

WRITINGS OF C A COATES

by C.A. Coates

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by C.A. Coates, compiled for study and devotional reading.

11 Chapters

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01.00. Ministry

Ministry by C. A. Coates – Part One

Introduction • Affection for Christ: Its Awakening Its Decline Its Revival • A Warning and an Appeal
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01.01. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

C. A. Coates

You may be familiar with the name and the ministry of C. A. Coates – however it's more than likely that there is personal information, of which you are unaware, in our Biography: C. A. Coates.

CAC's Outlines – and other ministry and gospel tracts – have been a help to many who know nothing of * his lifelong commitment to the interests of Christ, * marked by a separation from the world and its ecclesiastical systems.

* Many of those who are aware choose to ignore it, glad to benefit from – and sometimes retail – his ministry, while retaining their own compromised positions.

Some of the first books I acquired, as a young believer in 1948, were CAC's Outlines of Genesis and Revelation.

* I knew nothing of CAC but his ministry helped me greatly, then and since, and established me in the truth. o A few years later I made contact with brethren with whom CAC had been in fellowship.

* Some years later another brother – Michael Sawicki – came after a long search for those with whom CAC had been in fellowship. o He had been helped by some books by Mr. Coates loaned to him by another brother in the same 'open' meeting – but o when he asked about those with whom CAC had walked, he was refused any information!

Affection for Christ has been "highly recommended" to MB by Phil Gasston of New Zealand as "a must-read for every believer". May it recall you to what CAC calls that

* "moment – never to be forgotten – when Christ risen comes before the soul, and the greatness of His victory, and the share we have in it, and the wonderful purposes of God for us – all secured by that victory – take possession of the heart". A Warning and an Appeal is a challenge to all of us who profess "to love our Lord Jesus Christ" – as to whether our love to Him is "in sincerity" as proved by our obedience.

Present Conditions in the Christian Profession is a cogent reply to some perennial questions. CAC's answers are even more pertinent in these days when the conditions in the profession generally – and among the successors of the early brethren – are far, far, worse than in 1926.

01.02. AFFECTION FOR CHRIST

AFFECTION FOR CHRIST Its Awakening, Decline, and Revival 2 Corinthians 11:1-3 From 'The Paths of Life, and other Addresses'

Ministry by C. A. Coates, 19: 84-100 Affection for Christ: Its Awakening The subject which is before me tonight is that of affection for Christ, or the state of heart which the Spirit is here to produce in the saints, o and by which they answer to the present thoughts of Christ.

* I am afraid that when we speak of being here for Christ it is often the thought of our service or conduct that is prominent, o and therefore it is well to be reminded that there is something over which Christ is more jealous than He is over our conduct or our service.

* It is that "garden enclosed", that "spring shut up", that "fountain sealed", from which all others but Himself are excluded – the hidden spring of o those affections which alone satisfy His heart, or render conduct and service acceptable to Him. This is very strikingly expressed in the words which we have just read, where we see the object of the true evangelist.

* He is a man bent upon a present result for Christ.

* He is not anxious to have a number of converts whom he can count as his own; he is not thinking of himself, but of His Master; o he is wanting those whom he can present "as a chaste virgin to Christ".

* It is not that he loses sight of the eternal result, but the immediate object on which his heart is set, and for which he longs with intense fervency, is o a present result in a people whose affections are altogether for Christ.

* "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ". This is the great object before the heart of God at the present time – to have a people saved not only from judgment and the lake of fire, but from the world; o saved not only for heaven by-and-by, but for the heart of Christ now.

* The work of Christ on the cross has settled every question that sin raised between God and our souls, and the future is bright with the glory of God into which we shall be brought according to all the value of that work.

* But there is another thing, and that is the interval between the cross and the glory – an interval o marked so far as this world is concerned, by the dishonour and rejection of Christ.

* Satan cannot touch the value of the work of the cross, nor can he mar the perfection of the eternal glory, but the whole force of his power is put forth to hinder a present result for Christ.

* On the other hand, all the energy of the Holy Spirit is active to produce a present result for Christ.

* Every believer is looking to be to the satisfaction and joy of Christ in the eternal future; and surely none of us would like to say that we did not care whether we were to His satisfaction now or not, and yet, alas! practically it very often comes to this.

I think a verse from Jeremiah 2:1-37 may help us to see in an Old Testament type when the soul may be looked upon as espoused unto Christ. o "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase".

* I have no doubt that these words refer to the time when the children of Israel were brought through the Red Sea.

* They were brought into the joy of complete deliverance from the power of the oppressor and from the land of judgement.

* Jehovah Himself became everything to them – their strength, their song, and their salvation; His victory and glory, and his thoughts and purposes, filled their hearts. o They were absorbed with Himself.

* Read the song, Exodus 15:1-27. It as all "Thou," "Thy," "Thee," "Thine"; if they speak of themselves it is as "Thy people". It was a wonderful moment.

* You may say that it did not last long. That is true; but think of the wonderful blessedness of it while it did last.

* It was what Jehovah could remember and speak of more than 800 years afterwards as "the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals".

Such a moment as that has come in the history of every soul who knows the salvation of God.

* Perhaps it was some time after you were converted; you may have been under the shelter of the blood for years before you came to it; o but there is a moment – never to be forgotten – when Christ risen comes before the soul, and the greatness of His victory, o and the share we have in it, and the wonderful purposes of God for us – all secured by that victory – take possession of the heart.

* We are brought to One who has been raised again for our justification, and through Him we find ourselves clear of the judgement land and the oppressor's power.

* There is no sense of need in the soul that is in presence of Christ risen; there is a sense of boundless favour, o for the soul is conscious – though it might not know how to explain it – that we share in the victory as belonging to the One who has won it. o Through Him we have access into favour.

* But the soul who has come to this is not thinking so much of the favour or blessing as a thing in itself, o but as that which we have in connection with Him, and as belonging to Him.

* If I belong to Him, the more wonderful His victory and position, the more wonderful mine is but I think of it all as His.

* I do not think that we rightly get a sense of belonging to Him until we come to him as the risen One, but I believe o every heart that knows Him as risen from the dead has the consciousness, "I belong to Him".

* I believe Thomas had it when he said, "My Lord and My God".

* I am not speaking of knowing truths or doctrines at all, but of a consciousness in the soul that has really reached Christ risen. o I believe that to be the moment of the soul's espousal unto Christ.

* There may be much to learn, but there is great affection for Christ.

* All the wealth and wisdom of Egypt would not have tempted back at that moment those who sang the song. "Israel was holiness unto Jehovah". No doubt there are many believers who have not reached a risen Christ simply because they have not had a Paul to "espouse" them to that "one Husband".

* They have not heard of His glorious victory, or of His new place as the risen One; they are struggling on in Egypt's darkness and bondage; their lives are being wasted in worldly thoughts and upon worldly things, o and in may cases they do not know but that they are doing God's service – going in for politics and temperance and so on – o trying to make Egypt better, instead of seeing that the whole scene is under the enemy's power and the judgment of God.

* If believers knew that the whole system of the world was under the leadership of Satan and the judgement of God, they would he heartily glad to be clear of it all.

* But how few there are to proclaim that the world is a judged thing before God, and that o Christ and all the blessings of Christianity can only be found on the platform of resurrection.

* How few there are in christendom to-day who are really seeking to bring souls to a risen Christ – o to espouse them to one Husband that they may be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ.

I trust that many of you understand the blessedness of a moment when Christ is really known by the heart, outside everything here, in the infinite greatness of His won triumph, o and you are conscious that you share in it all because you belong to Him.

* I venture to say that at such a moment the offer of £1000 a year would have very little power to attract your heart.

* You had found a Person outside everything here, who was infinitely more to your heart than all the things of earth.

* You had stepped on to the shore of a new world, and found yourself supremely happy there, and the old world was totally eclipsed and superseded. o It was the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals.

* There was One whom, not having seen, you loved, and in whom, though you saw Him not, yet believing, you rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

* The vain things that had charmed you were forgotten, or only remembered with shame, o and you gladly accepted a part in the rejection of Christ here, because of the satisfaction you had found in Him on the other side.

* I trust many of you have known the reality of such a moment in your history.

* Now that is the true beginning of a Christian, and the Spirit of God is jealous over us that these affections should be maintained in freshness and fervency in our souls.

* It is thus – and only thus – that Christ has His true satisfaction in us, for if the day of espousal yields deep and holy joy to us, o it yields a deeper and a fuller joy to Him whose matchless love has drawn forth the responsive affection of our hearts.

* It is "the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart," Song of Solomon 3:11.

01.03. Affection for Christ: Its Decline

Affection for Christ: Its Decline

We can easily understand that if the devil has succeeded in turning Christ out of this world, it will be no pleasure to him to see a people here to whose hearts Christ is everything.

* Therefore it is his great object to corrupt our minds from simplicity as to the Christ; and this he seeks to accomplish, not by open attack upon Christ, but "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety".

* He had introduced amongst the saints at Corinth men who pretended to be apostles of Christ, and had all the appearances of ministers of righteousness, 2 Corinthians 11:12-15.

* These men were going about amongst the saints discrediting Paul, and under a great show of doing the Lord's work they were craftily bringing in fleshly and worldly principles, and so far as they were accepted and tolerated, the saints' minds were corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ.

* I dare say they were careful not to assail what we call foundation truths. The devil knows better than to put in the thick end of the wedge first.

* It would not do for them to show their colours openly at first; but everything would be modified, and more or less humanized, and stripped of its proper force and bearing.

I am sure this is of great importance to us all, for I think we should all be prepared to admit that there is a great lack of the simplicity of affection to which Christ in resurrection is everything.

* The question arises, Why is it so? Why do saints who have known what it was to be espoused unto Christ get so cold in their affections? o How are they brought to be satisfied and comfortable again in worldly and carnal things?

* I do not believe that any person who had known what it was to be espoused unto Christ would go in for worldliness until his mind had been corrupted by something that lessened his judgment as to what the world is.

* Before the outward departure the corrupting influence is at work within; the mind is being occupied and permeated with thoughts and principles that connect themselves with man and with things here, and all this is done in such a subtle way that very often no alarm is felt in the conscience during the process.

* It is a solemn thing to say, but I believe that the decline of affection for Christ, and the corrupting process that precedes that decline, can often be traced to o the influence of ministry that is not on the line or in the current of the Spirit of God.

* I think the chapter before us shows plainly that there are two kinds of ministry - the true and the false - o that which is of Christ and the Spirit, and that which is of Satan - the one flatly opposed in

its tendency and effect to the other.

* All true ministry in the power of the Spirit tends to draw our hearts away from man and from things here to Christ in resurrection.

* False ministry occupies us with man and with things here, and hence draws our hearts away from Christ, for He can only be known as outside everything here, in resurrection.

* I am speaking soberly and in sorrow when I say that the overwhelming preponderance of ministry at the present day is of the latter character.

* It is inevitably so when the minister himself is unconverted, or has never known for himself what it is to be espoused unto Christ; but we must not overlook the fact that a man may be converted, and may know a good deal of truth, and yet the general drift of his ministry may be to occupy souls with things on this side of resurrection.

* Men may have the reputation of great piety, and they may say much that is good and true, and yet the real tendency of it all may be to occupy you with man and with things here.

* You know that as a matter of fact to be a good citizen, and to take part in everything that is supposed to tend to the improvement of the world, is looked upon by many even evangelical believers at the present day as a part of Christianity; and all the great religious bodies are more or less occupied in seeking to improve their position and enlarge their influence in this world. Woe betide us if we are drawn into this current.

* True affection for Christ is completely blighted thereby, for He can only be known in resurrection, and as One utterly rejected by man.

We cannot be too careful as to the influences which we allow to act upon us.

* We are affected by all that we hear and all that we read - unconsciously it may be.

* The damage is done before we know it; like Ephraim, we have grey hairs and know it not.

* I do not think you can put yourself under the influence of the ministry which is generally found even amongst evangelical Christians at the present day, either by hearing or reading it, without suffering loss in your soul.

* You will find your heart turned back to things here - perhaps religious things - and correspondingly brought away from Christ in resurrection.

I need not say that worldly literature of all kinds has the same effect.

* I am quite sure that a man cannot soak his mind in a newspaper every morning, and retain freshness of affection for Christ.

* Of course a man in business may have to look at the market price of timber, or stone, or corn, just as a Christian slave in the apostle's days might have had to go down to the market on his master's business, but you may be sure that the Christian slave who knew what it was to be espoused to Christ would turn away as quickly as possible from the tumult of the market and the idle gossip of the street, and the harangue of the political orator would have little charm for his ear.

* Some have said "But I can hear and read things without being damaged by them if I do not allow them a place in my heart".

* A very pertinent question for such persons would be, "What gain is there in occupying the mind with so much that is acknowledged to be unworthy of the heart?" o But it is precisely in this way that the heart is turned aside.

* The mind - the thoughts - are turned to things here, and the affections soon follow in the same direction.

* Nor is it a question of the actual retention in the memory of the things that are heard or read, o but of the impression that is made on the mind, and the cast that is given to the thoughts by them.

* The mind is turned back to things here, and the speedy result of this that the whole-hearted affection to which Christ was everything is lost and perhaps soon regarded as only a temporary excitement of no practical value.

* Ah! the Lord looks back to those hours of holy joy, of absorbing affection, of burning love, and He says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals".

* Eight hundred years had passed in Israel's history - long centuries of backsliding and rebellion - but the Lord never forgot the brief moment in which He was everything to their hearts.

* How far has He to look back to find such a moment in your history or mine?

Then there is another thing. "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me in the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water", Jeremiah 2:13.

* In the East a man sometimes spends years in hewing out a cistern in the rock, hoping to get it filled in the rainy season, that he may have a supply for the time of drought.

* At last the rains descend, the streams rush into the mouth of the cistern, but the water-level does not rise - the water runs out as fast as it runs in - it is a broken cistern.

* What a disappointment! The man has two counts to the bad - he has wasted all his labour, and he is dry.

* That is God's picture of a man whose heart has been turned away from Christ.

* You are looking to find the present satisfaction of your heart in earthly things, but, depend upon it, sooner or later you will find that all your cisterns here are "broken".

* What a solemn thing to have to look back at the end on a wasted life! How sad to be dry with such a Fountain near!

Affection for Christ: Its Revival

I will now turn to one or two scriptures which bring before us the ways of the Lord in His restoring grace when the hearts of His own have got away from Him.

* And in connection with this I may say that we are as dependent on the Lord for restoration when we wander as we were at the beginning for salvation.

