

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 20

by C.H. Mackintosh

A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 20, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

71 Chapters

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Things New and Old Volume 20

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” 1 Cor. 15:3, 4.

1 John 4:9

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins..... God is love.” 1 John 4:9, 10, and 16.

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” 2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

2 Peter 3:17-18

“Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.” 2 Pet. 3:17, 18.

All That We Were

All that we were—our sin, our guilt,

Our death, was all our own:

All that we are we owe to Thee,

Thou God of grace, alone.

Alone With God

Alone with God art thou afraid to be?
Hiding from Him as though He could not see?
Alone with God if thou hast never been,
Ne'er in His sight thine own lost state hast seen,
Alone before Him never searched thy heart,
And proved its worthlessness in every part,
Alone with God if thou hast never stood,
There learned the value of Christ's precious blood,
Alone with Him refuse not now to be,
With Him whose heart is full of love to thee,
With Him who formed thee, and who gave thee breath,
Whose power and love preserve thee now from death.
Alone with God! oh, do not steel thy heart
'Gainst Him who made it, knows each hidden part,
Whose eye discovers every secret thought,
And sees each sin and folly thou hast wrought,
Alone with God! Oh, hasten to be there,
Low at His footstool bow thy soul in prayer,
Own He is righteous, and thou'rt full of sin,
Own every evil thing, outside and in.
Alone with God, with all thy thoughts laid bare
And every hidden sin that's lurking there.
This is the place for blessing, and when here,
God can in righteousness His grace bring near.
Own thyself ruined, sinful, lost, undone,
Then plead the Sacrifice—His well-loved Son.

Plead that He's raised Him, set Him on His throne;
Then may'st thou count that Savior as thine own,
Alone with Him thou then wilt love to be,
With Him who loved thee and who died for thee.
Who made the world, who all things did create,
Yet veiled His glory, stooped to man's estate,
Sought His own world, and took the sinner's place,
Received of sin the wages—matchless grace!
But now in glory He is seated, where,
Waiting He longs with us His joy to share.
Thence will He come, and fetch us there to be,
Where sorrow, pain, or death no more we'll see.
H. M. S.

At Jacob's Well

He hath come from far, that weary
One Who sits by the lone well-side;
And tired and faint, 'neath the Eastern sun,
He rests in the fierce noontide.
Oh, cool are the waters far below,
And thirsting is He to drink;
But a greater thirst His heart doth know,
As He sitteth on the brink.
And known to Him ere it meets His ear,
The tread of those coming feet;
An erring one to the well draws near,
Whom His heart goes forth to meet.
Goes forth with love and with healing grace,
For He knoweth all her need:
With a careless glance she scans His face,
But His heart she cannot read.
And yet those miles He has traveled o'er,
And has waited for her there;
Has thirsted that she might thirst no more,
But unfailing waters share!
And oh, He knoweth, He knoweth well,
The price which Himself must pay;
Her tears to wipe and her fears to quell,
And her sins to take away.
To clothe her soul in the garments white,
That washed in His blood must be;

And His mind foresees—O wondrous sight!
His Cross! and His agony!
The holy God and the sinner met!
What marvelous grace is here!
She hears His voice, but she knows not yet
Herself to her God so near.
So far in sin, but so near in grace,
So near to the heart of love!
O erring child of Samarian race,
Rest here like a weary dove.
He tells of a fountain clear and deep,
That she needs not seek afar;
Of the still sure waters, where His sheep
So tenderly shelter'd are.
He tells her of joy beyond her ken,
And He shows her who He is;
"His delights were with the sons of men,"
Whom He came to fill with bliss.
O happy moments for Him, for her!
She the joyful tidings bears;
He sits regardless of hunger there,
For His Father's joy He shares.
That another lost one has been found;
And to do His Father's will
Is His meat and drink—He looks around
For some other heart to fill.
T'was thus from His chosen work of grace
He was never turned aside;
And his human wants could find no place,

Until love was satisfied.

O God, our Father! in Christ Thy Son

Is Thy “perfect love” revealed!

And well may our hearts rejoice, each one

By Thy Holy Spirit sealed.

Of love so high, unto depths so low,

Stooping in grace to shine—

Not men, nor angels, nor God doth know

Of a love, O God, like Thine!

Bethany: Part 1

We want the reader to turn with us to John 11; 12. If we mistake not, he will find therein a very rare spiritual treat. In chapter 11 we see what the Lord Jesus was to the family of Bethany; and in chapter 12 we see what the family of Bethany was to Him. The entire passage is full of the most precious instruction.

In chapter 11 we have three great subjects presented to us, namely, first, our Lord's own path with the Father; secondly, His profound sympathy with His people; and, thirdly, His grace in associating us with Himself in His work, in so far as that is possible.

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

The sisters, in their time of trouble, turned to their divine Friend; and they were right. Jesus was a sure resource for them, as He is for all His tried ones wherever, however, or whoever they are. "Call upon me in the time of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." We make a most serious mistake when, in any time of need or pressure, we turn to the creature for help or sympathy. We are sure to be disappointed. Creature streams are dry. Creature props give way. Our God will make us prove the vanity and folly of all creature confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations. And on the other hand, He will prove to us in the most touching and forcible manner, the truth and blessedness of His own word, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

No never! He, blessed be His holy Name, never fails a trusting heart. He cannot deny Himself. He delights to take occasion from our wants, woes and weaknesses, to express and illustrate His tender care and loving-kindness, in a thousand ways. But He will teach us the utter barrenness of all human resources. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

Thus it must ever be. Disappointment, barrenness and desolation are the sure and certain results of trusting in man. But, on the other hand,—and mark the contrast, reader— "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer. 17:5-8.

Such is the unvarying teaching of holy scripture on both sides of this great practical question. It is a fatal mistake to look even to the very best of men—to betake ourselves, directly or indirectly, to poor human cisterns. But the true secret of all blessedness, strength and comfort is to look to

Jesus—to betake ourselves at once, in simple faith, to the living God whose delight it ever is to help the needy, to strengthen the feeble, and lift up those that are cast down.

Hence, then, the sisters of Bethany did the right thing when, in the hour of need and pressure, they turned to Jesus. He was both able and willing to help them. But that blessed One did not at once respond to their call. He did not see fit at once to fly to their relief, much as He loved them. He fully entered into their sorrow and anxiety. He took it all in and measured it perfectly. He was thoroughly with them in it. There was no lack of sympathy, as we shall see in the sequel. Yet He paused; and the enemy might cast in all sorts of suggestions; and their own hearts might conceive all sorts of reasonings. It might seem as though “The Master” had forgotten them. Perhaps their loving Lord and Friend was changed toward them. Something may have occurred to bring a cloud between them. We all know how the poor heart reasons and tortures itself at such times. But there is a divine remedy for all the heart’s reasonings, and a triumphant answer to all the enemy’s dark and horrible suggestions. What is it? Unshaken confidence in the eternal stability of the love of Christ.

Christian reader, here lies the true secret of the whole matter. Let nothing shake your confidence in the unalterable love of your Lord. Come what may; let the furnace be ever so hot; let the waters be ever so deep; let the shadows be ever so dark; let the path be ever so rough; let the pressure be ever so great, still hold fast your confidence in the perfect love and sympathy of the One who has proved His love by going down into the dust of death—down under the dark and heavy billows and waves of the wrath of God, in order to save your soul from everlasting burnings. Be not afraid to trust Him fully—to commit yourself, without a shadow of reserve or misgiving, to Him. Do not measure His love by your circumstances. If you do, you must, of necessity, reach a false conclusion. Judge not according to the outward appearance. Never reason from your surroundings. Get to the heart of Christ, and reason out from that blessed center. Never interpret His love by your circumstances; but always interpret your circumstances by His love. Let the beams of His everlasting favor shine upon your darkest surroundings, and then you will be able to answer every infidel thought, no matter whence it comes.

It is a grand thing to be able, come what may, to vindicate God, to stand, even if we can do nothing more, as a monument of His unfailing faithfulness to all who put their trust in Him. What though the horizon around be dark and depressing—though the heavy clouds gather and the storm rage, God is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.

Besides, we must not measure divine love by the mode of its manifestation. We are all prone to do so; but it is a great mistake. The love of God clothes itself in varied forms, and not infrequently the form seems to us, in our shallowness and short-sightedness, mysterious and incomprehensible. But, if only we wait patiently and in artless confidence, divine light will shine upon the dispensation of divine providence, and our hearts shall be filled with wonder, love and praise.

“We leave it to Himself,

To choose and to command;

With wonder filled, we soon shall see

How wise, how strong, His hand.

We comprehend Him not;
Yet earth and heaven tell,
God sits as Sovereign on the throne
And ruleth all things well.”

God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor His ways as our ways; nor His love as our love. If we hear of a friend in distress or difficulty of any kind, our first impulse is to fly to his help and relieve him of his pressure, if possible. But this might be a very great mistake. In place of rendering help, it might be doing serious mischief. We might actually be running athwart the purpose of God, and taking our friend out of a position in which divine government had placed him for his ultimate and permanent profit. The love of God is a wise and a faithful love. It abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence. We, on the contrary, make the gravest mistakes, even when most sincerely desiring to do what is right and good. We are not competent to take in all the bearings of things, or scan the windings and workings of providence, or weigh the ultimate results of the divine dealings. Hence, the urgent need of waiting much on God; and, above all things, of holding fast our confidence in His unchanging, unfailing, unerring love. He will make all plain. He will bring light out of darkness, life out of death, victory out of seeming defeat. He will cause the deepest and darkest distress to yield the very richest harvest of blessing. He will make all things work together for good. But He is never in a hurry. He has His own wise ends in view, and He will reach them in His own time and way; and, moreover, out of what may seem to us to be a dark, tangled, inexplicable maze of providence, light will spring forth and fill our souls with praise and adoration.

The foregoing line of thought may help us to understand and appreciate our Lord's bearing towards the sisters of Bethany, on hearing of their trouble. He felt there was much more involved in the case than the mere matter of relieving those whom He, nevertheless, deeply loved. The glory of God had to be considered. Hence, He says, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” He saw in this case an occasion for the display of the divine glory, and not merely for the exhibition of personal affection however deep and real that might be—and with Him, blessed be His Name, it was both deep and real, for we read, “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”

But, in the judgment of our blessed and adorable Lord, the glory of God took precedence of every other consideration. Neither personal affection nor personal fear had the smallest sway over His movements. He was ruled, in all things, by the glory of God. From the manger to the cross, in life and in death, in all His words, and all His works, and all His ways, His devoted heart was set, with firm and unalterable purpose, upon the glory of God. Hence, though it might be a good thing to relieve a friend in distress, it was far better and higher to glorify God; and we may rest assured, that the beloved family of Bethany sustained no loss by a delay which only made room for the brighter out-shining of the divine glory.

Let us all remember this in seasons of trial and pressure. It is an all-important point, and when fully apprehended, will prove a very deep and blessed source of consolation. It will help us marvelously to bear up under sickness, pain, death, bereavement, sorrow, and poverty. How blessed to be able to stand beside the sick bed of a friend and say, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God!” And this is faith's privilege. Yea, the true believer can stand, not only in the sick chamber,

but by the open grave, and see the beams of the divine glory shining forth over all.

No doubt the skeptic might cavil at the statement that “This sickness is not unto death.” He might object and reason and argue on the ground of the apparent fact that Lazarus did die. But faith never reasons from appearances. It brings God in and then finds a divine solution for all difficulties. Such is the moral elevation—such the reality of a life of faith. It sees God above and beyond all circumstances. It reasons from God downward, and never from circumstances upward. Sickness and death are nothing in the presence of divine power. All difficulties disappear from the pathway of faith. They are, as Joshua and Caleb assured their unbelieving brethren, simply bread for the true believer.

Nor is this all. Faith can wait God’s time, knowing that His time is the best. It staggers not, even though He may seem to linger. It rests with the most perfect calmness in the assurance of His unchanging love and unerring wisdom. It fills the heart with the sweetest confidence that if there be delay—if the relief be not sent all at once—it is all for the best, inasmuch as all things work together for good, and all must in the long run redound to the glory of God. Faith enables its happy possessor to vindicate God amid the most intense pressure, and to know and confess that divine love always does the very best for its object.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Bethany: Part 2

It gives great rest to the heart to know that the One who has undertaken for us, in all our weakness, in all our need, and in all the exigencies of our path, from first to last, has first of all perfectly secured, in every respect, the glory of God. That was His primary object in all things. In the grand work of redemption, and in all the most minute details of our history, from the starting-post to the goal, the glory of God has the first place in the devoted heart of that blessed One with whom we have to do. At all cost to Himself He vindicated and maintained the divine glory. For that end He gave up everything. He laid aside His own glory, humbled Himself and emptied Himself. He surrendered all His personal rights and claims, and yielded up His life, in order to lay the imperishable foundation of that glory which now fills all heaven—shall soon cover the earth, and shine through the wide universe forever.

The knowledge and abiding sense of this must give profound repose to the spirit in reference to everything that concerns us, whether it be the salvation of the soul, the forgiveness of sins, or the need of the daily path. All that could possibly be a matter of exercise to us, for time or for eternity, has been provided for, all secured on the selfsame basis that sustains the divine glory. We are saved and provided for; but the salvation and provision, all praise to our glorious Savior and Provider!—are inseparably bound up with the glory of God. In all that our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, in all that He is doing, in all that He will do, the glory of God is fully maintained.

And, further, we may add, in all our trials, difficulties, sorrows, and exercises, if instant relief be not afforded, we have to remember that there is some deep reason connected with the glory of God and our real good, why the desired relief is withheld. In seasons of pressure we are apt to think only of the one thing, namely, relief. But there is very much more than this to be considered. We should think of the glory of God. We should seek to know His object in putting us under the pressure. We should earnestly desire that His end might be gained, and His glory promoted. This would be for our fullest and deepest blessing, while, on the contrary, the relief which we so eagerly desire would be the very worst thing we could get. We must always remember that, through the marvelous grace of God, His glory and our true blessing are so inseparably bound up together, that when the former is maintained, the latter must be perfectly secured.

This is a most precious consideration, and one eminently calculated to sustain the heart in all seasons of affliction. All things must ultimately redound to the glory of God, and “all things work together for good to those that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.” It may not, perhaps, be so easy to see this when the pressure is upon us. When anxiously watching by the sick-bed of a beloved friend; or when treading the chamber of sorrow; or when laid on a bed of pain and languishing ourselves; or when overwhelmed by sudden tidings of the loss of our earthly all: under such circumstances it may not be so easy to see the glory of God maintained, and our blessing secured; but faith can see it for all that; and as for “blind unbelief,” it is always “sure to err.” If those beloved sisters of Bethany had judged by the sight of their eyes, they would have been sorely tried during those weary days and nights spent at the bedside of their much loved

brother. And not only so, but when the terrible moment arrived, and they were called to witness the closing scene, many dark reasonings might have sprung up in their crushed and desolate hearts.

But Jesus was looking on. His heart was with them. He was watching the whole process, and that, too, from the very highest stand-point—the glory of God. He took in the entire scene, in all its bearings, in all its influences, in all its issues. He felt for those afflicted sisters—felt with them—felt as only a perfect human heart could feel. Though absent in person, He was with them in spirit, as they waded through the deep waters. His loving heart perfectly entered into all their sorrow, and He only waited for “God’s due time” to come to their aid, and light up the darkness of death and the grave with the bright beams of resurrection glory. “When he had heard that Lazarus was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.” Things were allowed to take their course, as we say; death was allowed to enter the much loved dwelling; but all this was for the glory of God. The enemy might seem to have it all his own way, but it was only in appearance; in reality death itself was but preparing a platform on which the glory of God was to be displayed. “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”

Such, then, was the path of our blessed Lord—His path with the Father. His every movement, His every step, His every act, His every utterance, His every thought had direct reference to the claims of the Father’s glory. Much as He loved the family of Bethany, His personal affection led Him not into the scene of their sorrow, till the moment was come for the display of the divine glory, and then no personal fear could keep Him away. “Then after that he saith to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”

Thus that blessed One ever walked in the full blaze of the glory of God. His springs of action were all divine—all heavenly. He was a perfect stranger to all the motives and objects of the men of this world, who are stumbling along in the thick moral darkness that enwraps them, whose motives are all selfish, whose objects are earthly and sensual. He never did a single thing to please Himself. His Father’s will, His Father’s glory, ruled Him in all things. The stirrings of deep personal affection took Him not to Bethany, and no personal fear could keep Him away. In all He did, and in all He did not do, He found His motive in the glory of God.

Precious Savior! teach us to walk in Thy heavenly footsteps! Give us to drink more into Thy spirit! This, truly, is what we need. We are so sadly prone to self-seeking and self-pleasing, even when apparently doing right things, and ostensibly engaging in the Lord’s work. We run hither and thither, do this and that, travel, and preach, and write; and all the while we may be pleasing ourselves, and not really seeking to do the will of God, and promote His glory. May we study more profoundly our divine Exemplar! May He be ever before our hearts as the One to whom we are predestinated to be conformed. Thank God for the sweet and soul-sustaining assurance that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. It is but a little while, and we shall be done forever with all that now hinders our progress, and interrupts our communion. Till then, may the blessed Spirit work in our hearts, and keep us so occupied with Christ, so feeding by faith on His preciousness, that our practical ways may be more a living expression of Himself, and that we may bring forth more abundantly the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and

praise of God.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Bethany: Part 3

We may now meditate for a few moments on the deeply interesting theme of Christ's sympathy with His people, so touchingly illustrated in His dealings with the beloved family of Bethany. He allowed them to go through the exercise, to wade through the deep waters, to be thoroughly tested, in order that "the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory." Looked at from nature's standpoint, it might seem as though all hope was gone, and every ray of light faded away from the horizon. Lazarus was dead and buried. All was over. And yet the Lord had said, "This sickness is not unto death." How was this? What could He mean?

Thus nature might reason; but we must not listen to the reasonings of nature, which are sure to carry us down into the regions of the shadow of death. We must listen to the voice of Jesus; we must hearken to His living, cheering, strengthening, encouraging accents. In this way we shall be able to vindicate and glorify God, not only at the sick-bed, but in the chamber of death, and at the very grave itself. Death is not death if Christ be there. The grave itself is but the sphere in which the glory of God shines out in all its luster. It is when all that belongs to the creature is gone from the scene—when the platform is thoroughly cleared of all that is merely of man—it is then, and not until then, that the beams of the divine glory can be seen in all their brightness. It is when all is gone, or seems to be, that Christ can come in and fill the scene.

This is a grand point for the soul to get hold of and understand. It is only faith that can really enter into it. We are all so terribly prone to lean on some creature prop, to sit beside some creature stream, to trust in an arm of flesh, to cling to what we can see, to rest in the palpable and the tangible. "The things that are seen and temporal" have oftentimes more weight with us than "the things which are unseen and eternal." Hence it is that our ever faithful Lord sees it right and good to sweep away our creature props, and dry up our creature streams, in order that we may lean on Himself, the eternal Rock of our salvation, and find all our springs in Himself, the living and exhaustless Fountain of all blessing. He is jealous of our love and confidence, and He will clear the scene of everything that might divide our hearts with Himself. He knows it is for our soul's full blessing to be wholly cast upon Himself, and hence He seeks to purify our hearts from every hateful idol.

And should we not praise Him for all this? Yes, truly; and not only so, but we should welcome whatever means He is pleased to use for the accomplishment of His wise and gracious end, even though, to nature's view, it may seem harsh and severe. He may often have to say to us, as He said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Yes, beloved reader, by-and-by we shall know and appreciate all His dealings. We shall look back upon the whole course, from the light of His own blessed presence, and see and own that "the very heaviest stroke of His hand was the very strongest expression of His love at the time." Martha and Mary might wonder why death had been allowed to enter their dwelling. Doubtless they looked, day after day, hour after hour, moment after moment, for their beloved Friend to enter; but

instead of that He kept away, and death entered, and all seemed gone.

“Why was this? Let Himself reply. “These things said he; and after that he saith unto them, our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” What touching affection! What gracious intimacy! What a tender linking of Himself with the family of Bethany, on the one hand, and His disciples, on the other! “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” It was but a gentle sleep. Death is not death in the presence of the Prince of life. The grave is but a sleeping-place. “I go that I may awake him out of sleep.” Such words could not have been uttered had Lazarus been raised from a sick bed. “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity;” and we can see without difficulty that the grave afforded God a far better opportunity than a sick-bed.

This, then, was the reason why Jesus kept away from His beloved friends. He waited for the fitting moment, and that moment was when Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already; when every human hope had vanished; when all human agency was powerless and valueless. “I go”—not to raise him from a sick-bed, but “that I may awake him out of sleep.” The platform was cleared of the creature, in order that the glory of God might shine out in all its brightness.

And is it not well to have the scene thus cleared of the creature? Is it not a mercy—not in disguise, as some people say, but—a plain, positive, palpable mercy—to have every human prop gone, every human hope vanished? Faith says, “Yes”—says it unhesitatingly and emphatically. Nature says, “No!” The poor heart craves something of the creature, something that the eye can see. But faith—that most precious, priceless, divinely-wrought principle, positively delights in being called to lean absolutely and abidingly upon the living God.

But it must be a real thing. It is of little use talking about faith if the heart be a stranger to its power. Mere profession is perfectly worthless. God deals in moral realities. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith?” He does not say, “What doth it profit though a man have faith?” Blessed be God, those who, through grace, have it, know that it profits much every way. It glorifies God as nothing else can do it. It lifts the soul above the depressing influences of things seen and temporal. It tranquillizes the spirit in a most blessed manner. It enlarges the heart, by leading us out of our own narrow circle of personal interests, sympathies, cares, and burdens, and connecting us livingly with the eternal, exhaustless spring of goodness. It works by love, and draws us out, in gracious activity, towards every object of need, but specially toward those who are of the household of faith.

It is faith alone that can move along the path where Jesus leads. To mere nature that path is dreadful. It is rough, dark, and lonely. Even those who surrounded our blessed Lord on the occasion of the death of Lazarus seemed wholly unable to comprehend His thoughts, or follow intelligently His footsteps. When He said, “Let us go into Judea again,” they could think only of the Jews’ stoning Him. When He said, “I go, that I may awake him out of sleep,” they replied, “If he sleep he shall do well.” When He spake of his death, they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. When “He said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe;” poor unbelieving nature, speaking through the lips of Thomas Didymus, said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

In a word, we see total inability to take in the true bearing of the case, as viewed from a divine standpoint. Nature sees nothing but death and darkness, where faith basks in the sunlight of the

divine presence. "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Alas! alas! was this all that even a disciple had to say? How absurd are the conclusions of unbelief! Let us go with the Prince of life, that—what? "we may die with him!" What folly! What a gross contradiction! What should Thomas have said? "Let us go, that we may behold His glory;" that we may see His marvelous doings in the very region of the shadow of death; that we may share in His triumphs; that we may shout, at the very gates of the grave, our hallelujahs to His deathless name!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Bethany: Part 4

We have already noticed the three prominent subjects presented to us in John 11, namely, our Lord's own path with the Father; secondly, His profound sympathy with us; thirdly, His grace in linking us with Himself, in so far as that is possible, in all His blessed work. He ever walked with God, in calm, unbroken communion. He walked in the most implicit obedience to the will of God, and was ruled in all things by His glory. He walked in the day, and stumbled not. The will of God was the light in which the perfect workman ever carried on His work. He found His only motive for action in the divine will—His only object in the divine glory. He pleased not Himself. He came down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father, and in doing that will He ever found His meat and drink.

But His large loving heart flowed out in perfect sympathy with human sorrow. This we see attested, in the most touching manner, as He moved, in company with the afflicted sisters, to the tomb of their brother. If any question had arisen in their hearts during the season of trial, in the absence of their Lord, it was abundantly answered, yea, we may add, completely demolished, by the manifestation of His deep and tender affection as He moved toward the spot where the beams of the divine glory were so soon to shine out over the dreary region of death.

We do not here dwell upon the interesting interview between the two sisters and their beloved Lord, so full of teaching—so illustrative of His perfect mode of dealing with His people in their varied measures of intelligence and communion. We pass at once to the inspired statement in verse 33-35 of our chapter. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept."

How wonderful! The Son of God groaned and wept. Let us never forget. He, though God over all, blessed forever; though the eternal Son of the Father; though the Resurrection and the Life; though the Quickener of the dead; though the Conqueror of the grave; though on His way to deliver the body of His friend from the grasp of the enemy—sample of what He will soon do for all who belong to Him—yet, so perfectly did He enter into human sorrow, so completely did He take in all the terrible consequences of sin, all the misery and all the desolation of this sin-stricken world, all the dreadful pressure of the enemy's power upon the human family—so thoroughly did the blessed One take in each and all of these things, that He groaned and wept; and those tears and groans emanated from the depths of a perfect human heart that felt as only a perfect human heart could feel—felt according to God,—for every form of human sorrow and misery. Though perfectly exempt, in His own divine Person, from sin and all its consequences, yea, because exempt, He could, in perfect grace, enter into it all, and make His own of it, as only He could do.

"Jesus wept!" Wondrous, significant, suggestive fact! He wept, not for Himself, but for others. He wept with them. Mary wept. The Jews wept. All this is easily grasped and understood. But that Jesus should weep reveals a mystery which no created intelligence can ever fathom. It was divine compassion weeping through human eyes over the desolation which sin had caused in this poor

world, weeping in sympathy with those whose hearts had been crushed by the rude hand of death.

Let all who are in sorrow remember this. Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. His circumstances are changed, but His heart is not. His position is different, but His sympathy is the same. "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There is a perfect human heart on the throne of the Majesty of the heavens, and that heart sympathizes with us in all our sorrows, in all our trials, in all our infirmities, in all our pressure and exercise. He perfectly enters into it all. Yea, He gives Himself to each one of His beloved members here upon earth, as though He had only that one to look after.

How sweet and soothing to think of this! It is worth having a sorrow to be allowed to taste the preciousness of Christ's sympathy. The sisters of Bethany might say, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But if their brother had not died, they would not have seen Jesus weeping, or heard His deep groan of sympathy with them in their sorrow. And who would not say that it is better to have the sympathy of His heart with us in our sorrow, than the power of His hand in keeping or taking us out of it? Was it not much better, much higher, much more blessed, for the three witnesses in Dan. 3 to have the Son of God walking with them in the furnace, than to have escaped the furnace by the power of His hand? Unquestionably.

And thus it is in every case. We have ever to remember that this is not the day of Christ's power. By-and-by He will take to Himself His great power, and reign. Then all our sufferings, all our trials, all our tribulations, will be over forever. The night of weeping will give place to the morning of joy, the morning without clouds, the morning that shall never know an evening. But now it is the time of Christ's patience, the time of His precious sympathy; and the sense of this is most blessedly calculated to sustain the heart in passing through the deep waters of affliction.

And there are the deep waters of affliction. There are trials, sorrows, tribulations, and difficulties. And not only so, but our God means that we should feel them. His hand is in them for our real good, and for His glory. True, it is our privilege to be able to say, "We glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

The Lord be praised for all this! But it is folly to deny that there are trials, sorrows, and tribulations of all sorts. Nor would our God have us insensible to them. Insensibility to them is folly; glorying in them is faith. The consciousness of Christ's sympathy, and the intelligence of God's object in all our afflictions, will enable us to rejoice in them; but to deny that there are afflictions, or that we ought to feel them, is simply absurd. God would not have us to be stoics. He leads us into deep waters, but He walks with us through them, and when His end is reached, He delivers us out of them, to our joy, and His own everlasting praise.

"He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." At the first, Paul longed to be rid of the thorn in the flesh, whatever it was. He besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But

the thorn in the flesh was better than pride in the heart. It was better far to be afflicted than puffed up—better to have Christ's sympathy with him in his temptation than the power of His hand in delivering him out of it.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Bethany: Part 5

It is deeply touching to mark the two groans of our Lord, as He moved toward the tomb of His friend. The first groan was called forth by the sight of the weeping mourners around Him. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." The margin reads, "He troubled himself."

How precious is the thought of this to the crushed and sorrowing heart! The sight of human tears drew forth a groan from the loving, sympathizing, tender heart of the Son of God. Let all mourners remember this. Jesus did not rebuke Mary for weeping. He did not rally her on account of her sorrow. He did not tell her she ought not to feel; that she ought to be above everything of that sort. Ah! no; this would not be like Him. Some of us heartless folk talk in this style; but He knew better. He, though Son of God, was a real Man; and hence, He felt as a man ought to feel, and He knew what man must feel, while passing through this dark vale of tears. Some of us talk largely and loftily about being above nature, and not feeling the snapping of tender links, and much in that strain. But in this we are not wise. We are not in sympathy with the heart of the Man, Christ Jesus. It is one thing to put forth, in heartless flippancy, our transcendental theories, and it is quite another to pass through the deep waters of grief and desolation with a heart exercised according to God. It will generally be found those of us who declaim the loudest against nature, prove ourselves to be just like other people, when called to meet bodily sickness, sorrow of heart, mental pressure, or pecuniary loss. The great point is to be real, and to go through the stern realities of actual life, with a heart truly subject to God. Fine drawn theories will not stand the test of real sorrow, trial, and difficulty; and nothing can be more absurd than to talk to people, with human hearts, about not feeling things. God means us to feel; and—precious, soothing, consolatory thought! —Jesus feels with us.

Let all the sons and daughters of sorrow remember these things for the consolation of their sorrowing hearts. "God comforts those that are cast down." If we were never cast down, we should not know His precious ministry. A stoic does not need the comfort of God. It is worth having a broken heart to have it bound up by our most merciful High Priest.

"Jesus groaned"— "Jesus wept." What power, what divine sweetness in these words! What a blank there would be were these words erased from the page of inspiration! Surely we could not do without them, and therefore our own most gracious God has, by His Spirit, penned these unspeakably precious words for the comfort and consolation of all who are called to tread the chamber of sorrow, or to stand at the grave of a friend.

But there was another groan evoked from the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the Jews, when they heard His groan, and saw His tears, could not help exclaiming, "Behold how he loved him!" But alas! others only found, in such affecting proofs of true and profound sympathy, occasion for the display of heartless skepticism—and skepticism is always perfectly heartless— "Some of them said, could not this man, that opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Here the poor human heart lets itself out, in its ignorant reasonings. How little did these skeptics understand either the Person or the path of the Son of God! How could they appreciate the motives that actuated Him either in what He did, or in what He did not do? He opened the eyes of the blind, in order that "The works of God might be made manifest in him." And He did not prevent the death of Lazarus, that God might be glorified thereby.

But what did they know about all this? Absolutely nothing. The blessed One moved at far too high an elevation to be within the ken of worldly religionists and skeptical reasoners. "The world knew him not." God understood and appreciated Him perfectly. This was enough. What were the thoughts of men to One who ever walked in calm communion with the Father? They were utterly incapable of forming a correct judgment either of Himself or of His ways. They carried on their reasonings in that thick moral darkness in which they lived and moved and had their being.

Thus it is still. Human reasonings are begun, continued, and ended in the dark. Man reasons about God; reasons about Christ; reasons about scripture; reasons about heaven, about hell, about eternity; about all sorts of things. But all his reasonings are worse—far worse than worthless. Men are no more capable of understanding or appreciating the written word, now, than they were of understanding or appreciating the living Word, when He was amongst them. Indeed, the two things must go together. As the living word and the written word are one, so to know the one we must know the other; but the natural, the unrenewed, the unconverted man knows neither. He is totally blind, in utter darkness, dead; and when he makes a religious profession, he is "twice dead"—dead in nature and dead in his religion. What are his thoughts, his reasonings, his conclusions worth? Nothing! they are perfectly baseless, totally false, thoroughly ruinous.

Nor is there the slightest use in arguing with unconverted people. It only tends to deceive them by leading them to suppose that they can argue. It is always the best way to deal solemnly with them as to their own moral condition before God. We do not find our Lord taking any notice of the unbelieving reasonings of those around Him. He simply heaves another groan and goes on His way. "Jesus therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it."

This second groan is deeply affecting. He groaned, at first, in sympathy with the mourners around Him. He groaned again over the hardness and dark unbelief of the human heart, and of the heart of Israel in particular. But, be it carefully noted, He does not attempt to explain His reasons for not having hindered the death of His friend, although He had opened the eyes of the blind.

Blessed, perfect Servant! It was no part of His business to explain or apologize. He had to work on in the current of the divine counsels, and for the promotion of the divine glory. He had to do the Father's will, not explain Himself to those who could not possibly understand the explanation.

This is a most weighty point for us all. Some of us lose a quantity of time in argument, apology, and explanation, in cases where such things are not the least understood. We really do mischief. Better far pursue, in holy calmness of spirit, singleness of eye, and decision of purpose, the path of duty. This is what we have got to do, not to explain or defend ourselves, which is sorry work at best for anyone.

But we must pass for a moment to the tomb of Lazarus, and there see with what lovely grace our adorable Lord and Master sought to associate His servants with Himself, in His work, in so far as

that was possible; though, even here, too, He is sadly intruded upon by the dark unbelief of the human heart. "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." This they could do, and hence He most graciously calls upon them to do it. It was all they could do, so far. But here unbelief breaks in and casts its dark shadow over the heart. "Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days."

And what of that? Could the humiliating process of decomposition, even if completed, stand for one moment in the way of Him who is the resurrection and the life? Impossible! Bring Him in, and all is clear and simple; leave Him out, and all is dark and impracticable. Let but the voice of the Son of God be heard, and death and corruption must vanish like the darkness of night before the beams of the rising sun. "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

How magnificent! What are death, the grave, and decomposition in the presence of such power as this? Talk of being dead four days as a difficulty! Millions that have been moldering in the dust for thousands of years, shall spring up in a moment into life, immortality, and eternal glory, at the voice of that blessed One to whom Martha ventured to offer her unbelieving and irrational suggestion.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Bethany: Part 6

In our Lord's reply to Martha we have one of the very finest utterances that ever fell on the human ear. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" What living depth, what divine power, what freshness, sweetness, and comfort in these words! They present to us the very gist and marrow, the heart's core, the essential principle of the divine life. It is only the eye of faith that can see the glory of God. Unbelief sees only difficulties, darkness, and death. Faith looks above and beyond all these, and ever basks in the blessed beams of the divine glory. Poor Martha saw nothing but a decomposed human body, simply because she was governed by a spirit of dark and depressing unbelief. Had she been swayed by an artless faith, she would have walked to the tomb in company with Him who is the resurrection and the life, assured that, instead of death and decomposition, she should see the glory of God.

Reader, this is a grand principle for the soul to get a thorough grasp of. It is utterly impossible for human language to overstate its value and importance. Faith never looks at difficulties, except indeed it be to feed on them. It looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. It takes hold of the living God. It leans on His arm; it makes use of His strength; it draws on His exhaustless treasury; it walks in the light of His blessed countenance, and sees His glory shining forth over the darkest scenes of human life.

The inspired volume abounds in striking illustrations of the contrast between faith and unbelief. Let us glance at one or two of them. Look, for example, at Caleb and Joshua, in contrast with their unbelieving brethren, in Numb. 13. These latter saw only the difficulties which stood in their way. "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land"—not stronger than Jehovah, surely—"and the cities are walled and very great;"—not greater than the living God—"and moreover we saw the children of Anak there." It is very clear that they did not see the glory of God; indeed they saw anything and everything but that. They were wholly governed by a spirit of unbelief, and hence they could only "bring up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature"—they did not see a single small man, not one trifling difficulty; they looked at everything through the magnifying-glass of unbelief. "There we saw the giants"—no doubt!—"and the sons of Anak which come of the giants." And nothing more? Nothing whatever. God was shut out; they could not see Him at all through the glasses they used. They could only see the terrible giants and towering walls. "And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight."

But what of Jehovah? Alas, He was shut out! Unbelief invariably leaves God out of its calculations. It can take a very accurate account of all the difficulties, all the hindrances, all the hostile influences, but as for the living God, it sees Him not. There is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, whether we listen to them in the wilderness of Kadesh, or, fourteen hundred years afterward, at the tomb of Lazarus. Unbelief is always and everywhere the same; it begins, continues, and ends with the absolute and complete exclusion of the one living and true God. It

can do naught save to cast dark shadows over the pathway of every one who will listen to its voice.

How different are the accents of faith! Hearken to Joshua and Caleb, as they seek to stem the rising tide of unbelief. "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes; and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to search it is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us"—here lies the secret— "then he will bring us into this land, and give it us, a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us;"—faith actually feeds on the difficulties which terrify unbelief— "their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not."

Glorious words! It does the heart good to transcribe them. "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Thus it is always. If there is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, there is a glorious consistency in the accents of faith, wherever we hearken to them. Caleb and Joshua saw the glory of God, and in the light of that glory, what were giants and high walls? Simply nothing. If anything, they were bread for the nourishment of faith. Faith brings in God, and He shuts out all difficulties. What walls or giants could stand before the Almighty God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Such is ever the artless, but powerful, reasoning of faith. It conducts all its arguments, and reaches all its conclusions, in the blessed light of the divine presence. It sees the glory of God. It looks above and beyond the heavy clouds which at times gather upon the horizon, and finds in God its sure and never-failing resource. Precious faith! The only thing in the world that really glorifies God; the only thing that makes the heart of the Christian truly bright and happy.

Let us take another illustration. Turn to 1 Kings 17, and contrast the widow of Sarepta with Elijah the Tishbite. What was the difference between them? Just the difference that ever exists between unbelief and faith. Listen again to the utterances of unbelief. "And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

Here, truly, is a gloomy picture. An empty barrel, an exhausted cruse, and death! Was that all? That was all for blind unbelief. It is the old story of the giants and lofty walls over again. God is shut out, though she could say, "As the Lord thy God liveth." In reality she had no real sense of His presence, and of His all-sufficiency to meet her need and that of her house. Her circumstances excluded God from the vision of her soul. She looked at things that were seen, not at the things which were unseen. She saw not the invisible One; she saw nothing but famine and death. As the ten unbelieving spies saw nothing but the difficulties; as Martha saw nothing but the grave and its humiliating results; so the poor Sareptan saw nothing but starvation and death.

Not so the man of faith. He looked beyond the barrel and the cruse. He had no thought of dying of hunger. He rested on the word of the Lord. Here was his precious resource. God had said, "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." This was quite enough for him. He knew that God could turn the very barrel itself into meal, and the cruse into oil, to sustain him, if necessary. Like Caleb and Joshua, he brought God into the scene, and found in Him the true solution of every difficulty. They saw God above and beyond the walls and the giants. They rested on His eternal

word. He had promised to bring His people into the land, and hence, though there were nothing but walls and giants from Dan to Beersheba, He would most surely fulfill His word.

And so with Elijah the Tishbite. He saw the living and Almighty God above and beyond the barrel and the cruse. He rested upon that word which is settled forever in heaven, and which never can fail a trusting heart. This tranquillized his spirit, and with this he sought to tranquillize the widow too. "And he said unto her, Fear not;"—precious, soul-stirring, utterance of faith!—"go and do as thou hast said..... For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain on the earth."

Here was the solid ground on which the man of God rested when he ventured to offer a word of encouragement to the poor desponding widow of Sarepta. It was not in the light-heartedness, or blind recklessness, of nature that he spoke to her. He did not attempt to deny that the barrel and cruse were almost empty, as the woman had said. This could have given her no comfort, inasmuch as she knew too well the facts of her case. But he brought the living God and His faithful word before her sinking heart; and hence he could say, "Fear not." He sought to lead her soul to that true resting-place where he himself had found repose, namely, the word of God—blessed, unfailing, divine resting-place for every anxious soul!

Thus it was with Caleb and Joshua. They did not attempt to deny that there were giants and high walls. That would have been of no possible use. But they brought God in, and sought to place Him between the hearts of their desponding brethren and the dreaded difficulties. This is what faith always does, and thus gives glory to God, and keeps the soul in perfect peace, let the difficulties be ever so great. It is the height of folly to deny that there are obstacles and hostile influences in the way. There is a certain style of speaking of such things which cannot possibly minister comfort or encouragement to a poor troubled heart. Faith accurately weighs the difficulties and trials, but knows that the power of God outweighs them all, and rests in holy calmness on His word, and in His perfect wisdom and everlasting love.

The reader's mind will no doubt recur to many other instances in which the Lord's people have been cast down, by looking at circumstances, instead of looking at God. David, in a dark moment, could say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." What a sad mistake! The mistake of unbelief. What should he have said? Denied that the hand of Saul was against him? Surely not; what comfort could that have given him, inasmuch as he knew too well that it was really so? But he should have remembered that the hand of God was for him, and that hand was stronger than ten thousand Sauls.

So with Jacob, in his day of darkness and depression. "All these things," said he, "are against me." What should he have added? "But God is for me." Faith has its "buts" and "ifs" as well as unbelief; but faith's buts and ifs are all bright, because they express the passage of the soul—its rapid passage from the difficulties to God Himself. "But God who is rich," &c. And again, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus faith ever reasons. It begins with God. It places Him between the soul and all its surroundings, and thus imparts a peace which passeth all understanding, a peace which nothing can disturb.

But we must, ere closing this paper, return for a moment to the tomb of Lazarus. The rapid glance we have taken through the inspired volume will enable us to appreciate more fully those most

precious words of our Lord to Martha, “Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” Men tell us that seeing is believing, but we can say that believing is seeing. Yes, reader, get hold of this grand truth. It will carry you through, and bear you above, the darkest and most trying scenes of this dark and trying world. “Have faith in God.” This is the mainspring of the divine life. “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.” Faith knows, and is persuaded, that there is nothing too hard, nothing too great, yea, and nothing too small, for God. It can count on Him for everything. It basks in the very sunlight of His presence, and exults in the manifestations of His goodness, His faithfulness, and His power. It ever delights to see the platform cleared of the creature, that the glory of God may shine forth in all its luster. It turns away from all creature streams and creature props, and finds all its resources in the one living and true God.

Only see how the divine glory displays itself at the grave of Lazarus, even spite of the unbelieving suggestion of Martha’s heart—for God, blessed be His name, delights at times to rebuke our fears, as well as to answer our faith. “Then they took away the stone where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

Glorious scene! displaying our Jesus as the Son of God, with power, by resurrection of the dead. Gracious scene! in which the Son of God condescends to use man in rolling away the stone, and removing the grave clothes. How good of Him to use us in any little way! May it be our joy to be ever ready! May His grace in using us produce in us a holy readiness to be used, that God in all things may be glorified!

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

Bethany: Part 7

The opening paragraph of John 12 brings before us a scene of deepest interest, and full of most precious instruction. We feel we cannot do better than quote at full length the lovely record, for the spiritual benefit of the reader. There is nothing, after all, like the veritable language of holy scripture.

“Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.”

Here we have illustrated, in the most striking and forcible manner, the three grand features which ought to characterize every Christian and every christian assembly, namely, calm, intelligent communion, as seen in Lazarus seated at the table: holy worship, as seen in Mary at the feet of her Lord; and loving service, as seen in Martha, in her activities about the house. All three go to make up the christian character, and all three should be exhibited in every christian assembly. We consider it a very great moral mistake to set any one of these features in opposition to the others, inasmuch as each, in its proper place, is lovely; and, we may add, each should find its place in all. We should all of us know what it is to sit at the table with our blessed Lord, in sweet communion. This will most assuredly lead to profound homage and adoration; and we may rest assured that, where there is the communion and the worship, there will not be lacking the loving activities of true service.

The reader will observe that, in the above beautiful scene, there is no record of any collision between Martha and Mary. Each had her place to fill. There was room for both. “Jesus loved Martha and her sister.” Here Martha is put first. In verse 1, we read of “Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” Looked at from a divine standpoint, there is no need why anyone should in the smallest degree collide with another. And, further, we may add, there is no necessity whatever for comparing the sphere of one with that of another. If Christ be our one absorbing object, there will be lovely harmony in action, though our line of things may vary.

Thus it was at Bethany. Lazarus was at the table, Mary at the Master's feet, and Martha was about the house. All was in beautiful order, because Christ was the object of each. Lazarus would have been entirely out of his place had he set about preparing the supper; and if Martha had sat at the table, there would have been no supper prepared. But both were in their right places, and we may rest assured that both would rejoice in the odor of Mary's ointment as she poured it on the feet of their ever-loving and beloved Lord.

Is not all this conveyed to us in that one sentence, “There they made him a supper?” It was not one more than another. All had part in the precious privilege of making a supper for the one peerless object of their heart's affections; and, having Him in their midst, each fell naturally, simply,

and effectively, into his and her proper place. Provided the beloved Master's heart was refreshed, it mattered not who did this, or who did that. Christ was the center, and each moved round Him.

