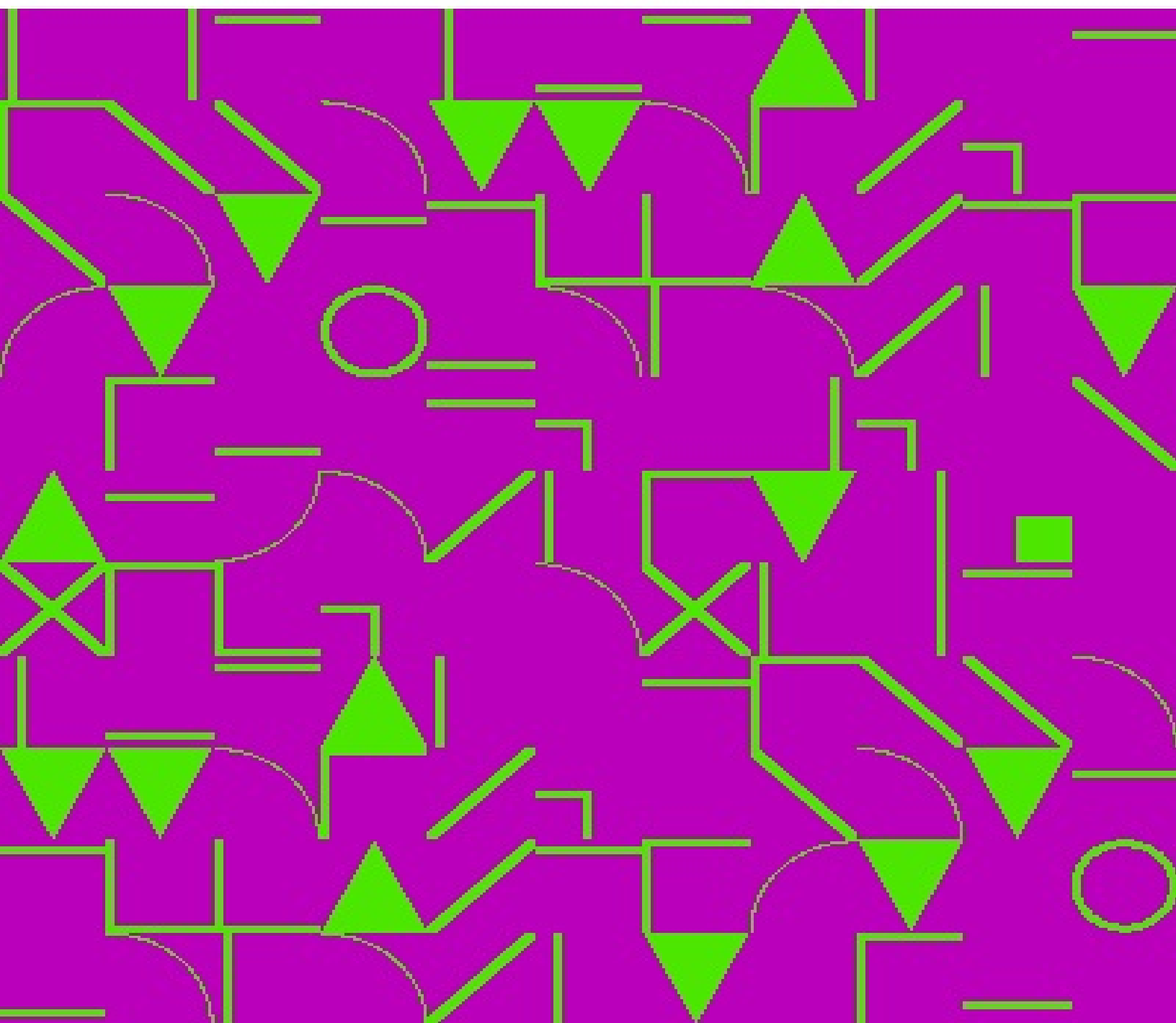


The Great Commission. Miscellaneous Writings of C. H. Mackintosh, vol. IV

Charles Henry Mackintosh



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MISCELLANEOUS
WRITINGS
of C.H.M.

The Great Commission

Miscellaneous Writings of
C. H. MACKINTOSH

Volume IV

LOIZEAUX BROTHERS
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CONVERSION: WHAT IS IT?

PART I.

The first chapter of first Thessalonians presents a very striking and beautiful picture of what we may truly call *genuine conversion*. We propose to study the picture in company with the reader. If we are not much mistaken, we shall find the study at once interesting and profitable. It will furnish an answer, distinct and clear, to the question which stands at the head of this article, namely, What is Conversion?

Nor is this by any means a small matter. It is well, in days like these, to have a divine answer to such a question. We hear a good deal now-a-days about cases of conversion; and we would heartily bless God for every soul truly converted to Him.

We need hardly say we believe in the absolute, the indispensable, the universal necessity of divine conversion. Let a man be what he may; be he Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, Protestant or Roman Catholic; in short, whatever be his nationality, his ecclesiastical position, or his theological creed, he *must* be converted, else he is on the broad and direct road to an everlasting hell.

There is no one born a Christian, in the true sense of that word. Neither can anyone be educated into Christianity. It is a fatal mistake, a deadly delusion, a deceit of the arch-enemy of souls, for anyone to think that he can be a Christian either by birth or education, or that he can be made a Christian by water baptism, or by any religious ceremony whatsoever. A man becomes a Christian only by being divinely converted. We would earnestly press on the attention of all whom it may concern, the urgent and absolute necessity in every case of true conversion to God.

This cannot be overlooked. It is the height of folly for anyone to attempt to ignore or to make light of it. For an immortal being—one who has a boundless eternity stretching away before him—to neglect the solemn question of his conversion, is the wildest fatuity of which anyone can possibly be guilty. In comparison with this most weighty subject, all other things dwindle into utter insignificance. The various objects that engage the thoughts and absorb the energies of men and women in the busy scene around us, are but as the small dust of the balance in comparison with this one grand, momentous question of the soul's conversion to God. All the speculations of commercial life, all the schemes of money-making, the absorbing question of profitable investment, all the pursuits of the pleasure hunter—the theatre, the concert, the ball-room, the billiard-room, the card-table, the dice-box, the race-course, the hunting-ground, the drinking saloon—all the numberless and nameless things that the poor unsatisfied heart longs after, and grasps at—all are but as the vapor of the morning, the foam on the water, the smoke from the chimney-top, the withered leaf of autumn—all vanish away, and leave an aching void behind. The heart remains unsatisfied, the soul unsaved, because unconverted.

And what then? Ah, yes; what then! Tremendous question! What remains at the end of all this scene of commercial excitement, political strife and ambition, money-making and pleasure-hunting? Why, then the man has to face death! "It is appointed unto men once to die." There is no getting over this. There is no discharge in this war. All the wealth of the universe could not purchase one moment's respite at the hand of the ruthless foe. All the medical skill which earth affords, all the fond solicitude of affectionate relatives and friends, all their tears, all their sighs, all their entreaties cannot stave off the dreaded moment, or cause the king of terrors to sheathe his terrible sword. Death cannot be disposed of by any art

of man. The moment *must* come when the link is to be snapped which connects the heart with all the fair and fascinating scenes of human life. Fondly loved friends, charming pursuits, coveted objects, all must be given up. A thousand worlds could not avert the stroke. Death must be looked at straight in the face. It is an awful mystery—a tremendous fact—a stern reality. It stands full in front of every unconverted man, woman, and child beneath the canopy of heaven; and it is merely a question of time—hours, days, months, or years,—when the boundary line must be crossed which separates time, with all its empty, vain, shadowy pursuits, from eternity with all its stupendous realities.

And what then? Let Scripture answer. Nothing else can. Men would fain reply according to their own vain notions. They would have us believe that after death comes annihilation. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Empty conceit! Vain delusion! Foolish dream of the human imagination blinded by the god of this world! How could an immortal soul be annihilated? Man, in the garden of Eden, became the possessor of a never-dying spirit. "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a *living* soul"—not a dying soul. The soul must live forever. Converted or unconverted, it has eternity before it. Oh, the overpowering weight of this consideration to every thoughtful spirit! No human mind can grasp its immensity. It is beyond our comprehension, but not beyond our belief.

Let us hearken to the voice of God. What does Scripture teach? One line of holy Scripture is quite sufficient to sweep away ten thousand arguments and theories of the human mind. Does death annihilate? Nay! "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Mark these words, "*After this* the judgment." And this applies only to those who die in their sins, only to unbelievers. For the Christian, judgment is passed forever, as Scripture teaches in manifold places. It is important to note this, because men tell us that, inasmuch as there is eternal life only in Christ, therefore all who are out of Christ shall be annihilated.

Not so says the word of God. There is judgment after death. And what will be the issue of the judgment? Again Scripture speaks in language as clear as it is solemn. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them; and *they were judged every man according to their works*.... This is the second death"—the lake of fire. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx.)

All this is as plain as words can make it. There is not the slightest ground for demur or difficulty. For all whose names are in the book of life there is no judgment at all. Those whose names are not in that book shall be judged according to their works. And what then? Annihilation? Nay; but "the lake of fire;" and that forever and forever.

How overwhelming is the thought of this! An unconverted person, whoever and whatever he is, has death, judgment, and the lake of fire before him, and every throb of his pulse brings him nearer and nearer to those awful realities. It is not more sure that the sun shall rise, at a certain moment, to-morrow morning, than that the reader must, ere long, pass into eternity; and if his name is not in the book of life—if he is not converted—if he is not in Christ, he will assuredly be judged according to his works, and the certain issue of that judgment will be the lake of fire, through the endless ages of eternity.

The reader may perhaps marvel at our dwelling at such length on this dreadful theme. He may feel

disposed to ask, "Will this convert people?" If it does not convert them, it may lead them to see their need of conversion. It may lead them to see their imminent danger. It may induce them to flee from the wrath to come. Why did the blessed apostle reason with Felix on the subject of "judgment to come"? Surely that he might persuade him to turn from his evil ways and live. Why did our blessed Lord Himself so constantly press upon His hearers the solemn reality of eternity? Why did He so often speak of the deathless worm and the unquenchable fire? Surely it was for the purpose of rousing them to a sense of their danger, that they might flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.

Are we wiser than He? Are we more tender? Have we found out some better mode of converting people? Are we to be afraid of pressing upon our readers or our hearers the same solemn theme which our Lord so pressed upon the men of His time? Are we to shrink from offending polite ears by the plain declaration that all who die unconverted must inevitably stand before the great white throne, and pass into the lake of fire? God forbid! It must not be. We solemnly call upon the unconverted reader to give his undivided attention to the all-important question of his soul's salvation. Let nothing induce him to neglect it. Let neither cares, pleasures, nor duties so occupy him as to hide from his view the magnitude and deep seriousness of this matter. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

O reader, if thou art unsaved, unconverted, let us earnestly entreat thee to ponder these things, and rouse thee to a sense of thy need of being savingly converted to God. This is the only way of entering His kingdom. So our Lord Christ distinctly tells us; and we trust you know this at least, that not one jot or tittle of His holy sayings can ever pass away. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but His word can never pass away. All the power of earth and hell, men and devils, cannot make void the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Either of two things for thee—*conversion here, or eternal damnation hereafter.*

Thus it stands, if we are to be guided by the word of God; and, in view of this, is it possible for us to be too earnest, too vehement, too importunate in urging upon every unconverted soul with whom we may come in contact, either with voice or pen, the indispensable necessity, this very moment, of fleeing from the wrath to come, fleeing to that blessed Saviour who died on the cross for our salvation; who stands with open arms to receive all who come; and who declares in His own sweet and precious grace, "HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT?"

PART II.

In our previous paper, we have sought to set forth the absolute need, in every case, of conversion. Scripture establishes this point in such a way as to leave no possible ground of doubt for anyone who bows to its holy authority. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3).

This applies, in all its moral force and deep solemnity, to every son and daughter of fallen Adam. There is not so much as a solitary exception, throughout the thousand millions that people this globe. Without conversion, there is—there can be no entrance into the Kingdom of God. Every unconverted soul is outside the Kingdom of God. It matters not, in the smallest degree, who I am, or what I am; if I am unconverted, I am in "the kingdom of darkness," under the power of Satan, in my sins, and on the way to hell.

I may be a person of blameless morals; of spotless reputation; a high professor of religion; a worker in the vineyard; a Sunday-school teacher; an office-bearer in some branch of the professing church; an ordained

minister; a deacon, elder, pastor or bishop; a most charitable individual; a munificent donor to religious and benevolent institutions; looked up to, sought after, and revered by all because of my personal worth and moral influence. I may be all this and more; I may be, and I may have, all that it is possible for a human being to be or to have, and yet be unconverted, and hence outside the Kingdom of God, and in the kingdom of Satan, in my guilt, and on the broad road that leads straight down to the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Such is the plain and obvious meaning and force of our Lord's words in Matt. xviii. 3. There is no possibility of evading it. The words are as clear as a sunbeam. We cannot get over them. They bear down, with what we may truly call tremendous solemnity, upon every unconverted soul on the face of the earth. "Except ye be converted, ye *cannot* enter the Kingdom of heaven." This applies, with equal force, to the degraded drunkard that rolls along the street, worse than a beast, and to the unconverted Good Templar or teetotaler who prides himself on his sobriety, and is perpetually boasting of the number of days, weeks, months, or years during which he has refrained from all intoxicating drink. They are both alike outside the Kingdom of God; both in their sins; both on the way to eternal destruction.

True it is that the one has been converted from drunkenness to sobriety—a *very great* blessing indeed, in a moral and social point of view—but conversion from drunkenness to a temperance society is not conversion to God; it is not turning from darkness to light; it is not entering the Kingdom of God's dear Son. There is just this difference between the two, that the teetotaler may be building upon his temperance, pluming himself upon his morality, and thus deceiving himself into the vain notion that he is all right, whereas, in reality, he is not. The drunkard is palpably and unmistakably wrong. Everybody knows that no drunkard can inherit the Kingdom of God; but neither can an unconverted teetotaler. Both are outside. Conversion to God is absolutely indispensable for the one as well as the other; and the same may be said of all classes, all grades, all shades, all castes and conditions of men under the sun. There is no difference as to this great question. It holds good as to all alike, be their outward character or social status what it may—"Except ye be converted, ye *cannot* enter the Kingdom of heaven."

How important, then—yea, how momentous the question for each one, "*Am I converted?*" It is not possible for human language to set forth the magnitude and solemnity of this inquiry. For any one to think of going on, from day to day, and year to year, without a clear and thorough settlement of this most weighty question, can only be regarded as the most egregious folly of which a human being can be guilty. If a man were to leave his earthly affairs in an uncertain, unsettled condition, he would lay himself open to the charge of the grossest and most culpable neglect and carelessness. But what are the most urgent and weighty temporal affairs when compared with the salvation of the soul? All the concerns of time are but as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, when compared with the interests of the immortal soul—the grand realities of eternity.

Hence it is, in the very highest degree, irrational for any one to rest for a single hour without a clear and settled assurance that he is truly converted to God. A converted soul has crossed the boundary line that separates the saved from the unsaved—the children of light from the children of darkness—the Church of God from this present evil world. The converted soul has death and judgment behind him, and glory before. He can be as sure of heaven as though he were already there; indeed as a man in Christ he belongs there already. He has a title without a blot, a prospect without a cloud. He knows Christ as his Saviour and Lord; God as his Father and Friend; the Holy Ghost as his blessed Comforter, Guide and Teacher; heaven as his bright and happy home. Oh! the unspeakable blessedness of being converted. Who can utter it? "Eye hath not seen, or ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us [believers] by His Spirit; for the

Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10).

And now let us inquire what this conversion is, whereof we speak. Well, indeed, will it be for us to be divinely instructed as to this. An error here will prove disastrous in proportion to the interests at stake.

Many are the mistaken notions in reference to conversion. Indeed we might conclude, from the very fact of the vast importance of the subject, that the great enemy of our souls and of the Christ of God would seek, in every possible way, to plunge us into error respecting it. If he cannot succeed in keeping people in utter carelessness as to the subject of conversion, he will endeavour to blind their eyes as to its true nature. If, for example, a person has been roused, by some means or other, to a sense of the utter vanity and unsatisfactoriness of worldly amusements, and the urgent necessity of a change of life, the arch-deceiver will seek to persuade such an one to become religious, to busy himself with ordinances, rites and ceremonies, to give up balls and parties, theatres and concerts, drinking, gambling, hunting and horse-racing; in a word, to give up all sorts of gaiety and amusement, and engage in what is called a religious life, to be diligent in attending the public ordinances of religion, to read the Bible, say prayers, and give alms, to contribute to the support of the great religious and benevolent institutions of the country.

Now, this is not conversion. A person may do all this, and yet be wholly unconverted. A religious devotee whose whole life is spent in vigils, fastings, prayers, self-mortifications and alms deeds, may be as thoroughly unconverted, as far from the Kingdom of God as the thoughtless pleasure hunter, whose whole life is spent in the pursuit of objects as worthless as the withered leaf or the faded flower. The two characters, no doubt, differ widely—as widely perhaps, as any two could differ. But they are both unconverted, both outside the blessed circle of God's salvation, both in their sins. True, the one is engaged in "wicked works," and the other in "dead works;" they are both out of Christ; they are unsaved; they are on the way to hopeless, endless misery. The one, just as surely as the other, if not savingly converted, will find his portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Again, conversion is not a turning from one religious system to another. A man may turn from Judaism, Paganism, Mahometanism, or Popery, to Protestantism, and yet be wholly unconverted. No doubt, looked at from a social, moral, or intellectual standpoint, it is much better to be a Protestant than a Mahometan; but as regards our present thesis, they are both on one common platform, both unconverted. Of one, just as truly as the other, it can be said, unless he is converted, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Conversion is not joining a religious system, be that system ever so pure, ever so sound, ever so orthodox. A man may be a member of the most respectable religious body in Christendom, and yet be an unconverted, unsaved man, on his way to eternal perdition.

So also as to the theological creeds. A man may subscribe to any of the great standards of religious belief, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, John Wesley's Sermons, Fox and Barclay, or any other creed, and yet be wholly unconverted, dead in trespasses and sins, and on his way to that place where a single ray of hope can never break in upon the awful gloom of eternity.

Of what use, we may lawfully inquire, is a religious system or a theological creed to a man who has not a single spark of divine life? Systems and creeds cannot quicken, cannot save, cannot give eternal life. A man may work on in religious machinery like a horse in a mill, going round and round, from one year's end to another, leaving off just where he began, in a dreary monotony of dead works. What is it all worth? what does it all come to? where does it all end? *Death!* Yes; and what then? Ah! that is the question. Would to God the weight and seriousness of this question were more fully realized!

But further, Christianity itself, in all its full-orbed light, may be embraced as a system of religious belief.

A person may be intellectually delighted—almost entranced with the glorious doctrines of grace, a full, free gospel, salvation without works, justification by faith; in short, all that goes to make up our glorious New Testament Christianity. A person may profess to believe and delight in this; he may even become a powerful writer in defence of Christian doctrine, an earnest eloquent preacher of the gospel. All this may be true, and yet the man be wholly unconverted, dead in trespasses and sins, hardened, deceived and destroyed by his very familiarity with the precious truths of the gospel—truths that have never gone beyond the region of his understanding—never reached his conscience, never touched his heart, never converted his soul.

This is about the most appalling case of all. Nothing can be more awful, more terrible, than the case of a man professing to believe and delight in, yea, actually preaching the gospel of God, and teaching all the grand characteristic truths of Christianity, and yet wholly unconverted, unsaved, and on his way to an eternity of ineffable misery—misery which must needs be intensified to the very highest degree, by the remembrance of the fact that he once professed to believe, and actually undertook to preach the most glorious tidings that ever fell on mortal ears.

O! reader, whoever thou art, do, we entreat of thee, give thy fixed attention to these things. Rest not, for one hour, until thou art assured of thy genuine, unmistakable conversion to God.

PART III.

Having thus far seen the absolute necessity, in every case, of conversion, and having, in some measure, sought to point out what conversion is *not*, we have now to inquire what it *is*. And here we must keep close to the veritable teaching of holy Scripture. We can accept nothing less, nothing different. It is greatly to be feared that very much of what passes, now-a-days, for conversion is not conversion at all. Many so-called cases of conversion are published and talked of, which cannot stand the test of the word of God. Many profess to be converted, and are accredited as such, who prove to be merely stony-ground hearers. There is no depth of spiritual work in the heart, no real action of the truth of God on the conscience, no thorough breaking with the world. It may be the feelings are wrought upon by human influence, and certain evangelical sentiments take possession of the mind; but *self* is not judged; there is a clinging to earth and nature; a lack of that deep-toned earnestness and genuine reality which so remarkably characterize the conversions recorded in the New Testament, and for which we may always look where the work of conversion is divine. We do not here attempt to account for all these superficial cases; we merely refer to them in order that all who are engaged in the blessed work of evangelization may be led to consider the matter in the light of holy Scripture, and to see how far their own mode of working may call for holy correction. It may be there is too much of the merely human element in our work. We do not leave the Spirit of God to act. We are deficient in faith, in the power and efficacy of the simple work of Christ itself. There may be too much effort to work on the feelings, too much of the emotional and the sensational. Perhaps, too, in our desire to reach results—a desire which may be right enough in itself—we are too ready to accredit and announce, as cases of conversion, many which, alas! are merely ephemeral.

Will this lessen our earnestness? The very reverse; it will intensify our earnestness immensely. We shall be more earnest in pleading with God in secret, and in pleading with our fellows in public.

We shall feel more deeply the divine seriousness of the work, and our own utter insufficiency. We shall ever cherish the wholesome conviction that the work must be of God from first to last. This will keep us in our right place, that of self-emptied dependence upon God, who is the Doer of all the works that are

done upon the earth. We shall be more on our faces before the mercy-seat, both in the closet and in the assembly, in reference to the glorious work of conversion; and then, when the golden sheaves and mellow clusters appear, when genuine cases of conversion turn up—cases which speak for themselves, and carry their own credentials with them to all who are capable of judging—then verily shall our hearts be filled with praise to the God of all grace who has magnified the name of His Son Jesus Christ in the salvation of precious souls.

How much better is this than to have our poor hearts puffed up with pride and self-complacency by reckoning up our cases of conversion! How much better, safer and happier to be bowed in worship before the throne, than to have our names heralded to the ends of the earth as great preachers and wonderful evangelists! No comparison, in the judgment of a truly spiritual person. The dignity, reality, and seriousness of the work will be realized; the happiness, the moral security, and the real usefulness of the workman will be promoted; and the glory of God secured and maintained.

Let us see how all this is illustrated in 1 Thessalonians i. "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of *faith* and labor of *love*, and patience of *hope*"—the grand elements of true Christianity—"in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren, beloved of God, your election." How did he know it? By the clear and unquestionable evidence afforded in their practical life—the only way in which the election of any one can be known. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; *as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*"

The blessed apostle was, in his daily life, the exponent of the gospel which he preached. He *lived* the gospel. He did not demand or exact aught of them. He was not burdensome to them. He preached unto them the precious gospel of God freely; and in order that he might do so, he wrought with labor and travail, night and day. He was as a loving, tender nurse, going in and out among them. There were with him no high-sounding words about himself, or his office, or his authority, or his gifts, or his preaching, or his wonderful doings in other places. He was the loving, lowly, unpretending, earnest, devoted workman, whose work spoke for itself, and whose whole life, his spirit, style, deportment, and habits, were in lovely harmony with his preaching.

How needful for all workmen to ponder these things! We may depend upon it that very much of the shallowness of our work is the fruit of the shallowness of the workman. Where is the power? Where is the demonstration of the Spirit? Where is the "much assurance?" Is there not a terrible lack of these things in our preaching? There may be a vast amount of fluent talking; a great deal of so-called cleverness; and much that may tickle the ear, act on the imagination, awaken a temporary interest, and minister to mere curiosity. But oh! where is the holy unction, the living earnestness, the profound seriousness? And then the living exponent in the daily life and habits—where is this? May the Lord revive His work in the hearts of His workmen, and then we may look for more of the results of the work.

Do we mean to teach that the work of conversion depends upon the workman? Far away be the monstrous notion! The work depends wholly and absolutely on the power of the Holy Ghost, as the very chapter now lying open before us proves beyond all question. It must ever hold good, in every department and every stage of the work, that it is "not by might nor by power; but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

But what kind of instrument does the Spirit ordinarily use? Is not this a weighty question for us workmen? What sort of vessels are "meet for the Master's use?" Empty vessels—clean vessels. Are we such? Are

we emptied of ourselves? Are we cured of our deplorable self-occupation? Are we "clean?" Have we clean hands? Are our associations, our ways, our circumstances, clean? If not, how can the Master use us in His holy service? May we all have grace to weigh these questions in the divine presence! May the Lord stir us all up, and make us more and more vessels such as He can use for His glory!

We shall now proceed with our quotation. The whole passage is full of power. The character of the workman on the one hand, and of the work on the other, demands our most serious attention.

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples [or models] to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything, for they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you."

This was real work. It carried its own credentials with it. There was nothing vague or unsatisfactory about it—no occasion for any reserve in forming or expressing a judgment respecting it. It was clear, distinct, and unmistakable. It bore the stamp of the Master's hand, and carried conviction to every mind capable of weighing the evidence. The work of conversion was wrought, and the fruits of conversion followed in delightful profusion. The testimony went forth far and wide, so that the workman had no need to speak about his work. There was no occasion for him to reckon up and publish the number of conversions at Thessalonica. All was divinely real. It was a thorough work of God's Spirit as to which there could be no possible mistake, and about which it was superfluous to speak.

The apostle had simply preached the Word in the power of the Holy Ghost, in much assurance. There was nothing vague, nothing doubtful about his testimony. He preached as one who fully believed and thoroughly entered into what he was preaching about. It was not the mere fluent utterance of certain known and acknowledged truths—not the cut and dry statement of certain barren dogmas. No; it was the living outpouring of the glorious gospel of God, coming from a heart that felt profoundly every utterance, and falling upon hearts prepared by God's Spirit for its reception.

Such was the work at Thessalonica—a blessed divine work—all real, the genuine fruit of God's Spirit. It was no mere religious excitement, nothing sensational, no high pressure, no attempt to "get up a revival." All was beautifully calm. The workman, as we are told in Acts xvii., "came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews; and as his manner was, he went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures"—Precious, powerful reasoning! would to God we had more of it in our midst!—"opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

How simple! Preaching Jesus out of the Scriptures! Yes, here lay the grand secret of Paul's preaching. He preached a living Person, in living power, on the authority of a living Word, and this preaching was received in living faith, and brought forth living fruit, in the lives of the converts. This is the preaching that God has ordained and uses. It is not sermonizing, not religious talk, but the preaching of Christ by the Holy Ghost speaking through men who are themselves under the power of what they are preaching. God grant us more of this!

PART IV.

The last two verses of our chapter (1 Thess. i.) demand our very special attention. They furnish a remarkable statement of the real nature of conversion. They show, very distinctly, the depth, clearness,

fulness, and reality of the work of God's Spirit in those Thessalonian converts. There was no mistaking it. It carried its own credentials with it. It was no uncertain work. It did not call for any careful examination ere it could be accredited. It was a manifest, unmistakable work of God, the fruits of which were apparent to all. "They themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye *turned to God from idols*, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (vers. 9, 10).

Here, then, we have a divine definition of conversion—brief, but comprehensive. It is a turning *from*, and a turning *to*. They turned from idols. There was a complete break with the past, a turning of the back, once and forever, on their former life and habits; a thorough surrender of all those objects that had ruled their hearts and commanded their energies. Those dear Thessalonians were led to judge, in the light of divine truth, their whole previous course, and not only to judge it, but to abandon it unreservedly. It was no half-and-half work. There was nothing vague or equivocal about it. It was a marked epoch in their history—a grand turning-point in their moral and practical career. It was not a mere change of opinion, or the reception of a new set of principles, a certain alteration in their intellectual views. It was far more than any or all of these things. It was the solemn discovery that their whole past career had been one great, dark, monstrous lie. It was the real heart conviction of this. Divine light had broken in upon their souls, and in the power of that light they judged themselves and the entire of their previous history. There was an out-and-out surrender of that world which had hitherto ruled their hearts' affections; not a shred of it was to be spared.

And what, we may ask, produced this marvelous change? Simply the word of God brought home to their souls in the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. We have referred to the inspired account of the apostle's visit to Thessalonica. We are told that "he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." He sought to bring their souls into direct contact with the living and eternal word of God. There was no effort to act on their feelings and imagination. All this the blessed workman judged to be utterly valueless. He had no confidence whatever in it. His confidence was in the word and Spirit of God. He assures the Thessalonians of this very thing in the most touching manner, in chap. ii. of his epistle. "For this cause," he says, "thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it *not as the word of men*, but, as it is in truth, *the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

This is what we may call a vital and cardinal point. The word of God, and that alone, in the mighty hand of the Holy Ghost, produced these grand results in the case of the Thessalonians, which filled the heart of the beloved apostle with unfeigned thanksgiving to God. He rejoiced that they were not linked on to him, but to the living God Himself, by means of His word. This is an imperishable link. It is as enduring as the Word which forms it. The word of man is as perishable as himself; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. The apostle, as a true workman, understood and felt all this, and hence his holy jealousy, in all his ministry, lest the souls to whom he preached should, in any way, lean upon him instead of on the One whose messenger and minister he was.

Hear what he says to the Corinthians: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you *the testimony of God*. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but *in demonstration of the Spirit* and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but *in the power of God*" (1 Cor. ii. 1-5).

Here we have true ministry—"the testimony of God," and "the demonstration of the Spirit"—the Word and

the Holy Ghost. Nothing else is of any value. All mere human influence, human power, and the results produced by human wisdom or energy, are perfectly worthless—yea, positively mischievous. The workman is puffed up by the apparent results of his work paraded and talked of, and the poor souls that are acted upon by this false influence are deceived, and led into an utterly false position and false profession. In a word, the whole thing is disastrous in the extreme.

Not so when the word of God, in its mighty moral power, and the energy of the Holy Ghost, are brought to bear on the heart and conscience. Then it is we see divine results, as in the case of the Thessalonians. Then indeed it is made apparent, beyond all question, who is the workman. It is not Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, but God Himself, whose work accredits itself, and shall stand forever; all homage to His holy name! The apostle had no need to reckon up and publish the results of his work at Thessalonica, or rather God's work by his means. It spoke for itself. It was genuine. It bore, with unmistakable distinctness, the stamp of God upon it, and this was quite enough for Paul; and it is quite enough for every true-hearted, self-emptying workman. Paul preached the Word, and that Word was brought home, in the quickening energy of the Holy Ghost, to the hearts of the Thessalonians. It fell into good ground, took root, and brought forth fruit in abundance.