* How sweet to know that He does not, and will not give us up.

* The secret of all His gracious dealings with us lies in the fact that He loves us, and nothing but love will satisfy love.

* He is jealous over us; He must have the affection of our hearts; He values it; it is the chosen satisfaction of His love. In bringing about restoration the Lord makes use of two great agencies - Ministry and Government; or to put it in simpler words, He reaches us by His voice or by His hand.

* I am not forgetting His advocacy with the Father, for this lies behind it all.

* He takes up our whole case with the Father before there is a movement of restoring grace towards us, or any response to that movement in our souls.

* That advocacy which is in all the value of His own nearness to the Father and based upon His sin-atonement work, is the unfailing outcome of His love.

* Our sin becomes the immediate occasion for His love to concern itself on our behalf, and this with the Father.

* Then consequent upon this perfect and prevailing advocacy, there is the activity of His restoring grace toward us, and it is of this that I now speak.

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

* "and hast borne, and hast patience and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

* "Nevertheless I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love.

* "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent," Revelation 2:2-5.

Here we have ministry, or the Lord's voice, addressing itself to those whose hearts had left their first love, and seeking to call them to repentance. o How solemn is the picture here presented to our view.

* We see an assembly that was apparently in the most perfect outward order, and in which was found an extraordinary measure of faithfulness and spiritual energy, yet lacking the one thing which alone could satisfy the heart of Christ.

* No human eye might have been able to discern that anything was lacking; there was service, fidelity, suffering for Christ's name's sake and endurance of no ordinary kind.

* If we knew such an assembly we should probably think they were everything that could be desired.

* But the love of their espousals had waned; they had left the bright "first love" to which Christ Himself was everything.

* Alas! it is possible for our service, our fidelity, and our testimony for Christ to become prominent in our minds, o and for these things, so excellent in themselves, to usurp the place which Christ longs to hold in our affections.

* It may have been so at Ephesus, for Satan will use even such things as these to corrupt our minds from simplicity as to the Christ, and it is often thus that the decline of affections begins.

How touching is that word, "Remember from whence thou art fallen".

* We have already seen how the Lord remembers the "first love" of His saints; He delights to call it to mind; and He counts upon it being also a sweet memory to the hearts of his own.

* This is the first effort of His restoring grace - to recall the memory of those precious hours when the holy rapture of "first love" filled the heart, and He was really everything to the soul.

* Are the best and brightest seasons of your soul's history somewhere far behind?

* Have you to look back through the mist of intervening years to find a moment of deep joy in which Christ filled the whole vision of your soul, and His love satisfied every longing of your heart?

* Sorrowfully, but in tender love, the Lord calls you now to "remember".

* Do not allow yourself to be deceived by the fact that you know more, and that many truths are clearer to your mind.

* This may be so while the affections wither, and the soul is as dry as the desert sand.

* May the voice of the Lord really reach and recall in power every heart that has left its first love.

"And repent". I think there is an immensity of grace in that word.

* It opens the door for the aroused heart to trace its way back to the point where the decline began.

* It is, so to speak, the Lord inviting us to return to the happiness and intimacy of "first love".

* It is sad and humbling that the Lord has to use such a word to his own, but there is precious grace and comfort in it for the exercised heart.

* Instead of putting any difficulty or discouragement in the way of our return, He invites us - calls upon us - to retrace our steps.

* Yet we must needs return in a way that really sets us free in the presence of His love from the things that had diverted us from Him. Hence He says "Repent".

* It is by the judgment in His presence of the whole course by which our hearts have wandered that we are brought back to the point where the decline began.

* The soul has to travel back over its course, and to judge the presence of the Lord the true character of the things that have turned it aside, o and in doing so to judge itself for that condition

which gave these things their power over it.

* This is a deep, solemn, searching process, but infinite love calls us into it, and will carry us through if we respond to that call.

* I can quite understand a backslider saying, 'But my course has been so crooked and intricate that I could never trace it out; and the beginnings of my decline were so subtle, and the stages so imperceptible, that I am quite at a loss'.

* This may serve to prove that you cannot restore yourself.

* The Lord alone can lead us back over the history of our souls, and if our hearts really turn to Him He will do it.

* He can show us exactly what turned us aside, and what it was that prepared us to be turned aside, and He can give us His own judgment about it all.

* There is no legal effort about this, but the soul, sitting down before the Lord to judge with Him the whole course of departure.

* The results of it is that we are brought back, with a deepened knowledge of self and a truer judgment of the world, to find our entire satisfaction in the unchanging love of His heart.

* We are brought back to the freshness and simplicity of that "first love" to which Christ is everything. But there is another agency employed by the Lord to reach the consciences and hearts of His backsliding people, and that is Government.

* To bring this before you, I will read from the Old Testament: o "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. o "And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now," Hosea 2:6-7.

* Here we see the movement of the Lord's hand in restoring grace.

* He will not allow the backslider to go unchecked in his self-chosen way; He hedges it up with thorns, and builds a wall across it. Do not our hearts know something of this?

* We thought to take a seemingly pleasant path, but Christ was not before our hearts when we entered it, and every step in it was taking us further from Him, and in His grace He put a hedge of thorns across it.

* He allowed our path to land us in painful circumstances, and the thorns tore our flesh.

* Did we consider that it was restoring grace which hedged up our way?

* Then again, we thought we saw a straight smooth way before us; it fell in with our wishes, our judgment approved it, and we entered on it with the greatest assurance.

* But presently we came to a dead block; there was a wall right across the road, we could neither get over it nor round it.

* Ah! it was restoring grace which built that wall, and which seeks to remind us by it that Christ was not before us when we turned that way. Have you ever pursued an object without any success, and been mortified by the disappointment?

* Or, having obtained the desired end, found it very different from what you had expected?

* Have you ever sought gratification in things here, and been surprised that they yielded so little?

* You have followed without overtaking, and you have sought without finding.

* You have been proving that the cisterns here are broken and can hold no water.

* Does not the dealing of the Lord's hand with you constrain you to say, "I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better than now"?

Let us read further. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her (margin, "to her heart")", Hosea 2:14.

* If our affections are true to Christ, they will make this world a wilderness to us; but if our affections do not make it a wilderness, His government will.

* He loves us too well to allow our hearts to nestle here; and He makes us conscious that it is a wilderness that He may have opportunity in our loneliness and our sorrow to speak to our hearts.

* The Voice that could not be heard in the din and bustle, and amid the laughter of the city, can be heard in the silence and solitude of the wilderness.

* Have you never had a wilderness interview with the Lover of your soul?

Then further. "And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope," Hosea 2:15.

* How significant is this! The valley of Achor (trouble) was the place where Achan was stoned, and he and his family, and his ill-gotten spoil, were burned with fire.

* This is very remarkable, for the sin of Achan was the first movement of departure after the people got into the land, and the place where that first movement was so thoroughly judged is the place given as a "door of hope" for a backsliding people.

* Does it not again impress upon our hearts the solemn and imperative necessity of judging the root and secret cause of the first symptom of decline?

* It is the allowance of the flesh - the toleration of its tastes and tendencies - which is the root of all.

* We allow ourselves to be swayed by a man who thinks more of a "goodly Babylonish garment," or a little silver or gold, than he does of Christ.

* You may depend upon it that if Christ loses His place in our affections, we are henceforth controlled by either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life.

* May the Lord conduct each backsliding heart through the valley of Achor, and give each one a thorough root-judgment of the flesh and the world. A few words more. "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt ... And I will

betroth thee unto me for ever ... I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord," Hosea 2:15, Hosea 2:19-20.

* What a triumph of grace! Poor backsliding Israel, after more than 3000 years of wandering and rebellion, will be brought back to the kindness of her youth and to the love of her espousals.

* She will know Jehovah in His infinite grace as she has never known Him before - no longer as her Master, but as her Husband (see verse 16) - and she will enter afresh and for ever into the joy of her betrothal to Him.

Beloved brethren, if this is the manner of His grace to Israel, surely our hearts are entitled to appropriate its sweetness to ourselves, who are called, through infinite love, to know Him in a closer relationship.

* I know that when the heart has long been a stranger to the joy of first love, o there is a great tendency to settle down and go on with things as they are, as though it were hopeless to expect to be restored.

* I am sure that if the Lord gives your heart a fresh consciousness that He really loves you, that despairing and depressing idea will be banished from your soul.

* You will awake to the blessed reality of the fact that He yearns over you in rich boundless love, and that He is ready to lead you into communion with Himself o in the judgment of the things that have turned you aside, and of yourself for giving them a place in your thoughts.

* Your heart will leap for joy to think that His love is really unchanged.

* Thus restored, "first love," with all that it means for you and for Him, will again fill your heart. You will sing as in the days of your youth.

* You will come back with a subdued and chastened spirit - with a humbled heart and a broken will - to the joy of that moment of espousal when Christ was everything to your heart.

C. A. C.

01.04. Affection for Christ: Its Revival

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* He takes up our whole case with the Father before there is a movement of restoring grace towards us, or any response to that movement in our souls.

* That advocacy which is in all the value of His own nearness to the Father and based upon His sin-atonement work, is the unfailing outcome of His love.

* Our sin becomes the immediate occasion for His love to concern itself on our behalf, and this with the Father.

* Then consequent upon this perfect and prevailing advocacy, there is the activity of His restoring grace toward us, and it is of this that I now speak.

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

* "and hast borne, and hast patience and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

* "Nevertheless I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love.

* "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent," Revelation 2:2-5.

Here we have ministry, or the Lord's voice, addressing itself to those whose hearts had left their first love, and seeking to call them to repentance. o How solemn is the picture here presented to our view.

* We see an assembly that was apparently in the most perfect outward order, and in which was found an extraordinary measure of faithfulness and spiritual energy, yet lacking the one thing which alone could satisfy the heart of Christ.

* No human eye might have been able to discern that anything was lacking; there was service, fidelity, suffering for Christ's name's sake and endurance of no ordinary kind.

* If we knew such an assembly we should probably think they were everything that could be desired.

* But the love of their espousals had waned; they had left the bright "first love" to which Christ Himself was everything.

* Alas! it is possible for our service, our fidelity, and our testimony for Christ to become prominent in our minds, and for these things, so excellent in themselves, to usurp the place which Christ longs to hold in our affections.

* It may have been so at Ephesus, for Satan will use even such things as these to corrupt our minds from simplicity as to the Christ, and it is often thus that the decline of affections begins.

How touching is that word, "Remember from whence thou art fallen".

* We have already seen how the Lord remembers the "first love" of His saints; He delights to call it to mind; and He counts upon it being also a sweet memory to the hearts of his own.

* This is the first effort of His restoring grace – to recall the memory of those precious hours when the holy rapture of "first love" filled the heart, and He was really everything to the soul.

* Are the best and brightest seasons of your soul's history somewhere far behind?

* Have you to look back through the mist of intervening years to find a moment of deep joy in which Christ filled the whole vision of your soul, and His love satisfied every longing of your heart?

* Sorrowfully, but in tender love, the Lord calls you now to "remember".

* Do not allow yourself to be deceived by the fact that you know more, and that many truths are clearer to your mind.

* This may be so while the affections wither, and the soul is as dry as the desert sand.

* May the voice of the Lord really reach and recall in power every heart that has left its first love.

"And repent". I think there is an immensity of grace in that word.

* It opens the door for the aroused heart to trace its way back to the point where the decline began.

* It is, so to speak, the Lord inviting us to return to the happiness and intimacy of "first love".

* It is sad and humbling that the Lord has to use such a word to his own, but there is precious grace and comfort in it for the exercised heart.

- * Instead of putting any difficulty or discouragement in the way of our return, He invites us – calls upon us – to retrace our steps.
- * Yet we must needs return in a way that really sets us free in the presence of His love from the things that had diverted us from Him. Hence He says "Repent".
- * It is by the judgment in His presence of the whole course by which our hearts have wandered that we are brought back to the point where the decline began.
- * The soul has to travel back over its course, and to judge the presence of the Lord the true character of the things that have turned it aside, and in doing so to judge itself for that condition which gave these things their power over it.
- * This is a deep, solemn, searching process, but infinite love calls us into it, and will carry us through if we respond to that call.
- * I can quite understand a backslider saying, 'But my course has been so crooked and intricate that I could never trace it out; and the beginnings of my decline were so subtle, and the stages so imperceptible, that I am quite at a loss'.
- * This may serve to prove that you cannot restore yourself.
- * The Lord alone can lead us back over the history of our souls, and if our hearts really turn to Him He will do it.
- * He can show us exactly what turned us aside, and what it was that prepared us to be turned aside, and He can give us His own judgment about it all.
- * There is no legal effort about this, but the soul, sitting down before the Lord to judge with Him the whole course of departure.
- * The results of it is that we are brought back, with a deepened knowledge of self and a truer judgment of the world, to find our entire satisfaction in the unchanging love of His heart.
- * We are brought back to the freshness and simplicity of that "first love" to which Christ is everything. But there is another agency employed by the Lord to reach the consciences and hearts of His backsliding people, and that is Government.
- * To bring this before you, I will read from the Old Testament: o "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. o "And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now," Hosea 2:6-7.
- * Here we see the movement of the Lord's hand in restoring grace.
- * He will not allow the backslider to go unchecked in his self-chosen way; He hedges it up with thorns, and builds a wall across it. Do not our hearts know something of this?
- * We thought to take a seemingly pleasant path, but Christ was not before our hearts when we entered it, and every step in it was taking us further from Him, and in His grace He put a hedge of

thorns across it.

* He allowed our path to land us in painful circumstances, and the thorns tore our flesh.

* Did we consider that it was restoring grace which hedged up our way?

* Then again, we thought we saw a straight smooth way before us; it fell in with our wishes, our judgment approved it, and we entered on it with the greatest assurance.

* But presently we came to a dead block; there was a wall right across the road, we could neither get over it nor round it.

* Ah! it was restoring grace which built that wall, and which seeks to remind us by it that Christ was not before us when we turned that way. Have you ever pursued an object without any success, and been mortified by the disappointment?

* Or, having obtained the desired end, found it very different from what you had expected?

* Have you ever sought gratification in things here, and been surprised that they yielded so little?

* You have followed without overtaking, and you have sought without finding.

* You have been proving that the cisterns here are broken and can hold no water.

* Does not the dealing of the Lord's hand with you constrain you to say, "I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better than now"?

Let us read further. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her (margin, "to her heart")", Hosea 2:14.

* If our affections are true to Christ, they will make this world a wilderness to us; but if our affections do not make it a wilderness, His government will.