Thus it should be always in the assembly of Christians, and thus it would be, if odious self were judged and set aside, and each heart simply occupied with Christ Himself. But, alas! here is just where we so sadly fail. We are occupied with ourselves, and our little doings, and sayings, and thinkings. We attach importance to work, not in proportion to its bearing upon the glory of Christ, but its bearing upon our own reputation. If Christ were our one object—as He surely will be throughout eternity, and ought to be now—we should not care the least who did the work, or who rendered the service, provided His name was glorified, and His heart refreshed. Harken to the utterance of a truly devoted heart in reference to the very subject before us: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. Yea, and if I be offered [or poured out] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.” Phil. 2:14-18.

This is uncommonly fine. The blessed apostle presents in this exquisite passage a true sample of self-forgetting devotedness. He expresses Himself as ready to be poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of his beloved Philippians, utterly regardless of himself. It mattered not to him who contributed the component parts of the sacrifice, provided only that the sacrifice was presented as a sweet odor to Christ. There was none of that contemptible littleness and self-occupation about that beloved servant of Christ which so often, alas! appear in us, and prevent our appreciation of another's service. We are all alive when any little service of our own happens to be on the tapis. We listen with intense interest to any one speaking or writing about our usefulness, or the result of our preachings or writings; but we hear with cold apathy and marked indifference the record of a brother's success. We are by no means ready to be poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of another's faith. We like to provide both meat-offering and drink offering ourselves. In a word, we are deplorably selfish, and assuredly never is self more thoroughly contemptible than when it dares to mix itself up with the service of God. Bustling self-importance in the work of Christ, or in the church of God, is about the most hideously ugly thing in all this world. Self-Occupation is the death-blow to fellowship and to all true service. Nor this only; it is also the fruitful source of strife and division in the church of God. Hence the deep need of those faithful and most wholesome words of the blessed apostle, “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth,

and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Here lies the grand remedy for the terrible malady of self-occupation in all its phases. It is having Christ before our hearts, and His lowly mind formed in us by the Holy Ghost. It is utterly impossible to drink into the spirit of Jesus, to breathe the atmosphere of His presence, and be occupied with self in any shape or form. The two things are in direct opposition. In proportion as Christ fills the heart, self and its belongings must be excluded; and if Christ occupies the heart, we shall rejoice to see His name magnified, His cause prospering, His people blessed, His gospel spread abroad, no matter who may be used as His instrument.

We may rest assured that wherever there is envy, or jealousy, or strife, there self is uppermost in the heart. The blessed apostle could rejoice if Christ was preached, even though it was of contention.

But to return to the family of Bethany. We wish the reader to notice particularly the three distinct phases of christian life exemplified in Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, namely, communion, worship, and service—Should we not, each one of us, seek to realize and exemplify all the three? Is it not interesting and important to observe that in John 12 there is no question raised between Martha and Mary? Is not this accounted for by the fact that in this beautiful passage we have the divine and heavenly side on the subject?

In Luke 10 we have the human side. Here, alas! there is collision. Let us read the passage. “Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house”—it was Martha’s house, and of course she had to manage it. “And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word”—blessed, privileged place!— “But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Here we find that Martha’s self-occupation marred her service, and drew forth words of reproof from the lips of her loving, yet faithful, Lord—words, we may safely say, which would never have fallen upon her ear had she not interfered with her sister Mary. Her service had its place and its value, and her Lord knew well how to appreciate it; but, blessed be His name, He will not allow any one to interfere with another. Each had her own place, her own line of things. Jesus loved Martha and her sister, but if Martha will complain of her sister, she must learn that there is something more to be thought of than preparing a supper. Had Martha gone quietly on with her work, having Christ as her object in all that she was doing, she would not have had a rebuff; but she was evidently in a wrong spirit. She was not in communion with the mind of Christ; had she been so, she never could have used such words to her Lord as, “Dost thou not care? Surely He does care about us, and He is interested in all our little works and ways. The smallest service done to Him is precious to His loving heart, and will never be forgotten.

But we must not interfere with another’s service, or intrude in any way upon his domain. Our blessed Lord will not suffer it. Whatever He gives us to do, let it be done simply to Him. This is the

grand point. There is not the slightest necessity for jostling one another. There is ample space for all, and the very highest sphere is open to all. We may all enjoy intimate communion; we may all worship; we may all serve; we may all be acceptable. But the moment we set about making invidious comparisons, we are clearly out of the current of the Master's mind. Martha, no doubt, thought her sister rather deficient in action. She was mistaken. The best preparation for action is sitting at the Master's feet to hear His word. Had Martha understood this, she would not have complained of her sister; but, inasmuch as she herself raised the question, and gave occasion for any comparison, she had to learn that a hearing ear, and a worshipping heart, are more precious by far than busy hands. Alas! our hands may be very busy, while the ear is heavy, and the heart far away! but if the heart be right, then the ear, the hands, the feet, yea, all will be right. "My son, give me thine heart."

We do not mean to imply that Martha's heart was not right in the main. Far from it. We feel assured it was. But there was an element which needed correction, as there is in all of us. She was a little occupied with her service. "Carest thou not that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she come and help me." This was all wrong. She ought to have known that service was not confined to cooking—that there was something higher than meat and drink. Ten thousand might be got to prepare a supper for one that would break an alabaster box. Not that our Lord undervalued the supper; but what would that supper have been to Him without the ointment, the tears, the hair? What is any act of service without the deep and true devotion of the heart? Nothing. But, on the other hand, where the heart is really engaged with Christ, the smallest act is precious to Him. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath."

Here lies the root of the whole matter. It is an easy thing to bustle about in so-called service, to run from house to house, and place to place, visiting and talking, and after all there may not be a single spark of genuine affection for Christ, but the mere worthless activity of a self-occupied mind, an unbroken will, the workings of a heart that has never known the constraining power of the love of Christ. The grand point is to find our place at the feet of our gracious Lord, in worship and adoration, and then we shall be ready for any sphere of action which He may see fit to open for us. If we make service our object, our service will become a snare and a hindrance. If Christ be our object, we shall be sure to do the right thing, without thinking about ourselves or our work.

Thus it was with Mary. She was occupied with her Lord, and not with herself or her alabaster box. She sought not to interfere with anyone else. She complained not of Lazarus at the table, nor of Martha with her household cares. She was absorbed with Christ and His position at the moment. The true instincts of love led her to see what was fitting for the occasion, and grateful to His heart, and she did that—did it with all her heart.

Yes, and her Lord appreciated her act. And not only so, but when Martha complained of her, He very soon taught her, her mistake; and when Judas, with ill-concealed covetousness, talked of her act as being a waste, he too got his answer. Heartless man! hiding his covetousness under the cloak of caring for the poor. No one can have a true heart for the poor who does not love Christ. Judas—professor, and apostle and all, as he was—loved money: alas! no uncommon love. He had no heart for Christ, although he may have preached and cast out devils in His blessed name. He could talk of selling the ointment for three hundred pence, and giving it to the poor; but, oh! the Holy Ghost, who measures everything by the one standard of the glory of Christ, lets us see the

roots of things, and He it is who tells the full truth as to Judas. "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

How truly awful! To be outwardly so near the Lord; to profess His name; to be an apostle; to talk about giving to the poor; and all the while to be a thief, and the betrayer of the Son of God!

Dear christian reader, let us ponder these things. Let us seek to live very near to Christ, not in mere profession, but in reality. May we find our place ever in the moral shelter of His holy presence, there to find our delight in Him, and thus be fitted to serve Him, and witness for His name!

Correspondence

1. "A Young Believer," Surrey. The scene to which you refer (Gen. 14:18) is a type of the future kingdom, when the true Melchisedec will come forth and bless His people.

2. "A Sister in the Lord," Co. Down. We should strongly recommend you to turn from all human opinions, and give yourself to the study of the word of God, in humble dependence upon His Spirit. Ask Him to teach you. He most surely will. Do not act without direct authority from the word of God, If you have not this, wait. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." The Lord keep you close to Himself!

3. "J. T.," Ryde. You will, we trust, easily perceive that your questions, though very interesting and important, are not suitable for our pages. It is extremely difficult to form, not to speak of giving, an opinion in such cases. It would be well if our friends would more cultivate the habit of seeking counsel of God in all their difficulties. He never fails those who simply wait on Him. He may see fit, for their deep blessing and profit, to keep them waiting; but, in the end, light will surely shine; and the season of waiting is full of richest blessing. When any difficulty occurs in an assembly, let the brethren get together before God for united prayer, and continue to look to Him until He manifests His judgment in this matter. This is far better than writing hither and thither for the opinions of men, which are too often given on an ex }arte, or at least, a defective statement of the case.

4. "L. E. H." Thanks for your lines, and your note of the 3rd of October.

5. "W. A. N.," Camberwell. We have repeatedly gone into your question. See a paper entitled "Responsibility and Power." Also one entitled "One-sided Theology." We must bow to scripture, not reason about theology. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

If you allow yourself to reason about the conflicting dogmas of divinity, you may land in infidelity. Salvation is free to all. "God will have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." He is not "willing, that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "His righteousness is unto all," but it is only "upon all them that believed." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Scripture is as plain as possible, if only we come to it like a little child. It is theology that puzzles people.

6. "M. J. A." You have our fullest sympathy. May God bless your effort.

7. "C. E. M.," Gravesend. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was attributing to the devil works done by the Eternal Spirit. The leaders of the Jewish people were guilty of it.

8. "L.," Somerset. Our Lord's present priestly ministry is Aaronic. By-and-by it will be according to the functions of Melchisedec. He is a priest forever; but He will not always perform the same functions.

9. "E. C" London. Matt. 18:10, 11, is, we believe, the solid authority on which to build the precious truth of infant salvation. Scripture says nothing as to the specific point you name.

10. "G. A. S.," London. The Lord will guide us to the publication, in a separate form, of the "Letters." Let us wait on Him about it.

11. "A. A.," Harrow. We quite agree with you in thinking that Gen. 3:22 is perfectly plain in its meaning; but some people are never satisfied with the obvious sense of holy scripture.

12. "P. A. F. G.," Christchurch. Mark 4:12 is the judicial sentence passed upon the Jewish people because of their persistent rejection of divine testimony.

13. "A recent Reader." The context, in each instance, will plainly show you what we are to judge and what we are not to judge. We certainly are called upon to judge evil doctrine and bad morals; but we are not called to judge motives.

Correspondence

14. "H. N. W.," Islington. The best way, when you have any difficulty as to the statements of a public lecturer, is to apply to himself.

15. "G. B.," Jersey. The question of the disciples, in John 9:2, exhibits simple ignorance of the ways of God. They imagined that the poor man's blindness must be on account of some special sin of his—foreknown of God—or of his parents. The idea of his being born blind on account of any sin of his own would be an absurdity, unless it be supposed that God would deal with a person on the ground of some sin foreknown of Him; and this is worse than an absurdity. Our Lord corrects the error in the minds of His disciples by showing them that the man's blindness was not the result of any special sin; it was not a case of governmental dealing, but simply an occasion for the display of the grace of God.

As to the "many mansions," of John 14, they set forth the blessed fact that there is room in the Father's house for the "many families" which shall share in the fruits of His everlasting love. But our Lord assures His disciples that His going to heaven was, at once to prepare and define the place which they were to occupy. There was no place there for them till He went thither; but His place teas to be theirs. Wondrous truth! The notion that the many mansions set forth the various rewards to be given to Christ's servants is, in our judgment, simply absurd. "I go to prepare a place for you." What has this to do with rewards? It is His entrance there, not our working here that prepares our place in the Father's house. We believe, of course, in rewards; but John 14:2 has nothing to do with them. You ask, "Why, in Acts 7:55, is Jesus represented standing at the right hand of God?" and another scripture says, "He forever sat down on the right hand of God." (Heb. 10) We have referred to this subject in a former volume; but we may here remark that in Acts 7 Jesus is seen standing, as it were, lingering, over the nation of Israel, and waiting to see if haply they would receive the testimony of the august Witness who had just gone down, namely, the Holy Ghost. But all was vain. They resisted the Holy Ghost; and hence, the epistle to the Hebrews sets forth, doctrinally, the final breach with Israel, and Jesus is presented as having definitively taken His seat. No doubt other grand truths flow out of His session at the right hand of God; but this we judge to be the meaning of the contrasted attitudes of Acts 7 and Heb. 10

16. "M. S.," Jersey. We do not know of any work on the subject to which you refer.

17. "R. M. L.," Sligo. We trust the pamphlet which we sent you by post has helped you. The two goats in Lev. 16 typify Christ as the propitiation and the substitute. See "Notes on Leviticus." Christ

bore all our sins in His own body on the tree. Scripture never speaks of “future sins.” All our sins, and the sins of all, for the last eighteen hundred years, were future when Christ bore them. The distinction is baseless. It arises from looking at the subject from a human instead of a divine standpoint. You must distinguish between atonement and forgiveness. All our sins were atoned for on the cross. They were not forgiven until we believed. As to the advocacy, it rests on the atonement, and is designed for the restoration of our communion with the Father whenever that communion has been interrupted. “If any man sin we have”—not the atonement, but—“an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only but for the whole world”—not “the sins of the whole world.” Scripture never says this.

18. “Irvine.” Your question is wholly out of our line.

Correspondence

19. “M. H.,” The subject of your letter—though truly interesting—is not one that we can take up in our pages.

20. “J. C.,” Knaresborough. You ask the meaning of Matt. 16:28, “Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” The persons to whom our Lord referred in this passage, were Peter, James and John who, in the opening of chapter 17, were taken up to the Mount of transfiguration, and there permitted to see a sample of the kingdom and glory of the Son of man.

21. “A Young Christian,” Jersey. A safe rule, as to all such places, is to ask yourself, “Should I like my Lord to come and find me in such a place? or can I, before going, kneel down and ask God’s blessing on the visit?” If you cannot, in truth and sincerity, answer in the affirmative, then do not go.

22. “H. C. A.” Your lines have come duly to hand.

23. “K. T.,” Ashford. We agree, in the main, with your remarks on Numb. 4 and 6. We cannot exactly see your difficulty as to 1 Samuel 7:2. It refers to the time which elapsed between the return of the ark out of the land of the Philistines, and the restoration of the people by the ministry of Samuel, as recorded in the after part of the chapter. We see no difficulty whatever in Genesis 6:6. We find the same expression used in reference to the setting up of Saul as king, 1 Samuel 15:11. The Lord condescends to speak after the manner of man, as one disappointed in the first man. It is no question of changing His mind, but the introduction of the second Man, as to whom there can be no repentance. “God is not a man that he should lie; nor the Son of man that he should repent.” “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

Correspondence

24. “T. S.” Why should you fear to give your full address? Why transpose your very initials? The fact of your trying to conceal yourself, to say nothing of the character and tone of your communication, would be quite sufficient to make us pass it over in total silence. We may just add here that we consider all fictitious and anonymous communications utterly unworthy of notice. They are cowardly and contemptible. A man should never write anything to which he is ashamed or afraid to affix his name and address.

25. "A. C. R.," Teignmouth. You have quite misunderstood our reply to "L.," Somerset. Was not Aaron a type of our Lord Jesus Christ? And is not our Lord's present ministry after the Aaronic pattern? True, it is after the order of Melchisedec, as every Christian knows; but our Lord is not now "sitting as a priest upon his throne." He will, ere long, blessed be God. He will come forth, as the true Melchisedec, when all the conflict is over, to refresh the hearts of His people, and lead them into the everlasting joy of His kingdom.

26. "J.B.," Weston-super-Mare. The passage you quote, at the opening of your letter contains the divine answer to your question; and, we may add, completely demolishes all your objections. The sentence, "They that have believing masters," proves that some had not. And yet you say, "But although the word is clear as to this, I do not see that a servant"—in a worldly family—"can be really separate from the world," &c. &c. Now we should say if the word is clear, you ought to be able to see; and we doubt not you will be able to see, when you learn to bow your will to the supreme authority of holy scripture. We consider that when scripture speaks on any subject, all discussion is closed for the humble, teachable soul. We certainly cannot understand any true Christian saying, "The word is clear, but I cannot see." Would you think of saying to your earthly master, "Sir, your directions are very clear; but I cannot see them '?" If you were to speak so, we judge he would very speedily dismiss you from his service. It seems to us, dear friend, you are under a complete mistake as to the position and duty of a christian servant in a worldly family. You say, "There may, it is true, be an opportunity of being a light for Christ, by bringing the word to bear upon their consciences." Now, we should judge that the very best possible way of being a light for Christ in any family, would be to fulfill, with holy fidelity, all the duties of your situation. It is not so much bringing the word to bear on their consciences as letting it act on your own, and proving that it does act by your cheerful temper, your humble deportment, your gracious manner, your earnest diligence at work, your faithfulness, your strict integrity, your unselfish devotedness to all the interests of the family. These lovely fruits of righteousness would bring more glory to your Lord, and tell more powerfully upon the consciences of your master and mistress, than if you were preaching to them from morning till night. Indeed we very much doubt the moral propriety of servants preaching to their masters. It needs special grace and wisdom to speak on divine things under such circumstances. The Lord may give an open door, at times; but great tact is needed, owing to the peculiar position of a servant in relation to the master. The grand point is to let the life speak. "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters,"—whether converted or unconverted—"and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining; but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Titus 2:9, 10.

27. "A. M.," Newport. Thanks for your kind note and accompanying lines.

28. "D. W." Your letter has come to hand.

29. "M. S. S.," Monkstown. Thanks for the lines.

30. "J. H.," Bury. We have never known a single instance of any one complaining of the want of love in others who was not failing in love himself. The best way to get water out of a dry pump is to pour a little in.

31. "A Constant Reader," London. We desire to render hearty thanks to God for the blessing vouchsafed to your precious soul, through our February paper. It would hardly do to publish that one piece separately, seeing it is one of a series. But it is probable that all will appear in due time, as a separate pamphlet, if God permit. May He abundantly bless you, and grant you all the desire of your soul! Accept our warmest thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter.

32. "C. H.," Kenmare. You have our fullest sympathy in all your exercises. We most thoroughly approve of your purpose to do nothing hastily. Wait on the Lord. His promise is sure, "I will guide thee with mine eye." "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." Do not take a single step until God gives you light; but the moment you get divine light for one step, then take that step with firm decision, and wait still on God for the next. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And now, beloved friend, we commend you to God and the word of His grace. May He guide, keep, sustain, and bless you!

33. "E.," Ryde. You have our fullest sympathy in your present painful exercises of heart. But, inasmuch as we know nothing of the facts of the case, it would be impossible for us to give any counsel. We can only say to you, dear friend, wait on the Lord—wait patiently—wait in fullest confidence. He will assuredly appear for your relief.. Light will break in upon your path, and you will be filled with wonder, love, and praise.

Correspondence

34. "F. C" Saffron Walden. Heb. 6:6 is unquestionably genuine.

35. "J. E.," Adelaide. We desire to tender you our warmest thanks for your interesting and encouraging letter. We deem it a most precious privilege to be allowed, in any little way, to minister to the flock of Christ. Pray for us, beloved friend, that we may be kept to the end true to Christ, and seeking the blessing of all who belong to Him. May you enjoy much of His blessed presence, both in private and in public. To Him we would earnestly commend you, and all those with whom you are associated.

36. "J. C. K.," New York. 1 John 1:9 teaches the blessed truth, that when we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Christ has answered for all our sins, and this is the ground of divine faithfulness and justice in forgiving us. Were it not for the death of Christ, God's faithfulness and justice would be seen in sending us to hell for a single sinful thought; for, most surely, a single sinful thought proves a sinful nature just as clearly as a whole life of sin. One solitary crab upon a tree proves it to be a crab-tree just as distinctly as ten thousand crabs. As to the word "if," it in nowise touches the precious grace of the passage; but how could we be in communion with God with un-confessed, unjudged, sin on the conscience? Impossible. If we have failed, in thought, word, or deed, there must be confession, ere our communion can be restored. Thanks be to God, all this is provided for in the advocacy of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and that advocacy rests upon the eternal foundation of His atoning death—that priceless, peerless, divine sacrifice. Let us praise Him continually with all our ransomed powers.

37. "W. R.," Ayrshire. Rom. 7:7-24 describes the condition of a quickened soul under law. Some would teach us that it presents proper christian experience. This is a mistake. Surely a Christian is not a "wretched man," crying out for deliverance; but a happy man, rejoicing in being delivered.

Again, can a Christian never do good? Must he always do evil? To say so is to falsify the whole christian position. The Christian is one who is washed in the blood of Christ, delivered from the law, from sin, from the world, from Satan—sealed by the Holy Ghost, who is the spring of power to avoid what is wrong, and to do what is right. This, and nothing less, is the Christianity of the New Testament.

But, on the other hand, there are some who maintain that Rom. 7 does not set forth the exercises of a quickened soul at all. This too is a mistake. Who but a quickened soul could say, “ I delight in the law of God after the inner man?” What does the “ inner man” mean but the new nature? We believe this much misunderstood passage sets before us the experience of a quickened soul not delivered, not emancipated, not sealed. It most certainly was not Paul’s experience when writing the epistle. He may have passed through it, as many of God’s people have; but to say that it is the proper experience of a Christian, is simply to deny the whole teaching of the New Testament, and to rob the Christian of all his distinctive privileges and blessings as a member of the body of Christ.

38. “ L.,” Somerset. We have not considered the question; indeed we may say to you that such things are not in our line. They may have their interest and value, but we do not go in for them.

39. “A. C,” London. You are under a complete mistake as to Heb. 10:12. You are doubtless led astray by the punctuation in some of our English bibles. We give you the true rendering of the passage, from the pen of a very able and accurate Greek scholar.

“ But he, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God.” This we can affirm to be the true reading of the passage, as any ordinary scholar can see at a glance. The following explanation gives the warrant for the above rendering. “εις το διηνεκες” differs from “εις τοναιωνα.” Having perfectly completed the work, He had not to get up again to complete it; He could sit down, and abide so, having done all. It is in contrast with the priests standing. They stood daily; He is set down for a continuance. The connecting εις το διηνεκες (forever, or in perpetuity) with ‘sacrifice’ spoils the whole force of the passage. You must allow us to say, dear friend, that in writing on such a point, your tone might well have been a little more modest. It is you, and not our correspondent, that “must have missed much of the force of the argument.”

40. “A Constant Reader,” Childokeford. 2 Corinthians v. 10 states the broad fact as to the judgment-seat of Christ. All shall be, must be, manifested there. All shall come out there. The word “ all” takes in believers and unbelievers. Not, blessed be God, that they will be manifested at the same time. The time is different, and—all praise to redeeming and pardoning love!—the ground and result are perfectly opposite. The believer will be manifested to be the righteousness of God. The Judge on the judgment-seat will be his righteousness. The unbeliever will be judged according to his works, as in Revelation 20. What should be the present effect of all this upon us? “ Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

As to 1 Cor. 7:14, there is nothing about conversion, on the one hand, or baptism, on the other. It simply teaches that, under the gospel, the offspring of a mixed marriage need not be put away, as was the case under the law. It is not a question as to the subjective state of the children—as to any work of the Spirit of God in them.

Correspondence

41. "J. D." The first line of your fourth stanza we deem objectionable.

42. "Ebenezer." It is impossible to lay down a rule on the subject of books for children. Parents and teachers have to exercise godly care in the matter. It is very difficult to find suitable books for young people. You cannot, as you truly remark, get young children to love solid reading; and they must have something to read. The Lord will guide and help you to a right judgment. We think the Lending Library is a most interesting and valuable adjunct to the Sunday school; but of course it requires care in the matter of supplying the books. May the Lord guide, help, and bless you!

43. "J. F. L.," Aberdeen. 1 Cor. 15:52 refers to the moment when the Lord comes for His people, which most surely is before the millennium.

44. "J. F.," Castlefin. Thanks for your letter. You are on right ground, dear friend, in looking only to the living God to meet your every need. He never fails a trusting heart. Accept as a little motto for yourself Phil. 4:19.

45. "G.," Bromley. We have more than once explained 1 Pet. 3:19; but it may be you have not met with the exposition. We believe that the passage teaches that the Spirit of Christ in Noah preached to the people before the flood, whose spirits are now in prison because they rejected the preaching. We heartily thank God for any blessing to your precious soul through our pages.

46. "A. L.," Ashwell Thorpe. All the leading editors agree in rejecting the last clause of Rom. 8:1. It is, without doubt, an interpolation. One might arrive at this conclusion, apart from mere criticism, from the fact that the same words occur, in their proper connection, at the close of verse 4. To have them in both places would involve redundancy, which is incompatible with the idea of divine inspiration.

Correspondence

47. "A Christian Inquirer.■■■ It is entirely a matter of individual faith. Our conviction is that in all such cases, the more excellent way is to wait only upon God. He can touch hearts, and open doors, and provide means; yea, He could, if needful, turn the very dust of the earth into means to meet His people's need. "My soul, wait thou only upon God."

48. "L. N.," Wangford. One grand feature of the Lord's supper is the setting forth the truth of the unity of the body. "For we, many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf." (1 Cor. 10) This being so, it would be entirely foreign to the nature of the feast for any one to keep it alone. Indeed, we consider such a thing utterly void of scripture authority or spiritual intelligence.

49. "L. M. T.," Naples. We do not know of any work on the subject to which you refer. We would most gladly help you, were it in our power, for we deeply sympathize with you in your exercise of heart. But we do not feel called of God to enter upon such a field. Give yourself to prayer. Wait continually on the Lord. He will hear, help, and deliver.

50. "L. W.," Heme Hill. We thank you heartily for your kind note and the accompanying lines.

51. "H. H.," Halifax. We have no recollection whatever of receiving the letter to which you refer. As to your present question, we look upon the infinite nature of Christ's sacrifice as one powerful proof of the truth of eternal punishment. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver from

the punishment of sin, that punishment must be eternal.

52. "B. L.," Lower Norwood. We beg to tender you our warmest thanks for your truly kind and interesting letter. We heartily bless God for His great goodness in those cases to which you refer. May He abundantly bless you, dear friend, in your own soul, and in your testimony!

Correspondence

53. "J. M.," London. It is quite true—blessedly true—that "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation, not willing that any one should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But we see no warrant whatever, in the word of God for the statement to which you refer. It seems to us to lack the sobriety and dignity of truth.

54. "M. R.," Teignmouth. Matt. 24:40, 41, bears distinctly upon the Jewish people. The "one taken," is for judgment; the "other left," is for earthly blessing. It will be the very reverse when the Lord comes to take His church; then those taken will be for glory; those left will be for strong delusion and eternal perdition. Solemn fact! Would that we all felt its awful reality more deeply!

55. "A Believer," Tunbridge Wells. Heb. 10:19-22 is an exhortation to draw nigh, grounded upon the fact of our having boldness to do so by the blood of Jesus. The Epistle to the Hebrews does not present Christians as already in heaven; but as on their way to it. It abounds in warning and exhortation to get on. It keeps us continually on the move. It is characterized by such utterances as, "Let us fear;" "Let us labor;" "Let us come boldly;" "Let us go on to perfection;" "Let us draw nigh;" "Let us hold fast;" "Let us consider one another;" "Let us run;" "Let us go forth." The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us one grand aspect of Christianity; and the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us the other. In the former, the Christian is presented as seated in heaven, and coming down to walk on earth in all the varied relationships of life. In Hebrews the Christian is presented as starting from earth, responsive to the heavenly call, and pressing forward to the rest that remaineth.

56. "J. W. A.," Margate. Thanks for your paper. It is terrible to think of any one calling himself a Christian, giving such an answer to an anxious soul. How unlike Paul and Silas, in Acts 16!

57. "W. J.," Birtley. The wise men of Babylon were, as you say, "just morally incapacitated" to read or understand the writing. This was the real point in the matter. Had the writing been in a tongue foreign to them, there would have been nothing remarkable in their not being able to read it. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "The world by wisdom knew not God."

58. "A. W.," Brighton. We are not at all surprised that the "naturalist" to whom you applied for a solution of your difficulty as to Isa. 65:25, was wholly unable to satisfy you. If, instead of referring you to the stomach of the lion, he had brought the power of God before your soul, he would have done much better. The one who made the lion can make him eat straw if He pleases. Nothing can be more miserable than to hear scientific infidels talking about scripture. It always reminds us of a blacksmith approaching, with his tongs and hammer, an exquisite Geneva watch: or of a butcher attempting, with cleaver and saw, the anatomy of the human eye. You must always draw a broad line of distinction between the facts of science, and the conclusions of so-called scientific men. Facts are facts, wherever you meet them, in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the

waters under the earth; nor is there one solitary fact throughout nature's vast domain, which will be found in collision with holy scripture. The reasonings of scientific men are continually running counter to the statements of the word of God; and, hence, we utterly reject the reasonings, while we respect the facts. It seems to us, dear friend, as if the grand object of many of our scientific men were to pick holes in the word of God. Terrible object! May God have mercy upon them, and open their eyes that they may see!

Correspondence

59. "E. G. J. S., M Wickham Market. We judge you are perfectly right; but of course, it is with your Lord you have to do, and not with the thoughts of men. In all such cases, discussion, explanation, and apology are simply time and labor lost. We have just to go on—on—quietly and decidedly on.

60. " M. V. B.," St. Bees. Thanks for your most kind note and the precious lines.

61. "W. B.," Hull. Your package has come to hand. Accept our thanks for your kind note. The Lord will guide as to the various pieces of poetry. It would be a simple impossibility to insert the hundredth part of the poetry sent in to us: go that we earnestly trust that our dear friends will not feel aggrieved should their contributions not appear.

62. " J. H.," Penzance. Your note and lines have come to hand.

63. " G. R.," Oswestry. Our publisher ought to be able to reply to your query. We are not aware of the separate publication of the paper to which you refer.

64. " W. W.," South Shields. Your very kind letter has come to hand. We can only bless God for all you can tell us of help and blessing through our pages. It is so good of Him to let us hear, from time to time, of results, so that we may be encouraged to go on with the work. May He most abundantly bless you, in your own soul, and in your work for Him!

65. " W. F. A.," Youghal. Col. 1:23 presents the wide aspect of the gospel. It is unto every creature under heaven; verse 24 teaches us that Paul had a certain measure of the afflictions of Christ to fill up. It is not, assuredly, that there was any deficiency in Christ's sufferings, but simply that the blessed apostle had his own measure of afflictions to fulfill for the church.

Correspondence

66. " Mary," Middlesex. Your case is, alas! not an uncommon one. It is a most serious thing to trifle with the truth of God, or to refuse the path which His word plainly sets before us. Blessed be His name, He bears with us in our ignorance, our unbelief, and varied infirmities. But to sin against light is a fearfully solemn thing. "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Jer. 13

Mark the words! "Before he cause darkness." Does God cause darkness? Yes, verily, and blindness, if people refuse His light. There is no darkness so profound, no blindness so awfully complete, as that which God sends judicially upon those who trifle with His word. Look at 2 Thess. 2, " For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Here we have

the future destiny of Christendom. God shall send strong delusion. He will turn their very professed light into gross darkness and the shadow of death. All this is most solemn. It should make us tremble at the very thought of refusing to act up to the light which God graciously affords us.

Look at the blessed contrast to all this, as given in Luke 11: “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.” What does God give light for? That it may be quashed, quenched, hindered? Assuredly not; but that it may be seen. But how can it be seen if we do not act upon it? If we, for worldly gain, personal advantage, to please ourselves, or to please our friends, refuse to obey the word of God, and thus hide the light under a bushel—what then? It may issue in “gross darkness”—“the shadow of death”—“strong delusion.” How awful!

But, our Lord continues, “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single”—that is, when you have but one object before you—“thy whole body also is full of light;”—beautiful state!—“but when thine eye is evil, the body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”

How striking the contrast! Instead of stumbling on the dark mountains, the obedient soul not only has light for his own path, but he is actually a light-bearer for others. The moral progress in the above passage is uncommonly fine. There is first the single eye—the one simple, firm, earnest purpose of the heart to go right on in the path of obedience, cost what it may. Then the body is full of light. And what more can there be? There is something more, for assuredly there is no redundancy in scripture—“If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark”—no reserve, no chamber of the heart kept locked up, on account of friends, self-interest, worldly ease, or aught else—“the whole shall be full of light”—you become transparent, and your light shines so that others see it. Not that you think so, for a single eye never looks at self. If I make it my object to be a light-bearer, I shall get full of darkness, and be a stumbling-block. When Moses came down from the mount, the skin of his face shone. Did he see it or know it? Not he. Others saw it; and thus it should be with us. “We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Lord the Spirit.” 2 Cor. 3

Finally, then, dear friend, let us entreat you to yield yourself without reserve to the word of your Lord.

Suffer not your “friends” to stand in your way. Will your friends answer for you before the judgment-seat of Christ? Can they now fill your heart with that sweet peace which can only be found in the path of obedience? They do not deserve the name of friends, if they stand in your way in following Christ. They are just like the swallows that flutter about us in the summer-time, but on the first approach of autumn blasts they wing their way to sunnier climes. Obey, we beseech thee, the word of your Lord. Let no flimsy excuse, no worldly consideration, no thought of personal aggrandizement, weigh with you for a single moment. What will all these things be worth in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ? What will you think of them in eternity?

But you will tell us you are saved; you are a “christian girl;” you have eternal life; you can never perish. Thank God for all this. But surely you do not mean to say that this is any reason why you should not obey what you know to be the word of God. Is it not rather the very ground of

obedience, and the love of Christ, the constraining motive? What are all the friends in the world compared with Christ? Would they shed their blood to do you good? Nay, but they are making you miserably unhappy to please them. You would rather pain the heart of Jesus, by neglecting His commandments, than pain your friends by obeying them.

May the Lord help you, dear friend, to lay aside every weight, and your besetting sin, and run with patience and true purpose of heart the race that is set before you.

67. "F.," Victoria. We believe that Matt. 5:34-37, and Jas. 5:12 refer to our ordinary, daily life, our private intercourse and habits, and not to our swearing when called upon by a judge or magistrate. We merely give you our judgment which must go for what it is worth.

Correspondence

67. "H. C. C.," London. We most cordially agree with all you say in reference to the matter of audible speaking at reading meetings and prayer meetings; indeed at all public meetings. We cannot understand the object of speaking at all if people cannot hear what is said. Assuredly all who take part in the meetings should feel a solemn responsibility as to everyone in the room, to make all hear whatever the Lord gives them to say. We remember hearing, some years ago, of a somewhat striking rebuke administered to a number of brethren at a reading meeting. I suppose they were speaking in a low tone, or, it may be, the friend who rebuked them was a little deaf. However, he simply asked to be allowed to read one verse of scripture; and he opened at the 8th of Nehemiah, and read as follows: " So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinct!!/, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" We see the happy result of Ezra's distinct reading and clear exposition further on in the chapter. " And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them" May all public readers and speakers learn to imitate Ezra and his companions!

68. " G. W.," Moulmein, British Burmah. It seems to us that scripture leaves the question open as to the hour or time of day for the Lord's supper. It tells us that " on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread;" but as to the hour, it is only by inference we can reach any conclusion. In the early part of the Acts we learn that they broke bread " from house to house" (κατ οίκον). We do not see any importance in the question as to whether it was morning, noon, or eventide.

Diversity and Unity

It is at once interesting and instructive to mark the varied lines of truth presented in the New Testament, all finding their common center in that blessed One who is the truth. We see this, both in the gospels and in the epistles. Each of the four evangelists, under the direct guidance and power of the Holy Ghost, gives us a distinct view of Christ. Matthew presents Him in His Jewish relations—as the Messiah, the Son of David, Son of Abraham—heir of the promises made to the fathers. Mark presents Him as the earnest workman, the diligent servant, the laborious minister, the incessant preacher and teacher. Luke gives us “The Man Christ Jesus,” in His human relations, Son of man, Son of Adam. John is occupied with the Son of God, Son of the Father, the heavenly Man, in His heavenly relationships.

Thus each one has his own specific line. No two are alike, but all agree. There is lovely variety, but the most perfect harmony; there is diversity and unity. Matthew does not interfere with Mark; nor Mark with Luke; nor Luke with John. There is no collision, because each moves in his own proper orbit and all revolve round the one grand center.

Nor could we do without any one of the four. There would be a serious blank if one were missing. We could not afford to give up a single ray of the moral glory of the Son of God; and not only so, but we could not consent to ignore one of those instruments by which the Holy Ghost has presented Him to our view.

We want them all. Each fills his own niche and fulfills his own service, under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost.

So also is it in the epistles. Paul's line of things is as distinct from Peter's, as Peter's is from John's, or John's from James. No two are alike, hut all agree. There is no collision, because, like the four evangelists, each moves in his own appointed orbit, and all revolve round the one common center. The orbit is distinct, but the center is one. Paul gives us the great truth of man's relation with God, on the ground of accomplished redemption, together with the counsels of God as to Israel and the church. Peter gives us the christian pilgrimage and God's government of the world. James insists upon practical righteousness. John opens up the grand theme of eternal life, first with the Father, then manifested in the Son; communicated unto us, and finally displayed in the glorious future.

Now, it would be the very height of folly on our part to institute any invidious comparison between those varied lines of truth or the beloved and honored instruments by whom those lines are presented to us. How silly it would be to set up Matthew against Mark, Mark against Luke, Luke against John, or John against all the rest! How puerile it would be for anyone to say, “I go in for Paul's line of things, only James seems below the mark. Peter and John 1 do not appreciate. Paul is the man for me. His ministry suits me. The others do not reach my heart, or feed my soul as he does.”

All this we should, at once, denounce as the most sinful folly. It would not be tolerated for a moment.

The varied lines of truth all converge upon one glorious and blessed center. The varied instruments are all employed by one and the self-same inspiring Spirit, for the one grand object of presenting the varied moral glories of Christ. We want them all. We could no more afford to do without Matthew or Mark than we could do without Luke or John; and it is no part of our business to undervalue Peter or James, because they do not give such a lofty or comprehensive range of truth as Paul or John. Each is needful in his place. Each has his niche to fill, his work to do, his appointed line of things to attend to, and we should be doing serious damage to our own souls as well as marring the integrity of divine revelation, if we were to confine ourselves to any one particular line of truth, or attach ourselves exclusively to any one particular instrument or vessel.

The early Corinthians fell into this grave error, and thus called forth a sharp rebuke from the blessed apostle Paul. Some were of Paul; some of Apollos; some of Cephas; some of Christ. All were wrong; and those who said they were of Christ were quite as wrong as any of the others. They were carnal and walked as men. It was a grievous folly to be puffed up for one against another, inasmuch as they were all Christ's servants, and all belonged to the whole church.

Nor is it otherwise now, in the church of God. There are varied kinds of workmen, and varied lines of truth; and it is our happy privilege, not to say our holy duty, to recognize and rejoice in them all. To be puffed up for one against another, is to be "carnal and walk as men." To depreciate any of Christ's servants is to depreciate the truth which he carries and to forsake our own mercies. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

This is the true and the divine way to look at the matter; and this, too, is the way to avoid sects, parties, cliques and coteries in the church of God. There is one body, one Head, one Spirit, one divine and perfect revelation—the holy scriptures. There are many members, many gifts, many lines of truth, many distinct characters of ministry. We want them all, and therefore God has given them all.

But, most surely, God has not given the various gifts and ministries for us to set one against another, but that we may humbly and thankfully avail ourselves of all and profit by them according to His gracious purpose in giving them. If all were Paul's, where were the Peters? If all were Peters where were the Johns?

Nor this only; but what must be the effect of going in for any one particular line of truth, or character of ministry? "What but to produce an imperfect christian character? We are all sadly prone to one-sidedness, and nothing more ministers to this evil than an inordinate attachment to some one particular branch of truth, to the exclusion of other branches equally important. It is by "the truth" we are sanctified—by all, not by some truth. We should delight in every department of truth, and give a cordial welcome to each vessel or instrument which our God may be pleased to use in ministering His truth to our souls. To be puffed up for one against another is to be more occupied with the vessel than with the truth which the vessel contains, more occupied with man than with God—a fatal mistake! "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man."

Here lies the grand principle. God has various instruments for His work. We want them all, and we should value them all as His instruments, and nothing more. It has ever been Satan's object to lead the Lord's people to set up heads of schools, leaders of parties, centers of cliques, thus splitting up the church of God into sects, and destroying its visible unity. Let us not be ignorant of his devices; but in every possible way "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace."

How is this great object to be attained? By keeping near the center—by abiding in Christ—by habitual occupation with Himself—by drinking deeply into His spirit and walking in His footsteps—by lying at His feet, in true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind, by thorough consecration to His service, the furtherance of His cause, the promotion of His glory, the prosperity and blessing of every beloved member of His body.

Thus shall we be delivered from strife and contention, from the discussion of profitless questions, and baseless theories; from partiality, prejudice and predilection. We shall be able to see and appreciate all the varied lines of truth converging upon the one divine center, the varied rays of light emanating from the one eternal source. We shall rejoice in the great fact that in all the ways and works of God, in every department of nature and grace, in things on earth and things in heaven, in time and eternity, it is not a dull uniformity but a delightful variety. In a word, God's universal and eternal principle is "Diversity and Unity."

Divine Love and Its Fruits

We have now come to that period in the history of (God's ways with man when His love as perfect is manifested in connection with the cross of Christ. The whole condition of man from Adam to Christ has been looked at in every way; full trial has been made in the long patience of God, of what man was, and is, and the result has proved him to be without one good thing towards God. This is man's—all men's—sad, sad condition. Four thousand years of probation, and every fair trial under all the possible circumstances in which man could be placed, have demonstrated his true character and condition. But he is not only without one good thing towards a merciful and long-suffering God, but there is in his heart and in all his ways the presence of every evil thing. Negatively and positively, in principle and in practice, man is essentially ungodly.

God had known this from the beginning; but it was not until after it had been fully proved that He takes His place towards the sinner in Christ Jesus, according to the greatness of His love and the riches of His grace. This is a point of immense practical importance in the history of souls. How often we have found a young believer greatly troubled and long kept from peace with God, through experiencing so much within that is contrary to Him. How can I believe God loves me—how can I believe He hears my prayers—how can I believe that I am His child with all this indwelling sin? This perplexity is natural, and so far it is right to be troubled on account of indwelling evil; but Satan's object is to keep the soul in this state, and to turn the mind in upon self for evidences, and so to harass and perplex the feeble in faith. Such souls have not yet learned the grand truth which the apostle is here discussing, and which is now before us—perfect love to the sinner, consequent upon, not before, the trial of man, and founded on the finished work of Christ. When this grand, consoling, peace-giving truth is known, all doubts, fears, and perplexities must immediately disappear. Nothing short of perfect rest and cloudless joy would fill the soul, and nothing could disturb its sweet repose. It is one with Christ in resurrection, beyond the reach of every foe, and possessed of His "unsearchable riches"

Had God manifested His love towards man before He had proved what was in him, He might have been afterward disappointed, as men speak, with his ingratitude and disobedience; and we might reasonably enough have been in doubt as to what God would now say, and whether He would not turn away from us and judge us as hopelessly evil. But oh! blessed! precious! yea, thrice precious truth to the soul! It was not until man had been fully tried in every way, and his terrible guilt consummated in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's well-beloved Son, that His love is fully revealed. If God can love, and does love the sinner in Christ Jesus after this expression of his hatred, rebellion, and wickedness, what must that love be! Again the heart exclaims, as it rests in the effulgent beams of that love which can never be darkened by a cloud, O! mighty, marvelous, wondrous, matchless love! And like an ocean without a shore; it is measureless, boundless, whence flow the ten thousand streams of living grace for the refreshment of the weary by the way, and for the establishment of our souls in faith and holiness.

It was this love which overflowed the heart of the apostle as he wrote the first eleven verses of this chapter—the richest perhaps, in divine love that have been given to us. “ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet per-adventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

This is the gospel of the grace of God—God’s new principle in dealing with man who now stands before Him as entirely lost. All His past ways with man, dispensational and personal, clown to the cross, only demonstrated him to be utterly alien in nature, and hopelessly bad in condition; consequently, the love that was henceforth displayed must be absolutely free and perfect. Nothing was ever found in man to induce but everything to dissuade the manifestation of divine love. But now all is changed. God retires into the rights of His own sovereignty; grace reigns; but not on the ruins of law and justice; not in setting aside the claims of God, nor in lightly passing over the guilt of man; but through accomplished righteousness towards God, and eternal life to the lost sinner by Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Rom. 5:20, 21.