And let us mark the fruit. "*Ye turned from idols.*" Here we have, in one word, the whole life of every unconverted man, woman, or child on the face of the earth. It is all wrapped up and presented to our view in the one expression, "*idols.*" It is not by any means necessary to bow down to a stock or a stone in order to be an idolater. Whatever commands the heart is an idol; the yielding of the heart to that thing is idolatry, and the one who so yields it is an idolater. Such is the plain, solemn truth in this matter, however unpalatable it may be to the proud human heart. Take that one great, crying, universal sin of "covetousness." What does the inspired apostle call it? He calls it "idolatry." How many hearts are commanded by money! How many worshipers bow down before the idol of gold! What is covetousness? Either a desire to get more, or the love of what we have. We have both forms in the New Testament. The Greek has a word to represent both. But whether it be the desire to grasp, or the desire to hoard, in either case it is idolatry.

And yet the two things may be very unlike in their outward development. The former, that is, the desire to get more, may often be found in connection with a readiness to spend; the latter, on the contrary, is generally linked with an intense spirit of hoarding. There, for example, is a man of great business capacity—a thorough commercial genius—in whose hand everything seems to prosper. He has a real zest for business, an unquenchable thirst for making money. His one object is to get more, to add thousand to thousand, to strengthen his commercial foundation, and enlarge his sphere. He lives, thrives, and revels in the atmosphere of commerce. He started on his career with a few pence in his pocket, and he has risen to the proud position of a merchant prince. He is not a miser. He is as ready to scatter as to obtain. He fares sumptuously, entertains with a splendid hospitality, gives munificently to manifold public objects. He is looked up to and respected by all classes of society.

But he loves to get more. He is a covetous man—an idolater. True, he despises the poor miser who spends his nights over his money-bags, "holding strange communion with his gold;" delighting his heart and feasting his eyes with the very sight of the fascinating dust, refusing himself and his family the common necessities of life; going about in rags and wretchedness, rather than spend a penny of the precious hoard; who loves money, not for what it can get or give, but simply for its own sake; who loves to accumulate, not that he may spend, but that he may hoard; whose one ruling desire is to die worth so much wretched dust—strange, contemptible desire!

Now these two are apparently very different, but they meet in one point; they stand on one common

platform; they are both covetous, and they are both idolaters.^[1] This may sound harsh and severe, but it is the truth of God, and we must bow down before its holy authority. True it is that nothing is apparently more difficult to bring home to the conscience than the sin of covetousness—that very sin which the Holy Ghost declares to be idolatry. Thousands might see it in the case of the poor degraded miser, who nevertheless would be shocked by its application to a merchant prince. It is one thing to see it in others, and quite another to judge it in ourselves. The fact is, that nothing but the light of the word of God shining in upon the soul, and penetrating every chamber of our moral being, can enable us to detect the hateful sin of covetousness. The pursuit of gain—the desire to have more—the spirit of commerce—the ability to make money—the desire to get on—all this is so "highly esteemed amongst men," that very few, comparatively, are prepared to see that it is positively "an abomination in the sight of God." The natural heart is formed by the thoughts of men. It loves, adores and worships the objects that it finds in this world; and each heart has its own idol. One worships gold, another worships pleasure, another worships power. Every unconverted man is an idolater; and even converted men are not beyond the reach of idolatrous influences, as is evident from the warning note raised by the venerable apostle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 21).

Reader, will you permit us to put a plain, pointed question to you, ere we proceed further? Are you converted? Do you profess to be so? Do you take the ground of being a Christian? If so, have you turned from idols? Have you really broken with the world, and with your former self? Has the living word of God entered your heart, and led you to judge the whole of your past life, whether it has been a life of gayety and thoughtless folly, a life of busy money-making, a life of abominable vice and wickedness, or a life of mere religious routine—Christless, faithless, worthless religion?

Say, dear friend, how is it? Be thoroughly in earnest. Be assured there is an urgent demand for out-and-out earnestness in this matter. We cannot hide from you the fact that we are painfully conscious of the sad lack of thorough decision amongst us. We have not, with sufficient emphasis or distinctness, "turned from idols." Old habits are retained; former lusts and objects rule the heart. The temper, style, spirit and deportment do not bespeak conversion. We are sadly too like our former selves—too like the openly and confessedly worldly people around us.

All this is really terrible. We fear it is a sad hindrance to the progress of the gospel and the salvation of souls. The testimony falls powerless on the ears of those to whom we speak, because we do not seem as though we ourselves really believe what we are talking about. The apostle could not say to us, as he said to his dear Thessalonian converts, "From you sounded out the word of the Lord ... so that we need not to speak anything." There is a want of depth, power and markedness in our conversion. The change is not sufficiently apparent. Even where there is a work, there is a tameness, feebleness and vagueness about it truly deplorable and discouraging.

But more of this in our next, if the Lord will.

PART V.

We are now called to consider what we may term the positive side of the great subject of conversion. We have seen that it is a turning *from* idols—a turning from all those objects which ruled our hearts and engaged our affections—the vanities and follies, the lusts and pleasures which made up the whole of our existence in the days of our darkness and blindness. It is, as we read in Acts xxvi. 18, a turning *from* darkness, and from the power of Satan; and, as we read in Gal. i. 4, a turning *from* this present evil world.

But conversion is much more than all this. It would, in one sense, be but a poor thing if it were merely a turning "*from* sin, the world, and Satan." No doubt it is a signal mercy to be delivered, once and forever, from all the wretchedness and moral degradation of our former life; from the terrible thralldom of the god and prince of this world; from all the hollowness and vanity of a world that lieth in the arms of the wicked one; and from the love and practice of sin—the vile affections which once held sway over us. We cannot be too thankful for all that is included in this side of the question.

But, we repeat, there is very much more than this. The heart may feel disposed to inquire, "What have we gotten in lieu of all we have given up? Is Christianity merely a system of negations? If we have broken with the world and self—if we have given up our former pleasures and amusements—if, in short, we have turned our back upon what goes to make up life in this world, what have we instead?"

1 Thessalonians i. 9 furnishes, in one word, the answer to all these inquiries—an answer full, clear, distinct, and comprehensive. Here it is—"Ye turned to GOD."

Precious answer! Yes, unspeakably precious to all who know aught of its meaning. What have I got instead of my former "idols?" God! Instead of this world's vain and sinful pleasures? God! Instead of its riches, honors, and distinctions? God! Oh, blessed, glorious, perfect Substitute! What had the prodigal instead of the rags of the far country? The best robe in the Father's house! Instead of the swine's husks? The fatted calf of the Father's providing! Instead of the degrading servitude of the far country? The Father's welcome, his bosom, and his table!

Reader, is not this a blessed exchange? Have we not, in the familiar, but ever charming history of the prodigal a most touching and impressive illustration of true conversion in both its sides? May we not well exclaim, as we gaze on the inimitable picture, "What a conversion! What a turning from and turning to!" Who can utter it? What human tongue can adequately set forth the feelings of the returned wanderer when pressed to the Father's bosom and bathed in the light and love of the Father's house? The rags, the husks, the swine, the slavery, the cold selfishness, the destitution, the famine, the misery, the moral degradation—all gone, and gone forever; and instead thereof the ineffable delight of that bright and happy home, and, above all, the exquisite feeling that all that festive joy which surrounded him was awakened up by the very fact of his return—that it made the Father glad to get him back!

But we shall, perhaps, be told that all this is but a figure. Yes; but a figure of what? Of a precious, a divine reality; a figure of what takes place in every instance of true conversion, if only it be looked at from a heavenly standpoint. It is not a mere surrender of the world, with its thousand and one vanities and follies. It is this, no doubt; but it is very much more. It is being brought to God, *brought home*, brought to the Father's bosom, brought into the family; made—not in the language of a barren formulary, but in the power of the Spirit, and by the mighty action of the Word—a child of God, a member of Christ, and an heir of the kingdom.

This, and nothing less, is conversion. Let the reader see that he thoroughly understands it. Let him not be satisfied with anything short of this grand reality—this turning from darkness to light, from the power of Satan, and from the worship of idols, to God. The Christian is, in one sense, as really brought to God now as if he were actually in heaven. This may seem strong, but it is blessedly true. Hear what the apostle Peter says as to this point: "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to"—what? Heaven when we die? Nay; but "to bring us to God" *now*. So, also, in Rom. v. we read, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life! And not only so, but we also *joy in God*, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

This is an immense principle. It is not within the compass of human language to set forth all that is involved in being "turned," or "brought to God." Our adorable Lord Jesus Christ brings all who believe in His name into God's presence, in all His own perfect acceptability. They come in all the credit, and virtue, and value of the blood of Jesus, and in all the fragrance of His most excellent name. He brings us into the very same position with Himself. He links us with Himself, and shares with us all He has, and all He is, save His Deity, which is incommunicable. We are perfectly identified with Him. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me; *because I live, ye shall live also.*" Again, "Peace I leave with you, *my peace I give unto you*; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "These things have I spoken unto you, that *my joy might remain in you*, and that your joy might be full." "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for *all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*"

So, also, in that marvelous prayer in John xvii., we read, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them." "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because *they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" "*As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*" "*And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one*: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, *and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.* Father, *I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am*; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that *the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*"

Now it is utterly impossible to conceive anything higher or more blessed than this. To be so thoroughly identified with the Son of God, to be so wholly one with Him as to share in the very same love wherewith He is loved by the Father, to partake of His peace, His joy, His glory—all this involves the very highest possible measure and character of blessing with which any creature could be endowed. To be saved from the everlasting horrors of the pit of hell; to be pardoned, washed, and justified; to be reinstated in all that Adam lost; to be let into heaven on any ground or in any character whatsoever, would be marvelous mercy, goodness, and loving-kindness; but to be brought to God in all the love and favor of His own beloved Son, to be intimately associated with Him in all His position before God—His acceptability now—His glory by and by—this, truly, is something which only the heart of God could think of, and only His mighty power accomplish.

Well, reader, all this is involved in the conversion whereof we speak. Such is the magnificent grace of God, such the love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, enemies in our minds by wicked works, serving divers lusts and pleasures, worshiping idols, the blind, degraded slaves of sin and Satan, children of wrath, and going straight to hell.

And the best of it all is, that it both glorifies the name and gratifies the heart of God to bring us into this place of inconceivable blessedness, love, and glory. It would not satisfy the love of His heart to give us any lower place than that of His own Son. Well might the inspired apostle exclaim, in view of all this stupendous grace, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the

foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, *to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved*, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i.).

What depth of love, what fulness of blessing, have we here! It is the purpose of God to glorify Himself, throughout the countless ages of eternity, in His dealings with us. He will display, in view of all created intelligences, the riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us, by Christ Jesus. Our forgiveness, our justification, our perfect deliverance, our acceptance—all the blessings bestowed upon us in Christ—are for the display of the divine glory throughout the vast universe forever. It would not meet the claims of God's glory, or answer the affections of His heart, to have us in any other position but that of His own well-beloved and only begotten Son.

All this is marvelous. It seems too good to be true. But it is worthy of God, and it is His good pleasure so to act toward us. This is enough for us. It may be, and most assuredly is, too good for us to get, but it is not too good for God to give. He acts toward us according to the love of His heart, and on the ground of the worthiness of Christ. The prodigal might ask to be made as one of the hired servants, but this could not be. It would not be according to the Father's heart to have him in the house as a servant. It must be as a son or not at all. If it were a question of desert, we do not deserve the place of a servant any more than that of a son. But, blessed be God, it is not according to our deserts at all, but according to the boundless love of His heart, and to the glory of His holy name.

This, then, is conversion. Thus we are *brought to God*. Nothing short of this. We are not merely turned from our idols, whatever they were, but we are actually brought into the very presence of God, to find our delight in Him, to joy in Him, to walk with Him, to find all our springs in Him, to draw upon His exhaustless resources, to find in Him a perfect answer to all our necessities, so that our souls are satisfied, and that forever.

Do we want to go back to the idols? Never! Have we any hankering after our former objects? Not if our hearts are realizing our place and portion in Christ. Had the prodigal any longings after the husks and the swine when folded in the father's bosom, clothed in the father's house, and seated at the father's table? We do not, and cannot, believe it. We cannot imagine his heaving a single sigh after the far country when once he found himself within the hallowed circle of that bright and blissful home of love.

We speak according to the divine standard. Alas! alas! many profess to be converted, and seem to go on for a season; but ere long they begin to grow cold, and get weary and dissatisfied. The work was not real. They were not really brought to God. Idols may have been given up for a time, but God Himself was never reached. They never found in Him a satisfying portion for their hearts—never knew the real meaning of communion with Him—never tasted heart-satisfaction, heart-rest, in Christ. Hence, in process of time, the poor heart began to long once more for the world, and back they went, and plunged into its follies and vanities with greater avidity than ever.

Such cases are very sad, very disappointing. They bring great reproach on the cause of Christ, and are used as a plea for the enemy, and as a stumbling-block for anxious inquirers. But they leave the question of divine conversion just where it was. The soul that is truly converted is one who has not merely been turned from this present evil world, and all its promises and pretensions, but who has been led by the precious ministry of the Holy Ghost to find in the living God, and in His Son Jesus Christ, all he can possibly want for time and eternity. Such an one has divinely done with the world. He has broken with it

forever. He has had his eyes opened to see, through and through, the whole thing. He has judged it in the light of the presence of God. He has measured it by the standard of the cross of Christ. He has weighed it in the balances of the sanctuary, and turned his back upon it forever, to find an absorbing and a commanding object in the Person of that blessed One who was nailed to the accursed tree, in order to deliver him, not only from everlasting burnings, but also from this present evil world.

PART VI.

The more we dwell on 1 Thess. i. 9, the more we are struck with its marvelous depth, fulness, and power. It seems like sinking a shaft into an inexhaustible mine. We have dwelt a little on that very fruitful and suggestive clause, "*Turned to God from idols.*" How much is wrapped up in it! Do we really understand the force and fulness of it? It is a wonderful thing for the soul to be brought to God—to know Him now as our resource in all our weakness and need—the spring of all our joys—our strength and shield—our Guide and Counsellor—our all in all—to be absolutely and completely shut up to Him, wholly dependent upon Him.

Reader, do you know the deep blessedness of all this in your own soul? If you are a child of God, a truly converted soul, then it is your happy privilege to know it, and you ought not to be satisfied without it. If we are "turned to God," what is it for but to find in Him all we can possibly want for time and eternity? Nothing can ever satisfy the human soul but God Himself. It is not within the compass of earth to meet the cravings of the heart. If we had the wealth of the universe, and all that that wealth could procure, the heart would still want more; there would still be an aching void which nothing under the sun could fill.

Look at the history of Solomon. Hear him recording his own experience. "I, the preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. I said in my heart, Go to, now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, it is mad, and of mirth, what doeth it? I sought in my heart to give myself to wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom, and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water there with the wood that bringeth forth trees. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also, I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also, my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and behold, *all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun*" (Eccle. i., ii.).

Such is the withering commentary upon all earth's resources as given by the pen of one who had all that earth could give—of one who was allowed to drain to the very dregs every cup of human and earthly pleasure. And what was it all? "Vanity and vexation of spirit." "All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." The poor human heart can never be satisfied with the resources of earth. Creature streams can never quench the thirst of the immortal soul. Material things cannot possibly make us truly happy, even if they were permanent. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The truth of this must be proved by every human heart. Sooner or later all must find it out. Men may turn a deaf ear to it now; they may refuse to listen to the Spirit's warning voice; they may vainly imagine that this poor world can yield them substantial comfort and happiness; they may eagerly grasp at its riches, its honors, its distinctions, its pleasures, its material comforts; but they will find out their mistake. And oh, how dreadful to find it out *too late*! How terrible to open one's eyes in hell, like the rich man in the parable! What human language can set forth the horrors of a soul shut out forever from the presence of God, and consigned to outer darkness, to the place of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? It is overwhelming to think of it. What will it be to realize it? What will it be to find oneself in the tormenting flames of hell, at the other side of that impassable gulf where a single ray of hope can never break through the deep gloom of eternity?

Oh that men would think of all this in time! that they might flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on the blessed hope set before them in the gospel; that they might "turn to God." But alas! the god of this world blinds their minds, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. He engrosses them with present things—business, money-making, pleasures, cares, lusts, anything and everything but the one thing, in comparison with which all earthly things are but as the small dust of the balance.

But we have digressed from our special theme, to which we must return.

We are particularly anxious to press upon the Christian reader the immense importance of seeking to find all his resources in the living God. We have only for a moment turned aside from this point, in order to sound a warning note in the ear of any unconverted, careless one who may happen to take up this paper. We earnestly entreat the latter to turn to God. We entreat the former to seek a deeper acquaintance with the One to whom, by grace, he has turned. We have the two things before us in penning these papers on the great subject of "conversion." We can truly say, we long to see precious souls converted to God, and we long to see converted souls happy in God.

We are increasingly convinced of the practical importance of Christians proving in their daily life that they have found thorough rest of heart in God. It has immense weight with worldly people. It is a grand point gained when we are able, through grace, to tell the world that we are independent of it; and the only way to do this is to live in the abiding sense of what we have in God. This would impart a moral elevation to our entire course and character. It would deliver us completely from that strong tendency to lean on human props and to betake ourselves to creature streams which we have all more or less to lament, and which must assuredly issue in disappointment to us and dishonor to God.

How prone we are on all occasions to look to our fellow-men for sympathy, succor and counsel instead of looking directly and exclusively to God! This is a serious mistake. It is in principle to forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water. What can we expect? What must be the issue? Barrenness and desolation. Our God, in very faithfulness to us, will cause our fellow-man to fail us, in order that we may learn the folly of leaning upon an arm of flesh.

Hear what the prophet says on this great practical question: "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited."

But mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. xvii.).

O reader, it is a grand reality to lean on the arm of the living God—to find in Him our relief and our resource at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. He never fails a trusting heart. He will never disappoint us. He may see fit to keep us waiting for an answer to our call, but the time we spend in waiting is well spent, and when the answer comes our hearts are filled with praise, and we are able to say, "Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men" (Psa. xxxi. 19).

It is a great thing to be able to trust God before the sons of men, to confess His sufficiency for our every exigence. But it must be a reality, and not mere profession. It is no use to talk of leaning on God while at the same time we are, in one way or another, looking to some poor mortal to help us. This is a sad delusion. But, alas! how often we fall under its power! We adopt the language of dependence upon God, but in reality we are looking to man, and letting him know our wants. We deceive ourselves and dishonor God, and the end is disappointment and confusion of face.

Reader, let us look closely and honestly at this matter. Let us see to it that we understand the meaning of those precious words, "Turned to God." They contain the very essence of true happiness and true holiness. When the heart is really turned to God it has found the true, the divine secret of peace, rest, and full satisfaction; it finds its all in God, and has no occasion whatever to turn to the creature. Am I in any perplexity? I can look to God for guidance. He has promised to guide me with His eye. What perfect guidance! Can man do better for me? Surely not. God sees the end from the beginning. He knows all the bearings, all the belongings, all the roots and issues of my case. He is an infallible guide. His wisdom is unerring, and, moreover, He loves me perfectly. Where could I find a better guide?

Am I in want? I can go to God about it. He is the Possessor of heaven and earth. The treasures of the universe are at His disposal. He can help me if He sees it to be good for me; and if not, the pressure will be much better for me than the relief. "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Is not this enough? Why look to a creature stream? Why turn from such a God and go with our wants to a human being? It is in reality giving up, so far, the ground of faith, the life of simple dependence on God. It is actually dishonoring our Father. If I apply to my fellow for help, it is tantamount to saying that God has failed me. It is really betraying my loving Father who has taken me up, body, soul and spirit, to do for me for time and eternity. He has pledged Himself to provide for all my wants, be they ever so many, ever so great, ever so varied. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also *freely* give us *all things*?" His word is, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

True, God uses the creature to meet our need; but this is a totally different matter. The blessed apostle could say, "God who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus." Paul was looking to God for comfort, and God sent Titus to comfort him. Had Paul been looking to Titus, he would have been disappointed.

Thus it is in every case. Our immediate and exclusive reference must be to God in all our need. "We have turned *to God* from idols;" and hence in every exigence He is our sure resource. We can go to Him for counsel, for succor, for guidance, for sympathy, for all. "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God, for my expectation is from Him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be moved."

Will this most blessed habit of looking only to God lead us to undervalue the channels through which His precious grace flows to us? The very reverse. How could I undervalue one who comes to me directly from God, as His manifest instrument, to meet my need? Impossible. But I value him as a channel, instead of applying to him as a source. This makes all the difference. We must never forget that true conversion means our being brought to God; and most surely, if we are brought to God, it is in order that we should find in Him a perfect covering for our eyes, a perfect object for the heart, a perfect resource in all our exigencies, from first to last. A truly converted soul is one who is turned from all creature confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations, to find all he wants in the living and true God, and that forever.

PART VII.

We are now called to consider a deeply practical point in our subject. It is contained in the clause, "*To serve the living and true God.*" This is full of interest to every truly converted soul, every true Christian. We are called "to serve." Our whole life, from the moment of our conversion to the close of our earthly career, should be characterized by a spirit of true, earnest, intelligent service. This is our high privilege, not to say our hallowed duty. It matters not what our sphere of action may be, what our line of life, or what our calling; when we are converted, we have just got one thing to do, namely, to serve God. If there be anything in our calling which is contrary to the revealed will of God—contrary to the direct teaching of His word—then we must at once abandon it, cost what it may. The very first step of an obedient servant is to step out of a false position, be it what it may.

We are called to serve God, and everything must be tried by this standard. The Christian has to ask himself this one question, "Can I fulfil the duties of this situation to the glory of God?" If not, he must abandon it. If we cannot connect the name of God with our calling in life, then, assuredly, if we want to walk with God, if we aim at serving Him, if it be our one desire to be found well-pleasing in His sight, then we must give up that calling and look to Him to open some path for us in which we can walk to His praise.

This He will do, blessed be His name. He never fails a trusting soul. All we have to do is to cleave to Him with purpose of heart, and He will make the way plain before us. It may seem difficult at first. The path may appear narrow, rough, lonely; but our simple business is to stand for God, and not to continue for one hour in connection with anything contrary to His revealed will. A tender conscience, a single eye, a devoted heart, will settle many a question, solve many a difficulty, remove many a barrier. Indeed, the very instincts of the divine nature, if only they be allowed to act, will guide in many a perplexity. "The light of the body is the eye; therefore, when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light." When the purpose of the heart is true to Christ, true to His name and cause, true to the service of God, the Holy Spirit opens up the precious treasures of divine revelation to the soul, and pours a flood of living light upon the understanding, so that we see the path of service as clear as a sunbeam before us, and we have only got to tread it with a firm step.

But we must never, for one moment, lose sight of the grand fact that we are converted to the service of God. The outcome of the life which we possess must ever take the form of service to the living and true God. In our unconverted days we worshiped idols, and served divers lusts and pleasures; now, on the contrary, we worship God in the Spirit, and we are called to serve Him with all our ransomed powers. We have turned to God, to find in Him our perfect rest and satisfaction. There is not a single thing in the entire range of a creature's necessities, for time and eternity, that we cannot find in our own most gracious God and Father. He has treasured up in Christ, the Son of His love, all that can satisfy the desires of the new life in us. It is our privilege to have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, and to be so rooted and grounded in love as to be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.

Thus filled, satisfied and strengthened, we are called to dedicate ourselves, spirit, soul and body, to the service of Christ; to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. We should have nothing else to do in this world. Whatever cannot be done as service to Christ ought not to be done at all. This simplifies the matter amazingly. It is our sweet privilege to do everything in the name of the Lord

Jesus, and to the glory of God. We sometimes hear people speak of "a secular calling," as contrasted with what is "sacred." We question the correctness of such a distinction. Paul made tents and planted churches, but in both he served the Lord Christ. All that a Christian does ought to be sacred, because it is done as service to God. If this were borne in mind, it would enable us to connect the very simplest duties of daily life with the Lord Himself, and to bring Him into them in such a way as to impart a holy dignity and interest to all that we have to do, from morning till night. In this way, instead of finding the duties of our calling a hindrance to our communion with God, we should actually make them an occasion of waiting on Him for wisdom and grace to discharge them aright, so that His holy name might be glorified in the most minute details of practical life.

The fact is that the service of God is a much simpler matter than some of us imagine. It does not consist in doing some wonderful things beyond the bounds of our divinely appointed sphere of action. Take the case of a domestic servant. How can she serve the living and true God? She cannot go about visiting and talking. Her sphere of action lies in the shade and retirement of her master's house. Were she to run about from house to house, she would be actually neglecting her proper work, her divinely appointed business. Harken to the following sound and wholesome words: "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again: not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus ii. 9, 10).

Here we see that the servant, by obedience, humility and honesty can adorn the doctrine of God just as effectually, according to her measure, as an evangelist ranging the world over in the discharge of his high and holy commission.

Again, we read, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as *the servants of Christ*, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing *service*, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. vi.).

How lovely is all this! What a fine field of service is opened up for us here! How beautiful this "fear and trembling!" Where do we see it nowadays? Where is the holy subjection to authority? Where the singleness of eye? Where the willing-hearted service? Alas! we see headiness and high-mindedness, self-will, self-pleasing, and self-interest. How must all these things dishonor the Lord, and grieve His Holy Spirit! How needful that our souls should be roused to a sense of what becomes us as those who are called to serve the living and true God! Is it not a signal mercy to every true Christian to know that he can serve and glorify God in the most commonplace domestic duties? If it were not so, what would become of ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians?

We have taken up the case of an ordinary domestic servant in order to illustrate that special line of practical truth now under our consideration. Is it not most blessed for us to know that our God graciously condescends to connect His name and His glory with the very humblest duties that can devolve upon us in our ordinary domestic life? It is this which imparts dignity, interest and freshness to every little act, from morning till night. "Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." Here lies the precious secret of the whole matter. It is not working for wages, but serving the Lord Christ, and looking to Him to receive the reward of the inheritance.

Oh that all this were more fully realized and illustrated amongst us! What moral elevation it would give to the entire Christian life! What a triumphant answer it would furnish to the infidel! What a withering rebuke to all his sneers and cavils! Better by far than ten thousand learned arguments. There is no

argument so forcible as an earnest, devoted, holy, happy, self-sacrificing Christian life, and this life can be displayed by one whose sphere of action is bounded by the four walls of a kitchen.^[2]

And not only does the practical life of a true Christian afford the very best possible answer to the skeptic and the infidel, but it also meets in a most satisfactory manner the objections of those who talk about works, and insist upon putting Christians under the law, in order to teach them how to live. When people challenge us as to our not preaching up works, we simply ask them, "For what should we preach works?" The unconverted man cannot do any works, save "wicked works," or "dead works." "They that are in the flesh"—unconverted people—"cannot please God." Of what possible use can it be to preach works to such? It can only cast dust in their eyes, blind their minds, deceive their hearts, and send them down to hell with a lie in their right hand.

There must be genuine conversion to God. This is a divine work from first to last. And what has the converted man got to do? He certainly has not to work for life, because he has it, even life eternal, as God's free gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has not to work for salvation, because he is saved already—"saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." What, then, is he called to do? "To serve the living and true God." How? When? Where? In everything; at all times, and in all places. The converted man has nothing else to do but to serve God. If he does anything else, he is positively untrue, unfaithful to that blessed Lord and Master who, ere ever He called him to serve, endowed him with the life, and the grace, and the power, whereby alone the service can be rendered.

Yes, reader, the Christian is called to serve. Let us never forget this. He is privileged to "present his body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is his reasonable (his intelligent) service." This settles the whole question. It removes all difficulties; it silences all objections; it puts everything in its right place. It is not a question of what I am doing, but how I do it—not where I am, but how I conduct myself. Christianity as displayed in the New Testament is the outcome of the life of Christ in the believer; it is Christ reproduced in the Christian's daily life, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Everything the Christian touches, everything he does, everything he says, his whole practical life, from Lord's-day morning till Saturday night, should bear the impress and breathe the spirit of that great practical clause on which we have been dwelling—"serving the living and true God." May it be so more and more! May all the Lord's beloved people, everywhere, be really stirred up to seek more earnest, out-and-out, whole-hearted devotedness to Christ and His precious service!

PART VIII

The last words of our chapter—1 Thess. i.—now claim our attention. They furnish a very striking and forcible proof of the clearness, fulness, depth and comprehensiveness of the apostle's testimony at Thessalonica, and also of the brightness and reality of the work in the young converts in that place. It was not only that they turned from idols to God, to serve the living and true God. This, through grace, they did; and that, too, with uncommon power, freshness, and fervor.

But there was something more; and we may assert, with all possible confidence, that there would have been a grand defect in the conversion and in the Christianity of those beloved disciples if that had been lacking. *They were converted "to wait for the Son of God from the heavens."*

Let the reader give to this very weighty fact his most devout attention. The bright and blessed hope of the Lord's coming formed an integral part of the gospel which Paul preached, and of the Christianity of those who were converted by his ministry. That blessed servant preached a full gospel. He not only declared

that the Son of God had come into the world to accomplish the great work of redemption, and lay the everlasting foundation of the divine glory and counsels, but that He had gone back to the heavens, and taken His seat as the victorious, exalted and glorified Man, at the right hand of the throne of God; and that He is coming again; first, to receive His people to Himself, and conduct them into the very innermost circle of His Father's house—the place prepared for them: and then to come forth *with* them, to execute judgment upon His enemies—gather out of His kingdom all that offend, and all that do iniquity, and set up His glorious dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

All this was included in the precious gospel which Paul preached, and which the Thessalonian converts received. We find an indirect but very interesting intimation of this in a passage in Acts xvii., where the inspired writer records what the infidel Jews thought and said about the apostle's preaching. "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, *These that have turned the world upside down* are come hither also; whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, *saying that there is another king, Jesus.*"

Such were the ideas which these poor, ignorant, prejudiced unbelievers gathered from the preaching of the Lord's beloved servants; and we can see in them the elements of great and solemn truths—the complete upturning of the present system of things, and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezek. xxi. 27).

But not only did the Lord's coming and kingdom occupy a prominent place in the *preaching* of the apostle, it also shines brilliantly forth in all his *teaching*. Not only were the Thessalonians converted to this blessed hope, they were built up, established and led on in it. They were taught to live in the brightness of it every hour of the day. It was not a dry, barren dogma, to be received and held as part of a powerless, worthless creed; it was a living reality, a mighty moral power in the soul—a precious, purifying, sanctifying, elevating hope, detaching the heart completely from present things, and causing it to look out, moment by moment—yes, reader, we repeat it with emphasis, moment by moment—for the return of our beloved Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

It is interesting to notice that in the two epistles to the Thessalonians there is far more allusion to the Lord's coming than in all the other epistles put together. This is all the more remarkable inasmuch as they were the very earliest of Paul's epistles, and they were written to an assembly very young in the faith.