* He loves us too well to allow our hearts to nestle here; and He makes us conscious that it is a wilderness that He may have opportunity in our loneliness and our sorrow to speak to our hearts.

* The Voice that could not be heard in the din and bustle, and amid the laughter of the city, can be heard in the silence and solitude of the wilderness.

* Have you never had a wilderness interview with the Lover of your soul?

Then further. "And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope," Hosea 2:15.

* How significant is this! The valley of Achor (trouble) was the place where Achan was stoned, and he and his family, and his ill-gotten spoil, were burned with fire.

* This is very remarkable, for the sin of Achan was the first movement of departure after the people got into the land, and the place where that first movement was so thoroughly judged is the place given as a "door of hope" for a backsliding people.

* Does it not again impress upon our hearts the solemn and imperative necessity of judging the root and secret cause of the first symptom of decline?

* It is the allowance of the flesh – the toleration of its tastes and tendencies – which is the root of all.

* We allow ourselves to be swayed by a man who thinks more of a "goodly Babylonish garment," or a little silver or gold, than he does of Christ.

* You may depend upon it that if Christ loses His place in our affections, we are henceforth controlled by either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life.

* May the Lord conduct each backsliding heart through the valley of Achor, and give each one a thorough root-judgment of the flesh and the world. A few words more. "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt ... And I will betroth thee unto me for ever ... I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord," Hosea 2:15, Hosea 2:19-20.

* What a triumph of grace! Poor backsliding Israel, after more than 3000 years of wandering and rebellion, will be brought back to the kindness of her youth and to the love of her espousals.

* She will know Jehovah in His infinite grace as she has never known Him before – no longer as her Master, but as her Husband (see verse 16) – and she will enter afresh and for ever into the joy of her betrothal to Him.

Beloved brethren, if this is the manner of His grace to Israel, surely our hearts are entitled to appropriate its sweetness to ourselves, who are called, through infinite love, to know Him in a closer relationship.

* I know that when the heart has long been a stranger to the joy of first love, o there is a great tendency to settle down and go on with things as they are, as though it were hopeless to expect to be restored.

* I am sure that if the Lord gives your heart a fresh consciousness that He really loves you, that despairing and depressing idea will be banished from your soul.

* You will awake to the blessed reality of the fact that He yearns over you in rich boundless love, and that He is ready to lead you into communion with Himself o in the judgment of the things that have turned you aside, and of yourself for giving them a place in your thoughts.

* Your heart will leap for joy to think that His love is really unchanged.

* Thus restored, "first love," with all that it means for you and for Him, will again fill your heart. You will sing as in the days of your youth.

* You will come back with a subdued and chastened spirit – with a humbled heart and a broken will – to the joy of that moment of espousal when Christ was everything to your heart.

C. A. C.

01.05. A WARNING AND AN APPEAL

A WARNING AND AN APPEAL to all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity

We are living in days of religious activity. In the past century Christianity, if measured by its outward signs, greatly improved the position of this country.

* During the last few years too, there have been efforts, not only to erect buildings for religious purposes, but also to get the people into them.

* Outwardly Christianity is still recognised, even by many who are boasting loudly of the progress that men are making.

I recognise thankfully the efforts made by many real Christians towards evangelisation, and that sinners have been converted to God.

* There was in the early years of the nineteenth century a remarkable movement of the Spirit of God amongst God's people,

* and the long-lost truths pregnant with blessing and sanctifying power have been, through grace, restored to the intelligence and faith of many hearts.

* But there is now a widespread movement which is entirely opposed to the word of God, and which must lead eventually to the complete subversion of every truth vital to spiritual Christianity. It is against this latter movement that I raise a warning voice.

* What is the worth of progress and popularity if these are gained at the expense of truth, and by the surrender of everything that gives Christianity its divine character?

History Repeating Itself The history of the fourth century appears to be repeating itself, in a modified form, in the twentieth.

* From infamy and persecution the church arose in a very short time to greatness and supremacy.

* She laid aside the gory crown of martyrdom, assumed the glittering tiara, and forthwith began to walk, as Bunyan quaintly puts it, "in the sunshine with her silver slippers on". But at what a cost was this place of popularity and power purchased!

* By the surrender of all spiritual blessings, by being shorn of everything heavenly, by substituting earthly and carnal ritual for worship in spirit and in truth, by wholesale conformity to the usages and customs of the heathen world, and by the suppression of the word of God and the introduction of teachings of morality and philosophy in place of the gospel.

* In short, by giving up the truth, and by playing a traitor's part to the Lord Jesus, the church became great on earth where He had but a cross and a grave. The church secured the masses; she got the people to fill her sanctuaries, and to pour their money into her coffers, but at what a cost!

* We search the writings of the Fathers in vain to find any clear knowledge of the simplest elements of Christian blessing. The forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, peace with God, the knowledge and assurance of salvation, the eternal security of the believer, * his acceptance in Christ, his title to enter the holiest with boldness by the blood of Jesus, * his being indwelt by the Holy Spirit as the seal of sonship and the earnest of glory, * his identification with Christ's present place of rejection on earth, * are all subjects on which the apostles dwelt with happy familiarity in writing even to babes in Christ. In the worldly church of the Fathers – both episcopal and papal – all these, and other more exalted truths, were either quickly ignored, grossly perverted, or flatly denied.

* The church gained the people, but she lost the truth; o she attracted the world by stripping herself of everything that marked her as "a chaste virgin espoused unto Christ".

* Was not success of this kind a terrible calamity? Was not honour gained on such terms an immeasurable degradation?

I raise a warning voice because I see so plainly the same principles at work today.

* The attractiveness of Ritualism, the plausibility of Rationalism, and the charms of worldly pleasure o are being introduced on every hand as valuable accessories to the great work of reaching the masses.

* I do not write for the mere moralist, the Sunday religionist, or the worldly professor, o but for those of God's people who are associated with this development of evil without perhaps being sensible of its real nature in the sight of God.

* I call upon you to test your position, your surroundings, the practices you sanction by your presence, and the teaching you listen to, by the word of God. The Rejection of Christ

It seems to be Satan's object at the present time to obliterate the fact that Christ is rejected, or at any rate to rob that fact of all its deep and awful significance.

* There has been a full declaration of God in the Person of His Son, but how was He received? o With what honours did the world invest Him? o With what manner of reverence did the husbandmen treat the Son of the Lord of the vineyard?

* The very fact that God made Himself fully known only served to bring out the truth that men hated Him, and that the world knew Him not.

* The path that began at the manger ended upon the cross. The world's answer to God's Son was, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!"

* Nor has this verdict ever been reversed; Satan is still the god and prince of this world; o and the presence of the Holy Spirit is the abiding demonstration that Christ has been rejected, and of the real condition of the world.

* "When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged", John 16:8-11. The One who has been rejected was "full of grace and truth", o and His rejection proved that there was nothing in the

natural man that would respond to "grace" or be attracted by "truth".

* Grace was despised and truth was hated. Such is the world; such is man; and such were we until the Spirit of God wrought in us.

* It is plainly proved that the natural man has not one thought in common with God.

* It is not until God works in divine power by His word and Spirit and effects the new birth that there is anything in man in which He can take pleasure.

* The more moral and religious a man is without being born again, the more ignorant he is of God, and the more opposed to God's truth and grace.

If the rejection of Christ has proved the real condition of fallen man, it has also become the starting-point of all the wondrous grace and blessings which have come out in the gospel; o and which, having their foundation in His death, are connected with Christ risen and glorified.

* Redemption has been accomplished at the very moment when it was most clearly seen that the world would not have the Christ of God; o and now the earth-rejected One is seated at the right hand of God as the One who has died for all, and who has purged the sins of those who believe on Him.

* It is in Him – the risen and glorified One – that we have life and acceptance; it is in Him that we are blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places; o and it is He who is now set at God's right hand as "head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all", Ephesians 1:22.

* The church is the body of Christ, and each member thereof is united to the Head in heaven by the Holy Spirit. o Thus the very constitution of the church proves the rejection of Christ by the world.

* He would not be glorified as Man at God's right hand if He had not first been rejected here; and, as we have already seen, o the presence of the Holy Spirit is the abiding demonstration of the condition of the world which has rejected Him.

Christian, keep it ever before your heart that this world has rejected Christ, and we can never gain popularity with the world except at the expense of loyalty to Christ.

* Just in proportion as we step out of the path of reproach and contempt, we forsake our true position.

* Hence you will find that as buildings become larger and finer, and services more attractive, the inward spiritual power declines.

* Why should the followers of a despised and rejected Man be ambitious to make a fine appearance in the world where He died?

* Yet to gain this object all kinds of worldly expedients are adopted, and the help of unconverted people not only accepted but solicited, o and of course the world is only too glad to further an object which is so entirely in consonance with its own tastes. The Doctrines Preached

Then as to the doctrines preached. Vague and rationistic ideas as to the inspiration of the word of God are becoming more widespread every day; and as a consequence all the truths which stand or fall by the authority of Scripture are weakened or denied.

* The fall of man – the utterly lost condition by nature of every child of Adam – has not a very prominent place in present-day preaching. The absolute necessity of the new birth is consequently kept in the background or ignored altogether.

* Along with this, vague and misty theories of atonement are substituted for the solemn yet divinely precious statements of Scripture as to the eternal efficacy of the death and blood-shedding of Christ.

Unitarians are boasting in the spread of their anti-christian views as to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus.

* The plain declarations of the word of God as to eternal punishment are being challenged or explained away on every hand.

* It is asserted that religious teachers should not speak so much about divine and eternal things as about things connected with this life – science, morality, politics, etc. – and it is said that if we want to attract people we must speak on subjects in which they are interested. That is, the church must come down to the level of the world before she can win the world's approval.

* That is true enough, but what is the spiritual condition of the Christian who proposes such a thing?

Sober-minded Christians will not deny that the old paths are being forsaken both as to doctrines and practice.

* Many are protesting with indignation only to find themselves in a minority, or obliged to compromise matters by a partial surrender to preserve peace.

* Thousands of others are groaning in secret over the declension and departure, but have not the courage to lift up their voices against it.

* Others, again, in spite of misgivings and fears, are hoping for the best, and trying to feel satisfied that the movement is in the right direction.

* And, lastly – it must be said with sadness – some true children of God have so fallen under the power of this flowing tide of worldliness and apostasy that they are carried along by it, and give it their sanction and support. May God in His great mercy arouse the sleeping consciences of such, and deliver them from the snare in which they are taken! The Failure of the Church Anticipated Let us now turn to the word of God and see if such a state of things has been anticipated.

* Does the inspired volume lead us to expect failure and departure from the truth?

* If so we need not be surprised as we see the evidence of it all around us. Read the following scriptures.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with the blood of own.

* "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

* "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them", Acts 20:28-30.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils", 1 Timothy 4:1.

"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, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away", 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived", 2 Timothy 3:12-13.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables", 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

* See also 2 Timothy 1:15, 2 Timothy 2:16; 2 Peter 2:1, 2 Peter 3:17; 1 John 2:18-26; Jude 1:16-18.

It is manifest from the above scriptures, and others which might be cited, that even in the apostles' days declension had set in, and no prospect of recovery is held out.

* The prophetic intimations as to the church's future on earth become increasingly dark and gloomy until its "last days" are described in words almost identical with those which the Holy Spirit employs in speaking of the heathen world before Christianity came into it, compare 2 Timothy 3:1-17 with Romans 1:1-32.

* The church as a public profession in the world has failed in all the different forms which she has taken.

* At every phase of her history she has failed, and if Scripture is to be our guide, we may expect that failure to become deeper and deeper until it ends in open apostasy. The Path of Faith for Today

Many earnest Christians will be ready to ask, "What can I do to remedy this state of things? or how can I act so as to please the Lord in the present circumstances of the church?"

* In short, what is the path of faith for today?" In seeking to furnish a scriptural answer to these questions we must bear in mind that there is no hope held out in the word of God of a general recovery of the church.

* As a public profession on earth its career is to end, as we have seen, in apostasy.

* No doubt where hearts are loyal to Christ, and the departure and declension of the church are seen, there will be efforts to bring back what is according to God's mind, but such efforts will have but small success.

* The tide of evil will be found too strong, and the conviction will be forced upon those who feel it that the path of faith must be in setting themselves right.

* In proportion as we walk with God, and have a spiritual judgment of things, we shall be sorrowful to see the worldliness and corruption that are coming in like a flood.

* We shall "sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done". We shall humble ourselves before God as being involved in the common shame of the great dishonour done to the Lord's name.

* We shall be ready, like Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel in their day, to confess the sin of our people, o and to judge ourselves as having contributed to the weakness and worldliness of the church by our want of devotedness and fidelity.

* I do not believe that any Christian will be found in the path of faith at the present day if he is not humbled and sorrowful as he sees the departure from the truth which is so manifest to every spiritual eye.

Humiliation, self-judgment, and confession will surely characterise each one who is truly learning the will of God in these evil days.

* Such a one will be of a contrite spirit, and will tremble at the word of God, Isaiah 66:2. He will be of like character to those of whom it is said: o "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord", Zephaniah 3:11-12.

* While the great religious bodies are boasting of their position and progress with Laodicean self-complacency, o spiritually minded believers are humbled and distressed by seeing that the advances are being made at the expense of fidelity to Christ and the truth.

If you cleave to the word of God and reject as error what is opposed to its teaching, you may be called a narrow-minded bigot.

* If you are uncompromisingly loyal to Christ you may be spoken of as peculiar and fanatical * If you begin to judge things by the word of God you are accused of thinking nobody is right but yourself, o and all this may be said by those who take the place of being Christians, and are foremost in what are considered to be christian activities.

* Every faithful Christian finds himself in a position of isolation which is in proportion to the measure of his fidelity to Christ.

* He is shunned by the carnal and the worldly, and his absence from their society is hailed as a relief.

* The more faithful a man is to Christ, the more isolated will he be from his surroundings in the professing church today. The Foundation of God – 1 There is however a direct word in Scripture for the guidance of every true Christian in such days as these; o a word which I trust the Holy Spirit will lay upon the consciences of many who read this pamphlet. Here it is.

* "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.

* "And, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord 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 honour, and some to dishonour.

* "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

* "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart", 2 Timothy 2:19-22.

Blessed be God! there is a foundation the security and stability of which nothing can impair.

* The professing church may drift into open apostasy, error may be rampant, worldliness may come in like a flood, but in spite of all, and in the midst of all, a sure foundation remains.

