwhelming floods did swiftly quell

Proud Pharaoh’s host!”

Sweet babe! no desert’s weary track for thee,

No Red Sea’s gloom;

Beneath the pearly deep, the crystal sea,

Thy early tomb.

O’er Jordan’s flood by angel pinions borne,

Thy better part;

To Canaan’s land, ere yet by grief was torn,

Thy tender heart.

While yet thy robe of innocence was white,

Oh happiest child!

Thy Father’s hand withdrew thee from our sight,

Still undefiled.

A little longer, ye who held him dear,
Your loved, your own;
The Red Sea crossed, must tread the desert drear,
But not alone.
The hand that snatched him from your warm embrace,
A Father's hand—
Will lead you to his happy dwelling place,
That better land.

Redemption and Purchase

“Denying the Lord that bought them.” A word on this clause of holy scripture may relieve the minds of persons to whom it often seems harsh that the Lord had bought false teachers and heretics. You must distinguish between being bought and being redeemed.

It is never taught in scripture that the Lord redeemed a heretic, or any other man that was not saved. There is not a syllable in God’s word that enfeebles the certainty of eternal life for the believer; but it is none the less clearly taught there that the Lord has “bought” every man whatever, saved or not—believer or not. The result for man has nothing to do with the Lord’s purchase. He has bought the world and everything that belongs to it. This is the doctrine everywhere, whether in parable or in doctrine, whether in gospel or epistle; and this is the constant statement of the Spirit. Of course, therefore, these bad people were bought as well as the rest.

But redemption is another thought, and so far from purchase being the same as redemption, the two things are decidedly in contrast. The object of redemption is to deliver a person from the power of the adversary, to bring one who is a captive out of slavery, to set him free by the ransom paid. This is only true of the believer; he alone is brought out of captivity and made free. It is an efficacious not a nominal deliverance, and belongs only to faith. It is not merely that there is purchase-money; this is not enough for redemption, which is a question of setting a slave or prisoner free, and this is never the case unless a soul believes in Christ. But it is a different thing with purchase; you may buy that which is inanimate, and that which is bought belongs to you indeed, but possibly for harm and shame. Supposing you could purchase a person, what is the effect of the transaction? You make him a slave; thus it is the very reverse of redemption. Redemption makes the slave free, but purchase makes what you buy your property or your slave.

These two facts are both true of Christians, and meet in Christ’s blood. The Christian is both redeemed and purchased; but he alone is redeemed. But besides being redeemed, he is bought by the blood of Christ, and therefore it is that he becomes Christ’s slave. He is a bondman of Christ Jesus. Perfectly freed by redemption, he is made thoroughly a slave by purchase; and this is precisely the anomaly the natural man never understands. As for the theologians, some of them are only natural men; but one might ask in despair, what it is they ever seem to understand? The fact is that they have so confused the two things as to make the subject hopeless in their hands.

It is clear that the dispute between those called Calvinists and the so-called Arminians turns much on this point, which is then very important. Both of them agree in the error that redemption and purchase are the same thing. The consequence is that they never can settle the question. The Calvinist is quite right in his premise that redemption belongs solely to the household of faith; the Arminian is no less right in his premise that purchase belongs to every creature under the effects of sin. But they are both equally mistaken in assuming them to be the same thing; and there they wrangle, as they might forever, without advancing an inch toward settling the matter, because each holds a truth that the other denies.

The truth in this question, as in many others which have distracted Christendom is, that faith receives that which the contending parties lose in the dispute; faith bows to the whole truth, instead of being shut up to a part of it.

Here then in 2 Pet. 2 it will be seen that it is only a question of purchase, which does not imply that these men were ever born of God.

W. K.

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 1

We propose, in dependence upon divine guidance, to write a few papers on the life and ministry of the blessed servant of Christ whose name stands at the head of this paper. We shall trace him through the Gospels, through the Acts, and through the Epistles, for he appears in all the three grand divisions of the New Testament. We shall meditate upon his call; upon his conversion; his confession; his fall; his restoration; in a word, we shall glance at all the scenes and circumstances of his remarkable history, in which we shall find, if we mistake not, many valuable lessons which we may well ponder. May the Lord the Spirit be our Guide and Teacher!

For the earliest notice of Simon Peter, we must turn to the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Here we find, at the very outset, a scene full of interest and instruction. Amongst those who had been gathered by the powerful ministry of John the Baptist there were two men who heard him deliver his glowing testimony to the Lamb of God. We must quote the words: "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God."

These words fell with peculiar power upon the hearts of two of John's disciples. Not that the words were specially addressed to them; at least, we are not told so. But they were words of life, freshness, and power—words welling up from the depths of a heart that had found an object in the Person of Christ. On the preceding day, John had spoken of the work of Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And again, "The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

Thus much as to the work of Christ, on which we shall not now dwell, inasmuch as we have recently dwelt upon that great subject, in the pages of "Things New and Old."

But let the reader note particularly John's testimony to the Person of the Lamb of God. "John stood," riveted, no doubt, by the object which filled the vision of his soul. "And looking upon Jesus, as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God." It was this that went right to the very heart of the two disciples who stood beside him, and so affected them that they left their master to follow this new and infinitely more glorious object that had been presented to their notice.

There is always immense moral power in the testimony that emanates from an absorbed heart. There is nothing formal, official, or mechanical, in such testimony. It is the pure fruit of heart communion; and there is nothing like it. It is not the mere statement of true things about Christ. It is the heart occupied and satisfied with Christ. It is the eye riveted, the heart fixed, the whole moral being centered and absorbed in that one commanding object that fills all heaven with His glory.

This is the kind of testimony we so much want both in our private life and in our public reunions. It is this that tells, with such marvelous power, on others. We never can speak effectively for Christ, unless our hearts are filled with Him. And so it is also, in reference to our meetings. When Christ is the one absorbing object of every heart, there will be a tone and an atmosphere which must tell in some way or other on all who enter the place. There may not be any gift—any teaching or

exhortation—not much power in prayer—very little charm in the singing, for persons of musical taste; but oh! there is heart-enjoyment of Christ. His name is as ointment poured forth. Every eye is fixed on Him; every heart is centered in Him; He is the commanding object—the satisfying portion. The unanimous voice of the assembly seems to say, “Behold the Lamb of God,” and this must produce its own powerful effect, either in attracting souls to Him, or in convincing them that the people in that assembly have gotten something of which they know nothing at all.

But let us note particularly the effect produced on the two disciples of John. “They heard him speak and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi—which is to say, being interpreted, Master—where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day; for it was about the tenth hour.” Thus the blessed testimony of the Baptist led them to follow Jesus, and as they followed on, fresh light was poured upon their path, and they found themselves, at length, in the very abode of that one of whom they had heard their Master speak.

Nor was this all, though it was much—very much indeed—something to satisfy their own hearts’ deepest longings. But there was more. There was that delightful going out after others which must, in every instance, be the result of close personal acquaintance and occupation with the Person of Christ. “One of the two which heard John, and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.”

Here is something which we may well ponder. See how the circle of blessing widens! See the result of a single sentence uttered in truth and reality! It might seem to a carnal observer as though John had lost by his testimony. Far from it. That honored servant found his joy in pointing souls to Jesus. He did not want to link them on to himself, or to gather a party round himself. “John bare witness of him, and cried saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me.” And again, “This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they ask him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us, What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.”—What a fine moral lesson for Pharisees to be set down to!—“And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.”

It is not very likely that the man who could give such answers, and bear such a testimony, would be, in the smallest degree, affected by the loss of a few disciples. But, in good truth it was not losing them when they followed Jesus and found their abode with Him. Of this we have the very finest evidence that could be furnished, from John’s own lips, in reply to those who evidently thought that their master might possibly feel at being left in the shade. “They came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold,

the same baptizeth, and all come to him.” John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” John 3.

Noble words! It was the joy of this most illustrious servant—this greatest of woman born, to hide himself behind his Master, and find all his personal springs in Him. As to himself, he was but a voice. As to his work, he was only baptizing with water, he was not worthy to loose the latchet of his Master’s shoe.

Such was John. Such the man whose glowing testimony led the brother of Simon Peter to the feet of the Son of God. The testimony was clear and distinct, and the work deep and real in the souls of those who received it.

It does the heart good to note the simple, earnest, forcible words of Simon’s brother Andrew. He is able to say, without reserve or hesitation, “We have found the Messiah.” It was this that led him to look after his brother. He lost no time. Saved and blessed himself, he would, at once, begin to lead his brother into the same blessing.

How simple! How morally lovely! How divinely natural! No sooner had he found the Messiah, than he went in search of his brother to tell him of his joy. It must ever be thus. We cannot doubt for a moment, that the true secret of looking after others is the actual finding Christ for ourselves. There is no uncertainty in Andrew’s testimony—no wavering—no doubting or fearing. He does not even say, “I hope I have found.” No; all is clear and distinct; and, we may say, with all possible assurance, it would not have done Simon Peter much good had it been anything else. An uncertain sound is not of much use to anyone.

It is a grand point to be able to say, “I have found Christ.” Reader, can you say it? Doubtless, you have heard of Him. It may be you have heard from the lips of some ardent lover of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God.” But have you followed that blessed One? If so, you will long to find someone to whom you can speak of your newly found treasure and bring him to Jesus. Begin at home. Get hold of your brother, or your sister, or your companion, your fellow student, your fellow shopman, your fellow workman, your fellow servant, and whisper lovingly, but clearly and decidedly, into his ear, “I have found Jesus. Do come, taste and see how gracious He is. Come—oh! do come to Jesus.” Remember this was the way that the great apostle Peter was first called. He first heard of Jesus from the lips of his own brother Andrew. This mighty workman—this great preacher who was blessed, on one occasion, to three thousand souls—who opened the kingdom of heaven to the Jew in Acts 3 and to the Gentile in Acts 10—this blessed servant was brought to Christ by the hand of his own brother in the flesh.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 10

We could not close this series of papers without glancing, however cursorily, at the way in which our apostle discharged his various commissions. We see him “catching men;” opening the kingdom of heaven to the Jew and to the Gentile; and, finally, feeding and shepherding the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ.

Elevated services these, for any poor mortal to be called to, and more especially for one who had fallen so deeply as Simon Peter. But the remarkable power with which he was enabled to fulfill his blessed service, proved beyond all question, the reality and completeness of his restoration. If, at the close of the gospels, we see Peter, restored in heart and conscience; in the Acts and in his epistles, we see him restored to his work.

We cannot attempt to go into details; but a point or two must be briefly noticed. There is something uncommonly fine in Peter’s address in the third chapter of Acts. We can only quote a sentence or two. “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son, Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just.”