If the reader will just glance rapidly through these two most precious writings, he will find the hope of the Lord's return introduced in every one of the eight chapters, and in connection with all sorts of subjects. For example, in chap. i. we have it presented as the grand object to be ever kept before the Christian's heart, let his position or his relationship be what it may—the brilliant light shining at the end of his long pilgrimage through this dark and toilsome world. "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for"—what? The time of their death? No such thing, no allusion to such a thing. Death, for the believer, is abolished, and is never presented as the object of his hope. For what, then, were the Thessalonian disciples taught to wait? "For God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead."

And then mark the beautiful addition! "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." This is the Person for whom we are waiting; our precious Saviour; our great Deliverer; the One who undertook our desperate case; who took, on our behalf, the cup of wrath from the hand of infinite Justice and exhausted it

forever; who cleared the prospect of every cloud, so that we can gaze upward into heaven, and onward into eternity, and see nothing but the brightness and blessedness of His own love and glory, as our happy home throughout the everlasting ages.

Oh, beloved Christian reader, how blessed to be looking out, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight, for the coming of our gracious Deliverer! What a holy reality to be ever waiting for the return of our own loving and beloved Saviour and Lord! How separating and elevating, as we rise each morning to start on our daily course of duty—whatever that duty may be, whether the scrubbing of a floor or the preaching of the gospel—to cherish the bright and blessed hope that, ere the shades of evening gather round us, we may be summoned to ascend in the folds of the cloud of glory to meet our coming Lord!

Is this the dream of a wild fanatic or a visionary enthusiast? Nay, it is an imperishable truth, resting on the very same foundation that sustains the entire fabric of our most glorious Christianity. Is it true that the Son of God has trod this earth of ours in the person of Jesus of Nazareth? Is it true that He lived and labored here, amid the sins and sorrows of poor, fallen humanity? Is it true that He sighed, and wept, and groaned, under the sense of the widespread desolation which sin had wrought in this world? Is it true that He went to the cross, and there offered Himself without spot to God, in order to vindicate the Divine Majesty; to answer all the claims of the throne of God; to destroy all the works of the devil; to make a public show of all the powers of hell; to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; to bear the sins of all those who, from the beginning to the end of time, should, through grace, believe in His name? Is it true that He lay for three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and on the first day of the week rose triumphant from the grave, as the Head of the new creation, and ascended into the heavens, after He had been seen by at least five hundred witnesses? Is it true that fifty days after His resurrection He sent down the Holy Ghost, in order to fill and fit His apostles to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth? Is it true that from the day of Pentecost to this very hour He has been acting on His people's behalf as an Advocate with the Father, a great High Priest with God; interceding for us in all our failures, sins and shortcomings, and sympathizing with us in all our infirmities and in all our sorrows; and presenting continually our sacrifices of prayer and praise, in all the fragrance of His own glorious Person?

Are all these things true? Yes, thank God, they are all divinely true, all set forth in the pages of the New Testament, with most marvelous fulness, clearness, depth, and power; all rest on the solid foundation of Holy Scripture—a foundation which not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils, can ever touch.

Well, then, the blessed hope of the Lord's coming rests on precisely the same authority. It is not more true that our Lord Jesus Christ lay as a babe in the manger of Bethlehem, that He grew up to man's estate, that He went about doing good, that He was nailed to the cross and laid in the tomb, that He is now seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, than that He will come again to receive His people to Himself. He may come to-night. No one can tell when He will come, but at any moment He may come. The only thing that detains Him is His long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. For eighteen long centuries has He waited in lingering love, mercy, and compassion; and during all that time salvation has been ready to be revealed, and God has been ready to judge; but He has waited, and He still waits, in long-suffering grace and patience.

But He will come, and we should ever live in the hope of His coming. Thus the apostle taught his beloved Thessalonians to live. Thus he lived himself. The blessed hope was intimately bound up with all the habits and feelings of his daily life. Was it a question of reaping the fruit of his labors? Hear what he says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, *at His coming*?" He would see them all then and there. No enemy will be allowed to hinder that meeting. "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us." Very

wonderful! Very mysterious! Yet so it was. Satan hindered an angel of God in the discharge of his business in the days of Daniel; and he hindered an apostle of Christ in the accomplishment of his loving desire to see his brethren at Thessalonica. But, thanks be to God, he will not be able to hinder the joyful meeting of Christ and His saints for which we wait. What a moment that will be! What precious reunions! What sweet recognitions! What affectionate greetings of dear old friends! But, far above all, Himself! His smile! His welcome! His soul-stirring "Well done!"

What a precious, soul-sustaining hope! Need we wonder at the prominent place it occupied in the thoughts and the teachings of the blessed apostle? He recurs to it on all occasions, and in connection with every subject. Is it a question of progress in the divine life and practical godliness? Thus he puts it: "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we do toward you; to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.*"

Let the reader specially mark the last clause of this touching and beautiful quotation. "*With all His saints.*" What admirable wisdom shines here! The apostle was about to touch directly upon an error into which the Thessalonian believers had fallen in reference to their departed friends. They feared that those who had fallen asleep would not participate in the joy of the Lord's coming. This error is completely demolished by that brief sentence, "with *all* His saints." Not one will be absent from that joyous meeting, that festive scene. Blessed assurance! Triumphant answer to all who would have us believe that none will share the joy of our Lord's coming save those who see this, that, and the other! "With *all* his saints," spite of their ignorance and their errors, their wanderings and their stumblings, their shortcomings and their failures. Our blessed Saviour, the everlasting Lover of our souls, will not shut any of us out at that blissful moment.

Is all this matchless grace to make us careless? God forbid! Nay, it is the abiding sense of it which alone can keep us alive to our holy responsibility to judge everything in us and in our ways which is contrary to the mind of Christ. And not only so, but the hope of our Lord's return, if it be kept bright and fresh in the heart, *must* purify, sanctify and elevate our entire character and course as nothing else can. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It is morally impossible for any one to *live* in the hope of seeing his Lord at any moment and yet have his heart set upon worldly things—upon money-making, self-indulgence, pleasure, vanity, folly. Let us not deceive ourselves. If we are daily looking out for the Son of God from heaven, we must sit loose to the things of time and sense. We may hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming as a mere dogma in the intellect; we may have the entire range of prophetic truth mapped out before our mind's eye, without its producing the smallest effect upon the heart, the character, or the practical life. But it is another thing altogether to have the whole moral being, the entire practical career, governed by the bright and blessed hope of seeing the One who loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in His own most precious blood.

Would there were more of this amongst us! It is to be feared that many of us have lost the freshness and power of our true and proper hope. The truth of the Lord's coming has become so familiar as a mere doctrine that we can flippantly speak of it, and discuss various points in connection with it, and argue with people about it, and all the while our ways, our deportment, our spirit and temper give the lie to what we profess to hold.

But we shall not pursue this sad and humbling side of the subject. May the Lord look upon us, and graciously heal, restore and lift up our souls! May He revive in the hearts of all His beloved people the proper Christian hope—the hope of seeing the bright and Morning Star. May the utterance of the whole heart and the utterance of the whole life be, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Here we must close this paper. We had hoped to run through the two epistles to the Thessalonians in company with our readers, in order to prove and illustrate the statement that the hope of the Lord's return was bound up in the heart of the apostle, with all the scenes, circumstances and associations of Christian life. But we must allow the reader to do this for himself. Sufficient, we trust, has been said to show that true conversion, according to apostolic teaching, cannot stop short of the blessed hope of the Lord's coming. A truly converted person is one who has turned from idols—has broken with the world—broken with his former self—turned to God, to find in Him all he can possibly want for time and eternity, to serve Him, and Him only—and, finally, "to wait for the Son of God from heaven." Such we conceive to be the true and proper answer to the question, "What is conversion?"

Reader, art *thou* converted? If not, what then? If thou art, does thy life declare it?

SIMON PETER: HIS LIFE AND ITS LESSONS

PART I.

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

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

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

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

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

This is the kind of testimony we so much want both in our private life and in our public reunions. It is this that tells, with such marvelous power, on others. We never can speak effectively for Christ, unless our hearts are filled with Him. And so it is also, in reference to our meetings. When Christ is the one absorbing object of every heart, there will be a tone and an atmosphere which must tell in some way or other on all who enter the place. There may not be much gift, not much teaching—very little charm in the singing, for persons of musical taste; but oh! there is heart-enjoyment of Christ. His name is as ointment poured forth. Every eye is fixed on Him; every heart is centred in Him; He is the commanding object—the satisfying portion. The unanimous voice of the assembly seems to say, "Behold the Lamb of God," and this

must produce its own powerful effect, either in attracting souls to Him, or in convincing them that the people in that assembly have gotten something of which they know nothing at all.

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

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

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

It is not very likely that the man who could give such answers, and bear such a testimony, would be, in the smallest degree, affected by the loss of a few disciples. But, in good truth it was not loosing them when they followed Jesus and found their abode with Him. Of this we have the very finest evidence that could be furnished, from John's own lips, in reply to those who evidently thought that their master might possibly feel at being left in the shade. "They came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all come to Him. John answered and said, *A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.* Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: *this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John iii. 26-30).

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

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

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

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

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

PART II.

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

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

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

Mark especially the moral grace that shines here. "He *prayed* him that he would thrust out *a little* from the land." Though Lord of all creation—Possessor of heaven and earth—He nevertheless, as the lowly, gracious Man, courteously owns Simon's proprietorship, and asks, as a favor, that he would thrust out a

little from the shore. This was morally lovely, and we may rest assured it produced its own effect upon the heart of Simon.

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

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

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

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

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

left its impress upon the whole of his after course, character, and ministry. He, too, like Simon, was brought to the end of himself, and there he found an Object that not only met his deepest need, but also perfectly satisfied all the cravings and aspirations of his renewed being.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART III.

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

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

But then Scripture expressly informs us that, "There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii.). And it repeats this statement, in chap. x. of the same epistle, basing it upon another footing, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."

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

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

Nor is this all. Not only does God's present government take cognizance of the conduct of men, causing them to reap, even here, the due reward of their deeds but when Scripture opens to our view, as it does in manifold places, the awful judgment to come, it speaks of "books being opened." It tells us that men "shall be judged *every man according to their works*." In short, we have close and accurate discrimination, and not a promiscuous huddling of men and things.

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

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

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

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

This is very humbling to human pride and pretension. It is a doctrine to which none will ever submit until they see themselves as Simon Peter saw himself in the immediate presence of God. All who have ever been there will fully understand those self-condemning words, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." These were accents flowing from the depths of a truly penitent and contrite soul. There is what we may venture to call a lovely inconsistency in them. Simon had no such thought as that Jesus would depart from him. He had, we may feel assured, an instinctive sense that that blessed One who had spoken such words to him, and shown such grace, could not turn away from a poor broken-hearted sinner. And he judged rightly. Jesus had not come down from heaven to turn His back upon any one who needed Him.

"He came to seek and to save that which is lost." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Him that cometh unto Me, I will *in no wise* cast out." A Saviour-God had come down into this world, not, surely, to turn away from a lost sinner, but to save him and bless him, and make him a blessing. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

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

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

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

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

But, Christian reader, we have to distinguish between abandoning our lawful calling and breaking with the world. The former may be quite wrong; the latter is our bounden duty. We are called to rise up, in the spirit of the mind and in the firm purpose of the heart, out of all merely worldly influences, to break every worldly link, and lay aside every weight, in order to follow our blessed Lord and Master. We are to be absolutely and completely for Him in this world, as He is for us in the presence of God. When this is really the case with us, it matters not whether we are sweeping a crossing or evangelizing a continent. All is done to Him. This is the one grand point. If Christ has His due place in our hearts, all will be right. If He has not, nothing will be right. If there is any under current in the soul, any secondary object, any worldly motive, any selfish aim or end, there can be no progress. *We must make Christ and His cause our absorbing object.*

PART IV.

The more deeply we ponder the history of professing Christians, whether as furnished by the pen of inspiration, or as coming within the range of personal observation, the more fully we must see the vast

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

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

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

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

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

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

him than to the cold, correct, sleek professor, who thinks of himself, and seeks to make the best of both worlds.

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

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

How awful is this! And how remarkable to find it at the close of such an epistle as the first to the Corinthians! How forcibly it declares to all who will only bend their ears to listen, that love to Christ is the basis of all sound doctrine, the motive spring of all true morality! If that blessed One be not enthroned at the very centre of the heart's affections, an orthodox creed is an empty delusion; and an unblemished reputation is but dust cast in a man's eyes to prevent him seeing his true condition in the sight of God. The Christians at Corinth had fallen into many doctrinal errors and moral evils, all needing rebuke and correction; but when the inspiring Spirit pronounces His awful anathema, it is levelled, not at the introducers of any one special error, or moral pravity, but at "any man who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ."

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

How momentous, therefore, the question put by our Lord Christ to His disciples, "Whom do *men* say that I, the Son of man, am?" Alas, alas! "men" knew nothing, cared nothing about Him. They knew neither who He was, what He was, nor whence He was. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." In a word, there was endless speculation, because there was utter indifference and thorough heartlessness. The human heart has not so much as a single true thought about Christ, not one atom of affection for Him. Such is the awful condition of the very best of men until

renewed by divine grace. They know not, they love not, they care not for the Son of God—the Beloved of the Father's heart—the Man on the throne of heaven's majesty. Such is their moral condition, and hence their every thought, word, and act is contrary to God. They have not a single feeling in common with God, for the most distinct of all reasons, that the One who is everything to Him is nothing to them. Christ is God's standard, and every one and everything must be measured by Him. The heart that does not love Christ has not a single pulsation in unison with the heart of God; and the life that does not spring from love to Christ however blameless, respectable, or splendid in the eyes of men, is a worthless, objectless, misspent life in the judgment of God.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART V.

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

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

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

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

However, let it be distinctly understood that it is not by any means a personal question, or a comparison of people, but of dispensational position. If this be clearly seen, it will, we doubt not, remove out of the way a great deal of the difficulty which many pious people seem to feel in reference to the truth of the Church.

But above and beyond all this stands the question, What does Scripture teach on the subject? If any one had spoken to Abraham about being a member of the body of Christ, would he have understood it? Could that honored and beloved saint of God have had the most remote idea of being linked by an indwelling Spirit to a living Head in heaven? Utterly impossible. How could he be a member of a body which had no existence? And how could there be a body without a Head? And when do we first hear of the Head?

When the Man Christ Jesus, having passed through death and the grave, ascended into the heavens, and took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then, and not until then, did the Holy Ghost come down to form the Body, and link it by His presence to the glorified Head above.

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

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

Now, in the face of all this, how can any one seek to maintain that the truth of the Church was known in Old Testament times, and that there is no difference whatever between the position of a Christian and that of an Old Testament believer? The fact is that even Simon Peter himself found it extremely difficult to take in the idea of admitting the Gentiles into the Kingdom of Heaven. Though he was entrusted with the keys of that kingdom, he was very reluctant indeed to use them for the admission of the Gentiles. He had to be expressly taught by a heavenly vision, ere he was prepared to fulfil the commission with which he was charged by his Lord in Matthew xvi.

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

We can only reach the great mystery of the Church by walking over the broken-down middle wall of partition. "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh *by the blood of Christ*. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. ii. 11-18.)

Thus, from all that has passed before us, the reader will, we trust, fully see why it is that our Lord in His word to Simon Peter speaks of the Church as a future thing. "Upon this rock *I will build* my Church." He does not say, "I have been," or, "I am, building my Church." Nothing of the kind. It could not be. It was

still "hid in God." The Messiah had to be cut off and have nothing—nothing, for the present, as regards Israel and the earth. He must be rejected, crucified, and slain, in order to lay the foundation of the Church. It was utterly impossible that a single stone could be laid in this new, this wondrous building until "the chief Corner-stone" had passed through death and taken His place in the heavens. It was not in incarnation, but in resurrection, that our Lord Christ became Head of a body.

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

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

PART VI.

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

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

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

Thus it has been, thus it is, and thus it will be until that day in the which the despised Stranger of Nazareth shall reign from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth. We are ready enough to avail

ourselves of the benefits and blessings which *a loving Saviour* can bestow upon us, but when it becomes a question of following *a rejected Lord* along that rough and lonely path which He has trodden for us in this sinful world, we are disposed, like those of old, to go back, and walk no more with Him.

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

How deeply affecting! How it must have touched the hearts of all, save that one who had no heart for aught but money—who was "a thief" and "a devil!" Alas! alas! a moment was approaching when all were to forsake Him and fly—when He was to be left absolutely *alone*, forsaken of men, forsaken of God—utterly and awfully deserted.

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

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

And mark the singular fulness of Peter's confession. "Thou *hast* the words of eternal life;" and then, "Thou *art* that Christ, the Son of the living God." We have the two things, namely, what He *has*, and what He *is*. Blessed be His name, Christ has all we can possibly want for time and eternity. Words of eternal life flow from His lips into our hearts. He causes those who follow Him to "inherit substance." He bestows upon them "durable riches and righteousness." We may truly say that, in comparison of what Christ has to give, all the riches, honors, dignities, and pleasures of this world are but dross. They all pass away as the vapors of the morning, and leave only an aching void behind. Nothing that this world has to offer can possibly satisfy the cravings of the human soul. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." And not only so—it must be given up. If one had all the wealth of Solomon, it lasts but a moment in comparison with that boundless eternity which lies before every one of us. When death approaches, all the riches of the universe could not purchase one moment's respite. The last great enemy gives no quarter. He ruthlessly snaps the link that connects man with all that his poor heart prizes and loves upon earth, and hurries him away into eternity.

And what then? Yes, this is the question. Who can answer it? Who can attempt to picture the future of a soul that passes into eternity without God, without Christ, without hope? Who can describe the horrors of

one who, all in a moment, opens his eyes to the fact—the tremendous fact—that he is lost, lost forever—hopelessly, eternally, lost? It is positively too dreadful to dwell upon it. And yet it must be looked at; and if the reader is still of the world, still unconverted, careless, thoughtless, unbelieving, we would earnestly entreat of him now, just now, to give his earnest attention to the weighty and all-important question of his soul's salvation—a question, in comparison with which all other questions dwindle into utter insignificance. "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is, beyond all question, the most egregious folly that any one can be guilty of to put off the grand business of his soul's salvation.

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

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

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

PART VII.

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

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

All this is fully unfolded on the page of prophecy, and is of the deepest interest to every lover of God and His word; but for the present we can merely dwell upon the inspired record concerning Simon Peter, and seek to learn the lesson which that record so forcibly teaches. "And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

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

All this may be so; but we are free to confess that the zeal, energy and devotedness of this beloved servant of Christ have far more powerful charms for the heart than the cool, calculating, self-considering spirit which, in order to avoid the shame and humiliation of a defeat, refuses to take a bold and decided step for Christ. True it is that Peter in the interesting scene now before us completely broke down. But why did he? Was it because he left the ship? No; but because he ceased to look in simple faith to Jesus. Here lay the root of his failure. Had he only kept his eye on the Master, he could have walked on the water though ever so rough. Faith can walk on rough water as easily as on smooth. Nature cannot walk on either. It is not a question of the state of the water, but the state of the heart. Circumstances have nothing to do with faith, except, indeed, that when difficult and trying, they develop its power and brightness. There was no reason whatever, in the judgment of faith, why Peter should have failed in his walk on the water. Faith looks not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. "Faith is the evidence of things *not seen*." It lifts the heart above the winds and waves of this rough world, and keeps it in perfect peace, to the praise of Him who is the Giver of faith, as of "every good and perfect gift."

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

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

All this was proved by Simon Peter when he came down out of the ship to walk on the water; and every child of God and every servant of Christ must prove it in his measure, for Peter's history is full of great practical lessons for us all. If we want to walk above the circumstances of the scene through which we are passing—if we would rise superior to its influences—if we would be able to give an answer, clear,

distinct, and decided, to the skepticism, the rationalism and the infidelity of the day in which we live—then, assuredly, we must keep the eye of faith firmly fixed on "the Author and Perfecter of faith." It is not by logical skill or intellectual power we shall ever meet the arguments of the infidel, but by an abiding sense, a living and soul-satisfying apprehension, of the all-sufficiency of Christ—Himself—His work—His word—to meet our every need, our every exigence.

But it may be the reader feels disposed to condemn Peter for leaving the ship. He may think there was no need for his taking such a step. Why not abide with his brethren on board the vessel? Was it not possible to be quite as devoted to Christ in the ship as on the water? And, further, did not the sequel prove that it would have been far better, and safer, and wiser, for Peter to remain where he was, than to venture forth on a course which he was not able to pursue?

To all this we reply that our apostle was evidently governed by an earnest desire to be nearer to his Lord. And this was right. He saw Jesus walking on the water, and he longed to be with Him. And, further, he had the direct authority of his Lord for leaving the ship. We fully and freely grant that without this it would have been a fatal mistake to leave his position; but the moment that word "Come" fell on his ear he had a divine warrant for going forth upon the water—yea, to have remained would have been to miss great blessing.

Thus it is in every case. We must have authority before we can act in anything. Without this, the greater our zeal, energy, and apparent devotedness, the more fatal will be our mistake, and the more mischief we shall do to ourselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ. It is of the very last possible importance in every case, but especially where there is a measure of zeal, earnestness, and energy, that there should be sober subjection to the authority of the Word. If there be not this, there is no calculating the amount of mischief which may be done. If our devotedness flow not in the channel of simple obedience, if it rush over the embankments formed by the word of God, the consequences must be most disastrous.

But there is another thing which stands next in importance to the authority of the *divine Word*, and that is the abiding realization of the *divine presence*. These two things must never be separated if we want to walk on the water. We may be quite clear and settled in our own minds, having distinct authority for any given line of action; but if we have not with equal distinctness the sense of the Lord's presence with us—if our eyes are not continually on the living God—we shall most assuredly break down.

This is very serious, and demands the gravest consideration of the Christian reader. It was precisely here that Peter failed. He did not fail in obedience, but in realized dependence. He acted on the word of Jesus in leaving the ship, but he failed to lean on the arm of Jesus in walking on the water; hence his terror and confusion. Mere authority is not enough; we want power. To act without authority is wrong. To act without power is impossible. The authority for starting is the word. The power to proceed is the divine presence. The combination of the two must ever yield a successful career. It matters not in the smallest degree what the difficulties are if we have the stable authority of Holy Scripture for our course, and the blessed support of the presence of God in pursuing it. When God speaks, we must obey; but in order to do so, we must lean on His arm. "Have not I commanded you?" "Lo, I am with you."

Here are the two things so absolutely essential to every child of God and every servant of Christ. Without these, we can do nothing; with them, we can do all things. If we have not a "Thus saith the Lord," or "It is written," we cannot enter upon a path of devotedness; and if we have not His realized presence, we cannot pursue it. It is quite possible to be right in setting out, and yet to fail in going on.

It was so in the case of Simon Peter, and it has been so in the case of thousands since. It is one thing to

make a good start, and another thing to make good progress. It is one thing to leave the ship, and another thing to walk on the water. Peter did the former, but he failed in the latter. This beloved servant of Christ broke down in his course; but where did he find himself? In the arms of a loving Saviour. "Lord, save me!" How touching! How deeply affecting! He casts himself upon a well-known love—a love which was yet to meet him in far more humiliating circumstances. Nor was he disappointed. Ah, no! Blessed be God, no poor failing creature can ever appeal to that love in vain. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Exquisite grace! If Peter failed to reach his Lord, his Lord did not fail to reach him. If Peter failed in faith, Jesus could not fail in grace. Impossible. The grace of our Lord Jesus is exceeding abundant. He takes occasion from our very failures to display His rich and precious love. Oh, how blessed to have to do with such a tender, patient, loving Lord! Who would not trust Him and praise Him, love Him and serve Him?

PART VIII.

We have now to follow our beloved apostle into the darkest and most humbling scene in his entire history—a scene which we could hardly understand or account for if we did not know something of the infinite depths of divine grace on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the terrible depths into which even a saint of God or an apostle of Christ is capable of plunging if not kept by divine power.

It seems very wonderful to find on the page of inspiration the record of the fall of such an eminent servant of Christ as Simon Peter. We, in our wisdom, would judge it best to draw the curtain of silence over such an event. Not so the Holy Ghost. He has seen fit to tell us plainly of the errors, and failures, and sins, of such men as Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, and Paul, in order that we may learn holy lessons from such records—lessons of human frailty, lessons of divine grace, lessons full of solemn warning, and yet of most precious consolation and encouragement. We learn what we are, and we learn what God is. We learn that we cannot trust ourselves for a single moment; for, if not kept by grace, there is no depth of sin into which we are not capable of falling; but we learn to trust the eternal stability of that grace which has dealt with the erring ones and sinning ones of other days, and to lean with ever-growing confidence on the One who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Not one of the four evangelists omits the fall of Peter. Let us open at Matt. xxvi.; "And when they had sung a hymn they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended."

In these few words Peter lets out the real root of the whole matter. That root was self-confidence—alas! alas! no uncommon root amongst us. We do not in the least question Peter's sincerity. We feel perfectly sure he meant all he said; and, further, that he had not the most remote idea of what he was about to do. He was ignorant of himself, and we generally find that ignorance and self-confidence go together. Self-knowledge destroys self-confidence. The more fully self is known, the more it must be distrusted. If Peter had known himself, known his tendencies and capabilities, he never would have uttered the words which we have just penned. But so full was he of self-confidence, that when his Lord told him expressly what He was about to do, he replied, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee."

This is peculiarly solemn. It is full of instruction for us all. We are all so ignorant of our own hearts that we deem ourselves incapable of falling into certain gross sins. But we should, every one of us, bear in mind that if not kept each moment by the grace of God, we are capable of anything. We have materials in

us for any amount or character of evil; and whenever we hear any one saying, "Well, I certainly am a poor, failing, stumbling creature, but I am not capable of doing the like of that," we may feel assured he does not know his own heart; and not only so, but he is in imminent danger of falling into some grievous sin. It is well to walk humbly before our God, distrusting self, and leaning on Him. This is the true secret of moral safety at all times. Had Peter realized this, it would have saved him his terrible downfall.

But Peter was self-confident, and, as a consequence, he failed to watch and pray. This was another stage in his downward journey. Had he only felt his utter weakness, he would have sought for strength divine. He would have cast himself on God for grace to help in time of need. Look at the blessed Master! He, though God over all, blessed forever, yet being a Man, having taken the place of the creature, and fully entering into His position, was agonizing in prayer while Peter was fast asleep. Yes, Peter slept in the garden of Gethsemane while his Lord was passing through the deepest anguish He had yet tasted, though deeper still lay before Him. "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and *saith unto Peter*, What! could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

What tender grace! What readiness to make allowance! What moral elevation! And yet He felt the sad want of sympathy, the cold indifference to His sore agony. "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." How much is involved in these words! He looked for comforters. That perfect human heart craved sympathy; but, alas! there was none for Him. Even Peter, who declared himself ready to die with Him, fell asleep in view of the agonies of Gethsemane.

Such is man—yea, the very best of men! Self-confident, when he ought to be self-distrusting—sleeping, when he ought to be watching; and, we may add, fighting, when he ought to be submitting. "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus." How incongruous, how utterly out of place, was a sword in company with the meek and lowly Sufferer! "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Peter was entirely out of the current of his Master's spirit. He had not a thought in common with Him in reference to His path of suffering. He would fain defend Him with carnal weapons, forgetting that His kingdom was not of this world.

All this is peculiarly solemn. To find a dear and honored servant of Christ failing so grievously is surely sufficient to teach us to walk very softly. But, alas! we have not yet reached the lowest point in Peter's downward course. Having used his sword in defence of his Master, we next find him "following afar off." "Then took they Jesus, and led Him, and brought Him to the high priest's house. And *Peter followed afar off*. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, *Peter sat down among them*."

What company for an apostle of Christ! "Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? Can one walk on burning coals, and his feet not be burned?" It is terribly dangerous for the Christian to sit down among the enemies of Christ. The very fact of his doing so proves that decline has set in, and made serious progress. In Peter's case the stages of decline are strongly marked. First, boasting in his own strength; secondly, sleeping when he ought to have been praying; thirdly, drawing his sword when he ought to have been meekly bowing his head; fourthly, following afar off; fifthly, making himself comfortable in the midst of

the open enemies of Christ.

Then comes the last sad scene in this terrible drama. "And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, *I know not, neither understand I, what thou sayest.* And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. *And he denied it again.* And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But *he began to curse and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak.* And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept." (Mark xiv. 66-72.)

Luke adds a most touching clause: "*And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.* And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

How deeply affecting is all this! Only think of a saint of God, and an apostle of Christ, cursing and swearing that he did not know his Lord! Does the reader feel disposed to question the fact that Peter was, spite of all this, a genuine saint of God? Some do question it, but their questioning is a gross mistake. They find it hard to conceive such a thing as a true child of God falling so terribly. It is because they have not yet thoroughly learnt what flesh is. Peter was as really a saint of God in the palace of the high priest as he was on the mount of transfiguration. But he had to learn himself, and that, too, by as humiliating and painful a process as any soul could well be called to pass through. Doubtless, if any one had told Peter, a few days before, that he would ere long curse and swear that he did not know his Lord, he would have shrunk with horror from the thought. He might have said, like one of old, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Yet so it was. We know not what we may do until we are in the circumstances. The great thing for us all is to walk humbly with our God day by day, deeply sensible of our own utter weakness, and clinging to Him who is able to keep us from falling. We are safe only in the shelter of His presence. Left to ourselves, we are capable of anything, as our apostle found to his deep sorrow.

But the Lord was watching over His poor erring servant. He never lost sight of him for a single moment. He had His eye upon the whole process. The devil would have smashed the vessel in hopeless fragments if he could. But he could not. He was but an instrument in the divine hand to do a work for Peter which Peter had failed to do for himself. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted (or restored), strengthen thy brethren."

Here we are permitted to see the root of the matter. Peter needed to be sifted, and Satan was employed to do the work—just as in the case of Job, and the man in 1 Cor. v. It seems very wonderful, very mysterious, very solemn, that Satan should be so used. Yet so it is. God uses him "for the destruction of the flesh." He cannot touch the spirit. That is eternally safe. But it is terrible work to get into Satan's sieve. Peter found it so, and so did Job, and so did that erring Corinthian.

But oh, the *grace* of those words! "I have prayed for thee"—not that he might not fall, but, having fallen, that his faith might not fail, his confidence might not give way. Nothing can surpass the grace that shines out here. The blessed One knew all that was to happen—the shameful denial—the cursing and swearing; and yet, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not"—that thy confidence in the eternal stability of my grace may not give way.

Perfectly marvelous! And then, the *power* of that look! "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." It was this that broke Peter's heart, and drew forth a flood of bitter, penitential tears.

PART IX.

We are now called to consider the intensely interesting subject of Simon Peter's restoration, in which we shall find some points of the utmost practical importance. If in his fall we learn the frailty and folly of man, in his restoration we learn the grace, wisdom, and faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fall was, indeed, deep, terrible, and humiliating. The restoration was complete and marvelous. We may rest assured that Simon Peter will never forget either the one or the other; nay, he will remember them with wonder, love, and praise, throughout the countless ages of eternity. The grace that shines in Peter's restoration is the same which is displayed in his conversion. Let us glance at some of the salient points. It can be but the merest glance, as our space is limited. And first let us look at

THE PROCURING CAUSE.