* What a relief for a Christian's heart to apprehend this! What a resting-place for the soul amid the sea of unrest which rolls around us today!

* It may seem as if all the old landmarks were being rapidly removed, yet an immovable foundation may be found, and happy will be my reader's portion if he is led to that foundation and takes his stand upon it.

Two things characterise the "foundation of God", one of which is brought before us in the words, "The Lord knoweth them that are His".

* Sovereign grace has secured its objects, and will secure them to the end, in spite of all the evil and departure from truth. o They may be – and, alas! often are – hidden to human eyes, but the Lord knows them.

* Though He can no longer own as His the great profession which bears His name only to dishonour it, in the midst of it all He knows the chosen, called, and justified ones.

* We may not be able to discriminate between the wheat and the tares, or between the wise and foolish virgins.

* We may be deceived by the empty and Christless professor, or we may misjudge the truly converted soul, o but the Lord makes no mistakes. Grace has chosen her objects, and secured them, and keeps them in spite of men or devils, and "the Lord knoweth them that are His".

* I earnestly hope that my reader has the divine assurance on the authority of the word of God, that his sins are forgiven, that he is justified by faith, has peace with God, and has received the Holy Spirit. The Foundation of God – 2 But the "foundation of God" has another seal – sometimes overlooked by those who rejoice in the first. o "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity".

* It cannot be said that anyone is on the "foundation of God" unless he is acting upon this solemn injunction. o No one can calmly and steadfastly stand for God in an evil day like this except as he

acts on this principle.

* To remain in association with iniquity is to nullify all our power to testify against it, o and those who do so in hope that they may be able to do something to stem the current of evil, only vex themselves and prove their own weakness; o and in the end they either become soured in spirit by continual contentions or for peace sake they tolerate and acquiesce in the evil.

* In a day like this the only divine path is one of unhesitating obedience to the word of God.

* Human reason and natural feeling may suggest innumerable arguments to defer obedience to a word like this. o Another course may seem better calculated to attain the end in view.

* But human expediency and policy are unknown things in the region of faith. Faith's inquiry is, What saith the Scripture? What saith the Lord? Faith hears His voice only to obey it.

* Now, can my reader look this scripture honestly in the face: "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity"?

I do not wish to lead anyone to take a single step beyond the measure of light and faith which the Lord has given him, o but I ask, Are you going on with anything which in your faith and conscience you know to be contrary to the mind of the Lord?

* If God has given you light by His word and Spirit, it is a serious thing to trifle with it.

* Every ray of divine light which we receive is given to us that it may, o first of all, be applied in self-judgment so that we ourselves are delivered by the truth and by the Spirit's power from motives and principles which are not according to God; o and, secondly, to enable us to judge of our associations and surroundings from a divine standpoint.

Many Christians are sick at heart as they see the spread of ritualism, the encroachments of worldliness, and the bold advance of infidelity under a religious guise.

* The "iniquity" is clearly seen; its character is known; it is sorrowed over; but it is gone on with .

* The sharp edge of the scripture we are considering is not allowed to sever the link of association with that which is evil.

* Is it any wonder that the Spirit is grieved, that piety declines, and souls make no spiritual progress?

* It is impossible for one to expect increase of light or blessing from the Lord so long as this plain word is disregarded.

* Many have said to me, "I do not know what to do". Well, here is a plain word of direction. You cannot say that it is obscure or unintelligible. o It does not require much learning, wisdom, or research to understand it.

* It only requires the obedience of a heart subject to the Lord. "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity".

Further, the Holy Spirit uses the figure of "a great house" to represent the condition of the professing church in the evil days of which He speaks and in the midst of which we are now living,

o and He says that some vessels therein are "to honour and some to dishonour".

* Then follows another solemn and searching word for the conscience of everyone who seeks to be faithful unto the Lord. o "If a man therefore purge himself from these" – vessels to dishonour – "he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work".

It has often been remarked that the word here translated "purge" only occurs twice in the New Testament – in 1 Corinthians 5:7, and in the scripture before us.

* At Corinth the state of things was not hopelessly evil and the Holy Spirit acted by the apostle to arouse the consciences of all, so that the "old leaven" might be "purged out" and the assembly be a new lump as unleavened.

* In 2 Timothy the total and hopeless ruin of the church as a public profession in the world is insisted on, and no attempt is made to set it right.

* Plain directions are given as to the path for faithful individuals. He who will be "a vessel unto honour" must "purge himself" from vessels to dishonour.

* It is not now the time to consider how to set the church right; it is too late for that. The question for every exercised heart is, o How can I put myself right so as to be in the current of the Spirit and in accordance with the Lord's will in an evil day like this? A man who holds, teaches, and maintains what is contrary to the word of God is a "vessel to dishonour".

* Charity and liberality have no place when the truth of God is in question. o We must not excuse error on the ground of the sincerity of the one who holds it.

* Truth is of God, and whatever is contrary to it is of the father of lies.

* If you remain in association with those who pervert or deny the truth, you lend your sanction to what they teach or hold, and you fail to be a witness to the truth.

* You cannot do this without immeasurable loss to your own soul, as well as dishonour to the Lord.

* Moreover, your continued association with vessels to dishonour indicates that the Lord's claims and the truth of God have but little hold upon your conscience and heart.

You may say that if this were acted upon it would lead to many professedly christian congregations being forsaken by all true Christians.

* I believe it would, and such testimony would have its own solemn and weighty effect.

* Whereas if Christians remain and countenance by their presence worldliness, ritualism, infidelity, or Unitarianism, o they are helping to deceive the unsaved around them by leading them to suppose that such things are all right.

* That which is contrary to the truth, whether it be in practice or in doctrine, must be dishonouring to the Lord, and those who maintain such things are without doubt "vessels to dishonour".

* The scripture leaves no doubt as to the course which a faithful one should pursue in reference to such persons. o "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified,

and meet for the master's use".

* Do you not covet the honour from God of which these words speak?

"Flee also youthful lusts" is the next solemn injunction of the Holy Spirit in this connection, and never was the word more seasonable than it is today.

* Does it not seem in some quarters as if the gratification of these lusts was a part of Christianity, or at least might be made subservient to spiritual ends?

* What is the object of all the concerts, entertainments, and worldly amusements – which are so often organised in connection with professedly christian bodies – but the direct gratification of "youthful lusts"?

* What is ritualism with its imposing ceremonial but an appeal to the lust of the eye? and everybody knows how attractive it has proved, especially to the young.

* The thirst for something new is another lust which generally burns ardently in youthful bosoms, and to gratify this longing for novelty the old anchorages of faith and conscience are left, and all kinds of speculations and theories are substituted for the solid verities of the word of God.

* I believe that all such things are included under the head of "youthful lusts", as well as those darker passions which have so often played havoc with spiritual life. The Positive Side of the Truth Thus far we have been occupied with the negative side of the path of faith; and the faithful one must "depart from iniquity", he must "purge himself" from vessels to dishonour, and he must "flee youthful lusts".

* But there is positive occupation of heart for him likewise, and that, too, in association with those whom the Lord approves.

"Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart".

* Righteousness is to do the will of God and to seek His glory,

* Faith is that divine principle by which we are able to walk with God and to please Him, even if we have no human support whatever.

* Love in God is the sovereign source of all blessing – an eternal spring which never fails whatever state the church may be reduced to; and Love in us is the divine nature in virtue of which we can, by the Spirit, walk in love as imitators of God whatever may be the state of things around us.

* Peace is that holy calm which can only be known when our own wills are judged and displaced, and our hearts seek only the will of God.

What precious objects of pursuit for the Christian!

* Righteousness, giving God His right place in everything;

* Faith, maintaining us as dependent ones in the paths of righteousness;

* Love, the spring of everything, so that obedience flows out of divine affections, and is not a mere cold sense of duty; and * Peace keeping our hearts and ruling there is spite of every storm around!

Take courage, then, beloved Christians! These are the things which the Lord sets before you and which He would have your heart to pursue.

* No amount of evil, and no development of the ripening apostasy, can hinder you from following "righteousness, faith, love, peace", if your heart desires to go after them.

* The Lord would not have you to dwell upon the evil, but to judge it and forsake it that you may follow and cleave to that which is good and of Himself.

* This must be your individual path whatever others say or do. If you could not find another to walk with you or to approve of your course, it would still be your privilege and your responsibility to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace". The scripture we are looking at does not lead us to suppose that we shall be isolated from all Christians, for it tells us to "follow ... with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart".

* Does not this indicate that in the darkest days and in the most perilous times there will still be not only faithful individuals, but a company with whom we may be associated in a bond of divine fellowship?

* It is a pledge to us from the Lord that if we are, through His grace, exercised in heart and seeking to do His will, we shall find others in whom the same grace is working. We may not know them – they may not be very prominent – but it should become our business to seek them out.

* If the Holy Spirit has led you into the knowledge of the truth in any measure, you will be able to recognise His leading and teaching in others.

* There are some trying to find the right company of Christians with whom to be associated who need, in the first place, to get into the presence of God about their own spiritual condition, and if they got personally right with the Lord three-fourths of their difficulties would be solved at once.

Objections

It is often urged, even by those who admit the excellence of divine principles, that it is a practical impossibility to carry them out in these days; but this is a solemn thing to say.

* If this be admitted as true, the Christian is no longer to be under the authority of the Lord, or to obey the word of God.

* On the contrary, when he reads plain words such as we have been looking at in 2 Timothy, he is, after all, to use his own judgment as to whether he will obey them or not.

* If obedience does not suit his inclination, or the spirit of the times, he may disobey, and excuse himself on the ground that it is a practical impossibility to act upon the will of the Lord! To state such an argument in plain words is sufficient to refute it for every heart that loves to hear and obey the voice of the Lord.

* Imprisonment, torture, and death were not sufficient to turn aside the noble army of martyrs from the path of subjection and obedience. They might often have saved their lives by the surrender of fidelity in what might be called things of minor importance.

* Alas! in our easy times the displeasure of relatives or friends, the loss of business or occupation, the reluctance to break away from old associations, o often have a power to hinder fidelity to Christ greater than that of the dungeon or the stake in their days.

I am also aware that it will be said that those who have attempted to act upon divine principles have failed quite as much as others. What does that prove?

* Nothing but the simple fact that divine principles can only be carried out in divine power, o and if God's people are not really walking by faith and in the Spirit, the more scriptural the principles on which they profess to act, the more inconsistent will they be in carrying them out.

* But a devoted heart would never make the failure of others an excuse for disobedience.

* If we really loved the Lord, the more we saw others fail to carry out His mind, the more we should seek, through grace, to carry it out ourselves.

* The one all-important consideration is that "the grace which is in Christ Jesus" is a sufficient resource for the most difficult days.

* Let us not forget that we are commended to "God and the word of His grace", Acts 20:32.

* Surely no Christian would venture to say that God is not able to maintain us in the path of obedience to His word! o It is well, on the other hand, to remember that we can only walk in this path as we are maintained by divine grace and power. The sectarian divisions of the church are often excused or justified on the ground that all Christians can never be made to see alike, o and divisions amongst those who have professed to take an unsectarian position are pointed to as proof positive of the assertion.

* But the important question is, not how we or our brethren see things, but how does the Lord see them?

* If there are a thousand different judgments amongst His saints, and they are divided in a thousand different companies, o it is still true that the Lord has not two different judgments about the same thing, o and those who are near enough to Him to have His mind will undoubtedly be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment", 1 Corinthians 1:10.

* Everything thus becomes a test of our spiritual condition, for if we are not going on with the Lord in humility and self-judgment how can we expect to know His mind?

* It was said to the Corinthians, "There must be also sects among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you", 1 Corinthians 11:19.

* A division amongst saints is the proof that some of them, at least, have failed to discern the mind of the Lord as to the matter in question.

* Outwardly the one company may retain as correct a form as the other, o but their whole position is founded upon the fact that in certain things they have not known the mind of the Lord; o that is, they have acted upon their own mind and judgment instead of His.

* Who would say that in a company professing to "call on the Lord out of a pure heart", it was a matter of no consequence whether they had His mind or not on any subject that caused difficulty

or division?

* It is impossible for any spiritual person to suppose that a company is gathered to the Lord's name, o if that company owes its existence to the fact that the individuals who compose it have failed to discern His mind and judgment on a matter serious enough to cause division amongst His saints.

* Such a company owes its existence to the fact that man's mind and judgment have been allowed to determine the question, o and this is the very thing that has given rise to the countless sects of Christendom.

* Such a company is essentially sectarian – however much it may profess the contrary – o and will necessarily be found defective in the knowledge and maintenance of the truth according to God. A Divine Position No question should be of greater interest and importance for those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity than * whether it is possible for us in these last days to be found in a divine position. o Something far removed from the endless diversity of human opinion.

* Can you believe that the Lord has so forsaken His own that it is not possible to be found today in a position according to His mind?

* Through His grace, it is possible to be found in such a position, and I trust that there may be kindled in christian hearts an intense desire to be thus found.

Thank God! He will not fail nor forsake those who in loyalty of heart to Christ desire to be found in the path of faith.

* Whatever be the difficulties and complications, they are not too great for divine power and wisdom; and if they serve to cast us upon God, they are blessings in disguise. o "To the upright there ariseth light in darkness". o "The meek will He guide in judgment; the meek will He teach His way". In conclusion, I appeal to the christian reader not to think lightly of the privilege which, through the grace of God, lies within his reach.

* Be not content to have the knowledge and assurance of salvation and christian blessings, but covet earnestly to be found in the true path of faith.

* The Lord's return is very nigh. May we be found with our loins girded, our lights burning, and we ourselves like men that wait for their Lord! o "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown", Revelation 3:11.

C. A. C.

01.06. PRESENT CONDITIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION

PRESENT CONDITIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION Letters of C. A. Coates: 125-131, 1926 The questions raised in your letter are important, and they involve much that can hardly be dealt with briefly.

* But I will endeavor to answer them as far as I can according to the exercise which I have in the light of Scripture.

It is true that J.N.D. and J.B.S. would have received to break bread "a godly clergyman" or "a person known to be godly and sound in the faith o "who has not left some ecclesiastical system ... as to which his conscience is not enlightened, nay, which he may think more right".

* And the question is now raised as to whether brethren still do so? or whether they are on sectarian ground if they do not?

It is evident that J.N.D. and J.B.S. had in view, in writing as they did the spiritual conditions of the time.

* They did not contemplate persons being received who came from associations leavened by all kinds of worldliness, or by evil teaching on vital matters.