What a splendid evidence we have here of Peter’s complete restoration! It would have been utterly impossible for him to charge his audience with having denied the Holy One, if his own soul had not been fully and blessedly restored. Alas! he, too, had denied his Lord; but he had repented, and wept bitterly. He had been down in the depths of self-judgment, just where he desired to see every one of his hearers. He had been face to face with his Lord—just where he longed to see them. He had been given to taste the sweetness, the freeness, the fullness of the pardoning love of God, to prove the divine efficacy of the atonement and the prevalence of the advocacy of Christ. He was pardoned, healed, restored; and as such he stood in their presence, a living and striking monument of that grace which he was unfolding to them, and which was amply sufficient for them as it had proved for him. “Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Who could more distinctly and emphatically utter such precious words than the erring, restored and forgiven Peter? If any one of his audience had ventured to remind the preacher of his own history, what would he have said in reply? Doubtless, he would have had little to say about himself; but much—very much to say about that rich and precious grace which had triumphed over all his sin and failure—much—very much about that precious blood which had canceled forever all his guilt, and given perfect peace to his conscience—much, very much about that all-prevailing advocacy to which he owed his full and perfect restoration.

Peter was just the man to unfold to others those glorious themes in which he had so thoroughly learned to find his strength, his comfort and his joy. He had proved, in no ordinary way, the reality and stability of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was no mere empty theory; no mere doctrine or opinion with him.

It was all intensely real to him. His very life and salvation were bound up in it. He knew the heart of Christ, in a very intimate way. He knew its infinite tenderness and compassion—its unswerving devotedness, in the face of many stumbles, shortcomings, and sins; and hence, he could bear the most distinct and powerful testimony to the whole house of Israel, to the power of the name of Jesus, the efficacy of His blood, and the deep and infinite love of His heart. “His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”

What power in these words! How refreshing is the testimony to the peerless Name of Jesus! It is perfectly delightful at all times; but specially so in this infidel day in which our lot is cast—a day so marked by the determined and persistent effort of the enemy to exclude the Name of Jesus from every department.

Look where you will, whether it be in the domain of science, of religion, of philanthropy, or moral reform, and you see the same sedulous and diligently pursued purpose to banish the name of Jesus. It is not said so in plain terms, but it is so, nevertheless. Scientific men—the professors and lecturers in our universities talk and write about “the forces of nature” and the facts of science in such a way as practically to exclude the Christ of God from the whole field of nature. Scripture tells us, blessed be God! that by the Son of His love, “All things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” And again, speaking of the Son, the inspiring Spirit says, “Who being the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” Col. 1, Heb. 1

These splendid passages lead us to the divine root of the matter. They speak not of “the forces of nature” but of the glory of Christ—the power of His hand—the virtue of His word. Infidelity would rob us of Christ, and give us instead, “the forces of nature.” We vastly prefer our own beloved Lord. We delight to see His Name bound up, indissolubly, with creation in all its vast and marvelous fields. We vastly prefer the eternal record of the Holy Ghost to all the finely-spun theories of infidel professors. We rejoice to see the Name of Jesus bound up in every department of religion and philanthropy. We shrink, with ever increasing horror, from every system, every club, every order, every association that dares to shut out the glorious Name of Jesus from its schemes of religion and moral reform. We do solemnly declare that the religion, the philanthropy, the moral reform which does not make the Name of Jesus its Alpha and its Omega, is the religion, the philanthropy and the moral reform of hell. This may seem strong, severe, ultra and narrow minded; but it is our deep and thorough conviction, and we utter it fearlessly, in the presence of all the infidelity and superstition of the day.

But we must return to our apostle’s discourse which has wakened up those glowing sentiments in the very depths of the soul.

Having charged home their terrible sin upon the consciences of his hearers, he proceeds to apply the healing, soothing balm of the gospel, in words of marvelous power and sweetness. “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer, he hath so

fulfilled.” Nothing can exceed the grace of this. It recalls the words of Joseph to his troubled brethren. “It was not you that sent me hither, but God.” Such is the exquisite grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—such the infinite love and goodness of our God.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from [or by] the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

Thus did this dear and honored apostle, in the power of the Holy Ghost, throw wide open the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, in pursuance of his high commission as recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew. It is what we may well call a splendid testimony from first to last. Most gladly would we linger over it; but our limited space forbids. We can only commend it to the earnest study of the reader, and pass on, for a few moments, to the tenth chapter of Acts which records the opening of the kingdom to the Gentile.

We assume that the reader understands the truth in reference to the keys of the kingdom of heaven being committed to Peter. We shall not therefore occupy his time or our own. In combating the ignorant superstition which attributes to our apostle what we may rest assured he would have rejected with intense and holy horror, namely, the power to let souls into heaven. Detestable folly! which, while it obstinately refuses Christ, who is God’s only way to heaven, will blindly build up on some poor sinful mortal like ourselves who himself was a debtor to the sovereign grace of God and the precious blood of Christ for his entrance into the church on earth and into heaven above.

But enough of this. All intelligent Christians understand that the apostle Peter was commissioned, by his Lord and ours, to open the kingdom of heaven to both Jew and Gentile. To him were committed the keys—not of the church, nor yet of heaven; but of “the kingdom of heaven;” and we find him, as it were, using one of those keys in Acts 3, and the other in Acts 10.

But he was by no means so alert in taking up the latter as he was in taking up the former. Prejudice—that sad hindrance, then, now, and always—stood in the way. He needed to have his mind enlarged to take in the divine purpose in respect to the Gentiles. To one trained amid the influences of the Jewish system, it seemed one thing to admit Jews into the kingdom, and quite another to admit Gentiles. Our apostle had to get further instruction in the school of Christ ere his mind could take in the “no difference” doctrine. “Ye know,” he says to Cornelius, “how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation.” Thus it had been in days gone by; but now all was changed. The middle wall was broken down—the barriers were swept away; “God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” He had seen, in a vessel which came from heaven, and returned thither, “all manner of

four-footed beasts,” and a voice from heaven had commanded him to slay and eat. This was something new to Simon Peter. It was a wonderful lesson he was called to learn on the housetop of Simon the tanner. He was there, for the first time, taught that “God is no respecter of persons,” and that what God hath cleansed, no man may call common.

All this was good and healthful for the soul of our apostle. It was well to have his heart enlarged to take in the precious thoughts of God—to see the old barriers swept away before the magnificent tide of grace flowing from the heart of God over a lost world—to learn that the question of “clean” or “unclean” was no longer to be decided by an examination of hoofs and habits (Lev. 11)—that the same precious blood of Christ which could cleanse a Jew could cleanse a Gentile also, and moreover, that the former needed it, just as much as the latter.

This, we repeat, was most valuable instruction for the heart and understanding of Simon Peter: and if the reader wants to know how far he took it in and appreciated it, he has but to turn to Acts 15 and read the apostle’s own commentary upon the matter. The church had reached a solemn crisis. Judaizing teachers had begun their terrible work. They would fain bring the Gentile converts under the law. The occasion was intensely interesting and deeply important, yea, solemnly momentous. The very foundations were at stake. If the enemy could but succeed in bringing the Gentile believers under the law, all was gone.

But, all praise to our ever gracious God, He did not abandon His church to the power or wiles of the adversary. When the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raised up a standard against him. A great meeting was convened—not in some obscure corner; but at Jerusalem, the very center and source of all the religious influence of the moment—the very place, too, from whence the evil had emanated. God took care that the great question should not be decided at Antioch by Paul and Barnabas, but at Jerusalem itself, by the unanimous voice of the apostles, elders, and the whole church, governed, guided and taught by God the Holy Ghost.

At this great meeting our apostle delivered himself in a style that stirs the very deepest springs of our spiritual life. Hear his words, “And when there had been much disputing—” Alas! how soon the miserable disputing began. “Peter rose up and said unto them, Men, brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us. And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, nor we were able to bear? But we believe that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they.”

This is uncommonly fine. Indeed it is morally grand. He does not say, “They shall be saved even as we.” No; but “We shall be saved even as they”—on the same ground, after the same model, in the same way. The Jew comes down from his lofty dispensational position, only too thankful to be saved, just like the poor Gentile, by the precious grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How those words of the apostle of the circumcision must have refreshed and delighted the heart of Paul as he sat at the marvelous and never to be forgotten meeting! Not that he sought in any way, the countenance, the support, or authority of man. He had received his gospel and his commission, not from Peter but from Peter’s Lord; and from Him, too, not as the Messiah on earth,

but as the risen and glorified Son of God in heaven. Still, we cannot doubt that the testimony of his beloved fellow-laborer was profoundly interesting and cordially welcome to the apostle of the Gentiles. We can only say Alas! alas! that there should have been aught in the after course of that fellow-laborer, in the smallest degree inconsistent with his splendid testimony at the conference. Alas! that Peter's conduct at Antioch should vary so much from his words at Jerusalem. See Gal. 2

But such is man, even the best of men, if left to himself. And the higher the man is, the more mischief he is sure to do if he makes a stumble. We shall not however dwell on the sad and painful scene at Antioch, between those two most illustrious servants. They are both now in heaven, in the presence of their beloved Lord, where the remembrance of past failure and sin only enhances the value of that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and of that grace which reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. The Holy Ghost has thought proper to record the fact that our apostle failed in frankness and integrity at Antioch; and further, that the blessed apostle of the Gentiles had to withstand him to the face; but we are not going to expatiate upon it. We would profit by it, as well we may, for it is full of deep instruction and solemn warning. If such an one as the apostle Peter, after all his experience, his fall and restoration, his long course of service, his intimate acquaintance with the heart of Christ, all the instruction he had received, all his gifts and knowledge, all his powerful preaching and teaching—if such an one as this could, after all, dissemble through fear of man, or to hold a place in man's esteem, what shall we say for ourselves? Simply this:

“O Lamb of God, still keep me close to Thy pierced side;

'Tis only there in safety and peace I can abide.

When foes and snares surround me, when lusts and fears within:

The grace that sought and found me alone can keep me clean.

May the Lord greatly bless to our souls our meditation on the history of Simon Peter! May his life and its lessons be used of the Holy Ghost to deepen in our souls the sense of our own utter weakness, and of the matchless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 2

The notice which we have of our apostle, in John 1, is very brief indeed, though, doubtless, there is much wrapped up in it. “Andrew first findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas: Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone.”

Now, we have no record here of any deep spiritual work in the soul of Simon. We are told his name in the old creation, and his name in the new; but there is no allusion whatever to those deep exercises of soul of which we know he was the subject. For these we must ask the reader to turn for a few moments to Luke 5, where we have a marvelous piece of divine workmanship.

“And it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.”

Mark especially the moral grace that shines here. “He prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land.” Though Lord of all creation—Possessor of heaven and earth—He nevertheless, as the lowly, gracious man, courteously owns Simon’s proprietorship, and asks, as a favor, that he would thrust out a little from the shore. This was morally lovely, and we may rest assured it produced its own effect upon the heart of Simon.

“ Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draft.” Simon was about to be well paid for the loan of his boat. “And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net.” There was power, as well as grace, in that word! “And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.” Neither their nets nor their ships were able to sustain the marvelous fruit of divine power and goodness. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Here, then, we have the great practical effect produced in Peter’s soul by the combined action of grace and power. He is brought to see himself in the light of the divine presence, where alone self can be truly seen and judged. Simon had heard the word of Jesus addressed to the multitude on the shore. He had felt the sweet grace and moral beauty of His way toward himself. He had marked the display of divine power in the astonishing draft of fish. All told powerfully upon his heart and conscience, and brought him on his face before the Lord.