This we have given us with peculiar force by the pen of the inspired evangelist Luke. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat." If Satan had been suffered to have his way, poor Simon would have been hopelessly ruined. But no; he was merely employed as an instrument, as he had been in Job's case, to do a needed work, and, when that work was done, he had to retire. He dare not go one hair's breadth beyond his appointed sphere. It is well to remember this. Satan is but a creature—crafty, wily, powerful, no doubt, but a creature who can only go as far as he is permitted by God. Had Peter walked softly, had he humbly and earnestly looked for divine help, had he been judging himself in secret, there would have been no need of Satan's sifting. Thanks be to God, Satan has no power whatever with a soul that walks humbly with God. There is perfect shelter, perfect safety, in the divine presence; and there is not an arrow in the enemy's quiver that can reach one who leans in simple confidence upon the arm of the living God. Here our apostle failed, and hence he had to pass through a very severe process indeed, in order that he might learn himself.

But, oh, the power and preciousness of those words, "*I have prayed for thee!*" Here assuredly lay the secret—here was the procuring cause of Simon's restoration. The prayer of Jesus sustained the soul of His erring servant in that terrible hour when the enemy would fain have crushed him to powder. What could Satan do in opposition to the all-powerful intercession of Christ? Nothing. That wonderful prayer was the ground of Peter's safety, when, to human view, all seemed hopelessly gone.

And for what did our Lord pray? Was it that Peter might not commit the awful sin of denying Him? Was it that he might not curse and swear? Clearly not. What then? "*I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.*"

Can aught exceed the grace that shines here? That gracious, loving, faithful Lord, in view of Peter's terrible sin—knowing all he was about to do, all the sad forgetfulness—could actually plead for him that, spite of all, his confidence might not give way—that he might not lose the sense of the eternal stability of that grace which had taken him up from the depth of his ruin and guilt.

Matchless grace! Nothing can surpass it in brightness and blessedness. Had it not been for this prayer, Peter's confidence must have given way. He never could have survived the awful struggle through which his soul passed when thinking of his dreadful sin. When he came to himself, when he reflected upon the whole scene, his expressions of devotedness, "Though all should deny Thee, yet will I never deny Thee"—"Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee"—"I am ready to go with Thee to prison

and to death"—to think of all these words, and yet that he should deny his beloved Lord with cursing and swearing, was overpowering.

It is a dreadful moment in the soul's history when one wakes up to the consciousness of having committed sin—sin against light, knowledge, and privilege—sin against divine grace and goodness. Satan is sure to be specially busy at such a crisis. He casts in the most terrible suggestions—raises all manner of questions—fills the heart with legal reasonings, doubts, and fears—causes the soul to totter on the foundation.

But, thanks and praise to our God, the enemy cannot prevail. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." The all-prevailing intercession of our divine Advocate sustains the faith so sorely tried, carries the soul through the deep and dark waters, restores the broken link of communion, heals the spiritual wounds, lifts up the fallen one, brings back the wanderer, and fills the heart with praise and thanksgiving. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." Here we have set before us in the most touching way *the procuring cause* of Simon Peter's restoration. We shall now look for a moment at

THE PRODUCING MEANS.

For this, too, we are indebted to the evangelist Luke. Indeed it is through him the inspiring Spirit has given us so much of what is exquisitely human—so much of what goes straight to our very hearts, in subduing power—so much of God coming out in loveliest human form.

We have already noticed Peter's gradual descent—his sad progress, from one stage to another, in moral distance and culpable decline—forgetting to watch and pray—following afar off—warming himself at the enemy's fire—the cowardly denial—the cursing and swearing. All this was down! down! down! shamefully and awfully down. But when the erring, straying, sinning one had reached the very lowest point, then comes out, with heavenly lustre, the grace that shines in the procuring cause and the producing means of his restoration. The former we have in Christ's *prayer*; the latter in Christ's *look*. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Yes, here it is; "The Lord *looked*"—"Peter remembered"—Peter wept—"wept bitterly." What a look! What a remembrance! What a weeping! What human heart can conceive, what tongue express, what pen portray, all that is wrapped up in that one look? We can well believe that it went right home to the very centre of Peter's soul. He will never forget that marvelous look, so full of mighty moral power—so penetrating—so melting—so soul-subduing.

"Peter went out, and wept bitterly." This was the turning point. Up to this all was darkly downward. Here divine light breaks in upon the deep moral gloom. Christ's most precious prayer is having its answer, His powerful look is doing its work. The fountain of the heart is broken up, and penitential tears flow copiously forth, demonstrating the depth, reality, and intensity of the work within.

Thus it must ever be, and thus it will ever be when the Spirit of God works in the soul. If we have sinned, we must be made to feel, to judge, and to confess our sin—to feel it deeply, judge it thoroughly, and confess it fully. It will not do merely to say, in levity, flippancy, or mere formality, "I have sinned." There must be reality, uprightness, and sincerity. God desires truth in the inward parts. There was nothing light, flippant, or formal about our beloved apostle in the hour of his fall and repentance. No, all was intensely real. It could not but be so with such a procuring cause, and such a producing means. The prayer and look

of Peter's Lord displayed their precious results in Peter's restoration.

Now the reader will do well to notice that the prayer and look of our Lord Jesus Christ set forth, in a very striking and beautiful manner, the two grand aspects of Christ's present ministry as our Advocate with the Father. We have the value and prevalency of His intercession, and the power and efficacy of His word in the hands of the Holy Ghost, that "other Advocate." Christ's *prayer* for Peter answers to His intercession for us. His *look* upon Peter answers to His word brought home to us in the power of the Holy Ghost. When we sin—as, alas! we do in thought and deed—our blessed and adorable Advocate speaks to God on our behalf. This is the procuring cause of our repentance and restoration. But He speaks to us on God's behalf. This is the producing means.

We shall not dwell upon the great subject of the advocacy here, having recently sought to unfold it in our papers on "The All-sufficiency of Christ." We shall close this paper with a brief reference to two or three of the moral features of Peter's restoration—features which, be it well remembered, must be looked for in every case of true restoration. In the first place there is

THE STATE OF THE CONSCIENCE.

Now, as to the full and complete restoration of Peter's conscience after his terrible fall, we have the most unquestionable evidence afforded in his after history. Take the touching scene at the sea of Tiberias, as given in John xxi.^[4] Look at that dear, earnest, thorough man, girding his fisher's coat around him, and plunging into the sea, in order to get to the feet of his risen Lord! He waits neither for the ship nor for his companions, but in all the lovely freshness and liberty of a divinely restored conscience, he rushes to his Saviour's feet. There is no tormenting fear, no legal bondage, no doubt, darkness, or distance. His conscience is perfectly at rest. The prayer and the look—the two grand departments of the work of advocacy—had proved effectual. Peter's conscience was all right, sound, and good; and hence he could find his home in the presence of his Lord—his holy, happy home.

Take another striking and beautiful evidence of a restored conscience. Look at Peter in Acts iii. There he stands in the presence of assembled thousands of Jews, and boldly charges them with having "denied the Holy One and the Just"—the very thing which he himself had done though under circumstances very different. How could Peter do this? How could he have the face to speak so? Why not leave it to James or John to prefer this heavy charge? The answer is blessedly simple. Peter's conscience was so thoroughly restored, so perfectly at rest, because perfectly purged, that he could fearlessly charge the house of Israel with the awful sin of denying the Holy One of God. Was this the fruit of moral insensibility? Nay, it was the fruit of divine restoration. Had any one of the congregation gathered in Solomon's porch undertaken to challenge our apostle as to his own shameful denial of his Lord, we can easily conceive his answer. The man who had "wept bitterly" over his sin would, we feel assured, know how to answer such a challenge. Not that his bitter weeping was the meritorious ground of his restoration; nothing of the kind, it only proved the reality of the work of repentance in his soul. Moral insensibility is one thing, and a restored conscience, resting on the blood and advocacy of Christ, is quite another.

But there is another thing involved in a true work of restoration, and that is

THE STATE OF THE HEART.

This is of the very utmost importance in every instance. No restoration can be considered divinely

complete which does not reach the very depths of the heart. And hence, when we turn back to the scenes on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, we find the Lord dealing very closely and very powerfully with the state of Peter's heart. We cannot attempt to expatiate, much as we should like to do so, on one of the most affecting interviews in the entire volume of God. We can do little more than quote the inspired record, but that is quite enough.

It is deeply interesting to notice that there is no allusion—not the most remote—to past scenes, during that wonderful dinner, provided, cooked, and dispensed by the risen Lord! But "when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" Here Simon is recalled by the words of his faithful Lord to his self-confident profession. He had said, "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I." Then the searching question, three times repeated, evidently calls back the threefold denial.

Peter's *heart* is touched—the moral *root* of the whole matter is reached. This was absolutely necessary in Peter's case, and it is absolutely necessary in every case. The work of restoration can never be thorough unless the roots of things are reached and judged. Mere surface work will never do. It is of no use to crop the sprouts; we must get down to the depths, the hidden springs, the moral sources, and judge them in the very light of the divine presence.

This is the true secret of all genuine restoration. Let us ponder it deeply. We may rest assured it demands our most solemn consideration. We are all too apt to rest satisfied with cropping off the sprouts that appear above the surface of our practical daily life, without getting at the roots; and the sad consequence is that the sprouts quickly appear again, to our sorrow and shame, and the dishonor of our Lord's name. The work of self-judgment must be more profound if we would really make progress. We are terribly shallow, light, and flippant. We greatly lack depth, seriousness, and moral gravity. We want more of that heart-work which was wrought in Simon the son of Jonas on the shore of the sea of Tiberias. "Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me?" The knife of the divine Operator had reached the root of the moral disease, and that was enough. It was needful, but it was enough; and the grieved and self-judged Simon Peter has only to fall back upon the great fact that his Lord knew all things. "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." It is as though he had said, "Lord, it demands the eye of Omniscience itself to discern in the heart of the poor erring one a single spark of affection for Thee."

Reader, this truly is real work. We have before us a thoroughly restored soul—restored in conscience, restored in heart. And if it be asked, "What remains?" the answer is, We see a servant

RESTORED TO HIS WORK.

Some would tell us that if a man falls, he can never recover his position; and no doubt, under *government*, we must reap as we sow. But *grace* is another thing altogether. Government drove Adam out of Eden, and never replaced him there, but grace announced the victorious Seed of the woman. Government kept Moses out of Canaan, but grace conducted him to Pisgah's top. Government sent a perpetual sword upon David's house, but grace made the son of Bathsheba the wisest and wealthiest of Israel's kings.

This distinction must never be lost sight of. To confound grace and government is to commit a very grave mistake indeed. We cannot attempt to enter upon this weighty subject here, having done so in one of our earlier volumes. But let the reader seek to understand it, and bear it ever in mind.

As to Simon Peter, we not only see him restored to the work to which he was called at the first, but to something even higher. "Feed My lambs—shepherd My sheep"—is the new commission given to the man

who had denied his Lord with an oath. Is not this something beyond "catching men?" "When thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." Can anything in the way of service be more elevated than shepherding sheep, feeding lambs, and strengthening brethren? There is nothing in all this world nearer or dearer to the heart of Christ than His sheep, His lambs, His brethren: and hence He could not have given Simon Peter a more affecting proof of His confidence than by committing to his care the dearest objects of His deep and tender love.

And then mark the closing words, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast *young*, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be *old*, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, FOLLOW ME."

What weighty words are these! Who can tell their depth, power, and significance? What a contrast between Simon, "*young*," restless, forward, blundering, boastful, self-confident; and Peter, "*old*," subdued, mellowed, passive, crucified! What a difference between a man walking whither he would, and a man following a rejected Lord along the dark and narrow pathway of the cross, home to glory!

CONCLUSION.

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

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

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

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

Who could more distinctly and emphatically utter such precious words than the erring, restored and forgiven Peter? If any one of his audience had ventured to remind the preacher of his own history, what

would he have said in reply? Doubtless he would have had little to say about himself, but much, very much, to say about that rich and precious grace which had triumphed over all his sin and failure—much, very much, about that precious blood which had canceled forever all his guilt, and given perfect peace to his conscience—much, very much, about that all-prevailing advocacy to which he owed his full and perfect restoration.

Peter was just the man to unfold to others those glorious themes in which he had so thoroughly learnt to find his strength, his comfort, and his joy. He had proved in no ordinary way the reality and stability of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was no mere empty theory, no mere doctrine or opinion, with him. It was all intensely real to him. His very life and salvation were bound up in it. He knew the heart of Christ in a very intimate way. He knew its infinite tenderness and compassion, its unswerving devotedness in the face of many stumbles, shortcomings, and sins; and hence he could bear the most distinct and powerful testimony to the whole house of Israel to the power of the name of Jesus, the efficacy of His blood, and the deep and infinite love of His heart. "His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him *this perfect soundness* in the presence of you all."

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

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

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

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

Having charged home their terrible sin upon the consciences of his hearers, he proceeds to apply the healing, soothing balm of the gospel, in words of marvelous power and sweetness: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets that Christ should suffer, *He hath so fulfilled.*" Nothing can exceed the grace of this. It recalls the words of Joseph to his troubled brethren: "It was not you that sent me hither, but God." Such is the exquisite grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, such the infinite love and goodness of our God.

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

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

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

But enough of this. All intelligent Christians understand that the apostle Peter was commissioned, by his Lord and ours, to open the kingdom of heaven to both Jew and Gentile. To him were committed the keys, not of the Church, nor yet of heaven, but of "the kingdom of heaven;" and we find him using them in Acts iii. and x.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How those words of the apostle of the circumcision must have refreshed and delighted the heart of Paul as he sat at this never-to-be-forgotten meeting! Not that Paul sought in any way the countenance, the support, or authority of man. He had received his gospel and his commission, not from Peter, but from Peter's Lord; and from Him, too, not as the Messiah on earth, but as the risen and glorified Son of God in heaven. Still, we cannot doubt that the testimony of his beloved fellow-laborer was deeply interesting and cordially welcome to the apostle of the Gentiles. We can only say, Alas! alas! that there should have been aught in the after-course of that fellow-laborer in the smallest degree inconsistent with his splendid testimony at the conference. Alas! that Peter's conduct at Antioch should vary so much from his words at

Jerusalem. See Gal. ii.

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

"O Lamb of God, still keep me close to Thy pierced side;
'Tis only there in safety and peace I can abide.
When foes and snares surround me, when lusts and fears within,
The grace that sought and found me, alone can keep me clean."

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

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION:

WHAT IS IT?

There are few thoughtful students of the New Testament who have not, at some time or another, felt a little perplexed as to the real force and application of the word "perfect," which is of frequent occurrence. This word is used in such a variety of connections that it is deeply important we should be clear as to what the Holy Ghost means by it in each particular case. We believe the context will, generally speaking, guide us to a right understanding of the just sense and application of the word in any given passage. We are aware that the subject of "Christian Perfection" has given rise to much theological strife and controversy; but we must at the outset assure our readers that it is not by any means our intention to take up the question in a controversial way; we shall merely seek to bring under their notice the various passages in the New Testament in which the word "perfect" occurs, or at least some of the leading instances of its use, trusting the Lord to use what He may give us to write, for the glory of His name and the profit of those precious souls for whom we ever desire to write. We shall not trace the word in the order in which it occurs, but rather in that order which the real need of the soul would naturally suggest. In this way we shall find that the first great aspect of Christian perfection is presented to us in the ninth verse of the ninth chapter of Hebrews, and may be denominated

PERFECTION AS TO THE STATE OF THE CONSCIENCE.

"Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service *perfect* (τελειωσαι) as pertaining to the conscience." The apostle, in this passage, is drawing a contrast between the sacrifices under the Mosaic economy, and the sacrifice of Christ. The former could never give a perfect conscience, simply because they were imperfect in themselves. It was impossible that the blood of a bullock or of a goat could ever give a perfect conscience. Hence, therefore, the conscience of a Jewish worshiper was never perfect. He had not, if we may use the expression, reached his moral end as to the condition of his conscience. He could never say that his conscience was perfectly purged, because he had not yet reached a perfect sacrifice.

With the Christian worshiper, however, it is different. He has, blessed be God, reached his moral end. He has arrived at a point, so far as the state of his conscience is concerned, beyond which it is utterly impossible for him to go. He cannot get beyond the blood of Jesus Christ. He is perfect as to his conscience. As is the sacrifice, so is the conscience that rests thereon. If the sacrifice is imperfect, so is the conscience. They stand or fall together. Nothing can be simpler, nothing more solid, nothing more consolatory, for any awakened conscience. It is not at all a question of what I am; *that* has been fully and forever settled. I have been found out, judged, and condemned in myself. "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good." I have got to the end of myself, and there I have reached the blood of Christ. I want no more. What could be added to that most precious blood? Nothing. I am perfect, as to the state of my conscience. I do not want an ordinance, a sacrament, or a ceremony, to perfect the condition of my conscience. To say so, to think so, would be to cast dishonor upon the sacrifice of the Son of God.

The reader will do well to get a clear and firm hold of this foundation-point. If there be any darkness or uncertainty as to this, he will be wholly unable to understand or appreciate the various aspects of "Christian Perfection" which are yet to pass in review before us. It is quite possible that many pious

people fail to enjoy the unspeakable blessing of a perfect conscience by reason of self-occupation. They look in at self, and not finding aught there to rest upon—who ever did?—they deem it presumption to think of being perfect in any respect whatever. This is a mistake. It may be a pious mistake, but it is a mistake. Were we to speak of perfection in the flesh (what many, alas, are vainly aiming at), then, verily, true piety might recoil with just horror from the presumptuous and silly chimera. But, thank God, our theme is not perfection in the flesh, through any process of improvement, moral, social, or religious. This would be poor, dreary, depressing work indeed. It would be setting us to look for perfection in the old creation, where sin and death reign. To look for perfection amid the dust of the old creation were a hopeless task. And yet how many are thus engaged! They are seeking to *improve man and mend the world*; and yet, with all this, they have never reached, never understood—yea, they actually deny—the very first and simplest aspect of Christian perfection, namely, perfection as to the state of the conscience in the presence of God.

This latter is our thesis, and we want the anxious reader to understand it in its simplicity, in order that he may see the solid foundation of his peace laid down by the very hand of God Himself. We want him, ere he lays aside this paper, to enter into the joyful sense of sins perfectly forgiven, and his conscience perfectly purged by the blood of Jesus. The entire matter hinges upon the question of the sacrifice. What has God found in that sacrifice? Perfection. Well, then, that perfection is for you, anxious one, and you should at once and forever enjoy it. Remember, it is not a question as to what you are, nor yet as to what you think about the blood of Christ. No, dear friend: the question is, What does God think about the blood of His own Son? This makes all so clear. Say, is it clear to you? Can you now rest in it? Is your conscience set free by being brought in contact with a perfect sacrifice? Oh that it may be so! May God's Spirit now show you the fulness and perfectness of Christ's atoning work with such clearness, vividness and power that your whole being may be emancipated, and your heart filled with praise and thanksgiving!

It makes the heart bleed to think of the thousands of precious souls kept in darkness and bondage when they ought to be walking in the light and liberty which flow from a perfectly purged conscience. So many things are mixed up with the simple testimony of the Word and Spirit of God as to the value of Christ's work that it is wholly impossible for the heart to get liberated. You will get a little bit of Christ, and a little bit of self; a little bit of grace, and a little bit of law; a little bit of faith, and a little bit of works. Thus the soul is kept hovering between confidence and doubt, hope and fear, just as one or other of the ingredients predominates in the mixture, or happens to be tasted at the moment. How rare is the gem of full, free, present, and eternal salvation! We would fain cause that gem to sparkle in all its divine and heavenly lustre under the gaze of the reader at this moment. Then shall the chains of his spiritual bondage drop off. If the Son shall make him free he shall be free indeed, and thus be able to rise in the power of this freedom and trample the legal system beneath his feet.

The more we ponder the question now before us—and we have pondered it a good deal—the more we are convinced that the true secret of all the error, confusion and perplexity in which so many are involved in reference to it will be found in the fact that they do not clearly understand death and resurrection—the new birth—the new creation. Were this grand truth only laid hold of in power it would make all clear as to the state of the conscience. So long as I am seeking to tranquilize my conscience by efforts after self-improvement, so long I must be either miserable or self-deceived. It does not matter in the least what means I adopt in carrying on the process; the issue must be one and the same. If I attempt to take up the profession of Christianity for the purpose of bettering *self*—improving nature or mending my condition in the old creation—I must be a total stranger to the bliss of a perfect conscience. "All flesh is as grass." The old creation lies under the withering influences of sin and its curse. A risen Christ is the Head of the new creation—"the beginning of the creation of God"—"the first-begotten from among the dead" (ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν).

Here in very deed is perfection for the conscience. What more do I want? I see the One who hung upon the cross, charged with the full weight of all my sins, now crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of God, amid the full blaze of heaven's majesty. What can be added to this? Do I want ordinances, rites, ceremonies, or sacraments? Surely not. I dare not add aught to the death and resurrection of the eternal Son of God. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper symbolize and celebrate that grand reality; and, so far, they are precious to the Christian—most precious. But when, instead of being used to symbolize and celebrate death and resurrection, they are used to displace it,—used as patches upon the old creation, as crutches for the old man,—they must be regarded as a snare, a curse, from which may the Lord deliver the souls of His people!

We would fain dwell upon this our first point because of its immense importance in this day of ordinances, traditionary religion, and self-improvement. We should like to ponder it—to elaborate, illustrate and enforce it—in order that the reader may get a clear, full, bold grasp of it. But we look to God the Holy Ghost to do His own work in this matter; and if He will graciously bring the heart under the power of the truth which has been so feebly unfolded, then indeed will there be both ability and leisure to look at the second great aspect of Christian perfection, namely,

PERFECTION AS TO THE OBJECT OF THE HEART.

Here, again, we are ushered into the new creation. Christ died to give me a perfect conscience. He lives to give me a perfect object. But it is very clear that until I have tasted the deep blessedness of the former, I can never be properly occupied with the latter. I must have a perfect conscience ere my heart can be at leisure to go out after the person of Christ. How few of us really taste the sweetness of communion with a risen Christ! How little do any of us know of that fixedness of heart upon Him as our one paramount, engrossing, undivided object! We are occupied with our own things. The world creeps in, in one way or another; we live in the region of nature; we breathe the atmosphere—the dark, heavy, murky atmosphere—of the old creation; self is indulged; and thus our spiritual vision becomes dimmed, we lose our sense of peace, the soul becomes disturbed, the heart unhinged, the Holy Ghost grieved, the conscience exercised. Then the eye is turned in upon self and back upon its actings. The time that else might be spent in holy and happy occupation with our Object is, and must be, devoted to the business of self-judgment—heavy, but needed work!—in order to get back into the enjoyment of what we should never have lost, even a perfect conscience.

Now, the moment the eye is turned off from Christ darkness must set in—ofttimes darkness that may be felt. It is only as the eye is single that the body is full of light. And what, beloved reader, is a single eye but having Christ for our one object? It is thus that light divine pours in upon us, until every chamber of our moral being becomes lighted up, and we become lights for others, "as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." In this way the soul is kept happily free from obscurity, perplexity, and anxiety. It finds all its springs in Christ. It is independent of the world, and can move on, singing—

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

It is impossible for words to convey the power and blessedness of having Jesus ever before the heart as an object. It is perfection, as we have it in Philippians iii. 15, where the apostle says, "Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect* (τελειοι), be thus minded: and if in anything ye be differently minded (ετερως), God

shall reveal even this unto you." When Christ stands before the heart as our absorbing and satisfying object, we have reached our moral end so far as an object is concerned; for how can we ever get beyond the person of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Impossible. We cannot get beyond the blood of Christ, for the conscience; neither can we get beyond the person of Christ, for the heart; we have therefore reached our moral end in both; we have perfection as to the state of the conscience, and as to the object of the heart.

Here, then, we have both peace and power—peace for the conscience, and power over the affections. It is when the conscience finds sweet repose in the blood that the emancipated affections can go forth and find their full play around the person of Jesus. And oh, what tongue can tell, what pen unfold, the mighty moral results of gazing upon Christ? "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Observe, "*Beholding ... are changed.*" There is no legal bondage—no restless effort—no anxious toiling. We gaze, and gaze, and—what then? Continue to gaze, and as we gaze we become morally assimilated to the blessed Object, through the transforming power of the Holy Ghost. The image of Christ is engraved upon the heart, and reflected back in ten thousand ways in our practical career, from day to day.

Reader, remember, this is the only true idea of Christianity. It is one thing to be a religious man, it is quite another to be a Christian. Paul was a religious man before his conversion; but he was a Christian afterwards. It is well to see this. There is plenty of religion in the world, but, alas, how little Christianity! And why? Simply because Christ is not known, not loved, not cared for, not sought after. And even where His work is looked to for salvation—where His blood is trusted for pardon and peace—how little is known or thought of Himself! We are ready enough to take salvation through the death of Jesus, but oh, beloved reader, how far off do we keep from His blessed Person! How little does He get His true place in our hearts! This is a serious loss. Indeed, we cannot but believe that the pale, flickering light of modern profession is the fruit of habitual distance from Christ, the central sun of Christianity. How can there possibly be light, heat, or fruitfulness, if we wander amid the gloomy vaults and dark tunnels of this world's pleasures, its politics, or its religion? It is vain to expect it. And even where we make salvation our object—when we are occupied with our spiritual condition, feeding upon our experiences and looking after our frames and feelings—we must become weak and low, inasmuch as these things are certainly not Christ.

There are many who, as we say, have retired from the world, have given up its balls, its parties, its theatres, its exhibitions, its concerts, its flower shows, its numberless and nameless vanities, who, nevertheless, have not found their object in a risen and glorified Christ. They have retired from the world, but have gone in upon themselves. They are seeking an object *in their religion*; they are engrossed with forms of pietism; they are feeding upon the workings of a morbid conscience or a superstitious mind; or they are trafficking in the experience of yesterday. Now, these persons are just as far from happiness—as far from the true idea of Christianity, as the poor pleasure-hunters of this world. It is quite possible to give up pleasure-hunting and become a religious mope—a morbid, melancholy mystic—a spiritual hypochondriac. What do I gain by the change? Nothing; unless, indeed, it be a vast amount of self-deception. I have retired from the world around, to find an object in the world within—a poor exchange!

How different is this from the true Christian! There he stands, with a tranquilized conscience and an emancipated heart, gazing upon an Object that absorbs his whole soul. He wants no more. Talk to him about this world's pleasure? Ask him, has he been to this or that Exhibition? What is his calm and dignified reply? Will he merely tell you of the sin, the harm, of such things? Nay; what then? "I have found my *all* in Christ. I have reached my moral end. I want no more." This is the Christian's reply. It is a poor

affair when we come to talk of the harm of this or that. It often happens that persons who speak thus are occupied, not with Christ, but with their own reputation, their character, their consistency with themselves. Of what use is all this? Is it not self-occupation, after all? What we want is to keep the eye fixed on Christ; then the heart will follow the eye, and the feet will follow the heart. In this way our path will be as the shining light, shining more and more until it becomes lost in the blaze of the perfect and everlasting day of glory.

May God, in His infinite mercy, grant to the writer and reader of these pages to know more of what it is to have reached our moral end, both as to the state of the conscience and as to the object of the heart!

In considering the subject of Christian perfection, it might seem sufficient to say that the believer is perfect in a risen Christ: "Complete in Him which is the head of all principality and power." This, surely, comprehends everything. Nothing can be added to the completeness which we have in Christ. All this is blessedly true; but does it not still hold good that the inspired writers use the word "perfect" in various ways? And is it not important that we should understand the sense in which the word is used? This, we presume, will hardly be questioned. We cannot suppose for a moment that any thoughtful reader of Scripture would be satisfied to dismiss the matter without prayerfully seeking to understand the exact force and just application of the word in each particular passage in which it occurs. It is plain that the word "perfect" in Heb. ix. 9 is not applied in the same way as it is in Phil. iii. 15. And is it not right—is it not profitable—is it not due to our own souls and to the sacred volume—to seek, through grace, to understand the difference? For our part, we cannot question it; and in this confidence we can happily pursue our examination of the subject of Christian perfection by calling the reader's attention, in the third place, to

PERFECTION IN THE PRINCIPLE OF OUR WALK.

This is unfolded to us in Matt. v. 48: "Be ye therefore perfect (τελειοι), even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "How," it may be asked, "can we be perfect as our Father which is in heaven? How can we reach to such an elevated point as this? How can we attain to so lofty a standard? We can understand our being perfect as to the conscience, inasmuch as this perfection is based upon what Christ has done for us. And we can also understand our being perfect as to the object of the heart, inasmuch as this perfection is based upon what Christ is to us. But to be perfect as our Father in heaven seems entirely beyond us." To all this it may be said that our blessed Lord does not ask us to do impossibilities. He never issues a command without furnishing the needed grace to carry it out. Hence, therefore, when He calls upon us to be perfect as our Father, it is plain that He confers upon us a holy privilege, that He invests us with a high dignity, and it is our place to seek to understand and appropriate both the one and the other.

What, then, is meant by our being perfect as our Father in heaven? The context of Matt. v. 48 furnishes the answer: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that (οπως) ye may be the sons (υιοι) of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is

perfect."

Here we have a lovely phase of Christian perfection, namely, perfection in the principle of our walk. We are called to walk in grace toward all, and in so doing to be imitators of God as dear children. Our Father sends His sunshine and His showers even upon His enemies. He deals in grace with all. This is our model. Are we formed upon it? Reader, search and see. Are you perfect in the principle of your walk? Are you dealing in grace with your enemies and those who are in your debt? Are you demanding your rights? Are you, in principle, taking your fellow by the throat, and saying, "Pay me that thou owest?" If so, you are not "perfect as your Father." He is dealing in grace, and you are dealing in righteousness. Were He to act as you are acting, the day of grace would close, and the day of vengeance open. Had He dealt with you as you are now dealing with others, you should long since have been in that place where hope is unknown.

Let us ponder this. Let us see to it that we are not misrepresenting our heavenly Father. Let us aim at perfection in the principle of our daily walk. It will cost us something. It may empty the purse, but it will fill the heart; it may contract our pecuniary resources, but it will enlarge our spiritual circle. It will bring us into closer contact and deeper fellowship with our heavenly Father. Is not this worth something? Truly it is. Would that we felt its worth more deeply! Would that we felt more of the dignity conferred upon us in our being called to represent, in this evil, selfish, dark world, our heavenly Father, who pours in rich profusion His blessings upon the unthankful and the unholy. There is no use in preaching grace if we do not act it. It is of little avail to speak of God's dealing in long-suffering mercy if we are dealing in high-handed justice.