* Their uncompromising separation from Bethesda, and all who espoused its principles, in 1848, shewed that they regarded association with evil as a definite bar to Christian communion.

Truth and divine principles do not change, but it has not been the way of God – either when first giving the truth through the apostles, o or in reviving it during the last century – to give all the truth at once, or the full bearing of it.

* He has brought it out as the needs of the church required, according to the exercises of the time, o and with regard to the conditions obtaining in relation to His testimony.

* It is well to inquire what the conditions were under which J.N.D. and J.B.S. wrote as they did. At that time those in the sects were marked individually and collectively by a very considerable degree of separation from the world, and by much true devotedness; o they preserved in large measure purity of doctrine as to fundamental truth.

* Before the movement of separation began it is obvious that whatever light there was, or whatever faithfulness or testimony there was, was found in those bodies.

* There were "a few names" in Sardis of whom the Lord could say that they had not defiled their garments, and that they should walk with Him in white, for they were worthy. o Such had preserved in holy integrity what was consistent with the truth so far as they knew it.

* If there had not been such, there would have been no material suited to receive the Lord's further testimony.

* But there was material out of which something truly Philadelphian in character could be formed as ministry was given from Christ as Head.

Now I do not learn from Scripture that it has ever been God's way to suddenly disown, or break the link with, what has been, in its day, of Himself when He brings in further and greater light. o He acts in patient consideration for His people. He respects, if one may so say, His former ways. o He has regard to that which He may have been pleased to use even though it fell short of what was in His mind.

* It was so when Judaism was superseded by Christianity; there was a transition period during which the separation between the old and the new was not definite.

* The faithful remnant entered into the blessings of the new order without altogether severing themselves from the former system – now really set aside by God.

* It was not until the epistle to the Hebrews was written that they were definitely called to "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach".

There is a certain analogy between what the epistle to the Hebrews was to the believing remnant of Israel, then made partakers of the heavenly calling, o and what 2 Timothy is to us as calling us into separation from those things in the Christian profession which are not suitable to the present testimony of God, and which largely have the character of Judaism.

* But the application of 2 Timothy was accompanied by much consideration – which was, I believe, at the time, of the Spirit of God – o for faithful and pious souls, even though they were not fully prepared to take the path of complete separation to the Lord.

* The practice of eighty or ninety years ago was probably, at that time, of the Lord, o for it was important to make manifest that the spiritual movement was in no way a sectarian one, but that it opened up a path, through divine favor, for all saints. But every exercised Christian must see that there is an immense and solemn change in the whole condition of things since those days.

* Evil has come in like a flood; there has been no power to keep it out of religious bodies; all kinds of leavening influences are at work. o No grave and exercised mind can be unaware of the tremendous change.

* It calls imperatively for greatly increased vigilance and care on the part of those who desire through grace, to maintain what is due to the Lord, o and to preserve a purity of associations which shall be in keeping with the truth of God's assembly, and with the principles of 2 Timothy 2:1-26.

Then it must not be overlooked that if there has been a terrible down-grade movement affecting more or less all the organized bodies, o there has been another movement marked by the following of righteousness, faith, love, peace, and by calling on the Lord out of a pure heart.

* It is evident that the breach between these two movements must necessarily have been widening all the time. o The separation between them becomes continually more definitely marked.

* And I have no doubt that this is felt, and that it has the effect of restraining persons from wishing to break bread who are not prepared to break their links with what is, in the light of Scripture, unrighteous.

* So that it becomes increasingly rare for any to wish to break bread while still retaining their links with the systems.

* I think the incompatibility of the two positions is felt by many who have not even seriously weighed the reasons for it.

Things can only be maintained by God as we act on the principles laid down in 2 Timothy.

* The two-fold seal of God's foundation is that "The Lord knows those that are his; and, Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity".

* We cannot have Christian fellowship in any definite or practical sense except on this line.

God works by the ministry of what is positive – by the truth.

* Certain things have been seen to be evil, and they have been withdrawn from because they have been judged in the light of the positive truth.

* The lordship and headship of Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the truth of the body and the house, the divine order of the assembly, the spiritual character of all that is for God's pleasure, the heavenly calling of the saints, o and much more that might be mentioned in detail, are the great and precious realities by which saints have been revived and moved in these last days. In the light of these things the present condition of the Christian profession generally has been discerned to be one of great departure from the truth, o and this we have to humbly own as having our part in the responsibility of it.

* But the instructions of 2 Timothy have provided an open door by which to escape from things which are inconsistent with the truth, and with the fellowship to which believers are called. o This open door is available for all saints.

* The truth of the fellowship is only known practically as we avail ourselves of it.

* The fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and of the body and blood of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, and of the apostles, is the only fellowship which Scripture recognizes as being a divine one.

* It is because the truth of this fellowship could not be realized in systems characterized by human order and clerical office, or where a sectarian bond was recognized or boasted in, that so many have definitely separated from such systems.

* Souls have been freed from these things by the power of positive truth, as they have moved after Christ, and after what is of God, with a desire to realise the true position and wealth of the assembly in the Holy Spirit.

* And in proportion as there has been separation to Christ, and giving place to the Holy Spirit as practically recognizing His presence and action in the saints, o there has been great enlargement in the communication and apprehension of the truth concerning Christ and the assembly.

It is impossible to say that there is anything sectarian about this.

* It is a path clearly indicated in 2 Timothy, and it is open to all saints, and every one who has truly found that path would earnestly wish that all saints might also be found in it.

* And there is an unrestricted ministry of positive divine wealth going on all the time, through what is spoken and printed, by which what is spiritually attractive is put within reach of those whom the Lord loves, o and for whom He cares, and to whom He sends light and food that they may find His path, and know the blessedness and the bond of the fellowship.

* If souls take this path they will find the privilege of the Lord's supper awaiting them.

Every Christian is divinely called to the fellowship; it is there for every one who has faith and affection to take it up.

* And I think it must be admitted that being true to the fellowship morally precedes the eating of the Lord's supper together.

* 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 precedes 1 Corinthians 11:1-34. We get first "the teaching and fellowship of the apostles"; then "breaking of bread and prayers," Acts 2:42.

* But the truth of the fellowship clearly raises the question of associations. It did so at the beginning. o How much more so – may we not say? – in the midst of all the confusion of the last days?

* Can there be any doubt that 2 Timothy is given to us as a special guidance for the last days? o And does it not raise the question of associations very definitely?

* It is a powerful divine call to take heed to our moral condition, and to look well to our associations. In the last days fidelity becomes of the utmost importance and the faithful word must have its place. o "For if we have died together with him, we shall also live together; if we endure, we shall also reign together," etc., o "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity".

* It is needful to purify oneself from vessels to dishonour in separating from them, if one would be a vessel to honour. o And we are to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart".

* I would submit that the title of any Christian to be received to partake of the Lord's supper has now to be conditioned by the principles laid down in 2 Timothy. o Our companying with saints is clearly to be on those lines.

* This raises grave considerations as to how far those should be received to the eating of the Lord's supper who are obviously not maintaining fidelity to the truth of the fellowship.

* To partake of the one loaf and to drink of the one cup is the most intimate and holy expression of our participation in the fellowship. o It is a serious thing for any to commit themselves in a most solemn act to a fellowship which in their minds they are not prepared to take up.

* No doubt many look upon the Lord's supper merely as individual privilege and do not consider that it involves any definite fellowship.

* But it is really the most definite commitment to the fellowship, and to all that the fellowship involves. o To sign a deed of partnership is a serious matter even in human things; how much more so in the holy things of God?

* If souls are not prepared for the path of separation from evil, in the light and blessedness of all the good that is of God, o they would do well to wait upon the Lord until they are assured as to the path in which He would have them to walk.

Members of religious bodies stand publicly committed to the acts of those bodies, o and these are often such as to raise a question as to whether those who remain identified with them could be regarded as calling upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

* Not, of course, forgetting that we can only take account of what becomes manifest, and of what persons are identified with in public profession.

* Present-day conditions call for careful and godly door-keeping.

There is a further serious aspect of this question which we have to face.

* The course of the testimony during the last hundred years has been attended by many conflicts.

* And succeeding separations have tested the saints, and have left permanent results in a form that is sorrowful and humiliating, but which cannot be ignored.

* We cannot now say that we are free to receive Christians without raising any question as to their associations.

* It would mean confusion and looseness, and would commit us to the practical acceptance of principles which we believe to be contrary to divine assembly order, and to the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

* So far as we have learned the mind of God we wish to maintain it in a practical way.

* The principles which govern the fellowship are universal and abiding. They have had to be maintained in times of conflict at the cost of separation from many brethren.

* But it is impossible to accept identification with principles which we have definitely separated from as not being of God.

* The door is widely open for any to acknowledge the divine principles which they may have formerly refused. o But to receive them without this would be to deprive them of the spiritual gain of the exercise which the Lord permitted to be raised.

It may be truly said that many now know nothing of the conflicts which have resulted in their being where they are; many, perhaps, converted long years after such conflicts have taken place.

* In such cases, if the Lord were drawing one by the attraction of increased knowledge of Himself, and of spiritual light and food, it would be manifest that spiritual motives were at work.

* Such a soul, finding the Lord amongst His saints, and prepared to move as having the Lord before him, would find no difficulty.

* He would be received as having moved, through spiritual exercise, from his former associations.

C. A. C.

02.00. THE NAZARITE'S VOW

THE NAZARITE'S VOW An Address to Young Christians from

Numbers 6:1-27 by . A. Coates (1862-1945) Reprinted from the booklet:

"The Nazarite's Vow: An Address to Christian Young Men" by C. A. Coates.

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02.01. Part 1

Part I

BEFORE entering upon the subject of the Nazarite's Vow, I should like to say very plainly that the salvation of a sinner depends altogether upon Christ and His perfect work on the cross, and it is received only by faith. The prayers, works, self-denial, and devotedness of the believer add nothing whatever to his salvation. To suppose that our salvation depends in any way upon ourselves is to be "fallen from grace," and to be in darkness and uncertainty as to the whole matter. But when we see that Christ is the Alpha and Omega of our salvation, that His atoning work has settled every question that sin had raised between God and our souls, that His blood "cleanseth us from all sin," and that we are on the shoulder of the Good Shepherd who has pledged His word that we "shall never perish," we find ourselves upon solid ground, and divine assurance takes the place of alternating hope and fear. The question of salvation was settled for me fifteen years ago. Has it been settled for you?... Has the momentous inquiry been wrung from your heart, "What must I do to be saved?" Is the great transaction done?... I trust it is so with each one in this company! An important fact in connection with salvation is sometimes overlooked, viz. that salvation is linked with the recognition of the rights of the Lord Jesus. It is written, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth THE LORD JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). In a coming day every knee will be made to bow to Him, and every tongue will have to confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, but the believer does it now. By-and-by the rightful but now rejected King will have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; but to-day His authority is only acknowledged and confessed by those who believe on His Name. A little millennium is set up in the heart of the believer, and he confesses Jesus as Lord. But at this point I fear the screw is often loose. Jesus is trusted as the Saviour but not fully recognised as Lord. He is taken on board more as a passenger than as captain of the ship. The captain has authority from stem to stern; the ship sails "whithersoever he listeth;" everything about the vessel and her voyage is under his control. Now let each of us ask himself the question, Have I got Christ on board as a Passenger, or as Captain of the ship?

Some—Jacob-like—will give Christ the tenth part; others will offer Him a larger proportion; but giving Him one-tenth or nine-tenths is not really owning His rights. The inhabitants of a besieged city wanted to make terms with their enemies, but the answer was, "No terms: unconditional surrender." That is what we must have if we want to be Christians worthy of the name. No terms with Christ, but unconditional surrender to Him—the loyal and unreserved recognition of His rights as LORD! And is He not worthy? Think of His unconditional surrender for us! See the Lord of glory stooping down into the dust of death! He sacrificed everything and laid down His life to make us His own. The love of Christ, expressed in death, has a constraining power over every heart that really knows it; and it argues with a cogency which nothing but the hardness of unbelief can resist, that we should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him. Do we believe that "He gave Himself?" Then how can we make reserves in our surrender to Him? Shall we not fervently

exclaim—

"Higher than the highest heavens, Deeper than the deepest sea, Lord, Thy love at last hath conquered.

Grant me now my spirit's longing, 'None of self and all of Thee!'" May all bargaining and compromise and reserve cease from our hearts here and now, and may that short but all-comprehensive prayer of a surrendered and subject heart—"Lord, what wilt THOU have me to do?"—be our soul's utterance to-night and evermore!

Surely none of us could be content to quietly assume that because our sins are forgiven we need not concern ourselves as to whether we are devoted to Christ or not! Let us not forget the judgement seat! Let us remember that there is such a thing as being "saved yet so as by fire!" My brother, your present happiness and your future place in the kingdom glory depend on your loyalty to Christ here on earth. May God touch us with a little of the fire that burned in the soul of a true Nazarite! No one was compelled to be a Nazarite. The Lord wants volunteers, not pressed men. The Nazarite was one who voluntarily devoted himself to the Lord—not of necessity, but of a willing mind. Grace wrought in his heart the desire to be wholly for the Lord, and then grace provided a way in which that devotedness could be expressed. The great need of the Israel of God to-day is more Nazarites—more thoroughly devoted men and women. Spiritual young people are a great testimony for Christ in these days of secularised Christianity, and I should like every young person here to have it impressed upon his heart that God has committed to him a stewardship of the interests and glory of CHRIST. If we have not an intense longing to be really for Christ, may God give it to us now!

Notice the three words—eight times repeated in this chapter—

"UNTO THE LORD."