Now this is what we may call a genuine work of conviction. Simon is in the place of true self-judgment—a very blessed place indeed—a place from which all must start if they are to be

much used in the Lord's work, or if, indeed, they are ever to exhibit much depth or stability in the divine life. We need never look for any real power or progress unless there is a deep and solid work of the Spirit of God in the conscience. Persons who pass rapidly into what they call peace, are apt to pass as rapidly out of it again. It is a very serious thing indeed to be brought to see ourselves in the light of God's presence, to have our eyes opened to the truth of our past history, our present condition, and our future destiny. Simon Peter found it so in his day, and so have all those who have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. Harken to Isaiah's words, when he saw himself in the powerful light of the divine glory. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." So also in the case of the patriarch, Job. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

These glowing utterances reveal a deep and genuine work in both the patriarch and the prophet. And surely our apostle occupied the same moral ground when he exclaimed, from the very depths of a broken heart, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." If Simon is to be called Cephas, he must be thoroughly broken up, and brought to the end of himself. If he is to be used to catch men, he must learn, in a divine way, man's true condition. If he is to teach others that "all flesh is as grass," he must learn the application of this great truth to his own heart.

Thus it is in every case. Look at Saul of Tarsus. What mean those three days of blindness, during which he neither did eat nor drink? May we not confidently affirm that they were serious days, perhaps the most serious in the entire history of that remarkable man? They were, doubtless, days in the which he was led down to the most profound depths of his moral being, the deepest roots of his history, his nature, his character, his conduct, his religion. He was led to see that his whole life had been a terrible mistake, an awful lie; that his very career as a religious man had been one of mad rebellion against the Christ of God. All this, we may feel assured, passed in solemn and soul-subduing review before the soul of this deeply, because divinely, convicted man. His repentance was no superficial work; it was deep and thorough; it left its impress upon the whole of his after course, character, and ministry. He, too, like Simon, was brought to the end of himself, and there he found an object that not only met his deepest need, but also perfectly satisfied all the cravings and aspirations of his renewed being.

Now, we must confess we delight in contemplating a spiritual work of this kind. It is truly refreshing to dwell upon conversions of this type. We greatly fear that in much of the work of our time there is a sad lack of depth and spiritual power, and, as a consequence, a lack of stability in the christian character, and of permanency in the christian course. It may be that those of us who are engaged in the work of evangelization are feeble and shallow in the divine life ourselves, that we are not near enough to Christ to understand how to deal with souls; that we do not know how to present the truth from God's side of it; that we are more desirous of showing out how the sinner's need is met, than how the glory of God is secured and maintained. We do not, perhaps, sufficiently press the claims of truth and holiness upon the consciences of our hearers. There is a want of fullness in the presentation of the truth of God, too much harping upon one string; there is a barrenness and dreary monotony in the preaching, arising from lack of abiding near the fountain head, and drinking into our own souls from the inexhaustible springs of grace and truth in the Person and work of Christ. Perhaps, too, we are more occupied with ourselves and our preaching than with Christ and

His glory; more anxious to be able to parade the results of our work, than to be a sweet savor of Christ to God-ward.

We cannot but feel the weight and seriousness of these considerations for all who take part in the work of the gospel. We certainly do need to be more in the presence of God in reference to our service, for we cannot, by any possibility, hide from ourselves the fact, in reference to the preaching of this our day, that the fruit is small in quantity, and poor in quality. We do-sire to bless God for any display of His grace and power in souls; though we are by no means able to accredit as genuine much that is boastfully paraded in the way of conversion. What we long for is a deep, genuine, unmistakable work of the Holy Ghost, a work which will prove itself, beyond all contradiction, by its permanent results in the life and character. It is one thing to reckon up and publish a number of cases of conversion, and quite another to see these cases made good in actual fact. The Holy Ghost can, and does, tell us at times in the page of inspiration the number of souls converted. He tells us of three thousand on one occasion. He can do so, because He knows perfectly all about it. He can read the heart. He can distinguish between the spurious and the genuine. But when men undertake to count up and publish the number of their converts, we must receive their statements with considerable reserve and caution.

Not that we would be suspicious. God forbid; yea, we would earnestly cultivate a hopeful temper of soul. Still, we cannot but feel that it is better, in every case, to let the work speak for itself. All that is really divine is sure to be found, even though it be after many days; whereas on the other hand, there is immense danger, both for the workman and his work, in an eager and hasty reckoning up and publishing of results.

But we must return to the lake of Gennesaret, and dwell for a moment on the lovely grace that shines forth in our Lord's dealing with Simon Peter. The work of conviction was deep and real. There could be no mistaking it. The arrow had entered the heart, and gone right to its very center. Peter felt and owned that he was a man full of sin. He felt he had no right to be near such an one as Jesus; and yet we may truly say he would not for worlds have been anywhere else. He was perfectly sincere in saying, "Depart from me," though we cannot but believe he had an inward conviction that the blessed One would do nothing of the kind. And if He had, He was right. Jesus could never depart from a poor broken-hearted sinner—no, never. It was His richest, deepest, joy to pour the healing balm of His love and grace into a wounded soul. It was His delight to heal the broken heart. He was anointed for that work, and it was His meat and His drink to do it, blessed forever be His holy name!

"And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Here was the divine response to the cry of a contrite heart. The wound was deep, but the grace was deeper still. The soothing hand of a Savior-God applied the precious balm. Simon was not only convicted, but converted. He saw himself to be a man full of sin, but he saw the Savior full of grace; nor was it possible that his sin could be beyond the reach of that grace. Oh, no! there is grace in the heart of Jesus, as there is power in His blood, to meet the very chief of sinners. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

This was real work. It was a bona fide case, as to which there could be no question; a case of conviction, conversion, and consecration.

“He spread the banquet, made me eat, Bid all my fears remove; Yea, o’er my guilty rebel head, He placed His banner—Love.”

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 3

We closed our last paper with these suggestive words, “They forsook all, and followed him”—words expressive, at once, of thorough separation from the things of time and of nature, and of whole-hearted consecration to Christ and His interests.

Both these we see in Simon Peter. There was a deep and blessed work wrought in his soul, by the lake of Gennesaret. He was given to see himself, in the light of the divine presence, where alone self can be really seen and judged. We have no reason to suppose that, viewed from a human stand-point, Simon was worse than his neighbors. On the contrary, it is more than probable, that so far as his outward life was concerned, it was more blameless than that of many around him. He was not, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, arrested at the very height of a mad career of rebellion against Christ and His cause. He is introduced to us, by the inspired historian, in the pursuit of his quiet and honest calling as a fisherman.

But then scripture expressly informs us that, “There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3) And it repeats this statement, in chapter x. of the same Epistle, basing it upon another footing, “There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

Reader, see that you really understand this most important doctrine. It is not that there are not broad lines of distinction, in a moral and social point of view, between men. There, most assuredly, are such. There is, for example, a vast difference between the wretched drunkard who comes home, or is carried home, night after night, worse than a beast, to his poor brokenhearted wife and squalid, starving children, and a sober, industrious man, who realizes his responsibility as a husband and a father, and seeks to fulfill the duties attaching to such relationships.

Now, we judge it would be a very great mistake indeed to ignore such a distinction as this. We believe that God, in His moral government of the world, recognizes it. Contrast, for a moment, the drunkard’s home with that of the sober man. Yea, contrast their whole career, their social position, their course and character. Who can fail to recognize the amazing difference between the two? There is a certain way of presenting what is called, “The no-difference doctrine” which, to say the least of it, is far from judicious. It does not allow the margin which, as we believe, scripture suggests, wherein to insert great social and moral distinctions between men and men—distinctions which only blindness itself can refuse to see. If we look at the present government of God, we cannot but see that there is a very serious difference indeed between one man and another. Men reap as they sow. The drunken spendthrift reaps as he sows; and the sober, industrious, honest man reaps as he sows. The enactments of God’s moral government are such as to render it impossible for men to escape, even in this life, the consequences of their ways.

Nor is this all. Not only does God’s present government take cognizance of the conduct of men, causing them to reap, even here, the due reward of their deeds; but when scripture opens to our

view, as it does, in manifold places, the awful judgment to come, it speaks of “books being opened.” It tells us that men “shall be judged every man according to their works” In short, we have close and accurate discrimination, and not a promiscuous huddling of men and things.

And further, be it remembered, that the word of God speaks of degrees of punishment. It speaks of “few stripes” and “many stripes.” It uses such words as “more tolerable” for one than another.

What mean such words, if there be not varied grounds of judgment, varied characters of responsibility, varied measures of guilt, varied degrees of punishment? Men may reason; but “the Judge of all the earth will do right.” It is of no possible use for people to argue and discuss. Every man will be judged and punished according to his deeds. This is the teaching of holy scripture; and it would be much better and safer and wiser for men to submit to it than to reason against it, for they may rest fully assured of it that the judgment-seat of Christ will make very short work of their reasonings. Impenitent sinners will be judged and punished according to their works: and, although men may affect to believe that it is inconsistent with the idea of a God of love that any of His creatures should be condemned to endure eternal punishment in hell, still sin must be punished; and those who reason against its punishment have only a one-sided view of God’s nature and character. They have invented a God of their own who will connive at sin. But it will not do. The God of the Bible, the God whom we see at the cross, the God of Christianity will, beyond all question, execute judgment upon all who reject His Son; that judgment will be according to every man’s works; and the result of that judgment will, inevitably, be “The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone,” forever and forever.

We deem it of the utmost importance to press on all whom it may concern the line of truth on which we have been dwelling. It leaves wholly untouched the real truth of the no-difference doctrine; but, at the same time, it qualifies and adjusts the mode of presenting that truth. It is always well to avoid an ultra one-sided way of stating things. It damages truth and stumbles souls. It perplexes the anxious, and gives a plea to the caviler. The full truth of God should always be unfolded, and thus all will be right. Truth puts men and things in their right places, and maintains a holy moral balance which is absolutely priceless.

Is it then asserted that there is a difference? Not as regards the question of righteousness before God. On this ground, there is not a shadow of difference, for “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Looked at in the light of that glory, all human distinctions vanish. All are lost, guilty and condemned. From the very lowest strata of society—its deepest dregs, up to the loftiest heights of moral refinement, men are seen, in the light of the divine glory, to be utterly and hopelessly lost. They all stand on one common ground, are all involved in one common ruin. And not only so, but those who plume themselves on their morality, refinement, orthodoxy, and religiousness, are further from the kingdom of God than the vilest of the sons and daughters of men, as our Lord said to the chief priests and elders, “Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” Matt. 21.

This is very humbling to human pride and pretension. It is a doctrine to which none will ever submit until they see themselves as Simon Peter saw himself in the immediate presence of God. All who have ever been there will fully understand those glowing words, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” These were accents flowing forth from the depths of a truly penitent and contrite soul. There is what we may venture to call a lovely inconsistency in them. Simon had no such

thought as that Jesus would depart from him. He had, we may feel assured, an instinctive sense that that blessed One who had spoken such words to him, and shown such grace, could not turn away from a poor broken-hearted sinner. And he judged rightly. Jesus had not come down from heaven to turn His back upon any one who needed Him. "He came to seek and to save that which is lost." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Him that cometh unto me, I will, in no wise, cast out." A Savior-God had come down into this world not, surely, to turn away from a lost sinner, but to save him and bless him, and make him a blessing. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Such was the grace that shone upon the soul of Simon Peter. It removed his guilt, hushed his fears, and filled him with joy and peace in believing. Thus it is in every case. Divine pardon follows human confession—follows it with marvelous rapidity. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." God delights to pardon. It is the joy of His loving heart to cancel our guilt, and fill our souls with His own blessed peace, and to make us the messengers of His grace to others.