But, it may be said by some, "How ever could we carry out such a principle? We should be robbed and ruined. How could business be carried on if we are not to enforce our rights? We should be imposed upon and plundered by the unprincipled and the designing." This is not the mode in which to arrive at a just conclusion on our point. An obedient disciple never says, "How?" The question is, "Does the Lord Jesus call upon me to be perfect as my Father in heaven is perfect?" Assuredly. Well, then, am I aiming at this when I summon my fellow-creature to a bar of justice? Is this like my Father? Is this what He is doing? No; blessed be His name! He is on a throne of grace. He is reconciling the world. He is not imputing trespasses. This is plain enough. It only needs full subjection of heart. Let us bow our souls beneath the weight of this most glorious truth. May we gaze upon this most lovely aspect of Christian perfection, and seek to aim at the attainment of it. If we pause to reason about results, we shall never reach the truth. What we want is, that moral condition of soul that fully owns the power and authority of the Word. Then, though there may be failure in detail, we have always a touchstone by which to test our ways, and a standard to which to recall the heart and conscience. But if we reason and argue—if we deny that it is our privilege to be perfect in the sense of Matt. v. 48—if we justify our going to *law* when our Father is not going to law, but acting in the most unqualified *grace*, we deprive ourselves of that perfect model on which our character and ways should ever be formed.

May God the Holy Spirit enable us to understand, to submit to, and carry out in practical life, this perfect principle! It is most lamentable to see the children of God adopting in daily life a course of acting the direct opposite of that adopted by their heavenly Father. We ought to remember that we are called to be His moral representatives. We are His children by spiritual regeneration, but we are called to be His sons in moral assimilation to His character and practical conformity to His ways. "Do good to them that hate you ... *that ye may be* the sons of your Father which is in heaven." Striking words! In order to our being morally and characteristically the sons of God, we are called to do good to our enemies. This is what He does, and we are called to be like Him. Alas, how little we enter into this! How unlike we are! Oh for a

more faithful representation!

Time and space would fail us to dwell, as we should like to do, upon this deeply practical part of our subject; we must therefore pass on, in the fourth place, to the consideration of

PERFECTION IN THE CHARACTER OF OUR SERVICE.

"I have not found thy works perfect (πεπληρωμένα) before God" (Rev. iii. 2). The English reader should be informed that the word here rendered "perfect" is not the same as that used in the three passages already referred to. It is usually translated πεπληρωμένα "fulfilled"—"finished"—"accomplished." Its use in reference to the works of the Church of Sardis teaches us a deeply solemn and heart-searching lesson. There was a name to live; but the works were not fulfilled under the immediate eye of God. There is nothing more dangerous to a Christian than to have "*a name*." It is a positive snare of the devil. Many a professor has fallen by means of being occupied with a name. Many a useful servant has been destroyed by the effort to keep up a name. If I have gotten a reputation in any department of service—as an active evangelist—a gifted teacher—a clear and attractive writer—a man of prayer—a man of faith—a person of remarkable sanctity, or great personal devotedness—a benevolent person—a name for anything, in short—I am in imminent danger of making shipwreck. The enemy will lead me to make my reputation my object instead of Christ. I shall be working to keep up a name instead of the glory of Christ. I shall be occupied with the thoughts of men instead of doing all my work under the immediate eye of God.

All this demands intense watchfulness and rigid censorship over myself. I may be doing the most excellent works, but if they are not fulfilled in the presence of God they will prove a positive snare of the devil. I may preach the gospel—visit the sick—help the poor—go through the entire range of religious activity—and never be in the presence of God at all. I may do it for a name—do it because others do it, or expect me to do it. This is very serious, beloved reader. It demands real prayer—self-emptiness—nearness to and dependence upon God—singleness of eye—holy consecration to Christ. Self continually intrudes upon us. Oh this self, self, self, even in the very holiest things; and all the while we may appear to be very active and very devoted. Miserable delusion! We know of nothing more terrible than to have a religious name without spiritual life, without Christ, without a sense of God's presence possessing the soul.

Reader, let us look closely into this. Let us see that we begin, continue, and end our work under the Master's eye. This will impart a purity and a moral elevation to our service beyond all price. It will not cripple our energy, but it will tend to raise and intensify our action. It will not clip our wings, but it will guide our movements. It will render us independent of the thoughts of men, and fully deliver us from the slavery of seeking to maintain a name, or keep up a reputation—miserable, degrading bondage! May the good Lord grant us full deliverance from it! May He give us grace to fulfil our works, whatever they may be, few or many, small or great, in His own blessed presence!

Having said thus much in reference to the *character* of our service, we shall close with a few lines on

PERFECTION IN OUR EQUIPMENT FOR SERVICE.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be *perfect* (αρτιος) thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). Here, again, we have a different word, and one which only occurs in this one place in the entire New Testament. It is most expressive. It signifies *present readiness* for any exigence. The man who is acquainted with, and subject to the word of God, is ready for every emergency.

He has no need to go and cram for an occasion—to consult his authorities—to make himself up on a point. He is *ready now*. If an anxious inquirer comes, he is ready; if a curious inquirer comes, he is ready; if a skeptic comes, he is ready; if an infidel comes, he is ready. In a word, he is always ready. He is perfectly equipped for every occasion.

The Lord be praised for all these aspects of Christian perfection! What more do we want? Perfection as to the conscience; perfection in object; perfection in walk; perfection in the character of service; perfection in our equipment. What remains? What wait we for? Just this—perfection in glory—perfect conformity in spirit, and soul, and body, to the image of our glorified Head in heaven!

May the Lord so work on our hearts by His Spirit, producing that which is well-pleasing in His sight, that we may stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God!"

C. H. M.

THE TRIBE OF LEVI ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THEIR FAMILIES.

First Class.

GERSHON,	meaning,	<i>A stranger, or exile.</i>
LAEL	"	<i>Dedicated, or belonging to God.</i>
ELIASAPH	"	<i>God hath added.</i>
SHIMEI	"	<i>Renowned.</i>
LIBNI	"	<i>White.</i>

Second Class.

KOHATH	"	<i>Assembly.</i>
HEBRON	"	<i>Association, communion.</i>
AMRAM	"	<i>Exalted people, or of the exalted One.</i>
IZHAR	"	<i>Oil.</i>
UZZIEL	"	<i>The strength of God.</i>

Third Class.

MERARI	"	<i>Bitter.</i>
MAHLI	"	<i>Sick, sickly.</i>
MUSHI	"	<i>Yielding, forsaking.</i>
ABIHAIL	"	<i>Father of strength.</i>
ZURIEL	"	<i>My rock is God.</i>

THE HISTORY OF THE TRIBE OF LEVI CONSIDERED

There are few exercises more profitable for the Christian than that of reflecting upon the character of God as unfolded in the history of the saints and fathers of ancient times recorded in the scriptures of the Old Testament: and indeed this might be expected from the very nature of the subject, which is such that, whatever be its extent, it unfolds principles to us which stand intimately connected with all that is important for us to know or be established in. Thus, whether we get the dealings of God on a limited scale, as with any one of the fathers *personally*, or more widely extended, as with the seed of Israel afterwards, it is nevertheless the same lesson we are called upon to learn, namely, *God and man*. Now, this is what should enhance exceedingly the value of the Old Testament to the Christian; almost the great body of its teaching is of the above character: and not only so, but it also (as looked at in this point of view) guards effectually against the mere exercise of imagination; for when we consider the history of any man or people, it is not necessary that we should decide positively what is *shadowed out* therein,^[5] it is enough for us to see that we have before us a more or less extensive development of the character and actings of God and man; and this, without ever descending beneath the surface of Scripture, cannot fail of being instructive and edifying to the soul.

But, of all the histories of the Old Testament embodying instruction of the above character, I believe there are few more copious, deep and varied than that which is about to engage our attention. If the narrative of a soul taken up by sovereign and eternal grace from the pit of corruption and deep depravity, carried through the various stages which grace and truth had enacted for sinful man, until at last he is set down in the very sanctuary of God and established in the enjoyment of the covenant of life and peace forever; if, I say, such a narrative would possess charms and present attractions to us, then does the history of Levi abound in this. It is only a matter of astonishment that a history fraught with such rich and varied instruction has not occupied more of the thoughts of those luminaries of the Church whose writings have been a source of comfort and instruction to all who have been taught to value the truth of God.

Yet, much as I see in the history of Levi, and much as I admire what I do see, I could not think of directing the reader's thoughts to the subject without informing him that I purpose doing little more than to bring before his mind in a connected way the various scriptures which treat of this most interesting question; however, these scriptures are so plain and striking that no one who is at all familiar with Scripture truths can fail to enter into them. Now, as I purpose, with the Lord's blessing and grace, to follow the history of Levi through all the scriptures in which it is brought before us, I will commence with

HIS BIRTH,

As recorded in GENESIS xxix. 34.

"And she (Leah) conceived again, and bare a son: and said, Now this time will my husband be *joined* unto me, because I have borne him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi" (that is, 'joined;' see margin).

Here, then, we are presented with the birth and name of this most remarkable character—a name of wondrous significance as looked at in connection with his after history, whether in nature's wild and lawless extravagance, in which we find him "*joined*" with his brother in the perpetration of a deed of blood and murder (Gen. xxxiv.), or in the day when he was called to drink deeply and largely of the cup of God's electing grace, when "*joined*" with Aaron in "the work of the tabernacle" (Num. viii.).

GENESIS xxxiv. 25, 26.

"And it came to pass on *the third day*, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went out."

As the Spirit of God in Jacob has furnished us with a striking commentary on the above piece of cruelty, we will consider the scripture in which the commentary is given, namely:

GENESIS xlix. 5-7.

"Simeon and Levi *are brethren*; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, *come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united*: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel; *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*"

We have here a truly humbling view of human nature as looked at in the light of the holiness of God. It is as if the Lord would say to us, Look here! behold a man clothed in nature's blackest garb, and presenting nature's most forbidding aspect. Examine him closely, in order that you, seeing what *man is* when stripped of all that false clothing which ignorance or vain self-righteousness would put upon him, may know the rich aboundings of My grace, which can avail to lift even such a one into the loftiest heights of communion—heights which human conception would utterly fail to mount, but which My grace, through the blood of the cross, can make available to the very chief of sinners.

In reading such a description as that which the above passage presents to us, how needful it is for the sinner to bear in mind that it is not only in the light of *God's holiness* that he is called to look at himself, but also in the light of *His grace*. When this is learned he needs not be afraid to penetrate deeply into the dark recesses of his heart's corruption; for if God in grace *fill* the scene, the sinner (so far as his own righteousness is concerned) must necessarily be *out* of the scene; and then it is no longer a question of what we think about sin, but how *God* will deal with it in grace, and that is simply to put it away forever—yea, to bury it forever in the waters of His forgetfulness: thus it will be placing *our sin* side by side with *God's grace*; which is what the gospel invites us to do, and which, moreover, is the only way to arrive at a proper settlement of the question of sin. On the other hand, where this saving principle is not known—not believed—the sinner will undoubtedly seek to make the load of his guilt as light as possible, in order that he may have as little to do as he may. This will ever lead to the most unutterable and intolerable bondage; or if not to this, to that which is much worse, even to detestable religious pride, which is of all things most truly abominable in the sight of God.

Reader, if you have not as yet got the question of sin settled between your conscience and God, ponder, I do beseech you, what I have now stated; for to know this principle in spirit is life eternal. Christ has, *once for all*, borne sin's deepest curse in His own body on the tree, and now even *Levi* can lift up his head; for although he be by nature only conversant with "*instruments of cruelty*," things which must have

kept God forever at a distance from "his secret and his assembly;" although he be by nature *cruel, fierce, self-willed, scattered, and divided*, yet God can, in the exercise of His mercy, make him conversant with "the instruments of the tabernacle," bring him into the enjoyment of the covenant of *life and peace, in union* with the great head of the priestly family, and, in the power of this blessed union, cause him to have his "*lights and perfections with his Holy One*" (Deut. xxxiii. 8; Mal. ii. 4, 5). However, we must not anticipate the teaching of passages which are yet to come under our notice; I will therefore close my remarks on this part of our subject by requesting my reader to compare attentively the character of Levi, as above recorded, with that which the apostle Paul, quoting from the Psalms, has given of man generally, whether Jew or Gentile: "There is *none* righteous, no, not one; there is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are *together* become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: *their FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes*" (Rom. iii. 10-18).

EXODUS xxxii. 25-29.

"And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day."

Here a new scene opens to us, and we are called to witness the dawning of a new day upon Levi; a day, moreover, which may justly lead us to anticipate great things. It is true we get him here likewise with his sword by his side, but, oh, for what a different purpose, and in what a different cause! It is not now in anger and self-will slaying a man, but in holy jealousy and care for the honor of the Lord God of Israel, and in simple obedience to His command; and although this may, and will, lead to the very cutting off of a brother, a son, or a friend, Levi cares not; for the word is, "Consecrate yourselves to the Lord, that He may bestow upon you a blessing." This was enough for Levi; and although by nature he was vile and utterly unfit either for the fellowship or service of God, yet is he now the foremost in jealous vindication of His holy name and worship against those who would seek to "turn their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass." Nor is Levi now seen "*joined*" with his brother Simeon—no, he might join in league with him in the days of his wickedness for the perpetration of deeds of blood; but here, as I before observed, we get the opening of a new scene, and therefore he is seen "*joined*" with the Lord and His servant Moses for the execution of righteous judgment upon idolatry.

And henceforth, in following the footsteps of Levi, we shall find that, instead of being "swift to shed blood," they are to be "swift" in following the movements of the cloud, and "swift" in performing the service of the tabernacle.

It would, of course, be quite foreign to our subject to dwell upon the sad and humbling scene that called out the above act of service on the part of Levi. Suffice it to say that it was, as we know, on the part of Aaron and the camp, a ceasing to exercise faith in the fact that Moses was *alive* in the presence of God for

them. The consequence of which was an entire forgetfulness of the mighty Hand and stretched out Arm that had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and of their present position *in the wilderness*; hence, as might be expected, "the people *sat down to eat and drink* and rose up to play." May the Lord preserve us from like forgetfulness; and, seeing "those things were written for our admonition," may we be truly admonished thereby not to "lust after evil things."

We shall now pass on to the next scripture, where we get the Lord's own thoughts upon the above act of service, namely,

DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. 8-11.

"And of Levi he (Moses) said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy One, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed Thy word and kept Thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law; they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again."

In this passage we have real Levite service brought before us in the words, "who said unto his father and mother, I have not seen him," etc. The *true* and *decided* servant of God will ever have to experience something of this; indeed, the measure thereof will just be in proportion to the faithfulness and power of his walk: "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" therefore every heir of that kingdom must show himself in readiness to deny all the claims which "flesh and blood" would make on him, whether in himself or in others. Most happily does the address to "the queen," in Ps. xlv., connect itself with this point: "*Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou Him*" (vers. 10, 11). We have all to watch against a tendency to be influenced by the claims of flesh and blood, in our testimony for Christ. He Himself has said on this subject that "no man having put his hand to the plow and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 62). And, as some one has observed, it was upon this point that the prophet Elisha's character seemed a little defective, for when Elijah cast his mantle over him, or, in other words, when he had put upon him the high honor of making him a prophet of the Lord God, Elisha's heart seemed to yearn after home, and he said, "Let me, I pray thee, *kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee*" (1 Kings xix. 20). Now this was most natural, and, as some would say, amiable and affectionate; but, oh, amiability and natural affection have often hindered people from entering as they should into the Lord's service; and although it is one of the marks of the latter-day apostasy to be "without natural affection," yet does Moses, in the above-cited passage, ask the Lord to bless Levi, because "he said unto his father and his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children." How grossly inconsistent would it have been for Levi to have said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother," when called to enter upon the Lord's work; and not less so is it for us to allow the claims of "flesh and blood" to interfere with our true hearted Levite service to our God, who has done so much for *us*.

But let us carefully observe the blessed consequences of this decision of character on the part of Levi. These are, first, "They shall *teach Jacob* Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law." Secondly, "They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon *Thine altar*." Thirdly, "Bless his substance." Fourthly, "Accept the work of his hands." Fifthly, "Smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." All these fruits are distinct, and yet intimately

connected, as springing from the same source, namely, simple, devoted and uncompromising obedience to the Lord. As to the first of these fruits, how true it is that it is only the man who himself endeavors to walk in power before God that can speak with effect to the hearts and consciences of others; nothing else will do—nothing else will tell, either upon the hearts or in the lives of Christians. There may be, and, alas, is much of mere systematic teaching and preaching of things which the mere intellect may have received, and which, by a natural fluency of language, we may be able to give out; but all such teaching is vain, and had much better be avoided in the sight of God. True, it might often give to our public assemblies an appearance of barrenness and poverty which our poor, proud hearts could ill brook; but would it not be far better to keep silence than to substitute mere carnal effort for the blessed energy of the Holy Spirit?

True ministry, however, the ministry of the Spirit, will always commend itself to the heart and conscience. We can always know the source from which a man is drawing who speaks in "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," and with the ability which God giveth; and while we should ever pray to be delivered from the mere effort of man's intellect to handle the truth of God amongst us, we should diligently cultivate that power to teach which stands connected, as in Levi's case, with the denial of the claims of flesh and blood, and with entire devotedness to the Lord's service.

In the second consequence above referred to we have a very elevated point: "They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar." This is worship. We put incense before God when we are enabled, in the power of communion, to present in His presence the sweet odor of Christ in His person and work. This is our proper occupation as members of the chosen and separated tribe.

But it is particularly instructive to look at both the above mentioned consequences in connection; i.e., the Levites in ministry to their brethren, and the Levites in worship before God: it was as acceptable in the sight of God, and as divine an exercise of his functions, for a Levite to instruct his brethren as it was for him to burn incense before God. This is very important. We should never separate these two things. If we do not see that it is the same Spirit who must qualify us to speak *for* God as to speak *to* Him, there is a manifest want of moral order in our souls. If we could keep this principle clearly before our minds, it would be a most effectual means of maintaining amongst us the true dignity and solemnity of ministry in the Word: having lost sight of it has been productive of very sad consequences. If we imagine for a moment that we can teach Jacob by any other power or ability than that by which we put incense before God, or if we imagine that one is not as acceptable before God as the other, we are not soundly instructed upon one of the most important points of truth; for, as some one has observed, "Let us look at this point illustrated in the personal ministry of Christ, and we shall no longer say that teaching by the Holy Ghost is inferior to praise by the same, for surely the apostleship of Christ when He came *from God* was as sweet in its savor to God as His priesthood when *He went to God* to minister to Him in that office. The candlestick in the holy place which diffused the light of life—God's blessed name—was as valuable, at least in His view, as the altar in the same place, which presented the perfume of praise."

We now come to speak of the third point, namely, "Bless, Lord, his substance." This is just what we might have expected; an *increase* of blessing will ever be the result of real true-hearted devotedness to Christ. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit He purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit;" "The diligent soul shall be made fat;" and "To him that hath shall *more* be given." Levi had exhibited much diligence of soul in the Lord's service—he had shown himself in readiness to vindicate His name in strong and decided opposition to every mere human thought and affection; and now the Lord will show Levi that He is not unrighteous to forget his work and labor of love, "for He will bless his substance." We find the apostle Paul bringing forward the same principle to his son Timothy when he tells him to "meditate on these things; *give thyself wholly* to them, that *thy profiting may appear to all*." Here he connects the "profiting"

with the "giving himself wholly:" this will ever be the case; and if we would experience more than we do the meaning and power of the words, "Bless, Lord, his substance," we must first endeavor to enter into the meaning of what goes before, namely, "who said to his father and to his mother, I have not known him," etc. "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. xix. 29).

Not less striking is the connection between what has just been stated and our fourth point, namely, "Accept the work of his hands." This I conceive to be a point of the greatest importance to us, and one which involves a question upon which we frequently display much want of intelligence. We often find it difficult to reconcile the idea of salvation through free grace with that of an increase of blessing and power for walking in obedience; and yet we find the two things constantly maintained in Scripture; thus we read, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and *will manifest Myself* to him." And, again, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, *and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him*" (John xiv. 21, 23).

This is very clear and decided upon the subject: we see here that the manifestation of the Son is made to depend on our keeping the commandments of Christ. Grace takes up a sinner and leads him into the knowledge of the full forgiveness of his sins through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ: but all this is simply a means to an end: it is, in a word, to set him down in a position of responsibility to Christ, which position he by nature could never have sustained, because "the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." If, then, a man be put into a place of responsibility, it is clear that the more faithfully and diligently he maintains that place, the more enlarged will be his communion.

A father may have two children, the one obedient, the other the very reverse; now, they are both his children; neither the obedience of the one nor the disobedience of the other can interfere in the least with the relationship existing between them; but can we have a question as to which of them would enjoy most of the father's presence and affection? Surely not; a father likes to be obeyed, and will love the obedient child. There may be extraordinary cases where, from a warped judgment or a blind and unmeaning partiality, the disobedient, lawless son may have more of the heart of the parent than the other; but this is not so with God: His judgment is clear and unerring: He can accurately distinguish between the one that honors Him and the one that despises Him: the former "He will honor," the latter He will "lightly esteem." The Lord does not ask a sinner *dead* in trespasses and sins to serve Him, for all such a one could do would be polluted with sin—his very prayers are polluted—his meditations are polluted—his acts of benevolence are polluted; in a word, he is all polluted, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and therefore can do nothing acceptable in the sight of God. But the Lord quickens those that are dead in trespasses and sins, and then teaches them to "walk worthy of Him as dear children," and to be fruitful in every good word and work, to the praise of His name: and when we do this He graciously condescends to "accept the work of our hands." But not only does Scripture abound with precepts which confirm what has been above stated, it also affords numerous examples and illustrations of the same; thus, for instance, the case of Abraham and Lot, in the opening of the book of Genesis. These were both servants of God, but yet how differently they walked! one loved God; the other loved the well-watered plains of Sodom: and the consequence was, that while the Lord Himself could meet with Abraham, and sup with him, and, moreover, unfold to him His counsels with reference to Sodom, He merely sends *angels* to Sodom, and we can plainly perceive in their manner toward Lot their marked disapproval of his circumstances, for when he invites them into his house, they reply, "*Nay, but we will abide in the street all night.*"

This is plain: the angels of the Lord would rather abide all night in the streets of guilty Sodom than go in to a child of His who was not walking in obedience; nor does the fact that they afterwards consented to go in at all interfere with the point which I am seeking to establish; no, their answer speaks volumes of the most solemn and practical instruction to us; they enter into *Lot's house*, it is true; but if they do, it is only to counteract the sad effects of *Lot's sin*. May we, then, seek, by prayer and communion with God, to keep ourselves in the path of obedience, so that we may prove in our soul's happy experience the meaning of the prayer in our text, "Accept the work of his hands."

We have now arrived at the fifth and last point in this branch of our subject, namely, "Smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." This is properly the last point, when there shall be neither "adversary nor evil occurrent," we shall rest from our labor and conflict, and enter into possession of that upon which hope now feeds; therefore, when it can be said of our enemies "that they rise not again," we shall be happy indeed.

However, there is much of practical value in this point in the connection in which it stands here, i.e., as a *consequence* of obedience; there is nothing that gives the soul such marvelous power over enemies as an obedient, holy walk. Every step we take in real obedience to Christ is, so far, a victory gained over the flesh, and the devil; and every fresh victory ministers fresh power for the conflict which follows; thus we grow. And on the other hand, every battle *lost* only serves to weaken us, while it gives power to our enemies to attack us again. Thus we see that the man whose heart is truly devoted to the Lord will have power to teach—power to worship; he will increase in substance, for Christ causes those that love Him "to inherit *substance*" (Prov. viii.). He will enjoy more of God's favor and of the light of His countenance, for "them that honor Me I will honor;" and, finally, he will have enlarged power over all enemies. All these are the fruits of that true Levite devotedness which will enable a man to say "to his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him;" or, in other words, those fruits can only be enjoyed by one who is ready to "leave all and follow Christ." This being the case, then, we can have little difficulty in accounting for the poverty in gifts of ministry—the poverty in worship—the meagreness of growth—the many interruptions in the enjoyment of divine favor—the almost total lack of power over enemies of which we have all to complain. Many seek to satisfy themselves by saying that we cannot expect the same power in gifts and worship now as that which fell to the lot of the saints in the apostolic day, and this, of course, we are not going to deny; but then, the question is, Have we as much power and freshness in these things as we might have? I believe we have not—and why? Is not Levi's God our God? Yes, He is, blessed be His name, and the same everlasting and abundant fountain of blessing as ever He was, but we, alas, are *far behind* in the matter of Levi's true devotedness; and this is the root of it all, for it remains unalterably true that "to him that hath shall *more* be given," and "we cannot serve two masters." This is true—solemn—and practical.

We are now called to consider a scripture which will unfold to us at once the wondrous secret of how a sinner so degraded as Levi could hold a place of such elevation and nearness to God as that which he afterwards occupied. There is nothing in a sinner by nature with which God could hold any intercourse; therefore, if ever He brings any one into a place of blessing and high communion, He does so in *pure grace*, and thus *excludes* "boasting" altogether, for "no flesh shall glory in His presence." Those who look upon it as presumption in a sinner to speak of holding a place of such nearness to God, seem to lose sight of this completely. It could never be *pride* that would lead any one into a place where *he* would be broken to pieces, and be shown that he was altogether corrupt and worthless; if God were to elevate *flesh*, and bring flesh into a place of nearness to Himself, then indeed there would be some force in the objection on the ground of presumption; but God does no such thing: the flesh is so far gone in ruin that it cannot be improved, and therefore God declares in the Cross His mind about the flesh, namely, that it is a condemned thing; but He, by the same Cross, gives the poor sinner *life*, and in the power of *that life*, and

not in the power of life in the flesh, He brings the sinner into His presence and sets him down at His table; so that it is not the presumption of a poor prodigal that assigns the place which he is to occupy, but the *grace* and boundless lovingkindness of the father: thus, God says to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before Me," and what then? "Make thee an ark of gopher wood"—and in that ark is Noah raised up beyond the region of judgment, and a judged world, into a place of undisturbed communion. Now, we shall find the very same principles developed in God's dealings with Levi, in the scripture which is about to engage our attention. I shall first consider their cleansing; and, secondly, their position and service. First, their cleansing as recorded in

NUMBERS viii. 5-14.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil; and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: and thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the Lord, to make an atonement for the Levites. And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the Lord. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be Mine."

This passage furnishes us with a very rich and blessed branch of our interesting subject. We were enabled to see, in looking at Levi by nature, that such was his character that God would have no fellowship with him whatever, and that, so far as Levi was concerned, he should abide forever in *his own habitation*, in company with the "instruments of cruelty" which were therein. But God will not leave him there, and therefore God must Himself provide the remedy—God Himself must cleanse this self-willed, cruel and fierce man. And here we are invited to recall a thought which occurred to the mind in the opening of this paper, viz., that man's sin must ever be brought into the presence of God's grace. Levi had nothing else to look to; his sin was such as to preclude every thought of human remedy; the law condemned Levi's nature; and God had pronounced him unfit for His presence. And what, then, had Levi to do? Could he set himself with heart and soul to keep the law? Impossible: the law had not only condemned his works, but pronounced the curse of God upon his very nature. The law said, "Thou shalt do no murder;" and having said this, it added, "*Cursed* is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." But Levi had murder in his nature, therefore Levi's nature was cursed.

What, then, could Levi do? Might he not cast himself over upon the mercy of God, with the hope that He would deal lightly with his sins? No; by no means: God had given forth His solemn and unalterable decree, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret;" God could not come into a habitation wherein were "instruments of cruelty."

Thus, then, Levi was completely shut up, without a single means of escape; the law nailed him down to this one point, "Answer my demands." And all that Levi had towards the discharge of these demands was, "anger, fierceness, murder, self-will, cruelty," etc.: poor resources, alas! Nor would the law of God enter into any composition with the sinner; it should have "the uttermost farthing," or else the word was,

"*cursed art thou.*" Therefore Levi, *as a man alive in the flesh*, or, in other words, Levi, as seeking to get life through the law, was judged, condemned, and set aside, and it only remained for him to take thus the place of *one dead*, in order that God might *in grace* quicken him into new life, which God was ready and willing to do, and which, as we shall see, He graciously did, according to His own marvelous thoughts, and in His own way.^[6] Levi, then, had just to see himself as one that was, in God's account, *dead*, as we read, "for they (i.e., the Levites) are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; *instead* of such as open every womb, even *instead* of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me: for all the first-born of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, *I sanctified them for myself; and I have taken the Levites for all the first-born of the children of Israel*" (chap. viii. 16-18).

The Lord passed through the land of Egypt with the sword of justice unsheathed, to smite *all* the first-born, nor would Israel's first-born have escaped, had not the sword fallen upon the neck of the spotless victim; and thus, as some one has beautifully observed, "There was death in every house, not only in the houses of the Egyptians, but also in those of the Israelites: in the former, it was the *death of Egypt's first-born*; in the latter, the death of God's Lamb."

The Levites, then, were taken *instead* of those upon whom the sword of the destroying angel should have fallen; or, in other words, *the Levites were, typically, a dead and risen people*, and thus were no longer looked at in the circumstances of nature, but of *new life* through grace, in which they were placed by God Himself. And here let me observe that this is the path which every sinner must travel if he would know experimentally anything of Levi's after history. There is no other way in which to escape from the judgment of the law on the one hand, or from the horrid workings of indwelling corruption on the other, than simply to see ourselves "*dead*" to both, and "*alive* unto God through Jesus Christ." "How shall we," says the apostle, "that are *dead to sin* live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 2-4). And, again, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become *dead* to the *law* by the body of Christ, that ye should be *married to another*, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (chap. vii. 4). But not only are death and resurrection the only possible means by which a sinner can escape the condemnation of the law and the tyrannical sway of sin, they are also the only means by which he can acceptably serve God. The flesh, or carnal mind, cannot serve God, for it is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be; therefore we infer that the sources of that life by which we can serve God are not to be found in the flesh, but only in union with the Lord Jesus in resurrection. "If a man abide not *in me*, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered" (John xv. 6). Consequently, when God would bring Levi into a place of nearness and service to Himself, He shows him to us as passing through those circumstances which, in the clearest manner, illustrate *death and resurrection*; for they are taken instead of those that were as dead, but who escaped through the death of the lamb: and then, having thus passed through the circumstances of death, they are told in chap. viii. to "*put off the old man and put on the new*"—for that is the meaning of the "washing of water," and "shaving of the flesh," etc. This is in full keeping with what the apostle states to his son Titus: "For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, *living in malice and envy*, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the *washing of regeneration*, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus iii. 3-6).

But in order that we may have a clearer and more comprehensive view of the ground upon which the

Levites stood before God, I would refer, in as brief and concise a manner as I can, to the offerings connected with their consecration: these were the burnt offering, the meat offering, and the sin offering; all, as we shall see, showing out the Lord Jesus Christ in His varied aspects.^[7] And first, the burnt offering: the principles unfolded in this offering are brought out in the first chapter of Leviticus, where we read, "If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord" (ver. 3).