This, we affirm, is the gospel on the divine side; the effects on the human side will be manifested in genuine faith, godly repentance, and a life of holiness, and would to God it were better understood; for when received in simplicity every question is settled. If I know that He loves me with a perfect love, after He has estimated all my sin and guilt, then no evil can ever spring up in my heart that He knew not beforehand, and that He has not fully judged in the cross of Christ and put out of His sight forever. But here it may be asked, Did God not love the sinner before the death of Christ? Most assuredly He did. Perfect love always dwelt in the heart of God towards man. To speak of the death of Christ as exciting or procuring the love of God towards the sinner, is a pernicious doctrine and without the shadow of foundation in scripture. On the contrary, the death of the Lord Jesus is represented as the expression of God’s love towards us, and the character, or greatness of that love, is revealed by the condition of those for whom Christ died. Love, full, perfect, and active, always dwelt in His heart; and its grand object ever was the reconciliation of man to Himself. God never was the enemy of man, therefore He needed not to be reconciled; nay, rather, “ He was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Innumerable passages rush into the mind in proof of this rest-giving truth; such as, “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” 1 John 4:9-19.

Yes, what a mercy for us, this love was always there; and although rejected, it was not weakened. But the death of Jesus opened the way for its full revelation, and for the accomplishing of all the purposes of grace. There was no link between God and man in the flesh; for all His love, He had only received hatred; no response was ever found in the human heart to His most tender appeals. But Christ glorified God about sin in His death; He accomplished all righteousness; He met the highest claims of heaven, and the deepest necessities of man; the law was magnified and the promise established in His Person; and He laid a righteous foundation in His death and resurrection for the perfect display of the divine nature and character, and that in respect of sin. Now God takes His own place, and manifests what He is towards the sinner in Christ Jesus. We have seen what man is, now we have to see what God is, and what the fruits of His love are.

Our attention is now directed by the apostle to what we may call the first-fruits of perfect love—the death of Christ as an object for faith outside ourselves. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” No more difficult truth for man to believe was ever revealed than this. It is so opposed to all human thoughts, feelings, affections, and ways, that he cannot understand it. Who ever heard of love lavishing its choicest gifts on unrelenting but powerless enemies? Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that, or, abide the consequences, man can understand; it is consistent with his reason. But for love to say, after it has proved that there is nothing in its object but hatred, and a hatred too, unchangeable, and cruel as death—I have opened the flood-gates of heaven that my love may flow forth in unmeasured, unhindered fullness for your eternal happiness, far transcends the loftiest thoughts of the human mind. That God should love the righteous, the good and the holy, excites no surprise; but that He should love the unholy, the unrighteous and the evil, and give His own beloved Son to die the death they deserved, must ever shine forth throughout the countless ages of eternity as the wonder of all wonders.

But who could believe it? even with this oracle of love, man has found something to find fault with and to complain of. He cannot bear the idea of being proclaimed powerless. He would sooner far believe that he is ungodly than that he is weak. By trying, he hopes to cease being ungodly, and to become better, and he refuses to bow to the humiliating truth, that he is wholly “without strength.” But this is where the gospel begins, and where man must be brought to if his soul is to be saved. He may struggle long against the truth, as many do, thinking they can do something, or at least feel that they are growing better by their own doings, such as prayer, reading the word, and attending to the means of grace. But no! God will wait till the awakened sinner bows to the result of his own history as written by God Himself powerless for good; morally and spiritually dead; condemned already, and lying under the guilt of the death of Christ.

This then, we repeat, is the gospel; not what man is, not what God requires of man, but what God is, after He has proved man to be both powerless and godless. This believed, the light of heaven fills the soul. With his first breath the believer may exclaim; “God loves me with a perfect love, notwithstanding all I am and have done; Christ died for me, and all the benefits of His death are mine; now my salvation depends, not on my own consistency—though I ought to be consistent—but on the unchangeable love of God, and the eternal efficacy of the blood of Christ. I have simply to rest in His love, and to rejoice in the effects of the work of Christ, which fits me for His holy presence.”

But what must be the guilt of those who reject the Lord Jesus, full of all grace and goodness, yea and of God Himself in reconciling love? Everything in which blessing can be found is rejected, and the soul must eternally perish by its own suicidal hand. The very remembrance of such love, and so slighted; of such opportunities, and so neglected; must give vehemence to the flames that shall never be quenched, and vitality to the worm that shall never die. May the Lord have mercy on my unconverted reader, and lead him to take his true place at the feet of Jesus, and to believe what is so plainly revealed, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Divine Love and Its Fruits

The expression, “in due time” seems to convey two distinct thoughts. 1. It was the time of man’s utmost need; his guilt had reached its highest height, and all was lost as to man. He was without

strength to come out of this condition, although God under the law showed him the way. He had nothing to look for but wrath. 2. It was the “due time” for the full manifestation of divine love in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man had been thoroughly revealed, and nothing was found in him to draw forth the love of God, but everything to make God his judge; and to appear before God as a judge is everlasting condemnation. But in place of judgment He showed mercy. It was His due time to enter a scene of hopeless ruin, and bring salvation to (he lost. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4, 5.

The character of God's love

Verses 7, 8. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would am dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” If the character and quality of love is to be determined by the character and condition of its object, how far divine love must transcend every illustration of human love! God only can love without a motive, save that which is within His own heart. Man must have a motive without, and his feelings and affections are thereby governed. He may be moved to esteem, to approval, by righteousness, and to affection by benevolence: but it is scarcely to be expected that any one would think of dying for a merely just or righteous man; though for a good man, a benefactor, such self-devotion might be found; but such love could not be surpassed among the children of men; this would be its strongest expression. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

What characterizes God's love is His sending His own Son to die, not for the righteous, or even for the good, but for sinners, for those who were deserving His wrath, not His love. Yes, here we may pause for a moment, and wonder and adore. Man required a strong motive to draw forth his love; God had none. Fresh and full, pure and perfect, from His own heart—its native fountain—it flowed forth, and overflowed all the boundaries of human sin. “Where sin abounded grace did much more abound.” There was nothing in man to call forth, but everything to hinder, the expression of His love; but the spring and the power were within, and no object without was needed to induce or draw it forth. God is love, and God only can thus love.

Do any inquire, Can God love sin? All answer, No. Can He love the sinner? Many hesitate to answer fearlessly. But what does the word say? God commendeth His love in not sparing His own Son. He thus commends, proves, makes manifest His love by Christ dying for sinners, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. So that, speaking as a believer, I have the positive certainty of how much God loves me, and what He is to me, in spite of all that I am, or have been. It was after He knew all the evil that is in me, and of which I am guilty, that He gave His Son to die for me. This is the expression of His love to me, in so far as that love can be expressed. Thus the death of the Lord Jesus is the fullest proof of my sin, and of God's love to me. But all my evil is judged and gone—gone forever—His love alone remains. What a resting-place for the conscience, as well as the heart! “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” God being righteous and holy, as truly as love, could not introduce me into His presence in my sins, therefore He laid them all on Jesus, who put them away on the cross. There I must look to see them all put away, not within; God has never said He would put them away from my heart while I am here. He looks to the cross, and sees the work

finished, and so does faith: unbelief looks within, and judges by experience.

But is there not a sense, my anxious friend may inquire, in which the love of God is known and enjoyed in the heart? Most true, most blessedly true! But that is by faith, after the judgment of present things: and when Christ is before the heart as the hope of glory. Pardon and justification are viewed as past things; peace with God, and standing in grace, as present; waiting for glory as future. Then comes trial, sustained by faith in the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” This is good and wholesome exercise for the Christian, but we must bear in mind that the Holy Spirit never points the soul to His own work in us—which is never finished while we are here—but to the work of Christ for us, which is finished—absolutely perfect—and outside ourselves.

“THE GOSPEL OF GOD.”

This, we love to repeat, is the gospel on God’s part, on the divine side. God loves the sinner. What a wonderful thing for an anxious soul to find that there is love in the heart of God for him—for one who had only thought of God as a judge ready to condemn. But now he finds that God loves him, that Christ has borne the punishment of sin in his stead, poured out His soul unto death, and put away sin; that He has risen again, has ascended into heaven; that God is glorified, and the Holy Ghost has come down to make His love known in the heart by faith, and to seal home the work of Christ in the soul. This is more than something from God, such as justification, peace, and hope, or His tender care in tribulation; it is like God Himself coming to take up His abode in the heart. To enter into the full perception of God’s ways in grace with the sinner constitutes the believer’s highest enjoyment, opens up a vast field for the loftiest meditations, and the greatest activities of heart and mind in the scene around us. The Father’s love, the Savior’s grace, the Spirit’s power, are our associates in labor. The bright regions of glory, the dark regions of hell, the priceless value of the immortal soul, are the weighty motives which govern the evangelist.

Yet, strange to say, some have the temerity to speak of the gospel as if it were merely elementary truth, and only fit to be listened to by the unconverted or newly-awakened soul. But what have we here before us? In the simple truth that “Jesus came down to be a man, and die,” we have the revelation of Him who is infinite, of the God of love; and, we may say, of the depths of His heart, for He who lay deepest there God freely gave. Yet withal it is adapted to the simplest minds, and to the wants of every heart that knows its condition as lost under sin. “Thus the display of His love in the death of Christ comes down to the child, while it wholly transcends the highest soarings of poor but proud philosophy. There is the most profound truth, but it is embodied in facts which speak to every heart and conscience when the will has been dealt with by the Holy Spirit. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us; and in this God commends His own love toward us.”

The sinner that has been converted by means of this gospel has found a place of perfect rest; not merely because he is pardoned, or his debts paid; nor even in his faith, however genuine; nor in his repentance, however deep—and deep it will be when he knows what God is, and what He has been; nor in the work of the Spirit in him, though that has given him light and power; but far above all these he rises, and rests on the heart of God, through the finished work of Christ. As water rises

to its level, so the living water that came down to the defiled Samaritan re-ascends to its source, giving the title and the capacity to enjoy the richest blessings which flow from that eternal spring. And as it was in her case, there is no better fitness to preach the gospel to others than the full enjoyment of it ourselves. Knowing the remedy for perishing souls, we must not conceal it. If we found a man lying on the road-side, dying from pain, and had a remedy at hand that would remove the pain and restore him to health, it would be wicked and cruel to withhold it. True, he might be slow to believe in the sincerity of our intentions, but we should not fail to entreat and beseech until we had persuaded him to try our cure. And knowing man's love of the world, and his disinclination to attend to the spiritual concerns of his soul, we must entreat and beseech as those who see his danger, and carry with us a divine specific for every malady of his precious soul.

We have sometimes referred to the teaching of one to whom many are indebted, and we have profited by many a rich thought without acknowledging it—save to the Great Original—but as an earnest, fervent, beseeching gospel preacher he is less known. We give the following appeal—slightly abridged—as an example which we should think safe for the preacher to follow, and most suitable for the unsaved reader of “Things New and Old.” May he give good heed to it, and believe to the salvation of his soul.

“ Now, dear friends, I would just, in conclusion, ask you, Have you been led to come, as you are, ungodly sinners, to God? Not to bring your own righteousness, which is nothing but filthy rags; but have you come pleading the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God? If you have, assuredly there is peace for you, for that is a sure token that God is for you. Or have you been acting against God all your lives, and have never found peace? Are you still tormented with a guilty conscience, and are you still rejecting and refusing salvation? I would earnestly beseech you to consider the danger you are in, and I would ask you to look before you, and see where you are going, and what you are doing. You are wandering in the midst of the wide sea of this world, you are toiling through its waves, without a prospect of deliverance; and if persisted in, you will ere long sink down into the sleep of death, to wake in eternal misery.....

“But be of good cheer if your hearts are set on Christ: there is your stay, the anchor of your soul. If He is such, dear friends, stand forward for Him; be not ashamed to own your relationship to Him, your dependence on Him; be decided, cut short all expedients for deferring the bold acknowledgment of your being His; confess Him before men, act for Him, and live for Him in an ungodly world.....Be not debating within yourselves when you shall avow yourselves; do it at once, decidedly. Make the plunge, and trust God for the consequence. I know it by experience that an open, bold, confession of being Christ's is more than half the struggle over. I know the devil tempts, and says, ‘ O don't be too hasty, you might ruin the cause by over-forwardness; this is not the time to confess yourself openly, wait for another opportunity.’ But I say, dear friends, as one who knows, that if a man, in the strength of the Lord, is just brought to say to his companions and friends, ‘ I am Christ's, and I must act for Him,’ that he will not suffer what others will feel who are creeping on, fearful and afraid to avow Him whom they desire to serve. Believe me, my friends, it is as I say, by this decided and open opposition to the world: he may at first be laughed at, and mocked, but what of that? Christ was served so.....

“ Oh! I once more entreat you to be candid. Be open, be decided, confess Christ's name on earth, and He will not be ashamed to confess your name before the whole assembled universe.”

Divine Love and Its Fruits

The apostle having established the great truth of the love of God and its effects, as demonstrated by the gift of Christ and His death for us, now reasons, in a divine way, as to the perfect security of the believer. Justification is his true state before God in virtue of the work of Christ: "Being justified by his blood." When it is said in the first verse of this chapter, "Being justified by faith;" the meaning is, not that we are saved by faith as a virtue, but that faith includes its object, which, in this connection, embraces the whole work of Christ, His death and resurrection. This being known to faith, the believer has peace with God, the enjoyment of His favor and the hope of glory. Thus we are brought by the risen Lord into association with Himself, and in the place where He Himself is gone, and in all His acceptance, our sins are all blotted out, annihilated by the work of Christ, and the heart, unburdened, rejoices in the Lord.

But this is not all; we pass through tribulation. God leads us into it and is with us in it. He is glorified in the trial. In place of the impatience of nature, there is the endurance of grace. The will is subdued, and we learn the true character of the scene in which we move, and through which we pass on our way home. The wheels of the soul are set in motion, and result in the hope of the glory of God. Divine love is now demonstrated, not only in the gift of Christ, but also in the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that love shed abroad in the heart. The believer has now a twofold security for his present blessing and future glory—the place which he has in God's heart; and, oh! wondrous, marvelous, mysterious, truth! the place which He has chosen to occupy in the heart that has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." This is the presence of the God of love in us. Thus know we the love of God both subjectively and objectively: we have the consciousness of the former; the latter we have displayed in the great public fact of the death of Christ for us.

the apostle's conclusions.

From the freeness and greatness of the divine love as thus unfolded, the apostle draws the following most obvious conclusions. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, tee shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Verses 9, 10.

Much more, is emphatic and conclusive. The reasoning of the apostle is founded on the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus; "Being now justified by his blood." This is an expression of peculiar weight and solemnity, and ought not to be passed lightly over. It gives us an overwhelming view of the infinite evil and malignant nature of sin; and that blood of infinite dignity was required to discharge its claim on the sinner. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." It also speaks of the inflexible justice of God, the integrity of His word, and of the execution of the first sentence; "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." How utterly impossible for the guilty to escape the awful judgment of God if not sheltered and cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus! As the apostle says, "How shall we escape if we neglect [not wickedly reject, but carelessly neglect] so great salvation?" Nothing but the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on Israel's door-posts could save them from the sword of the destroyer. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Truth was satisfied, justice was stayed, and deliverance from Pharaoh secured, by the blood-sprinkled lintels. God is holy; and as such He is against sin, and must judge it. Happy day, when the sinner sees that his own soul is lost without the safe-guard of the Savior's precious

blood. The work of grace is then in the conscience, and it will never be at rest until the doorposts of the heart are sprinkled with the blood of the true paschal Lamb. Then he is safe forever and beyond the reach of every destroyer. He has a safe passport to the goodly land of Canaan.

On the other hand, the expression, “justified by his blood/” proves, as nothing else could, not only the evil of sin, but the perfect love of God toward the sinner. He spared not His own Son; while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Faith in that precious blood is complete justification and eternal life to the once guilty and condemned soul. What a mercy to know and to be able to say in view of the awful judgment of God against sin; “It is God [yes, God Himself by virtue of Jesus’ blood] that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” And faith, standing in the midst of these eternal realities, can raise the shout of victory, and send out its challenge in the face of every foe, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” He gave His Son to die; that is God’s love to the guilty. He accepted the work of His Son, and set the workman at his own right hand; that is God’s righteousness. It was righteousness on God’s part to accept the perfect righteousness presented to Him by the righteous One; and we, being accepted in Christ, are made the righteousness of God in Him.

Here we have a full gospel—justified by the blood of Jesus, complete deliverance through Him. Not merely that our sins are all forgiven; that would only be a negative blessing. But we have positive divine righteousness in Christ, which is our title to glory. Thus the intelligent believer can say, Now I stand in the presence of God not only without my sins, but in the absolute righteousness of God. Divine righteousness has taken the place of human sin. This is perfect love, perfect righteousness, perfect rest, perfect blessedness, and God perfectly glorified. But wrath, not love, awaits the unbelieving soul, yea, abides on him that submits not to the power of that justifying blood. Only those who believe in Jesus, trust in His precious blood to cleanse from all sin, are delivered from the wrath to come.

Verse 10. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Here the apostle pursues his subject with deepening interest and energy. The Spirit of God is leading the apostle in this verse to yet more definite reasoning and more powerful conclusions. Had God discovered any symptoms of love in us to serve Him, or any willingness to obey Him, His love would not have been absolutely perfect. He would have found a motive in us for His love. But how did matters stand? We were ungodly, without strength, sinners, enemies; so that the positive enmity of man, as shown in these four features, but furnished the deepest occasion for the display of His all-perfect love.

From the garden of Eden to the cross of Calvary, in place of man showing any symptoms of love or of obedience, he takes no pleasure in the things of God, sees no beauty, no loveliness, in His holiness, no glory in His righteousness, and dares to insult His majesty. His judgments, though a law-breaker, he disregards; His mercies, though he would perish were they to be withdrawn, He despises; His temporal favors, he uses, or, it may be, abuses, to His dishonor; His love, in the coming of His Christ, he rejected; the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the work of Christ and the salvation which is in Him unto eternal glory, he refuses as less worthy of his thoughts than the fleeting vanities of a day. Can any reason be found in man why God should love him? Rather, is there not every reason why God should be against him? To love such, must be free, perfect,

sovereign, love. The reason, the motive, the power, is in Himself. It is God's own love; lie only can love like this; and, forever be adored His great and holy name, He has loved us, He docs love us with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness has He drawn us to Himself, and blessed us in His love.

Divine Love and Its Fruits

But even that love could not have sufficed of itself to meet our case as enemies. God's love was indeed great, but His wrath was just. The death and resurrection of Christ were necessary to put everything in its right place: neither wrath, on God's part, against sin, nor enmity on man's against God, is ignored. The daysman not only lays his hand on the alien sinner, but on the God of holiness. He is the Mediator, and reconciliation is accomplished. The ministry of this reconciliation was given to our apostle.

In 2 Cor. 5 we have this immense truth, that God was in Christ. In His character of Reconciler He thus in richest grace draws nigh to us, because, as sinners and without strength, we could not go to Him; God was in Christ; that is to say, when Christ was on earth He was "reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Thus we learn that it is God who reconciles, and that man, the believer, is reconciled through the death of Christ. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." All is based upon this truth of unspeakable importance.

God had set His love upon us where we were, and as we were, and in order to make us the expression of His own divine righteousness through all eternity, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. Oh, most marvelous truth! Immeasurable grace! Infinite goodness! Man had no righteousness of his own, he had been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; he had been tested by the truth of God, and found to be only sin. But in place of executing the judgment due on the poor blinded slave of sin and Satan, He so wrought for Him in Christ, as to bring him back, and give him a place of nearness to Himself, according to His own nature and purpose, by redemption. Jesus died, His blood was shed, the believer is justified, reconciled, and made the righteousness of God in Christ. As the sin-bearer, He perfectly glorified God, blotted out sin, finished redemption, accomplished righteousness, and thus laid a foundation for the fullest and highest results of the purposes of His love. Throughout the countless ages of eternity, and before the myriad hosts of principalities and powers, in heavenly places, this mighty miracle of grace shall be displayed, and as children we shall be the objects of His complacent delight forever and forever.

The apostle now fairly reasons, that if, while we were enemies, Christ died for us, what will He not do for us now that we are His friends; and also, He who died for us being alive, and having all power in heaven and on earth, acts for us in the mighty energy in which He lives eternally? "Much more shall we be saved by his life." "Fear not," He said to John in resurrection, "I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." There was nothing now to make John afraid. Christ had put away his sins on the cross, He had vanquished death and the grave, and He held in His hand the symbols of absolute authority over Satan and the realm of darkness. Every foe was now beneath His feet, and the Christian being in the risen Christ, and one with Him, every foe is beneath his feet, while he stands fast in his risen and victorious Lord. His life in resurrection is the pledge and security for the eternal life of all who believe in Him, as He Himself says, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

John 14:9; Rev. 1:17, 18.

Such are the blessed fruits of divine love—of the gospel of God. The believer is not only pardoned, justified, and reconciled, but he is associated with Christ as risen from among the dead; possessed of the same life, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, standing in the same relationship to God the Father, blessed with the same inheritance, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Nor is this rich roll of blessing all the fruit of that love, even that which may be enjoyed here on our pilgrim way. The apostle boasts of a yet higher privilege.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HIGHEST JOY.

Verse 11. “ And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement”—reconciliation (see margin). Higher joy than this we can never have; it is infinite, yet we have already entered into it. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ—in virtue of completed reconciliation, a blessed, conscious, happy re-union with the living God is accomplished. This verse brings us back to the beginning of our chapter, where it is said that believers have peace with God, have access to Him, and rejoice in hope of His glory. But here we have arrived at the fountain head, looking through all the blessings conferred on us, and rejoicing in God Himself as the highest spring and object of them all. Yes! God Himself is the Christian's joy, glory, and boast! It is not now merely in hope of the glory of God that we rejoice; nor is it in our tribulation, because of its effects, divine love being known in our hearts through the Holy Ghost given unto us; nor is it in the many blessings He has given us, but, better far, in Himself.

This is grace, pure grace, grace to the poorest, grace to the vilest, grace to thee, my reader, if thou wilt only have it in God's way. Man's ability to meet the requirements of the holiness of God has been fully tried, but the plainer the truth, the clearer the light, the more did it bring out man's darkness and opposition to God. And then grace came in—it was God's due time—and Christ died for the ungodly. We can only be pardoned and saved through faith in the blood of Jesus. When God sees the blood of the slain Lamb, He is satisfied. He sees that which has blotted out sin, vindicated His character, verified His word, and met the whole need of ruined man. And now, observe, if thou art satisfied with it, trusting wholly to it, as the only answer to sin's claims upon thy precious soul—the only discharge from that dread tribunal; thy soul is saved, and God is glorified.

There is nothing we are so slow to understand as grace; nothing so hard for our hearts as to be humble enough to see that grace only can meet our case, and nothing so easy as to get away from this lowly place. The natural feeling of the human heart is, not that there is grace in God for the sinner, but, “ I know that thou art an austere man.” So it was with the prodigal son—with every prodigal son and daughter: the thought of grace in his father's heart never once entered into his mind, and therefore he reckoned on being received as an “ hired servant.” But how was he met? on the ground of righteousness or of grace? Had it been the former, he would have been condemned to the judgment due to his sins; but, as in the case of every penitent sinner, it was on the ground of pure, rich, free grace. Not a word was said to him as to where he had been, or what he had done, he was sheltered by the blood of Jesus. The Father knew every moment of his past history, but every offense was met, and all his sins cleansed away by the blood of Jesus Christ, God's own Son. Faith, through grace, had triumphed in the prodigal's return, and now grace shines in his acceptance. “ Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand,

and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” All is grace, pure grace.

THE SINNER'S LOWEST CONDITION.

The former condition of those who are now rejoicing in God is set forth, as above, in the very strongest language. And this, no doubt, that divine love might be manifested in the fullest way to the chief of sinners; and that such may be encouraged to believe in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But supposing for a moment that my reader is still unconverted, and that I ask him the following questions:—Can you believe that there is love in God's heart towards you, notwithstanding all you have done, been, and still are? Do you believe that you may come to Him, believing in Christ, just as you are, and just at this moment, without any preparation on your own part? And do you believe that you will be received with open arms, embraced with the kiss of peace; sealed with the ring of eternal love; clothed with the best robe, the righteousness of God; and introduced to the Father's house, all heaven rejoicing, as your home forever? Or, as in the case of the fallen woman at the feet of Jesus, in the house of Simon; do you believe that grace will meet you as fully as it met her? “ And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” And do you further believe that it is the death of Jesus that has opened the way for the love of God to flow forth in such streams of blessing? The heart that can amen these questions is surely taught of God, and savingly acquainted with His grace; I mean the heart that has felt their importance, and answers seriously, not lightly.

But no supposed case can exceed the alienation of heart from God which the description before us gives; and yet it was for such that Jesus died, not only to prove God's love, but to open the flood-gates, that it might find a righteous channel in which to flow forth to the utmost bounds of human need. They were without strength, ungodly, sinners, under wrath, enemies of God. If such, then, is man's condition by nature, the love of God toward us must be absolutely free from all motive, in us or of us. Hence, not only its perfectness, but its unchangeableness. It flows, not from promises made to us, but purely from what God is; and “ God is love.” The spring being in the depths of His heart who knows no change, all the blessings of that love are absolutely secured to the feeblest believer in Christ Jesus. Nothing in us called it out, nothing in us can drive it back; unless, indeed, it may be for a time, through our ingratitude and love of the world. Such was the painful experience of the blessed Lord when here amongst men. For His love He had hatred; for His goodness He had ingratitude; for His faithfulness He had a cross. “ This, for He was perfect love, was, I doubt not, the sense of what was expressed by Jesus in the words, ‘I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!’ The love was there, full, perfect, active in His heart. He showed it in all that He did, in all that it could be shown in, but as to the proper effect of its power, its true object, the reconciling man to Himself, it was, so to speak, driven back into Himself: blessed be God! unweakened, but driven back, finding no response in man's heart, nothing to which it could attach itself there, in the selfish enmity which reigned there.”

Divine Love and Its Fruits

Christ the only channel of blessing to man.

If the heart of God is the native fountain of redeeming love, Christ is its only channel, as the Holy Ghost is its only power. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. For our joy in God—which is

the highest that can ever be attained or enjoyed even throughout eternity—with all the unspeakable blessings enumerated from the first to the eleventh verse, we are debtors to Jesus. Oh, how this should bind our hearts to Him in unreserved, undivided devotedness! Oh! what can I do for Him who has done so much for me? should be the natural cry of every saved soul.

How dreadful the thought that we can forget our Savior and Lord; that we can object to do His will; that we can leave His presence, and do our own; that we can shut Him out, and entertain His enemies; that we can take the most serious and important step in life in direct opposition to His revealed word. Nevertheless He loves on, loves on. What a mercy, His love, though slighted, is not weakened, is not turned away from us! He knew from the beginning what we would be. At the same time we must not forget that He is our Lord as well as our Savior, and that He will take His own time and way to bring us back, but that may be with a humiliation that will cleave to us through life.

May the Lord enable every believer who reads these pages to realize his position as one with Christ in resurrection. There could be no link between a sinless Christ and sinful flesh; but there is a real union between the Christian and the risen Christ. In a new life, by the Holy Ghost, he is united to Him who is in the presence of God for us; and we are in Him, and as He is in heavenly places. Christ's death writes death on the old man; all are dead. "If one died for all, then were all dead." Obviously the moral history of man closes here. But the believer has the privilege of knowing that he not only died in Christ's death, but that he rose again in His resurrection. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24.

This is the true and only principle of christian life and christian position; dead to the world, and alive unto God in Christ. And being thus united to Christ in heaven, this life must be one with Him, and its true character will be displayed by living to Him before men. Seeing, then, that this is the Christian's position, can he have one single principle in common with the world? Not one. He is one with Christ, and as He is before God, therefore he ought to be the living display of what Christ is here in this world before men. "I am crucified with Christ," said Paul; "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

Here we may close our papers on the history of the first and the Second man. God has been fully revealed. Where? In Christ; in His life, and in His death. He was a true witness for God in grace. He might wither the self-righteous Pharisee with His rebuke, who was only adding the sin of hypocrisy to his other sins; but to the penitent at His feet He was all grace, nothing but grace and love. God's righteous wrath against sin was fully expressed on the cross; there the believer sees the burning wrath of God against his sin spent on the holy Sufferer; so that the judgment of God against sin, which we naturally fear and dread, has become our salvation. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The Savior died, having borne the judgment, is risen again, and stands in living righteousness before God. The first man had no righteousness for God, but Christ is of God, made righteousness unto all who believe.

the reign of grace.

This is the new order of things, and the summing up of the great principles and ways of God's dealings with man through Christ, the last Adam. God is righteous, and God is gracious, therefore grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. Now the sinner knows what the God is with whom he has to do. What a mercy! Look, my fellow-sinner, at the reception of the prodigal son, and see what God is. And follow the footsteps of Him who is the revelation and testimony of God to man. Whenever there is reality before Him, no mere pretense to be something that is good, but true humility, a loathing of self, He takes the place of perfect grace, and lavishes the full blessings of His love on the penitent soul, without ever uttering one upbraiding word. This is God—God in Christ to every penitent sinner, though he may be the vilest of the human race—a robber, an outcast, or one who was covered with the darkest sin of woman; yet she may find a refuge in that heart—which only loves—from the cruel rage of her fellow-sinners. And another, whom the Pharisee would not have touched with his staff, draws forth, in sweetest tenderness, a plenary pardon, salvation and peace with God. His lips dropped words of grace, as sweet-smelling myrrh, in the presence of the chiefs of Israel. There divine love found its repast, not on the lordly dish of the Pharisee, but in the broken heart that lay bleeding at His feet; and she carries off the noblest prize of infinite love, while the self-righteous Pharisee, who had no appreciation for the lowly Jesus, is left to wither under the blighting curse of divine righteousness.

Learn then, O my fellow-sinner, from these lovely scenes how to meet God. Meet Him thou must; but how? On the ground of grace or righteousness? This meeting, remember, cannot be avoided. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Now is the time to come to Him—to come as a penitent, as that woman did—and all, all, is well. There thou seest the heart of God bowed down in loveliest grace to meet her every need. And we may be bold, yet free to say, that the heart of Jesus was never more gladdened in this world, and He will be equally gladdened to meet all thy need on the same plea—as a sinner, melted, broken down, at His feet. Grace has no respect of persons, as thou seest, but thou must come to Him by faith, There is no salvation but through faith in Him. In His death there is the full answer to thy whole condition as a man and a sinner; in resurrection He has taken His place in the power of a new life; and thus He is the Head of a new race which belong to Him by faith, righteous in Him, as we were sinners in the first Adam.

But, oh! forget not, again, I pray thee, that outside of this heaven-born race, through faith in Jesus Christ, is no salvation. All, all, is lost—lost forever, and lost within arm's-length of the gates of heaven. Thou art bound to believe the result of thine own history, as summed up in the death of Christ; and thou art equally bound to believe that there, through His death and resurrection, a new life only is to be found. Do, then, I beseech thee, come to Jesus. He is disappointed at the slowness of man's heart to believe. Hear His own touching complaint: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Better far, my friend, spend thy eternity with Jesus and all His ransomed ones, within the golden gates of everlasting glory, than be shut within the gloomy gates of hell, in the dark and murky regions of everlasting woe. It must be in the one place or the other; there is no middle place. Oh! break with the world; decide for Christ; give thy heart to Him, so shall thy blessing be great in this life, and as age after age rolls on, unfolding the ever increasing wonders of redeeming love, and the ever-deepening mysteries of that precious blood which lusters the throne of God, so shall thy blessing continue to abound throughout a glorious eternity.

Everlasting Kindness

“ Everlasting kindness,” hark, my soul! ‘tis He,
Thy Jehovah Jesus speaks this word to thee.
“ Everlasting kindness,” speak that word once more,
O my soul! still listen, trust it and adore!
“ Everlasting kindness,” e’en to such as I,
On whom wrath eternal might in justice He;
But Jehovah Jesus speaks this word so free,
“ Everlasting kindness,” I have shown to thee.
“ Everlasting kindness,” since the world began,
God’s eternal kindness through the ages ran,
Hidden oft in shadows, dim to human sight,
In Jehovah Jesus now it shineth bright.
“ Everlasting kindness,” feasting on that word,
Now my soul is tasting of its fullness, Lord!
But eternal ages, as they roll along,
Never shall exhaust that word so sweet, so strong.
“ Everlasting kindness “ brought the Son of God
From the Father’s bosom, here to shed His blood;
“ Everlasting kindness,” all God’s ways shall crown,
When before our Jesus gladly we fall down.
“ Everlasting kindness” never shall depart,
Well Jehovah Jesus knew my wandering heart,
Knew that loving-kindness, tender, true, and free,
“ Everlasting kindness” only, suited me.

Fragment

To say that I must sin, is to deny the foundations of Christianity.

To say that I cannot sin, is to deceive myself.

To say that I need not sin, is to state a divine privilege.

God, in His Works and in His Word

Scripture is always perfect; but men are not competent to speak, unless taught of God. Thus, humanly speaking, there are those who could appreciate the wonders of the heavens, but are dull to perceive the divine construction of a daisy; yet to any one that estimates aright, the perfect hand of God, even in a daisy, is just as clear and certain as in the solar system. It is only a question of the place which each creature of God occupies in His own immense scheme. His wisdom and power are displayed no less in the minute than in the grand, and massive, and sublime. Thus there is no doubt that if the telescope opens many a wonder to man, the microscope is not less impressive. They are both important instruments in the hand of man, and they are both intended, doubtless, in God's providence, to show man from the natural world a witness of divine power in what is above, and also in that which is beneath. But in all things, what ought to be gathered from it is, not incense for man—though admitting the great dignity of Him who is the head, or natural chief, of creation—but the wonders of God in what He has wrought.

A similar principle applies to the word of God; for therein, if God displays Himself in what is vast, quite as much does He appear in ways whose minuteness might easily escape observation. Everywhere perfection is claimed for God, whether in what He has made, or, above all, in that which He has written; and in that which He has written beyond that which He has wrought, because His mind and ways must transcend His outward works. For the word of God is claimed the very highest place, as the expression of His wisdom—His inner wisdom. For that which is connected with matter must yield to what has to do with mind and the affections, and, above all, the display of the divine nature. W. K.

The Grace of Christ to a Roman Catholic Priest

As I walked on the platform of the railway station at Shipley, I noticed a priest with a very swollen face. I felt greatly interested in him, and felt assured I had to speak a word from God to his soul. We waited a considerable time, passed and re-passed each other; and yet I had not courage to speak to him.

At length the train arrived from Bradford. He stepped into one carriage, and I into another. Thus we traveled, until the train reached Leeds.

Again there was delay. We passed and re-passed; but not a word did I speak. A fellow-priest was waiting for him. I took my seat. He now walked from end to end of the train, not a seat could he find but the one next to me. He stepped into the carriage, and sat down by my side, his companion remaining on the step outside.

I learned from their conversation that my fellow-traveler was going to Sheffield, to undergo an operation of no ordinary character. I still felt a lack of courage to speak. We traveled in silence until we reached the station for Barnsley. Here all the passengers in our compartment left us. We were alone.

I then inquired if the large swelling on the cheek arose from anything wrong with the teeth. He explained very fully to me the nature of the case. It was a formation of bone on the cheek-bone. He had had the best possible advice, and was told he could not live more than two years, unless he submitted to the painful operation of having the bone removed; and that he was going to Sheffield to undergo the operation the very next day.

He then described to me how the difficult operation would have to be performed. I said, "And if you do well, how long do you expect to be confined to bed?" "Well," said he, "I shall not be allowed to speak for seven or ten days, and shall no doubt have to lie in bed as many weeks. The thought of it feels very strange, for, with the exception of restless nights, I am, as you see, quite well and strong."

I then said, "And if you die under the operation, what then?" He looked surprised, and said, "My dear sir, I have been so occupied with the operation, I really have not given that one serious thought." I saw God was awakening his soul to the awful thought of a never-ending eternity. I said, "I will give you one text of scripture that was made a great blessing to a friend of mine in Sheffield, who was bed-ridden for months; and I feel sure, whether you die under the operation, or lie in bed some months, this scripture will be made a comfort to you." This is it, quoting from the Roman Catholic translation:

"Amen, amen, I say unto you, that he who heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life everlasting; and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.) "Is not that very clear and wonderful? 'Hath life everlasting ' cometh not into judgment;' 'is passed from death unto life?'"

At the first moment, this seemed too good to be true. He said, " Yes, if we hear Christ, and if we keep His commandments, and serve Him faithfully, we shall then have life everlasting." "No, no," I said, "that is adding a great deal to the words of Christ. All that will come after as fruit; but, on the Amen of Christ, if we hear His words, and believe God that sent Him, we have at this moment life everlasting."

"Yes," he said, "I see it."

And now, as to judgment, as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so, we are assured, Christ was offered once to bear the sin? of many; and so, when He comes the second time, it is not for judgment on sin, but for salvation to them that look for Him.

And notice the infinite value of that one sacrifice, d Himself once, in contrast with the many offerings under the law, which could never take away sins. This blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, " having offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sitteth on the right hand of God. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." And God the Hoi) Ghost testifies, "And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." (See Heb. 9; 10) " Oh, yes; amen, amen, it is most certain, if we hear the words of Jesus, and believe God that sent Him, life everlasting we have, and into judgment for our sins we shall never come. How can we, when God says He will remember them no more?"

Oh, if you had seen that face light up with joy! God opened his heart to receive the testimony of Christ. In a few minutes we must part, yet knit together for eternity. Had I known him for fifty years, I could not have felt more intense affection for him. Nay, it was the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

I said, " Now tell me, if you die under the operation, are you afraid?" I was both surprised and delighted to hear his reply: "Whether the Lord shall come first, and I go to meet Him; or I die, I am ready to go and be with Him!" I had not spoken one word on the coming of Christ, save the reference to Heb. 9:28.

The train was drawing up at Hasbro': we shook hands, with the deep, real, joy of those who have passed from death unto life. " Good-bye!" " Goodbye! The Lord be with you in the painful operation! Adieu!" I saw him no more. The operation was too painful for me to describe. A few Christians had prayer for him, the same evening, at Rotherham. His suffering was very great; and in a week or eight days from the day I met him he fell asleep. He was absent from the body, present with the Lord. I did not even know his name, but I shall meet him in that supreme moment when we awake in the likeness of our risen Lord.

Can you say, reader, that you have life everlasting? Have you been brought to receive the words of Christ? Do you believe God who sent Him, His own eternal Son, to bear our sins in His own body on the tree?

Has He not died, the one all-sufficient, because infinite, sacrifice for sin? Oh! have you peace with God by the blood of Jesus? The moment we believe God, al is true to us. Life everlasting we have; Jesus says it. Into judgment we shall not come; Jesus says it. We are passed from death unto life; Jesus says it. Do you hear Him? Do not add a word. It is not, if you do this or that, then you may hope to have everlasting life. Those who are thus doing works for salvation never lead a holy life;

that is, they never walk according to God's word. It is only those who are born of God who have eternal life, who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, that love God, because He hath first loved them.

Oh, precious words of Jesus! "Amen, amen, I say unto you, that he who heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life everlasting, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed from death unto life."

One who lives near where the operation took place met Dr. H., who took part in it, and said, " Oh, Dr. H., I have a friend greatly interested in the priest you operated on; he wishes to know about the state of his soul at his departure." Dr. H.'s reply was, "I never saw so happy a death-bed scene."

Truly the wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. " My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

That priest with the swollen face was one of Christ's sheep. The Father had given him to Christ. The Shepherd had died for that sheep, and now the moment came when he must hear His voice. Eternal life was given to him.

Very beautiful it is to see a sheep of Christ in that moment when the ear is opened to hear the voice of Christ. The ear of the thief was opened on the day of his death; the ear of the priest eight days before. Has that voice, that word, ever entered my reader's soul? This may be the day of your death, or it may be eight days before. It is only a question of time. Hark, He says, " I give, I give unto them eternal life." " And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Oh, Jew or Gentile, Romanist or Protestant, " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!" Surpassing grace! Lord, make us more like Thyself! Dear reader, are you still a stranger to Christ? To this day have you been reading the scriptures as you would read a newspaper? Have you never heard the voice of Christ? Remember the love of Christ to this Catholic priest. The moment he heard the voice of Jesus in the word, he passed from death unto life; life everlasting he hath, and into judgment he shall never come. What joy! What peace! What assurance of salvation! On the authority of Thy precious word, Lord Jesus. Here our souls rest, without the shadow of a doubt.

C. S.

Great Commission: 23471

We have seen that the basis of “The Great Commission” is the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This must never be lost sight of. “It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” It is a risen Christ that sends forth His heralds to preach “repentance and remission of sins.” The incarnation and the crucifixion are great cardinal truths of Christianity; but it is only in resurrection they are made available for us in any way. Incarnation—precious and priceless mystery though it be—could not form the groundwork of remission of sins, for 1 ‘without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb. 9:22.) We are justified by the blood, and reconciled by the death, of Christ. But it is in resurrection that all this is made good unto us. Christ was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. (Rom. 4:25; 5:9, 10.) ‘For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” 1 Corinthians xv. 3, 4.

Hence, therefore, it is of the very last possible importance for all who would carry out our Lord’s commission, to know in their own souls, and to set forth in their preaching, the grand truth of resurrection. The most cursory glance at the preaching of the earliest heralds of the gospel will suffice to show the prominent place which they gave to this glorious fact.

Hearken to Peter on the day of Pentecost, or rather to the Holy Ghost, just come down from the risen, ascended, and glorified Savior. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should beholden of it.....This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.” (Acts 2) So also in chapter iii.: “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, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.... unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, by turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” “And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them. Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead”

Their preaching was characterized by the prominent place which it assigned to the glorious, powerful, and telling fact of resurrection. True, there was the full and clear statement of incarnation and crucifixion, with the great moral bearings of these facts. How could it be otherwise? The Son of God had to become a man to die, in order that, by death, He might glorify God as to the entire

question of sin; destroy the power of Satan: rob death of its sting, and the grave of its victory; put away forever the sins of his people, and associate them with Himself in the power of eternal life, in the new creation, where all things are of God, and where a single trace of sin or sorrow can never enter. Eternal and universal homage and adoration to His peerless name!

But let all preachers remember the place which resurrection holds in apostolic preaching and teaching. "With great power gave the apostles witness." Of what? Incarnation or crucifixion merely? Not so; but "of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." This was the stupendous fact that glorified God and His Son Jesus Christ. It was this that attested, in the view of all created intelligences, the divine complacency in the work of redemption. It was this that demonstrated, in the most marvelous way, the complete and eternal overthrow of the kingdom of Satan, and all the powers of darkness. It was this that declared the full and everlasting deliverance of all who believe in Jesus—their deliverance, not only from all the consequences of their sins, but from this present evil world, and from every link that bound them to that old creation which lies under the power of evil.

No marvel, therefore, if the apostles, filled as they were with the Holy Ghost, persistently and powerfully presented the magnificent truth of resurrection. Hear them again before the council—a council composed of the great religious leaders and guides of the people. "The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree." They were at issue with God on the all-important question as to His Son. They had slain Him, but God raised Him from the dead. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."

So also in Peter's address to the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius, speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, he says, "whom they slew, and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead."

The Holy Ghost is careful to set forth the weighty and, to us, profoundly interesting fact, that "God raised up his Son Jesus." This fact has a double bearing. It proves that God is at issue with the world, seeing He has raised, exalted, and glorified the very One whom they slew, and hanged on a tree. But, blessed throughout all ages be His holy name! it proves that He has found eternal rest and satisfaction as to us, and all that was, or could be, against us, seeing He has raised up the very One who took our place, and stood charged with all our sin and guilt.

But all this will come more fully out as we proceed with our proofs.

Let us now listen for a moment to Paul's splendid address in the synagogue at Antioch. "Men, brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead. And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the

fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he said in this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption; but he whom God raised again saw no corruption.”

Then follows the powerful appeal, which, though not bearing upon our present line of argument, we cannot omit in this place. “ Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you.” Acts 13:26-41.

We shall close our series of proofs from the Acts of the Apostles by a brief quotation from Paul’s marvelous address at Athens. “ Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. And the times of this ignorance God overlooked; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Acts 17

This is a very remarkable and deeply solemn passage. The proof that God is going to judge the world in righteousness—a proof offered to all—is that He has raised His ordained Man from the dead. He does not here name the Man; but at verse 18 we are told that some of the Athenians deemed the apostle a setter forth of strange gods, “ because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.”