Not that we are called in the same way, or to the same work, as our apostle; but surely we are called to fellow the Lord, and cleave to Him, with purpose of heart. This is the blessed privilege and sacred duty of every saved soul on the face of the earth, we are imperatively called upon to break with the world, and follow Christ.

It is not a question of abandoning our proper calling in life, as in Simon's case. Few indeed and far between are the cases in which such a course of action is fitting. Many, alas! have assayed to do this, and have entirely broken down, simply because they were not called of God to it, or sustained of God in it. We are convinced that, as a rule, it is better for every man to work with his hands or his brains at some bread-winning calling, and preach and teach as well, if gifted to do so. There are exceptions, no doubt, to the rule. There are some who are so manifestly called, fitted, used, and sustained of God, that there can be no possible mistake as to their course. Their hands are so full of work, their every moment so engrossed with ministry in speaking or writing, teaching publicly and from house to house, that it would be a simple impossibility for them to take up what is termed a secular calling—though we like not the phrase. All such have to go on with God, looking only to Him, and He will infallibly maintain them unto the end.

Still, admitting, as we are bound to do fully, the exceptions to the rule, we are, nevertheless, convinced, that, as a rule, it is better, in every way, for men to be able to preach and teach without being chargeable to any. It gives moral weight, and it furnishes a fine testimony against the wretched hirelingism of Christendom so demoralizing to souls and so damaging, in every way, to the cause of Christ.

But, christian reader, we have to distinguish between abandoning our lawful calling and breaking with the world. The former may be quite wrong; the latter is our bounden duty. We are called to rise up, in the spirit of the mind, and in the firm purpose of the heart, out of all merely worldly influences, to break every worldly link, and lay aside every weight, in order to follow our blessed Lord and Master. We are to be, absolutely and completely, for Him in this world, as He is for us in the presence of God. When this is really the case with us, it matters not whether we are sweeping a crossing or evangelizing a continent. All is done to Him. This is the one grand point. If Christ has His due place in our hearts, all will be right. If he has not, nothing will be right. If there is any under

current in the soul, any secondary object, any worldly motive, any selfish aim or end, there can be no progress. We must make Christ and His cause our absorbing object.

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 4

The more deeply we ponder the history of professing Christians, whether as furnished by the pen of inspiration, or as coming within the range of personal observation, the more fully we must see the vast importance of a complete break with the world, at the outset. If there be not this, it is vain to look for inward peace, or outward progress. There may be a measure of clearness as to the doctrines of grace, the plan of salvation, as it is called, justification by faith and the like. But unless there is the thorough judgment of self, and the complete surrender of this present evil world, peace and progress must be out of the question. How can there be peace where self, in some one or other of its thousand shapes, is fostered? And how can there be progress where the heart is hankering after the world, halting between two opinions, and vacillating between Christ and present things? Impossible. As well might a racer expect to get on in the race while still lingering about the starting post, and encumbering himself with heavy weights.

Does the reader deem all this legal? Let him rest assured that nothing is further from every trace of legality than making a proper start on the christian course. Indeed we may set it down as a fixed principle that legality, and self, and the world invariably go together; and what we are contending for is the complete surrender of all these things in order to our running, with success, the race set before us.

Is it then, that peace is to be found by denying self and giving up the world? Most certainly not. But neither can peace ever be found while self is indulged and the world retained. True peace is found only in Christ—peace of conscience in His finished work—peace of heart in His blessed person. All this is clear enough. But how comes it to pass that hundreds of people who know, or profess to know, these things have no settled peace, and never seem to take a single step in advance? You meet them, week after week, month after month, year after year, and there they are in the same position, in the same state, and with the same old story, chronic cases of self-occupation, stereotyped world-borderers, “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” They seem to delight in hearing the gospel clearly preached, and truth fully unfolded. In fact, they cannot endure anything else. But, for all that, they are never clear, bright or happy. How can they be? They are halting between two opinions; they have never broken with the world; they have never surrendered a whole heart to Christ.

Here, we are persuaded, lies the real secret of the whole matter as regards that class of persons now before us. “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” A man who tries to keep one eye on the world, and the other on Christ, will be found to have no eye for Christ, but both eyes for the world. It must be so: Christ must be all or nothing; and hence it is the very height of absurdity to talk of peace or progress, where Christ is not the absorbing object of the soul. Where He is, there will never be any lack of settled peace; and there will be progress. The Holy Ghost is jealous of the glory of Christ, and He can never minister comfort, consolation, or strength to a heart divided between Him and the world. It could not be. He is grieved by such unfaithfulness; and instead of being the minister of comfort, He must be the stern reprover of indulged selfishness,

worldliness? and vacillation.

Let us look at the case of our apostle. How refreshing it is to contemplate his thorough-going style! His starting was of the right sort. "He forsook all and followed Christ." There was no halting here, at all events; no vacillating between Christ and present things. Boats, nets, fish, natural ties, all are unhesitatingly and unreservedly surrendered, not as a matter of cold duty or legal service, but as the grand and necessary result of having seen the glory and heard the voice of the Son of God.

Thus it was with Simon Peter, at the opening of his remarkable career. All was clear and unequivocal, whole-hearted and decided, so far as the starting was concerned; and we must bear this in mind, as we pursue his after history. No doubt, we shall find mistakes and stumblings, failure, ignorance, and sin; but, underneath, and in spite of all this, we shall find a heart true to Jesus—a heart divinely taught to appreciate the Christ of God.

This is a grand point. Blunders may well be borne with, when the heart beats true to Christ. Someone has remarked that, "The blunderers do all the work." If this be so, the reason is that those blunderers have real affection for their Lord; and that is precisely what we all want. A man may make a great many mistakes, but if he can say when challenged by his Lord, "Thou knowest that I love thee," he is sure to come right in the end; and not only so, but, even in the very midst of his mistakes, our hearts are much more drawn to him than to the cold, correct, sleek professor, who thinks of himself, and seeks to make the best of both worlds.

Simon Peter was a true lover of Christ. He had a divinely given sense of His preciousness, of the glory of His Person, and the heavenly character of His mission. All this comes out, with uncommon force and freshness, in his varied confessions of Christ, even before the day of Pentecost. We shall glance at one or two of these, not with any view to chronological order, but simply to illustrate and prove the lovely devotedness of this true-hearted servant of Christ.

Let us turn to Matt. 16 "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" Weighty question! Upon the answer to this question hangs the whole moral condition and future destiny of every human being under the sun. All really depends upon the heart's estimate of Christ. This it is, which like a great moral indicator, reveals a man's true state, character, bent and object, in all things. It is not merely a question of his outward life, or of his profession of faith. The former may be blameless, and the latter orthodox; but, if underneath all this blameless morality and orthodox profession, there be not one true pulsation of the heart for Christ, no divinely wrought sense of what, and who, and whence He is, then verily all the morality and the orthodoxy are but the trappings with which a guilty, hell-deserving sinner adorns himself in the eyes of his fellows, or with which he deceives himself as to the awful eternity which lies before him. "What think ye of Christ?" is the all-deciding question; for God the Holy Ghost has emphatically declared that, "If any man"—no matter who or what he be—"love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." 1 Cor. 16:22.

How awful is this! And how remarkable to find it at the close of such an epistle as the first to the Corinthians! How forcibly it declares to all who will only bend their ears to listen, that love to Christ is the basis of all sound doctrine, the motive spring of all true morality! If that blessed One be not enthroned at the very center of the heart's affections, an orthodox creed is an empty delusion; and an unblemished reputation is but dust cast in a man's eyes to prevent him seeing his true condition

in the sight of God. The Christians at Corinth had fallen into many doctrinal errors and moral evils, all needing rebuke and correction; but when the inspiring Spirit pronounces His awful anathema, it is leveled, not at the introducers of any one special error, or moral pravity, but at “any man who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is peculiarly solemn at all times; but specially so for the day in which our lot is cast, when the Person and glory of Christ are so little thought of or cared for. A man may actually blaspheme Christ, deny His deity or His eternal Sonship, and yet be received into professing christian circles, and allowed to preside at so-called religious meetings. Surely all this must be dreadful in the sight of God, whose purpose it is “that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father;” and that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to Jesus as Lord of all. God is jealous for the honor of His Son; and the man that neglects, rejects, and blasphemes that blessed One will yet have to learn and own the eternal justice of that most solemn decree, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.”

How momentous, therefore, the question put by our Lord Christ to His disciples, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” Alas, alas! “men” knew nothing, cared nothing about Him. They knew neither who He was, what He was, nor whence He was. “Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” In a word, there was endless speculation, because there was utter indifference and thorough heartlessness. The human heart has not so much as a single true thought about Christ, not one atom of affection for Him. Such is the awful condition of the very best of men until renewed by divine grace. They know not, they love not, they care not for the Son of God—the Beloved of the Father’s heart—the Man on the throne of heaven’s majesty. Such is their moral condition, and hence their every thought, word, and act is contrary to God. They have not a single feeling in common with God, for the most distinct of all reasons, that the One who is everything to Him is nothing to them. Christ is God’s standard, and everyone and everything must be measured by Him. The heart that does not love Christ has not a single pulsation in unison with the heart of God; and the life that does not spring from love to Christy however blameless, respectable, or splendid in the eyes of men, is a worthless, objectless, misspent life in the judgment of God.

But how truly—delightful to turn from all the heartlessness and indifference of “men,” and hearken to the testimony of one who was taught of God to know and own who the Son of man was! “Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Here was the true answer. There was no vain speculation here, no uncertainty, no may be this, or may be that. It was divine testimony flowing from divinely given knowledge. It was not yea and nay, but yea and amen to the glory of God. We may rest fully assured that these glowing words of Simon Peter went up, like fragrant incense, to the throne of God, and refreshed the heart of the One who sat there. There is nothing in all the world so precious to God as a heart that, in any measure, appreciates Christ. Let us never forget this!

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Here we have the very first direct allusion to the church, or assembly of Christ; and the reader will note that our Lord speaks of it as yet future. He says, "I will build my church." He was the rock, the living stone, the divine foundation; but ere a single stone could be built on Him, He must die.

This is a grand cardinal truth of Christianity—a truth which our apostle had yet to learn, notwithstanding his brilliant and beautiful confession. Simon Peter was not yet prepared for the profound mystery of the cross. He loved Christ, and he had been taught of God to own Him in a very full and blessed manner; but he had yet much to learn ere he could take in the soul-subduing truth that this blessed Son of the living God must die, ere even he, as a living stone, could be built upon Him. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

Here the solemn truth begins to break through the clouds. But Simon Peter is not prepared for it. It withered up all his Jewish hopes and earthly expectations. What! The Son of the living God must die! How could it be? The glorious Messiah be nailed to a cross! "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee (or pity thyself), Lord, this shall not be unto thee."