Here, then, is something real for the soul to feed on and rejoice in. We have in the burnt offering the Lord Jesus Christ, in all His fulness and perfections, as offering Himself "*without spot to God*," and also as accepted before God *for us*. In this He was found to be "*a male without blemish*;" so much so, that the One in whose sight the very heavens are not clean, could say, "In whom I am well pleased;" and again, "Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth."

But further, this unblemished offering presents Himself voluntarily at the door of the tabernacle. "No man," says the Lord Jesus, speaking of His life, "taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of My Father." And truly, in tracing the way of the blessed Jesus through this defiled world, we can recognize this feature of the burnt offering in a very striking manner. From first to last His course was marked with all the steadiness and divine uninterrupted calmness of true devotedness to God. The billows of dark and fierce temptation might roll and toss themselves with a rage and fury which would have crushed one less than God. The devil might stir up all his deadly malice against Him; man might display all his enmity—enmity which could only be outdone by the eternal friendship of this devoted One. His disciples, moreover, may refuse to "watch with Him one hour." Death may arm himself with all his ghastly terrors, and pour out a cup mixed with hell's bitterest ingredients; and further, display his deadly sting in all its infernal keenness and power to wound. The grave may conjure up all its unutterable horrors to make one grand struggle for "*victory*," but *all* in vain. The answer of this unblemished voluntary offering to all these was, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He had His eye upon one object, and that was "the joy that was set before Him." He looked forward to the moment when He would be able to draw forth from the inexhaustible treasures of eternal love the rich and princely fruits of His hard-bought victory, and pour them forth in divine profusion upon the "travail of His soul;" even the Church, which He loved, and purchased with His own precious blood. He eagerly anticipated "the morning without clouds," when, surrounded by the myriads of His ransomed brethren, He will sound forth in everlasting strains the mighty answer to all the foul aspersions of the enemy as to the love of God toward the sinner. All these attractions, I say, He had before Him, and therefore He marched onward in the greatness of His strength; "He *steadfastly* set His face to go to Jerusalem." Lord Jesus Christ, invigorate our poor cold hearts to sound forth the eternal honors of Thine adorable name; and may our lives be more and more the decided evidence of our hearts—love to Thee, for "Thou alone art worthy!" All this is surely most blessed for us; but, blessed as it is, it is not all; there are other strokes from the pencil of the Divine Artist, calculated, in the highest degree, to captivate our spiritual tastes, yea, more, to feed our souls. "He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and *it shall be accepted for him*, to make atonement for him" (ver. 4). Here, then, is grace! Levi, the self-willed, cruel, fierce, and blood-shedding Levi, is accepted in all the perfectness and acceptableness of this "unblemished male" before God: whatever of excellency, whatever of value, whatever of purity, God beheld in this offering, that did He likewise behold in Levi as "accepted *in* the offering." Thus, look at Levi *apart from* the offering, and you will find him such that God could not come into *his* assembly: but look at him as *in the offering*, and you find him, through grace, as pure and as perfect as the offering itself. Nothing could surpass this most excellent grace. The grace that could take up a sinner from such a pit of corruption as

that in which Levi lay groveling, and lead him into such high elevation, deserves the highest note of praise; and, blessed be God, it shall, ere long, have it from all who, like Levi, have felt its sacred power.

However, we must not enter too minutely into the detail of this burnt offering, and there are just two points further to which I will refer. The first is presented to us in ver. 6: "And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces." Here we see at once to what a process of strict, jealous and uncompromising scrutiny the Lord Jesus exposed Himself in offering Himself before God. It was not enough that the animal should be APPARENTLY "without blemish," for the skin, or *outward surface*, might look very well, and at the same time the offering be not at all fit for God's altar; therefore the *outward surface* must be removed, in order that this offering may be examined in all its sinews, joints and veins, and thus be found, as to *the springs of action, the structure of his frame*, and the source and channels of the life that animated him, a perfectly unblemished offering. But further, "*he shall cut it into his pieces*," i.e., take the offering asunder, and examine its various parts, in order that it may not only form a perfect whole, but that each distinct joint may be found perfect. Thus, in whatever aspect we look at the Lord Jesus, we get divine perfection. He could say to God, "Thou hast tried Me, and shalt find nothing;" and God could answer, "I am well pleased." He could say of the devil, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing *in Me*;" and the devil could reply, "I know Thee, who thou art, the *Holy One of God*." He could say to men, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" and man could answer, "Truly this was a *righteous man*." Thus, I say, our divine burnt-offering, who voluntarily presented Himself at God's altar, and there poured forth His most precious blood, was found, in every feature and in every aspect, pure and perfect in the very highest sense of the word, and confessed so by heaven, earth, and hell.^[8]

All, therefore, having been found pure, and fit for God's altar, it becomes the happy place of *Aaron's sons* to send up before God the sweet savor of this most acceptable offering, as we read: "And the *sons of Aaron* the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire. And *the priests*, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar. But *his inwards and his legs* shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn *all* on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord" (vers. 7-9). The fat of the offering was God's peculiar part; no one could with impunity touch that; yea, the punishment for so doing was the same as for eating blood; i.e., it was as wrong and as daringly presumptuous for a man to intrude upon God's portion of the offering as it was for him to assume life in his own right, which latter was an open denial of the state of death and ruin in which he was by reason of sin. God, then, I say, claimed the fat. He alone could feed upon the inward excellency and peerless perfections of Jesus, just as in the case of the unmeasured ointment in Exodus xxx., where we see, as well as in the above cited passage, that the infinite mind of God could alone appreciate the infinite value of Christ. But we find *the head* burnt in connection with the fat, showing us, I suppose, that both the hidden energies of the Lord Jesus and the seat of His understanding were equally suited to be a sweet savor unto God. Lastly, the inwards and legs were washed and burned upon the altar, showing us that the secret thoughts, purposes and counsels of the Lord Jesus, as well as the outward development of these in His *walk*, were perfectly pure and fit for the altar: and, in connection with this last point, one cannot help dwelling with comfort upon the marvelous contrast between the Lord Jesus and His poor people. How often may our *outward walk*, typified by "the legs," appear quite right in the eye of man, when, at the same time, perhaps, in the eye of God, our "*inwards*" may be full of gross impurity. But it is well for us that such was not the case with our great Head: in Him *all was alike*, for *all was pure*. May our hearts, dear Christian reader, enter more and more fully, under the teaching of the Spirit, into the intrinsic excellency of the Lord Jesus; and may we be enabled daily, standing at the altar before God, to send up in His presence the savor of all this!

As to the meat offering, we need not enter minutely into it. It was composed, as we know, of that which sprang from *the earth*, and such as aptly shadowed out "the Man Christ Jesus," the frankincense thereon marking the entire devotedness of all the actings of Christ's human nature to God His Father. Nothing was

done by Him to meet man's eye, or man's approbation; nothing was done to produce mere effect; no, *all was directly before God*. Whether we trace the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, while, for thirty years, *He was subject* to His parents at home; or while, for three years, He was engaged in public ministry amongst the Jews—all was alike: all showed forth the pure frankincense that marked Him, in all things, as God's peculiar and devoted servant. We may observe further that this meat offering was *baked* with oil, and *anointed* with oil; thus showing forth, I suppose, the incarnate Son of God, who was first "*conceived* of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. i. 20), and then "*anointed* with the Holy Ghost" (Matt. iii. 16; Acts x. 38).

We now come to speak of the sin offering, and may the Lord graciously refresh our spirits while dwelling for a little on the blessed principles unfolded therein. The sin offering is brought before us in Leviticus iv., from whence we may select one case for our present purpose. "If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people, then *let him* bring for his sin which he hath sinned a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering. *And he shall bring* the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head and kill the bullock before the Lord" (vers. 3, 4).

The reader will, no doubt, observe a marked difference between the above passage and that in which the burnt offering was referred to; and the difference so far mainly consists in this, that in the last cited passage the words "*voluntary will*" are not found, and this was quite to be looked for. In the burnt offering we were enabled to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ *offering* Himself voluntarily before God, in which aspect of His blessed work He could say, "No man taketh it (My life) from Me, *I lay it down of Myself*." In other words, He offered Himself "*of His own voluntary will* at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord." But in the sin offering it is quite different: "*He shall be brought*" and "*He shall be killed*;" i.e., instead of *coming*, *He shall be brought*; and instead of laying down His life of *Himself*, His life *shall be taken from Him*. These, I say, are important distinctions, and such as arise from the very nature of the two offerings. In the burnt offering the Lord Jesus is seen offering Himself in all the unblemished perfectness which belonged to Him; and in this His soul had great delight, because He was presenting that before God which was so acceptable to Him. But in the sin offering the Lord Jesus is seen standing in connection with that which His pure and spotless soul must have deeply abhorred and keenly resented—abhorred and resented, indeed, in a way of which we cannot form the faintest idea. He is seen, in a word, as standing in connection with *sin*: yea, more, as "*made sin*" (2 Cor. v. 21). *Thus* it was that the prophet, through the Spirit, viewed Him when he said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with *His stripes* we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 5, 6).

Now I believe that by looking at the two offerings in connection we get a very deep and wondrous view of sin's dark and dreadful enormity in the sight of God: for sin in this point of view appears sinful just according to the measure of Christ's perfectness in God's account. If in the burnt offering we were enabled to see that such was the beauty and excellency of Christ that His *whole man* could go up before God as a sweet savor, and that God could "find nothing in Him" but perfection, as a necessary consequence then we must see in the sin offering the blackness and heinousness of sin, which could oblige God to hide His face from "His elect, in whom His soul delighted."

This brings us to the next point connected with the sin offering, viz., "He shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head" (ver. 4). Here we have at once the secret of the deep and profound mystery of the three hours' darkness.

It was before observed that God had to hide His face from the Lord Jesus on the cross, but how are we to

account for such a mysterious circumstance? Simply by the words, "he (the sinner) shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head." If, in contemplating the burnt offering, we were struck by the fact that all the perfectness of the offering was communicated to the "fierce and cruel" Levi, so here we are called upon to adore the grace that devised the wondrous plan whereby that could be effected, which was by imputing to the offering all the sin and defilement of Levi, and dealing with the sin of Levi in the person of the sin offering, in order that Levi himself might be dealt with in the person of the burnt offering.

And all this, be it observed, is conveyed to us in the action of "the laying on of hands." This action was performed in both cases; i.e., Levi laid his hands on the head of the burnt-offering, and Levi laid his hands on the head of the sin offering. As to the *act*, it was the same in each case; but oh, how different the results! they were, in a word, as different as life and death, heaven and hell, sin and holiness. In fact, we cannot conceive a wider contrast than that which is observable in the results of this action, to all appearance the same in each case. We may, perhaps, be able to form some idea of it by considering that the act of imposition of hands was at once the imputation of *sin* to one "*who knew no sin*," but was "*holy, harmless, undefiled*," and whose very nature abhorred *all sin*. And, on the other hand, it was the imputation of *perfect righteousness* to one who was by nature "a cruel, fierce, and self-willed murderer." [9] Furthermore, the act of imposition of hands obliged the One who from before all worlds dwelt in the bosom of the Father to travel far away into the cold and barren regions of death and darkness, where the genial and life-giving rays of His Father's countenance, which He alone could truly appreciate, had never penetrated; and standing upon the confines of which, He cried out, "*If it be possible*, let this cup pass from Me!" and again, when these gloomy regions, with their ten thousand unutterable horrors, burst upon His spotless soul, "My God, My God, WHY HAST THOU forsaken Me?" And, on the other hand, it enabled the one who dwelt in "the habitations of cruelty," into whose "assembly" God could not come, to stand in the very blaze of the light of God's throne. These considerations, I say, may perhaps assist our conceptions in some measure upon this astounding truth. Now, the apostle states the same truth in the didactic language of the New Testament when he says, "He (God) hath *made Him* to be *sin for us*, that *we* might be *made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor. v. 21). That is, He hath made the One whose perfectness is seen in the burnt offering to be judged *as sin*, and treated as such in the sin offering, in order that *we*, who deserved the treatment of the sin offering, might be treated as accepted in the burnt offering.

I would also observe here that there is much force and value in the word "*made*:" it shows out most fully that righteousness was just as foreign to the nature of man as sin was to the nature of Christ. Man had no righteousness of his own, or, in other words, he knew no righteousness, and therefore he had to be "*made*" righteousness. Christ "*knew no sin*," and therefore had to be "*made sin*" in order that we might be *made* righteousness, even "the righteousness of God *in Him*." But further, we learn from the passage to which we are referring that the Lord Jesus having been "*made sin for us*," is not more real, not more true, not more palpable, than that the believer is "*made righteousness in Him*."

If there be any truth or reality in the record concerning the cross and passion of the Lord Jesus, then, it is plain that the moment a soul acts faith upon Christ in His death and resurrection, that moment he is accepted in all the acceptableness of Christ. His consciousness of this is, of course, quite another question: a truth and the realization of a truth are quite distinct.

The measure of our realization will be in proportion to the measure of our communion with God. If we are satisfied to move at a cold and heartless distance from God, our consciousness of the power and value of any truth will, as a consequence, be meagre and shallow: while, therefore, it is not to be forgotten that the root and source of all life and communion is the truth stated in the passage to which we are alluding, it is manifest that the more we walk in communion with Him who gives us the life, the more shall we enjoy

both Himself and the life which He gives. Dear Christian reader, let us pray that the cross and passion of the Lord Jesus may sink so deeply into our hearts that we may have on the one hand such a view of the loathsomeness of sin as shall lead us to abhor it with a holy abhorrence "all the days of our life," and on the other hand such a view of the amazing love of God as shall constrain us "to live not unto ourselves but unto Him who died for us and rose again."

Thus, then, we see that the laying on of hands shows forth nothing less than *a change of places* on the part of the sinner and the Saviour. The sinner was *out* of the favor of God: "O my soul, come not thou into their habitation." The Saviour was *in* the favor of God, "*daily His delight*," dwelling in His bosom from before all worlds. But the amazing plan of redemption *shows us the Saviour out of the favor of God, and God forsaking Him, while at the same time a condemned malefactor is brought at once into the very presence of a loving and pardoning God*. Amazing, deep, inconceivable, eternal love! unfathomable wisdom! love which soars far aloft above the most gigantic conception! wisdom which has written everlasting contempt upon all the power and base designs of the great enemy of God and man! For, ere Levi could be introduced into the enjoyment of the "covenant of *life and peace*" (Mal. ii. 5), a spotless Victim must stand the shock of the king of terrors and all his thunders. But who is this Victim? We ask not, "Who is this King of glory?" but *Who* is this Victim? The answer to this question it is which gives to the plan of redemption its grandest and most divine characteristic. The Victim was none less than the Son of God Himself! Yes! here was love, here was wisdom. The Son of God had to stoop because man had exalted himself. And surely we may say, If God had not entered upon the work, *all, all* were lost, and that forever. No mere mortal could have entered into that dark scene where sin was being atoned for; no one but the Son of God could have sustained the weight which, in the garden and on the cross, rested on the shoulders of the "One that was mighty." And here we might refer to the Lord's language to His disciples when He was about to enter into conflict with the adversary: "Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). Why could He not "talk much with them?" Because He was just going to enter upon the work of atonement, in which they could do nothing, because the prince of this world, had he come, would have had *plenty in them*; but then, the moment He, as it were, in spirit passes through that sorrowful hour, He says, "*Arise*, let us go hence;" i.e., although we could not move a single step in the achievement of the victory, yet we could enjoy the fruits of it; and not only so, but *display* the fruits of it in a life of service and fruit-bearing to God, which forms the subject of teaching in the next chapter.

Here, then, is what gives peace to the awakened conscience of the sinner. God Himself has done the work. God has triumphed over all man's wickedness and rebellion, and now every soul who feels his need of pardon and peace can draw near in faith and holy confidence and reap the fruits of this wondrous triumph of grace and mercy.

And now, dear reader, if *you* have not as yet made these wondrous fruits your own; if you have not as yet cast the whole burden of your sins on God's eternal love as seen in the cross, I ask you, Why do you stand aloof? Why do you doubt? Perhaps you feel the hardness of your heart, perhaps you are ready to say that you feel yourself even now unmoved by the contemplation of all the deep sorrow endured by the Son of God. Well, what of that? If it be a question of *your* guilt, you may go much farther than even this, for in that hour of which we have been speaking you stood unmoved, looked on with cold and heartless indifference, while all creation owned the wondrous fact. Yea, more, you yourself crucified the incarnate God, you spat in His face, and plunged your spear into His side. Do you shrink back and say, "Oh, not so bad!" I say *it was the act of the human heart*; and if you have a human heart, it was your act. But the Scriptures at once decide this point, for it is written, "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, *with the Gentiles* and the people of Israel, were

gathered together" (Acts iv. 27). This passage, I say, proves that all the world were *representatively* around the cross. But why insist on this? Simply to show forth the riches of the grace of God, which can only be seen in all its effulgent lustre in the cross; and therein it is seen mounting far above all man's sin and malignant rebellion; for when man, in the fiendish pride of his heart, could plunge his spear into the side of incarnate Deity, God's cry was—BLOOD! and through *that blood "remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem."* Thus, "where *sin* abounded, *grace* did *much more* abound," and "grace REIGNS through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Enough, I trust, has been said to show the grounds upon which the Levites stood before God. These grounds were free and *eternal grace*—grace exercised toward them through the blood, which is the only channel through which grace can flow. Man has been found to be *utterly ruined* before God, and therefore it must be a question either of salvation through *free grace*, or eternal damnation; for "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." But then, while man is by nature utterly unfit to render anything like an acceptable righteousness or service to God, yet, when God gives us *new life* through grace, He, of course, looks for the development of that life. In other words, grace brings the soul into circumstances of responsibility and service, and it is as we meet those circumstances that God is glorified in us and our souls grow in the knowledge of God. Thus it was in the case of the leper: up to a certain point in his history he had nothing to do, *the priest* was the sole actor. But when the priest had done his part; when, by virtue of *the blood* which had been shed, he had pronounced him "clean," the leper had *then* to begin to "*wash himself*" (Lev. xiv. 8). Now we shall find that the history of Levi develops all these principles most fully.

We have hitherto been engaged with Levi's condition and character by nature and also the wondrous remedy devised by grace to meet him in his lost estate, and not only to save him *from* that estate but also to raise him up to an elevation which could never have entered into the heart of man, even into the very tabernacle of God. We shall now, with God's blessing and grace, proceed to examine that high elevation to which we have referred, and also the service which it involved, as put before us in

NUMBERS iii.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, *Bring the tribe of Levi near*, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep *all the instruments of the tabernacle* of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron, and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel" (vers. 5-9).

Here, then, God's marvelous purposes of grace toward Levi fully open before us, and *truly* marvelous they are indeed. We see that the sacrifices were but a means to an end; but both the means and the end were in every way worthy of each other. The means were, in one word, "death and resurrection," and *all included therein*. The end was, *nearness* to God, and *all included therein*.

Looking at Levi by nature, there could not be any point farther removed from God than that at which he stood; but *grace* in exercise, through the blood, could *lift him up* out of that ruin in which he stood, and "bring him nigh," yea, bring him into association with the great head of the priestly family, there to serve in the tabernacle. Thus, we read, "You *hath He quickened who were dead* in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.... *But God*, who is *rich in mercy*, for His

great love wherewith *He loved us*, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 1-6). And again, "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were *afar off*, are made *nigh* by the blood of Christ" (ver. 13).

When *nature* is left free to work, it will ever go as far away from God as it can. This is true since the day when man said, "I heard *Thy voice*, and I was *afraid* and I hid myself" (Gen. iii. 10). But when grace is left free and sovereign to work, it will ever bring the soul "nigh." Thus it was with Levi. He was by nature "*black as the tents of Kedar*;" by grace, "*comely as the curtains of Solomon*;" by *nature* he was "*joined*" in a covenant of murder; by *grace* "*joined*" in a covenant of "life and peace." The former, because he was "*fierce and cruel*;" the latter, because he feared and was afraid of the Lord's name. (Comp. Gen. xlix. 6, 7; Mal. ii. 5.) Furthermore, Levi was by *nature* conversant with the "instruments of cruelty;" by *grace*, with "*the instruments of God's tabernacle*;" by *nature* God could not come into *Levi's assembly*; by *grace*, Levi is brought into *God's assembly*: by nature, "*his feet were swift to shed blood*;" by grace, *swift* to follow the movements of the cloud through the desert, in real, patient service to God. In a word, Levi had become a "*new creature*," and "*old things had passed away*," and therefore he was no longer to "*live unto himself*," but unto Him who had done such marvelous things for him in grace.

I would further observe, on the last cited passage, that the Levites are, in the first place, declared to be God's property, and then they are "WHOLLY GIVEN UNTO AARON." Thus we read: "*Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me*, and they have kept Thy word" (John xvii. 6). And again, "All that *the Father giveth Me* shall come to Me" (John vi. 37).

I would now look a little into the detail of their service, in which, I doubt not, we shall find much to edify and refresh us.

We find that although the whole tribe of Levi were, *as to standing*, "*joined with Aaron*," yet, as to *service*, they were divided into classes. "All had not the same office;" and this is what we might have expected, for, although in the matter of *life* and *standing* they were all *on a level*, yet, in the development of that life, and in the manifestation of the power of that standing, they would, no doubt, display different measures; and not only so, but there would also be seen an assignment to each of distinct position and line of service, which would serve to distinguish him from his brethren in a very marked and decided manner. And here I would observe that I know of nothing connected with the walk and service of the Christian which demands more attention than this point to which I am now alluding, viz., *unity* in the matter of life and standing, and at the same time the greatest variety in the manifestation of character and in the line of service. A due attention to this important point would save us from much of that "unwise" comparing of ourselves and our service with the persons and services of others, which is most unholy, and, as a consequence, most unhealthy.^[10] And not only would it lead thus to beneficial results in a negative point of view, it would also have a most happy effect in producing and cultivating originality and uniqueness of Christian character. But while there was this diversity in the line of service amongst the Levites, it is also to be remembered that there was *manifested unity*. The Levites were *one people*, and seen as such; they were "*joined*" with Aaron in the work of the tabernacle; moreover, THEY HAD ONE STANDARD, round which they *all* rallied, and that was "*the tabernacle of the congregation*," the well known type of Christ in His character and offices. And, indeed, this was one of the ends which God had in view in calling out the Levites by His grace from amongst the people of Israel; it was that they should stand in marked association with Aaron and his sons, and in that association bear the tabernacle and all pertaining thereto on their shoulders, through the barren wilderness around.^[11]

God did not call out the Levites *merely* that they might escape the sad effects of God's absence from their assembly; or, in other words, God had more than THEIR blessing and security in view in His dealings with them. He designed that they should serve in the tabernacle, and thus be to His praise and glory. We shall, however, I trust, see this principle upon which I am dwelling in a clearer and stronger point of view as we proceed in our subject.

We find that Levi had three sons, viz., "Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari" (Num. iii. 17). These formed the heads of the three classes alluded to, and we shall find that the nature of the service of each was such as of necessity to impart that tone of character signified by their very name. Thus: "Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites. And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph, the son of Lael. And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof" (vers. 21-26).

Here was Gershon's work, to carry through the waste and howling wilderness the tabernacle and its coverings. This was indeed *true Levite service*, but it was most blessed service, and its antitype in the Church now is what we should much seek after, because it is that which alone puts the Christian into his right place in the world, i.e., the place of a STRANGER. There could be but little attractiveness in the rams' skins and badgers' skins; but, little as there was, it was, nevertheless, the high privilege of the Gershonite to take them all up and bear them cheerfully on his shoulders across the trackless sands. What, then, are we to understand by the covering of the tabernacle? I believe, in a word, it shadowed out the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was that which would meet the eye. There might be, and were, other services among the Levites of a very blessed nature, but surely it was most elevated service to carry through the desert that which so strikingly prefigured the character of Christ.

This is what makes the saint "a stranger" (as the name Gershon imports) in the world. If we are walking in *the manifestation of the character of the Lord Jesus*, and in so doing realize our place as *in the wilderness*, we may rest assured it will impart a very decided tone of strangership to our character in the world. And oh, would that we knew much more of this. The Church has laid down the rams' skins and badgers' skins, and with them the Gershonite character: in other words, the Church has ceased to walk in the footsteps of her rejected Lord and Master, and the consequence has been that instead of being the wearied and worn stranger, as she should be, treading the parched and sterile desert, with the burden on the shoulders, she has settled herself down in the green places of the world and made herself at home. But there was another feature of the stranger character shadowed out in the curtain, viz., *anticipation*. This was most blessed—God dwelling in curtains showed plainly that neither God nor the ark of His strength had found a resting-place, but were *journeying on* towards "*a rest that remained*."

And how could there be a *rest* in the desert? There were no rivers and brooks *there*—no old corn *there*—no milk and honey *there*. True, the smitten rock sent forth its refreshing streams to meet their need, and heaven sent down their *daily bread*; but all this was not Canaan. They were still in the desert, eating wilderness food and drinking wilderness water, and it was Gershon's holy privilege to carry upon his shoulders that which in the fullest manner expressed all this, viz., THE CURTAIN. "Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build Me an house for Me to dwell in? Whereas I have not *dwelt* in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have *walked* in a *tent* and in a *tabernacle*" (2 Sam. vii. 5, 6). Here, too, we have sadly failed. The Church grew weary of the curtain, and wished to build a house before the time; she grew weary of "*walking in a tent*," and earnestly desired

to " *dwell in a house.*"

And truly we have all to watch and pray against this disposition to grow weary of our Gershonite character. There is nothing so trying to nature as continual labor in a state of expectancy; our hearts love rest and fruition, and therefore nothing but the continual remembrance that "our sufficiency is of God" can at all sustain us in our Gershon or stranger condition.

Let us therefore remember that we bear on our shoulders the curtains, and have beneath our feet the sand of the desert, above our heads the pillar of cloud, and before us "the land of rest" clothed in never-withering green, and, both as a stimulus and a warning, let us remember that "He that endureth to the end THE SAME shall be saved."^[12]

We shall next consider the Merarite feature of character; for, although the family of Merari does not stand next in order in the chapter, yet there is a kindredness of spirit, as it were, arising out of the very nature of their service, that would link them together in the mind. But, not only is there this intimate connection between the services of these two classes of Levites, which would lead us to link them together thus, the Lord Himself presents them to us in marked unity of service, for we read, "And the Kohathites set forward bearing the sanctuary; and *the other* (i.e., the Gershonites and the Merarites) *did set up the tabernacle against they came*" (Num. x. 21). Here, then, we see that it was the great business of these two families to pass onward through the desert in holy companionship, bearing with them, wherever they went, "*the tabernacle*," and, moreover, the tabernacle as looked at in its character of outward manifestation or testimony; which would, as a matter of course, put those who carried it thus into a place of *very laborious* discipleship. "And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords" (chap. iii. 36, 37). Here, then, was what Merari had to do: he had to take his place here or there, according to the movement of the cloud, and *set up* the boards of the tabernacle in their sockets of silver—and all this, be it remembered, upon the sand of the desert.^[13]

Could anything be more opposed to another than the nature of all that Merari had to set up was to the waste and howling wilderness around? What could be more unlike than silver and barren sand? But Merari might not shrink from all this; no, his language was, when he had arrived at a spot in the desert at which the cloud halted, "I am come to set up the patterns of things in heaven in the very midst of all the desolation and misery of the wilderness around." All this was most laborious, and would, no doubt, impart to the character of Merari a tone of sadness or sorrow which was at once expressed in his name, which means "*sorrow*."

And surely the antitype of all this in the Church now will fully confirm what has been stated about the character of Merari. Let any one take his stand firmly and decidedly in the world *for Christ*—let him penetrate into those places where "*the world*" is really seen in its vigor—let him oppose himself, *firm as a rock*, to the deep and rapid tide of worldliness, and *there* let him begin to set up "*the sockets of silver*," and, rest assured of it, he will find such a course attended with very much sorrow and bitterness of soul; in a word, he will realize it to be a path in which the cross is to be taken up "*daily*," and not only taken up, but borne. Now, if any further proof were needed of the above interpretation, we have a most striking

one in the fact that there are but *very few* of the laborious Merarite character to be found; and why is this? Simply because the exhibition of such a character will ever be attended with very much labor and sorrow to nature, and nature loves ease, and therefore human nature never could be a Merarite; nothing will make us true Merarites but deep communion with Him who was "THE MAN OF SORROWS."

There is something in the service of Gershon from which one does not shrink so much as from that of Merari. For what had Gershon to do? He had to place the curtains and badgers' skins over the boards *which had been already set up by his laborious and sorrowful brother*. And just so now: if a laborious servant of God has gone to a place where hitherto the world and Satan have reigned supreme, and there raised a testimony for Christ, it will be comparatively easy for another to go and walk on in the simple *manifestation* of Christian character, which would of itself put him into the place of "a stranger."

But, although nature may assume the character of a misanthropist, yet nothing but grace can make us Merarites, and *the true Merarite* is the *true philanthropist*, because he introduces that which alone *can bless*; and the very fact that a Merarite should have to take a place of sorrow is a most convincing proof that the world is an evil place. There was no need of a Merarite in Canaan, nor a Gershonite either: for the Merarite was *happy there*, and the Gershonite *at home*. But the world is not the Levite's home, and therefore if any will carry the curtains, he must be a stranger; and if any will carry the sockets and boards, he must be a man of sorrow; for when He who was a true Gershonite and a true Merarite came into the world He was emphatically *the Man of sorrows, who had not where to lay His head*.

However, if the Gershonite and the Merarite had to occupy a place in which they endured not a little of "the burden and heat of the day," yet the Lord graciously met them in that with a very rich reward, for "He is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love," and therefore, if they had to labor and toil *amongst* their brethren, they were blessedly ministered to *by* their brethren. Thus we read concerning the offerings of the princes: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service. And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. *But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none*, because *the service of the sanctuary* belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders" (Num. vii. 4-9).

Here we see that the service of Gershon and Merari was that which met the rich and blessed ministrations of their brethren. Grace had filled the hearts and affections of the princes, and not only filled but overflowed them, and in its overflow it was designed to refresh the spirits of the homeless Gershonite and sorrowful Merarite: on the other hand, the Kohathites had no part in these ministrations; and why? Because *their service*, as we shall see presently, was in *itself* a rich reward indeed. We see the very same doctrine taught in the case of the Levites generally, as contrasted with the priests, in chap. xviii., where we read: "And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither *shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel*" (ver. 20).

On the other hand, He says of the Levites, "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in *Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve*, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation."

And again, "Ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households, for *it is your reward* for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation" (vers. 21, 31).

Aaron occupied a position so truly elevated that any inheritance in the way of earthly things would have been to him most degrading; whereas the Levites (looked at in one aspect) had not this high standing, but had much hard labor; and consequently, while Aaron's very place and service was "*his reward*," the Levites had to get *a tenth* for "*their reward*."