From all this it is perfectly plain that the blessed apostle Paul gave a most prominent place in all his preachings to the glorious truth of resurrection. Whether he addresses a congregation of Jews in the synagogue at Antioch, or an assembly of Gentiles on Mars’ Hill at Athens, he presents a risen Christ. In a word, he was characterized by the fact that he preached, not merely the incarnation and the crucifixion, but the resurrection; and this, too, in all its mighty moral bearings—its bearing upon man in his individual state and destiny; its bearing upon the world as a whole, in its history in the past, its moral condition in the present, and its certain doom in the future; in its bearing upon the believer, proving his absolute, complete, and eternal justification before God, and his thorough deliverance from this present evil world.

And we have to bear in mind that in apostolic preaching the resurrection was not presented as a mere doctrine, but as a living, telling, mighty, moral fact—a fact, the magnitude of which is beyond all power of human utterance or thought. The apostles, in carrying out “ the great commission” of their Lord, pressed the stupendous fact that God has raised Jesus from the dead—had raised the Man who was nailed to the cross, and buried in the grave. In short, they preached a resurrection gospel. Their preaching was governed by these words, “ It was necessary that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead the third day.”

We shall now turn for a moment to the epistles, and see the wondrous way in which the Holy Ghost unfolds and applies the fact of resurrection. But ere doing so we would call the reader's attention to a passage which is sadly misunderstood and misapplied. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, " We preach Christ crucified." These words are continually quoted for the purpose of casting a damper on those who earnestly desire to advance in the knowledge of divine things. But a moment's serious attention to the context would be sufficient to show the true meaning of the apostle. Did he confine himself to the fact of the crucifixion? The bare idea, in the face of the body of scripture which we have quoted, is simply absurd. The fact is, the glorious truth of resurrection shines out in all his discourses.

What, then, does the apostle mean when he declares, " We preach Christ crucified?" Simply this, that the Christ whom he preached was the One whom the world had crucified. He was a rejected, outcast Christ—One for whom the world considered a malefactor's gibbet quite good enough. What a fact for the poor Corinthians, so full of vanity and love for this world's wisdom! A crucified Christ was the One whom Paul preached, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Remarkable words! words divinely suited to people prone to boast themselves in the so-called wisdom and greatness of this world—the vain reasonings and imaginations of the poor human mind, which all perish in a moment. All the wisdom of God, all His power, all His greatness, all His glory, all that He is, in short, come out in a crucified Christ. The cross confounds the world, vanquishes Satan and all the powers of darkness, saves all who believe, and forms the solid foundation of the everlasting and universal glory of God.

Enough, we trust, has been said to prove to the reader that there is neither moral force nor spiritual intelligence in the use so frequently made of the words, "We preach Christ crucified." Indeed it is directly contrary to the entire body of apostolic preaching and teaching, and its effect upon the souls of those who accept it is pre-eminently mischievous.

We shall now turn for a moment to a very beautiful passage in Rom. 4, in which the inspired writer handles the subject of resurrection in a most edifying way for us. Speaking of Abraham, he says, "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief,"—which is always sure to stagger—" but was strong in faith, giving glory to God"—as faith always does. " And being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." And then, lest any should say that all this applied only to Abraham, who was such a devoted, holy, remarkable man, the inspiring Spirit adds, with singular grace and sweetness, " 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 in him that"—what? Gave His Son? Bruised His Son on the cross? Not merely this, but " that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,"

Here lies the grand point of the apostle's blessed and powerful argument. We must, if we would have settled peace, believe in God as the One who raised up Jesus from the dead, and who in so

doing proved Himself friendly to us, and proved, too, His infinite satisfaction in the work of the cross. Jesus, having been “ delivered for our offenses,” could not be where He now is, if a single one of these offenses remained unatoned for. But, blessed forever be the God of all grace, He raised from among the dead the One who had been delivered for our offenses; and to all who believe in Him righteousness shall be reckoned. “ It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.” See how this glorious theme, the basis of the great commission, expands under our gaze as we pursue our study of it!

One more brief quotation shall close this paper. In Heb. 13 we read, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

This is uncommonly fine. The God of judgment met the Sin-bearer at the cross, and there, with Him, entered thoroughly into, and definitively settled, the question of sin. And then, in glorious proof that all was done—sin atoned for—guilt put away—Satan silenced—God glorified—all divinely accomplished, “ the God of peace’ entered the scene, and raised from the dead our Lord Jesus, that “ great Shepherd of the sheep.”

Beloved reader, how glorious is all this! How enfranchising to all who simply believe! Jesus is risen. His sufferings are over forever. God has exalted Him. Eternal Justice has wreathed His blessed brow with a diadem of glory; and, wondrous fact! that very diadem is the eternal demonstration that all who believe are justified from all things, and accepted in a risen and glorified Christ. Eternal and universal hallelujahs to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!

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

Great Commission: Part 1

“ And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved 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. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Luke 24:44-49.

This splendid passage of holy scripture sets before us the great commission which the risen Lord entrusted to His apostles just as He was about to ascend into the heavens, having gloriously accomplished all His blessed work upon earth. It is truly a most wonderful commission, and opens up a very wide field of truth, through which we may range with much spiritual delight and profit. Whether we ponder the commission itself, its basis, its authority, its ‘power, or its sphere, we shall find it all full of most precious instruction. May the blessed Spirit guide our thoughts, while we meditate, first of all, upon

THE COMMISSION ITSELF, The apostles of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ were specially charged to preach “repentance and remission of sins.” Let us all remember this. We are prone to forget it, to the serious damaging of our preaching, and of the souls of our hearers. Some of us are apt to overlook the first part of the commission, in our eagerness, it may be, to get to the second. This is a most serious mistake. We may rest assured that it is our truest wisdom to keep close to the veritable terms in which our blessed Lord delivered His charge to His earliest heralds. We cannot omit a single point, not to say a leading branch of the commission, without serious loss in every way. Our Lord is infinitely wiser and more gracious than we are, and we need not fear to preach with all possible plainness what He told His apostles to preach, namely, “ repentance and remission of sins.”

Now the question is, are we all careful to maintain this very important connection? Do we give sufficient prominence to the first part of the great commission? Do we preach “ repentance?”

We are not now inquiring what repentance is; that we shall do, if God permit. But, whatever it is, do we preach it? That our Lord commanded His apostles to preach it is plain; and not only so, but He preached it Himself, as we read in Mark 1: “ Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Let us carefully note this record. Let all preachers note it. Our divine Master called upon sinners to repent and believe the gospel. Some would have us to believe that it is a mistake to call upon persons dead in trespasses and sins to do anything. “How,” it is argued, “ can those who are dead repent? They are incapable of any spiritual movement. They must first get the power ere they can

either repent or believe.”

What is our reply to all this? A very simple one indeed—our Lord knows better than all the theologians’ in the world what ought to be preached. He knows all about man’s condition—his guilt, his misery, his spiritual death, his utter helplessness, his total inability to think a single right thought, to utter a single right word, to do a single right act; and yet He called upon” men to repent. This is quite enough for us. It is no part of our business to seek to reconcile seeming differences. It may seem to us difficult to reconcile man’s utter powerlessness with his responsibility; but “ God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.” It is our happy privilege, and our bounden duty, to believe what He says, and to do what He tells us. This is true wisdom, and it yields solid peace.

Our Lord preached repentance, and He commanded His apostles to preach it; and they did so constantly. Harken to Peter on the day of Pentecost. “ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And again, ‘Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.’ Harken to Paul also, as he stood on Mars’ Hill, at Athens: “ But now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance (πιστιν) unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” So also, in his touching address to the elders of Ephesus, he says, “ I kept back nothing that was profitable, [blessed servant!] but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying, both to the Jews, and also the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” And again, in his address to king Agrippa, he says, “ Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”

Now, in the face of this body of evidence—with the example of our Lord and His apostles so fully and clearly before us—may we not very lawfully inquire whether there is not a serious defect in much of our modern preaching? Do we preach repentance as we ought? Do we assign to it the place which it gets in the preaching of our Lord and of His early heralds? It is vanity and folly, or worse, to talk about its being legal to preach repentance, to say that it tarnishes the luster of the gospel of the grace of God to call upon men dead in trespasses and sins to repent, and do works meet for repentance. Was Paul legal in his preaching? Did he not preach a clear, full, rich, and divine gospel? Have we got in advance of Paul? Do we preach a clearer gospel than he? How utterly preposterous the notion! Well, but he preached repentance. He told his hearers that God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Does this mar the gospel of the grace of God? Does it detract from its heavenly fullness and freeness? As well might you tell a farmer that it lowered the quality of his grain to plow the fallow ground before sowing.

No doubt it is of the very last possible importance to preach the gospel of the grace of God, or, if you please, the gospel of the glory, in all its fullness, clearness, and power. We are to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ—to declare the whole counsel of God—to present the righteousness of God and His salvation, without limit, condition, or hindrance of any kind—to publish the good news to every creature under heaven.

We should, in the very strongest possible manner, insist upon this. But at the same time we must jealously keep to the terms of “the great commission.” We cannot depart the breadth of a hair from these without serious damage to our testimony, and to the souls of our hearers. If we fail to preach repentance, we are “keeping back” something “profitable.” What should we say to a husbandman, if we saw him scattering his precious grain along the beaten highway? We should justly pronounce him out of his mind. The plowshare must do its work. The fallow ground must be broken up ere the seed is sown: and we may rest assured that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of grace, the plowing must precede the sowing. The ground must be duly prepared for the seed, else the operations will prove altogether defective. Let the gospel be preached as God has given it to us in His word. Let it not be shorn of one of its moral glories; let it flow forth as it comes from the deep fountain of the heart of God, through the channel of Christ’s finished work, on the authority of the Holy Ghost. All this is not only most fully admitted, but peremptorily insisted upon; but at the same time we must never forget that our Lord and Master called upon men to “repent and believe the gospel;” that He strictly enjoined it upon His holy apostles to preach repentance; and that the blessed apostle Paul, the chief of apostles, the profoundest teacher the church has ever known, did preach repentance, and call upon men everywhere to repent, and do works meet for repentance.

And here it may be well for us to inquire what this repentance is which occupies such a prominent place in “the great commission,” and in the preaching of our Lord and of His apostles. If it be—as it most surely is—an abiding and universal necessity for man—if God commands all men everywhere to repent—if repentance is inseparably linked with remission of sins—how needful it is that we should seek to understand its true nature.

What, then, is repentance? May the Spirit Himself instruct us by the word of God! He alone can. We are all liable to err—some of us have erred—in our thoughts on this most weighty subject. We are in danger, while seeking to avoid error on one side, of falling into error on the other. We are poor, feeble, ignorant, erring creatures, whose only security is in our being kept continually at the feet of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can teach us what repentance is, as well as what it is not. We feel most fully assured that the enemy of souls and of the truth has succeeded in giving repentance a false place in the creeds, and confessions, and public teachings of Christendom; and the conviction of this makes it all the more needful for us to keep close to the living teachings of holy scripture.

We are not aware of any formal definition of the subject furnished by the Holy Ghost. He does not tell us in so many words what repentance is; but the more we study the word in reference to the great question, the more deeply we feel convinced that true repentance involves the solemn judgment of ourselves, our condition, and our ways, in the presence of God; and, further, that this judgment is not a transient feeling, but an abiding condition—not a certain exercise to be gone through as a sort of title to the remission of sins, but the deep and settled habit of the soul, giving seriousness, gravity, tenderness, brokenness, and profound humility, which shall overlap, underlie, and characterize our entire course.

We seriously question if this aspect of the subject is sufficiently understood. Let not the reader mistake us. We do not mean for a moment to teach that the soul should be always bowed down under the sense of un-forgiven sin. Far be the thought! We think it will be found that our teaching in

the pages of “Things New and Old,” for the last nineteen years, is the very reverse of such a thought. But we greatly fear that some of us, in running away from legality on the question of repentance, have fallen into levity. This is a serious error. We may depend upon it that levity is no remedy for legality were it proposed as such, we should have no hesitation in pronouncing the remedy much worse than the disease. Thank God we have His own sovereign remedy for levity, on the one hand, and legality on the other. “ Truth” insisting upon “ repentance,” is the remedy for the former. “ Grace,” publishing “remission of sins,” is the remedy for the latter. And we cannot but believe that the more profound our repentance, the fuller will be our enjoyment of remission.

We are inclined to judge that there is a sad lack of depth and seriousness in much of our modern preaching. In our anxiety to make the gospel simple, and salvation easy, we fail to press on the consciences of our hearers the holy claims of truth. If a preacher now-a-days were to call upon his hearers to “repent and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance,” he would, in certain circles, be pronounced legal, ignorant, below the mark, and such like. And yet this was precisely what the blessed apostle Paul did, as he himself tells us. Will any of our modern evangelists have the temerity to say that Paul was a legal or an ignorant preacher? We trust not. Paul carried with him the full, clear, precious gospel of God—the gospel of the grace, and the gospel of the glory. He preached the kingdom of God—He unfolded the glorious mystery of the church—yea, that mystery was specially committed to him.

But let all preachers remember that Paul preached repentance. He called upon sinners to judge themselves—to repent in dust and ashes, as was meet and right they should. He himself had learned the true meaning of repentance. He had not only judged himself once in a way, but he lived in the spirit of self-judgment. It was the habit of his soul, the attitude of his heart, and it gave a depth, solidity, seriousness, and solemnity to his preaching of which we modern preachers know but little. We do not believe that Paul’s repentance ended with the three days and three nights of blindness after his conversion. He was a self-judged man all his life long. Did this hinder his enjoyment of the grace of God or of the preciousness of Christ? Nay, it gave depth and intensity to his enjoyment.

All this, we feel persuaded, demands our most serious consideration. We greatly dread the light, airy, superficial style of much of our modern preaching. It sometimes seems to us as if the gospel were brought into utter contempt, and the sinner led to suppose that he is really conferring a very great favor upon God in accepting salvation at His hands. Now we must solemnly protest against this. It is dishonoring to God, and lowering His gospel; and, as might be expected, its moral effect on those who profess to be converted is most deplorable. It superinduces levity, self-indulgence, worldliness, vanity, and folly. Sin is not felt to be the dreadful thing it is in the sight of God. Self is not judged. The world is not given up. The gospel that is preached is what maybe called “ salvation made easy” to the flesh—the most terrible thing we can possibly conceive—terrible in its effect upon the soul—terrible in its results in the life. God’s sentence upon the flesh and the world gets no place in the preaching to which we refer. People are offered a salvation which leaves self and the world practically unjudged, and the consequence is, those who profess to be converted by this gospel exhibit a lightness and unsubduedness perfectly shocking to people of serious piety.

It will, perhaps, be said that those sad results of which we speak are owing to the fact that the heavenly portion of the gospel is left out—that a glorified Christ is not preached—that a full

resurrection gospel is not proclaimed—that man and his need are made more prominent than God and His glory—that it is more a bringing Christ down into our circumstances than bringing us up into God's presence, in association with a risen and glorified Christ.

Well, there may be a good deal in this, and we are well disposed to admit a broad margin in which to in-kort all that has to be said on this side of the question, out we must still fall back on the weighty fact that the blessed apostle Paul—who most surely preached the gospel in all its fullness and in all its power—insisted upon repentance. This cannot be set aside. Man must take his true place before God, and that is the place of self-judgment, contrition of heart, real sorrow for sin, and true confession. It is here the gospel meets him. The fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel, and a truly repentant soul is the empty vessel into which all the fullness of the grace of God can flow in saving power. The Holy Ghost will make the sinner feel and own his real condition. It is He alone who can do so; but He uses preaching to this end. He brings the word of God to bear on man's conscience. The word is His hammer, wherewith He breaks the rock in pieces—His plowshare, wherewith He breaks up the fallow ground. He makes the furrow, and then casts in the incorruptible seed, to germinate and fructify to the glory of God. True, the furrow, how deep so ever it may be, can produce no fruit. It is the seed, and not the furrow; but there must be the furrow, for all that.

It is not, need we say? that there is anything meritorious in the sinner's repentance. To say so could only be regarded as the most monstrous audacity. Repentance is not a good work whereby the sinner merits the favor of God. All this view of the subject is utterly and fatally false. True repentance is the discovery and hearty confession of our utter ruin and guilt. It is the finding out that my whole life has been a lie, and that I myself am a liar. This is serious work. There is no flippancy or levity when a soul is brought to this. A penitent soul in the presence of God is a solemn reality; and we cannot but feel that were we more governed by the terms of “ the great commission,” we should more solemnly, earnestly, and constantly call upon men “ to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance,” we should preach “repentance” as well as “the remission of sins.” (To be continued, if the Lord will)

Great Commission: Part 2

Since writing our paper for January, we have been much interested in the way in which repentance is presented in those inimitable parables in Luke 15. There we learn, in a manner the most touching and convincing, not only the abiding and universal necessity—the moral fitness, in every case, of true repentance; but also that it is grateful to the heart of God. Our Lord, in His marvelous reply to the scribes and Pharisees, declares that “there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.” And, again, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

Now this gives us a very elevated view of the subject. It is one thing to see that repentance is binding upon man; and another and very much higher thing to see that it is grateful to God. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” A broken heart, a contrite spirit, a repentant mind, gives joy to God.

Let us ponder this fact. The scribes and Pharisees murmured because Jesus received sinners. How little they understood Him! How little they knew of the object that brought Him down into this dark and sinful world! How little they knew of themselves! It was the “lost” that Jesus came to seek. But scribes and Pharisees did not think themselves lost. They thought they were all right. They did not want a Savior. They were thoroughly unbroken, unrepentant, self-confident; and hence they had never afforded one atom «of joy in heaven. All the learning of the scribes, and all the righteousness of the Pharisees could not waken up a single note of joy in the presence of the angels of God. They were like the elder son in the parable who said, “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.”

Here we have a true specimen of an unbroken heart and an unrepentant spirit—a man thoroughly satisfied with himself. Miserable object! He had never touched a chord in the Father’s heart—never drawn out the Father’s love—never felt the Father’s embrace—never received the Father’s welcome. How could he? He had never felt himself lost. He was full of himself, and therefore had no room for the Father’s love. He did not feel that he owed anything and hence he had nothing to be forgiven. It rather seemed to him that the father was his debtor. “Lo, these many years do I serve thee; and yet thou never gavest me a kid.” He had not received his wages.

What egregious folly! And yet it is just the same with every unrepentant soul—everyone who is building upon his own righteousness. He really makes God his debtor. “I have served thee; but I have never gotten what I earned.” Miserable notion! The man who talks of his duties, his doings, his sayings, his givings, is really insulting God. But on the other hand, the man who comes with a broken heart, a contrite spirit, repentant, self-judged, that is the man who gives joy to the heart of God.

And why? Simply because such an one feels his need of God. Here lies the grand moral secret of the whole matter. To apprehend this is to grasp the full truth on the great question of repentance. A God of love desires to make His way to the sinner's heart, but there is no room for Him so long as that heart is hard and impenitent. But when the sinner is brought to the end of himself, when he sees himself a helpless hopeless wreck, when he sees the utter emptiness, hollowness, and vanity of all earthly things, when like the prodigal he comes to himself and feels the depth and reality of his need, then there is room in the heart for God, and—marvelous truth!—God delights to come and fill it. “To this man will I look.” To whom? To the man who does his duty, keeps the law, does his best, lives up to his light? Nay; but “To him who is of a contrite spirit.”

It will, perhaps, be said that the words just quoted apply to Israel. Primarily, they do; but morally, they apply to every contrite heart on the face of the earth. And, further, it cannot be said that Luke 15 applies specially to Israel. It applies to all. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that”—what? Does his duty? Nay, it does not even say, “that believeth?” No doubt believing is essential in every case; but the interesting point here is that a truly repentant sinner causes joy in heaven. A person may say, “I fear I do not believe.” Well, but do you repent? Have your eyes been opened to see your true condition before God? Have you taken your true place before God as utterly lost? If so, you are one of those over whom there is joy in heaven. What gave joy to the shepherd's heart? Was it the ninety and nine sheep that went not astray? Nay, it was finding the lost sheep. What gave joy to the woman's heart? Was it the nine pieces safe in her possession? Nay, it was finding the one lost piece. What gave joy to the father's heart? Was it the service and the obedience of the elder son? Nay, it was getting back his lost son. A repentant, brokenhearted, returning sinner wakens up heaven's joy. “Let us eat and be merry.” Why? Because the elder son has been working in the fields and doing his duty? No; but, “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

All this is perfectly wonderful. Indeed it is so wonderful that if we had it not from the lips of Him who is the Truth, and on the eternal page of divine inspiration, we could not believe it. But, blessed be God, there it stands, and none can gainsay it. There shines the glorious truth that a poor, broken-hearted, penitent, worthless, self-destroyed, hell-deserving sinner gives joy to the heart of God. Let people talk as they will about keeping the law and doing their duty. It may go for what it is worth; but be it remembered that there is no such clause within the covers of the volume of God—no such sentence ever dropped from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ as, “There is joy in heaven over one sinner that docs his duty.”

A sinner's duty! What is it? “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” “What is it that can really define our duty? Surely the divine command. Well, here it is, and there is no getting over it. God's command to all men, in every place, is to repent. His commandment binds them to it; His goodness leads them to it; His judgment warns them to it; and, above all, and most marvelous of all, He assures us that our repentance gives joy to His heart. A penitent heart is an object of profoundest interest to the mind of God, because that heart is morally prepared to receive what God delights to bestow, namely, “remission of sins”—yea, all the fullness of divine love. A man might spend millions in the cause of religion and philanthropy, and not afford one atom of joy in heaven. What are millions of money to God? A single penitential tear is more precious to Him than all the wealth of the universe. All the offerings of an unbroken heart are a positive insult to God; but a single sigh from the depths of a contrite spirit goes up as fragrant incense to His throne and to

His heart.

No man can meet God on the ground of duty; but God can meet any man—the very chief of sinners, on the ground of repentance, for that is man's true place; and we may say with all possible confidence that when the sinner as he is, meets God as He is, the whole question is settled once and forever. “ I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” The moment man takes his true place—the place of repentance, God meets him with a full forgiveness, a divine and everlasting righteousness. It is His joy to do so. It gratifies His heart and it glorifies His name to pardon, justify, and accept a penitent soul that simply believes in Jesus. The very moment the prophet cried, “Woe is me; for I am undone,”—” Then flew one of the seraphims with a live coal from off the altar.”

Thus it is always. The fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel. If I am full of myself, full of my own fancied goodness, my own morality, my own righteousness, I have no room for God, no room for Christ. “ He filleth the hungry with good things; but the rich he hath sent empty away.” A self-emptied soul can be filled with the fullness of God; but if God sends a man empty away, whither can he go to be filled? All scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, goes to prove the deep blessedness as well as the moral necessity of repentance. It is the grand turning-point in the soul's history—a great moral epoch which sheds its influence over the whole of one after life. It is not, we repeat, a transient exercise; but an abiding moral condition. We are not now speaking of how repentance is produced; we are speaking of what it is according to scripture, and of the absolute need of it for every creature under heaven. It is the sinner's true place, and when through grace he takes it, he is met by the fullness of God's salvation.

And here we see the lovely connection between the first and second clauses of “ The great commission,” namely, “ Repentance and remission of sins.” They are inseparably linked together. It is not that the most profound and genuine repentance forms the meritorious ground of remission of sins. To say or to think so, would be to set aside the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in that and in that alone have we the divine ground on which God can righteously forgive us our sins. This we shall see more fully when we come to consider the “basis” of “ the great commission.” We are now occupied with the commission itself; and in it we see those two divinely settled facts, repentance and remission of sins. The holy apostles of our Lord and Savior were charged to preach among all nations; to declare in the ears of every creature under heaven, “ repentance and remission of sins.” Every man, be he Jew or Gentile, is absolutely commanded by God to repent, and every repentant soul is privileged to receive, on the spot, the full and everlasting remission of sins. And we may add the deeper and more abiding the work of repentance, the deeper and more abiding will be the enjoyment of remission of sins. The contrite soul lives in the very atmosphere of divine forgiveness; and as it inhales that atmosphere, it shrinks, with ever-increasing horror, from sin in every shape and form.

Let us now turn for a moment to the Acts of the Apostles, and see how Christ's ambassadors carried out the second part of His blessed commission. Hear the apostle of the circumcision addressing the Jews on the day of Pentecost. We cannot attempt to quote the whole of his marvelous address; we merely give the few words of application at the close. “ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Here the preacher bears down upon the consciences of his hearers with the solemn fact that they had proved themselves to be at issue with God Himself about His Christ. What a tremendous fact! It was not merely that they had broken the law, rejected the prophets, refused the testimony of John the Baptist; but they had actually crucified the Lord of glory, the eternal Son of God. “ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men, brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:36-38.

Here are the two parts of the great commission brought out in all their distinctness and power. The people are charged with the most awful sin that could be committed, namely, the murder of the Son of God; they are called upon to repent, and assured of full remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. What wondrous grace shines forth in all this! The very men that had mocked and insulted the Son of God, that had spit upon Him and crucified Him, even these, if truly repentant, were assured of the complete pardon of all their sins and of their crowning sin amongst the rest. Such is the wondrous grace of God—such the mighty efficacy of the blood of Christ—such the clear and authoritative testimony of the Holy Ghost—such the glorious terms of “the great commission.”

But let us turn for a moment to Acts 3 Here the preacher, after charging his hearers with the same awful act of wickedness, enmity, and rebellion against God, even the rejection and murder of His Son, adds these remarkable words, “ 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. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

It is not possible to conceive anything higher or fuller than the grace that shines out here. It is a part of the divine response to the prayer of Christ, on the cross, “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” This surely is royal grace. It is victorious grace—grace reigning through righteousness. It was impossible that such a prayer could fall to the ground. It was answered in part, on the day of Pentecost. It will be answered, in full, at a future day, for “All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

But mark particularly the words, “ Those things which God before had showed.... He hath so fulfilled.” Here the preacher brings in God’s side of the matter; and this is salvation. To see only man’s part in the cross would be eternal judgment. To see God’s part and to rest in it is eternal life, full remission of sins, divine righteousness, everlasting glory.

The reader will doubtless be reminded here of the touching scene between Joseph and his brethren. There is a striking analogy between Acts 3 and Gen. 45 “ Now therefore,” says Joseph, “ be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.....And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God”

But when were these words uttered? Not until the guilty brethren had felt and owned their guilt. Repentance preceded the remission. “ They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning

our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us.” Joseph “spake roughly” to his brethren at the first. He brought them through deep waters, and made them feel and confess their guilt. But the very moment they took the ground of repentance, he took the ground of forgiveness. The penitent brethren were met by a pardoning Joseph, and the whole house of Pharaoh was made to ring with the joy which filled the heart of Joseph on getting back to his bosom the very men that had flung him into the pit.

What an illustration of “repentance and remission of sins!” It is ever thus. It is the joy of the heart of God to forgive us our sins. He delights in causing the full tide of His pardoning love to flow into the broken and contrite heart.

Yes, beloved reader, if you have been brought to feel the burden of your guilt, then be assured it is your privilege this very moment, to receive a divine and everlasting remission of all your sins—yea, your sins will never be mentioned to you. The blood of Jesus Christ has perfectly settled the question of your guilt, and you are now invited to rejoice in the God of your salvation.

(To he continued, if the Lord will.)

Great Commission: Part 3

We shall now turn for a few moments to the ministry of the apostle of the Gentiles, and see how he fulfilled the great commission. We have already heard him on the subject of “repentance.” Let us hear him also on the great question of “remission of sins.”

Paul was not of the twelve. He did not receive his commission from Christ on earth, but, as he himself distinctly and repeatedly tells us, from Christ in heavenly glory. Some have spent not a little time and pains in laboring to prove that he was of the twelve, and that the election of Matthias in Acts 1 was a mistake. But it is labor sadly wasted, and only proves an entire misunderstanding of Paul's position and ministry. He was raised up for a special object, and made the depositary of a special truth which had never been made known to any one before, namely, the truth of the church—the one body, composed of Jew and Gentile, incorporated by the Holy Ghost, and linked, by His personal indwelling, to the risen and glorified Head in heaven.

Paul received his own special commission, of which he gives a very beautiful statement in his address to Agrippa, in Acts 26, “Whereupon as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests”—what a different “commission” he received ere he entered Damascus!—“at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” Here the glorious truth of the intimate union of believers with the glorified Man in heaven, though not stated, is beautifully and forcibly implied. “But rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins”—ἀφ᾽ ὧν the same word as in the commission to the twelve in Luke 24—“and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.”

What depth and fullness in these words! What a comprehensive statement of man's condition! What a blessed presentation of the resources of divine grace! There is a very remarkable harmony between this commission to Paul and that to the twelve in Luke 24. It will perhaps be said there is nothing about repentance. True, the word does not occur; but we have the moral reality, and that with singular force and fullness. What mean the words, “To open their eyes?”

Do they not most certainly involve the discovery of our condition? Assuredly. A man who has his eyes opened is brought to the knowledge of himself, the knowledge of his condition, the knowledge of his ways; and this is true repentance. It is a wonderful moment in a man's history when his eyes are opened. It is the grand crisis, the momentous epoch, the one turning-point. Till then he is blind, morally and spiritually blind. He cannot see a single divine object. He has no perception of anything pertaining to God, to Christ, to heaven.

This is truly humbling to proud human nature. Think of a clear-headed, highly educated, deeply learned, intellectual man, a profound thinker, a powerful reasoner, a thorough philosopher, who has won all the honors, the medals, the degrees, that this world's universities can bestow; and yet he is blind to everything spiritual, heavenly, divine. He gropes in moral darkness. He thinks he sees, assumes the right to judge and pronounce upon things, even upon scripture and upon God Himself. He undertakes to decide what is fitting for God to say and to do. He sets up his own mind as the measure in the things of God. He reasons upon immortality, upon eternal life, and eternal punishment. He deems himself perfectly competent to give judgment in reference to all these solemn and weighty matters; and all the while his eyes have never been opened. How much is his judgment worth? Nothing. Who would take the opinion of a man who, if his eyes were only opened, would reverse, that opinion in reference to everything heavenly and divine? Who would think for a moment of being guided by a blind man?

But how do we know that every man in his natural, his unconverted state is blind? Because, according to Paul's commission, the very first thing which the gospel is to do for him is "to open his eyes." This proves, beyond all question, that he must be blind. Paul was sent to the people and to the Gentiles—that is, to the whole human family—to open their eyes. This proves, to a divine demonstration, that all are by nature blind.

But there is more than this. Man is not only blind, but he is in "darkness." Supposing for a moment that a person has his eyesight, of what use is it to him if he is in the dark? It is the double statement as to man's state and position. As to his state, he is blind. As to his position, he is in darkness; and when his eyes are opened, and divine light streams in upon his soul, he then judges himself and his ways according to God. He sees his folly, his guilt, his rebellion, his wild infidel reasonings, his foolish notions, the vanity of his mind, his pride and ambition, his selfishness and worldliness—all these things are judged and abhorred. He repents, and turns right round to the One who has opened his eyes, and poured in a flood of living light upon his heart and conscience.

But, further, not only is man—every man—Jew and Gentile, blind and in darkness, but, as if to give the climax of all, he is under the power of Satan. This gives a terrible idea of man's condition. He is the slave of the devil. He does not believe this. He imagines himself free—thinks he is his own master—fancies he can go where he pleases, do what he likes, think for himself, speak and act as an independent being.

But he is the bond-slave of another! he is sold under sin, bound hand and foot. Satan is his lord and master. Thus scripture speaks, and it cannot be broken. Man may refuse to believe, but that cannot touch the fact. A condemned criminal at the bar may refuse to believe the testimony from the witness table, the verdict from the jury-box, the sentence from the bench; but that in nowise alters his terrible condition. He is a condemned criminal all the same. So with man as a sinner; he may refuse the plain testimony of scripture, but that testimony remains notwithstanding. Even if the thousand millions that people this globe were to deny the truth of God's word, that word would still stand unmoved. Scripture does not depend for its truth upon man's belief. It is true whether he believes it or not. Blessed forever is the man who believes; damned forever is the man who refuses to believe; but the word of God is settled forever in heaven, and it is to be received on its own authority, apart from all human thoughts for or against it.

This is a grand fact, and one demanding the profound attention of every soul. Everything depends upon it. The word of God claims our belief because it is His word. If we want any authority to confirm the truth of God's word, we are in reality rejecting God's word altogether, and resting on man's word. A man may say, "How do I know that the Bible is the word of God?" We reply, It carries its own divine credentials with it; and if these credentials do not convince, all the human authority under the sun is perfectly worthless. If the whole population of the earth were to stand before me, and assure me of the truth of God's word, and that I were to believe on their authority, it would not be saving faith at all. It would be faith in men, and not faith in God; but the faith that saves is the faith that believes what God says because God says it.

It is not that we undervalue human testimony, or reject what are called the external evidences of the truth of holy scripture. All these things must go for what they are worth; they are by no means essential in laying the foundation of saving faith. We are perfectly sure that all genuine history, all true science, all sound human evidence, must go to establish the divine authenticity of the Bible; but we do not rest our faith upon them, but upon the scriptures to which they bear testimony; nor if all human evidence, all science, and every page of history, were to speak against scripture, we should utterly and absolutely reject them, and cordially, reverently, and implicitly believe it. Is this narrow? Be it so. It is the blessed narrowness in which we gladly find our pence and our portion forever. It is the narrowness that refuses to admit the weight of a leather as an addition to the word of God. If this be narrowness, we repeat it with emphasis, and from the very center of our ransomed being, let it be ours forever. If to be broad we must look to man to confirm the truth of God's word, then away with such broadness, it is the broadway that leadeth straight down to hell. No, reader, your life, your salvation, your everlasting peace, blessedness, and glory, depend upon your taking God at His word, and believing what He says because He says it. This is faith—livings saving, precious faith. May you possess it! God's word, then, most distinctly declares that man in his natural, unrenewed, unconverted state is Satan's bond-slave. It speaks of Satan as "the god of this world," as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." It speaks of man as "led captive by the devil at his will." Hence, in Paul's commission, the third thing which the gospel is to do is to turn man from "the power of Satan to God." Thus his eyes are opened; divine light comes streaming in; the power of Satan is broken, and the delivered one finds himself, peacefully and happily, in the presence of God. Like the demoniac in Mark v., he is delivered from his ruthless tyrant, his cruel master; his chains are broken and gone; he is clothed, and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

What a glorious deliverance! It is worthy of God in every aspect of it, and in all its results. The poor blind slave, led captive by the devil, is set free; and not only so, but he is brought to God, pardoned, accepted, and endowed with an eternal inheritance among the sanctified. And all this is by faith, through grace. It is proclaimed in the gospel of God to every creature under heaven—not one is excluded. The great commission, whether we read it in Luke 24 or in Acts 26, assures us that this most precious, most glorious, salvation is unto all.

Let us listen for a moment, ere we close this paper, to our apostle, as he discharges his blessed commission in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. Most gladly would we transcribe the whole of his marvelous and most precious discourse, but our limited space compels us to confine ourselves to the powerful appeal at the end. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man"—Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and glorified—"is preached"—not promised in the future,

but preached now, announced, as a present reality—" unto you the remission of sins. And by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

From these words we learn, in the clearest possible manner, that every soul in that synagogue was called upon, there and then, to receive into his heart the blessed message which fell from the preacher's lips. Not one was excluded. " Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." If anyone had asked the apostle if the message was intended for him, what would have been the reply? " Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." Was there no preliminary question to be settled? Not one. All the preliminaries had been settled at the cross. Was there no question as to election or predestination? Not a syllable about either in the whole range of this most magnificent and comprehensive discourse.

But is there no such question? Not in that " Great Commission" whereof we speak. No doubt the grand truth of election shines in its proper place on the page of inspiration. But what is its proper and divinely appointed place? Most assuredly not in the preaching of the evangelist, but in the ministry of the teacher or pastor. When the apostle sits down to instruct believers, we hear such words as these, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." And again, " Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

But let it never be lost sight of, when he stands up as an ambassador of Christ, the herald of salvation, he proclaims in the most absolute and unqualified manner a present, a personal, a perfect salvation to every creature under heaven; and everyone who heard him was responsible, there and then, to believe. And every one who reads him now is equally so. If anyone had presumed to tell the preacher that his hearers were not responsible, that they were powerless, and could not believe—that it was only deceiving them to call upon them to believe—what would have been his reply? We think we are warranted in saying that a full and overwhelming reply to this, and every such preposterous objection, is wrapped up in the solemn appeal with which the apostle closes his address, " Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

Great Commission: Part 4

Having, in former papers, dwelt a little upon the terms of “The Great Commission,” we shall now, in dependence upon divine teaching, seek to unfold the truth as to the basis. It is of the very last possible importance to have a clear understanding of the solid ground on which “repentance and remission of sins” are announced to every creature under heaven. This we have distinctly laid down in our Lord’s own words, “It behooved Christ to suffer, and in to rise from the dead the third day.”

Here lies, in its impregnable strength, the foundation of the glorious commission whereof we speak. God blessed forever be His holy Name, has been pleased to set before us, with all possible clearness, the moral ground on which He commands all men everywhere! to repent, and the righteous ground on which He can proclaim, to every repentant soul, the perfect remission of sins.

We have already had occasion to guard the reader against the false notion that any amount of repentance, on the part of the sinner, could possibly form the meritorious ground of forgiveness. No doubt, the vast majority of those who read “Things New and Old” are, through the mercy of God, clear on this point. But, inasmuch as we write for those who may be ignorant of the very elements of the gospel, we feel bound to put things in the very simplest possible form so that all may understand. We all know how prone the human heart is to build upon something of our own, if not upon good works, at least upon our penitential exercises. If ever, it becomes our bounden duty to set forth the precious truth of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only righteous ground of the forgiveness of sins.

True, all men are commanded to repent. It is meet and right they should. How could it be otherwise? How can we look at that cursed tree on which the Son of God bore the judgment of sin, and not see the absolute necessity of repentance? How can we hearken to that solemn cry, breaking forth from amid the shadows of Calvary, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,” and not own, from the deepest depths of our moral being, the moral fitness of repentance? If indeed sin is so terrible, so absolutely hateful to God, so perfectly intolerable to His holy nature, that He had to bruise His well-beloved and only-begotten Son on the cross, in order to put it away, does it not well become the sinner to judge himself, and repent in dust and ashes? Had the blessed Lord to endure the hiding of God’s countenance, because of our sins, and we not be broken, self-judged and subdued on account of these sins? Shall we, with impenitent heart, hear the glad tidings of full and free forgiveness of sins—a forgiveness which cost nothing less than the unutterable horrors and agonies of the cross? Shall we, with flippant tongue, profess to have peace—a peace purchased by the ineffable sufferings of the Son of God? If it was absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer for our sins, is it not morally fitting that we should repent of them?

Nor is this all. It is not merely that it becomes us, once in a way, to repent. There is far more than this. The spirit of self-judgment, genuine contrition, and true humility must characterize everyone who enters at all into the profound mystery of the sufferings of Christ. Indeed it is only as we

contemplate and deeply ponder those sufferings that we can form anything approaching to a just estimate of the hatefulness (of sin, on the one hand, and the divine fullness and perfectness of remission, on the other. Such was the hatefulness of sin, that it was absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer; but—all praise to redeeming love!—such were the sufferings of Christ, that God can forgive us our sins according to the infinite value which He attaches to those sufferings. Both go together; and both, we may add, exert a formative influence, under the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost, on the Christian character, from first to last. Our sins are all forgiven; but “it behooved Christ to suffer;” and hence, while our peace flows like a river, we must never forget the soul-subduing fact that the basis of our peace was laid in the ineffable sufferings of the Son of God.

This is most needful, owing to the excessive levity of our hearts. We are ready enough to receive the truth of the remission of sins, and then go on in an easy, self-indulgent, world-loving spirit, thus proving how feebly we enter into the sufferings of our blessed Lord, or into the real nature of sin. All this is truly deplorable, and calls for the deepest exercise of soul. There is a sad lack amongst us of that real brokenness of spirit which ought to characterize those who owe their present peace and everlasting felicity and glory to the sufferings of Christ. We are light, frivolous, and self-willed. We avail ourselves of the death of Christ to save us from the consequences of our sins, but our ways do not exhibit the practical effect of that death in its application to ourselves. We do not walk as those who are dead with Christ—who have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts—who are delivered from this present evil world. In a word, our Christianity is sadly deficient in depth of tone; it is shallow, feeble, and stunted. We profess to know a great deal of truth; but, it is to be feared, it is only in theory. We talk about principles, which are not turned to practical account.

It may, perhaps, be asked, “What has all this to do with ‘The Great Commission?’” “It has to do with it, in a very intimate way. We are deeply impressed with a sense of the superficial way in which the work of evangelization is carried on at the present day. Not only are the terms of the great commission overlooked, but the basis seems to be little understood. The sufferings of Christ are not duly dwelt upon and unfolded. The atoning work of Christ is presented in its sufficiency for the sinner’s need—and, no doubt, this is a signal mercy. We have to be profoundly thankful when preachers and writers hold up the precious blood of Christ as the sinner’s only plea, instead of preaching up rites, ceremonies, sacraments, good works—falsely so called, creeds, churches, religious ordinances, and such like delusions.

All this is most fully admitted. But, at the same time, we must give expression to our deep and solemn conviction that much of our modern evangelical preaching is extremely shallow and bald; and the result of that preaching is seen in the light, airy, flippant style of many of our so-called converts. Some of us seem so intensely anxious to make everything so easy and simple for the sinner, that our preaching becomes extremely one-sided.

Thanks be to God, He has indeed made all easy and simple for the needy, broken-hearted, penitent sinner. He has left him nothing to do, nothing to give. It is “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.” It is not possible for any evangelist to go too far in stating this side of the question. No one can go beyond Rom. 4:5, in setting forth salvation by free grace, through faith, without works of any sort or description.

But then, we must remember that the blessed apostle Paul—the greatest evangelist that ever lived except his divine Master—did not confine himself to this one side; and neither should we. He pressed the claims of divine holiness. He called upon sinners to judge themselves, and he called upon believers to subdue and deny themselves. He did not preach a gospel that left people at ease in the world, satisfied with themselves, and occupied with earthly things, he did not tell people that they were saved from the flames of hell and were therefore free to enjoy the follies of earth.

This was not Paul's gospel. He preached a gospel which, while it fully met the sinner's deepest need, did also most fully maintain God's glory—a gospel, which, while it came down to the very lowest point of the sinner's condition, did not leave him there. Paul's gospel not only set forth a full, clear, unqualified, unconditional, present forgiveness of sins, but also, just as fully and clearly, the condemnation of sin, and the believer's entire deliverance from this present evil world. The death of Christ, in Paul's gospel, not only assured the soul of complete deliverance from the just consequences of sins, as seen in the judgment of God in the lake of fire; but it also set forth, with magnificent fullness and clearness, the complete snapping of every link with the world, and entire deliverance from the present power and rule of sin.

Now, here is precisely where the lamentable deficiency and culpable one-sidedness of our modern preaching are so painfully manifest. The gospel which one often hears now-a-days is, if we may be allowed the use of such a term, a carnal, earthly, worldly gospel. It offers a kind of ease, but it is fleshly, worldly ease. It gives confidence; but it is rather a carnal confidence than the confidence of faith. It is not a delivering gospel. It leaves people in the world, instead of bringing them to God.

And what must be the result of all this? We can hardly bear to contemplate it. We greatly fear that, should our Lord tarry, the fruit of much of what is going on around us will be a terrible combination of the very highest profession with the very lowest practice. It cannot be otherwise. High truth taken up in a light, carnal spirit, tends to lull the conscience and quash all godly exercise of soul as to our habits and ways, in daily life. In this way, people escape from legality only to plunge into levity, and truly the last state is worse than the first.

We earnestly hope that the christian reader may not feel unduly depressed by the perusal of these lines. God knows we would not pen a line to discourage the feeblest lamb in all the precious flock of Christ. We desire to write in the divine presence. We have entreated the Lord that every line of this paper and of all our papers should come directly from Himself to the reader. Indeed it has been our one desire and prayer, ever since we undertook the service of conducting this magazine, that it might be His messenger; and that when it ceased to be this, it should cease to be altogether.

Hence, therefore, we must ask the reader—and we do so most faithfully and affectionately—to ponder what is here put before him. We cannot hide from him the fact that we are most seriously impressed with the condition of things around us. We feel that the tone and aspect of much of the so-called Christianity of this our day are such as to awaken the gravest apprehension in the mind of every thoughtful observer. We perceive a terribly rapid development of the features of the last days, as detailed by the pen of inspiration. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, headstrong, high-minded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;

from such turn away.” 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

What an appalling picture! How solemn to find the very same evils that characterize the heathen, as recorded in Rom. 1, reproduced in connection with the highest profession of Christianity! Should not the thought of this awaken the most serious apprehensions in the mind of every Christian? Should it not lead all who are engaged in the holy service of preaching and teaching amongst us to examine themselves closely, as to the tone and character of their ministry, and as to their own private walk and ways? It does seem to us that we want a more searching style of ministry on the part of evangelists and teachers. There is a lack of hortatory and prophetic ministry. By prophetic ministry we mean that which brings the conscience into the immediate presence of God.