Such is man! Such was even Simon Peter! He would fain turn the blessed Lord away from the cross! He would, in his ignorance, frustrate the eternal counsels of God, and play into the hands of the devil! Poor Peter! What a rock he would be for the church to be built upon! "The Lord turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offense unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Withering words! Who would have thought that "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," should so speedily be followed by, "Get thee behind me, Satan?"

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 5

We must still linger a little over the deeply interesting and instructive scene in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. It brings before us two great subjects, namely, “The church” and “The kingdom of heaven.” These things must never be confounded. As to the first, it is only to be found in the New Testament. Indeed, as has often been remarked, verse 18 of our chapter contains the very first direct allusion in the volume of God, to the subject of the church or assembly of Christ.

This, though familiar to many of our readers, may present a difficulty to others. Many Christians and christian teachers strongly maintain that the doctrine of the church is distinctly unfolded in Old Testament scripture. They consider that the saints of the Old Testament belonged to the church; in fact, that there is no difference whatever; all form one great family; all stand on one common ground; and that to represent the Lord’s people in New Testament times as in a higher position or endowed with higher privileges than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the most complete delusion possible—a wild imagination of modern days, possessing not a shadow of scripture authority. It seems perfectly monstrous to such to assert that Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, did not belong to the church—were not members of the body of Christ—were not endowed with the selfsame privileges as believers now. Trained from their earliest days to believe that all God’s people, from the beginning to the end of time, stand on the same ground, are members of the one great family, bound up in the same bundle of life, and form one body, they find it impossible to admit of any difference. It seems to them the height of presumption on the part of Christians to assert that they are, in any respect, different from God’s beloved people of old—those blessed worthies of whom we read in Heb. 11 who lived a life of faith and personal devotedness, and who are now in heaven with their Lord.

But the all important question is, “What saith the scripture?” It can be of no possible use to set up our own thoughts, our own reasonings, our own conclusions, in opposition to the word of God. It is a very easy matter for men to reason, with great apparent force, point, and cleverness, about the absurdity and wild presumption of the notion that Christians are better and higher and more privileged than God’s people of old.

But this is not the proper way in which to approach this great subject. It is not a question of the difference personally between the Lord’s people at different periods. Were it so, where should we find, amongst the ranks of christian professors, any one to compare with an Abraham, a Joseph, a Moses, or a Daniel? Were it a question of simple faith, where could we find, in the entire history of the church, a finer example than the father of the faithful? Were it a question of personal holiness, where could we find a brighter illustration than Joseph? For intimate acquaintance with the ways of God and entrance into His mind, who could go beyond Moses? For unswerving devotedness to God and His truth, could we find a brighter example than the man who went down into the lions’ den rather than not pray toward Jerusalem?

However, let it be distinctly understood that it is not, by any means, a personal question, or a comparison of people; but simply of dispensational position. If this be clearly seen, it will, we doubt

not, remove out of the way a great deal of the difficulty which many pious people seem to feel in reference to the truth of the church.

But, above and beyond all this, stands the question, What does scripture teach on the subject? If anyone had spoken to Abraham about being a member of the body of Christ, would he have understood it? Could that honored and beloved saint of God have had the most remote idea of being linked, by an indwelling Spirit, to a living Head in heaven? Utterly impossible. How could he be a member of a body which had no existence? And how could there be a body without a Head? And when do we first hear of the Head? When the Man Christ Jesus, having passed through death and the grave, ascended into the heavens, and took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then, and not until then, did the Holy Ghost come down to form the body and link it, by His presence, to the glorified Head above.

This, however, is rather anticipating a line of argument which is yet to come before us. Let us here put another question to the reader. If anyone had spoken to Moses about a body composed of Jews and Gentiles—a body whose constituent parts had been drawn from among the seed of Abraham and the cursed race of the Canaanites, what would he have said? May we not safely assert that his whole moral being would have shrunk with horror from the thought? What! Jews and Canaanites—the seed of Abraham and uncircumcised Gentiles united in one body? Impossible for the lawgiver to take in such an idea. The fact is if there was one feature which, more strongly than another, marked the Jewish economy it was the rigid separation, by divine appointment, of Jew and Gentile. “Ye know,” says Simon Peter, “how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation.”

Such was the order of things under the Mosaic economy. It would have been a flagrant transgression on the part of a Jew to climb over that middle wall of partition which separated him from all the nations around; and hence the thought of a union between Jew and Gentile could not possibly have entered into any human mind; and the more faithful a man was to the existing order of things under the law, the more opposed he must have been to any such thought.

Now, in the face of all this, how can anyone seek to maintain that the truth of the church was known in Old Testament times; and that there is no difference whatever between the position of a Christian and that of an Old Testament believer? The fact is that even Simon Peter himself found it extremely difficult to take in the idea of admitting the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven. Though he was entrusted with the keys of that kingdom, he was very reluctant indeed to use the key which was to admit the Gentiles. He had to be expressly taught by a heavenly vision, ere he was prepared to fulfill the commission with which he was charged by his Lord in Matt. 16.

No, reader, it is of no possible use to stand against the plain testimony of scripture. The truth of the church was not—could not be known, in Old Testament times. It was, as the inspired apostle tells us, “Hid in God”—hid in His eternal counsels—“not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.” Eph. 3

We can only reach the great mystery of the church by walking over the ruins of the middle wall of partition. “Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that

time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall (partition; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, for to make himself of twain one new man, making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

Thus, from all that has passed before us, the reader will, we trust, fully see why it is that our Lord in His word to Simon Peter, speaks of the church as a future thing. “Upon this rock, I will build my church.” He does not say, “I have been” or “I am building my church.”, Nothing of the kind. It could not be. It was still “hid in God.” The Messiah had to be cut off and have nothing—nothing, for the present, as regards Israel and the earth. He must be rejected, crucified, and slain, in order to lay the foundation of the church. It was utterly impossible that a single stone could be laid in this new, this wondrous building, until “the chief corner-stone” had passed through death and taken His place in the heavens. It was not in incarnation but in resurrection that our Lord Christ became Head of a body.

Now our apostle was not the least prepared for this. He did not understand one jot or tittle of it. That Messiah should set up a kingdom, in power and glory—that He should restore Israel to their destined pre-eminence in the earth—all this he could understand and appreciate—he was looking for it. But a suffering Messiah—a rejected, and crucified Christ—of this he could not hear, just then. “Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.” These were the words which drew forth that withering rebuke with which we closed our last paper, “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offense unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”

We may gather the gravity of his error from the severity of the rebuke. Peter had much to learn—much to go through, ere he could grasp the great truth which His Lord was putting before him. But he did grasp it, by the grace of God, and confess it, and teach it with power. He was led to see not only that Christ was the Son of the living God; but that He was a rejected stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious; and that all who, through grace, come to Him, must share His rejection on earth as well as His acceptance in heaven. They are perfectly identified with Him.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 6

At the close of John 6 we have a very clear and beautiful confession of Christ from the lips of our apostle—a confession rendered all the more touching and forcible by the circumstances under which it was delivered.

Our blessed Lord, in His teachings in the synagogue at Capernaum, had unfolded truth of a very high order, so high as to put the poor human heart to the test, and wither up all the pretensions of man in a very remarkable manner. We cannot here attempt to enter upon the subject of our Lord's discourse, but the effect of it is thus recorded:—"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." They were not prepared for the reception of such heavenly doctrine. They were offended by it, and they turned their backs upon that blessed One who alone was worthy of all the affections of the heart, and of the homage and devotion of the whole moral being. "They went back, and walked no more with him."

Now we are not told what became of these deserters, or whether they were saved or not. No such question is raised. We are simply told that they abandoned Christ, and ceased to be any longer publicly identified with His name and His cause. How many, alas! have since followed their sad example! It is one thing to profess to be the disciples of Christ, and another thing altogether to stand with firm purpose of heart on the ground of public testimony for His name, in thorough identification with a rejected Lord. It is one thing for people to flock to Christ because of the benefits which He bestows, and it is quite another to cleave to Him in the face of the world's scorn and contempt. The powerful application of the doctrine of the cross very speedily thins the ranks of professors. In the chapter before us we see at one moment multitudes thronging enthusiastically around the Man who could so marvelously supply their need, and the next moment abandoning Him, when His teaching offended their pride.

Thus it has been, thus it is, and thus it will be until that day in the which the despised Stranger of Nazareth shall reign from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth. We are ready enough to avail ourselves of the benefits and blessings which a loving Savior can bestow upon us, but when it becomes a question of following a rejected Lord along that rough and lonely path which He has trodden for us in this sinful world, we are disposed, like those of old, to go back, and walk no more with Him.

This is very sad and very humiliating. It proves how little we know of his heart, or of what that heart desires from us. Jesus longs for fellowship. He does not want patronage. It does not meet the desire of his heart to be followed, or admired, or gazed at, because of what He can do or give. He delights in a heart taught of God to appreciate His Person, for this glorifies and gratifies the Father. He retired from the gaze of an excited and tumultuous throng who would fain make Him a king, because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled; but He could turn, with touching earnestness, to the little band of followers who still remained, and challenge their hearts with the question, "Will ye also go away?"

How deeply affecting! How it must have touched the hearts of all, save that one who had no heart for aught but money—who was “a thief” and “a devil!” Alas! alas! a moment was approaching when all were to forsake Him and fly—when even the very man whose history we are considering was to deny Him with cursing and swearing—when the blessed One was to be left absolutely alone, forsaken of men, forsaken of God—utterly and awfully deserted.

But that moment was yet future; and it is peculiarly refreshing to hearken to the fine confession of our beloved apostle, in reply to the deeply affecting inquiry of his Lord. “Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Well indeed might he say, “To whom shall we go?” There was not another throughout the wide universe of God to whom the heart could turn. He alone could meet their every need, satisfy their every right desire, fill up every chamber of the heart. Simon Peter felt this, and hence, with all his mistakes, his failures, and his infirmities, his loving and devoted heart turned with earnest affection to his beloved Lord. He would not abandon Him, though little able to rise to the height of His heavenly teaching. There was a link binding him to Jesus Christ which nothing could snap. “Lord, to whom shall we go?”—whither shall we betake ourselves?—on whom could we reckon beside? True, there may be trial and difficulty in the path of true discipleship. It may prove a rough and a lonely path. The heart may be tried and tested in every possible way. There may be deep and varied sorrow—deep waters, dark shadows; but in the face of all we can say, “To whom shall we go?”

And mark the singular fullness of Peter’s confession. “Thou hast the words of eternal life;” and, then, “Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” We have the two things, namely, what He has, and what He is. Blessed be His name, Christ has all we can possibly want for time and eternity. Words of eternal life flow from His lips into our hearts. He causes those who follow Him to “inherit substance.” He bestows upon them “durable riches and righteousness.”