We come now to consider the third and last division of the Levites, viz., the Kohathites, of whom we read, "The families of the sons of Kohath shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle southward. And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof" (chap. iii. 29-31). We can now have no difficulty in understanding why it was that Kohath had no share in the ministrations of the princes. Gershon and Merari might need wagons and oxen to carry the boards, etc., but not so Kohath; his charge was too precious to be committed to any or aught but himself, and therefore it was his high and honored place to carry all upon his shoulders. What a privilege, for example, to be allowed to carry *the ark, the table, or the golden candlestick*! And would it not have argued an entire absence of ability to appreciate his elevated calling if he had sought for the assistance of oxen in his holy service? What, then, we ask, would have been the effect produced upon the character of Kohath by this his service? Would it not have imparted a very elevated tone thereto? Surely it would. What can be more elevated, at least as far as development of character in the world is concerned, than the display of that congregational spirit which is expressed in the name of Kohath? Should not Christians be found rebuking, by a *real union in everything*, man's oft-repeated attempt at forming associations for various purposes? And how can they effect that if it be not by gathering more closely around their common centre, Christ, in all the blessed fulness and variety of that Name? a fulness and variety typified by the varied furniture of the tabernacle, some of the most precious parts of which were designed to be borne on the shoulders of this favored division of the tribe of Levi.

And surely we may safely assert that what would lead the saints now into more of the congregational spirit is just communion with Him whom the ark and table shadowed forth. If we were more conversant with Christ as the ark, covering in this scene of death, and, moreover, with the table of showbread, whereon stood *the food of the priests*—if, I say, we knew more of Christ in these blessed aspects of His character—we should not be as we are, *a proverb* and a byword by reason of our gross disunion. But, alas, as the Church grew weary of the curtains and the boards, and laid aside her Gershonite and Merarite character, so has she laid aside her Kohathite character, because she has ceased to carry the ark and the table upon her shoulder, and cast those precious pearls which were, through the grace of God, her peculiar property, to the swine, and thus has she lost her elevated character and position in the world.

Thus, let us review those three grand features of character shown forth in the tribe of Levi.

1st. Strangership. "Therefore the world *knoweth us not*, because it knew Him not." "Here we have no

abiding city." "Dearly beloved, I beseech you *as strangers and pilgrims*, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."

2d. Sorrow in the world. "*In the world ye shall have tribulation.*" "If they have *persecuted Me*, they will also *persecute you.*" "I RECKON that *the sufferings of this present time* are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "After that *ye have suffered awhile*, make you perfect"—"*ye have need of patience*"—"ye yourselves know that ye are appointed thereunto." "If we *suffer with Him*, we shall also reign with Him." "These are they that came out of *great tribulation*, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

3d. Union. "That they *all may be one.*" "He should gather together in *one* the children of God that are *scattered* abroad." "That He might reconcile *both* unto God in ONE body by the cross." And here, again, I would request of my reader to bear in mind that, while there was this beautiful diversity in the character and line of service of the Levites, yet they were *one people*, and that *manifestly*—they were *one* in *life*, *one* in standing, *one* in calling, *one* in inheritance; and so should it be with Christians *now*. We are not to expect uniformity of opinion on every point, nor yet are we to look for a perfect correspondence in the line of service and development of life; but then the saints should be seen as *one people*—*one* in worship, ^[14] *one* in labor, *one* in object, *one* in sympathy; in a word, *one* in everything that belongs to them in common as the people of God.

How sadly out of order it would have been for a Levite to call upon one of the uncircumcised of the nations around to assist him in carrying any part of the tabernacle! and yet we hear Christians now justifying and insisting upon the propriety of conduct not less disorderly, viz., calling upon the openly unconverted and profane to put their hands to the Lord's work. Thus we see that the Levites have become scattered, and have forsaken their posts. The Gershonite has refused to carry the curtains because he has become weary of the stranger condition; the Merarite has laid down the boards and sockets because he grew weary of bearing the cross, and the Kohathite has degraded his high and holy office by making it the common property of those who have not authority from God to put their hands thereunto. Thus the name of God is blasphemed among the heathen by us, and we do not "sigh and cry for the abominations" thus practiced, but lift up our heads in proud indifference as if it all were right, and as if the camp of God were moving onward in all heavenly order, under the guidance of the cloud, communicated by the silver trumpets. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." May we walk more humbly before our God, and, while we mourn over the sad fact that "Overturn, overturn, overturn" has been written by the finger of God upon all human arrangements, let us remember that it is only "*until He come whose right it is,*" and then

all shall be set right forever, for God, in all things, shall be fully glorified through Jesus Christ.

Thus, dear reader, have we followed Levi in his course; and oh, what a marvelous course has it been! a course, every step of which displays the visible marks of sovereign grace abounding over man's sin—grace, which led God to stoop from His throne in the heavens to visit "the habitations of cruelty," in order to lift a poor perishing sinner from thence, and bring him, through the purging power of the blood, into a place of marvelous blessing indeed, even into the very tabernacle of God, there to be employed about the instruments of God's house. We have found Levi to have been indeed the one who "was *dead* and is *alive* again, who was *lost* and is found." May we, then, adore the grace that could do such mighty acts! and if we have felt in our hearts the operations of the same grace in delivering us from the death and darkness of Egypt, may we remember that its effects should be to constrain us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. We are now in the wilderness, where we are called to carry the tabernacle. May we cheerfully move onward, "*declaring* PLAINLY that we seek a country," and anxiously look out for "THE REST THAT REMAINS."

PART I.

GLAD TIDINGS

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

There are some passages of holy Scripture which seem to contain, in a line or two, an entire volume of most precious truth. The verse which we have just penned is one of such. It is part of our Lord's memorable discourse with Nicodemus, and it embodies, in a condensed form, a very full statement of gospel truth—a statement which may well be termed, "Glad Tidings."

It should ever be borne in mind, both by preachers and those to whom they preach, that one grand object of the gospel is to bring God and the sinner together in such a way as to secure the sinner's eternal salvation. It reveals a *Saviour God* to a *lost man*. In other words, it presents God to the sinner in the very character that meets the sinner's need. A Saviour is precisely what suits the lost, just as a life-boat suits a drowning man, or a physician a sick man, or bread a hungry man. They are fitted the one for the other; and when God as a Saviour, and man as a lost sinner, meet together, the whole question is settled forever. The sinner is saved, because God is a Saviour. He is saved according to the perfection which belongs to God, in every character He wears, in every office He fills, in every relationship He sustains. To raise a question as to the full and everlasting salvation of a believing soul, is to deny that God is a Saviour. So it is in reference to justification. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier; and hence, the believer is justified according to the perfection which attaches to God in that character. If a single flaw could be detected in the title of the very weakest believer, it would be a dishonor to God as a Justifier. Grant me but this, that God is my Justifier, and I argue, in the face of every opposer and every accuser, that I am, and must be, perfectly justified.

And, on the same principle, grant me but this, that God has revealed Himself as a Saviour, and I argue, with unclouded confidence and holy boldness, that I am, and must be, perfectly saved. It does not rest upon aught in me, but simply and entirely upon God's revelation of Himself. I know He is perfect in everything; and, therefore, perfect as my Saviour. Hence, I am perfectly saved, inasmuch as the glory of God is involved in my salvation. "There is no God else beside Me: a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me." What then? "*Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else*" (Isa. xlv. 21, 22). One believing *look* from a lost sinner to a just God and a Saviour, secures eternal salvation. "*Look!*" How simple! It is not "Work"—"Do"—"Pray"—"Feel"—no; it is simply "Look." And what then? Salvation—everlasting life. It must be so, because God is a Saviour; and the precious little word "look" fully implies all this, inasmuch as it expresses the fact that the salvation which I want is found in the One to whom I look. It is all there, ready for me, and one look secures it—secures it forever—secures it for *me*. It is not a thing of to-day or to-morrow; it is an eternal reality. The bulwarks of salvation behind which the believer retreats have been erected by God Himself—the Saviour-God, on the sure foundation of Christ's atoning work; and no power of earth or hell can ever shake them. "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 6).

But let us now turn directly to the profound and comprehensive passage which forms the special subject of this paper. In it, most assuredly, we listen to the voice of a Saviour-God—the voice of Him who came down from heaven to reveal God in such a way as He had never been revealed before. It is a marvelously

blessed fact that God has been fully revealed in this world—revealed, so that we—the writer and the reader of these lines—may know Him, in all the reality of what He is—know Him, each for himself, with the utmost possible certainty, and have to do with Him, in all the blessed intimacy of personal communion.

Reader, think of this! Think, we beseech you, of this amazing privilege. You may know God for yourself, as *your* Saviour, *your* Father, *your* own very God. You may have to do with Him; you may lean upon Him, cling to Him, walk with Him, live and move and have your being in His own most blessed presence, in the bright sunshine of His loving countenance, under His own immediate eye.

This is life and peace. It is far more than mere theology or systematic divinity. These things have their value, but, be it remembered, a man may be a profound theologian, an able divine, and yet live and die without God and perish eternally. Solemn, awful, overwhelming thought! A man may go down to hell, into the blackness and darkness of an eternal night, with all the dogmas of theology at his fingers' ends. A man may sit in the professor's chair, stand in the pulpit and at the desk; he may be looked up to as a great teacher and an eloquent preacher: hundreds may sit at his feet and learn, thousands may hang on his lips and be enraptured, and, after all, he himself may descend into the pit, and spend a dismal, miserable eternity in company with the most profane and immoral.

Not so, however, with one who knows God as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. Such a one has gotten life eternal. "This," says Christ, "is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). It is not life eternal to know theology or divinity. A man may sit down to the study of these, as he would to study law or medicine, astronomy or geology, and all the while know nothing of God, and therefore be without divine life, and perish in the end.

So also as to mere religiousness. A man may be the greatest devotee in the world. He may most diligently discharge all the offices, and sedulously attend upon all the ordinances of systematic religion; he may fast and pray; hear sermons and say prayers; be most devout and exemplary; and all the while know nothing of God in Christ; yea, he may live and die without God, and sink into hell forever. Look at Nicodemus. Where could you find a better sample of religious human nature than in him? A man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews, a master in Israel; one, moreover, who seemed to discern in the miracles of our Lord the clear proofs of His divine mission; and yet the word to him was, "Ye must be born again." We have no need, surely, to go farther than this to prove that a man may be not only religious, but actually a guide and a teacher of others, and yet not have divine life in his soul.

But it is not so with one who knows God in Christ. Such a one has life and an object. He has God Himself for his priceless portion. This is divine. It lies at the very foundation of personal Christianity and true religion. It is above and beyond everything. It is not, we repeat, mere theology, divinity, or religiousness; it is God Himself, known, trusted, and enjoyed. It is a grand, unmistakable reality. It is the soul of theology, the groundwork of divinity, the life of true religion. There is nothing in all this world like it. It is something which must be *felt* in order to be known. It is acquaintance with God, confidence in Him, and enjoyment of Him.

Now, it may be that the reader is disposed to ask, "How can I possess this priceless treasure? How can I know God for myself, in this living, saving, powerful manner? If it be true that without this personal knowledge of God I *must* perish eternally, then how am I to obtain it? What am I to do, what am I to be, in order to know God?" The answer is, God has revealed Himself. If He had not, we may say with decision that nothing that we could do, nothing that we could be, nothing in us or of us, could possibly make us acquainted with God. If God had not manifested Himself, we should have remained forever in ignorance

of Him and perished in our ignorance. But, seeing that He has come forth from the thick darkness and showed Himself, we may know Him according to the truth of His own revelation, and find, in that knowledge, everlasting life, and a spring of blessedness at which our ransomed souls shall drink throughout the golden ages of eternity.

We know of nothing which so clearly and forcibly proves man's utter incompetency to do aught towards procuring life, as the fact that the possession of that life is based upon the knowledge of God: and this knowledge of God must rest upon the *revelation* of God. In a word, to know God is life, to be ignorant of Him is death.

But where is He to be known? This is, in very deed, a grave question. Many a one has had to cry out, with Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." Where is God to be found? Am I to look for Him in creation? Doubtless, His hand is visible there; but ah! that will not do for me. A Creator-God will not suit a lost sinner. *The hand of power* will not avail for a poor, guilty wretch like me. I want *a heart of love*. Yes, I want a heart that can love me in all my guilt and misery. Where can I find this? Shall I look into the wide domain of providence—the widely extended sphere of God's government? Has God revealed Himself there in such a way as to meet me, a poor lost one? Will providence and government avail for one who knows himself to be a hell-deserving sinner? Clearly not. If I look at these things, I may see what will perplex and confound me. I am short-sighted and ignorant, and wholly unable to explain the ins and outs, the bearings and issues, the why and the wherefore, of a single event in my own life, or in the history of this world. Am I able to explain all about the loss of *The London*? Can I account for the fact that a most valuable life is suddenly cut short, and an apparently useless one prolonged? There is a husband and the father of a large family; he seems perfectly indispensable to his domestic circle and yet, all in a moment, he is cut down, and they are left in sorrow and destitution; while, on the other hand, yonder lies a poor bed-ridden creature, who has outlived all her relations, and is dependent on the parish, or on individual benevolence. She has lain there for years, a burden to some, no use to any. Can I account for this? Am I competent to interpret the voice of Providence in this deeply mysterious dispensation? Certainly not. I have nothing in or of myself wherewith to thread my way through the mazes of the labyrinth of what is called providence. I cannot find a Saviour-God there.

Well, then, shall I turn to the law—to the Mosaic economy—the Levitical ceremonial? Shall I find what I want there? Will a Lawgiver, on the top of a fiery mount, wrapped in clouds and thick darkness, sending forth thunders and lightnings, or hidden behind a veil—will such a One avail for me? Alas! alas! I cannot meet Him—I cannot answer His demands nor fulfil the conditions. I am told to love Him with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my strength; but I do not know Him. I am blind and cannot see. I am alienated from the life of God, an enemy by wicked works. Sin has blinded my mind, blunted my conscience, and hardened my heart. The devil has completely perverted my moral being, and led me into a state of positive rebellion against God. I want to be renewed in the very source of my being ere I can do what the law demands. How can I be thus renewed? Only by the knowledge of God. But God is not revealed in the law. Nay, He is hidden—hidden behind an impenetrable cloud, an unrent veil. Hence I cannot know Him there. I am compelled to retire from that fiery mount, and from that unrent veil, and from the whole economy of which these were the characteristic features, the prominent objects, still crying out, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him." In a word, then, neither in creation, nor in providence, nor in the law, is God revealed as "a just God and a Saviour." I see a God of power in creation: a God of wisdom in providence; a God of justice in the law; a God of love *only* in the face of Jesus Christ. "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*" (2 Cor. v. 19).

To this stupendous fact we call the reader's earnest attention; that is, if he be one who does not yet know

the Lord. It is of the very last possible importance that he be clear as to this. Without it there can be nothing right. To know God is the first step. It is not merely knowing some things about God. It is not unrenewed nature turning religious, trying to do better, endeavouring to keep the law. No, reader; it is none of these things. It is God, known in the face of Jesus Christ. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is the deep and blessed secret of the whole matter. The reader, so far as his natural condition is concerned, is in a state of darkness. There is not so much as a single ray of spiritual light. He is, spiritually and morally, just what creation was physically before that sublime and commanding utterance fell from the lips of the Almighty Creator, "Let there be light." All is dark and chaotic, for the "god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. iv. 4-6).

Here are two things; namely, the god of this world blinding the mind, and seeking to hinder the in-shining of the precious life-giving beams of the light of God's glory; and, on the other hand, God, in His marvelous grace, shining in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus all hinges upon the grand reality of the knowledge of God. Is there light? It is because God is known. Is there darkness? It is because God is not known. No doubt there are various measures in the experience and exhibition of this light: but there is light, because there is the knowledge of God. So also there may be various forms of darkness; some more hideous than others; but there is darkness because God is not known. The knowledge of God is light and life. Ignorance of God is darkness and death. A man may enrich himself with all the treasures of science and literature; but if he does not know God, he is in the darkness of primeval night. But, on the other hand, a man may be profoundly ignorant of all human learning; but if he knows God, he walks in broad day-light.

In the passage of Scripture which is engaging our attention, namely, John iii. 16, we have a very remarkable illustration of the character of the entire Gospel of John, and especially the opening chapters. It is impossible to meditate upon it without seizing this interesting fact. In it we are introduced to God Himself, in that wondrous aspect of His character and nature, as loving *the world*, and giving His Son. In it, too, we find, not only the "world" as a whole, but the individual sinner, under that most satisfactory title of "whosoever." Thus God and the sinner are together—God, *loving* and *giving*; and the sinner, *believing* and *having*. It is not God judging and exacting; but God loving and giving. The former was law; the latter, grace; that was Judaism; this, Christianity. In the one, we see God demanding obedience in order to life; in the other, we see God giving life as the only basis of obedience. In the one, we see man struggling for life, but never obtaining it; in the other, we see man receiving life as a free gift, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the contrast between the two systems—a contrast which cannot be too deeply pondered. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John i. 17).

But let us mark the way in which this is unfolded in our text. "God so loved the world." Here we have the wide aspect of the love of God. It is not confined to any particular nation, tribe, caste, or family. It embraces the whole world. God is love; and, being so, it is not a question of the fitness or worthiness of the object of His love. It is what He *is*. He is love, and He cannot deny Himself. It is the very energy and activity of His nature. The heart may have many a question, many an exercise as to its state and condition before God, and very right it should have them. The Spirit Himself may produce such exercises and raise such questions; but, after all, the grand truth shines forth in all its lustre, "God is love." Whatever we are, whatever the world is, that is what God is; and we know that the truth as to God forms the deep and rich substratum which underlies the whole system of Christianity. The soul may pass through deep and sore conflict, under the sense of its own wretchedness; there may be many doubts and fears; many dark and heavy clouds; weeks, months, or years may be spent under the law, in one's inward self-consciousness,

and that, moreover, long after the mere intellect has yielded its assent to the principles and doctrines of evangelical truth. But, after all, we must be brought into direct personal contact with God Himself—with what He is—with His nature and character, as He has revealed Himself in the gospel. We have to acquaint ourselves with Him, and He is love.

Observe, it does not say merely that God is *loving*, but that He is *love*. It is not only that love is an attribute of His character, but it is the very activity of His nature. We do not read that God is justice, or holiness; He is just and He is holy; but it would not express the full and blessed truth to say that God is loving; He is much more, He is love itself. Hence, when the sinner—"whosoever" he be, it matters not—is brought to see his own total and absolute ruin, his hopeless wretchedness, his guilt and misery, the utter vanity and worthlessness of all within and around him, (and there is nothing in the whole world that can satisfy his heart, and nothing in his heart that can satisfy God, or satisfy even his own conscience) when these things are opened in any measure to his view, then is he met by this grand substantial truth that "God is love," and that He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son.

Here is life and rest for the soul. Here is salvation, full, free, and everlasting, for the poor, needy, guilty, lost one;—salvation resting not upon anything in man or of man, upon aught that he is or can be, aught that he has done or can do, but simply upon what God is and has done. God *loves* and *gives*, and the sinner *believes* and *has*. This is far beyond creation, government, or law. In creation, God spake and it was done. He called worlds into existence by the word of His mouth. But we hear nothing, throughout the entire record of creation, of God loving and giving.

So as to government, we see God ruling in unsearchable wisdom, amid the armies of heaven, and among the children of men: but we cannot comprehend Him. We can only say, as to this subject, that

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will."

Finally, as to the law, it is, from beginning to end, a perfect system of command and prohibition—a system perfect in its action as testing man, and making manifest his entire alienation from God. "The law worketh wrath." And again, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But what could such a system do in a world of sinners? Could it give life? Impossible. Why? Because man could not fulfil its holy requirements. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, then verily, righteousness should have been by the law." But no; the law was a ministration of death and condemnation. (See 2 Cor. iii.) The only effect of the law, to anyone who is under it, is the pressure of death upon the soul, and of guilt and condemnation upon the conscience. It cannot possibly be otherwise with an honest soul under the law.

What, then, is needed? Simply this, the knowledge of the love of God, and of the precious gift which that love has bestowed. This is the eternal groundwork of all. Love, and the gift of love. For, be it observed and ever remembered, that God's love could never have reached us save through the medium of that gift. God is holy, and we are sinful. How could we come near Him? How could we dwell in His holy presence? How could sin and holiness ever abide in company? Impossible. Justice demands the condemnation of sin; and if love will save the sinner, it must do so at no less a cost than the gift of the only-begotten Son. Darius loved Daniel, and labored hard to save him from the lions' den; but his love was powerless because of the unbending law of the Medes and Persians. He spent the night in sorrow and fasting. He could weep at the mouth of the den; but he could not save his friend. His love was not mighty to save. If he had offered himself to the lions instead of his friend, it would have been morally glorious; but he did not. His love told itself forth in unavailing tears and lamentations. The law of the Persian kingdom was more powerful than the love of the Persian king. The law, in its stern majesty, triumphed over an impotent love which had nothing but fruitless tears to bestow upon its object.

But the love of God is not like this—eternal and universal praise to His name! His love is mighty to save. It *reigns* through righteousness. How is this? Because "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." The law had declared in words of awful solemnity, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Was this law less stern, less majestic, less stringent, than the law of the Medes and Persians? Surely not. How then, was it to be disposed of? It was to be magnified and made honorable, vindicated and established. Not one jot or tittle of the law could ever be set aside. How, then, was the difficulty to be solved? Three things had to be done: the law had to be magnified; sin condemned; the sinner saved. How could these grand results be reached? We have the answer in two bold and vivid lines from one of our own poets—

"On Jesus' cross this record's graved,
Let sin be damned, and sinners saved."

Precious record! May many an anxious sinner read and believe it! Such was the amazing love of God, that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. His love cost Him nothing less than the Son of His bosom. When it was a question of creating worlds, it cost Him but the word of His mouth: but

when it was a question of loving a world of sinners, it cost His only-begotten Son. The love of God is a holy love, a righteous love, a love acting in harmony with all the attributes of His nature, and the claims of His throne. "Grace *reigns*, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Christ Jesus our Lord." The soul can never be set at liberty till this truth be fully laid hold of. There may be certain vague hopes in the mercy of God, and a measure of confidence in the atoning work of Jesus, all true and real so far as it goes; but true liberty of heart cannot possibly be enjoyed until it is seen and understood that God has glorified Himself in the manner of His love toward us. Conscience could never be tranquilized, nor Satan silenced, if sin had not been perfectly judged and put away. But "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." What depth and power in the little word "so"!

It may here be needful to meet a difficulty which often occurs to anxious souls, in reference to the question of appropriation. Thousands have been harassed and perplexed by this question, at some stage or other of their spiritual history; and it is not improbable that many who shall read these pages may be glad of a few words on the subject. Many may feel disposed to ask, "How am I to know that this love, and the gift of love, are intended for *me*? What warrant have *I* for believing that 'everlasting life' is for *me*? I know the plan of salvation; I believe in the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness and justification of all who truly believe. I am convinced of the truth of all that the Bible declares. I believe we are all sinners, and moreover, that we can do nothing to save ourselves—that we need to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and to be taught and led by the Holy Ghost, ere we can please God here, and dwell with Him hereafter. All this I fully believe, and yet I have no assurance that I am saved, and I want to know on what authority I am to believe that my sins are forgiven and that I have everlasting life."

If the foregoing be, in any measure, the language of the reader—if it be, at all, the expression of his difficulty, we would, in the first place, call his attention to two words which occur in our precious text (John iii. 16), namely, "*world*" and "*whosoever*." It seems utterly impossible for anyone to refuse the application of these two words. For what, let us ask, is the meaning of the term "*world*"? What does it embrace? or, rather, what does it not embrace? When our Lord declares that "God so loved the world," on what ground can the reader exclude himself from the range, scope, and application of this divine love? On no other ground whatever, unless he can show that he alone belongs not to the world, but to some other sphere of being. If it were declared that "the world" is hopelessly condemned, could anyone making a part of that world avoid the application of the sentence! Could he exclude himself from it? Impossible. How then can he—why should he—exclude himself, when it is a question of God's free love, and of salvation by Christ Jesus?

But, further, we would ask, What is the meaning, what is the force of the familiar word, "*whosoever*"? Assuredly it means "*anybody*;" and if anybody, why not the reader? It is infinitely better, infinitely surer and more satisfactory to find the word "*whosoever*" in the gospel than to find my own name there, inasmuch as there may be a thousand persons in the world of the same name; but "*whosoever*" applies to me as distinctly as though I were the only sinner on the face of the earth.

Thus, then, the very words of the gospel message—the very terms used to set forth the glad tidings, are such as leave no possible ground for a difficulty as to their application. If we listen to our Lord in the days of His flesh, we hear such words as these: "God so loved the *world* that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Again, if we listen to Him after His resurrection, we hear these words, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*" (Mark xvi.). And lastly, if we listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost sent from a risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, we hear such words as these: "The same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon Him. For *whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 12, 13).

In all the above-cited passages we have two terms used, one general, the other particular, and both together so presenting the message of salvation as to leave no room whatever for anyone to refuse its application. If "all the world" is the scope, and "every creature" is the object of the precious gospel of Christ, then, on what ground can anyone exclude himself? Where is there authority for any sinner out of hell to say that the glad tidings of salvation are not for him? There is none. Salvation is as free as the air we breathe—free as the dewdrops that refresh the earth—free as the sunbeams that shine upon our pathway; and if any attempt to limit its application, they are neither in harmony with the mind of Christ, nor in sympathy with the heart of God.

But it may be that some of our readers would, at this stage of the subject, feel disposed to ask us, "How do you dispose of the question of election?" We reply, "Very simply, by leaving it where God has placed it, namely, as a landmark in the inheritance of the spiritual Israel, and not as a stumbling-block in the pathway of the anxious inquirer." This we believe to be the true way of dealing with the deeply important doctrine of election. The more we ponder the subject, the more thoroughly are we convinced that it is a mistake on the part of the evangelist or preacher of the gospel to qualify his message, hamper his subject, or perplex his hearers, by the doctrine of election or predestination. He has to do with lost sinners in the discharge of his blessed ministry. He meets men where they are, on the broad ground of our common ruin our common guilt, our common condemnation. He meets them with a message of full, free, present, personal, and eternal salvation—a message which comes fresh, fervent, and glowing from the very bosom of God. His ministry is, as the Holy Ghost declares in 2 Cor. v., "a ministry of reconciliation," the glorious characteristics of which are these, "God in Christ" ... "reconciling the world unto Himself" ... "not imputing their trespasses;" and the marvelous foundation of which is, that God has made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Does this trench, in the smallest degree, upon the blessed and clearly established truth of election? By no means. It leaves it, in all its integrity and in its full value, as a grand fundamental truth of Holy Scripture, exactly where God has placed it; not as a preliminary question to be settled ere the sinner comes to Jesus, but as a most precious consolation and encouragement to him when he has come. This makes all the difference. If the sinner be called upon to settle beforehand the question of his election, how is he to set about it? Whither is he to turn for a solution? Where shall he find a divine warrant for believing that he is one of the elect? Can he find a single line of Scripture on which to base his faith as to his election? He cannot. He can find scores of passages declaring him to be lost, guilty and undone—scores of passages to assure him of his total inability to do aught in the matter of his own salvation—hundreds of passages unfolding the free love of God, the value and efficacy of the atonement of Christ, and assuring him of a hearty welcome to come *just as he is*, and make God's blessed salvation his own. But if it be needed for him to settle the prior question of his predestination and election, then is his case hopeless, and he must, in so far as he is in earnest, be plunged in black despair.

And is it not thus with thousands at this moment through the misapplication of the doctrine of election? We fully believe it is, and hence our anxiety to help our readers by setting the matter in what we judge to be the true light before their minds. We believe it to be of the utmost importance for the anxious inquirer to know that the standpoint from which he is called to view the cross of Christ is not the standpoint of election, but of conscious ruin. The grace of God meets him as a lost, dead, guilty sinner; not as an elect one. This is an unspeakable mercy, inasmuch as he knows he is the former, but cannot know that he is the latter until the gospel has come to him in power. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he know it? "Because our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. i. 4, 5). Paul preached to the Thessalonians as lost sinners; and when the gospel had laid hold of them as lost, he could write to them as elect.

This puts election in its right place. If the reader will turn for a moment to Acts xvii., he will there see how Paul discharged his business as an evangelist amongst the Thessalonians: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." So, also, in that passage at the opening of 1 Cor. xv.: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures" (verses 1-4).

From this passage, and many others which might be quoted, we learn that the apostle preached not merely a doctrine, but a person. He did not preach election. He taught it to saints, but never preached it to sinners. This should be the evangelist's model at all times. We never once find the apostles preaching election. They preached Christ—they unfolded the goodness of God—His loving-kindness—His tender mercy—His pardoning love—His gracious readiness to receive all who come in their true character and condition as lost sinners. Such was their mode of preaching, or, rather, such was the mode of the Holy Ghost in them; and such, too, was the mode of the blessed Master Himself. "*Come unto Me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*." "*If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink*." "*Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*" (Matt. xi.; John vi., vii.).

Here are no stumbling-blocks in the way of anxious inquirers—no preliminary questions to be settled—no conditions to be fulfilled—no theological difficulties to be solved. No, the sinner is met on his own ground—met as he is—met just now. There is rest for the weary, drink for the thirsty, life for the dead, pardon for the guilty, salvation for the lost. Do these free invitations touch the doctrine of election? Assuredly not. And what is more, the doctrine of election does not touch them. In other words, a full and free gospel leaves perfectly untouched the grand and all-important truth of election; and the truth of election, in its proper place, leaves the gospel of the grace of God on its own broad and blessed base, and in all its divine length, breadth, and fulness. The gospel meets us as lost, and saves us; and then, when we know ourselves as saved, the precious doctrine of election comes in to establish us in the fact that we can never be lost. It never was the purpose of God that poor anxious souls should be harassed with theological questions or points of doctrine. No; blessed forever be His name, it is His gracious desire that the healing balm of His pardoning love, and the cleansing efficacy of the atoning blood of Jesus, should be applied to the spiritual wounds of every sin-sick soul. And as to the doctrines of predestination and election, He has unfolded them in His Word to comfort His saints, not to perplex poor sinners. They shine like precious gems on the page of inspiration, but they were never intended to lie as stumbling-blocks in the way of earnest seekers after life and peace. They are deposited in the hand of the teacher to be unfolded in the bosom of the family of God; but they are not intended for the evangelist, whose blessed mission is to the highways and hedges of a lost world. They are designed to feed and comfort the children, not to scare and stumble the sinner. We would say, and that with real earnestness, to all evangelists, Do not hamper your preaching with theological questions of any sort or description. Preach Christ. Unfold the deep and everlasting love of a Saviour-God. Seek to bring the guilty, conscience-smitten sinner into the very presence of a pardoning God. Thunder, if you please, if so led, at the conscience—thunder loud at sin—thunder forth the dread realities of the great white throne, the lake of fire, and everlasting torment; but see that you aim at bringing the guilt-stricken conscience to rest in the atoning virtues of the blood of Christ. Then you can hand over the fruits of your ministry to the divinely qualified, to be instructed in the deeper mysteries of the faith of Christ. You may rest assured that the faithful discharge of your duty as an

evangelist will never lead you to trespass on the domain of sound theology.