In this we are lamentably deficient. There is a vast amount of objective truth in circulation amongst us—more, perhaps, than ever since the days of the apostles. Books, and periodicals by hundreds of thousands, tracts by hundreds of millions are sent forth annually.

Do we object to this? Nay; we bless God for it. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that by far the largest proportion of all this vast mass of literature is addressed to the intelligence, and not enough to the heart and conscience. Now, while it is quite right to enlighten the understanding, it is quite wrong to neglect the heart and conscience. We feel it to be a most serious thing to allow the intelligence to outstrip the conscience—to have more truth in the head than in the heart—to profess principles which do not govern the practice. Nothing can be more dangerous. It tends to place us, directly, in the hands of Satan. If the conscience be not kept tender, if the heart be not governed by the fear of God, if a broken and contrite spirit be not cultivated, there is no telling what depths we may plunge into. When the conscience is kept in a sound condition, and the heart is humble and true, then every fresh ray of light that shines in upon the understanding ministers strength to the soul and tends to elevate and sanctify our whole moral being.

This is what every earnest spirit must crave. All true-hearted Christians must long for increased personal holiness, more likeness to Christ, more genuine devotedness of heart, a deepening, strengthening, and expanding of the kingdom of God in the soul—that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

May we all have grace to seek after these divine realities! May we diligently cultivate them in our own private life, and seek, in every possible way, to promote them in all those with whom we come in contact! Thus shall we, in some measure, stem the tide of hollow profession around us, and be a living testimony against the powerless form of godliness so sadly dominant, in this our day.

Christian reader, art thou one with us in this current of thought and feeling? If so, then let us most earnestly entreat thee to join us in earnest prayer to God, that He will graciously raise our spiritual tone by drawing us closer to Himself, and filling our hearts with love to Him and earnest desire for the promotion of His glory, the progress of His cause, and the prosperity of His people.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Great Commission: Part 5

In handling our subject, we have yet to consider the authority and the sphere of “The Great Commission;” but, ere proceeding to treat of these, we must dwell a little longer on the basis. The commission is truly a great one, and would need a solid foundation on which to rest it; and such it has, blessed be God, in the atoning death of His Son. Nothing less than this could sustain such a magnificent fabric; but the grace that planned the commission has laid the foundation, and this is enough for us. A full remission of sins can be preached among all nations inasmuch as God has been glorified, in the death of Christ, as to the entire question of sin.

This is a grand point for the reader to seize. It lies at the very foundation of the christian system. It is the keystone of the arch of divine revelation. God has been glorified as to sin. His judgment has been executed upon it. The claims of His throne have been vindicated as to it. The insult offered to His divine majesty has been flung back in the enemy's face. If the sweet story of remission of sins had never fallen upon a human ear or entered a human heart, the divine glory would, none the less, have been most perfectly maintained. The Lord Jesus Christ did, by His most precious death, wipe off the stain which the enemy sought to cast upon the eternal glory of God. A testimony has been given in the cross, to all created intelligence, as to God's thoughts about sin. It can there be seen, with all possible clearness, that a single trace of sin can never enter the precincts of the divine presence. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. Sin, wherever found, must be met by divine judgment.

Where, we may ask, does all this come most fully and forcibly out? Assuredly in the cross. Harken to that solemn and most mysterious cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” What means this wondrous inquiry? Who is the speaker? Is He one of Adam's fallen posterity? Is He a sinner? Surely not; for were He such, there would be no moral force whatever in the question. There never was a sinner on the face of this earth who, so far as he was personally concerned, did not richly deserve to be forsaken of a holy, sin-hating God. This must never be forgotten. Some people entertain the most foolish notions as to this point. They have, in their own vain imagination, manufactured a god to suit themselves—one who will not punish sin—one who is so tender, so kind, so benevolent, that he will connive at evil and pass it over as though it were nothing.

Now, nothing is more certain than that this god of the human imagination is a false one, just as false as any of the idols of the heathen. The God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, the God whom we see at the cross is not like this. Men may reason as they will; but sin must be condemned—it must be met by the just and inflexible judgment of a sin-hating God.

But, we repeat the question, who uttered those words at the opening of Psalm 22? If He was not a sinner, who was He? Wonderful to declare, He was the only spotless, perfectly holy, pure and sinless man that ever trod this earth. He was more. He was the eternal Son of the Father; the object of God's ineffable delight who had dwelt in His bosom from all eternity, “the brightness of His glory and the exact expression of His substance.” (See Greek.)

And yet He was forsaken of God. Yes, that holy and perfect One, who knew no sin, whose human nature was absolutely free from every taint, who never had a single thought, never uttered a single word, never did a single act that was not in the most perfect harmony with the mind of God; whose whole life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, was a perfect sacrifice of sweetest odor presented to the heart of God. Again and again, we see heaven opening upon Him, and the voice of the Father is heard giving expression to His infinite complacency in the Son of His bosom. And yet, He it is whose voice is heard in that bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Marvelous question! It stands alone in the annals of eternity. No such question had ever been asked before; no such question has ever been asked since; and no such question can ever be asked again. Whether we consider the One who asked the question, or the One of whom it was asked, or the answer, we must admit that it is perfectly unique. That God should forsake such an One is the most profound and marvelous mystery that could possibly engage the attention of men or angels. Human reason cannot fathom its depths. No created intelligence can comprehend its mighty compass.

Yet there it stands, a stupendous fact before the eye of faith. Our blessed Lord Himself assures us that it was absolutely necessary. "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer." But why was it necessary? Why should the only perfect, sinless, spotless man have to suffer? Why should He be forsaken of God? The glory of God, the eternal counsels of redeeming love, man's guilty, ruined, helpless condition—all these things rendered it indispensable that Christ should suffer. There was no other way in which the divine glory could be maintained; no other way in which the claims of the throne of God could be answered; no other way in which heaven's majesty could be vindicated; no other way in which the eternal purposes of love could be made good; no other way in which sin could be fully atoned for, and finally taken away out of God's creation; no other way in which sins could be forgiven; no other way in which Satan and all the powers of darkness could be thoroughly vanquished; no other way in which God could be just, and yet the Justifier of any poor ungodly sinner; no other way in which death could be deprived of its sting, or the grave of its victory; no other way in which any or all of these grand results could be reached save by the sufferings and death of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ.

But, blessed forever be His holy Name, He went through it all. He went down under the heavy billows and waves of God's righteous wrath against sin. He took the sinner's place, stood in his stead, sustained the judgment, paid the penalty, died the death, answered every question, met every demand, vanquished every foe; and having done all, He ascended into the heavens and took His seat on the throne of God, where He is now crowned with glory and honor as the divine and all-glorious Accomplisher of the entire work of man's redemption.

Such then, reader, is the basis of "The Great Commission" whereof we speak. Need we wonder at the terms, when we contemplate the basis? Can there be anything too good, anything too great, anything too glorious for the God of all grace to bestow upon us poor sinners of the Gentiles, seeing He has been so fully glorified in the death of Christ? That most precious death furnishes a divinely righteous ground on which our God can indulge the deep and everlasting love of His heart in the perfect remission of our sins. It has removed out of the way every barrier to the full flood tide of redeeming love which can now flow through a perfectly righteous channel, to the very vilest sinner that repents and believes in Jesus. A Savior God can now publish a full and immediate

remission of sins to every creature under heaven. There is positively no hindrance. God has been glorified as to the question of sin; and the time is coming when every trace of sin shall be forever obliterated from His fair creation, and those words of John the Baptist shall have their full accomplishment, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” Meanwhile, the heralds of salvation are commanded to go forth to the ends of the earth and publish, without let or limitation, perfect remission of sins to every soul that believes. It is the joy of God’s heart to pardon sins; and it is due to the One who bore the judgment of sin on the cross, that in His name, forgiveness of sins should be thus freely published, fully received and abidingly enjoyed.

But what of those who reject this glorious message—who shut their ears against it and turn away their hearts from it? This is the solemn question. Who can answer it? Who can attempt to set forth the eternal destiny of those who die in their sins, as all must who refuse God’s only basis of remission? Men may reason and argue as they will; but all the reasoning and argument in the world cannot set aside the word of God which assures us, in manifold places, and in terms so plain as to leave no possible ground for questioning, that all who die in their sins—all who die out of Christ, must inevitably perish eternally—must bear the consequences of their sins, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

To quote the passages in proof of the solemn truth of eternal punishment would require a small volume. We cannot attempt it here; nor is it necessary, inasmuch as we have gone into the subject again and again, in former volumes of “Things New and Old.”

But we would here put a question which arises naturally out of our present thesis. It is this: Was Christ judged, bruised and forsaken on the cross—did God visit His only-begotten and well-beloved Son with the full weight of His righteous wrath against sin, and shall impenitent sinners escape? We solemnly press this question on all whom it may concern. Men talk of its being inconsistent with the idea of divine goodness, tenderness and compassion, that God should send any of His creatures to hell. We reply, who is to be the judge? Is man competent to decide as to what is morally fitting for God to do? And further we ask, what is to be the standard of judgment? Anything that human reason can grasp? Assuredly not. What then? The cross in which the Son of God died the just for the unjust. This, and this only is the great standard by which to judge the question as to sin’s desert. Who can hearken to that bitter cry emanating from the broken heart of the Son of God, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and question the eternal punishment of all who die in their sins? Talk of tenderness, goodness and compassion! Where do these shine out most brightly and blessedly? Surely in “The Great Commission” which publishes full and free forgiveness of sins to every creature under heaven. But would it be tender or good, or compassionate to suffer the rejecter of Christ to escape? If we would see the goodness, kindness, mercy, and deep compassion of God, we must look at the cross. “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” “It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. He hath put him to grief.” “He hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”

But if men reject all this and go on in their sins, in their rebellion, in their infidel reasonings, and impious speculations—what then? If men maintain that suffering for sin is not necessary, and that there is another and a better way of disposing of the matter—what then? Our Lord declared in the ears of His apostles that “it was necessary that Christ should suffer” that there was no other way

possible by which the great question could be settled. Whom are we to believe? Was the death of Christ gratuitous? Was His heart broken for nothing? Was the cross a work of supererogation? Did Jehovah bruise His Son and put Him to grief for an end which might be gained some other way?

How monstrous are the reasonings or rather the ravings of infidelity! Infidel doctors begin by throwing overboard the word of God, that peerless and perfect revelation; and then, when they have deprived us of our divine guide, with singular audacity, they present themselves before us, and undertake to point out for us a more excellent way; and when we inquire what that way is, we are met by a thousand and one fine-spun theories, no two of which agree in anything save in shutting out God and His word.

True, they talk plausibly about a God; but it is a God of their own imagination—one who will connive at sin—who will allow them to indulge in their lusts, and passions, and pleasures, and then take them to a heaven of which they really know nothing. They talk of mercy, and kindness, and goodness; but they reject the only channel through which these can flow, namely, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. They speak not of righteousness, holiness, truth and judgment to come. They would fain have us to believe that God put Himself to needless cost in delivering up His Son. They would ignore that marvelous transaction which stands alone in the entire history of the ways of God—the atoning death of His Son. In one word, the grand object of the devil, in all the skeptical, rationalistic, and infidel theories that have ever been propounded in this world? is to shut out completely, the word of God, the Christ of God, and God Himself.

We solemnly call upon all our readers, specially our young friends, to ponder this. It is our deep and thorough conviction that the harboring of a single infidel suggestion is the first step on that inclined plane which leads straight down to the dark and terrible abyss of atheism—down to the blackness of darkness forever.

We shall have occasion to recur to the foregoing line of thought when we come to consider the “authority” on which “The Great Commission” comes to us. We have been drawn into it by the sad fact that, in every direction, and on every subject, we are assailed by the contemptible reasonings of infidelity; and we feel imperatively called upon to warn all with whom we come in contact against infidel books, infidel lectures, infidel theories in every shape and form. May the inspired word of God be more and more precious to our hearts! May we walk in its light, feel its sacred power, bow to its divine authority, hide it in our hearts, feed upon its treasures, own its absolute supremacy, confess its all-sufficiency, and utterly reject all teaching which dares to touch the integrity of the holy scriptures.

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

“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with the angels of his power, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Great Commission: Part 7

We are now called to consider the deeply important subject of the authority on which the great commission proceeds. This we have presented to us in that one commanding and most comprehensive sentence, “It is written”—a sentence which ought to be engraved, in characters deep and broad, on the tablet of every Christian’s heart.

Nothing can possibly be more interesting or edifying than to note the way in which our blessed Lord, on all occasions and under all circumstances, exalts the holy scriptures. He, though God over all blessed forever, and as such the Author of all scripture, yet, having taken His place as man on the earth, He plainly sets forth what is the bounden duty of every man, and that is to be absolutely, completely, and abidingly governed by the authority of scripture. See Him in conflict with Satan. How does He meet him? Simply as each one of us should meet him, by the written word. It could be no example to us had our Lord vanquished him by the putting forth of divine power. Of course He could, there and then, have consigned him to the bottomless pit or the lake of fire, but that would have been no example for us, inasmuch as we could not so overcome. But, on the other hand, when we find the blessed One referring to holy scripture—when we find Him appealing, again and again, to that divine authority—when we find Him putting the adversary to flight simply by the written word, we learn in the most impressive manner the place, the value, and the authority of the holy scriptures.

And is it not of the very last possible importance to have this great lesson impressed upon us at the present moment? Unquestionably it is. If ever there was a, moment in the history of the church of God when it behooved Christians to bow down their whole moral being to this very lesson, it is the moment through which we are just now passing. On all hands the divine authority, integrity, plenary inspiration, and all-sufficiency of holy scripture are called in question. The word of God is openly insulted and flung aside. Its integrity is called in question, and that, too, in quarters where we should least expect it. At our colleges and universities our young men are continually assailed by infidel attacks upon the blessed word of God. Men who are in total spiritual blindness, and who therefore cannot possibly know anything whatever about divine things, and are utterly incompetent to give an opinion on the subject of holy scripture, have the cool audacity to insult the sacred volume, to pronounce the five books of Moses an imposture, to assert that Moses never wrote them at all.

What is the opinion of such men worth? Not worth the weight of a feather. Who would think of going to a man who was born in a coal-mine, and had never seen the sun, to get his judgment as to the properties of light, or the effect of the sun’s beams upon the human constitution? Who would think of going to one who was born blind to get his opinion upon colors, or the effect of light and shade? Surely no one in his senses. Well, then, with how much more moral force may we not ask, who would think of going to an unconverted man—a man dead in trespasses and sins—a man spiritually blind, wholly ignorant of things divine, spiritual, and heavenly—who would think for a moment of going to such an one for a judgment on the weighty question of holy scripture? And if

such an one were audacious enough, in ignorant self-confidence, to offer an opinion on such a subject, what man in his sober senses would think of giving the slightest heed?

It will, perhaps, be said, "the illustration does not apply." Why not? We admit it fails in force, but most certainly not in its moral application. Is it not a commonly received axiom amongst us, that no man has any right to give an opinion on a subject of which he is totally ignorant? No doubt. Well, what does the blessed apostle say as to the unconverted man? We must quote the whole context for the reader. It is morally grand, and its interest and value just now are unspeakable.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith"—mark these words, beloved reader—"should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit"—otherwise they could not possibly be known—"for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we"—all true believers, all God's children—"have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual"—or communicating spiritual things through a spiritual medium. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them"—be he ever so wise and learned—"because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor. 2:1-16.

We dare not offer an apology for giving so lengthened an extract from the word of God. We deem it invaluable, not only because it proves that it is only by divine teaching that divine things can be understood, but also because it completely withers up all man's pretensions to give judgment as to scripture. If the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, then it is perfectly plain that all infidel attacks upon the word of God are absolutely unworthy of the very smallest attention. In fact all infidel writers, be they ever so clever, ever so wise, ever so learned, are put out of court; they are not to be listened to for a moment. The judgment of an unconverted man in reference to the holy scriptures is more worthless by far than the judgment of an uneducated plowman, as to the use of the differential calculus, or the truth of the Copernican system. As to each, we have only to say, he knows nothing whatever about the matter. His thoughts are absolutely good for nothing.

But how truly delightful and refreshing to turn from man's worthless notions, and see the way in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ prized and used the holy scriptures! In His conflict with Satan,

He appeals, three times over, to the book of Deuteronomy. “It is written” is His one simple and unanswerable reply to the suggestions of the enemy. He does not reason. He does not argue or explain. He does not refer to His own personal feelings, evidences, or experiences. He does not argue from the great facts of the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the voice of the Father, precious and real as all these things were. He simply takes His stand upon the divine and eternal authority of the holy scriptures, and of that portion of the scriptures in particular which modern infidels have audaciously attacked. He uses as His authority that which they are not afraid to pronounce an imposture! How dreadful for them! What will be their end, unless they repent?

But not only did the Son of God—Himself, as God, the Author of every line of holy scripture—use the word of God as His only weapon against the enemy, but He made it also the basis and the material of His public ministry. When His conflict in the wilderness was over, “He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read”—His custom was to read the scriptures publicly. “And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias.”—Here He puts His seal upon the prophet Isaiah, as before upon the law of Moses.—” And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Luke 4

Let us turn now to that most solemn parable of the rich man and Lazarus, at the close of Luke 16, in which we have a most splendid testimony, from the Master’s own lips, to the integrity, value, and surpassing importance of “Moses and the prophets”—the very portions of the divine word which infidels impiously assail. The rich man in the midst of the flames of hell—alas! no longer rich, but miserably and eternally poor—entreats Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brethren, lest they also should come into that place of ineffable torment. Mark the reply! Mark it, all ye infidels, rationalists, and skeptics! Mark it, all ye who are in danger of being deluded and turned aside by the impudent and blasphemous suggestions of infidelity! “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them” Yes; “Hear them”—hear those very writings which infidels tell us are not divinely inspired at all, but documents palmed upon us by impostors pretending to inspiration. Assuredly the rich man knew better; indeed the devil himself knows better. There is no thought of calling in question the genuineness of “Moses and the prophets;” but perhaps “if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” Hear the weighty rejoinder! “And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Now, we must confess we rejoice exceedingly in the grandeur of this testimony. Nothing can be clearer, nothing higher, nothing more thoroughly confirmatory, as to the supreme authority and divine integrity of “Moses and the prophets.” We have the blessed Lord Himself setting His seal to the two grand divisions of Old Testament scripture; and hence we may, with all possible confidence, commit our souls to the authority of these holy writings; and not only to Moses and the prophets, but to the whole canon of inspiration, inasmuch as Moses and the prophets are so largely and so constantly quoted everywhere, are so intimately, yea, indissolubly, bound up with

every part of the New Testament, that all must stand or fall together.

But we must pass on, and turn for a moment to the last chapter of Luke—that precious section which contains “ the great commission” whereof we speak. We might refer, with profit and blessing, to those occasions in which our blessed Lord, in His interviews with Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers, ever and only appeals to the holy scriptures. In short, whether in conflict with men or devils, whether speaking in private or in public, whether for His public ministry, or for His private walk, we find the perfect Man, the Lord from heaven, always putting the very highest honor upon the writings of Moses and the prophets, thus commending them to us in all their divine integrity, and giving us the very fullest and most blessed encouragement to commit our souls, for time and eternity, with absolute confidence, to those peerless writings.

But we turn to Luke 24, and listen to the glowing words uttered in the ears of the two bewildered travelers to Emmaus—words which are the sure and blessed remedy for all bewilderment—the perfect solution of every honest difficulty—the divine and all-satisfying answer to every upright inquiry. We do not quote the words of the perplexed disciples; but here is the Master’s reply. “ Then said he unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” Alas! now-a-days a man is counted a fool if he does believe all that the prophets have spoken. In many learned circles, yea, and in not a few religious circles likewise, the man who avows—as every true man ought—his hearty belief in every line of holy scripture, is almost sure to be met with a sneer of contempt. It is deemed clever to doubt the genuineness of scripture—fatal, detestable cleverness! from which may the good Lord deliver us!—cleverness which is sure to lead the soul that is ensnared by it down into the dark and dreary abyss of atheism, and the darker and more dreary abyss of hell. From all such cleverness, we again say, and say it from the profoundest depths of our moral being, may God, in His mercy, deliver us and all our young people!

Beloved reader, have we not much cause to bless the Lord for these words of His addressed to His poor perplexed ones on their way to Emmaus? They may seem severe; but it is the necessary severity of a pure, a perfect, and a divinely wise love. “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And”—mark these words!—” beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” He Himself—all homage to His glorious Person!—is the divine center of all the things contained in the scriptures from cover to cover. He is the golden chain that binds into one marvelous and magnificent whole every part of the inspired volume, from Genesis to Revelation. Hence the man that touches a single section of the sacred canon is guilty of the heinous sin of seeking to overthrow the word of God; and of such a man, even charity itself must say, he knows neither the Christ of God, nor God Himself.

The man who dares to tamper in any way with the word of God has taken the first step on that inclined plane that leads inevitably down to eternal perdition. Let men beware, then, how they speak against the scriptures; and if some will speak, let others beware how they listen. If there were no infidel listeners, there would be few infidel lecturers. How awful to think that there should be either the one or the other in this our highly-favored land! May God have mercy upon them, and open their eyes, ere it be too late. Five minutes in hell will quash forever all the infidel theories that ever were propounded in this world. Oh! the egregious folly of infidelity!

We return to our chapter, which furnishes one more proof of the place assigned by our risen Lord to the holy scriptures. After having manifested Himself, in infinite grace and tranquillizing power, to His troubled disciples; having shown them His hands and His feet, and assured them of His personal identity by eating in their presence, “ He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written”

Here again we have the divine seal put upon all the grand divisions of the Old Testament. This is most comforting and strengthening for all pious lovers of scripture. To find our Lord Himself, on all occasions, and under all circumstances, referring to scripture, using it at all times, and for all purposes, feeding upon it Himself, and commending it to others, wielding it as the sword of the Spirit, bowing to its holy authority in all things, appealing to it as the only perfect standard, test, and touchstone, the only infallible guide for man in this world, the only unfailing light amid all the surrounding moral gloom—all this is comforting and encouraging in the very highest degree, and it fills our hearts with deepest praise to the Father of mercies who has so provided for us in all our weakness and need.

Here we might close this branch of our subject, but we feel bound to furnish our readers with two more uncommonly fine illustrations of our thesis: one from the Acts, and one from the epistles. In Acts 24 the apostle Paul, in his address to Felix, thus expresses himself as to the ground of his faith. “ But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” Will anyone dare to say that Paul was an ignorant fool, or a clever knave? Alas! for the man who could either say it or think it. Well, then, he reverently believed in Moses and the prophets. He fully accepted the Old Testament scriptures as the solid foundation of his faith, and as the divine authority for his entire course. Now how did Paul know that the scriptures were given of God? He knew it in the only way in which any one can know it, namely, by divine teaching. God alone can give the knowledge that the holy scriptures are His own very revelation to man. If He does not give it, no one can; if He does, no one need. If I want human evidence to accredit the word of God, it is not the word of God to me. The authority on which I receive it is higher than the word itself. Supposing I could, by reason or human learning, work my way to the rational conclusion that the Bible is the word of God, then my faith would merely stand in the wisdom of man, and not “in the power of God. Such a faith is worthless; it does not link me with God, and therefore leaves me unsaved, unblest, uncertain. It leaves me without God, without Christ, without hope. Saving faith is believing what God says, because He says it, and this faith is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. Intellectual faith is a cold, lifeless, worthless faith, which only deceives and puffs up; it can never save, sanctify, or satisfy.

We turn now to one of the very finest statements within the covers of the divine volume, namely, 2 Timothy iii. 14-17. The aged apostle, at the close of his marvelous career, from his prison at Rome, looking back at the whole of his ministry, looking around at the failure and ruin so sadly apparent on every side, looking forward to the terrible consummation of the “ last days,” and looking beyond all to “ the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give in that day” thus addresses his beloved son, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned; 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 (αρι09), thoroughly furnished unto all good works”

All this is unspeakably precious to every true lover of the word of God. The place here assigned, and the virtues here attributed, to the holy scriptures are beyond all price. In short, it is utterly impossible to overstate the value and importance of the foregoing quotation. It is deeply touching to find the revered and beloved old veteran, in the full power of the Holy Ghost, recalling Timothy to the days of his childhood, when, at the knees of his pious mother, he drank at the pure fountain of inspiration. How did the dear child know that these holy writings were the word of God? He knew it just in the same way that the blessed apostle himself knew it, by their divine power and effect upon his heart and conscience, through the Holy Ghost. Did he want any human evidence? Did the holy scriptures need man's credentials? How monstrous the thought! What an insult to the dignity of scripture to imagine that any human seal or guarantee is necessary to accredit it to the soul! Do we want a Butler or a Paley to assure us that God has spoken to us in His word? Do we want the authority of the church, the judgment of the Fathers, the decrees of councils, the consent of the doctors, the decision of the universities, to accredit the word of God? Far away be the thought! Who would think of bringing out a flashlight at noon to prove that the sun shines, or to bring home its beams, in their genial virtue, to the human frame? What son would think of taking his father's letter to an ignorant crossing-sweeper to have it accredited and interpreted to his heart?

These figures are feebleness itself when used to illustrate the egregious folly of submitting the holy scriptures to the judgment of any human mind. No, reader, the word of God speaks for itself. It carries its own powerful credentials with it. Its own internal evidences are amply sufficient for every pious, right-minded, humble child of God. It needs no letter of commendation from men. No doubt external evidences have their value and their interest. Human testimony must go for what it is worth. We may rest assured that the more thoroughly all human evidence is sifted, and the nearer all human testimony approaches to the truth, the more fully and distinctly will all concur in demonstrating the genuineness and integrity of our precious Bible. And, further, we must declare our deep and settled conviction that no infidel theory can hold water for a moment; no infidel argument can pass muster with an honest mind. We invariably find that all infidel assaults upon the Bible recoil upon the heads of those who make them. Infidel writers make fools of themselves, and leave the divine volume just where it always was, and where it always will be, like an impregnable rock, against which the waves of infidel thought dash themselves in contemptible impotency.

There stands the word of God, in its divine majesty, in its heavenly power, in its beautiful simplicity, in its matchless glory, in its unfathomed, because unfathomable, depths, in its never-failing freshness and power of adaptation, in its marvelous comprehensiveness, in its vastness of scope, its perfect unity, its thorough uniqueness. The Bible stands alone. There is nothing like it in the wide world of literature; and if anything further were needed to prove that that book which we call “The Bible” is, in very deed, the living and eternal word of God, it may be found in the ceaseless efforts of the devil to prove that it is not.

“Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” What remains, beloved reader, for thee? Just this, “ Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee.” Thus it stands, blessed be His holy name; and when we have His word hid in the depths of our hearts, the theories and the arguments, the reasonings or the ravings, the questionings and the conclusions, of skeptics, rationalists, and infidels, will be to us of less moment by far than the pattering of rain upon the window.

Thus much as to the weighty question of the “ authority” upon which the great commission proceeds. The immense importance of the subject, and the special character of the moment through which we are passing, must account for the unusual length of this article. We feel profoundly thankful for an opportunity of bearing our feeble testimony to the power, authority, all-sufficiency, and divine glory of “ the holy scriptures.” “ Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!”

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

Great Commission: Part 8

In full keeping with all that has passed in review before us is the sphere of “The Great Commission,” as set forth in that comprehensive clause, “Among all nations.” Such was to be the wide range of those heralds whom the risen Lord was sending forth to preach “repentance and remission of sins.” Theirs was, emphatically, a world-wide mission. In Matt. 10 we find something quite different. There the Lord, in sending forth the twelve apostles, “commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.”

This was to be a mission exclusively to the house of Israel. There was no message for the Gentiles, no word for the poor Samaritans. If these messengers approached a city of the uncircumcised, they were on no account to enter it. The ways of God—His dispensational dealings—demanded a circumscribed sphere for the twelve apostles sent forth by the Messiah in the days of His flesh. “The lost sheep of the house of Israel” were to be the special objects of their ministry.

But in Luke 24 all is changed. The dispensational barriers are no longer to interfere with the messengers of grace. Israel is not to be forgotten, but the Gentiles are to hear the glad tidings. The sun of God’s salvation must now pour its living beams over the whole world. Not a soul is to be excluded from the blessed light. Every city, every town, every village, every hamlet, every street, lane, and alley, every hedge and highway, must be diligently and lovingly searched out and visited, so that “every creature under heaven” might hear the good news of a full and free salvation.

How like our God is all this! How worthy of His large, loving heart! He would have the tide of His salvation flowing from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth. His righteousness is unto all, and the sweet tale of His pardoning love must be wafted far and wide over a lost and guilty world. Such is His most gracious purpose, however tardy His servants may be in carrying it out.

It is of the very last importance to have a clear view as to this branch of our subject. It brings out the character of God in a very magnificent light, and it leaves man wholly without excuse. Salvation is sent to the Gentiles. There is absolutely no limit, no question, no obstacle. Like the sun in the heavens, it shines on all. If a man will persist in hiding himself in a mine or in a tunnel, so that he cannot see the sun, he has none but himself to blame. It is no defect in the sun if all do not enjoy his beams. He shines for all. And in like manner, “the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared.” No one need perish because he is a poor lost sinner, for “God will have all to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” “He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

And then, that not a single feature might be lacking to set forth with all possible force and fullness the royal grace which breathes in “the Great Commission,” our blessed Lord does not fail to point out to His servants the remarkable spot which was to be the center of their sphere. He tells them to

“begin at Jerusalem.” Yes, Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified; where every indignity that human enmity could invent was heaped upon His divine Person; where a murderer and a robber was preferred to “God manifest in the flesh;” where human iniquity had reached its culminating point in nailing the Son of God to a malefactor’s cross—there the messengers were to begin their blessed work, that was to be the center of the sphere of their gracious operations, and from thence they were to travel to the utmost bounds of the habitable globe. They were to begin with “Jerusalem sinners”—with the very murderers of the Son of God, and then go forth to publish everywhere the glorious tidings, so that all might know that precious grace of God which was sufficient to meet the crimson guilt of Jerusalem itself.

How glorious is all this! The guilty murderers of the Son of God were the very first to hear the sweet tale of pardoning love, so that all men might see in them a pattern of what the grace of God and the blood of Christ can do. Truly the grace that could pardon Jerusalem sinners can pardon any one; the blood that could cleanse the betrayers and murderers of the Christ of God can cleanse any sinner outside the precincts of hell. These heralds of salvation, as they made their way from nation to nation, could tell their hearers where they had come from; they could tell of that super abounding grace of God which had commenced its operations in the guiltiest spot on the face of the earth, and which was amply sufficient to meet the very vilest of the sons of Adam.

“Sovereign grace o’er sin abounding:

Ransom’d souls the tidings swell!

‘Tis a deep that knows no sounding;

Who its length or breadth can tell?”

Precious grace of God! May it be published with increased energy and clearness throughout the divinely-appointed sphere. Alas, alas, that those who know it should be so slow to make it known to others! That slowness is, most surely, not of God. He absolutely delights in the publication of His saving, pardoning grace. He tells us that the feet of the evangelist are beautiful upon the mountains. He assures us that the preaching of the cross is a sweet savor to His heart. Ought not all this to quicken our energies in the blessed work? Ought we not, in every possible way, to seek to carry out the gracious desire of the heart of God? Why are we so slow? Why so cold and indolent? Why so easily discouraged and repulsed? Why so ready to make excuses for not speaking to people about their souls?

There stands the great commission shining on the eternal page of inspiration, in all its moral grandeur—its terms, its basis, its authority, its sphere! The work is not yet done. Eighteen hundred years have rolled past since the risen Savior sent forth His messengers; and still He waits, in sweet, long-suffering mercy, not willing that any should perish. Why are we not more willing-hearted in carrying out the gracious desire of His heart? It is not by any means necessary that we should be great preachers, or powerful public speakers, in order to carry on the precious work of evangelization. What we want is a heart in communion with the heart of God, the heart of Christ, and that will surely be a heart for souls. We do not, and cannot, believe that one who is not led out in loving desire after the salvation of souls, can really be in communion with the mind of Christ. We cannot be in His presence, and not think of the souls of those around us. For whoever cared for souls as He did? Mark His marvelous path!—His ceaseless toil as a teacher and

preacher!—His thirst for the salvation and blessing of souls!

And has He not left us an example that we should follow His steps? Are we doing so in this one matter of making known the blessed gospel? Are we seeking to imitate Him in His earnest diligence in seeking the lost? See Him at the well of Sychar! Mark His whole deportment! Listen to His earnest, loving words! Note the joy and refreshment of His spirit, as He sees one poor sinner receiving His message! “I have meat to eat that ye know not of;” “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”

We would earnestly entreat the christian reader to consider this great subject in the divine presence. We deeply feel its importance. We cannot but judge that, amid all the writing and reading, all the speaking and hearing, all the coming and going, there is a sad lack of deep-toned, earnest, solemn dealing with individual souls. How often do we rest satisfied with inviting people to come to the preaching, instead of seeking to bring them directly to Christ? How often do we rest content with the periodical preaching, instead of earnestly seeking, all the week through, to persuade souls to flee from the wrath to come? No doubt it is good to preach, and good to invite people to the preaching; but we may rest assured there is something more than all this to be done, and that something must be sought in deeper communion with the heart and mind of Christ.

Some there are who speak disparagingly of the blessed and holy work of evangelization. We tremble for them. We feel persuaded they are not in the current of the Master's mind, and hence we utterly reject their thoughts. It is to be feared that their hearts are cold in reference to an object that engages the heart of God. If so, they would need to humble themselves in His presence, and seek to get their souls restored to a true sense of the magnitude, importance, and interest of the grand question before us. At least let them beware of how they seek to discourage and hinder others whose hearts the Lord has moved to care for precious immortal souls. The present is most assuredly not the time for raising difficulties, and starting questions which can only prove stumbling-blocks in the pathway of earnest workers. It becomes us to seek, in every right way, to strengthen the hands of all who are endeavoring, according to their measure, to publish the glad tidings, and make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let us see that we do so, so far as in us lies; and, above all things, let us never utter a sentence calculated to hinder any one in the blessed work of winning souls to Christ.

But we must draw this paper, and this series of papers, to a close. We might do so here, were it not that there is one more point in our subject which we feel must not be omitted, and that is the power by which “the Great Commission” was to be carried out. To leave this out would be a grand defect, a serious blank indeed; and we are the more anxious to notice it, inasmuch as the special form in which the power was communicated links itself, in a very remarkable way, with that which has been before us in this paper. If the sphere was to be “all nations,” the power must be adapted thereto; and, blessed be God, so it was.

Our blessed Lord, in closing His commission to His disciples, said, “And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” This promise was fulfilled, this power was communicated on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost came down from the ascended and glorified Man, to qualify His servants for the glorious work to which He had called them. They had

to “tarry” until they got the power. How could they go without it? Who but the Holy Ghost could speak adequately of the love of God, of the Person, work, and glory of Christ? Who but He could enable any one to preach repentance and remission of sins? Who but He could properly handle all the weighty subjects comprehended in “the Great Commission?” In a word, the power of the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential for every branch of Christian service, and all who go to work without it will find it to be barrenness, misery, and desolation.

But we must call the reader’s special attention to the form in which the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost. It is full of deepest interest, and lets us into the precious secret of the heart of God in a most touching manner.

Let us turn to chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place”—instructive and suggestive fact!—” And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost”—He had full possession of their hearts and minds, full sway over their whole moral being—blessed condition!—” And they began to speak with other tongues”—not in the absurd and unintelligible jargon of cunning impostors or deluded fanatics, but—”as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven”—Remarkable fact!—” Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.”—How real! How telling!—” And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?”—not merely wherein we were educated—” Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”

What a marvelous passage! How marked the coincidence! How striking and interesting all the details! God so ordered it, in His infinite wisdom and perfect grace, that there should be assembled in the city of Jerusalem, at the exact moment, people from every nation on the face of the whole earth, in order that—even should the twelve apostles fail to carry out their commission—all might hear, in the very dialect in which their mothers first whispered into their infant ears the accents of a mother’s love, the precious tidings of God’s salvation.

Can anything exceed this in interest? Who can fail to see in the fact here recorded that it was the loving desire of the heart of God to reach every creature under heaven with the sweet story of His grace? The world had rejected the Son of God, had crucified and slain Him; but no sooner had He taken His seat at the right hand of God, than down came the august Witness, God the Spirit, to speak to man—to every man—to speak to him, not in accents of withering denunciation, not in the thundering anathemas of judgment, but in accents of deep and tender love, to tell him of full remission of sins through the blood of the cross.

True, He called on man to judge himself, to repent, to take his only true and proper place. Why not? How could it be otherwise? Repentance is—as we have already fully shown, and earnestly insisted upon, in these papers—a universal and abiding necessity for man. But the Spirit of God came down to speak face to face with man, to tell him, in his own mother tongue, of the wonderful works of God. He did not speak to a Hebrew in Latin, or to a Roman in Greek; but He spoke to each in the very dialect in which he was born, thus proving to a demonstration—proving in the most affecting manner possible—that it was God's gracious desire to make His way to man's heart, in deepest, richest, fullest grace. All homage to His name!

How different it was when the law was to be published from Mount Sinai! If all the nations of the earth had been assembled round that fiery mount, they could not have understood one word—unless, indeed, any one happened to know the Hebrew tongue. The law was addressed to one people, it was wrapped up in one language, it was enclosed in the ark. God took no pains to publish the record of man's duty in every language under heaven. But when grace was to be published, when the glad tidings of salvation were to be sounded abroad, when testimony was to be borne to a crucified, risen, ascended, and coming Savior and Lord, then, verily, God the Holy Ghost came down, for the purpose of fitting His messengers to speak to every man in a tongue which he could understand.

Facts are powerful arguments, and assuredly the above two facts, in reference to the law and the gospel, must speak to every heart, in a manner the most convincing, of the matchless grace of God, God did not send forth heralds to publish the law to “all nations.” No—this was reserved for “the Great Commission” on which we have been dwelling, and which we now earnestly commend, with all its great subjects, to the serious attention of every reader of “Things New and Old.”

The Happiness of Heaven

O happy, heavenly throng!

Now follow ye the Lamb where'er He leads,
'Mong the green pastures, by the waters still;
With the sweet fruits of life His flock He feeds,
Drafts from the crystal well their souls do fill.

O happy, heavenly throng!

Ye dwell within the shadow of the throne,
There nevermore the darts of sin ye dread;
God and the Lamb have Satan's power o'erthrown,
Secure ye stand in Christ, your living Head.

O happy, heavenly throng!

No tear of earth doth ever dim the eye;
No sorrow there doth drown the singing voice;
No stricken heart doth ever heave a sigh,
In the glad light of God ye all rejoice.

O blessed, heavenly throng!

Our finite vision doth not yet behold
Him whom we love, in whose dear love we live;
Ye see Him, walk with Him the streets of gold—
No higher bliss could God of blessing give.

O white-robed, ransomed throng!

Soon shall our song with yours exulting blend,
With ravished gaze we'll see Him as He is;
“A little while,”—tins fleshy veil shall rend,
Then, oh the joy! we'll be forever His.

Hebrews 13:20, 21

“ Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever.” (Heb. 13:20, 21.)

His Presence

“In Thy presence is fullness of joy.” Psalm 16:11.

“ The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young. Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee.” Psalm 84:3.

“ He brought me into the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” Song of Sol. 2:4.

“ Until the day break, and the shadows flee away.”

Wondrous place of deep repose—

Place, unreached by earthly woes;

Christ, upon the Father's throne.

Makes this glorious place my home.

His the love, that won my heart;

His the hand, that drew apart

All my dark and tangled past,

Lighted by His smile at last!

Reading now with Him life's story In the light of His sad cross;

Death to-day—to-morrow glory—

Heavenly gain, from earthly loss!

His the voice, which hush'd my fears;

His the hand which stay'd my tears;

Wandering from Him, all was sad

But returning, oh, how glad!

Oh ■ the wondrous wealth of bliss,

Given in the Father's kiss!

All the bitter past gone by,

All its sorrows and alarms;

Now for evermore brought nigh—

As a child within His arms!
Here my heart finds glad repose,
“Sorrow now nor thralldom knows,”
Learning all His ways of grace,
As I gaze upon His face.
Earth’s best love, and pleasure—gone!
Pass I on, through life, alone;
But His presence, day by day.
Sheds its radiance round my way.
And my heart can calmly rest—
Waiting, midst the twilight gray—
In ■ His presence, safe and blest
Till the shadows lice away.”
A. S. O.

The Hymnbook: Its Use and Abuse: Part 1

There are, we suppose, few intelligent Christians of well-balanced mind who would think of calling in question the use of the hymn-book. Most of us have learned to prize it as a special mercy granted to us by the Lord Himself, for our comfort and blessing, not only in the public assembly, but also in private life. The singing of hymns is one of our very sweetest and happiest exercises, and we have the fullest assurance that songs of praise, ascending from the hearts of God's people, are grateful to Him. Scripture abounds not only in intimations and suggestions, but in the clearest and most positive instruction on this interesting and important subject. It leaves not the slightest ground for questioning the rightness, the moral fitness, and the real preciousness of hymns, both in public worship and for private devotion.

Thus, for example, in Matt. 26, and in the corresponding passage in Mark 14, we are told that our Lord and His apostles sang a hymn at the close of the last supper, ere they went forth into the Mount of Olives. Now the inspiring Spirit has not told us what the hymn or psalm was which was sung on this memorable and solemn occasion; but He has recorded the fact for our instruction, and this is quite enough for us. It furnishes us, not only with clear authority, but also with an example of the deepest possible interest, in reference to the practice of singing. If our blessed Lord and His apostles sang a hymn at the supper-table, we need no further authority on the subject.

Such an example ought to be more than sufficient to silence forever all objectors to hymn-singing.

But we have further authority and instruction on this interesting question. In Acts 16 we are told that Paul and Silas sang praises in the prison at Philippi. Here, again, we are not told what they sang; but we are told that they did sing, and, further, we learn that the act of singing was distinct from praying, though connected with it. "They prayed and sang praises." This is as distinct and positive as anything can be. It is perfectly clear that these two beloved and honored servants of Christ would have had no sympathy whatever with those who object to the precious and beautiful exercise of singing. It was, we may be sure, most refreshing to their hearts to give expression in that particular form to their joy in the Lord. And not only was it grateful to them thus to render praise, but also to God to receive it.

But let us turn to the epistles, where, in addition to the living examples furnished in the Acts and Gospels, we have the inspired instructions of the Holy Ghost. Turn to 1 Cor. 14, where we have such ample guidance for the assembly. "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Verse 15.

It will perhaps be objected that this passage affords no warrant for the whole assembly joining in the act of singing, inasmuch as the apostle says, "I will sing." It can only, therefore, be viewed as authority for an individual singing a solo. Be this as it may, one thing is evident, that the apostle insists upon communion in the act. A person was not to sing in an unknown tongue. Fellowship

and edification were absolutely indispensable in all that went on in the assembly.

However, we are not now dealing with the question of the whole assembly joining in the act of singing, we are merely seeking divine authority for the act itself—the distinct, definite, act of hymn-singing, whether in public or in private.

We must pass over the Epistle to the Galatians as containing nothing on the subject of singing, for, alas! those assemblies were so far gone, even from foundation truth, that they were not in a condition to sing. Weeping, rather than singing, was what was morally fitting in their case. But in Ephesians we read, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess: but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.” So also in Colossians, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

From all these scriptures we learn that the singing of hymns is not only sanctioned by the Holy Ghost, but positively enjoined upon us as a spiritual service. We do not see how this can be called in question by any one who simply bows to the word. Questions may be raised as to the meaning of the terms, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; as to whether they were impromptu effusions sung by individuals, or regular compositions put into writing, known and recognized by Christians in or out of the public assembly. It seems to us that such questions are left open, inasmuch as scripture is silent in reference to them. It is enough for us that the exercise of hymn-singing is distinctly recognized and taught in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit has not thought proper to enter into any details, and hence we are justified in concluding that, in the absence of positive instruction, all discussion is vain. We may rest assured that, if details were needful, we should have them, for the Spirit of God can enter at times into the most minute particulars. But as to whether we should have recognized collections of hymns, or whether it should be the impromptu effusions of individuals, to be listened to by the assembly; or whether the whole assembly was supposed to join in the act of singing the hymn—as to all such questions, it seems to us the word is silent. 1 Cor. 14:15, 16 does most certainly insist upon this, that whatever is sung must be sung in a language that all can understand. “I will sing with the understanding also. Else, when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen at the giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest.”