We may truly say that, in comparison of what Christ has to give, all the riches, honors, dignities, and pleasures of this world are but as dross. They all pass away as the vapors of the morning, and leave only an aching void behind. Nothing that this world has to offer can possibly satisfy the cravings of the human soul. “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” And not only so—it must be given up. If one had all the wealth of Solomon, it lasts but a moment in comparison with that boundless eternity which lies before every one of us. When death approaches, all the riches of the universe could not purchase one moment’s respite. The last great enemy gives no quarter. He ruthlessly snaps the link that connects man with all that his poor heart prizes and loves upon earth, and hurries him away into eternity.

And what then? Yes, this is the question. Who can answer it? Who can attempt to picture the future of a soul that passes into eternity without God, without Christ, without hope? Who can describe the horrors of one who, all in a moment, opens his eyes to the fact—the tremendous fact—that he is lost, lost forever—hopelessly, eternally, lost? It is positively too dreadful to dwell upon it. And yet it must be looked at; and if the reader is still of the world, still unconverted, careless, thoughtless, unbelieving, we would earnestly entreat of him now, just now, to give his earnest attention to the weighty and all-important question of his soul’s salvation—a question, in comparison with which all other questions dwindle into utter insignificance. “What shall it profit a

man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is, beyond all question, the most egregious folly that anyone can be guilty of to put off the grand business of his soul's salvation.

And if any one inquire what he has to do in this business, the answer is Nothing—"nothing, either great or small." Jesus has the words of eternal life. He it is who says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life."

Here is the hinge on which the whole matter moves. Harken to the words of Christ. Believe in Him that sent that blessed One. Put your trust in God, and you shall be saved; you shall have eternal life, and never come into judgment.

Nor is this all. Simon Peter, in his lovely confession, does not confine himself to what Christ has to give, precious and blessed as that is, but he also speaks of what He is. "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This is full of deepest interest for the heart. Christ not only gives us eternal life, but He also becomes the object of our heart's affections—our satisfying portion, our unfailing resource, our infallible guide and counselor, our constant reference, in all our need, in all our pressure, in all our sorrows and difficulties. We need never go to any one else for succor, sympathy, or guidance. We have all we want in Him. He is the eternal delight of the heart of God, and He may well be the delight of our hearts here and hereafter, now and forever.

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 7

The close of Matt. 14 presents a scene in the life of our apostle on which we may dwell with profit for a few moments. It furnishes a very fine illustration of his own touching inquiry, “ Lord, to whom shall we go?”

Our Lord, having fed the multitude, and sent His disciples across the sea, retired into a mountain, to be alone in prayer. In this we have a striking foreshadowing of the present time. Jesus has gone on high. Israel is for the present set aside, but not forgotten. Days of trouble will come—rough seas and stormy skies will fall to the lot of the remnant; but their Messiah will return, and deliver them out of all their troubles. He will bring them to their desired haven, and all will be peace and joy for the Israel of God.

All this is fully unfolded on the page of prophecy, and is of the deepest interest to every lover of God and His word; but for the present we can merely dwell upon the inspired record concerning Simon Peter, and seek to learn the lesson which that record so forcibly teaches. “ And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”

This brief passage presents to our view in a very forcible way some of the leading features of Simon Peter's character. His zeal, his energy, his real devotedness of heart, no one can for a moment call in question; but these very qualities—most charming as they surely are—led him not infrequently into a position of such prominence as to render his weak points all the more conspicuous. A man of less zeal, less energy, would have remained on board the ship, and thus avoided Peter's failure and breakdown. Perhaps, too, men of cooler temperament would condemn as unwarrantable rashness Peter's act in leaving the ship, or pronounce it a piece of forwardness which justly deserved a humiliating rebuff.

All this may be so; but we are free to confess the zeal, energy, and devotedness of this beloved servant of Christ, have far more powerful charms for the heart than the cool, calculating, self-considering spirit, which in order to avoid the shame and humiliation of a defeat, refuses to take a bold and decided step for Christ. True it is that Peter, in the interesting scene now before us, completely broke down; but why did he? Was it because he left the ship? No; but because he

ceased to look in simple faith to Jesus. Here lay the root of his failure. Had he only kept his eye on the Master, he could have walked on the water, though ever so rough. Faith can walk on rough water as easily as on smooth. Nature cannot walk on either. It is not a question of the state of the water, but the state of the heart. Circumstances have nothing to do with faith, except, indeed, that, when difficult and trying, they develop its power and brightness. There was no reason whatever, in the judgment of faith, why Peter should have failed in his walk on the water. Faith looks not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." It lifts the heart above the winds and waves of this rough world, and keeps it in perfect peace, to the praise of Him who is the Giver of faith, as of "every good and perfect gift."

But our beloved apostle utterly failed in faith on the occasion now before us. He, as we, alas! so often do, took his eye off the Lord, and fixed it on his surroundings, and, as a consequence, he immediately began to sink. It must ever be so. We cannot get on for a single moment, save as we have the living God as a covering for our eyes. The grand motto for the life of faith is "Looking off unto Jesus." It is this alone which enables us to "run the race set before us," be the way rough or smooth. When Peter came down out of the ship, it was either Christ or drowning. He might well say at such a moment, "Lord, to whom shall I go?" Whither could he turn? When on board the ship, he had its timbers between him and death, but when on the water he had nothing but Jesus.

And was not He enough? Yes, verily, if only Peter could have trusted Him. This is the point. All things are possible to him that believeth. Storms are hushed into a perfect calm, rough seas become like glass, lofty mountains are leveled, when faith brings the power of God to bear. The greater the difficulties, the brighter the triumphs of faith. It is in the furnace that the real preciousness of faith is displayed. Faith has to do with God, and not with men or things. If we cease to lean on God, we have nothing but a wild, watery waste—a perfect chaos—around us, where nature's resources must hopelessly fail.

All this was proved by Simon Peter when he came down out of the ship to walk on the water; and every child of God, and every servant of Christ, must prove it in his measure, for Peter's history is full of great practical lessons for us all. If we want to walk above the circumstances of the scene through which we are passing—if we would rise superior to its influences—if we would be able to give an answer, clear, distinct, and decided, to the skepticism, the rationalism, and the infidelity of the day in which we live, then, assuredly, we must keep the eye of faith firmly fixed on "the Author and Perfecter of faith." It is not by logical skill or intellectual power we shall ever meet the arguments of the infidel, but by a profound and abiding sense, a living and soul-satisfying apprehension, of the all-sufficiency of Christ—Himself—His work—His word—to meet our every need, our every exigence.

But it may be the reader feels disposed to condemn Peter for leaving the ship. He may think there was no need for his taking such a step. "Why not abide with his brethren on board the vessel? Was it not possible to be quite as devoted to Christ in the ship as on the water? And, further, did not the sequel prove that it would have been far better, and safer, and wiser, for Peter to remain where he was, than to venture forth on a course which he was not able to pursue?"

To all this we reply that our apostle was evidently governed by an earnest desire to be nearer to his Lord. And this was right. He saw Jesus walking on the water, and he longed to be with Him.

And, further, he had the direct authority of his Lord for leaving the ship. We fully and freely grant that, without this, it would have been a fatal mistake to leave his position; but the moment that word, "Come," fell on his ear, he had a divine warrant for venturing forth upon the water—yea, to have remained would have been disobedience.

/bus it is in every case. We must have authority before we can act in anything. Without this, the greater our zeal, energy, and apparent devotedness, the more fatal will be our mistake, and the more mischief we shall do to ourselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ. It is of the very last possible importance in every case, but especially where there is a measure of zeal, earnestness, and energy, that there should be profound subjection to the authority of the word. If there be not this, there is no calculating the amount of mischief which may be done. If our devotedness flow not in the channel of simple obedience, if it rush over the embankments formed by the word of God, the consequences must be most disastrous.

But there is another thing which stands next in importance to the authority of the divine word, and that is the abiding realization of the divine presence. These two things must never be separated, if we want to walk on the water. We may be quite clear and settled in our own minds, having distinct authority for any given line of action; but if we have not, with equal distinctness, the sense of the Lord's presence with us—if our eyes are not continually on the living God, we shall most assuredly break down.

This is very serious, and demands the gravest consideration of the christian reader. It was precisely here that Peter failed. He did not fail in obedience, but in realized dependence. He acted on the word of Jesus in leaving the ship, but he failed to lean on the arm of Jesus in walking on the water. Hence his terror and confusion. Mere authority is not enough, we want power. To act without authority is wrong. To act without power is impossible. The authority for starting is the word. The power to proceed is the divine presence. The combination of the two must ever yield a successful career. It matters not, in the smallest degree, what the difficulties are, if we have the stable authority of holy scripture for our course, and the blessed support of the presence of God in pursuing it. When God speaks, we must obey; but in order to do so, we must lean on His arm. "Have not I commanded you?" "Lo, I am with you."

Here are the two things so absolutely essential to every child of God and every servant of Christ. Without these we can do nothing; with them we can do all things. If we have not a "Thus saith the Lord," or "It is written," we cannot enter upon a path of devotedness; and if we have not His realized presence, we cannot pursue it. It is quite possible to be right in setting out, and yet to fail in going on.

It was so in the case of Simon Peter, and it has been so in the case of thousands since. It is one thing to make a good start, and another thing to make good progress. It is one thing to leave the ship, and another thing to walk on the water. Peter did the former, but he failed in the latter. This beloved servant broke down in his course; but where did he find himself? In the arms of a loving Savior. "Lord, save me!" How touching! How deeply affecting! He casts himself upon a well-known love—a love which was yet to meet him in far more humiliating circumstances. Nor was he disappointed. Ah! no; blessed be God, no poor failing creature can ever appeal to that love in vain. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Exquisite grace! If Peter failed to reach his Lord, his Lord

did not fail to reach him. If Peter failed in faith, Jesus could not fail in grace. Impossible. The grace of our Lord Jesus is exceeding abundant. He takes occasion from our very failures to display His rich and precious love. Oh, how blessed to have to do with such a tender, patient, loving Lord! Who would not trust Him, and praise Him, love Him, and serve Him?

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 8

We have now to follow our beloved apostle into the darkest and most humbling scene in his entire history—a scene which we could hardly understand or account for, if we did not know something of the infinite depths of divine grace, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, of the terrible depths into which even a saint of God, or an apostle of Christ, is capable of plunging, if not kept by divine power.

It seems very wonderful to find on the page of inspiration the record of the fall of such an eminent servant of Christ as Simon Peter. We in our wisdom would judge it best to draw the curtain of silence over such an event. Not so the Holy Ghost. He knows better, and is infinitely wiser than we. He has seen fit to tell us plainly of the errors, and failures, and sins of such men as Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, and Paul, in order that we may learn holy lessons from such records—lessons of human frailty, lessons of divine grace, lessons full of solemn warning, and yet of most precious consolation and encouragement. We learn what we are, and we learn what God is. We learn that we cannot trust ourselves for a single moment; for, if not kept by grace, there is no depth of sin into which we are not capable of falling; but we learn to trust the eternal stability of that grace which has dealt with the erring ones and sinning ones of other days, and to lean with ever-growing confidence on the One who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

But let us turn to our subject.