These words are the key to the chapter. It is not "under the law," but "UNTO THE LORD." There was no servile constraint—no legal bondage—about the Nazarite's Vow. He was one whose heart burned with a desire to be wholly devoted "unto the Lord." Now I confess I know no arguments, and I am acquainted with no power that will move the heart to devotedness except the knowledge of the Lord Himself and of His love. It is possible to read books by the score, and to listen to the most faithful and blessed ministry for years together, and yet never know the Lord as a present living Object in heavenly glory. I venture to say that it is impossible to see and know Him there by faith without having an intense desire to be wholly devoted to Him here. Do you think that we could gaze upon the glory-crowned Person to whom angels and principalities are subject, and yet withhold the allegiance of our poor hearts? Do you suppose for a moment that we could see the hands, the feet, the side, that bear the everlasting tokens of His love to us, and remain in a state of passive indifference to His glory here? Could we see Him there—the exalted Object of the worship of delighted heaven, and at the same time be content to compromise His glory and dishonour His Name by conformity to the world which still sets Him at naught? A sight of that MAN in the glory takes the glitter from this corrupt and godless world. Its charms attract and its shams deceive no more. The heart says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" The ONE in glory becomes the "Object bright and fair, to fill and satisfy the heart," and the one who thus knows Him begins a new life. Instead of the affections and energies finding their home and object in the world and self, they

begin to flow in the current of Numbers 6:1-27, "unto the Lord." It is not that we deny ourselves for an indefinite reason, or to improve our spiritual standing or reputation, but there is a positive Object—a Person of infinite worth—before our souls, and for the sake and for the love of that Person what would otherwise be painful, self-denial becomes a source of deepest happiness to our souls. I am bold to say that the Nazarite who really devoted himself "unto the Lord" got overwhelmingly repaid for his self-denial in the blessing and joy of his soul. Now, my brethren, are you prepared to be true Nazarites? Does the Person of the Lord and His love so command you, that the deepest and most cherished desire of your heart is to be devoted entirely to Him?

There were three things the Nazarite was not to do; these three negatives being simply the fruit and the expression of the positive fact that he was a man devoted "UNTO THE LORD."

1. He was not to eat or drink any part or product of the vine.
2. He was not to cut his hair.
3. He was not to come in contact with a dead body. The Nazarite willingly devoted himself to a life of

1. SELF-DENIAL, and for the Lord's sake he abstained from that which would have been naturally pleasant to him. The testimony of Scripture is that "wine maketh merry" (Ecclesiastes 10:19), and "maketh glad the heart of man" (Psalms 104:15), and hence wine becomes the type of those earthly and worldly things that elevate and give pleasure to the heart and mind of man. The ordinary Israelite might indulge in wine and keep a good conscience; not so the Nazarite. The one who desired to be wholly for the Lord must abstain so totally that "from the kernels even to the husk" not a particle or a drop that came from the vine of the earth must pass his lips.

Alas! my friends, there are thousands in the spiritual Israel to-day who are not Nazarites; carnal believers who have never seen the Lord in glory or known the power of His cross, and whose joys are earthly and not heavenly. I only mention them to warn you that if you mean, through grace, to be a Nazarite, their example must be no standard for you. Professing Christians to-day are ready to drink every drop of the vine of earthly pleasure that they can get. They are ready to eat the whole vine—kernel and husks and all. The strait-laced legality of Puritan times has given place to a corrupt taste for pleasure and amusement, which is being gratified to the full by a sickly, effeminate, and unfaithful church, so that there is hardly any form of earthly or worldly pleasure which is not indulged in by professed people of God. My brethren if you are set for the Lord, you will very soon find out that you cannot go to a cricket or football match, to a dramatic or musical entertainment, or to a worldly party, and you cannot read light or fictitious literature, without defiling the head of your consecration. If you indulge in such things you will find that they destroy your appetite for the word of God, they take away your liberty in prayer, they bring a shade upon your spiritual joy, and very soon—unless you repent—they will deprive you of all power to be a living witness for Christ.

I speak plainly because I do not believe that any of you want to be merely theoretical Christians. The things which I have already mentioned carry so evidently the stamp of the world upon them that you have probably shunned them ever since you were converted. Perhaps the girdle of truth needs to be drawn a little tighter than this around the loins of our minds. There are many things which could not be pronounced sinful from which a thoroughly devoted heart would hold itself

aloof. Each of us has got tastes and tendencies of thought which if we had remained unconverted would have dominated and coloured our lives. With one it is a love for the society of friends, with another a taste for music, a third is held spellbound under the magician's wand of the poet, the mind of a fourth is absorbed by mechanical or scientific ideas, and so on. Remember I am not now speaking of what a man is engaged in as his business or profession, but of the source to which he turns for the pleasure of his heart when the claims of duty are discharged. Each of us, perhaps, could tell what he was naturally fond of, and each could perhaps also say that he had found by experience that the gratification of these natural tastes was not helpful to his spiritual life. All such things are products of the earthly vine - not always evil in themselves, but when the heart's affections are entwined round them, and the heart looks for its solace and joy in them they have diverted us from the true Source of our joy; they have displaced the Lord from His true place as our heart's absorbing Object, and the Nazarite is defiled.

Suppose that a widow was passing through a place where her husband had been murdered a few years before, you would hardly expect her to find much to gratify her heart there, however interesting the occupations and however innocent and entertaining the amusements of the place might be! Now do we look upon this world as the place where the One we love best was murdered? The earth did not yield HIM wine, but vinegar and gall, and He—the true Nazarite—has turned His back upon all earthly joys, saying, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:18). His joys are with the Father and in heaven, and He would have us so to know and to share them that we might count it a gain to turn aside from the vine of the earth.

"Thy love is better than wine... we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine," is the language of a heart truly attached to the Lord (Song of Solomon 1:2, Song of Solomon 1:4); and David could say, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased" (Psalms 4:7). Bear witness, every Christian heart! Have you not had seasons of joy in the Lord which have infinitely surpassed everything that the vines of earth can afford? Would you willingly and deliberately sacrifice the former for the sake of the latter? I think not. Then take heed that you are not beguiled by the serpent, who ever seeks to rob us of our true joys by turning us aside to things which promise fair, but which yield no real satisfaction to the heart. It is a real loss to us when we turn aside to these things, and we have to prove it so in the end; even as it is said of Israel, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Of course, Mr. Self, who wants to enjoy everything in heaven and on earth—particularly the latter—without caring much in what relation things stand to CHRIST, will lift up both hands in great surprise, and protest against being "deprived of innocent pleasures," and will tell us very emphatically that he cannot "see any harm" in these things. Well, we shall have to let him take his own course, but the true Nazarite will know very well who has the best of it even now; and a day is fast approaching when Mr. Self himself may find out that a different course would have been more to his advantage.

Deuteronomy 29:6 has been instructive to me in connection with this subject: "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the Lord your God." In the wilderness the Lord would make Himself the only Source, whether of sustenance or joy to His people. In the true spirit of this the altogether Perfect One refused both the bread (Luke

4:4) and the wine (Mark 15:23). He would only accept support from God. He would only have the solace and joy ministered by His God and Father. He was the true Nazarite. Even so He would have us to prove that He can carry us through this wilderness world without either its support or its solace. He would make Himself our bread and our wine, and instead of being worse off we should be infinitely better off, like Daniel's band, who were "fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." The devil is always ready to suggest that an out-and-out Christian is a melancholy creature who does not enjoy life at all. Every thread of that suggestion, warp and woof, is a lie. I will show you directly what it is that makes the long faces and the sad hearts, but you may take it for granted in the meantime that it is not whole-hearted separation to the Lord that makes a man unhappy.

Leviticus 10:9-10 is another suggestive scripture as to this matter: "Do not drink wine nor strong drink... that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." A man cannot indulge in earth-born joys without having his spiritual perceptions blunted. If he goes on with them, he will presently tolerate what he would have once judged to be evil. Then godly watchfulness as to the little everyday details of life gives place to carelessness and laxity. Week by week the line of separation from the world becomes less distinct. Solidity and force of spiritual character is lost. The holy is not sought, nor the unholy shunned, with that intensity of purpose which once burned brightly in the soul; and ere long the once devoted saint drifts along with the circumstances by which he is surrounded, with little exercise and less joy, and completely shorn of the beauty of his Nazariteship.

Another solemn voice reaches us from Lamentations 4:7 : "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick." How sad to think that the once lovely Nazarite may be reduced to such a condition as this! Have you never seen a blighted and withered Nazarite—a man who has lost the simplicity that is in Christ, and the beauty of holiness, and all the devotedness and heavenly-minded-ness that once shone so brightly in him? Now nobody can read Christ in him. True, his name is on a church-roll somewhere; he attends meetings perhaps; but he is not known in the streets. The men where he works don't know that he is a Christian, and it is as well they don't, for he is now more like a spiritual scarecrow than anything else. A man in that condition, instead of attracting souls to Christ, only scares them away. Let that man be a beacon-light to warn you from the rock on which he has made shipwreck. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the Nazarite's decline and fall begins by his turning aside to find pleasure in some joy that is of earth and not of heaven. The Lord loses for the moment His all-commanding and unrivalled place as the Object of the heart. This opens a crack—very small, probably, at first—but the devil has got wedges which are small enough at one end to get into the smallest crack; and when they are once in he knows how to drive them home, unless divine grace works repentance and restoration. Then you get a man like one of Jeremiah's Nazarites—worldly, conscience-smitten, and unhappy—a man who, sooner or later, will feel his thorough wretchedness; for if he is a converted man the Holy Ghost can neither give him the joys of heaven nor suffer him to be happy with the joys of earth. Thus, in seeking to enjoy two worlds, he for the present loses both. Alas! poor man, may God make thee a warning to us all! But the fearful results of a defiled Nazariteship have also another voice to us. We should be not only constrained thereby

to keep ourselves pure, but we should be also reminded of our responsibilities in regard to others. "I raised up... of your young men for Nazarites... but ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink" (Amos 2:12). I believe I am right in saying that the temptations which prevail most easily with the young in Christ are those which come from professing Christians. I have seen many a promising spiritual life blighted by the company and example of professed believers. In this respect, "woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink!" Remember the Saviour's solemn words about an offence (or cause of stumbling) given to one of His little ones...

02.02. Part 2

Part II But the fearful results of a defiled Nazariteship have also another voice to us. We should be not only constrained thereby to keep ourselves pure, but we should be also reminded of our responsibilities in regard to others. "I raised up... of your young men for Nazarites... but ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink" (Amos 2:12). I believe I am right in saying that the temptations which prevail most easily with the young in Christ are those which come from professing Christians. I have seen many a promising spiritual life blighted by the company and example of professed believers. In this respect, "woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink!" Remember the Saviour's solemn words about an offence (or cause of stumbling) given to one of His little ones.

2. I think we may find a key to the significance of the unshorn locks of the Nazarite in a sentence from the Apostle Paul: "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (1 Corinthians 11:14). The Nazarite was found in a condition which, according to the thoughts of nature, was one of reproach and shame. In connection with this I should like to read Hebrews 11:24-26 : "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming THE REPROACH OF CHRIST greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Here was a man most singularly favoured by Providence as to his position in this world, who deliberately turned his back upon wealth, power, and honours, when all these things were within his grasp, and threw in his lot with people who were in circumstances of the lowest degradation. No doubt he made himself a laughing-stock for Egypt, but the laughing did not last very long, while the gain on the other side can never be calculated. To use the figure, Moses presented himself to Egypt with the unshorn locks of a true Nazariteship. He did not shrink from shame and reproach. To "refuse" and to "choose" as Moses did requires uncompromising decision, or what the New Testament calls "PURPOSE OF HEART." Jonathan's armour-bearer presents a fine example of a decided and devoted servant. "Do all that is in thine heart," said he to his master: "behold, I am with thee according to thy heart" (1 Samuel 14:7). He was thoroughly one with his master, regardless of consequences. It looked like tempting Providence, as people say, for two men to attack an army. Common sense would say, They will certainly be defeated, perhaps slain, or at any rate taken captive. The odds were fearful. The field of battle was a precipitous and unlikely place. Everything was against them. Nevertheless he says, "I am with thee according to thy heart." This is the spirit in which Moses acted. He recognised in the toiling brick-makers the chosen people of the Lord. If God's heart was with these poor toilers, Moses' heart would be with them too. Not simply to pity and patronise them. but to suffer affliction and bear reproach along with them. No doubt people thought he was carrying things to extremes, and making a fool of himself. So he was, from Egypt's point of view, but he does not regret it to-day. We were singing just now Saviour, I long to follow Thee, Daily Thy cross to bear!" When a man was seen bearing his cross, everybody knew that he had done with the world, and as long as he remained in it he was an object of contempt. Now is that what we covet and expect? It is all very well to talk and sing about it here in barracks, but how

do we feel on the battle-field? We can all be very valiant for the truth when it costs us nothing. But a soldier must be prepared to stand fire, as well as to shine on the parade ground. It is at home, in the office, behind the counter, in the workshop, and on the street, in ten thousand details of everyday life, that the test comes. Are we prepared to face the Egyptians and the Philistines and all the foes of our Lord, ever saying to Him in loyalty of spirit, "I am with thee according to thy heart"? Do we really look upon the sneers and scorn of the world as our greatest treasure upon earth? We are not told that Moses "submitted" to the reproach or bore it well when it came, but that he chose it and esteemed it "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." The spiritual millionaires are the men and women who have most of the reproach of Christ. In the coming day of kingdom glory, I have no doubt, many of the brightest crowns will be found upon the brows of people unknown to fame. Many an obscure saint has to face from morning to night the full, fierce tide of "the reproach of Christ." I have no doubt theirs will be a rich reward, while many a bit of showy service will be found in that day to have yielded "nothing but leaves."

There is another scripture which I dare say has already occurred to your minds in connection with this subject: "Let us go forth therefore UNTO HIM without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). This scripture appeals directly to the true Nazarite by the introduction of these two central words—"UNTO HIM." But here a much narrower circle is in question. It is not now "Egypt," but "the camp"; i.e., the professed people of God. I cannot enter upon the subject now, but it would be easy to prove to you that the great religious bodies of Christendom occupy a position almost identical with the Jewish "camp" referred to here. In fact, much of the Christianity of today is only Judaism with Christian terms introduced into it, and there is as little true subjection to Christ and obedience to the will of God as there was in Israel when Moses pitched the tabernacle "outside the camp." The Nazarite would not be true to his consecration "unto the Lord" if he were to acquiesce in this kind of thing. Hence he is called to "go forth therefore unto him without the camp." But let him not suppose that his action will be either understood or commended by the "ten thousands of Israel!" He will be roundly abused by many. "Pharisee" and "Bigot" will be the names hurled at him by some; while others will say that he is "peculiar," "narrow-minded," and "a man of very extreme views." In short, he must be prepared to carry his locks unshorn, and to bear "the reproach of Christ."

It is an evil day for the Nazarite when the questions begin to rise in his heart, "Whatever will they think?" "What will Mr. ___ say?" When he begins to consider the opinions of others, and to shape his course to please men, whether they be friends or foes, the locks of his Nazariteship will soon be shorn. His spiritual strength will depart from him, and then woe be unto him when the Philistines come upon him! A devoted Christian must be a fool in the eyes of the world and of carnal believers. He is impelled by unknown motives; he suffers loss with no visible compensation in any form; he goes calmly and steadily in the opposite direction to everybody else; he despises the advantages which all others are eager to pursue; he spends his time, his talents, and his means in the service and for the glory of One who is only a myth to men of the world. In a word, he lives "UNTO THE LORD," and he is glad to be a "fool for Christ's sake."