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not by any means assert that 1 Cor. 14, or any other passage in the New Testament, affords direct authority for having a hymn-book; but we do assert that edification is promoted by such an arrangement, and this is the end constantly sought and insisted upon by the Holy Ghost.

And can we not recognize the grace and goodness of God toward His people, in enabling one and another of His beloved servants to compose those precious hymns, which stir the very deepest depths of our souls, whether sung in private or in public? Have not most of us tasted the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we lifted up our hearts to Him in some sweet song of praise, composed for our use by some one of His members—composed, may we not say, in a lower sense, by the inspiration of His Spirit? Has He not directed and enabled His servants to render a most blessed service to His assembly by composing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, to be used in public worship? And what, we may ask, is the difference between a person rising in the

public assembly, and by the Spirit giving forth an impromptu effusion, and one composing a hymn in the retirement of his closet, and then publishing it for the use and edification of the whole church?

Now, if it be true that our Lord has made such provision for us—and who will say He has not?—ought we to despise it, by refusing to use a collection of hymns? Would it not be forsaking our mercies so to do? Will any one deny that the Holy Ghost guides in the composition of hymns? And if He guides in the composition, does He not also guide in the use of such hymns?

And, further, who has not felt the power, the blessing, the refreshment, the comfort, the holy elevation of a hymn given out in the Spirit, and sung in full communion by the whole assembly? Have we not often known the entire current of a meeting changed, its spiritual tone raised, and a flood of blessing poured in upon it by a well-chosen hymn sung in the power of the Spirit? Shall all this be given up? Must our assemblies be robbed of the glorious privilege of raising their joint hallelujahs to God and the Lamb? Are we to hang our harps on the willows, and sit in gloomy silence in the presence of our God? Praise is for the present silent in Zion, must it be silent in the church also? Are we to abandon our beautiful hymns? We say “our” hymns, for if it be right for some to do so, it must be right for all. But is it right? Is it of God? Is it in keeping with the scope, spirit, and teaching of holy scripture? We do not, and cannot, believe it.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

The Hymnbook: Its Use and Abuse: Part 2

There are two sides to every question, and the question now before us is no exception to the rule. Few will be disposed to deny that the hymn-book has its use, both in private and in public. The Spirit of God most graciously deigns to make use of hymns for our comfort, edification, and refreshment when we are all alone; and He uses them as the vehicle of our worship in the public assembly. All this, we assume, will be fully admitted by the great majority of Christians, and hence we shall not occupy the reader's time with any further discussion of this side of the question.

But we must not lose sight of that good old motto, "Audi alteram partem"—Hear the other side. There is, alas! the abuse as well as the use of the hymn-book. This is only what we might expect. If the Spirit makes use of hymns to cheer, refresh, comfort, and edify our souls, we may rest assured the enemy will use hymns to lead us away from the truth of God. We all know what immense power poetry possesses over the human soul. A certain poet once said, "Let me compose the nation's sonnets, and I care not who makes the laws." He felt he could rule the nation by his melodies, at least he could do much toward forming the national mind.

There is a measure of truth in this; and it may be that some of us can, at times, detect ourselves drawing our theology more from the hymn-book than the Bible. Some false idea, clothed in a lovely poetic dress, has gained an entrance into the mind and into the heart, and found a lodgment there, and taken such possession of us, that we have at length begun to regard it in the light of a positive truth of God. It is, of course, generally admitted that we are not to expect in a poet the accuracy of a theologian; but we must not suffer ourselves, through poetic license, to be led away from sound doctrine. We are as responsible to judge the doctrine of a hymn as of any other writing. If I give or lend a book or tract, I am responsible for the doctrine contained in it. How much more so when I sing a hymn, seeing I adopt as my very own the sentiments expressed therein?

Now, let not the reader suppose that we would have him indulge in a judging, criticizing, fault-finding spirit. Nothing is further from our thoughts. We utterly repudiate such a spirit, and hold ourselves responsible to judge it on all occasions, but specially in the matter of hymns.

Still, we must judge. We cannot, or ought not, to sing false doctrine. We surely ought not, while professing to worship God, to deny His truth. We most assuredly ought not, when professedly lifting our hearts to the Lord in songs of praise, to give utterance to sentiments subversive of the very foundations of Christianity, and utterly inconsistent with our position and relationship as children of God. Take, for instance, that familiar stanza,

"The dying thief rejoiced to see

That fountain in his day;

And there may I, though vile as he,

Wash all my sins away."

Is this according to the truth of the Christian's position before God? Clearly not. A Christian is not merely one who "may" wash all his sins away in the precious blood of Christ, but whom Christ, blessed be His name, has washed from every stain. Look at Eph. 1:7. What does it say? "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." So also in Col. 1:14. If I say, "I may wash," it is clear I have not yet done so; and hence I have no business to sing. The singing of a hymn, according to the divine idea, is an act of worship. But a man in his sins—a man with an unpurged conscience—is not a worshipper. In order to worship, I must be consciously in the presence of God, with a perfectly purged conscience. I must be in the light, knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed me from all sin.

Let the reader see that he is thoroughly clear as to this grand foundation truth. It is of the very last possible importance. A Christian, according to the teaching of the New Testament, is one who knows that all his sins are forgiven—all blotted out as a thick cloud—all cast behind God's back forever. How then can he say, "There may I wash all my sins away?" It is simply denying what Christ has done for him; and surely this is not Christianity. How strange for a Christian to rise and sing about the blood of Christ, and, in the very words of his hymn, deny that his sins are forgiven! No doubt, it would be quite wrong, seriously wrong, for any one to say that his sins are forgiven, if he does not believe it. But then how can he take the place of a worshipper if he doubts the forgiveness of his sins?

It may perhaps be said we are making a great fuss about a word. But what if a word be the index of the entire position and state of the soul? We feel persuaded that the beloved author of the well-known hymn from which we have quoted above, did not, when composing it, enter into the full joy of a known forgiveness. His dear spirit was often beclouded with doubts and fears. He was a most beloved child of God, but, from various causes, he was often afflicted with misgivings as to his full security in Christ. At times, when freed from self-occupation, and lifted above the depressing influence of legality, he could pour forth the sweetest strains; for he truly loved the Lord, though, as he himself tells us, he often longed to know whether he did or not.

Now all this comes out in the expression, "There may I." why not say, "There have I?" Because his precious soul was not up to the mark, and he wrote as he felt. But are the accents of a doubting soul the proper vehicle for christian worship? Assuredly not. Doubts and fears are not worship. The groanings of a soul under law and the breathings of a spiritual worshipper are not the same thing. The "roarings" of an unforgiven soul differ materially from the "songs of deliverance" sung by one who knows and believes that all his sins are forgiven, and forgotten forever.

It is a very serious mistake indeed to use in public worship; hymns which actually deny the very foundations of Christianity. It is, of course, all well enough for people to write as they feel. None of us should ever presume to go beyond our measure, either in writing or speaking. But would it not have been very wrong for Israel when they stood, as a consciously delivered people, on the shore of the Red Sea, to groan as if still in the brick-kilns of Egypt, and under the lash of Pharaoh's task-masters? Unquestionably. The groan was right enough in Egypt; it suited their position and state. But for that very reason it would have been quite out of place on the shore of the Red Sea; and hence to put the dismal stanzas composed by a poet amid the gloom of Egyptian bondage into the lips of a host of triumphant worshippers, would have been a grievous error, involving a positive wrong to the worshippers, and a gross dishonor to the One who had so gloriously

delivered them from the power of the enemy.

Nor is it otherwise in the matter of our hymns. We have very little idea of the lowering effect upon the souls of God's people of hymns composed by persons not in the full enjoyment of the blessed liberty of the gospel of God. The expressions used in our devotional exercises take a wonderful hold upon us, and exert a formative influence over our moral and spiritual condition. Hence the seriousness of the question of the hymn-book. We might literally fill volumes with examples of erroneous or defective hymns which are continually sung in religious assemblies; but there is no need for this; our object will be gained if the attention of the christian reader be thoroughly roused in reference to the entire subject. We trust he will see that it is, to say the very least, our bounden duty to examine what we sing by the light of holy scripture, and not to adopt in our worship, language which stands in direct opposition to the gospel of God, and, as a consequence, robs us of the sweet and precious privileges which belong to us as members of the body of Christ, washed from all our sins in His precious blood, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost. Take, for example, the following well-known stanza:—" My soul looks back to see The burden Thou didst bear, When hanging on the accursed tree, And hopes her guilt was there."

Is this up to the mark of New Testament Christianity? Is it merely a matter of hope with the Christian that Christ bore his sins, and his guilt, and his full judgment on the cross? Is it not a divine certainty, attested by the resurrection from among the dead of the blessed Sin-bearer, declared on the authority of Him who cannot lie, and brought home to the heart in the power of the Holy Ghost? Such it is, most surely, if we are to be taught exclusively by scripture. True it is that the writer of the hymn may not be, in his own inward self-consciousness, up to the proper christian mark; and he must, of course, write as he feels. But why should one who, through grace, is up to the mark adopt as his own—and that in the holy act of worship—the language of one who is not?

It will, perhaps, be said, and that by not a few, that it is not well to be too confident. We ask, what is the true ground of worship? Is it doubt, or confidence? Is a doubting soul in a fit condition for worship? Surely not. " He that cometh to God must believe that he is." " 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"

Thus it is our God would have us to approach Him in sweetest, fullest confidence. He would have us near Him, in the calm confidence and happy liberty which His love warrants and invites us to enjoy. Has He given us any cause to doubt? Is there a shadow of basis on which to raise a question as to His perfect love? Is there any flaw in the work of Christ? Any defect in the testimony of the Holy Ghost? To say so, or think so, would involve a daring insult to the Trinity. Well, then, wherefore should we doubt? Why wound the loving heart of a Savior-God by reserve and suspicion? Is it, can it be, presumption to take God at His word? Nay, it gratifies His heart, and glorifies His name, when we thankfully accept what His grace has bestowed, and trustfully take the true ground of worshippers in His holy presence.

But the melancholy fact is that many of the hymns, prayers, and formularies of the professing church do actually deny the great truths which lie at the foundation of the christian position, and drive the people of God back to the shadows of the Mosaic economy. This may seem severe, but it is true, and we solemnly press the truth on the heart and conscience of the reader. We would

entreat him to take this whole question up, and examine it in the light of scripture. It is his bounden duty so to do. We are all called upon to test our utterances by the word of God, to measure our hymn-books by the standard of the New Testament, and with calm decision refuse to use language in our worship which actually robs us of all ground and title to worship.

We trust the reader will not be offended by our statements. God is our witness that nothing is further from our thoughts than to wound the feelings of any one; but we deeply feel the importance of the subject before us, and this is our reason for writing as we do.

We are convinced that serious damage is done to souls, injury to the truth of God, and grief occasioned to the Holy Ghost by many of our utterances in public worship. There are hundreds of thousands of professing Christians who, from week to week, month to month, and year to year, never in their public singing breathe the spirit of adoption; never cry, "Abba, Father;" never celebrate an accomplished redemption; never speak of a risen Savior. They use the language of souls under the law, yea, under the wrath of God, under His governmental infliction. Sometimes they use the very language of our adorable Lord when made sin for us on the cross, and cast out of God's presence, in order that we might be made nigh.

Is not this a matter for serious consideration? Is it not a very solemn thing to find professing Christians ignoring in their public worship all the great characteristic truths of Christianity?—to find them all their lifetime omitting in their singing all that is peculiar to the church of God, the body of Christ? Are we not warranted in earnestly calling the attention of the christian reader to this weighty question?

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

The Hymnbook: Its Use and Abuse: Part 3

There are two questions which we should ever ask ourselves when about to sing a hymn—first, “Is the hymn true?” Secondly, “Am I true in singing it?” If we cannot answer both these questions in the affirmative, we had better not sing. It is very much better to be silent than to sing what is contrary to sound doctrine, or what is beyond our measure. We should earnestly seek to be true and real in all our utterances, whether in singing or praying. Our God desires truth in the inward parts; and nothing can be more sorrowful to any one who looks at things from a divine standpoint, than to reflect upon the fearful amount of the untrue and the unreal in our public worship. We feel called upon to press the subject, with all possible solemnity, upon the attention of our readers; and we earnestly trust they will accept the word of exhortation, and seek to profit by it.

In our October paper we ventured to offer a few suggestions as to the doctrine of many of our hymns. We might fill a volume with this one branch of our subject; but we must leave the reader to follow out for himself this question, by diligently comparing the hymns which he may be in the habit of singing with the teaching of the New Testament; and if they tally not therewith, let him lay them aside, and seek to express his worship and adoration in words which harmonize with the mind of the Spirit.

Nor is it merely the doctrine of our hymns that demands our attention, but also the tone and character. How very few of our hymns, comparatively, deserve the name of worship-hymns 1 Indeed the very term, “ worship,” seems but little understood amongst us. Some of us seem to think that any sort of religious singing is worship, albeit we may actually in our song be contradicting the plainest statements of holy scripture; or, if not this, at least singing about ourselves, our experience, our exercises, our conflicts, our doubts and fears, which, we need hardly say, are not worship at all. No doubt they may have been the truthful utterance of those who composed them, but they are not the proper vehicle for the worship and adoration of the church of God. Experience is not worship. It may be very real, very true, very precious. God forbid that any of us should make light of experience. Most assuredly no spiritually-minded person would do so. No one who reads aright Rom. 5:3, 4 could think of depreciating experience. “ And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.”

But we repeat the statement, singing about our experience is not worship. In worship the soul is occupied solely with God Himself—with Christ—His Person, His work, His glory; and all this by the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence no hymn can properly be called a worship-hymn which does not bring God and His Christ before the heart. Prayer is not, properly speaking, worship. Most precious it is, need we say? Most needful, absolutely indispensable; but it cannot be said to be worship, inasmuch as in it we are occupied with the question of need—our own need—the need of the church, the need of the workmen and their work. True it is to God we come in our need—come in the name of Jesus, come in the faith of His word, come in the power of the Holy Ghost. But, all the while, prayer is not what can rightly be called pure worship. When we get to heaven there will

be no prayer, but there will be worship. “When those living creatures give glory, and honor, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth forever and ever, the four and twenty elders”—representing all the redeemed, both the Old Testament saints and the church—“fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Again, “And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth.”

Here we have true worship; and the more our hymns partake of the tone and spirit of these utterances, the more will they merit the title of worship-hymns. We cannot but deplore the paucity of such. Still, we bless God for those we have; and, so far as we are personally concerned, we are quite content to go on singing them until we get to our home above. For example, what can be finer than the following?—O Lord, we adore Thee; For Thou art the slain One That livest forever, Enthroned in heaven; O Lord, we adore Thee! For Thou hast redeemed us; Our title to glory We read in Thy blood.

O God, we acknowledge The depth of Thy riches; For of Thee, and through Thee, And to Thee, are all things; How rich is Thy mercy! How great Thy salvation! We bless Thee, we praise. Thee. Amen, and amen.”

Where is the Christian who could not join with all his heart in singing such a song as the above? Let his attainments in the divine life be ever so limited, let his experience be ever so shallow, let his knowledge be ever so elementary, he ought to be able—in spirit at least—to enter into such a precious breathing of worship and adoration. The merest babe in Christ, as well as the most matured and deeply-taught Christian, can praise God for His mercy and goodness, for the riches of His grace, for the fullness of His salvation, for the blessings of accomplished redemption. He can bless the Lamb with cheerful voice. He may not have the same measure of enjoyment in the worship; he may not be able to enter so fully into the depth and power of the song of praise; but his ransomed spirit can render homage and adoration to God and the Lamb. He can lift up his soul in spiritual and true worship, whatever be his capacity.

Take another uncommonly fine sample of a hymn of praise.

“Thou, Lamb of God! didst shed Thy blood.

Thou didst our load of misery bear;

And hast exalted us to share

The rank of kings and priests to God.

To Thee we'd render evermore

The honor, glory, praise that's due;

Might, power, and obedience too,

And in our hearts we Thee adore.

Amen! Amen!

O Lord, amen!"

The following partakes of the same lovely tone and character:

Blest Lamb of God! with grateful praise

Our voices now to Thee we raise—

O'er earth to reign, redeemed by blood,

Kingdom and priests are we to God.

Soon, too, in glory shall we sing,

And louder praises to Thee bring;

While every nation, tongue, and tribe,

Strength, glory, might, to Thee ascribe!

Amen! Amen!

O Lord, amen!"

Now, one special charm of such hymns as we have here quoted for the reader, is, that all true believers can join in singing them without any hitch or reserve whatsoever. All hymns that have God as their object, and Christ for their subject, can be freely sung by all Christians. It is not so with hymns of experience, if, indeed, such compositions deserve the name of hymns.

Imagine an assembly of Christians singing such a stanza as the following:—

"'Tis a point I long to know,

Oft times it causeth anxious thought,

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I His? or am I not?"

Could this be called worship? Certainly not. Could an intelligent Christian sing it in spirit and in truth? Most assuredly not. It is far away below the mark. It is the experience of a soul not at liberty, not at rest. It was no doubt very real, very true, the honest expression of the dear writer's feelings; but it is not the language of one who knows that he has passed from death unto life, who knows God as his Father, Christ as his Savior, and the Holy Ghost as the seal which God has put upon him, and the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. A Christian is one who has eternal life, and knows it. He has the Spirit of adoption, and can cry, "Abba, Father." A man who is not clear as to these things, is not yet, intelligently and happily, on the ground of New Testament Christianity. He may no doubt be a divinely-quicken soul, but he knows not the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

But, again, an experimental hymn may be entirely beyond our measure. Its language may be such as we could not honestly adopt. It may give expression to the accents of a lofty discipleship, an

ardent devotion, a fervent attachment to Christ—which we dare not make our own, inasmuch as we do not feel ourselves up to the mark.

This we consider a very serious point. If it be wrong—as it most certainly is—to sing hymns that are not up to the true christian standing, it is also wrong to sing hymns which are beyond our practical state. We cannot but fear that some of us err greatly in this matter. We use language in our hymns far away beyond our ordinary state and manner of life. In a word, we are not true in what we sing. If others sing hymns that are not true, we are often not true in our singing.

There is very great danger here. We would ask the christian reader if he does not consider this to be a subject demanding our most serious attention? We do not desire to discourage any true-hearted child of God. Far from it. We would much rather seek to cheer, strengthen, and help on all those who really long to follow Christ. But we cannot shut our eyes to solemn facts. We are deeply impressed with the sense of the gross inconsistency between our private habits and our public utterances. We sing of strangership and pilgrimage—of our being dead to the world, crucified with Christ—and all the while our practical life, from Monday morning till Saturday night, is a flat contradiction to the words of our song.

It is not by any means that we can, or would, cast a stone at another. Far be the thought. God is our witness, we write in a spirit of self-judgment. We feel the urgent need of a deeper exercise of heart in the matter of hymn-singing. We sometimes tremble when we compare the language of the hymns with the language of the life. Again and again, when some specially high note of personal devotedness is being sung, the heart asks, “Are we up to this?” Some hymn, composed, it may be, by an aged, deeply-taught servant of Christ—who for many years has flung the world behind him—is given out, and sung by a whole assembly. The writer of the hymn wrote as he felt—wrote in the presence of God; and, through grace, his whole life is, in measure, the exponent of his hymn. There is the true breathing of a devoted heart—a heart that longs ardently after Christ—a heart that truly finds the world a moral waste, and is only waiting and watching for “the bright and morning star.” The hymn is most precious. Every true-hearted Christian would desire to be able to adopt it; but how few of us are really up to the mark! No doubt we ought to be. It is the happy privilege of every child of God to tread the very highest pathway of the divine life. We are all called to set our affection on things above, to make Christ our one absorbing object, and to fling aside every worldly entanglement.

All this is most true; but it leaves wholly untouched the question under our consideration. We feel convinced that, as a rule, hymns of experience and deep-toned devotedness are beyond the measure of most of us. It is well to be real and true in our hymns and prayers; and while we should earnestly long for a higher spiritual tone, we certainly should not assume to be higher than we are. If our measure be small, let us own it, and wait on our God to enlarge it. Every true heart can, without a shadow of reserve, join in the following precious aspiration:—

“Ah! Lord, enlarge our scanty thought,
To know the wonders Thou hast wrought;
Unloose our stammering tongues to tell
Thy love immense, unsearchable.”

Yes, and every child of God can join in a hymn of praise—a hymn that has Christ for its theme—His Person, His work, His offices, His ways, His coming, His glory,—Himself in short, its Alpha and its Omega. He, blessed be His peerless name, will be our theme forever in that bright and happy home where we so soon hope to be. Then, thank God, there will be no hitch, no discrepancy, no drawback, nothing to judge. All will be in blissful, glorious harmony, and the rapturous hosannahs of the great congregation shall fill the wide universe of God throughout the countless ages of eternity.

“ But who that glorious blaze

Of living light shall tell?

Where all His brightness God displays,

And the Lamb's glories dwell.

God and the Lamb shall there

The light and temple be,

And radiant hosts forever share

The unveiled mystery.”

Here we close this short series of papers on the subject of the hymn-book. We have done nothing more than offer a few practical hints and suggestions to the christian reader, which we trust he will receive in the spirit in which they are presented. We must confess we long for more reality, more thorough earnestness of heart, more ardent devotedness of spirit, more uprightness of mind, in our private history, and in our public exercises and utterances. We greatly dread the habit of drawing near to God with the lips, while the heart is far from Him. Oh, may He graciously deliver us all from this most dreadful evil, and keep us ever in the moral shelter and deep repose of His own most blessed presence, for His name and glory's sake!

P.S.—We add an admonitory word for those whom it may concern, in reference to the matter of giving out hymns in the assembly. It needs much waiting on the Lord—quite as much as kneeling down to pray, or standing up to speak. If a hymn is not given out in the Spirit, serious damage is done to the whole assembly. The tone of a meeting may be lowered, and the current of communion and worship interrupted by the giving out of an unsuitable hymn. It is a mistake to give out a hymn merely because we think it nice. The question is, does the Lord think it suitable? He is so gracious, that we can count on Him to guide in this, as in all beside, if we only wait on Him in integrity of heart. We are wholly cast upon Him. If we act on the mere impulse of our own feelings, we may make the most serious mistakes. There is very great danger in the matter of giving out hymns, inasmuch as many can do that who never think of leading in prayer, or speaking. It needs real dependence on the Lord.

So also in the matter of starting the tune. Even this needs divine guidance. A hymn may be given out in the Spirit, and yet be marred in the rendering, through want of being properly raised, and carefully led. It often seems like offering a blemished sacrifice when a hymn is sung in a careless, slovenly way. We should sing with all our hearts, and to the very best of our ability; and, above all,

the person who leads the hymn should look to the Lord for grace to do it suitably, so that God may be glorified, and the assembly refreshed and edified. These are the grand ends to sought in everything that transpires in the assembly, and they will be attained in proportion as we all cultivate a spirit of worship, and a spirit of service. May our gracious God grant us a very much larger measure of both the one and the other!

I Cannot Get Away From God

Not many years since, a young coachman was living in a gentleman's family near London. He had good wages, a kind master, and a comfortable place; but there was one thing which troubled and annoyed him. It was that his old mother lived in a village close by, and from her he had constant visits. You may wonder that this was such a trouble to him. But the reason was that, whenever she came, she spoke to him about Christ and the salvation of his soul. "Mother," he at last said, "I cannot stand this any longer. Unless you drop that subject altogether, I shall give up my place, and go out of your reach, when I shall hear no more of such cant." "My son," said his mother, "as long as I have a tongue I shall never cease to speak to you about the Lord, and to the Lord about you." The young coachman was as good as his word. He wrote to a friend in the Highlands of Scotland, and asked him to find him a place in that part of the world. He knew that his mother could not write, and could not follow him; and, though he was sorry to lose a good place, he said to himself, "Anything for a quiet life." His friend soon got him a place in a gentleman's stables, and he did not hide from his mother that he was glad and thankful to get out of her way.

You may think it was a pity she thus drove him to a distance. Would it not have been wiser to say less, and thus not to lose the opportunity of putting in a word in season? But she believed, in her simplicity, that she was to keep to the directions given her in the word of God—that she was to be instant, not in season only, but also out of season. And true it is, that the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

The coachman was ordered to drive out the carriage and pair the first day after his arrival in Scotland. His master did not get into the carriage with the rest of the party, but said he meant to go on the box instead of the footman. "He wishes to see how I drive," thought the coachman, who was quite prepared to give satisfaction. Scarcely had they driven from the door, when the master spoke to the coachman for the first time. He said, "Tell me if you are saved." Had the question come to the coachman direct from heaven it could scarcely have struck him with greater consternation. He felt simply terrified. "God has followed me to Scotland!" he said to himself. "I could get away from my mother, but I cannot get away from God!" And at that moment he knew what Adam must have felt when he went to hide himself from the presence of God behind the trees of the garden. He could make no answer to his master, and scarcely could he drive the horses, for he trembled from head to foot.

His master went on to speak of Christ, and again he heard the old, old story, so often told him by his mother. But this time it sounded new—it had become a real thing to him. It did not seem to him then to be glad tidings of great joy, but a message of terror and condemnation. He felt that it was Christ, the Son of God, whom he had rejected and despised. He felt for the first time that he was a lost sinner. By the time the drive was over he was so ill, from the terrible fear that had come upon him, that he could do nothing more. For some days he could not leave his bed, but they were blessed days to him! His master came to speak to him, to read the word of God, and to pray, and soon the love and grace of the Savior he had rejected became a reality to him, as the terror of the

Lord had been at first. He saw that there was mercy for the scoffer and despiser; he saw that the blood of Christ is the answer before God even for such sin as his had been, and he now felt in his soul the sweetness of those blessed words, " We love him because he first loved us." He saw that Christ had borne his punishment, and that he, who had tried to harden his heart against God and against his own mother, was now without spot or stain in the sight of that God who had so loved him as to give for Him His only Son. The first letter he wrote to his mother was to tell her the joyful tidings: " God has followed me to Scotland, and has saved my soul."

" Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." Psalm 139:7-12.

" Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:11.

I Shall Meet You Above

One Saturday evening last autumn I was traveling to W—. When the train stopped at K—all the passengers left the carriage, and a very respectable intelligent man, of middle age, got in, sat down opposite me and said, “ I wish my journey was over!” “ Have you far to go, I asked?” “ Yes, to Penzance, but that is not the worst of it; I expect to find the only one I love, except two children, dead.” It was his wife, poor man. His anxiety was intense, having that afternoon received a telegram about her illness, and could not possibly reach her before 2 o'clock Sunday morning. After a little while I said, “Is she sheltered under the precious blood of Christ?” “No, sir!” “Are you?” “No sir! I will be honest with you, I believe if I were to die this moment I should go straight to hell!” I then spoke much to him of God's love to sinners, quoting John 3:16: “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,” and other passages. He replied, “ You can't tell me anything I don't know about the Bible, but I can't feel it here,” smiting his breast.

“Oh, my friend,” I said, “you never would feel it there, if you lived a thousand years!” With surprise he answered, “ God grant I never may then!” I showed him that he was looking within for some miraculous change, or certain kind of feelings, instead of resting calmly, in simple faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that, “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” He told me he was a Wesleyan—a Sunday school teacher and preacher, but for thirty years this thought had haunted him, that one day he should wake up in hell—adding “ Only last night I dreamed I was in hell, and saw several I knew there!”

Never shall I forget his intense anxiety and eager look, when with the tears rolling down his face, he said, “ Oh, I would give all I possess to enjoy that peace which you seem to have!” “ But it is without money and without price.” I answered. Christ hath made peace through the blood of his cross. “ The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

After a long conversation I felt sure he was a believer, but that the enemy of souls had tormented him in this way. I looked him full in the face, and asked, “ Do you hate the Lord Jesus Christ?”

“Hate Him, sir! hate Him, sir! do you mean h, a, t, e, hate?” “That's exactly what I do mean,” I said. “Ah! no,” with tears filling his eyes, he replied, “why, He is everything to me, and has done everything for me!” “ Well then, my friend,” I continued, “while you are traveling to Penzance, through the silent hours of tonight, think of Him ‘who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, but who is now at God's right hand in heavenly glory,’ and think how you have grieved His heart with all your wretched unbelief.”

As the train was nearing W— I took his hand while he firmly grasped mine, and said, “ Good bye, perhaps I may never meet you again.” But he answered, with a faltering voice, and tears filling his eyes, “I shall meet you above.” I reminded him that a little while ago, he had told me that he should be in hell, and, I added, “ by the grace of God I shall never be there.” “ Oh!” he said, “I do believe, I do believe,” and “I shall meet you above”—so we parted; but I do expect to meet my fellow-traveler

one day in my Father's house above.

Now, dear reader, are you saved? are you sheltered under the precious blood of Christ? If not, an everlasting hell must be your portion. But should a doubting, trembling heart read this, then let me assure you, " He came to seek and to save that which is lost." Read Luke 15 and see how God delights to bless a lost sinner.

His word too must ever be the sure resting-place for the soul. " He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

G. W.

Jesus Wept

Down from those loving, gracious eyes flow'd tears
And " Jesus wept;"
Beside Death's gate, amid their hopes and fears,
There " Jesus wept."
Death must be spoil'd, the conqueror laid low!
Life at the word, "Come forth!" "Loose him, and let him go!"
Once more He wept, at that prophetic sorrow,
Yes, Jesus wept
O'er Salem, reckless of the sad to-morrow,
Whilst Jesus wept.
" I would, but thou wouldst not," He fondly cried!
Rejected thus by man, for sinners yet He died.
He weeps no longer now. In that bright region
Where Jesus rests, No tear may dim the gaze of that vast legion
Who in Him rest. All must be praise and worship never ending,
From each a note of joy unspeakable ascending.
A. M. H.

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude

There is no theme more blessed, more elevating, or more edifying to the Christian, when he is in communion with God, than the revelations of His love. And what can be more practically interesting than the means of enjoying and dwelling in that love? The short epistle of Jude, after speaking of the apostasy of Christendom, brings before us these important subjects. (See vers. 20, 21.) 1. 44 Keep yourselves in the love of God” seems to be the one grand, or main exhortation of the epistle. 2. The others which surround it, such as, “ Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,” seem to be introduced more as the means of attaining to the other. Faith, we know, is the means of our relationship with God; we are His children by faith in Christ Jesus; and praying in the Spirit, while looking for the Lord’s return, must be the effectual means of enjoying and abiding in the divine favor. Thus the three Persons in the Godhead, as revealed in the economy of redemption, are brought powerfully before the soul.

Since finishing our papers on “ Divine Love and its Fruits,” our attention has been particularly drawn to the above passage in Jude as a kindred subject, and believing it to be, in its full application, the Christian’s stronghold in a time of general declension, we gladly turn to it for a little. But before speaking particularly on this rich cluster of exhortations, we will briefly glance at the history of the apostasy as here developed by the Spirit of God. The contrast between those who have renounced, and those who are building themselves up in their most holy faith will be more manifest; and it may be well to know something of this epistle, as we are in the midst of what is there described, or rather, prophetically viewed, the preserved and the apostate.

Jude begins with that which is most precious and touching to every heart that feels the danger of the surrounding evil. We are apt to look at circumstances, and to think more of the snares which the enemy is gilding in every way possible for the accomplishment of his evil designs, and to tremble for their effect on those we love and care for. But Jude would rather direct our thoughts to Him who is above all, the only true source of security, even in the midst of the apostasy, whether ecclesiastical, political, or social. Thus he addresses those who are standing true for Christ, wherever they may be, and even every individual Christian, wherever he maybe: “ Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called. Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.”

Here we have a most blessed declaration of the faithfulness of God, and of His tender care over all those who are “ earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” What could be more assuring, more rest-giving, to the heart that cares for the glory of Jesus, and is seeking to walk according to

His word? That which calls itself the church has become, in the hands of the enemy, a most successful means of drawing away the heart from Christ, and endangering the soul’s salvation. It still owns His name, but denies His authority: it is little different on high occasions from a place of gaiety and worldly amusement. The gorgeous ceremonies of the middle ages are largely

introduced, with modern inventions and innovations, and even with a mixture of heathen rites and festivities. Some parts of the ecclesiastical performance is little better than what may be called a pious paganism, and infidelity—worse still—is unblushingly taught by some of the principal actors. The music, decorations, and services, are fitted and intended to attract the natural mind, and to soothe and satisfy it, without Christ, and the knowledge of salvation through faith in Him. To follow some sections of the professing church now, would be to travel the darkest path in this dark world. And the imagination—especially of the young—is greatly wrought upon by such a ritualism, and we see multitudes drawn aside from the plain, simple truth of the gospel, and the path of a rejected Christ.

But, oh, how secure, how far beyond the reach of all such shadowy services, is the faithful witness for Christ and His finished work! “ Sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” What words are these! What words for the heart of faith! What marvelous grace on the part of God! But what is it to be thus sanctified? some may inquire. It is to be set apart for God, to God, and by God Himself. “ By the which will we are sanctified.” Relationship also comes in here, as “ the Father.” It is the place of privilege and power, as well as of security, in an evil time. It is like a strong tower, which not only affords safety, but gives the opportunity of watching the enemy’s movements from its lofty summit. The beautiful language of the psalmist, as applied to the hill of David, the mount of royal grace, may here be used, only in a much higher and more spiritual sense. “ Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48

The whole passage in Jude is like an answer to the prayer of the blessed Lord in John 17 “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” This is the class—the sanctified, preserved, and beloved—whom Jude addresses, and to whom the exhortations are given, although he keeps in view those who had openly renounced the ways of truth and holiness. By his wishing mercy to the saints, it is evident that he has not only Christians in general, but individual Christians, before his mind; or that the Holy Spirit would have every individual believer to see the importance of laying hold of the truth for his own soul. He has nothing on which to rest but the word of the living God, which can never fail. There is no portion of the professing church that is not outwardly in ruin, and however much we may value the communion of saints in Christ, we must be individual in heart before the Lord. Unity of thought, feeling, and action have no corporate existence now. Wherever the reader or the writer may be professedly, he is in and of the ruin, and anything like headships or schools in a community which have no head but Christ, must be most offensive to Him, and should be carefully avoided by us.

The evil of which Jude treats crept into the church, and corrupted it, in its earliest days; there it has been ever since, and there it will remain until destroyed by judgment at the appearing in glory of the blessed Lord. The later writings of the New Testament speak of this. Most solemn thought! especially when seen in connection with those systems which conceal the glories of Christ, by gathering around a mere outward cross, the superstitions of the darkest ages, and the sanction of a present evil world. But the voice of heaven still cries, “ Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.” When the day of reckoning comes, where will the heaviest stroke of judgment fall? Not upon the poor godless world, but upon apostate

Christendom—upon those systems of religion that have found a common platform for the church and the world to unite—the attempt to make communion possible between Christ and Belial. May we be preserved from this awful sin of Babylon, and from the plagues that are coming upon her.

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude: Examples of Apostasy

5. The three leading characters of evil in Christendom.—" Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."

Cain is the symbol of a very large class of professors. Indeed Cain and Abel divide mankind—the man of faith, and the man of the world. Still, Cain was a religious man, and a worshipper of the true God, but without faith to see his own sin and ruin, and without faith to apprehend God's judgment against sin; this is the state and character of multitudes who profess to worship the true God. He offered that which he had been toiling for in "the sweat of his brow." He "brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah." But though he was a religious man, he was utterly without conscience before God: he thought not of His claims nor of His rights. Self was his governing object. There was no love in his heart to God, and no faith in His word.

Abel came as a worshipper in the way of faith, acknowledging his ruined condition, and the judgment of God against sin. He knew he was not in paradise; sin had come in between God and him, and what was he to do? He could not approach God as he was; the wages of sin is death. He thus took the ground of a lost sinner, and placed by faith the blood of a spotless victim, judicially slain, between himself and the God of holiness. Faith never fails to see that " without shedding of blood there is no remission." " And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Here we have death, blood, and the fat, or excellency of the victim, which typically represent the full forgiveness of sins, through faith in the precious sacrifice of Christ, and acceptance in the excellencies of the well-beloved Lord and Savior. This is God's perfect love to the lost sinner; to meet his desperate need He has spared nothing, not even His only-begotten Son. " For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) Hence the grand conclusion of faith: " 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?" Rom. 8:32.

We have the painful contrast of all this in Cain—natural religion, the world, and opposition to the truth. He had no faith in God. He came to Him as a worshipper in the way of nature, not of faith. Being utterly insensible to his own condition as a sinner, and to the character of God, he thought that by his own toil and labor he could produce something that God would accept. His offering must have cost him more pains and toil than that of Abel. But, alas, it was a bloodless offering! His worship was the denial of the condition he was in, and that the blood of the sacrifice was necessary, in order that he might approach unto God. He thought, as many do in our own day, that by his toil and labor, his liberality, his painstaking with his offering, he could find acceptance in the presence of God. This was the daring, the blindness, and the hardness of unbelief. He believed not the testimony of God as to all the great things that had just happened, with their effects and consequences. This was his sin—the root of his false worship, of his estrangement from God, of his hatred of the man of faith, and of his reckless ways in the world. And Cain went out from the

presence of the Lord; and we learn that he used all his efforts to make the world, in which he had been made a fugitive and a vagabond, a pleasant dwelling-place, without God. But here we have chiefly to do with Cain as a worshipper—a professed worshipper of the true God, yet denying the testimony of God as to his own ruin, the only way of salvation, and the character of the God he had to do with. This was the greatest and worst of all Cain's sins, although there is no reason to believe that he was insincere; but human sincerity is a poor thing when the ways are contrary to the mind of God, and formed chiefly to please ourselves. Saul of Tarsus was sincere when he was a blasphemer and a persecutor.

How little this is thought of, that a man's religiousness may be his worst sin in the sight of God! Man feels uncomfortable at the thought of God coming near to him, and, Sunday after Sunday, he goes to his place of worship, willingly goes through a form of religion, carries his offering to the altar as a duty, and all for the express purpose of appeasing God, and keeping Him at a distance. He cannot trust God, he would do anything to hinder Him from breaking in upon his repose. Like Cain, he has settled himself down in the world; he may have surrounded himself with the sweet sounds of music, and the cunning work of artificers; he is doing his utmost to make himself happy, and the world a beautiful, a delightful, place, without God. A millennium without the Lamb, was Cain's idea, and is it not the idea of every natural man today? Man's boasted progress is not one step in advance of Cain's character—and this goes on, goes on, till death and judgment overtake him. Yet withal he is a most religious man, after the order of men, and liberal in his offerings; but he is an enemy to the true testimony of God, sets aside the work of Christ, and greatly dislikes His faithful witnesses.

Balaam, the covetous prophet. His name stands before us here as the type of ecclesiastical evil, selling his services for reward, and one of the darkest features of the apostasy. We cannot think of a character more sad than Balaam's, or of iniquity worse than his. His heart was set upon money—"he loved the wages of unrighteousness." He was the hired instrument of the enemy to preach or prophesy that which was contrary to the mind of God, and against His people. But he wished to do all in a religious way, with a certain owning of the power and intervention of God, that he might have the credit of His name. He was going to seek enchantments—the inspiration of Satan, yet professing to get his light from the Lord. Nothing could exceed the wickedness and perverseness of this miserable man. Yet Jude refers to a certain class in Christendom who partake of his character. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward"—teaching error for reward, and knowing all the while that it is so. But God will in due time vindicate His truth, and preserve His people. His history is a solemn warning to all professors, as well as to all teachers, to beware of covetousness, which is idolatry.

Core, the leader of the revolt against the true servants of the Lord, Moses and Aaron; and typical of the open rebellion of apostate Christendom against the authority of God in His true King and Priest at the end of this age, and also of the terrible judgments that will speedily follow. Of the melancholy history of Korah and his company, it does not fall in with our object to say anything. In Cain we see natural wickedness; in Balaam, religious corruption; in Core open infidelity, or audacious rebellion, which brings destruction. "Jude treats of results, and the end reserved to the corruption and the corrupters of Christianity. The gainsaying of Core is a revolt against the authority of Christ, and the necessity of His priesthood—a revolt excited by a man who, occupying the position of a minister, pretends that God can be approached without this priesthood.....

“ At the end of a dispensation based on any knowledge of God, when faith is lost, and profession retained, this last obtains a renown of which men glory, as now, of the name of Christianity, “ This is not only true, manifestly true, at the present moment, but it is truly the history of the professing church in all ages; nevertheless, the people of God—true believers—are preserved in Christ Jesus, and will be presented in due time faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude: the Dark Features of the Apostasy

The following statements of Jude are more than sufficient to account for the saying, that “ The annals of the church are the darkest on record.” The evil was at work in the apostle’s day. But the small mustard-seed has become a great tree, and the little leaven has permeated the mass. These early elements of evil were introduced into the church by the enemy to pervert its energies, and corrupt all its spiritual ways. “ These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.” They were, as we would say, in fellowship, breaking bread, and taking part in the love-feasts, which were meant to be the happy expression of brotherly love, but without a particle of conscience before God, or the least sense of their own sin and shame before men. But this state of things, in the early days of Christianity, is here viewed by the Spirit of God as that which would result in the full-blown apostasy of its closing days.

These instruments of Satan appeared in the midst of the saints, and feeding themselves at their pious feasts without fear. Hardened and blinded by the enemy, we doubt not they were most pretentious, forward, and active in the assembly of the faithful. “ Raging waves of the sea [turbulent and violent against all who opposed them] foaming out their own shame.” But they are described and denounced by the Holy Ghost with an energy strikingly peculiar. “ Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”

Clouds without water, darkening the heavens, but containing no refreshing showers: trees without fruit, as if blasted by the withering curse of God, and rooted out of the garden of the church, being doubly dead, by nature and their own apostasy. “Every plant,” says the Savior, “ which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” (Matt. 15:13.) Wandering stars, who had left their original position, and were unsteady in their course; to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Many, alas! who have assumed the position of stars never were in the Lord’s right hand, wandered from the Shepherd’s path, were unsteady in their course, and a stumbling-block to thousands who blindly followed them.

What must the state of Christendom be in the sight of the Lord, we may well exclaim, seeing it contains all these elements of evil, and in fearful activity! And still more solemn the thought, if possible, there is no hope of improvement. We are plainly taught by the Spirit of God, through the prophecy of Enoch, that the evil which had crept in among the early Christians would not cease, but continue, until the Lord returned with myriads of His saints to execute judgment upon the ungodly. Evil men and seducers in the professing church are spoken of as waxing worse and worse, until destroyed by judgment at the appearing of the Lord in glory. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which

ungodly sinners have spoken against them. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."

As the judgment here spoken of will not be executed until the Lord returns, attended by all His saints, the wicked must be left behind when the faithful have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Most solemn thought for all Christendom! The rapture of the saints leaves behind for judgment every false professor within its vast limits. There will be no conversions among such after the church is gone, and whatever may be the first feelings of those that are so left, they will speedily fall into the hands of Satan, and under the power of the strong delusion, being utterly rejected by God, "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." As they persisted in rejecting the truth of God, they are judicially doomed to believe the lie of Satan, with its awful and eternal consequences.

Such will be the fearful end of multitudes who once formed a most respectable part of the company of Christians. But though members of churches, or even office-bearers, they had never broken with the world, they had never really come as lost sinners to the Savior, they had never really and truly been converted to God. And were the Lord to come for His church today, how many such would be left behind? And how many who had never once thought of ever being left behind to perish with the openly and vulgarly wicked? What! they may exclaim, we were Christians, we have always been religious, we were in office, we were full members of the church, and have always done our duty—and not to be accepted!

Nothing can be more awfully solemn; but Cain, the founder of their system—natural religion, was a worshipper, and thought he had done his best. But he cared not to think of the nature and being of that God with whom he had to do, nor of his own condition as a lost sinner. The sweat of his brow should have reminded him of the judicial consequence of sin, and that his family had been driven out of paradise. But he was guided by his own opinions, not by God's word. And what should we think of a man now who hoped he would get to heaven by acting sincerely according to his own opinions, by contributing largely to the cause of religion, and being regular in his attendance at his place of worship? This is all; there is no faith in the blood of Christ, no subjection of heart to His will. And are there not thousands, and tens of thousands, all around us in this state? Blinded to the character of God, without conscience as to the judgment of sin, and their own condition, just as Cain was.

But again, we repeat that to be religious, a worshipper, without faith in the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, is a solemn mockery, and a practical denial of the whole truth of God. Only those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus, shall enter that cloudy chariot, and be caught up to the Father's house of many mansions, and be forever with the Lord.