Not one of the four evangelists omits the fall of Peter. Let us open at Matt. 26: “And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”

In these few words Peter lets out the real root of the whole matter. That root was self-confidence—alas! alas! no uncommon root amongst us. We do not in the least question Peter’s sincerity. We feel perfectly sure he meant all he said; and, further, that he had not the most remote idea of what he was about to do. He was ignorant of himself, and we generally find that ignorance and self-confidence go together. Self-knowledge destroys self-confidence. The more fully self is known, the more it must be distrusted. If Peter had known himself, known his tendencies and capabilities, he never would have uttered the words which we have just penned. But so full was he of self-confidence, that when his Lord told him expressly what he was about to do, he replied, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.”

This is peculiarly solemn. It is full of instruction for us all. We are all so ignorant of our own hearts, that we deem ourselves incapable of falling into certain gross sins. But we should, everyone of us, bear in mind that, if not kept each moment by the grace of God, we are capable of anything. We have materials in us for any amount or character of evil; and whenever we hear any one saying,

“Well, I certainly am a poor, failing, stumbling creature, but I am not capable of doing the like of that,” we may feel assured he does not know his own heart; and, not only so, but he is in imminent danger of falling into some grievous sin. It is well to walk humbly before our God, distrusting self, and leaning on Him. This is the true secret of moral safety, at all times. Had Peter realized this, it would have saved him his terrible downfall.

But Peter was self-confident, and, as a consequence, he failed to watch and pray. This was another stage in his downward journey. Had he only felt his utter weakness, he would have sought for strength divine. He would have cast himself on God for grace to help in time of need. Look at the blessed Master! He, though God over all blessed forever, yet being a Man, having taken the place of the creature, and fully entering into His position, was agonizing in prayer, while Peter was fast asleep. Yes, Peter slept in the garden of Gethsemane, while his Lord was passing through the deepest anguish He had yet tasted, though deeper still lay before Him. “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

What tender grace! What readiness to make allowance! What moral elevation! And yet He felt the sad want of sympathy, the cold indifference to His sore agony. “I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” How much is involved in these words! They tell a double tale. He looked for comforters. That perfect human heart craved sympathy; but, alas! there was none for Him. There was no one to minister a single drop of consolation to that loving heart in the hour of deepest anguish. He was left absolutely alone. Even Peter, who declared himself ready to die with Him, fell asleep in view of the agonies of Gethsemane.

Such is man—yea, the very best of men! Self-confident when he ought to be self-distrusting—sleeping when he ought to be watching; and, we may add, fighting when he ought to be submitting. “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.” How incongruous, how utterly out of place, was a sword in company with the meek and lowly Sufferer! “Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Peter was entirely out of the current of his Master’s spirit. He had not a thought in common with Him in reference to His path of suffering. He would fain defend Him with carnal weapons, forgetting that His kingdom was not of this world.

All this is peculiarly solemn. To find a dear and honored servant of Christ failing so grievously is surely sufficient to teach us to walk very softly. But, alas! we have not yet reached the lowest point in Peter’s downward course. Having used his sword in defense of his Master, we next find him “following afar off.” “Then took they Jesus, and led him, and brought him to the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.”

What company for an apostle of Christ! "Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? Can one walk on burning coals, and his feet not be burned?" It is terribly dangerous for the Christian to sit down among the enemies of Christ. The very fact of his doing so proves that decline has set in, and made serious progress. In Peter's case, the stages of decline are strongly marked. First, boasting in his own strength; secondly, sleeping when he ought to have been praying; thirdly, drawing his sword when he ought to have been meekly bowing his head; fourthly, following afar off; fifthly, making himself comfortable in the midst of the open enemies of Christ.

Then comes the last sad scene in this terrible drama. "And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I, what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cockcrow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon he wept." Mark 14:66-72.

Luke adds a most touching clause: "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cockcrow thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

How deeply affecting is all this! Only think of a saint of God, and an apostle of Christ, cursing and swearing that he did not know his Lord! Does the reader feel disposed to question the fact that Peter was, spite of all this, a genuine saint of God? Some do question it; but their questioning is a gross mistake. They find it hard to conceive such a thing as a true child of God falling so terribly. But they have not yet thoroughly learned what flesh is. Peter was as really a saint of God in the palace of the high priest, as he was on the mount of transfiguration. But he had to learn himself, and that too by as humiliating and painful a process as any soul could well be called to pass through. Doubtless, if anyone had told Peter a few days before that he would ere long curse and swear that he did not know his Lord, he would have shrunk with horror from the thought. He might have said, like one of old, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Yet so it was. We know not what we may do until we are in the circumstances. The great thing for us all is to walk humbly with our God day by day, deeply sensible of our own utter weakness, and clinging to Him who is able to keep us from falling. We are only safe in the shelter of His presence. Left to ourselves we are capable of anything, as our apostle found to his deep sorrow.

But the Lord was watching over His poor erring servant. He never lost sight of him for a single moment. He had His eye upon the whole process. The devil would have smashed the vessel in hopeless fragments if he could. But he could not. He was but an instrument in the divine hand to do a work for Peter, which Peter had failed to do for himself. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted [or restored] strengthen thy brethren."

Here we are permitted to see the root of the matter. Peter needed to be sifted, and Satan was employed to do the work. Just as in the case of Job, and the man in 1 Cor. 5 It seems very

wonderful, very mysterious, very solemn, that Satan should be so used. Yet so it is. God uses him “for the destruction of the flesh.” He cannot touch the spirit. That is eternally safe. But it is terrible work to get into Satan’s sieve. Peter found it so, and so did Job, and so did that erring Corinthian.

But oh, the grace of those words! “I have prayed for thee”—not that he might not fall, but, having fallen, that his faith might not fail, his confidence might not give way. Nothing can surpass the grace that shines out here. The blessed One knew all that was to happen—the shameful denial—the cursing and swearing; and yet, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not”—that thy confidence in the eternal stability of my grace may not give way.

Perfectly marvelous! And then the power of that look! “The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” It was this that broke Peter’s heart, and drew forth a flood of bitter penitential tears.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Simon Peter: His Life and Its Lessons: Part 9

We are now called to consider the profoundly interesting subject of Simon Peter's restoration, in which we shall find some points of the utmost practical importance. If in his fall we learn the frailty and folly of man, in his restoration we learn the grace, wisdom, and faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fall was, indeed, deep, terrible, and humiliating. The restoration was complete and marvelous. We may rest assured that Simon Peter will never forget either the one or other; nay, he will remember them with wonder, love, and praise, throughout the countless ages of eternity. The grace that shines in Peter's restoration is only second to the grace displayed in his conversion. Let us glance at some of the salient points. It can be but the merest glance, as our space is limited. And first let us look at the procuring cause.

This we have given us with peculiar force by the pen of the inspired evangelist Luke. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat." If Satan had been suffered to have his way, poor Simon would have been hopelessly ruined. But no; he was merely employed as an instrument, as he had been in Job's case, to do a needed work, and, when that work was done, he had to retire. He dare not go one hair's breadth beyond his appointed sphere. It is well to remember this. Satan is but a creature—crafty, wily, powerful, no doubt, but a creature who can only go as far as he is permitted by God. Had Peter walked softly, had he humbly and earnestly looked for divine help, had he been judging himself in secret, there would have been no need of Satan's sifting. Thanks be to God, Satan has no power whatever with a soul that walks humbly with God. There is perfect shelter, perfect safety, in the divine presence; and there is not an arrow in the enemy's quiver that can reach one who leans in simple confidence upon the arm of the living God. Here our apostle failed, and hence he had to pass through a very severe process indeed, in order that he might learn himself.

But, oh, the power and preciousness of those words, "I have prayed for thee!" Here assuredly lay the secret—here was the procuring cause of Simon's restoration. The prayer of Jesus sustained the soul of His erring servant in that terrible hour when the enemy would fain have crushed him to powder. What could Satan do in opposition to the all-powerful intercession of Christ? Nothing. That wonderful prayer was the ground of Peter's safety, when, to human view, all seemed hopelessly gone.

And for what did our Lord pray? Was it that Peter might not commit the awful sin of denying Him? Was it that he might not curse and swear? Clearly not. What then? "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

Can aught exceed the grace that shines here? That gracious, loving, faithful Lord, in view of Peter's terrible sin—knowing all he was about to do—all the sad forgetfulness, could actually plead for him that, spite of all, his confidence might not give way—that he might not lose the sense of the eternal stability of that grace which had taken him up from the depth of his ruin and guilt.

Matchless grace! Nothing can surpass it in brightness and blessedness. Had it not been for this prayer, Peter's confidence must have given way. He never could have survived the awful struggle through which his soul passed when thinking of his dreadful sin. When he came to himself, when he reflected upon the whole scene, his expressions of devotedness, "Though all should deny thee, yet will I never deny thee"—"Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee"—"I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death." To think of all these words, and yet that he should deny his beloved Lord with cursing and swearing, was perfectly overpowering.

It is a dreadful moment in the soul's history when one wakes up to the consciousness of having committed sin—sin against light, knowledge, and privilege—sin against divine grace and goodness. Satan is sure to be specially busy at such a crisis. He casts in the most terrible suggestions—raises all manner of questions—fills the heart with legal reasonings, doubts, and fears—causes the soul to totter on the foundation.

But, thanks and praise to our God, the enemy cannot prevail. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." The all-prevailing intercession of our divine Advocate sustains the faith so sorely tried, carries the soul through the deep and dark waters, restores the broken link of communion, heals the spiritual wounds, lifts up the fallen one, brings back the wanderer, and fills the heart with praise and thanksgiving. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." Here we have set before us in the most touching way the procuring cause of Simon Peter's restoration. We shall now look for a moment at

THE PRODUCING MEANS.

For this, too, we are indebted to the evangelist Luke. Indeed it is through him the inspiring Spirit has given us so much of what is exquisitely human—so much of what goes straight to our very hearts, in subduing power—so much of God coming out in loveliest human form.

We have already noticed Peter's gradual descent—his sad progress, from one stage to another, in moral distance and culpable decline—forgetting to watch and pray—following afar off—warming himself at the enemy's fire—the cowardly denial—the cursing and swearing. All this was down! down! shamefully and awfully down. But when the erring, straying, sinning one had reached the very lowest point, then comes out, with heavenly luster, the grace that shines in the procuring cause and the producing means of his restoration. The former we have in Christ's prayer; the latter in Christ's look. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Yes, here it is; "The Lord looked"—"Peter remembered"—Peter wept—wept bitterly." What a look! What a remembrance! What a weeping! What human heart can conceive, what tongue express, what pen portray, all that is wrapped up in that one look? We can well believe that it went right home to the very center of Peter's soul. He will never forget that marvelous look, so full of mighty moral power—so penetrating—so melting—so soul-subduing.

"Peter went out, and wept bitterly." This was the turning point. Up to this all was darkly downward. Here divine light breaks in upon the deep moral gloom. Christ's most precious prayer is having its answer, His powerful look is doing its work. The fountain of the heart is broken up, and penitential tears flow copiously forth, demonstrating the depth, reality, and intensity of the work within.