3. Finally, the Nazarite was not under any circumstances to touch a dead body. In connection with this let us read Romans 8:12-13 : "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Nothing could be more solemn than this scripture and its context,

for it shows the absolute impossibility of living to God as men in the flesh. The lesson learnt by the painful exercises of Romans vii. is that "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," and the soul cries bitterly, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The figure present to the writer's mind was that of the dreadful punishment of lashing a criminal to a dead body in such a way that it was impossible for him to free himself, and then leaving him to die. What was the dead body from which Paul had sought to be delivered? Was it not himself, and all that he was as a man in the flesh? Nor did he look for deliverance in vain. Having given himself up—as a man in the flesh—as being "a body of death," he looked outside himself for deliverance, and could immediately exclaim, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." He saw that the judgement of death had passed upon him at the cross, and that grace now gave him a perfect title to take the new ground that he was "IN CHRIST JESUS." A door of life and liberty was thus opened to him—for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS"—and, along with this, power by the Holy Ghost, so that he could say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Do not run away with the idea that I mean anything mystical or visionary when I say that the true Nazarite must live MORALLY APART FROM HIMSELF as a man in the flesh. In saying this, I am speaking the sober and practical truth of the word of God. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:8). You cannot come morally into contact with the flesh without being defiled. The Holy Ghost wages perpetual warfare against the flesh, and we are plainly told that if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). The Holy Ghost is dwelling in us to maintain us in freedom from that "law of sin and death" to which we were in bondage when we were "in the flesh." When a Christian thinks or speaks or acts according to the flesh, he is practically acknowledging the man who is under death—the man who was set aside at the cross. To use the figure, he touches the dead body and defiles the head of his consecration. And, inasmuch as he is allowing that upon which death has passed in the sight of God, he has to reap from it death and corruption. We have to learn—it takes some of us a long time—that it does not pay to live after the flesh; to do so brings darkness into the soul, robs the heart of its divine joys, and entails the misery of an accusing conscience. Brethren, we cannot afford to embrace or cherish that "dead body" any longer. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affection and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). But if we refuse the vileness and wickedness of the flesh, let us not forget that the flesh has a moral and religious side which is equally defiling to the true Nazarite. We are often, like Saul (1 Samuel 15:9) ready to spare "the best" and "the good" of Amalek, while we would "destroy utterly everything that is vile and refuse." The Galatians, having begun in the Spirit, were seeking to be made perfect by the flesh. Some were insisting on the necessity for circumcision and of keeping the law; they were observing days, months, times, and years, and were glorying in the flesh in a religious way. They were putting themselves again in moral contact with the "dead body" of the flesh, and Paul could hardly find language strong enough in which to describe their defilement thereby. He speaks of them as being "troubled," "bewitched," "foolish," "turned away to weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage," "fallen from grace." The Colossians, too, needed to be warned against those who would spoil them "through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"; and they had to be asked, "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? The Holy Ghost had to tell them that spiritual circumcision was "the putting off the

body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Christianity is not the flesh educated, or regulated, or decorated, but a new creation in Christ Jesus. If you see a man setting himself off with a religious title, or a religious dress, or even a bit of blue ribbon, you may be sure that he is not quite clear of the "dead body." He is not walking according to the rule of the new creation, but according to a rule which can be equally well carried out by an unconverted man. It seems a most admirable thing for a man to pledge himself to "touch not, taste not, handle not" some evil thing; but the very fact that he puts himself under an ordinance as to it shows that he is upon the old ground of a man in the flesh, on which ground he can never live unto God, or be a true Nazarite. However fair it may promise, the flesh can never yield anything but defilement, death, and corruption.

Then by what power can the spiritual Nazarite hold himself aloof from the "dead body" of his former self as a man in the flesh? Only by the Spirit of God. If we had not the Spirit, or if, having Him, we grieve Him, nothing can preserve us from living after the flesh. We naturally gravitate in that direction, and it is only as the counteracting "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is in operation that we are maintained in freedom "from the law of sin and death." The spiritual Nazarite has no power to hold himself aloof from the "dead body" save as he walks in the Spirit. No words of mine can convey the importance and solemnity of this to your hearts, but I trust God will impress it upon us all. "Through the Spirit," and only thus, can we "mortify the deeds of the body," and keep ourselves morally clear of the flesh both in its carnal and legal aspects. There seems to be a great difference between flesh that is licentious and self-indulgent and flesh that is exemplary, self-controlled, and ascetic. But flesh is flesh, and it is always opposed to what is of the Spirit of God; and the better it looks, the more it is to be dreaded. In England the dissenting bodies have gone in for the cultivation of man's intellect as a chief part of preparation for the ministry. What is the result? Under cover of "higher criticism" infidelity is now sown broadcast from many a pulpit from which a few years ago the word of God was faithfully preached. On the other hand, the Establishment, under the influence of Puseyism, has laid itself out to cultivate the religious sentiment of the people. With what effect? Popery, in everything but the name, has spread itself over the land. Both have sown to the flesh, and of the flesh have they reaped corruption. Rationalism appeals to man as an intellectual being, and Ritualism appeals to him as a religious being. But both ignore the fact that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God"; both are clinging to the "dead body" which can only defile.

What happens on a large scale in Christendom is just what will happen in the smaller circle of our own lives if we do not walk in the Spirit, and as those who are alive unto God IN CHRIST JESUS. May God keep us clear alike of the self-indulgence, the wisdom, and the religiousness of the flesh! May He keep us by His Spirit morally apart from that defiling "dead body!" But what if the Nazarite be defiled? I think everyone present will be profoundly thankful to know that grace has anticipated the possibility of defilement, and has made provision for it. Yet let none of us overlook or think lightly of the solemnity of such a thing. Indeed, this scripture is one of peculiar impressiveness in the solemn light which it throws upon the consequences of defilement. The brief hints which I can give you in the few moments that remain will, I trust, be followed up and searched out for yourselves. The defiled Nazarite has, so to speak, to begin again. He shaves his head, and he brings a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a trespass-offering to the Lord. When we defile the head of our consecration there is no restoration until God brings us back morally to the basis of all our blessing. The only ground whether of our clearance from sin and judgement or of our acceptance

with God is the death of Christ, and our hearts have to return to a sense of the infinite cost at which our clearance and acceptance have been secured. While this is in one way deeply blessed, and calls forth the full praise and worship of our hearts; it must, on the other hand, inevitably lead to the most profound self-judgement as we are brought to see in God's presence that we have allowed that which Christ died to remove, and from the judgement of which nothing but His death could save us. Do you think it is a light matter to discover that we have allowed the very thing which cost the Son of God His life? But there is another thing! "The days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled." Is not this very solemn? The longer a Nazarite maintained his consecration, the more serious it was for him if he suffered himself to be defiled. I believe the longer we go on right, the more serious it is for us if we turn aside. We have to make it up in moral time, which is not reckoned in days and months and years, but in exercise of soul.

I trust that the Lord will set our hearts very distinctly for Himself in this world, and that He will use what has come before us to warn us against the things that would defile the head of our consecration! It is worth our while to be out-and-out for Christ. There is not only "the recompense of the reward" by-and-by, but an immense return in spiritual blessing even now. It is at the end of this chapter—descriptive of a devoted man—that we find one of the most glorious benedictions that the Old Testament affords: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." A devoted man is always a prosperous and happy man—of course, I mean spiritually. He honours the Lord with his substance, and with the firstfruits of all his increase, and the result is that his barns are filled with plenty, and his presses burst out with new wine. Your melancholy and long-faced Christians are not the out-and-outers but half-and-half men—those who want to "fear the Lord and serve their own graven images," to make the best of both worlds, or to be pious according to the flesh. They have never learnt in their souls' experience the truth of Luther's definition of a Christian—that he is "a new man in a new world." At any rate, they are not practically owning that "new man" and living in that "new world."

Numbers 5:1-31 tells us about the bitter water of jealousy, and ends with a curse upon the unfaithful one; but Numbers 6:1-27 describes one who is loyal to the core, and ends with a blessing. It is even so with us. We are reaping governmentally day by day either the curse or the blessing. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but HE THAT SOWETH TO THE SPIRIT SHALL OF THE SPIRIT REAP LIFE EVERLASTING."

C.A.C.

S. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS by C. A. Coates (1862-1945)

Biography of C. A. Coates

I DESIRE to bring before you at this time a very important subject, the Forgiveness of Sins. Some may think it an elementary subject to bring before a company of believers, but I am quite sure it is a subject which many believers have not apprehended in its greatness and blessedness. We too often think of it from the side of man's need only, and by so doing we are apt to lose sight of the greatness and grace of it according to God. In the first place, then, let us consider THE PROCLAMATION OF FORGIVENESS. The Lord Jesus "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" (Luke 24:46-47). Paul at Antioch says, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). The first thing that demands attention as to this blessed proclamation is the fact that it is altogether on God's part. It does not suppose or require the fulfillment of any conditions on the part of man. It rather, indeed, assumes and takes for granted at the outset that nothing attaches to man but sins. It is the unconditional declaration on God's part of His disposition towards men. On their part they may be ungodly and impenitent, too hardened by familiarity with sin to feel their need, too proud to own it even if they feel it, or too much in love with their sins to wish to part company with them. But all this, sad as it is, does not in any way affect the proclamation of forgiveness, either to change its character or to limit its scope. God would have men to know what He is, and to know that His grace is greater than their sins, and to this end He sends forth this gracious proclamation. It is entirely of and from God.

Then it is preached in the name of the Lord Jesus, and through Him. A name sets forth the character, reputation, renown, dignity, and glory of the one to whom it belongs. Now it is in the name of the Lord Jesus that forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. What lustre and honour is thus put upon the proclamation! With what exceeding grace and attractiveness is it presented to men! We are not called upon, as it were, to look at the guilty sinner in his fearful need and danger; our eyes are at once directed to a Saviour in whom every perfection is found. Not the leper in his sores, but the mighty and gracious Healer, is before us. In short, we do not find ourselves in the presence of man's need and ruin, but in the presence of God's infinite grace.

Think of this blessed One, in whose name forgiveness of sins is proclaimed; seek to get before your heart something of His greatness and preciousness. He is One who, from eternity, was daily God's delight, and who came into this world to bring the full revelation of God into it, and at the same time to present absolute perfection in manhood to the eye of God in the very scene and circumstances where Adam and his children had so thoroughly broken down. He was One able to make atonement, to overcome death, to vanquish Satan, to spoil principalities and powers, and to

glorify God as to the whole question of sin; He was One who filled up and presented in His own person every prophetic blessing, whether connected with the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of man, or the Son of God; He is One who has finished the work God gave Him to do, who has glorified God by bringing every divine attribute into full and eternal display, and who has set the nature of God free to have its own way in blessing, even in a scene where everything had been ruined by sin. He is One now raised by the glory of the Father, and seated in heavenly exaltation at the right hand of the majesty on high. And IN HIS NAME forgiveness of sins is preached among all nations, and to every creature under heaven. With what power and preciousness does the proclamation go forth! It goes forth according to all the worthiness, excellence, perfection, grace, and glory of Christ, and invested with all the authority and attractiveness of His name. Important addresses to honored individuals are often inscribed upon costly vellum, and ornamented with every device that art can suggest; but was ever address or proclamation inscribed upon such a scroll as that on which God has inscribed His proclamation of grace to a world of lost and guilty sinners? God has invested that proclamation with all the beauty and glory of Christ, and with the power and preciousness of His sacred name. One might say that God has made forgiveness of sins as attractive as possible by setting it forth in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." God puts Christ before sinners—the Son of His love, the blessed Victim of Calvary, now the risen and glorified One—and through Him proclaims forgiveness. On the platform of divine grace—on which God approaches man with this wondrous proclamation—there is but one figure to be seen, and that is Christ. It is on the ground of what He is, and in connection with the worthiness and glory of His Person, that forgiveness of sins is proclaimed. The gospel of God is "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Our goodness, repentance, desire to amend, prayers, religious service, or works of any kind, have absolutely nothing to do with it. And, on the other hand, our sins—impiety, self-will, pride, indifference, self-satisfaction, blasphemy, hypocrisy, or whatever other form of wickedness we may have been guilty of in thought, word, or deed—do not in any way detract from the fulness or the freeness of this divine proclamation. The very fact that such a proclamation is addressed to us assumes that we are guilty; it is as such, and in no other way, that it regards us. But it addresses us, not according to our deserts, but according to all the greatness, perfection, and worthiness of the One in whose name it is promulgated.

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached CHRIST unto them" (Acts 8:5). Christ is the great and blessed theme of the evangelist, and as He is preached, faith in Him "cometh by hearing." Faith in Christ is not a blind acceptance of certain arbitrary dogmas or the assent of the mind to an orthodox creed. It is the whole-hearted confidence of one who has come to the knowledge of the blessed perfection of Christ as a Saviour. He is everything that He needs to be to fill that place—to be the Mediator between God and men. Nothing can be added to Him. He is everything to God's satisfaction, and He is everything that the heart and conscience of an exercised sinner would like Him to be. He is a suitable, an acceptable, and an attractive Saviour. And He is the only One; He has no rival; it is Christ or nothing. Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). This proclamation is universal in its scope; it is to go forth "among all nations." It is also unlimited in its application to the individual. God does not offer a partial discharge. He does not say "sins that are repented of," nor "sins that are confessed," nor "sins up to the time of believing," but simply "forgiveness of sins." The whole question of sins is

looked at as one thing, and when you get the forgiveness of sins you get it forever. If it were otherwise there could never be any certainty about the matter. How could the believer ever be sure that he had not overlooked some of his sins? Or if every fresh sin committed raised again the whole question of the believer's forgiveness and justification, it would be quite impossible for any to have the quiet confidence of peace with God or the certainty of forgiveness, which is the very groundwork in the soul of all happy relationship with God. I purpose later on to say a little about sins committed after conversion, both as to how they affect the believer's heart and conscience, and as to how they are dealt with. But for the present I desire to press the importance of seeing that the forgiveness of sins, which clears the believer of all imputation in the sight of a holy God, is something which is unchanging and eternal. There is no thought in Scripture of a believer having it today and not having it tomorrow. But before saying more as to this I should like to bring under your notice several scriptures with reference to the ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Acts 10:43; 1 John 2:12; Colossians 1:14. Doubts and misgivings on the subject of forgiveness arise from the fact that anxious souls are slow to believe that the proclamation is one of absolute grace, that it is presented to them in the name of the Lord Jesus, and that it is entirely "for his name's sake." They look upon it as a sort of conditional offer on God's part to obtain the benefit of which there must be the fulfillment of certain conditions on their part; and as they cannot be quite sure that they have fulfilled the conditions, they are in a state of uncertainty on the whole matter. They do not know whether they have repented enough, or whether they have faith enough, or whether they have the right kind of faith. These difficulties, and many others which trouble anxious souls, only show how little they have apprehended the grace of God. We are so slow to take in the blessed thought that God is acting from Himself and according to the worthiness of Christ, and that there is no question of any conditions to be fulfilled on our side. The whole thing is complete on God's side, and is not in any way conditional on our repentance or faith; it is God approaching man in all the fulness of His grace, and declaring Himself to be a Saviour-God.