May the God of mercy grant that my dear reader, if not already a true believer, may lay these things to heart. The door of mercy stands wide open now, and whosoever will may enter in. All who come are welcome, received, and blessed forever. "Him that cometh to me," says the blessed Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out." Surely this word of grace from His own lips is enough to create faith in that blessed Savior. And then love to Himself and willing obedience are sure to follow. But there must be personal exercise, personal faith, personal repentance, personal

confidence in the Lord Jesus, and in His word. This is the one thing needful; everything else, compared with this, dwindles into utter insignificance. Oh, then, my dear reader, as thou wouldst escape the awful disappointment of being left behind, the awful deception of the strong delusion, the awful judgment that will be executed upon all such by the Lord in Person, and in His full manifested glory, accompanied by all His saints in the same glory, and perfectly conformed to His image—forget not that the disappointment, the judgment, the separation from that glory and those glorified ones, must be forever. In the dark prison-house of hell, the brightness of His glory, the celestial happiness of those who now share that glory, when remembered by thee, must deepen its gloom, and increase thy misery. Hadst thou not seen the Savior in His beauty and glory, and the happy myriads around Him, thy agony would have been less intolerable. But now thine eyes have seen both, and their heavenly brightness can never be forgotten. But what a scene to remember in hopeless woe! Oh, what can I say to induce thee to give thy heart at once to Jesus! Escape! oh, escape! flee from the direful consequences of unbelief, however correct thy outward life may be. Salvation is by faith alone, without deeds of law. Nothing in the vast universe can keep thy soul out of the flames of hell but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Without the shedding of blood is no remission. But that precious blood cleanseth from all sin—all who believe are cleansed and whiter than snow. Heb. 9:22 John 1:7; Psalm 51:7.

We would only further add, with reference to the apostasy, that another of its characteristics is the way that certain persons are looked up to and believed in, in place of looking to the Lord, and believing in Him alone. With this class we are all familiar. “ Having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.” Favorite ministers or leaders may be idolized, and all they say received as pure truth, though opposed to the word of God. The former they admire, the latter they do not respect: or Jude may refer to the tendency of ministers to flatter the rich, and overlook their faults, in order to gain advantage by them. But there is a class of persons in the church “who separate themselves”—who consider themselves more holy, more sacred, more spiritual, and their persons more inviolate, than the rest of mankind; in every way superior to the laity, as if they were a higher order of beings, and made of a different material. Nothing is so plainly written on the pages of history as clerical assumption. “ These be they,” says the Spirit of truth, “ who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.” They are like the Pharisees, and practically say of others, Stand by, come not near me, for I am holier than thou. Yet they are without the Holy Spirit.

(* In the September number, page 244, bottom line, for “ sacred people,” read saved people.)

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude: the Faith We Have to Contend for

A deeper apprehension, through the power of the Holy Spirit, of the prevailing evil in the professing church turns Jude from his original intention. He had purposed writing to the faithful of the salvation common to all Christians, but his heart was moved to exhort them to be faithful and earnest in contending for their most holy faith. “Beloved,” he says, “when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” We must go back for the true ground of faith, not to the fathers, nor to the founder of our adopted system, but to the Lord and His apostles. The weight of antiquity, the authority of great names, and the influence of favorite teachers, are not enough to command our faith. We must have a revelation from God Himself. “Let that, therefore,” says John, “abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning (the beginning of Christ). If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” (1 John 2:24; 4:6.) This is what we are to contend for, and to contend earnestly for; not so much to attack what is false, as to contend for the plain, simple, unmistakable word of the living God. All theories, dogmas, and systems must be brought to this test; and if the connecting link with holy scripture is not found, they cannot be matters of faith, though sometimes they may be matters of instruction, either directly or indirectly. But it will ever be found that even sincere Christians contend more earnestly for a favorite notion than for the positive truth of scripture, the latter being quite capable of standing alone on its own basis, but the former requires all the ardor of our zeal to uphold it.

“Remember therefore,” says the blessed Lord to the angel of the church in Sardis, “how thou hast received and heard.” We must go back to the original to judge the present state. This is the ground of our responsibility—what we have received, and what we have heard. We must account for both—the grace we have received, and the truth we have been taught. Hold fast these, says the Lord, and repent; and, says His servant, earnestly contend, agonize, for them. And there is another saying of the Lord on this subject of the most solemn weight, which we have recorded in Luke 9:26: “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.” Few, if any, who profess Christianity would admit that they are ashamed of the name of Christ; but few, if any, could say, I have never been ashamed of His words. We know of no warning in scripture more deeply searching, more thoroughly sifting, or more detective of our unfaithfulness, than this passage—“Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words.” The Lord had just said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” In how many instances we have failed to take up our daily cross, He only knows; and to neglect or avoid the plain force of His words, is to be ashamed of them. How far have they governed our actions, especially in defending the faith we hold, showing grace to our enemies, kindness to all around us, love to our brethren, and in the innumerable details of daily life? The words of Christ are often so directly opposed to the sanctioned maxims of society, that they are willingly overlooked, and consequently we are drawn into the smooth flowing current of things, and

His words are treated as merely figurative or obsolete. We speak, of course, in general terms; every one must judge himself in the light of His sayings, which liveth and abideth forever: but we fear that the addition to His name, “and of my words,” has not been sufficiently thought of; their depth and breadth are without measure.

Take two examples: one as to social life, and one as to ecclesiastical position. 1. The golden rule—”Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matt. 7:12.) Surely we must all feel how far short we have come, how utterly we have failed, in carrying out the true spirit of this divine maxim. It would be out of place here to refer to particular instances, but they are the words of our blessed Lord and Master, and as His disciples we ought to allow them their due place and full weight in our hearts and ways. It is a rule of easy and of universal application. Are all my dealings with others, whether buyer or seller, master or servant, on the principle that I would like myself to be dealt with? The Lord would have His disciples to act, not according to the ways of men, but according to the grace of their heavenly Father. It is the spirit of this relationship He would have us to cherish. He had just said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.”

It is not a mere principle or dry rule affecting our transactions with others, but it implies habitual communion with the God of all grace. It is a direct appeal to our spiritual feelings as the children of our Father which is in heaven, and as such knowing His ways in grace with the evil and the good, with the just and the unjust. “Be ye therefore perfect,” says our Lord, “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” This does not refer to the absence of sin in our nature, for as long as we live here below the principle of evil will be in us; but He calls upon us to be perfect in grace according to the perfect pattern which we see in our heavenly Father’s dealings with His enemies now. This is the substance of the golden rule—perfect grace. It is supposed that we know the Father, that we know what His grace is to the evil as well as the good, and what will be well pleasing to Him on the part of His children, and that, whatever others may do to us, our business is to act towards them as becometh the children of such a parentage. What true dignity! What real nobility, both of birth and nature! How pitiful to see such high-born souls stooping to what is mean and selfish, and even questionable as to principle, in order to increase their earthly riches! Their spiritual condition must be immensely lowered by such a course. How can they walk in fellowship with the Father of mercies when their thought is, how can we save here, and gain there? and that without considering the welfare of others? Self is the ruling passion, not the honor and dignity of the heaven-born family. Great and eternal is their loss, though their riches may increase. They will be as rust upon the soul. Even the Jew under the law, that knew God and acted graciously, puts all such to shame, “for this is the law and the prophets.”

There is one other passage to which we would refer under this head, as we fear it is also much lost sight of. “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matt. 26:29.) This is the Nazarite vow. Christ separates Himself from the joys of earth till the Father’s kingdom come. He takes the place of the heavenly Nazarite; and we, being associated with Him as the ascended Man, are under His vow, and ought to be true Nazarites during His absence. This is the Christian’s calling—separation in

heart and spirit, as well as in practice, from the pleasures of the world. Wine is the symbol of the natural delights of men; but Christ here says, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." That is, He separates Himself from joy with His people on the earth until the millennium; and if we as Christians are seeking the pleasures of the world, the joys of earth, the natural delights of men, He can have no fellowship with us) it must be Without Christ, He is a heavenly Nazarite.

Now we may see something of the immense weight and the extensive application of the words, or sayings, of the blessed Lord, and how important it is not to overlook them, or to suppose that they are not applicable now, times being so changed. "The word of the Lord endureth forever." If the golden rule is intended to be a guide and guard for us in all our dealings and ways in this world, the Nazarite vow should separate us entirely from its unhallowed pleasures. And when the conversion of the soul is real, and Christ known and enjoyed, this will be no hardship. It will be an immense relief. Like the spouse in the Song of Songs, every young Christian should be able to say from the heart, "Thy love is better than wine"—Thy love to me, my Savior and Lord, is better far than all the attractions and entertainments of this present life. In Thy presence there is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude: the Faith We Have to Contend for

2. Ecclesiastical position. As to our second example, are there not thousands of true Christians who would honestly shrink from the thought of being ashamed of the name of Christ, but who have never fairly considered His words, or the words of His apostles, as to their ecclesiastical position? Multitudes, without examination, remain in the religious systems in which they were brought up; others may make a choice according to their own opinion, for on this subject most men think that they may please themselves, just as they would do in choosing a business or a profession. They speak of essentials and non-essentials, and the constitution of the church is reckoned to belong to the latter. Still, the saying of the divine Master remains unchanged—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." And has He not said, as to the principle of our coming together to worship, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?" This passage clearly implies that the constitution of the christian assembly should be according to His revealed will, not mere human opinion or expediency. To constitute a church according to the opinions of men, or to make choice of such an one, is plainly to set aside the word and the authority of Christ, seeing He has spoken so plainly.

Although this is not the place to explain such a passage, as we have only referred to it as an illustration of the point before us, yet we may say that to be gathered together in the name of Christ must be with His approval, with His blessing, and under the sanction of His presence. "There am I in the midst of them." Here we find two things essential to the assembly of God: 1, Christ as the center; 2, a power that gathers believers to that center—the Holy Ghost. No room is left for human opinion; at the same time we are bound to examine, and prayerfully to weigh, the words of our blessed Lord. It is not said, where two or three meet, this would imply that the human will was at work; but where two or three are gathered, this implies that a divine power is at work in gathering.

This subject is fully developed by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, but we will only refer to one verse at present. “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This is an exhortation not to form an assembly, nor to maintain the unity of our own spirits, supposing all to be of one mind; but to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit’s forming—“the unity of the Spirit” This is the expression in principle of the body of Christ, the church of the living God. “ There is one body, and one Spirit.” Are we endeavoring to keep, to maintain, to exhibit, this unity in the bond of peace? Are we honestly desiring to do so? or would we be ashamed to be found in the place where these words would surely set us—outside of every human system, in company with a rejected Christ, and with those who have gone outside the camp to where He is?

How searching, then, O my fellow Christian, is this saying of our Lord, “ Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.” It weighs heavily and solemnly on the mind of the writer, and fain would he press its weight and importance on the minds of all his readers. May the Lord give us to be perfect in grace, separate as the Nazarite, outside the camp, and to contend earnestly for the whole truth of God, especially for the precious sayings of our Lord and Master, Christ Jesus.

We now return, after this long digression, to verse 4: “ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here we have the two great elements of evil that were introduced into the church by the instruments of Satan during the days of the apostles—the denial of the rights of Christ as Lord and Master in His own house, and turning the grace of God into a principle of dissoluteness; as many have said, in excuse of the grossest guilt, “ Are we not as God has made us?” Thus was the way cleared by the enemy for the full indulgence of the human will, it was set free from everything that restrained it.

The history of the outward professing church, from the days of Jude down to the present moment, is the history of the operation of these two elements of evil under the fair name of Christianity; for although the authority of Christ is denied, His name is owned, to give weight and sanction to the pretensions of men. In one brief verse the parent evils that have afflicted and corrupted the church of Christ in all ages are here given. We see them at work in the present day on every side: where is it they are not to be seen, more or less? Infidelity, rationalism, and ritualism are abounding on every side. Yet God, in His infinite mercy, may use the very parading of the cross, and the sanctity that is thrown around the name of Jesus, to save precious souls. Many are saved through faith in that blessed name and His cross, though mixed up with much that obscures the plain truth of the gospel. “All that the Father giveth me,” says Christ, “shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out.” (John 6:37.) This word infallibly secures the gathering out of all such to Him, wherever they may be. Hence we find souls are converted in the most corrupt systems of men; but the ignorance in which they are found as to the mind of God, proves that the Holy Ghost who quickens them does not teach them beyond the system of which they are members. It is questionable if a person ever sees beyond what he is.

Jude now speaks of the character and judgment of apostasy. The Second Epistle of Peter, which is similar in various ways to the Epistle of Jude, has been spoken of by some commentators as the same, or as if the one borrowed from the other, but this is a mistake of unbelief; they are

essentially different: Peter speaks of sin, and the reward of unrighteousness, and Jude distinctively of apostasy. “If God spared not the angels that sinned” says Peter; but Jude speaks of them as “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.” This is apostasy—departure from the first estate, from the place that the goodness of God had set them in. This is the solemn character of apostasy, not merely sin or unrighteousness, but abandoning the position in which the grace of God may place us at any given time. It may be individual; alas, how often it is so! and how completely both the testimony and the vessel that carried it are ruined. In place of the humility of faith, there is the pride of reason and the exaltation of man. The truth has no deadlier enemies than those who once professed to be its friends, when Satan has done his terrible work. But Jude is speaking of the moral corruption which characterizes the general state of Christendom, and cites several examples as solemn warnings to the professing church.

Examples Of Apostasy.

1. The case of Israel.—The Jews, typically, were a sacred people, yet fell in the wilderness, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb. “I will therefore put you in remembrance [warn you], though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” Unbelief was the root of their apostasy, their downfall, and their judgment. It was not a question of immorality and corruption, like Sodom and Gomorrah, but of abandoning the truth and the ways of God. This is the deadly evil which pervades the general mass of professing Christians. Their walk is blameless; they may even be charitable, and cover all their ways with a strong odor of sanctity. But the truth, the plain word of God, is rejected, the authority of Christ is denied, the operations of the Holy Spirit in the assembly are hindered, His presence as sovereign leader is not acknowledged, and the testimony, as established by God at the beginning, is corrupted; and, alas for the church! with every appearance of becoming reverence, there is full license for the will of man, which manifests itself in rebellion against God, by ignoring His word, and carrying out its own superstitions. And this is called human progress, or the universal progression of man; but all is ripening for the approaching judgments, and of this solemn fact Jude faithfully warns professing Christians.

2. The case of Angels.—Those spoken of by Peter sinned, these by Jude, apostatized. They departed from the position in which God had placed them, hence their judgment is spoken of in strong terms—they are “reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.”

3. Sodom and Gomorrah.—Immorality, in this case.

is the cause of judgment: but it is evident that it was excessive, and contrary even to fallen nature. Yet Capernaum, the most highly favored of places, falls under a heavier judgment than depraved Sodom. “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.” Most solemn thought for our highly-favored land, and for every mere empty professor! If there was one city in the land of Israel more favored than another, it was Capernaum; and yet the judgment of this city will be more unsparing than that of Sodom. And why? Not because they were guilty of grosser sin than Sodom, but because they refused to listen to the voice of heavenly wisdom; they believed not in Jesus, though most of His mighty works had been done among them. Theirs was the deeper and darker sin of unbelief. Alas, how little this sin

is thought of, and even by those who could not tolerate the taint of immorality! They would be offended—and properly so—with the slightest impropriety, yet the most Christ-dishonoring unbelief may be cherished, and the word of God, as for all practical purposes, totally disregarded. Books of human composition have taken the place of the book of God, as to the regulation of all their christian services. The Lord is very merciful in view of all this, He is long-suffering, slow to wrath, but when He does rise up to judgment, who shall be able to stand? Oh that we could reach the ear of every mere nominal professor who is zealous for empty forms, but has no faith in Jesus, and no proper regard for His word! In the anguish of our spirit, knowing the state of multitudes, we can only cry to Thee, Lord. Raise up, qualify, send forth messengers, who will break in upon their soul-ruining delusion.

4. Dreamers, in whom there is no truth.—Contempt for authority, self-will, an unbridled tongue, speaking evil of the apostasy common in our own day. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.” Even the angels who excel in power and might rail not, but appeal to the judgment of God. How daring is man, and how prone to give license to the tongue!

Reflections on the Epistle of Jude: the Love of God and How to Abide in It

With unfeigned delight and good-will we now turn from the history of the apostasy to consider the practical exhortations addressed to the preserved remnant in Christ. This is happier work; though God has seen it good to foretell, at the commencement of the history of Israel and of the church, what their end would be. This, no doubt, is for the guidance, if not for the warning, of the faithful, and that they may not be surprised, however grieved, at the coming in of evil. Besides, the character and doom of the ungodly in all ages are plainly revealed in the writings of both the Old and the New Testament. But the grand object of the ascended Savior's gifts unto men is the blessing of His believing ones in divine fullness. "And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Next to the glory of their exalted Lord, this was to be their great work. And even when led to speak of many things which seem to have no direct bearing on their main object—as Paul in his second epistle to Timothy—it was never lost sight of. "Therefore," says Paul, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2 Tim. 2:10.

It never was the intention of the christian ministry to depreciate and censure the saints of God in general terms for the lack of this and because of that.

True, there is always plenty to mourn over, but the style is not apostolic.

Here Jude found it needful to turn aside from his main design, and warn the "beloved" saints against departure from original standing, and to exhort them to hold fast their most holy faith, and, above all, to "keep themselves in the love of God." This is the great object of his epistle. The faithful are happily assured, in the first place, of that which is well fitted to nourish this personal confidence and delight in the love of God. "To them," he says, "that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied." If we have fairly taken in what is here declared, we will have found our own proper sphere of thought and action outside the increasing evil, and will have little difficulty in believing ourselves to be the special objects of His love, as also of His tender care. Here it is strictly individual; it is no question as to the church. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." And surely, if I believe that God, in His faithful love, has thus shown His care for me in an evil time, I can have no difficulty in believing that I am a special object of His love, and that I am to make His love the object of my special, supreme, unceasing delight.

KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

But some may inquire, What are we to understand by "keeping ourselves in the love of God?" Just, we think, what is here stated—personal, conscious, enjoyment of the love of God as our sure portion, whatever may be the abounding evil around us. It implies the knowledge of God as He has revealed Himself unto us in Christ, and communion with Him as thus revealed. It is the soul's

refuge as the darkness thickens, and troubles increase. Nations may be quarreling and fighting; the cry of war may be coming from all quarters; the professing church may be passing through the several stages of apostasy, as “ the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, the gainsaying of Core;” but the soul’s hiding-place from the strife of nations and the divisions of the church, is the love of God—the unchangeable love of God; and faith can add, without a question, This is His love to me, for whom He spared nothing, not even His own Son, that I might be cleansed from all my sins, possess eternal life, and be brought into the cloudless enjoyment of His perfect and eternal love. Whatever may occur in the history of the church or of our brethren, He is unchangeable; and the individual soul that remains true amidst the general failure, will find no change in his “ safe retreat”—the changeless love of God.

But first of all we must know God to know love. “For love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:7, 8.) The divine nature is love, and the believer is a partaker of that nature. We must possess the nature that loves in order to know what love is. “ Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth him.” A son must be the same nature as his father. This is true of all that are born of God. We are partakers of the divine nature morally—love, grace, peace, holiness, mercy, patience, long-suffering, kindness, &c. This is the grand truth to be familiar with if we would know the love of God as our refuge and delight. Let my reader give special heed to this immense prerogative, which flows from the whole doctrine of the epistle. The eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested, and has been imparted to us; thus we are partakers of the divine nature. The affections of that nature, acting in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, in communion with God, who is its source, place us in such a relationship with Him, that we dwell in Him, and He in us. The actings of this nature prove that He dwells in us. We know at the same time that we dwell in Him, because He has given us of His Spirit.

When these truths, so profound, so marvelous, so rich in blessing, are understood, we shall see the force and value of Jude’s exhortation—“ Keep yourselves in the love of God.” What can be conceived so near to God as dwelling in Him, and He in us? And this is what the apostle proceeds to explain, or set forth, in the following verses of chapter. But we will only notice verses 9, 10 as their grand foundation. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Here we have our first lesson—the perfect manifestation of divine love to sinners as such. There is no mention of anything required of them; nothing said about law or commandments, but the simple fact that they did not love God, but that He loved them. Here, as lost sinners, we learn that God loved us when we were in our sins, and when we did not love Him, though we ought to have done so, as the law demands. And now, as a believer, I further learn—and can I speak of this without being deeply affected by it?—it was not anything good in me, but my need that drew forth His perfect love, and that in a twofold way—as life, and as propitiation. Being dead in sin, I needed eternal life, a new nature, and I have it in Christ; being guilty, I needed the forgiveness of my sins, cleansing from all defilements, and I have it in Christ, even according to the claims of the divine glory. God never separates these two blessings, life and forgiveness, and neither does faith, but unbelief is ever prone to disconnect them. They are the inseparable heritage of every child of God, and that too as the simple fruit of faith in Christ. We might also add righteousness, for we are made the

righteousness of God in Christ. Thus we have a divine title, a divine fitness, and a divine capacity for communion with God, and the enjoyment of His love forever.

But on this foundation-truth there must be no mistake, no misgiving, or we shall fail to enjoy this love. Were it possible to have Christ as life, and not as propitiation, we should be perfectly miserable. To know God in His holiness, and as the Judge of sin, and not to be sure of the forgiveness of all our sins, is misery enough, as many a quickened soul has experienced. This is where doubts and fears come in as the fiery darts of the enemy. Many a truly converted soul has remained long-ignorant of God's full judgment of sin on the cross, in the precious sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently exposed to the attacks of Satan, and great anguish of spirit. But we must ever hold fast this plain, all-powerful truth, that God, in His love, who gave Christ to be our life, gave Him also to be the propitiation for our sins. It is one of the strange inconsistencies of unbelief for a person to believe the ninth verse, and not the tenth of 1 John 4. It is perfect peace to know Christ as our life, righteousness, and propitiation, and the only way of enjoying God and dwelling in His love.

We have also to beware, at this point, of becoming occupied with our own feelings in place of the truth, or in seeking proofs of our love to God, and our possession of the divine nature in ourselves. This would lead to the greatest confusion and uncertainty. The obvious design of the Spirit in this passage is to fix our attention on the true object of faith—the Son of God. “In this was manifested the love of God towards us.” How? In what way? Because we feel a change within? No, just the opposite; “Because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” We are assured of His love, not by our own feelings, or any change in us, however real these may be, but in its manifestation towards us in that He has given His only Son, that we might have eternal life, and the full, free, and everlasting forgiveness of all our sins.

Much light is thrown on the exhortation before us in the words of our Lord, in John 15 “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.” By walking as man—the path of the perfect Man on earth—according to the whole mind and will of His Father, He abode in His love. Communion was maintained; He dwelt in the Father's love. The disciples, in this way, by following His example, and keeping His commandments, would dwell in His love. “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,” are wonderful words for the heart. When we have well weighed and understood them, we shall be prepared for what He asks, “Continue ye in my love.” That He should desire such a thing, what grace! Abide, dwell, keep your-selves in my love!

The commandments of Christ, so frequently spoken of by John, must not be confounded with the commandments of the law. They are entirely different. The law was given to man in the flesh, with the promise of life if he kept it. The commandments of Jesus are His words, sayings, graciously given to the disciples for the direction of the new life which they possessed. Hence the unspeakable importance, as we have already seen, of attending to the words of Jesus. It is in this way that we dwell in His love. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.....If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

Thus we have in the words of our Lord a beautiful exposition of the exhortation, “Keep yourselves in the love of God;” and in His own experience, while He dwelt on earth, a beautiful illustration of the important truth it conveys. May we walk in His path, abide in His love, and enjoy uninterrupted communion with Himself!

Largeness Not Laxity

“ I admire the exceeding breadth of Paul, as indeed well one may admire it in every one who—steering clear of its counterfeit, laxity proves spiritual capacity for it. It becomes not the Christian to be narrow. Nevertheless, who can avoid seeing the tendency to be so in various ways? Be assured that it is not only weakness, but a danger, wherever it may be. I grant, however, that even narrowness in and for God’s truth is far better than that lax uncertainty and spurious liberalism in divine things which is growingly a snare in this evil day.

“ Take the contrary of this in the apostle and his preaching. The very man to whom all are most indebted for the gospel of the grace of God, set forth, as none else did, that particular phase of it which is called the gospel of the glory of Christ. At the same time he preached the kingdom of God as decidedly as possible. He never was afraid of the ignorant outcry that this is low ground. The fact is, that hasty and little minds say so, unable to take in more than one idea, and apt to be intoxicated with that one. But the apostle exhibits that excellent largeness and elasticity which gives its place to every message which God has revealed, which pretends not to choose in scripture, but thankfully takes and uses the testimony of God as it is given. It seems to me that we really lower the revival of truth which grace has wrought, by allowing that this truth or that is the only truth for the day. The specialty of our blessing is that we have got into a large place—contemptible as it looks to unbelief—that no truth comes amiss, and that all truth is for this day. I hold this to be an important point for us, avoiding the pettiness of fancying or seeking a fictitious value for whatever happens to be dawning with especial force on our own minds.

“ It is a snare the more to be dreaded, because it has ever led to the making of sects, through an active mind laying hold of, or rather taken captive by, some favorite notion, or even truth. I consider it then an essentially sectarian bias; and that the true and distinctive blessing of what God has given to us now in these days, is not so much laying hold of this or that truth higher than others accept—though this be true—but the heart open to the truth in all its extent, and this bound up with Christ personally, as the only possible means of deliverance—if by grace we walk there in the power of the Spirit—from every kind of pettiness. It will be found, too, that it is immensely important practically for holiness, because we are so weak, that we are likely to take just what we like, and what at the time suits our own character, habits, position, circumstances, and capacity; whereas what we really want is to detect, judge, and thus be saved from self; not that whichever spares flesh, but what gives us to mortify our members on the earth, as well as what in divine love suits the varying wants of souls around us, and, above all, His glory who has given us not only a particular part of His mind, but the whole of it.

“ Thus, as it has been well said, the peculiarity of the right position is its universality. That is, it is not merely a special portion or phase of truth, no matter how blessed, but the truth in all its fullness as the divinely given safeguard against particular views, and the communication of the exceeding largeness of God’s grace, and truth, and ways for us in the world. ‘All things are yours.’ Anything that tends by distinctive marks to make a party by bringing forward oneself, or one’s own views, as

a center, is self-condemned.”

W. K.

Note.—The foregoing is an extract from a work, entitled “ Lectures Introductory to the Minor Prophets,” by W. Kelly. (Broom, 25, Paternoster Square, London, E. C.) We cannot too highly commend this valuable work to the notice of the christian reader.

It contains some of the soundest, clearest, finest passages we have ever read.

There are other volumes by the same author, such as “ Lectures Introductory to the Pentateuch;” “ Lectures Introductory to the Historical Books.” Also three volumes of “ Lectures on the New Testament;” and a very elaborate and able exposition of “ The Book of Revelation.” All these works we earnestly recommend to our readers. We should like to see them in the hands of every Christian throughout the length and breadth of the professing church.

Man's History and God's Due Time

We have now seen the whole condition of man fairly and fully revealed, and the period of his probation as under law, terminating in the cross of Christ. In God's account his moral history closes here, but not his responsibility. Because man is proved to be without any good thing towards God, some have affirmed that he is not responsible. This is a false and pernicious doctrine. The character of man's responsibility may change, but he can never cease to be responsible. Surely he is responsible to believe and acknowledge the result of his own history, and the judgment of God thereon. And had man simplicity enough to believe the testimony of God concerning himself as lost under sin, and His testimony concerning Christ as the Savior, he would be pardoned and saved on the spot; for man can only be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“ the second man.”

We have now to do with another man, whom the scriptures call “ the second Man.” From Adam downwards, even until the present hour, every man on the ground of responsibility has failed, save ONE. “Yes, One, and only One, perfect man has appeared amongst men during the entire period of their history. In the presence of Him who was perfect light and perfect love, the moral state of all other men was manifested. “**I** I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” All men, as by nature united to the first Adam, repeat his character; they are just so many sons in his own likeness, and after his own image. But to “ the second Man” God bears testimony from the opened heavens, saying, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17; Luke 9:35.) Though truly man, He is absolutely God, possessed of every divine perfection, and justly entitled to every divine honor; but for the present we speak of Him as man, and as such the very opposite, in every particular, of the first man, and of all men, down to His lowly birth in Bethlehem. As Son of God He was alone with the Father from all eternity; but in God's “ due time” He became a man, in order to die for men on the cross. “ When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4, 5.

This passage is so important to our subject, that we shall do well to pause for a moment, review our position, and recall some points in the history of man and of the Jew.

We have seen that man, as such, before the period of law, was lawless, and sought his happiness outside the presence of God; and that with the expansion of the human family the earth was filled with violence and corruption. The deluge closed the scene of antediluvian wickedness. After that, the posterity of Noah fell into the grievous sin of idolatry, which destroyed the link of connection between the world and God, so he called out Abraham to be a new stock, and formed his descendants into a distinct people, separate from all other nations. The Jews, as we have seen,

were not only separated to God Himself, but were protected by Him, and enriched with every means of blessing. They were called in an especial manner to be witnesses of God against the sin of idolatry. The unity of the Godhead was the most important truth conveyed in the law. "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. 6:4.) But, alas! alas! they were unfaithful to God, and fell into the very sin which they had been called out to testify against. The golden calf was the original and the great national sin of Israel. Jeroboam repeated the sin of Aaron, wherewith he made Israel to sin. "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan." 1 Kings 12:28-30.

Such was Israel, and such is the heart of man in all ages; and thus it became necessary that Christ should be not only a man, but a Jew—"Made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." As another has said, "If He had not been a man, there could have been no basis for meeting any child of Adam under any circumstances; and if He had not been a Jew, where had been the law, or the promises either? But being both, now comes in an infinitely greater thing—redemption.....But mere keeping of the law could not have redeemed any one; it was essential to the vindication of God that the Lord should show He was perfect man under the law, perfect Son of man, perfect Israelite, perfect Son of God, above law—in all things perfect."

But whatever might be the varied glories of "the second Man"—and we know He is equal with the Father—His mission to this world was love, His great work, redemption. God waited for His coming, He watched for the accomplishment of righteousness, for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself, for His complete mastery over death and the grave, that the flood-gates of His eternal love might be thrown wide open, and that the life-giving streams of His grace might flow forth freely to the utmost bounds of moral death and misery. Hence it was triumphantly proclaimed that "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." This was God's "due time".... "The fullness of the time." He had been perfectly glorified about sin, His truth maintained inviolate, His law magnified and made honorable, and the whole need of man, of the Jew, according to his past history, fully met in the redemption accomplished by Christ Jesus.

If man dishonored God by disobedience, disregarded His word, despised His grace, and insulted the Majesty of heaven by the worship of idols; the blessed Lord Jesus was the obedient, dependent man; He vindicated and honored God's truth and grace, and manifested in Himself—meek and lowly though He was—the Majesty of the Godhead. If man acquired a bad conscience through sin, sin has been put away, the conscience purified by the blood of Christ, through faith, so that there is no more conscience of sins. The curse of the broken law has been borne by Jesus, and all the promises are established in His adorable Person. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Corinthians 1:20-22.

oneness with Christ as risen and glorified.

O blessed, precious truth! All, all, is found in Christ, dead and risen again! The new center in resurrection, the head of a new race, the source of a new power, His own eternal life made ours by

faith in Him, and divine righteousness our title to His own position and privileges in heavenly places. "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." (Col. 2:9, 10.) Thus we see that redemption power raises the redeemed above creation power, and redemption glory exalts them far above all creation glory. "Complete!" yes, "complete in him:" but where? Wondrous! glorious truth! Above all principality and power—above every created thing—and in Him, one with Him, where He is, and as He is.

Who would not, we are ready to exclaim, leave the ruined family of the first Adam, join the family of the last Adam, and share its riches and its honors? There are but the two families now, no middle place whatever. The first Adam bequeathed to his posterity the sad inheritance of sin, a depraved nature, condemnation, death: the last Adam, righteousness, a divine nature, justification, eternal life. The one family must spend their eternity in the dark regions of hell; the other, in the bright and sunny regions of heaven. Can thoughtful, reflecting, intelligent man hesitate for a moment as to which of the two families he would belong? Can he remain undecided for a single second? Who would care to join a company, even in this life, that was insolvent, and on the eve of a total disaster—irrecoverable ruin? The reader, if he has not already, must now make his choice. Christ, risen and glorified, is the Head, Center, and uniting power of this new company—the family of God. And no dissolution, no separation, can ever take place. As the blessed Lord said to Martha, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Their bond is eternal life in the power of the Spirit, the duration of their reign the countless ages of eternity, and the portion of the least, the unsearchable, the untraceable, riches of Christ.

Such is the happy lot, the bright prospect, of all who believe in Jesus. And it may be all enjoyed now according to the measure of our faith, and the closeness of our walk with the Lord. And this happy place, this wealthy portion, may be my reader's to-day, be he Jew, or be he Gentile, or be he the vilest sinner on the face of the whole earth. The cross terminated the distinctions between Greek and Jew, between circumcision and uncircumcision, between barbarian, Scythian, bond and free; Christ is now the one, the only object, for all; and He is in all to them that believe. Flee, then, my dear reader, from the impending, the inevitable, but, alas! the eternal, ruin of the first man. Judgment is already given, the sentence already passed, nothing can avert the awful doom; but thou mayest yet escape; the door of mercy is still open, the voice of mercy still calls for thee; flee, then, oh, flee for thy life—life in Christ, life in endless glory;—for whosoever will may take of the water of life freely—gratis! "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Is not this for thee—thyself? Believe it, trust in Him who died for thee, and live forever.

My Rest

His rest—no tongue can tell
The joy of soul these words impart
To one who knows full well
That earth can ne'er delight his heart.
That there, beyond the reach
Of all the sorrows, tumults, cares,
Which yet their lessons teach,
Remains the rest his spirit seeks.
His rest—the One in whom
Our hearts have learned to make their boast,
Who, when we'd earn'd the doom
Of sin, redeem'd at such a cost
Our guilty souls, and all
His changeless love has made us know:
Whose word can never fail,
Whose boundless grace doth ceaseless flow.
His rest—no human word
Can add to this most blessed sound;
No mortal ear has heard,
No mortal tongue has ever found
One word to equal this,
That He, Himself, shall find His rest
In all that perfect bliss
Bestow'd by Him upon the blest.
His rest—shall we then long
To find our rest where He had none,

Whose wondrous path along
This Satan-govern'd world was one
Of ceaseless strife and work!
Our pattern He, nor ever should these
Hearts allow one thought to lurk
Of present comfort, rest or ease.
His rest—we then are left
A pilgrim band to thread our way
Alone? Ah? not bereft
Of blessed guidance either night or day.
His word shall search our hearts,
And in God's path us gently lead,
While priestly grace impart
The suited help to meet our need.
His rest—then onward still
A watching, waiting, working band,
We go, nor rest until
Himself shall speak the blest command,
And we to meet Him rise;
Well done! shall be the record there,
Our hearts shall richly prize
Who endless, perfect blessings share.
J. F. H.

My Way and God's Way: "He That Believeth Shall Not Make Haste"

My Father! I was hastening on my way
And now a hand has stopp'd me.
Is it Thine? Must I my spirit's ardent hopes resign,
To see my task of love complete today?
To labor thro' the day-light I had planned;
But one short hour, and I had finish'd all;
Now the gray shadows of the evening fall,
The night, when none can work, is nigh at hand.
Was not my thought according to Thy will?
Could hopes so bright be all of earthly guise?
I trusted they were perfect in Thine eyes,
And now Thy answer seems,— "Wait, and be still."
,Tis hard to bid my busy labors cease,
But I have promised hardness to endure;
And if Thou bid me linger, I am sure
The chamber that I wait in will be peace.
Perhaps if all the night I lie at rest,
And yield myself in stillness unto Thee,
Thou, in the silent hours, wilt work for me;
And oh, full well I know Thy work is best.
If on the altar I had thought to raise,
Thou wiltiest not this sacrifice should lie,
Obedience is most precious in Thine eye,
Submission is Thy sweetest song of praise.
In quietness my soul may grow more strong,
Another day, perhaps, to serve Thee more,

With greater wisdom than I did before,
With greater patience when the hours seem long.
Let me leave all to Thee—Thou knowest best,
Thus praying, all my bitter thoughts grow sweet:
Thus standing still, my eager hurrying feet,
As in a holy temple, seem to rest.
I will not look beyond with vain alarm;
The morning may have work, or restful joy.
Only be with me, Lord! my heart employ;
Be Thy pure will my guide, my strength Thy arm.

No More

“ The former troubles are forgotten, because they are hid from mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered nor come upon the heart.” (Marg.) Isa. 65:16, 17.

“ God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” Rev. 21:4, 5.

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more,”.... “and there shall be no more curse,”.... “ and there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever.”

“ And I beheld and lo, in the midst of the throne.... a Lamb as it had been slain.” Rev. 5:6.

No More! for the Journey Is Over

“No more!” for the journey is over,
Its weariness past;
And there bursts on each pilgrim, the dawning
Of heaven at last!
“No more!” shall death make, with his shadow,
The fond heart quiver;
For its loved ones are past all losing,
Alive forever!
No pause in the song, or the pleasure
Of that bright day;
No joy, that the fond heart can question
Will pass away!
No thought of the far distant country
Shall shadow us there;
When the Father’s bright home has been entered,
So wondrously fair!
The pathway of sorrow and suffering
Our footsteps have trod;
Forgotten:—while tasting in fullness
The sweet rest of God!
In the depths of “His great love” rejoicing
Our souls but adore;
To know from the bliss of His presence
We “go out no more.”
No thoughts of our past shall o’ershade us
No sorrow, or loss;

We shall only look back to remember
The woes of the cross!
And in depths of a radiance unfading
Our souls may retrace;
His path, from the cross to the glory—
His riches of grace!
His tears, and His grief, and His passion,
His sorrowful days,
We'll remember: while now in the glory
He leadeth our praise!
Our song of deep worship ascending,
As God we adore;
A bliss, once begun, never ending
We “go out no more!”
A. S. O,

Occupied

My Lord is in the glory now,
I journey still below,
Yet can my heart commune with Him,
His blessed presence know.
So really linked to Him above,
The things of time oft seem
Like shadows, while the Spirit speaks
Filling my soul with Him.
Oh, what a love is thus revealed,
Unfathomed, without end!
Not a mere servant to obey—
He calleth me His friend,
Confides to me the Father's mind—
I'm in the secret place,
Learning His mighty purposes,
Wonders of power and grace.
Oh! blessed haven of quietness,
Above earth's troubled roar,
Men's hearts are failing them for fear;
Mine never trembles more.
For I retire alone with Him
Whose will doth all restrain;
I know the wildest storms of earth
Surge round that Rock in vain.
Thus in His wisdom can I trust,
Waiting, since He waits too—

Man's lawlessness but ripening
Designs they never knew.
As when Golgotha's murderers,
Worked out God's deepest love,
Faith, understanding, learns to trust
The heart that plans above.
The Spirit leads my spirit up,
Shutting me in with God;
He thinks for me, He acts for me,
Faith never bears a load.
And this is joy most sanctifying,
Earth's brightest hues grow dim,
Losing all power to charm a heart
Thus occupied with Him.
No space is here for sinful self,
Nor useless, idle dream;
Flesh-blossoms wither in a heart,
Pre-occupied with Him,
Yea, thus the longing heart is full
Supplied for every need,
Finding an object and a joy
All-satisfying indeed.

Olivet: Every Man Went Unto His Own House. Jesus Went Unto the Mount of Olives

The day is done; thick falls the dew
Of night on Olivet. Hark! to the tread
Of weary feet! 'tis Jesus comes to seek,
As He is wont, the friendly shelter,
Where nightly, "alone, yet not alone,"
That "Man of sorrows" holds communion
With His God. He was that lowly One
Who had not where to lay His head;
Yet legions minister to Him unseen
By human eye, whilst the high
Heavens canopy His sacred head,
And myriad stars illuminate The night.
And what communion
Occupies the Father and the Son
'Tis man's redemption!
None hut Himself, the
Lord of glory, could
Such a work achieve. Out of the
Mighty depths of love that none
Can fathom till we shall know
As we are known, it came! and
Nobly, "It is finished."
Look upward, blood-bought children!
See where Jesus has from Olivet ascended,
Waiting the glorious dawning when

He shall come to meet us in the air!
Once more shall those same
Sacred feet stand on thy very heights,
Mount Olivet, a spectacle to wondering
And expecting gaze. Oh, sight of
Glory marvelous beyond compare!
Surely our faith then will confess,
“ The half had not been told.”
Keep us, Lord Jesus, by Thy Spirit,
Gazing at heaven’s high portals
From, as it were, our Olivet of faith,
Till we shall see Thee, and
Be like Thee, and forever
With Thee, Lord.
A. M. H.

Only a Little Longer

“ Watchman, what of the night? The morning cometh.” Isa. 21:11-12.

“ Only a little longer,”—sound forth the joyful tidings,—

Spread the sweet message over land and sea;—

Let its glad echoes ring o’er vale and mountain,

Cheering the drooping heart—rousing the feeble knee.

“ Only a little longer,”—deeper the night gloom gathers—

More chill and keen we feel the night blasts blow—

We heed them not, for evermore within us,

The Spirit keeps each heart in living glow.

“ Only a little longer!”—thickens the darkness round us,

Brighter the day-star shines—’twill soon be day!

So speed we on while circling softly round us

Hear we His own sweet whisper,—” I am the way.”

Clearer, and yet clearer still its love-light shineth,

While the rapt heart within us needs must sing,

As deeper, and yet deeper, and evermore still deeper

Drink we the waters of the everlasting spring.

“ Only a little longer!” life’s pulse beats higher;

Richer life’s music thrills the answering chord—

While heart to heart responsive cadence waking,

Swells the glad chorus of hope and joy in God.

“ Only a little longer!” new light gleams round us,

Showing that Ones illumined footsteps through the gloom

Tread we more firmly in that blessed pathway

Which leadeth every moment nearer home.

“Only a little longer!” shout, shout the joyful tidings—

Let the wide world its glorious key-note hear—
Tell them the daylight cometh—morning breaketh—
Tell them in warning voice, “ The Bridegroom’s near.”
“ Only a little longer!”—win souls for Jesus!
Speak of His wondrous, tender, dying love,
Woo them and win them by thine heart’s own yearnings
Tell them how His heart beats in heaven above.
“ Only a little longer!”—eternity is nearing!
Tell them of pardon bought by Jesus blood—
Speak of that wondrous way by His own self provided,
The sinner’s only way right back to God.
“ Only a little longer!”—see, the moments lessen—
Call to the wandering one—“come home, come home!’
Toll of a Father’s joy to pardon, and restore them—
Tell how His tender heart yearns o’er those who roam.
“ Only a little longer!”—Comfort the mourner,—
Fill up life’s voids with tender, loving care—
Tell how His tender heart in sympathy untiring
Longs to receive them too, His joy to share.
“ Only a little longer!”—Speak it more gently,—
Breathe it more softly into childhood’s ear—
Tell to the lisping children that the Savior cometh—
Cometh to take them to the mansions fair.
“ Only a little longer!” then, O Lord, to see Thee!
How our hearts yearn, Lord Jesus, to behold Thy face
To see Thee in Thy beauty, all gloriously transcendent—
No cloud between to hide Thy peerless grace.
“ Only a little longer!”—then to be like Thee,
For evermore like Thine own self to be,

Through the glad days of never-ending ages
To find our Light, our Song, our A11 in Thee.
St. Bees.

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

We must remember that in the prophecies before our Lord came, we do not read of the judgment before the great white throne. It is never the judgment of the soul and body in a risen state. I am not aware of any Old Testament prophecies which bring in the eternal judgment of man raised and consigned to the lake of fire as the second death. This is as characteristic of Christianity as the judgment of the world, as living men on the earth—of nations, tribes and tongues—is the proper subject of Old Testament prophecy. The Revelation of John, which is as peculiar in its themes as in its style, and in Hebrew-Greek phraseology, most appropriately sets both fully before us.

Herein we may see that traditional teaching is extremely defective and doubly misleading, because men try to bring in mere providential judgments into the New Testament state of things, as they would also graft eternal judgment upon the Old Testament predictions. The consequence is that a strain is put upon both Testaments, and confusion ensues; for the true way to understand the Bible is not to confound things that differ, but to accept divine revelation as discharging, in each of its two distinct parts, the functions for which God inspired those raised up to communicate His mind.