Thus it must ever be, and thus it will ever be, when the Spirit of God works in the soul. If we have sinned, we must be made to feel, to judge, and to confess our sin—to feel it deeply, judge it thoroughly, and confess it fully. It will not do merely to say, in levity, flippancy, or mere formality, “I have sinned.” There must be reality, uprightness, and sincerity. God desires truth in the inward parts. There was nothing light, flippant, or formal about our beloved apostle in the hour of his fall and repentance. No, all was profoundly and intensely real. It could not but be so with such a procuring cause, and such a producing means. The prayer and look of Peter’s Lord displayed their precious results in Peter’s restoration.

Now the reader will do well to notice that the prayer and look of our Lord Jesus Christ set forth, in a very striking and beautiful manner, the two grand aspects of Christ’s present ministry as our Advocate with the Father. We have the value and prevalence of His intercession, and the power and efficacy of His word in the hands of the Holy Ghost, that “other Advocate.” Christ’s prayer for Peter answers to His intercession for us. His look upon Peter answers to His word brought home to us in the power of the Holy Ghost. When we sin—as, alas! we do in thought and deed—our blessed and adorable Advocate speaks to God on our behalf. This is the procuring cause of our repentance and restoration. But He speaks to us on God’s behalf. This is the producing means.

We shall not dwell upon the great subject of the advocacy here, having recently sought to unfold it in our papers on “The All-sufficiency of Christ.” We shall close this paper with a brief reference to two or three of the moral features of Peter’s restoration—features which, be it well remembered, must be looked for in every case of true restoration. In the first place there is THE STATE OF THE CONSCIENCE.

Now, as to the full and complete restoration of Peter’s conscience after his terrible fall, we have the most unquestionable evidence afforded in his after history. Take the touching scene at the sea of Tiberias, as given in John 21. Look at that dear, earnest, thorough man, girding his fisher’s coat around him, and plunging into the sea, in order to get to the feet of his risen Lord! He waits neither for the ship nor for his companions, but in all the lovely freshness and liberty of a divinely restored conscience, he rushes to his Savior’s feet. There is no tormenting fear, no legal bondage, no doubt, darkness, or distance. His conscience is perfectly at rest. The prayer and the look—the two grand departments of the work of advocacy—had proved effectual. Peter’s conscience was all right, sound, and good; and hence he could find his home in the presence of his Lord—his holy, happy home.

Take another striking and beautiful evidence of a restored conscience. Look at Peter in Acts 3. There he stands in the presence of assembled thousands of Jews, and boldly charges them with having “denied the Holy One and the Just”—the very thing which he himself had done under circumstances far more aggravating. How could Peter do this? How could he have the face to speak so? Why not leave it to James or John to prefer this heavy charge? The answer is blessedly simple. Peter’s conscience was so thoroughly restored, so perfectly at rest, because perfectly purged, that he could fearlessly charge the house of Israel with the awful sin of denying the Holy One of God. Was this the fruit of moral insensibility? Nay, it was the fruit of divine restoration. Had any one of the congregation gathered in Solomon’s porch undertaken to challenge our apostle as to his own shameful denial of his Lord, we can easily conceive his answer. The man who had “wept bitterly” over his sin would, we feel assured, know how to answer such a challenge. Not that

his bitter weeping was the meritorious ground of his restoration; nothing of the kind, it only proved the reality of the work of repentance in his soul. Moral insensibility is one thing, and a restored conscience, resting on the blood and advocacy of Christ, is quite another.

But there is another thing involved in a true work of restoration, and that is

THE STATE OF THE HEART.

This is of the very utmost importance in every instance. No restoration can be considered divinely complete which does not reach the very depths of the heart. And hence, when we turn back to the scenes on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, we find the Lord dealing very closely and very powerfully with the state of Peter's heart. We cannot attempt to expatiate, much as we should like to do so, on one of the most affecting interviews in the entire volume of God. We can do little more than quote the inspired record, but that is quite enough.

It is deeply interesting to notice that there is no allusion—not the most remote—to past scenes during that wonderful dinner, provided, cooked, and dispensed by the risen Lord! But “when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” Here Simon is recalled by the words of his faithful Lord to his self-confident profession. He had said, “Though all shall be offended, yet will not I.” Then the searching question, three times repeated, evidently calls back the threefold denial.

Peter's heart is touched—the moral root of the whole matter is reached. This was absolutely necessary in Peter's case, and it is absolutely necessary in every case. The work of restoration can never be thorough unless the roots of things are reached and judged.

Mere surface work will never do. It is of no use to crop the sprouts; we must get down to the depths, the hidden springs, the moral sources, and judge them in the very light of the divine presence.

This is the true secret of all genuine restoration. Let us ponder it deeply. We may rest assured it demands our most solemn consideration. We are all too apt to rest satisfied with cropping off the sprouts that appear above the surface of our practical daily life, without getting at the roots, and the sad consequence is that the sprouts quickly appear again, to our sorrow and shame, and the dishonor of our Lord's name. The work of self-judgment must be more profound if we would really make progress. We are terribly shallow, light, and flippant. We greatly lack depth, seriousness, and moral gravity. We want more of that heart-work which was wrought in Simon the son of Jonas on the shore of the sea of Tiberias. “Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?” The knife of the divine Operator had reached the root of the moral disease, and that was enough. It was needful, but it was enough; and the grieved and self-judged Simon Peter has only to fall back upon the great fact that his Lord knew all things. “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” It is as though he had said, “Lord, it demands the eye of Omniscience itself to discern in the heart of the poor erring one a single spark of affection for thee.”

Reader, this truly is real work. We have before us a thoroughly restored soul—restored in conscience, restored in heart. And if it be asked, “What remains?” the answer is, we see a servant

RESTORED TO HIS WORK.

Some would tell us that if a man falls, he can never recover his position; and no doubt, under government, we must reap as we sow. But grace is another thing altogether. Government drove Adam out of Eden, and never replaced him, but grace announced the victorious seed of the woman. Government kept Moses out of Canaan, but grace conducted him to Pisgah's top. Government sent a perpetual sword upon David's house, but grace made the son of Bathsheba the wisest and wealthiest of Israel's kings.

This distinction must never be lost sight of. To confound grace and government is to commit a very grave mistake indeed. We cannot attempt to enter upon this weighty subject here, having done so in one of our earlier volumes. But let the reader seek to understand it, and bear it ever in mind.

As to Simon Peter, we not only see him restored to the work to which he was called at the first, but to something even higher. "Feed my lambs—shepherd my sheep"—is the new commission given to the man who had denied his Lord with an oath. Is not this something beyond "catching men?" "When thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." Can anything in the way of service be more elevating than shepherding sheep, feeding lambs, and strengthening brethren? There is nothing in all this world nearer or dearer to the heart of Christ than His sheep, His lambs, His brethren: and hence He could not have given Simon Peter a more affecting proof of His confidence than by committing to his care the dearest objects of His deep and tender love.

And then mark the closing words, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me."

What weighty words are these! Who can tell their depth, power, and significance? What a contrast between Simon, "young," restless, forward, blundering, boastful, self-confident; and Peter, "old" subdued, mellowed, passive, crucified! What a difference between a man walking whither he would, and a man following a rejected Lord along the dark and narrow pathway of the cross, home to glory!

Then Shall Every Man Have Praise of God

And can it be, my God! that Thou, ere long wilt stoop
To praise Thy purchased ones—and publicly announce,
To gazing, wondering multitudes, that this poor deed
Was done for Thee,—that act of self-renouncing love,
Observed by none down here—that quiet patient course,
Of waiting on the Lord, though earth and hell opposed?
All these Thine eye doth see, Thy loving heart approve;
And Thou dost deem them worth a record, in the book
Of Thy remembrance—worth rewarding in that day,
When we must all appear before the judgment-seat,
When that glad word “Well done” shall greet the raptured ear
Of many a one whose spirit here was wounded oft,—
Whose words and deeds had oft been misinterpreted,—
By bosom friends, by brothers, not by foes alone.
E’en now, the sense that Thine all-searching eye looks on,
Gives rest to weary hearts, and strength to faltering steps.
What will it be to have Thy welcome and Thy praise!
To adore the grace which kept in sore temptation’s hour!
And, with full heart, to give the glory all to Thee!
Surely that joyful day will recompense for all!
The ocean crossed—the haven reached—at home with Thee!
O! Father God! ‘tis sweet to know Thy watchful eye
Is ever on Thy children’s path—Thy loving arm
Upholds the feeble ones. Help us to lean on Thee,
And still to trust Thy guidance and Thy faithfulness;—
Not reckon on results,—but simply to obey;—

Having the mind of Him who came down here to do
His Father's will—who trod the path of suffering,
That He might know to sympathize with aching hearts—
To succor tempted souls—who drank the cup of wrath
For us,—that we might share His glory and His throne.

M. A. L

Till He Come

“I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”—John 14:3.

Only a few more burdens must we carry

In heat and toil beneath the scorching sun;

Only a little longer must we tarry—

Only a little longer “till He come.”

Only a little more of life’s rough journey

Through the world’s desert till the day is done;

Only a few more desert scenes of conflict,

Only a few more Marahs “till He come.”

Only a little longer, thinking gladly

Of the uprising of the brighter Sun;

Only a little longer, waiting sadly,

Midst the deep gloom of midnight “till He come.”

Only a few more billows, wildly tossing,

Beating us backward from the longed-for shore;

Only a few more snares our pathway crossing—

Then all the trials of the way’ll be o’er.

So let our eyes be on Him in His absence,

Seeking to serve Him in this day of grace;

While the thought cheers us in our constant sadness,

Soon He will come and meet us face to face.

The Voice of God

“He doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice.” Psalm 68:33.

God spoke in power—“Let there be light,”

And light directly shone;

The voice of God resistless is,

He speaks, and it is done.

God spoke in judgment—“Thou shalt die.”

Man sinned, and death came in;

A blighted world attests the fact,

Of human guilt and sin.

God spoke in mercy—“Look to Christ,

Believe in Him, and live.”

Thousands receive the precious word,—

‘Tis God’s delight to give.

And still in perfect love He speaks,

His accents all divine!

O wandering one, the call obey,

And glory shall be thine.

A.M.

The Way Home

I traverse not the wilderness alone!
With Jesus by my side,
His arm of strength my soul doth lean upon.
His counsel doth me guide.
Sweet words the weary journey to beguile,
He whispereth in mine ear;
With Him still less appears the "little while"
I needs must wander here.
The ocean fullness of redeeming love,
I ne'er shall span below;
E'en through the long eternal years above
Its depths I ne'er shall know.
When weary foot-prints mark the arid sand,
My fainting soul He cheers
With glory-glimpses of the better land,
Sure balm for wounds and fears!
Oh, saw ye once Him whom I love so well;
His would ye ever be!
Fair, fair is He,—His charms how shall I tell,
How speak His worth to me!
Oh, list, He calleth,—"Up and come away,
Thy winter's past and gone!
'Tis time my singing-bird were home with me,
Arise, my fairest one!"
Fain would this fettered spirit upward soar,
Fain reach Thy loving breast,

Where lost to earth, with Thee for evermore
Thy weary ones shall rest!
While still a wand'rer here, Thou, Lord, art mine;
But, lo! the shadows flee,—
The morrow dawneth,—breaks the day divine,
I come, I come to Thee!

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