I find nothing in myself that I can trust in the smallest degree, but I can trust the grace in which God has set Himself forth in Christ. It is God who has spoken to me of forgiveness of sins, and who has set this great blessing before me in the name of the Lord Jesus and through Him. I gladly receive this wondrous grace, for it brings me what I need, and at the same time bows my heart in adoration before the unexpected and unmerited favour of God. I believe on God as the Source of the whole blessing, and as the One who has provided it altogether from His own side; and I believe on the Lord Jesus as the Mediator of that grace, as the One who has opened up a righteous channel for it, and in whose name it is proclaimed. And the Word of God declares that "through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). There is no question or peradventure about it. The blessing is certain to "whosoever believeth in him." But the question will arise in some hearts, "Is it not possible to believe in a way that leaves a man a mere professor? We read that "Simon himself believed also" (Acts 8:13), and he turned out to be one that had "neither part nor lot in this matter." It is written that "the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). How, then, can one be sure that his faith is such as will secure the blessing of God?

I must again point out that the thought which lies behind this question is that faith is a condition which has to be fulfilled on our part before the grace of God is available for us. That is, the soul has the idea that the grace of God is conditional upon faith, but conditional grace is not really

grace at all. The gospel of the grace of God is the proclamation of the blessed fact that God is coming out in absolute grace on the ground of the death of Christ, and according to all the perfections of Christ, and is proclaiming forgiveness of sins to a world of sinners. When this gospel is believed it brings the knowledge of God in all the blessedness of His unconditional grace into the heart of the sinner. But the sinner's faith adds nothing to the gospel any more than the windows of our houses add to the light of the sun. The sun shines for everybody; my window lets the light into my room so that I enjoy it and am warmed by it. In like manner, the sun of divine grace is shining for everybody; faith is the window which lets the light and warmth of it into the soul of a sinner. If you appreciate that grace and rejoice in it as the only thing that could possibly meet the need of your soul, you need have no question as to the nature of your faith. You may be sure that Simon Magus had no appreciation of the grace of God. He was intellectually convinced, it may be, by the miracles done by Philip; the new religion had credentials that could not be disputed, and, moreover, it was, for the moment, the popular thing. By the sheer force of evidences and circumstances, he accepted and professed it, but there is nothing to show that he had the smallest real appreciation of the grace which Philip preached as he proclaimed Christ in the city. The devils may believe that there is one God, and tremble as they believe, but you may be sure they have no appreciation whatever of divine grace. A man may "say" he has faith; he may "say" that he believes in the grace of God; but if his heart is not cheered and gladdened by it, it is evident that it is nothing to him. The knowledge of grace subdues a man to God; it breaks the power of sin, and it brings heavenly gladness into the heart. In short, it brings the knowledge of God into the heart of man. The sinner who believes has the light of what God is in his heart. He only thinks of himself as a corrupt and hell-deserving sinner, but he knows what God is in absolute and unconditional grace for sinners; he knows something of the preciousness and worthiness of Christ. It is not that he believes in his own faith—anyone who did so would be on very dangerous ground—he believes God's proclamation of grace, and rejoices in that grace because it not only meets his need, but makes God known to him so that he can "joy in God."

Those who have misgivings about their faith are not generally those who despise the grace of God. It is more often those who realize something of the value of that grace, and feel they must perish without it, that are concerned lest they should not have it for themselves. Let me say to such that that grace has already, to some extent at any rate, established itself in your heart. The window may be small, and the rays of light are only few that have yet entered, but the light has begun to shine even in your soul. What you need is to turn away from yourself—your feelings and your faith—to the blessed God of all grace. He is what He is, whether you believe it or not; believing it brings the knowledge and gladness of it into your heart.

It is "for his name's sake" that the believer's sins are forgiven. It is because of what Christ is, and according to the value of His atoning death, that God can say to every believer on His blessed name, "Your sins are forgiven." And believers can say without question or doubt, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

What many souls need in order to establish them in assurance is to see THE GROUND OF FORGIVENESS as we have it clearly and fully presented in the Word of God. I desire to direct your attention in particular to Hebrews 10:1-39, where we learn that forgiveness is founded upon a sacrifice in which God has been glorified in righteousness. Let us then briefly consider what is presented to us in the first eighteen verses of this chapter. A careful reader cannot fail to notice

that two things are prominent in these verses: first, the accomplishment of the will of God; and second, the securing of a purged and perfected conscience for those who approach God. The second is really included in the first, for the will or pleasure of God may be briefly summed up in this, that He would make Himself known, and that He would have a people free in conscience and happy in heart to approach Him according to the revelation of Himself. The first covenant, and all that was connected with it, entirely failed to accomplish either of these two things. God found fault with the first covenant, as we are told in Hebrews 8:1-13, because it failed to make Him known in the hearts of His people; and the law, with the whole system of sacrifices connected with it, is taken away in Hebrews 10:1-39, because it was so entirely powerless to give a purged conscience to those who approached God. But now in connection with Christ we get all the grace of the new covenant [in His blood], God revealed in supreme and blessed grace on the one hand, and on the other His people purged and perfected in their consciences, so that they may be able to "draw near with a true heart." Consequent upon the death of Christ two things are made good: believers are (1) "sanctified" and (2) "perfected forever" (Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 10:14). "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God... By the which will we are sanctified [once for all] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." Believers are sanctified, or set apart, according to the pleasure of God. It is His pleasure to have a people whom He can regard according to His own estimate of the value of the death of Christ; it is His pleasure to have a people entirely divested of every trace of unsuitability to Himself; and this not by a progressive work carried on in them, but by the infinite efficacy of the "offering of the body of Jesus Christ." As to what the believer is in himself, Hebrews 10:1-39 supposes that he is nothing but a heap of sins. Morally my whole history is covered by that one word, sins. As a child of fallen Adam, nothing could come out of me but sins, the sad evidence of my corruption and irretrievable ruin. But in the "offering of the body of Jesus Christ" God has been glorified in the execution of a righteous sentence upon me and my sins. Christ has gone into death vicariously, and in His death there has been such a judgment of sin and sins that in the eyes of God not a stain of guilt, not a spot of contamination, remains upon His people. They are set apart in the will of God, and according to His pleasure, from everything that they were naturally, and from everything that attached to them as Adam's children in this world. Such is the efficacy and such is the result of the death of Christ looked at from God's side. It has secured for Him a sanctified people suited to Himself.

But, on the other hand, this has to be made known and to be made good in the consciences of believers, or they would have no liberty to approach God. Hence we read, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." If we compare this statement with Hebrews 9:9, we shall see that the perfection here referred to is perfection "pertaining to the conscience." It is not by any means that the believer is brought into a state of perfection as to his actual condition in this world; we shall only attain perfection in condition when we are conformed to the image of God's Son in glory, but perfection in conscience we not only may know now, but if we have it not, we must be more or less in legal darkness and in ignorance of the true grace of God. The believer is in his conscience with God, not as identified with his sins and all the imperfection that attached to him as a man in this world, but as identified with the value of the "one offering" of Christ. He knows the efficacy of that offering and rejoices in it as that by which his sins have been completely and eternally purged. It is not that he thinks lightly of his sins, but he has come to know and appreciate the value of the death of Christ. That death has cleared everything away in the estimation of God, so that He can have His people before Him in the beauty of divine

sanctification, and it has cleared everything away in the estimation of the believer's conscience, enlightened by grace, so that every question of sins is settled; he is as to this matter "perfected." And inasmuch as the ground of this perfection is the unalterable value of the death of Christ, he is "perfected forever." The believer's place with God according to divine grace is not changeable; he is not sometimes on the ground of Christ's death and sometimes on the ground of his own good behavior. The value of the "one offering" does not fluctuate with his changing moods and feelings, nor with the ebbings and flowings of his joy. It abides as the only and the unchanging ground on which God can have a people for Himself. The believer who apprehends this is on solid ground; he is acquainted with the grace of God, and he knows the secure basis on which all the activities of that grace are based; he is perfected in perpetuity.

There is another thing in the chapter before us which connects itself with all this in a very blessed way. I refer to [Israel's New Covenant in] Hebrews 10:16 : "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Here we see the effect of grace being known in the hearts of men. It becomes a pleasure to them to be controlled by the will of God, for the things which are on a man's heart and mind are things which give him pleasure: and along with this they have the blessed consciousness that the question of their sins has been entirely and eternally disposed of. The great thought of God is to have His people near Himself, with not a single outstanding question between Himself and them, and this in order that they may find their undistracted delight in Him and in being controlled by His pleasure. God would have His people conscious that there is nothing between Himself and them; He would have them conscious that they are a forgiven people, that thus they may realize the "blessedness" which David describes in Psalms 32:1-11 : "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." This is... THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS the happy portion of a people illuminated" (Hebrews 10:32) by divine grace. But some man will say, "If the whole question of the believer's sins is thus disposed of he may live as he likes, and, no matter how badly he behaves, he is always forgiven." In answer to this often-raised objection, I repeat what I have already said, that the effect of the grace of God being known in the soul is to thoroughly subdue a man in the presence of God. The knowledge of forgiveness never has the effect of making a man careless about sin. There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:4). The knowledge of grace establishes the fear of God in the heart of everyone who has it in truth. The forgiven man is a godly man. In Psalms 32:1-11, after describing the blessedness of the forgiven man, David goes on to say, "For this shall every one that is GODLY pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." And the New Testament puts things in exactly the same order, for we read that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and GODLY, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). It is the believer's joy, as we have already seen, to be controlled by the will of God. On the other hand, it is never stated in Scripture that the believer has no sin in him, or that he is beyond the reach of temptation or the danger of being overtaken in a fault. He is warned, if he thinks that he stands secure, to take heed lest he fall; he is warned against the deceitfulness of sin and the wiles of the devil; he is solemnly exhorted not to love the world, and to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. He has need to be in constant dependence, and to watch and pray that he may not enter into temptation. And practically it is true, as James says, that "in many things we all offend." But the more we know of the blessedness of forgiveness, the more

sensitive we shall be to any shade that comes upon it. If we have tasted the deep joy of being in the presence of God, with the consciousness of His infinite grace and the knowledge that that grace has removed, in righteousness, everything that was between Himself and us, we shall not be in any way disposed to tolerate or allow the activity of sin. We shall dread sin; we shall avoid it; we shall flee from it; we shall pray continually, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." And yet God would not have us to lose the sense of His grace even when, through lack of dependence or purpose of heart, we have sinned. His grace has anticipated the possibility of our doing so, and has made provision for such a case: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). And as to our side it is written that, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The very fact that we have sinned is the proof that in some degree we have departed from the sense of God's wondrous grace. No one could sin if his heart was in the consciousness of the grace of God, and restoration is the return of our souls to a sense of grace.

How far is the light and joy of divine favour the sunshine and life of our hearts? In proportion as it is so we shall be quick to feel the presence of a shade or a cloud. We shall make haste to confess our sins, not merely to get them off our minds or consciences, but to get near to God about the things which have for the moment intercepted the "blessedness" of our joy in His grace. In conclusion, I should like to say a few words about THE EFFECT OF FORGIVENESS in its practical bearing on the believer's state. In the first place, when forgiveness is consciously known as we have it presented in Scripture the soul is entirely on the ground of what CHRIST is. Indeed, it is IN HIM that we have it, as Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 state so plainly: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." In the apprehension of this there is entire deliverance from the power of the enemy. Satan may challenge my clearance and my acceptance, he may raise all kinds of questions about what I am and what I have done, but he can raise no question as to the worthiness or acceptance of CHRIST. The forgiven man is on an altogether new ground with God; he is on the ground of grace—grace which is set forth in CHRIST. The apprehension of this is redemption, and it puts the soul beyond the reach of the oppression and harassing of the enemy. This leaves the believer free in his spirit to approach God. God has brought us out of everything that attached to us in our responsibility as children of Adam, that we might be free to approach Him on another ground altogether. He has forgiven us all trespasses, that we might be free to apprehend His pleasure concerning us, that we might know what it is to be quickened together with Christ (Colossians 2:13). There is an entire settlement of every question connected with our responsible history, so that we may approach God as those whose hearts and consciences are free to enter into a circle where there is nothing but the perfection of Christ. If we have learned that God has approached us in His wondrous grace according to the preciousness and perfection of Christ—if God has dealt with us, not according to what we are, but according to what CHRIST is—the suited response to that grace is that we approach Him as those who are in conscious identification with the blessedness and perfection of Christ. This puts us on priestly ground with God; it is the suited state for the sanctuary; we begin to apprehend that God has brought us out that He might bring us in. He would have us in His own place, where everything is according to His own thoughts and according to the perfection of Christ. I do not think that anyone who had the consciousness of forgiveness according to God would care to stop short of this. Hence the writer of the epistle immediately follows up what he had been saying in Hebrews 10:1-39 about forgiveness of sins by the words, "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 a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Here we get one of the greatest Christian privileges—a privilege God would have to be realized in His assembly now: that of approach to Himself in His own circle. Great as this privilege is—and, alas! so feebly entered into by any of us, if one may speak for all—it is notwithstanding the great present end, with a view to which God makes known the forgiveness of sins. And I think I may venture to say again that if we really apprehend forgiveness of sins from God's side in all its grace and preciousness, we shall not care to stop short of this great privilege. The effect of forgiveness being consciously known is that we are in the divine peace of redemption on the one hand, and on the other we are greatly attracted by the blessed privilege of approach to God. If these two things are not true of us, it is a question whether we have not been content to apprehend forgiveness from the side of our need, rather than from the side of the divine greatness in which it is presented from God in the gospel of His grace.

C. A. C.

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