The Old and New Testaments are perfectly harmonious! and there is not a line or word of one that contradicts the other. But they are very far from being or saying the same things. God takes particular pains to mark the difference, in fact, writing each in a different tongue—the one Hebrew, having its groundwork in the family of Abraham after the flesh—the other Greek, used when God was sending the gospel to the Gentiles as such. Thus the Greek was just as much a representative of Gentile objects, as the Hebrew found its fitting object in Israel. But, for all that, God shows His mind in both. Only the distinctive feature of the Old Testament is His government, while the distinctive feature of the New Testament is His grace. Government and grace are totally distinct. Government is always a dealing with man: whereas grace is the revelation of what God is and does. Consequently the one invariably supposes judgment, and the other is the full display of mercy and goodness; and both find their meeting point in Christ. As He is the King, He consequently is the head of the government. As He is the Son of God, full of grace and truth, He consequently is the one channel for all the blessing peculiar to the New Testament. His glory—now that the mighty work of redemption is done—accounts for all our characteristic privileges.

W. K.

Rivers of Living Water

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” John 7:37, 38.

The feast referred to in this lovely scripture was “The feast of tabernacles,” called, at the opening of the chapter, “The Jews’ feast.” This stamped its character. It could no longer be called, as in Lev. 23 “A feast of Jehovah.” The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality—a powerless ordinance—a piece of barren routine—something in which man could boast himself while God was entirely shut out.

This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. No doubt power may clothe itself in a certain form; and, so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old; and thus it is with the professing church now. We have all to watch against this[^] snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul, and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise, the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained.

The reader has, no doubt, noticed that in the opening chapters of John’s Gospel, the inspired writer invariably designates the feasts as feasts of the Jews; and not only so, but we find the Lord Jesus displacing one after another of these feasts and offering Himself as an object for the heart. Thus at the opening of chapter vii. we read, “ After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand.” Terrible anomaly! deadly delusion! Seeking to murder the Son of God, and yet keeping the feast of tabernacles! Such is religious man without God. “ His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see thy ivories that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe on him.”

Near as His brethren were to Him, according to the flesh, they knew Him not, they believed not on Him. They had not one thought in common with Him. They would fain have Him make a display of Himself before the world. They knew not His object. He had not come from heaven in order to be gazed at and wondered after. “All the world will wonder after the beast” by-an-by; but the blessed Son of God came to serve and to give. He came to hide Himself, to glorify God, and to serve man.

He refused, therefore, to exhibit Himself at the feast. “ Then Jesus said unto them, my time is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet to this feast: for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.”

And for what did He go up? He went up to serve. He went up to glorify His Father, and to be the willing Servant of man’s necessity. “ Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, saying, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” Here His moral glory, as the self-hiding Servant, shines out. “ My doctrine is not mine.” Such was His answer to those who wondered where He got His learning. Alas! they knew Him not. His motives and His objects lay far beyond the reach of carnal and worldly-minded men. They measured Him by their own standard, and hence, all their conclusions were utterly false. “ If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself [απ εμαυτον]. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true and no unrighteousness is in him.”

The blessed One did not speak from Himself, as if He were independent of the Father, but as One who lived in absolute and complete dependence, and in unbroken communion, drawing all His springs from the living God, doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing apart from the Father.

We have the same truth with reference to the Holy Ghost, in John 16 “ Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.” The Holy Ghost did not speak from Himself, as independent of the Father and the Son, but as One in full communion with them.

But we must turn, for a moment, to the words which form the special subject of this paper. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.■’ Here we have set before us a truth of infinite preciousness and immense practical power. The Person of Christ is the divine spring of all freshness and spiritual energy. It is in Him alone the soul can find all it really needs. It is to Him we must betake ourselves for all our personal refreshment and blessing. If, at any time, we find ourselves dull, heavy and barren, what are we to do? Make efforts to raise the tone? Nay, this will never do. What then? Let him “ Come unto me and drink”

Mark the words. It is not, “ Come unto me and draw.” We may draw for others and be dry ourselves; but if we drink, our own souls are refreshed, and then—” Rivers of living water.”

Nothing is more miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion. We may be very busy; our hands may be full of work; our feet may run hither and thither; the head may be full of knowledge; but if the heart be not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will, it must be, all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned; and there will, there can be, no “rivers of living water” flowing out for others. Impossible. If we are to be made a blessing to others, we must feed upon Christ for ourselves. We do not” drink” for other people, we drink to satisfy our thirst; and as we drink, the rivers flow. Show us a man whose heart is filled with Christ, and we will show you a man whose hands are ready for work, and his feet ready to run; but unless we begin with heart communion, our running and our doing will be a miserable failure—there will be no glory to God—no rivers of living water.

Yes, reader, we must begin in the very innermost circle of our own moral being, and there be occupied, by faith, with a living Christ, else all our service will prove utterly worthless. If we want to act on others; if we would be made a blessing in our day and generation; if we desire to bring forth any fruit to God; if we would shine as lights amid the moral gloom around; if we would be a channel of blessing' in the midst of a sterile desert, then, verily, we must hearken to our Lord's words in John 7:37. We must drink at the fountain head. And what then? Drink still—drink ever—drink largely, and then the rivers must flow. If I say, "I must try and be a channel of blessing to others" I shall only prove my own folly and weakness. But if I bring my empty vessel to the fountain head and get it filled, then, without the smallest effort, the rivers will flow.

Separation: Not Fusion

“ Therefore, thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth; let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.’ Jer. 15:19.

The principle laid down in the foregoing passage is of the deepest possible importance to all who desire to walk with God. It is by no means a popular principle; very far from it. But this does not detract from its value in the judgment of those who are taught of God. In an evil world the popular thing is almost sure to be the wrong thing; and whatever has most of God—most of Christ—most of pure truth—is sure to be most unpopular. This is an axiom in the judgment of faith, inasmuch as Christ and the world are at opposite points of the moral compass.

Now, one of the most popular ideas of the day is fusion, or amalgamation; and all who desire to be accounted men of broad sympathies and liberal sentiments go thoroughly in for this grand object. But we hesitate not to avow that nothing can be more opposed to the revealed mind of God. We make this statement in the full consciousness of its opposition to the universal judgment of Christendom. For this we are quite prepared. Not that we court opposition; but we have long since learned to distrust the judgment of what is called the religious world, because we have so constantly found that judgment to be diametrically opposed to the plainest teaching of holy scripture; and it is, we can truly say, our deep and earnest desire to stand with the word of God against everything and everyone; for we are well assured that nothing can abide forever, save that which is based upon the imperishable foundation of holy scripture.

What, then, does scripture teach on the subject of this paper? Is it separation, or fusion? What was the instruction to Jeremiah in the passage quoted above? Was he told to try and amalgamate with those around him? Was he to seek to mingle the precious with the vile? The very reverse. Jeremiah was taught of God first of all to return himself—to stand apart even from those who were the professed people of God, but whose ways were contrary to His mind. And what then? “I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me.”

Here, then, we have Jeremiah's personal path and position most clearly laid down. He was to return, and take his stand with God in thorough separation from evil. This was his bounden duty, regardless of the thoughts of men, or of his brethren. They might deem and pronounce him narrow, bigoted, exclusive, intolerant, and the like; but with that he had nothing whatever to do. His one grand business was to obey. Separation from evil was the divine rule, not amalgamation with it. The latter might seem to offer a wider field of usefulness, but mere usefulness is not the object of a true servant of Christ, but simple obedience. The business of a servant is to do what he is told, not what he considers right or good. If this were better understood, it would simplify matters amazingly. If God calls us to separation from evil, and we imagine we can do more good by amalgamation with it, how shall we stand before Him? How shall we meet Him? Will He call that good which resulted from positive disobedience to His word? Is it not plain that our first, our last, our only duty, is to obey? Assuredly. This is the foundation, yea, it is the sum and substance of all

that can really be called good.

But was there not something for Jeremiah to do in his narrow path and circumscribed position? There was. His practice was defined with all possible clearness. And what was it? "If thou separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." He was not only to stand and walk in separation himself, but he was to try and separate others also. This might give him the appearance of a proselytizer, or of one whose object was to draw people over to his way of thinking. But here again he had to rise above all the thoughts of men. It was far better, far higher, far more blessed, for Jeremiah to be as God's mouth, than to stand well with his fellows. What are man's thoughts worth? Just nothing. When his breath goeth out of him, in that very hour his thoughts perish. But God's thoughts shall endure forever. If Jeremiah had set about mingling the precious with the vile, he would not have been as God's mouth; nay, he would have been as the devil's mouth. Separation is God's principle; fusion is Satan's.

It is counted liberal, large-hearted, and charitable, to be ready to associate with all sorts of people. Confederacy, association, limited liabilities, are the order of the day. The Christian must stand apart from all such things; not because he is better than other people, but because God says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It was not because Jeremiah was better than his brethren that he had to separate himself, but simply because he was commanded to do so by Him whose word must ever define the course, govern the conduct, and form the character of His people. And, further, we may rest assured it was not in sourness of temper, or severity of spirit, but in profound sorrow of heart and humility of mind that Jeremiah separated himself from those around him. He could weep day and night over the condition of his people; but the necessity of separation was as plain as the word of God could make it. He might tread the path of separation with broken heart and weeping eyes, but tread it he must if he would be as God's mouth. Had he refused to tread it, he would have been making himself to be wiser than God. What, though those around him, his brethren and friends, might not be able, to understand or appreciate his conduct; with this he had nothing whatever to do. He might refer them to Jehovah for an explanation, but his business was to obey, not to explain or apologize.

Thus it is always. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

It may seem very plausible and very popular to say, "We ought not to judge other people. How can we tell whether people are believers or not? It is not for us to set ourselves up as holier than others. It is charitable to hope the best. If people are sincere, what difference does it make as to creeds? Each one is entitled to hold his own opinions. It is only a matter of views after all."

To all this we reply, God's word commands Christians to judge, to discern, to discriminate, to come out, to be separate. This being so, all the plausible arguments and reasonings that can possibly be adduced are, in the judgment of a true-hearted, single-eyed, servant of Christ, lighter by far than

the small dust of the balance.

Hearken to the following weighty words from the blessed apostle Paul to his son Timothy—words bearing down with unmistakable clearness upon all the Lord's people at this very moment: "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from, iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man purge himself from these (the dishonorable vessels), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Tim. 2:19-21.

Here we see that if any man desires to be a sanctified vessel, meet for the Master's use, and prepared, unto every good work, he must separate himself from the iniquity and the dishonorable vessels around him. There is no getting over this without flinging God's word overboard; and surely to reject God's word is to reject Himself. His word commands me to purge myself, to depart from iniquity, to turn away from those who have only a form of godliness, but deny its power.

Take All Things As They Come

Take all things as they come, and murmur not,
The bitter and the sweet, as God sees best,
Be satisfied with thine appointed lot,
Build all thy hopes on Christ, and leave the rest
To His disposal, who's too wise to err,
And loves thee far too much to do thee harm;
And since the sparrow shares His loving care,
His child may safely rest without alarm.
He knows the needs be for whate'er
He sends, And watches over thee with, jealous care;
Thy song as incense to His throne ascends,
And well He loves to hear and answer prayer.
The trial of our faith he needs must prove.
The allegiance of our hearts the test must bear;
The chastening rod is but the proof of love,
Which tells us of a loving Father's care.
Oft have the things of time too large a claim
Upon our hearts, and rob them of the rest
Which occupation with the Lord—the Lamb—
Would give, in whom, with all things, now, we're blest.
Faith rests upon His never-failing word,
And gives the heart abiding, settled, peace,
It leaves all matters to its faithful Lord,
And all life's troubles and vexations cease.

Hereford, Nov. 4th, 1876. T. S-

This Man Receiveth Sinners

This man receiveth sinners; (hear,
'Tis calumny most sweet!)
He healed their wounds, and drawing near,
Amidst them took His seat.
This man receiveth sinners—yea,
For such He came to die;
Beneath the stroke of death He lay,
This Lamb of God most high!
He came the smoking flax to light,
To bind the bruised reed;
'Twas such in Him found great delight—
Yea, all that felt their need.
'Twas heaven on earth to one above,
Who came her God to meet;
When with her tears of grateful love
She bathed His way-worn feet.
His ear her speechless love could hear—
That adoration deep;
His eye could trace the falling tear
For Him, in His deep sleep.
The alabaster box she takes—
There's golden oil within—
It o'er His sinless head she breaks,
So soon to bear her sin.
He talked of grace (that love in which
All find a refuge sweet),

While she her tresses dark and rich,
Wrapt round His wearied feet.
His words had healed the heart's deep sore,
He turned around to greet;
She lingered yet a moment more
To kiss Emmanuel's feet.
My soul now flutters like the clove,
She mounting on the breeze,
And marvels if the realms above
Can vie the scene she sees!
'Tis in Thyself I too delight,
Though viler far than she;
Thou art my Life—my Surety—Light;
I'm found and lost in Thee.
'Tis in Thyself I find my all—
On thee my heart is bent;
My guilt upon Thy head did fall—
Thou Rock of Ages rent.
'Tis still Thyself—my Star in night,
I lift mine eyes to see;
Thou art my goal, my glory bright,
I soon shall like Thee be.

The Three Hearts: Jesus in Simon's House

Luke 7

Jesus'—

Behold the heart of Jesus! how it throbs

To bless that sinner, penitent and low;

To heal her wounds and silence all her sobs,

And give her all He can in love bestow.

Simon's—

O barren heart! so barren of all good,

Suspicious, envious, hard, and callous still!

The Guest neglected, and misunderstood,

What moves her heart, his seems alone to chill.

Woman's—

Ah! here's a heart wide open to receive

The good it finds not in its own domain;

Drawn by a love which only waits to give,

She weeps and loves, nor weeps and loves in vain.

Reader!

Which heart, dear reader, is akin to thine—

The barren heart, or that which open is

To take the blessing from Christ's heart divine,

And through His blood to know that thou art His?

A. M.

Thy Love Alone

Oh! I am weary of my love,
That doth so little t'wards Thee move;
Yet do I constantly groan,
To know the depth of all Thine own.
That groan, sweet Spirit, is from Thee,
Nor self-begotten e'er can be;
No natural heart, dear Lord, of mine
Could long to lose itself in Thine.
O love of loves, for me that died;
The love of Jesus crucified!
Who lowly took His part with me,
That I as one with Him might be.
Loved, and forever on Thy throne
Adored, and loved, Thou timeless One;
Thou wilt thro' one eternal day,
The height and depth of all display.
Meanwhile, Thou precious, wondrous Lamb
Content—at least with this I am,
To count my love too mean to own,
And know but Thine—"Thy love alone"
J. D. S.

To Me to Live—Christ

To live is Christ
Henceforth for me,
My one desire
His face to see;
Morn, noon, and night, 'tis He alone
Who fills my heart with joy unknown.
Where'er I go
May Christ be seen,
That all may know
With Him I've been.
Although it bring reproach and shame,
He'll keep me true to His blest name.
I want to know
Him better here,
While pressing on
To reach Him there,
Himself the mark, Himself the prize.
That speeds my steps, attracts mine eyes.
From where He is
In glory there,
I watch for Him
Soon to appear;
The " little while" will soon be gone
And I shall see His face ere long.
A " little while,"
Then shall be heard

His welcome “ shout”—
His “ quickening word”—
Then shall I see Him face to face,
Where shines the glory of His grace.
Until these eyes
My Savior see,
His path down here
My path must be.
“ Outside the camp” I follow on—
Because it leads to where He’s gone.
Though hosts of foes
My way impede,
His arm of strength
Is all I need;
With girded loins I still press on,
For Christ my inmost heart hath won.
‘Tis sweet to tread
The path He trod,
Learning of Him
To walk with God.
His cross behind—His home before—
Himself to-day and evermore.
L. W.

Two Impossibles: Part 1

There are few who have set out to follow the Lord Jesus who have not, at some time or other, gone through painful exercise of heart in connection with the opening verses of Heb. 6 And while, in the long run, they have had no reason to regret the exercise, yet it is always needful to distinguish between the Spirit's using a scripture to search, and Satan's abusing it to stumble us. Searching is good for us. It is most healthful. We all need it, and we have to be thankful when we get it, we are so prone to be light and superficial, and to retire from anything that probes the conscience.

Still, we have not the slightest doubt that many true and earnest souls, many to whom Heb. 6:4-6 has no application whatever, have been stumbled and discouraged through not understanding the true force and bearing of the passage. It is to help such that we pen the following lines, for we can truly say there is no work in which we have a more intense interest than in taking up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of God's beloved people. We feel most fully assured it is work which He delights to have done, inasmuch as He has given express commandment to His servants to do it. We have just to take care lest, in our desire to remove the stumbling-blocks, we should in any wise disturb the landmarks. May the blessed Spirit, then, graciously help us to a right understanding of this sadly misunderstood passage of holy scripture!

Our special business, just now, is to inquire who are they of whom the inspired writer speaks in verses 4-6—those of whom he declares, “It is impossible to renew them again to repentance?” A correct answer to this question will remove much, if not all, of the difficulty felt in respect to this portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and in reaching this answer there are two things to be borne in mind—first, that in verses 1 and 2, there is not a single feature belonging to Christianity as distinct from Judaism; secondly, that in verses 4 and 5 there is not a single expression that rises to the height of the new birth, or the sealing of the Spirit.

Let us quote the apostle's words: “Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” or, as the margin reads it, “The word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms [or washings], and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

Now it must be plain to the reader that the apostle could never exhort those professing christian Hebrews to “leave” anything belonging to Christianity. There is not a single fact in that glorious economy, from first to last—not a single stone in that glorious superstructure, from foundation to topstone—not a single principle in that magnificent system, from beginning to end—that we could afford to leave or dispense with for a moment. For what, let us ask, is the grand foundation of Christianity? The cross. And what are its two characteristic facts? A Man glorified in heaven, and God dwelling in man on the earth. Could we leave these? God forbid! To whom, or to what, should we go? It is impossible that we could leave or give up a single fact, feature, or principle of our glorious Christianity.

What, then, have we got in Heb. 6:1, 2? Simply those elements of truth contained in the Jewish system which, in so far as they possessed any permanent value, are reproduced in Christianity; but, as a system, were to be abandoned forever. Where is there a word peculiar to Christianity in this passage? Can we not see at a glance that the apostle has Judaism before his mind? It is this he exhorts his brethren to leave, and to go on to Christianity, which he here calls “perfection.”

It is a very commonly received idea that the words, “Let us go on to perfection,” refer to our leaving the earlier stages of the divine life, and getting on to the higher. This we believe to be a total mistake. As to what is called “the higher christian life,” there is in reality no such thing. If there be a higher life, there must be a lower one; but we know, blessed be God, that Christ is our life, the life of each, the life of all; and there cannot be anything higher than that. The merest babe in Christ has as high a life as the most matured and profoundly taught member of the church of God.

No doubt there is progress in the divine life, growth in grace, faith growing exceedingly. All this we own most fully, and would charge ourselves to seek after most earnestly. But it is not the subject of Heb. 6:1, 2. It is not a question of going from one form in the school of Christ to another, but of leaving the school of Moses to enter fully, heartily, and intelligently, the school of Christ. It is not a question of going from one stage of christian life to another, but of abandoning Judaism to go on to Christianity. We could not abandon a single atom of Christianity without abandoning Christ Himself, for He is the foundation, the source, the center, the spring of it all.

But the reader may feel disposed to ask, Have we not got “repentance, faith, resurrection, and eternal judgment” in Heb. 6:1, 2? True, but only as elements of the Jewish system. There is not a word about “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”—not a word about Christ at all; it is simply Judaism, to which some of the Hebrew professors were in danger of returning, but from which the apostle earnestly urges them to go on.

Let us now turn for a moment to verses 4, 5. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come [of the coming age], if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.”

Now the reader will notice that, as in verses 1, 2, we have not a single clause specially characteristic of Christianity; so, in verses 4, 5, we have not a single clause that rises to the height of the new birth, or the sealing of the Holy Ghost. A person might be all that is here spoken of, and yet never have been born again, • Resurrection, as seen in Christianity, is not merely “resurrection of the dead;” but, “resurrection from among the dead.”

never sealed by the Holy Ghost. How many thousands have been “enlightened” by the gospel, without being converted by it! Wherever the gospel has been preached, wherever the Bible has been received and read, an enlightening influence has gone forth, altogether irrespective of any saving work wrought in souls. Look, for example, at the nations of Europe since the Reformation. In all those countries that have received the Bible, we see the moral effect produced in the way of intelligence, civilization, and refinement, apart altogether from the question of the conversion of individual souls. On the other hand, those countries which have refused the Bible exhibit the melancholy results of ignorance, moral darkness, and degradation. In a word, there may be enlightenment of the understanding without any divine work in the conscience or in the heart.

But what means the * é tasting the heavenly gift?" Does not this imply the new birth? By no means. Many may have gotten a taste of the new, the heavenly, things set forth in the glorious gospel of God, and yet never have passed from death unto life, never have been broken down before God, about their sins—never have received Christ into their hearts. Tasting of the heavenly gift, and passing by new birth into the heavenly kingdom, are totally different things.

So also many were made "partakers (μετοχους) of the Holy Ghost," so as to speak with tongues, prophesy, and the like, who nevertheless were never born of the Spirit. When the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, His presence pervaded the whole assembly. His power was felt by all, converted or unconverted. The word rendered " partakers" does not express intelligent fellowship, and this makes it all the more clear that there is not the slightest thought of new birth or sealing.

Further, as to "tasting the good word of God," do we not all know too well that unconverted people can, in a certain sense, enjoy the word of God, and have a measure of delight in hearing a full, free, gospel preached? Have we not often heard persons who furnished no sort of evidence of divine life speaking, in highly appreciative terms, of what they called the savory doctrines of grace? There is a wide and very material difference indeed between a person tasting the good word of God, and the word of God entering the soul, in living, quickening, convicting, and converting power.

Finally, a person might taste " the power of the coming age"—the age when Messiah will set up His kingdom—he might heal diseases, and cast out devils—he might take up serpents, and drink poison—he might speak with tongues: he might do all these things, and yet never have been born again. " Thus"—as a recent writer has solemnly and forcibly put it—" we may fairly give the fullest force to every one of these expressions. Yet, write them out ever so largely, they fall short both of the new birth and of sealing with the Holy Ghost. There is everything, one may say, save inward spiritual life in Christ, or the indwelling seal of it. That is to say"—and, oh, may it be deeply pondered in this day of intellectual knowledge and flippant profession!—"one may have the very highest endowments and privileges, in the way both of meeting the mind, and also of exterior power; and yet all may be given up, and the man become so much the keener enemy of Christ. Indeed such is the natural result. It had been the mournful fact as to some. They had fallen away. Hence renewal to repentance is an impossibility"—declared to be so by the authoritative and conclusive testimony of the Holy Ghost—"seeing they crucify' to themselves the Son of God, and put him to an open shame."

"Why impossible? The case supposed is"—not any one who ever possessed a single spark of divine life in his soul; no, nor yet any one with the very feeblest desire after Christ, or one atom of true repentance or desire to flee from the wrath to come, but that—" of persons, after the richest proof and privilege, turning aside apostates from Christ, in order to take up Judaism once more. As long as that course is pursued, repentance there cannot be. Supposing a man had been the adversary of Messiah here below'■—as, for example, Paul himself, the very writer of the epistle—" there was still the opening for him of grace from on high. It was possible that the very man that had slighted Christ here below, might have his eyes opened to see and receive Christ above; but this abandoned, there is no fresh condition in which He could be presented to men. Those who rejected Christ, in the fullness of His grace, and in the height of His glory in which God had set Him

as Man before them”—Christ the object of fourfold testimony, His works, the Father, John the Baptist, and Moses. (John 5)—■ ■ Those that rejected Him, not merely on earth, but in heaven”—as attested by the Holy Ghost sent down from the ascended and glorified Man on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens—” what was there to fall back upon? What possible means to bring them to repentance after that? There is none. What is there but Christ coming in judgment?”*

Surely there is, and can be, nothing else. For one who, from amid the full blaze of gospel light and privilege, could deliberately go back to the darkness of Judaism, there remains nothing but hopeless impenitence, hardness of heart, judicial blindness, and eternal judgment.

It is not, be it carefully observed, a child of God falling into sin, and getting at a distance from God. Such an one will, most surely, be brought back, and restored, though it may be through sore affliction under the chastening hand of God. It is not an anxious soul earnestly seeking the way of life and peace. It is not the case of a poor soul ignorant and out of[^] the way. To none of these does the “ impossible” of Hebrews vi. 4 apply. There is not a single anxious, earnest, soul beneath the canopy of heaven whose case is impossible. There is just one case that approaches awfully near to Heb. 6:4, and that is one who has gone on sinning against light, refusing to act on the plain word of God, resisting the truth—knowingly and deliberately resisting—because of the consequences of acting upon it.

This is indeed most solemn. No one can take it upon him to say at what depths of darkness, blindness, and hardness of heart, a case of this kind may arrive. It is a terrible thing to trifle with light, and to go on with what we: know to be wrong, because of worldly advantage, to please friends, to avoid persecution and trial, or for any reason whatsoever. “ Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” Jer. 13:16.

Having sounded this warning note for any whose case may need it, we close this part of our subject by presenting to any troubled soul whose eye may scan these lines, that precious word at the very end of the inspired volume—a word issuing forth from the very heart of God—the heart of Christ—” Whosoever will, let him take the water of life FREELY.”

(to be continued, if the Lord will)

Two Impossibles: Part 2

In reading the Epistle to the Hebrews, we can hardly fail to notice the way in which the most solemn words of warning stand side by side with words of deepest comfort and consolation. Thus, for example, chapter iv. opens with, "Let us therefore fear;" and closes with, "Let us therefore come boldly" When we think of who we are, what we are, and where we are, we have reason to fear. But when we think of God—His grace, His goodness, His tender mercy, His faithfulness—we may cherish the most fearless confidence. When we think of the world, with all its dangers, temptations, and snares, we may well be on our guard. But when we think of "the throne of grace," with its exhaustless provisions, and of our most merciful, faithful, and sympathizing High Priest, we can draw nigh with holy boldness, and find an ample supply to meet our deepest need.

So also, in chapter x., we have the same striking contrast—the warning voice, and the sweet accents of comfort and encouragement. Harken to the former. "If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

How awfully solemn is all this! How searching! Should we seek to blunt the edge of the warning? God forbid! We should only see that it has its true direction, its proper application. Can it ever touch an anxious inquirer, or a true-hearted, earnest, follower of Christ? Assuredly not, save indeed that it may deepen the earnestness of the one, and quicken the pace of the other. For only see, reader, how close the word of comfort and encouragement stands to the awful note of warning and admonition. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Thus we see how the inspiring Spirit connects, in this epistle, the most precious consolation with the most solemn warning. Both are needed, and therefore both are given; and it will be our wisdom to seek to profit by both. We need never be afraid to trust scripture. If we find a difficulty, in place

of puzzling over it, let us quietly wait on God for further light, meanwhile calmly resting in the assurance that no one part of the word of God can ever contradict another. All is in the most perfect harmony; the apparent discrepancies are entirely owing to our ignorance; and hence, instead of putting forth our gratuitous efforts to reconcile things, we should just allow each passage of scripture to come home in all its moral force to the heart and conscience, and produce its divinely appointed result in the formation of our character. Thus, when we read such words as these, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one,” it is our sweet privilege to take them in, in all their divine simplicity and heavenly clearness, and rest in them in calm confidence. There is no difficulty, no obscurity, no vagueness about them. All Christ's sheep are as safe as He can make them, as safe as He is Himself. The hand that would touch them must touch Him. They are divinely and eternally secure. Persons may imagine, or profess themselves to be, His sheep who are not so in reality; they may fall away from their mere profession, bring much reproach on the cause of Christ, cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of honest inquirers, by leading them to think that true Christians can fall away, and be lost. All this may be true, but it leaves wholly untouched the precious and most comforting words of our good and faithful Shepherd, that His sheep have eternal life, and shall never—can never, perish. No passage of holy scripture can, by any possibility, contradict the plain statement of our Lord.

But then there are other passages designed to search the conscience, to make us watchful, to produce holy circumspection in our ways, to lead us to judge ourselves, to superinduce self-denial. Take the following weighty and most searching scripture: “ Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

Now, will any one attempt to place 1 Cor. 9 in opposition to John 10? Far be the thought! What then? Why we are simply to receive both, in all their divine force, and allow them to act upon us according to the divine purpose in giving them to us—the latter on our hearts, for comfort and consolation; the former on our consciences, for admonition and warning. How terrible it would be for any one to say or to think that, because he is a sheep of Christ, he may walk in self-indulgence—because he can never perish, he need not seek to keep his body under—because nothing can separate him from the love of Christ, he may give a loose rein to his desires! Surely such an one would afford most melancholy evidence that he is anything but a sheep of the flock of Christ.

But we must return to Heb. 6, and dwell for a moment upon our second “Impossible.” The first, as we have seen, had respect to man; the second has respect to God. Man, with the very highest advantages, with the very rarest privileges, with the most powerful array of evidence, will turn his back upon God and Christ; he will deliberately apostatize from Christianity, give up the truth of God, go back into darkness, and plunge into a condition, from which the Holy Ghost declares “it is impossible to renew him again to repentance.”

But, as usual, in this marvelous epistle, the “strong consolation” stands in close and most gracious proximity to the awful warning. And, blessed be God, this same strong consolation is designed for us in connection with the very smallest measure of living faith in the word of God. It is not a question of great attainments in knowledge, experience, or devotedness; no, it is simply a matter of having even that measure and character of faith, and earnestness, typified by the man-slayer as he flew to the city of refuge to escape the avenger of blood. How precious is this for every true and earnest soul! The very feeblest spark of divinely-given faith secures eternal life, strong consolation, and everlasting glory, because “it is impossible for God to lie.” He cannot, and will not, deny Himself, blessed forever be His name! He has pledged His word, and added His oath, the “two immutable things;” and where is the power, human or diabolical, that can touch these two things?

We close with a passage from a volume referred to in our paper for November.

“Another point of interest which may be remarked here (in Heb. 6) is the intimation at the end, compared with the beginning, of the chapter. We have seen the highest external privileges”—and they were merely external—”not only the mind of man, as far as it could, enjoying the truth, but the power of the Holy Ghost making the man, at any rate, an instrument of power”—not a subject of grace—”even though it be to his own shame and deeper condemnation afterward. In short, man may have the utmost conceivable advantage, and the greatest external power, even of the Spirit of God Himself, and yet all come to nothing.”

How solemnizing! “But the very same chapter, which affirms and warns of the possible failure of every advantage, shows us the weakest faith that the whole New Testament describes coming into the secure possession of the best blessings of grace.” How consolatory! How truly encouraging! “Who but God could have dictated that this same chapter should depict the weakest faith that the New Testament ever acknowledges? What can look feebler, what more desperately pressed, than a man fleeing for refuge? It is not a soul as coming to Jesus; it is not as one whom the Lord meets, and blesses on the spot; but here is a man hard pushed, fleeing for very life (evidently a figure drawn from the man-slayer fleeing from the avenger of blood), yet eternally saved and blessed according to the acceptance of Christ”—the very lowest character of faith met by the very fullest, richest, and most permanent blessing!

“There was no reality found in the persons referred to in verses 4 and 5, though so highly favored; and hence it was, as there was no conscience before God, no sense of sin, no cleaving to Christ, that everything came to naught. But here, in the end of the chapter, there is the fruit of faith, feeble indeed, and sorely tried, but in the light that appreciates the judgment of God against sin. Hence, although it be only fleeing in an agony of soul for refuge, what is it that God gives to one in such a state? Strong consolation, and that which enters within the veil. Impossible that the Son should be shaken from His place on the throne of God. And it is as impossible that the very least and weakest believer should come to any hurt whatever! The weakest of saints more than conqueror is.”

Well may we exclaim, in view of all this surpassing grace, “Hallelujah!” Beloved christian reader, may our whole life be spent in praising our ever blessed and most gracious Savior-God!

The Way of the Love of Jesus

The more perfect love is, the more entirely and without distraction will it regard its object; and this will give it at times a very different bearing; because its way will be determined by the condition and need of its object. Its way, therefore, at times may appear harsh and decisive, as when the Lord rebuked Peter in Matthew xvi., or when He reproved the two disciples in Luke 24 But this is only because love is perfect, and therefore is undistractedly considering its object.

Imperfect love will show itself otherwise. More attractively at times, but far, far intrinsically less true. Because imperfect love will not in this way unmixedly consider its object, but itself. It will be set upon enjoying its object rather more than on serving it. And this will give it a more considerate and tender bearing at times, and get for itself great credit; while perfect love has all the while forgotten itself and its enjoyments, and ordered its course and its actings in more undistracted concern and desire to have another blest and profited. Where do we see this perfect love but in Jesus—is God? A mother has it not, but will at times enjoy her child. But Jesus had it. He considered His disciples when He was with them; and He ordered His way with them to their profit, and not to His own gratification. He will gratify Himself with them in that coming age, when He need no longer care for them, as in a place of instruction and discipline. He will have no occasion then, in the exercise of perfect love, to consider only their profit, for their profit will have been brought to its accomplishment, in that place of their Lord's delight in them.

J. G. B.

We See Jesus

“Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Acts 7:56.

Behold the Son of man
At God's right hand on high,,
Tis by that glorious risen One,
We are to God made nigh.
Ah! see His hands and feet,
His wounded side behold,
From thence for us on Calvary's cross,
The blood once freely flowed.
What matchless, wondrous grace,
That God's beloved Son
Should stoop so low, and bear the cross,
For sinners lost, undone.
But oh! what boundless joy!
His grief and shame are o'er;
God's glorified, exalted Son
All heaven doth now adore.
Nor is He there alone,
The people to Him given,
Raised up and quickened with their Head,
Have now their place in heaven.
In spirit there with Him,
We rest in that bright home,
In patience waiting for that day,
When Christ our Lord will come.

Then we shall see His face,
And bear His image bright,
And cast our crowns before His feet
With rapture and delight.

M. S. S.

St. Petersburg, June 10th, 1877.

What Should I Read?

The question which forms the heading of this paper is one of real weight and practical importance. There is much more involved in it than we might perhaps be disposed to admit. It is a common saying, "Show me your company, and I will tell you what you are." It may, with equal truth, he said, "Show me your library and I will tell you where you are." Our reading may be taken as a rule, as the great indicator of our moral, intellectual, and spiritual condition. Our books are our mental and spiritual pabulum, the material on which the inner man feeds. Hence the seriousness of the entire question of christian reading. Indeed we may freely own to the reader of these lines that this subject has engrossed us much of late; and we feel constrained, in faithfulness to the Lord and to the souls of our readers, to offer a few words of admonition in reference to what we cannot but regard as a matter of real moment to all Christians.

We observe, with deep concern, a growing distaste for solid reading, especially amongst young Christians—though alas! it is not confined to them. Newspapers, religious novels, sensational tales, all sorts of poisonous and trashy literature are eagerly devoured, while volumes of most weighty and precious truth lie uncut and neglected on the bookshelf.

All this we consider most deplorable. We look upon it as a most alarming indication of a low spiritual condition. Indeed it is difficult to conceive how any one possessing a single spark of divine life can find pleasure in such defiling rubbish as one sees now-a-days, in the hands of many who occupy the very highest ground of christian profession. The inspired apostle exhorts all Christians, "As new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." How can we grow if we neglect the word of God, and yet devour newspapers and light worthless books? How is it possible for any Christian to be in a healthy condition of soul who can barely find a few hasty moments to run his eye over a verse or two of scripture, but can give hours to light and desultory reading? We may depend upon it our reading proves, beyond question, what we are, and where we are. If our reading is light and frivolous, our state is the same. If our Christianity is of a solid and earnest type, it will be distinctly evidenced by our habitual and voluntary reading—the reading to which we turn for our recreation and refreshment.

Some, perhaps, may say, "We cannot be always reading the Bible and good books." We reply, and that with plain decision and emphasis, the new nature would never care to read anything else. Now the question is, whether do we wish to minister to the old nature or the new? If the latter, we may rest assured that newspapers and light literature are not the means to be used. It is utterly impossible that a truly spiritual, earnest Christian can find any enjoyment in such reading. It may be that a Christian engaged in business or in public official life, will have occasion, in connection with his business or his official duty, to refer to a newspaper; but this is another thing altogether from finding his actual enjoyment and recreation in such reading. He will not find the hidden manna or the old corn of the land of Canaan in the newspaper. He will not find Christ in the sensational novel.

It is a poor low thing to hear a Christian say, “ How can we be always reading the Bible?” or, “ What harm is there in reading a story book?” All such questions afford melancholy evidence of the fact that the soul has got far away from Christ. This is what makes it so very serious. Spiritual decline must have set in and made alarming progress, ere a Christian could think of asking such questions. And hence there is little use in arguing about the right or the wrong of things. There is no ability to argue aright, no capacity to weigh evidence. The whole spiritual and moral condition is wrong. “ There is death in the pot.” What is really needed is thorough restoration of soul. You must “bring meal” or in other words, apply a divine remedy to meet the diseased state of the constitution.

We feel pressed in spirit to call the serious attention of the christian reader to this great practical question. We deem it to be one of deepest seriousness. We cannot doubt but that the extremely low spiritual tone of Christianity amongst us is owing, in many cases, to the reading of light and worthless literature. The moral effect of all such is most pernicious. How can a soul prosper, how can there be growth in the divine life where there is no real love for the Bible or for books which unfold the precious contents of the Bible to our souls? Is it possible that a Christian can be in a healthy condition of soul who really prefers some light work to a volume designed for true spiritual edification? We do not, and cannot believe it. We are persuaded that all true-hearted, earnest Christians—all who truly desire to get on in divine things—all who really love Christ, and are breathing after heaven and heavenly things—all such will be found diligently reading the holy scriptures and thankfully availing themselves of any good, helpful books which may come within their reach. They will have neither time nor taste for newspapers or light literature. With them it will not be a question as to the right or the wrong of such reading, they simply have no desire for it, they do not want it, would not have it. They have something far better. “ With ashes who would grudge to part, when called on angels’ bread to feast?”

We trust our readers will bear with us in writing thus plainly and pointedly. We really feel constrained as in view of the judgment-seat of Christ, to do so. And we can only say, Would that we could write as earnestly as we feel on the subject. We consider it one of the weightiest and most practical questions which can engage our attention. We entreat the Christian reader to shun and discountenance all light reading. Let us each ask the question, when about to take up a book or a paper, “ Should I like my Lord to come and find this in my hand? or can I take this into the presence of God, and ask His blessing upon the reading of it? Can I read it to the glory of the name of Jesus?” If we cannot say “ Yes” to these questions, then, by the grace of God, let us fling the paper or the book away, and devote our spare moments to the blessed word of God, or to some spiritual volume written thereon. Then shall our souls be nourished and strengthened; we shall grow in grace, and in the knowledge and love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and the fruits of righteousness shall abound in our practical life, to the glory of God.

It may be, however, that some of our friends would repudiate altogether the habit of reading human writings. Some there are who take the ground of reading nothing but the Bible. They tell us they find all they want in that peerless volume, and that human writings are rather a hindrance than a help.

Well, as to this, each one must judge for himself. No one can be a rule for another. We certainly cannot take this high ground. We bless the Lord, each day, more and more, for all the gracious

helps vouchsafed to us by means of the writings of His beloved servants. We look upon them as a most precious stream of refreshment and spiritual blessing, flowing down from our glorified Head in the heavens, for which we can never praise Him enough. We should just as soon think of refusing to hear a brother speak in the assembly, as of refusing to read his writings, for what is either but a branch of ministry given of God for our profit and edification?

No doubt we have to exercise a jealous care lest we make too much of ministry, whether oral or written; but the possible abuse of a thing is no valid argument against the use of it. There is danger on every side; and most surely it is a very dangerous thing to despise ministry. We are, none of us, self-sufficient. It is the divine purpose that we should be helpful one to another. We cannot do without" that which every joint supplieth." How many will have to praise God throughout eternity for blessing received through books and tracts! How many there are who never get an atom of spiritual ministry save what the Lord sends them through the press. It will be said, " They have the Bible." True, but all have not the same ability to fathom the living depths, or seize the moral glories, of the Bible. No doubt, if we cannot have either oral or written ministry, the Spirit of God can feed us directly in the green pastures of holy scripture. But who will deny that the writings of God's servants are used by the Holy Ghost as a most powerful agency in building up the Lord's people in their most holy faith? It is our firm conviction that God has made more use of such agency during the last forty years than ever before in the entire history of the church.

And cannot we praise Him for it? Truly so. We should praise Him, with full and glowing hearts; and we should earnestly pray Him to grant still further blessing on the writings of His servants—to deepen their tone, increase their power, and widen their sphere. Human writings, if not clothed with the power of the Holy Ghost, are just so much waste paper. And in like manner the voice of the public preacher or teacher, if not the living vehicle of the Holy Ghost, is but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. But the Holy Ghost does make use of both agencies for the blessing of souls, and the spread of the truth; and we deem it a serious mistake for anyone to despise an agency which God is pleased to adopt. Indeed we must confess we have rarely met anyone who refused the help of human writings who did not prove exceedingly narrow, crude, and one-sided. This is only what we might expect, inasmuch as it is the divine method to make us mutually helpful one to another; and hence, if any one affects to be independent or self-sufficient, he must sooner or later find out his mistake.

Words of Life and Peace

“ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”—Rom. 6:8, 10.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”—Colossians 3:1, 3.

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:6, 7.

Work, While It Is Called Today

Go, labor on; spend and be spent—
Thy joy to do the Father's will;
It is the way the Master went,
Should not the servant tread it still?
Go, labor on; 'tis not for naught;
Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain;
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not,
The Master praises—what are men?
Go, labor on; enough, while here,
If He shall praise thee, if He deign
Thy willing heart to mark and cheer;
No toil for Him shall be in vain.
Go, labor on, while it is day,
The world's dark night is hastening on;
Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away:
It is not thus that souls are won.
Men die in darkness at Thy side,
Without a hope to cheer the tomb;
Take up the torch and wave it wide,
The torch that lights time's thickest gloom.
Go on, faint not, keep watch, and pray;
Be wise the erring soul to win;
Go forth into the world's highway,
Compel the wanderer to come in.
Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice;
For toil comes rest, for exile home:

Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,
The midnight peal, " Behold I come!"

A Fragment on Worship

It is deeply important that the christian reader should understand the true character of the worship God looks for, and in which He delights. God delights in Christ; and hence it should be our constant aim to present Him to God. Christ should ever be the material of our worship, and He will be, in proportion as we are led by the Holy Ghost. How often, alas! it is otherwise with us the heart can tell. Both in the assembly and in the closet, how often is the tone low, and the spirit dull and heavy! We are occupied with self instead of with Christ; and the Holy Ghost, instead of being free to do His own proper work—which is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us—is obliged to occupy us with ourselves, in self-judgment, because our ways have not been right.

All this is to be deeply deplored. It demands our serious attention, both as assemblies and as individuals, in our public reunions and in our private devotions. Why is the tone of our public meetings frequently so low? Why such feebleness, such barrenness, such wandering? Why are the hymns and prayers so often wide of the true mark? Why is there so little that really deserves the name of worship? Why is there so little in our midst to refresh the heart of God?—so little that He can speak of as “ My bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto me?” We are occupied with self and its surroundings—our wants, our weakness, our trials, our difficulties; and we leave God without the bread of His sacrifice. We actually rob Him of His due, and of that which His loving heart desires.

Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain

Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow,
Worthy of heaven's sweetest lays,
Worthy of ransomed sinners' praise.
Worthy, O Lord, for what Thou art,
Revealer of the Father's heart,
Worthy for deeds that Thou hast done,
For mighty victories Thou hast won.
Worthy because it was Thy joy
To leave Thy glorious throne on high,
To come on earth to do God's will,
And all His counsel to fulfill.
Worth}', because in patient grace
Thou stoodest in the sinner's place,
On Calvary's cross Thy life-blood flowed,
To pay the mighty debt we owed.
Oh! who in heaven or on earth
Can utter all Thy glorious worth!
Who but Thy Father ever know
How dread Thy conflict with the foe!
'Tis o'er, beloved Lord, 'tis o'er,
Thou livest now to die no more,
Thou sittest on Thy Father's throne,
His glorified, exalted Son!
Many the crowns that Thou dost wear,
Enthroned, in highest glory there;

Thou Bruiser of the serpent's head,
Thou ' First-begotten of the dead.'
Yes, Thou art worthy, Jesus, Lord,
To be by heaven and earth adored;
The day draws nigh when every knee
Shall bow beneath Thy rightful sway.
Then, then shall myriad hosts exclaim,
'Worthy the Lamb that once was slain,
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.'

M.S. S.

November 30, 1876

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