And to the anxious inquirer we would say with equal earnestness, Let nothing stand in your way in coming this moment to Jesus. Let theology speak as it may, you are to listen to the voice of Jesus, who says, "*Come unto Me.*" Be assured there is no hindrance, no difficulty, no hitch, no question, no condition. You are a lost sinner, and Jesus is a full Saviour. Put your trust in Him, and you are saved forever. Believe in Him, and you will know your place amongst the "elect of God" who are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." Bring your sins to Jesus and He will pardon them, cancel them by His blood, and clothe you in a spotless robe of divine righteousness. May God's Spirit lead you now to cast yourself simply and entirely upon that precious, all-sufficient Saviour!

We will now notice, very briefly, three distinct evils resulting from a wrong application of the doctrine of election, namely:

I. The discouragement of really earnest souls, who ought to be helped on in every possible way. If such persons are repulsed by the question of election, the result must be disastrous in the extreme. If they are told that the glad tidings of salvation are only for the elect—that Christ died only for such, and hence only such can be saved—that unless they are elect they have no right to apply to themselves the benefits of the death of Christ: if, in short, they are turned from Jesus to theology—from the heart of a loving, pardoning God to the cold and withering dogmas of systematic divinity, it is impossible to say where they may end; they may take refuge either in superstition on the one hand, or in infidelity on the other. They may end in high church, broad church, or no church at all. What they really want is Christ, the living, loving, precious, all-sufficient Christ of God. He is the true food for anxious souls.

II. But, in the second place, careless souls are rendered more careless still by a false application of the doctrine of election. Such persons, when pressed as to their state and prospects, will fold their arms and say, "You know I cannot believe unless God give me the power. If I am one of the elect, I must be saved; if not, I cannot. I can do nothing, but must wait God's time." All this false and flimsy reasoning should be exposed and demolished. It will not stand for a moment in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ. Each one will learn there that election furnished no excuse whatever, inasmuch as it never was set up by God as a barrier to the sinner's salvation. The word is, "*Whosoever* will, let him take the water of life *freely.*" The very same form of speech and style of language which removes the stumbling-block from the feet of the anxious inquirer snatches the plea from the lips of the careless rejecter. No one is shut out. All are invited. There is neither barrier on the one hand, nor a plea on the other. All are made welcome; and all are responsible. Hence, if any one presumes to excuse himself for refusing God's salvation, which is as clear as a sunbeam, by urging God's decrees, which are entirely hidden, he will find himself fatally mistaken.

III. And now, in the third and last place, we have frequently seen with real sorrow of heart the earnest, loving, large-hearted evangelist damped and crippled by a false application of the truth of election. This should be most carefully avoided. We hold that it is not the business of the evangelist to preach election. If he is rightly instructed, he will *hold* it; but if he is rightly directed, he will not *preach* it.

In a word, then, the precious doctrine of election is not to be a stumbling-block to the anxious—a plea for the careless—a damper to the fervent evangelist. May God's Spirit give us to feel the adjusting power of truth!

Having thus briefly endeavored to clear away any difficulty arising from the misuse of the precious doctrine of election, and to show the reader, "*whosoever*" he be, that there is no hindrance whatever to his

full and hearty acceptance of God's free gift, even the gift of His only-begotten Son, it now only remains for us to consider the result, in every case, of this acceptance, as set forth in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here, then, we have the result in the case of every one who believes in Jesus. He shall never perish, but possesses everlasting life. But who can attempt to unfold all that is included in this word "perish"? What mortal tongue can set forth the horrors of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"? We believe, assuredly, that none but the One who used the word, in speaking to Nicodemus, can fully expound it to anyone; but we feel called upon to bear our decided and unequivocal testimony as to what He has taught on the solemn truth of eternal punishment. We have occasionally referred to this subject, but we believe it demands a formal notice; and inasmuch as the word "*perish*" occurs in the passage which has been occupying our thoughts, we cannot do better than call the reader's attention to it.

It is a serious and melancholy fact that the enemy of souls and of the truth of God is leading thousands, both in Europe and America, to call in question the momentous fact of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. This he does on various grounds, and by various arguments, adapted to the habits of thought and moral condition and intellectual standpoint of individuals. Some he seeks to persuade that God is too kind to send anyone to a place of torment. It is contrary to His benevolent mind and His beneficent nature to inflict pain on any of His creatures.

Now, to all who stand, or affect to stand, upon this ground of argument, we would suggest the important inquiry, "What is to be done with the sins of those who die impenitent and unbelieving?" Whatever there may be in the idea that God is too kind to send sinners to hell, it is certain that He is too holy to let sin into heaven. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. i. 13). God and evil cannot dwell together. This is plain. How, then, is the case to be met? If God cannot let sin into heaven, what is to be done with the sinner who dies in his sins? He must perish! But what does this mean? Does it mean annihilation—that is, the utter extinction or blotting out of the very existence of body and soul? Nay, reader, this cannot be. Many would like this, no doubt. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," would, alas, suit many thousands of the sons and daughters of pleasure who think only of the present moment, and who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue. There are millions on the surface of the globe who are bartering their eternal happiness for a few hours of guilty pleasure, and the crafty foe of mankind seeks to persuade such that there is no such place as hell, no such thing as the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and in order to obtain a footing for this fatal suggestion, he bases it upon the plausible and imposing notion of the kindness of God.

Reader, do not believe the arch-deceiver. Remember, God is holy. He cannot let sin into His presence. If you die in your sins you must perish, and this word "perish" involves, according to the clear testimony of Holy Scripture, eternal misery and torment in hell. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, in His solemn description of the judgment of the nations: "Then shall the King say also to them on His left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41). And while you harken to these awfully solemn accents, remember that the word translated "everlasting" occurs seventy times in the New Testament, and is applied as follows: "Everlasting fire"—"eternal life"—"everlasting punishment"—"eternal damnation"—"everlasting habitations"—"the everlasting God"—"eternal weight of glory"—"everlasting destruction"—"everlasting consolation"—"eternal glory"—"eternal salvation"—"eternal judgment"—"eternal redemption"—"the eternal Spirit"—"eternal inheritance"—"everlasting kingdom"—"eternal fire."

Now, we ask any candid, thoughtful person, upon what principle can a word be said to mean *eternal* when applied to the Holy Ghost or to God, and only *temporary* when applied to hell-fire or the punishment of the wicked? If it means eternal in the one case, why not also in the other? We have just glanced at a Greek Concordance, and we should like to ask, Would it be right to mark off some half-dozen passages in which the word "everlasting" occurs, and write opposite to each these words: "Everlasting here only means for a time"? The very thought is monstrous. It would be a daring and blasphemous insult offered to the volume of inspiration. No, reader, be assured of it, you cannot touch the word "everlasting" in one case without touching it also in all the seventy cases in which it occurs. It is a dangerous thing to tamper with the Word of the living God. It is infinitely better to bow down under its holy authority. It is worse than useless to seek to avoid the plain meaning and solemn force of that word "perish" as applied to the immortal soul of man. It involves, beyond all question, the awful, the ineffably awful reality of burning forever in the flames of hell. This is what Scripture means by "perishing." The votary of pleasure, or the lover of money, may seek to forget this. They may seek to drown all thought of it in the glass or in the busy mart. The sentimentalist may rave about the divine benevolence; the skeptic may reason about the possibility of eternal fire; but we are intensely anxious that the reader should rise from this paper with the firm and deeply wrought conclusion and hearty belief that the punishment of all who die in their sins will be eternal in hell as surely as the blessedness of all who die in the faith of Christ will be eternal in the heavens. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost would most assuredly have used a different word, when speaking of the former, from that which He applies to the latter. This, we conceive, is beyond all question.

But there is another objection urged against the doctrine of eternal punishment. It is frequently said, "How can we suppose that God would inflict eternal punishment as a penalty for a few short years of sin?" We reply, It is beginning at the wrong end to argue in this way. It is not a question of time as viewed from man's standpoint, but of the gravity of sin itself as looked at from God's standpoint. And how is this question to be solved? Only by looking at the Cross. If you want to know what sin is in God's sight, you must look at what it cost Him to put it away. It is by the standard of Christ's infinite sacrifice, and by that alone, that you can rightly measure sin. Men may compare their few years with God's eternity; they may compare their short span of life with that boundless eternity that stretches beyond; they may seek to put a few years of sin into one scale, and an eternity of woe and torment into the other, and thus attempt to reach a just conclusion: but it will never do to argue thus. The question is, Did it require an infinite atonement to put away sin? If so, the punishment of sin must be eternal. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver from the consequences of sin, those consequences must be eternal.

In a word, then, we must look at sin from God's point of view, and measure it by His standard, else we shall never have a just sense of what it is or what it deserves. It is the height of folly for men to attempt to lay down a rule as to the amount or duration of the punishment due to sin. God alone can settle this. And, after all, what was it that produced all the misery and wretchedness, the sickness and sorrow, the death and desolation, of well-nigh six thousand years? Just *one* act of disobedience—the eating of a forbidden fruit. Can man explain this? Can human reason explain how one act produced such an overwhelming amount of misery? It cannot. Well, then, if it cannot do this, how can it be trusted when it attempts to decide the question as to what is due to sin? Woe be to all those who commit themselves to its guidance on this most momentous point!

Ah, reader, you must see that God alone can estimate sin and its just deserts, and He alone can tell us all about it. And has He not done so? Yes, verily, He has measured sin in the cross of His Son; and there, too, He has set forth in the most impressive manner what it deserves. What, think you, must that be that caused the bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If God forsook His only-begotten Son when He was made sin, must He not also forsake all who are found in their sins? But how can they ever

get rid of them? We believe the conclusion is unavoidable. We consider that the infinite nature of the atonement proves unanswerably the doctrine of eternal punishment. That peerless and precious sacrifice is at once the foundation of our eternal life and of our deliverance from eternal death. It delivers from eternal wrath and introduces to eternal glory. It saves from the endless misery of hell and procures for us the endless bliss of heaven. Thus, whatever side of the Cross we look at, or from whatever side we view it, we see eternity stamped upon it. If we view it from the gloomy depths of hell or from the sunny heights of heaven, we see it to be the same infinite, eternal, divine reality. It is by the Cross we must measure both the blessedness of heaven and the misery of hell. Those who put their trust in that blessed One who died on the cross obtain everlasting life and felicity. Those who reject Him must sink into endless perdition.

We do not by any means pretend to handle this great question theologically, or to adduce all the arguments that might be advanced in defence of the doctrine of eternal punishment; but there is one further consideration which we must suggest to the reader as tending to lead him to a sound conclusion, and that is the immortality of the soul.^[15] "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The fall of man in nowise touched the question of the soul's immortality. If, therefore, the soul is immortal, annihilation is impossible. The soul must live forever. Overwhelming thought! Forever! Forever! Forever! The whole moral being sinks under the awful magnitude of the thought. It surpasses all conception and baffles all mental calculation. Human arithmetic can only deal with the finite. It has no figures by which to represent a never-ending eternity. But the writer and the reader must live throughout eternity either in that bright and blessed world above or in that terrible place where hope can never come.

May God's Spirit impress our hearts more and more with the solemnity of eternity, and of immortal souls going down into hell. We are deplorably deficient in feeling as to these weighty realities. We are daily thrown in contact with people, we buy and sell and carry on intercourse in various ways with those who must live forever, and yet how rarely do we seek occasion to press upon them the awfulness of eternity and the appalling condition of all who die without a personal interest in the blood of Christ!

Reader, let us ask God to make us more earnest, more solemn, more faithful, more zealous in pleading with souls, in warning others to flee from the wrath to come. We want to live more in the light of eternity, and then we shall be better able to deal with others.

It only remains for us now to ponder the last clause of the fruitful passage of Scripture which has been under consideration (John iii. 16). It sets forth the positive result, in every case, of simple faith in the Son of God. It declares, in the simplest and clearest way, the fact that every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is a possessor of everlasting life. It is not merely that his sins are blotted out; that is blessedly true. Nor is it merely that he is saved from the consequences of his guilt, which is equally true. But there is more. The believer in Jesus has a new life, and that life is in the Son of God. He is placed upon a new footing altogether. He is no longer looked at in the old Adam condition, but in a risen Christ.

This is an immense truth, and one of deepest possible moment. We earnestly pray the reader's calm and prayerful attention while we seek, in some feeble way, to present to him what we believe to be wrapped up in the last clause of John iii. 16.

There is in the minds of many a very imperfect sense of what we get by faith in Christ. Some seem to view the atoning work of Christ merely as a remedial measure for the sins of our old nature—the payment of debts contracted in our old condition. That it is all this we need not say; blessed be God for the precious truth. But it is much more. It is not merely that the sins are atoned for, but the nature which committed them is condemned and set aside by the cross of Christ, and is to be "*reckoned*" dead by the believer. It is not merely that the debts contracted in the old condition are canceled, but the old condition itself is

completely ignored by God, and is to be so accounted by the believer.

This great truth is doctrinally unfolded in 2 Cor. v., where we read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (ver. 17). The apostle does not say, "If any man be in Christ he is pardoned—his sins are forgiven—his debts paid." All this is divinely true; but the statement just quoted goes very much farther. It declares that a man in Christ is a new creation altogether. It is not the old nature pardoned, but completely set aside, with all its belongings, and a new creation introduced in which there is not a single shred of the old. "All things are become new; and all things are of God."

Now this gives immense relief to the heart. Indeed, we question if any soul can enter into the full liberty of the gospel of Christ until he lay hold, in some measure, of the truth of the "new creation." There may be a looking to Christ for pardon, a vague hope of getting to heaven at the last, a measure of reliance on the goodness and mercy of God—there may be all this, and yet no just sense of the meaning of "everlasting life," no happy consciousness of being "a new creation"—no understanding of the grand fact that the old Adam nature is entirely set aside, the old condition in which we stood done away in God's sight.

But it is more than probable that some of our readers may be at a loss to know what is meant by such terms as "the old Adam nature"—"the old condition"—"the flesh"—"the old man," and such like. These expressions may fall strangely on the ears of those for whom we specially write; and we certainly wish to avoid shooting over the heads of our readers. As God is our witness, there is one thing we earnestly desire, one object which we would ever keep before our minds, and that is the instruction and edification of our readers; and therefore we would rather run the risk of being tedious than make use of phrases which convey no clear or intelligible idea to the mind. Such terms as "the old man"—"the flesh," and the like, are used in Scripture in manifold places: for example, in Rom. vi. we read, "Our *old man* is crucified with Him (Christ), that *the body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (ver. 6).

Now what does the apostle mean by the "old man"? We believe he means man as in that Adam nature which we inherited from our first parents. And what does he mean by "the body of sin"? We believe he means the whole system or condition in which we stood in our unregenerate, unrenewed, unconverted state. The old Adam, then, is declared to be crucified—the old condition of sin is said to be destroyed (annulled)—by the death of Christ. Hence the soul that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is privileged to know that he—his sinful, guilty self—is looked upon by God as dead and set aside completely. He has no more existence as such before God. He is dead and buried.

Observe, it is not merely that our sins are forgiven, our debts paid, our guilt atoned for; but the man in the nature that committed the sins, contracted the debts, and incurred the guilt, is put forever out of God's sight. It is not God's way to forgive us our sins and yet leave us in the same relations in which we committed them. No; He has, in His marvelous grace and vast plan, condemned and abolished forever, for the believer, the old Adam relationship, with all its belongings, so that it is no longer recognized by Him. We are declared, by the voice of holy Scripture, to be "crucified"—"dead"—"buried"—"risen" with Christ. God tells us we are so, and we are to "*reckon*" ourselves to be so. It is a matter of faith, and not of feeling. If I look at myself from *my* standpoint, or judge by my feelings, I shall never, can never understand this truth. And why? Because I feel myself to be just the same sinful creature as ever. I feel that there is sin in me; that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; that my old nature is in nowise changed or improved; that it has the same evil tendencies as ever, and, if not mortified and kept down by the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, it will break out in its true character.

And it is just here, we doubt not, that so many sincere souls are perplexed and troubled. They are looking at themselves, and *reasoning* upon what they see and feel, instead of resting in the truth of God, and *reckoning* themselves to be what God tells them they are. They find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile what they feel in themselves with what they read in the word of God—to make their inward self-consciousness harmonize with God's revelation. But we must remember that faith takes God at His word. It ever thinks with Him on all points. It believes what He says because He says it. Hence, if God tells me that my old man is crucified, that He no longer sees me as in the old Adam state, but in a risen Christ, I am to believe, like a little child, what He tells me, and walk in the faith of it from day to day. If I look in at myself for evidences of the truth of what God says, it is not faith at all. Abraham "considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. iv. 19, 20).

This is the great principle which underlies the whole Christian system. "Abraham believed God," not something about God, but God Himself. This is faith. It is taking God's thoughts in place of our own. It is, in short, allowing God to think for us.

Now, when we apply this to the subject before us, it makes it most simple. He that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life. Mark, it is not he that believeth something about the Son of God. No, it is he that believeth in Himself. It is a question of simple faith in the person of Christ; and everyone that has this faith is the actual possessor of everlasting life. This is the direct and positive statement of our Lord in the Gospels. It is repeated over and over again. Nor is this all. Not only does the believer thus possess eternal life, but by the further light which the epistles throw upon this grand question he may see that his old self—that which he was in nature—that which the apostle designates "the old man"—is accounted by God dead and buried. This may be difficult to understand; but the reader must remember he must believe not because he understands, but because it is written in God's word. It is not said, "Abraham understood God." No; but he "believed God." It is when the heart believes that light is poured in upon the understanding. If I wait till I understand in order to believe, I am leaning to my own understanding, instead of committing myself in childlike faith to God's word.

Reader, ponder this! You may say you cannot understand how your sinful self can be looked upon as dead and gone while you feel its workings, its heavings, its tossings, its tendencies, continually within you. We reply, or rather God's eternal Word declares, that if your heart believes in Jesus, then is all this true for you, namely, you *have* eternal life; you *are* justified from all things; you *are* a new creation; old things *are* passed away; *all* things *are* become new; and *all* things *are* of God. In a word, you are "*in Christ*," and "*as He is, so are you in this world*" (1 John iv. 17).

And is not this a great deal more than the mere pardoning of your sins, the canceling of your debts, or the salvation of your soul from hell? Assuredly it is. And suppose we were to ask you on what authority you believe in the forgiveness of your sins. Is it because you feel, realize, or understand? Nay; but because it is written, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). Well, then, upon precisely the same authority you are to believe that your old man has been crucified, that you are not in the flesh, not in the old creation, not in the old Adam relation; but that, on the contrary, you are viewed by God as actually in a risen and glorified Christ—that He looks upon you as He looks upon Christ.

True it is—alas, how true!—the flesh is in you, and you are still here, as to the fact of your condition, in this old world, which is under judgment. But then, hear what your Lord saith, when speaking about you to

His Father: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And again, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

Hence, therefore, if you will just bow to God's word, if you will reason not about what you see in yourself, and feel in yourself, and think of yourself, but simply *believe* what God says, you will enter into the blessed peace and holy liberty flowing from the fact that you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; not in the old creation, but in the new; not under law, but under grace; not of the world, but of God. You have passed clean off the old platform which you occupied as a child of nature and a member of the first Adam, and you have taken your place on a new platform altogether as a child of God and a member of Christ.

All this is vividly prefigured by the deluge and the ark, in the days of Noah. (See Gen. vi.-viii.) "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, *The end of all flesh* is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Here, then, was, in type, the end of the old creation. All was to pass under the waters of judgment. What then? "Make thee an ark of gopher wood." Here we have set forth a figure of the new thing. That ark, floating peacefully over the dark abyss of waters, was a type of Christ, and the believer in Him. The old world, together with man, was buried beneath the waves of judgment, and the only object that remained was the ark—the vessel of mercy and salvation, riding in safety and triumph over the billows. Thus it is now, in truth and reality. There is nothing before the eye of God but a risen, victorious and glorified Christ, and His people linked with Him. The end of *all* flesh has come before God. It is not a question of some very gross forms of "flesh," or of nature, of that merely which is "vile and refuse." No; it is "the *end of all*." Such is the solemn, sweeping verdict; and then—what? A risen Christ. Nothing else. All in Him are seen by God as He is seen. All out of Him are under judgment. It all hinges upon this one question, "Am I in or out of Christ?" What a question!

Reader, are you in Christ? Do you believe in His name? Have you given Him the confidence of your heart? If so, you have "eternal life"—you are "a new creature"—"old things are passed away." God does not see a single shred of the old thing remaining for you. "All things are become new, and all things are of God." You may say you do not *feel* that old things are all passed away. We reply, God says they are, and it is your happy privilege to *believe* what He says, and "*reckon*" yourself to be what He declares you are. God speaks according to that which is true of you in Christ. He does not see you in the flesh, but in Christ. There is absolutely nothing before the eye of God but Christ: and the very weakest believer is viewed as part of Christ, just as your hand is a part of your body. You have no existence before God apart from Christ—no life—no righteousness—no holiness—no wisdom—no power. Apart from Him, you have nothing, and can be nothing. In Him you have all and are all, He says; you are thoroughly identified with Christ. Marvelous fact! Profound mystery! Most glorious truth! It is not a question of attainment or of progress. It is the settled and absolute standing of the feeblest member of the Church of God. True, there are various measures of intelligence, experience, and devotedness; but there is only one life, one standing, one position before God, and that is Christ. There is no such thing as a higher or lower Christian life. Christ is the believer's life, and you cannot speak of a higher or a lower Christ. We can understand the higher stages of Christian life; but there is no spiritual intelligence in speaking of a higher Christian life.

This is a grand truth, and we earnestly pray that God the Spirit may open it fully to the mind of the reader. We feel assured that a clearer understanding thereof would chase away a thousand mists, answer a thousand questions, and solve a thousand difficulties. It would not only have the effect of giving settled peace to the soul, but also of determining the believer's position in the most distinct way. If Christ is my life—if I am in Him and identified with Him, then not only do I share in His acceptance with God, but also in His rejection by this present world. The two things go together. They form the two sides of the one

grand question. If I am in Christ and as Christ before God, then I am in Christ and as Christ before the world: and it will never do to accept the result of this union before God and refuse the result of it as regards the world. If we have the one, we must have the other likewise.

All this is fully unfolded in John xvii. There we read on the one hand, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and *hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me*" (vers. 22, 23). And, on the other hand, we read, "I have given them Thy Word; and *the world hath hated them*, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (ver. 14). This is as plain and positive as anything can be. And be it remembered that, in this wondrous scripture, our Lord is not speaking merely of the apostles, but, as He says, of "them also who shall believe on Me through their word," that is, of all believers. Hence it follows that all who believe in Jesus are one with Him as accepted above, and one with Him as rejected below. The two things are inseparable. The Head and the members share in one common acceptance in heaven, and in one common rejection upon earth. Oh that all the Lord's people entered more into the truth and reality of this! Would that we all knew a little more of the meaning of fellowship with a heaven-accepted, earth-rejected Christ!

PART II.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

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

The fifth chapter of second Corinthians is a most weighty section of Inspiration. Its closing lines contain the special thesis of the following pages; but ere we proceed with it, we must call the reader's attention to some most interesting and important points presented in the course of the chapter.

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

Now, it must be admitted that if we ourselves had aught to do with the ground of certainty or assurance, then it would indeed be the very height of folly to think of being sure; then assuredly our hope would be a very vague one. But, thanks be to God, it is not so. We having nothing whatever to do with the ground of our certainty, it lies entirely outside of ourselves, and it must be sought only and altogether in the eternal word of God. This renders it blessedly simple. It makes the whole question hinge upon the truth of God's word. Why am I sure? Because God's word is true. A shadow of uncertainty or misgiving on my part would argue a want of authority or security in the word of God. It really comes to this: Christian certainty rests on the faithfulness of God. Before you can shake the former, you must shake the latter.

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

This, Christian reader, is a very weighty principle, and one which demands special attention on the part of

all anxious inquirers, as also on the part of all who undertake to deal with such. There is a strong and constant tendency to look *within* for the ground of assurance—to build upon certain feelings, experiences, and exercises, either past or present—to look back at some special process through which we have passed, or to look in at certain impressions or convictions of our own minds, and to find in these the ground of our confidence, the warrant for our faith. This will never do. It is impossible to find settled peace or calm repose in this way. Feelings, however true and real, change and pass away. Experiences, however genuine, may prove defective. Impressions and convictions may prove utterly false. None of these things, therefore, can form a solid ground of Christian certainty. This latter must be sought and found in God's word alone. It is not in feelings, not in experiences, not in impressions or convictions, not in reasonings, not in human traditions or doctrines, but simply in the unchangeable, eternal Word of the living God. That Word which is settled forever in heaven, and which God has magnified according to all the stability of His name, can alone impart peace to the mind and stability to the soul.

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

As is the foundation, so is the faith that builds thereon. Hence the solemn importance of seeking to lead souls to build *only* upon God's precious Word. Look at the anxiety of the apostle Paul in reference to this matter. Hear what he says to the Corinthians who were in such danger of being led away by human leadership and human authority. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you *the testimony of God*. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. ii. 1-5).

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

own thoughts to the precious truth of God.

We see the same thing in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. "For this cause also," says the faithful servant of Christ, "thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it *not as the word of men*, but, *as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (chap. ii. 13). Had he been seeking his own things, he would have been glad to obtain influence over the Thessalonians by linking them on to himself and leading them to lean upon him. But no; he rejoices in seeing them in living connection, in direct and realized association with God Himself. This is always the effect of true ministry, as it is ever the object of the true minister. Unless the soul be livingly linked with God, there is really nothing done. If it be merely following men—receiving what they say because they say it—an attachment to certain preachers or teachers because of something in their style and manner, or because they seem to be very holy, very separated, or very devoted—all this will come to naught. Those human links will soon be snapped asunder. The faith that stands in any measure in the wisdom of men will prove hollow and worthless. Nothing will prove permanent, nothing will endure, but that faith which rests on the testimony and in the power of the only true God.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But it is a totally different thing with a man who knows God as his Father—his Saviour—his best Friend; who knows that Jesus died to save him from his sins, and from all the consequences thereof. Such an one can say:

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

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

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

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

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

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

and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept" (Jno. xi. 33-35).

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

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

We have very little idea of what the heart of Jesus felt as He passed through this sorrowful, because sinful, world; and we are far too apt to miss the reality of His sufferings by confining them merely to what He endured on the cross, and also by supposing that because He was God over all, blessed for ever, He did not feel all that a human heart is capable of feeling. This is a sad loss. Indeed we may say it is an incalculable loss. The Lord Jesus, as the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings. See Heb. ii., where the inspired writer distinguishes carefully between "the suffering of death," and the "sufferings" of the Captain of our salvation. In order to save sinners from *wrath*, "He tasted death for every man," and having done so, we see Him "crowned with glory and honor." But in order to "*bring many sons to glory*," He had to be "perfected through sufferings." And now all true believers have the unspeakable privilege of knowing that there is One at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens who, when in this world of sin and woe, tasted every form of suffering and every cup of sorrow which it was possible for any human heart to know. He could say, "Reproach hath broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none" (Ps. lxi. 20).

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

If any further proof were needed, on this deeply interesting question, we have it in verses 5 and 6 of our chapter (2 Cor. v.), where the apostle goes on to say, "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are *always confident* (not doubting or fearing), knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord (for we

walk by faith, not by sight), we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (vers. 5-8).

Here we have two grand cardinal truths laid down, namely, first, The believer is God's workmanship; and secondly, God has given him the earnest of the Spirit. Most marvellous—most glorious facts! Facts which demand the attention of the reader. Everyone who simply and heartily believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is God's workmanship. God has created him anew in Christ Jesus. Clearly, therefore, there can be no possible ground for questioning his acceptance with God, inasmuch as God can never call in question His own work. He will, assuredly, no more do this in His new creation, than He did in the old. When God looked upon His work, in the opening of the Book of Genesis, it was not to judge it or call it in question, but to announce it very good, and express His complacency in it. So now, when God looks upon the very feeblest believer, He sees in him His own workmanship, and most assuredly, He is not going, either here or hereafter, to call in question His own work. God is a rock, His work is perfect, and the believer is God's work; and because he is His work He has sealed him with the Holy Ghost.

The same truth is stated in Ephesians ii. where we read, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This, we may truly say, is a point of the weightiest moment. It claims the grave attention of the reader who desires to be thoroughly established in the truth of God as to what a Christian—what Christianity really is. It is not a ruined, lost, guilty sinner seeking to work himself up into something or other fit for God. It is the very reverse. It is God, in the riches of His grace, on the ground of the atoning death of Christ, taking up a poor, dead, worthless, condemned thing—a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, and creating him anew in Christ Jesus. It is, as it were, God beginning *de novo*—on the new, as we may say—to form man in Christ, to place him on a new footing altogether, not now as an innocent being on a creation basis, but as a justified one, in a risen Christ. It is not man's old condition improved by human effort of any sort or description; but it is God's new workmanship in a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ. It is not man's own garment pieced or patched by human device in any shape or form whatever; but it is God's new garment introduced in the person of Christ, who having, in infinite grace, gone down into the dust of death, and endured, on man's behalf, the judgment of sin, the righteous wrath of a sin-hating God, was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and is become the Head of the new creation—"The beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14).

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

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

Oh that this were understood and entered into! Would to God that Christians more fully entered into it! Would to God that all Christian writers, preachers, and teachers entered into it, and set it forth distinctly with pen and voice! At the least, we earnestly desire that the reader should thoroughly grasp it. We are most fully persuaded that it is pre-eminently "truth for the times." It is truth to meet the need of thousands of souls—to remove their burdens, relieve their hearts and consciences—solve their difficulties—chase away their clouds. There are, at this moment, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, countless multitudes engaged in the fruitless work of painting and papering a condemned house—a house on which God has pronounced judgment, because of the hopelessly ruined condition of its foundations. They are seeking to do little jobs of repairs here and there throughout the house, forgetting, or perhaps not knowing, that the whole building is very shortly to be demolished by order of the divine government. Some are doing this with the utmost sincerity, amid much sore exercise of soul, and many tears, because they cannot succeed in satisfying their own hearts even, much less the claims of God. For God demands a perfect thing, not a patched-up ruin. There is no use in seeking to cover with paper and paint old walls tottering on a rotten foundation. God cannot be deceived by surface work, by shallow outside appearances. The foundations are bad, the whole thing must come down, and we must put our whole trust in Him who is "the beginning of the creation of God."

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

This is a solemn and sweeping sentence. A man out of Christ is "in the flesh;" and such a man cannot please God. He may be most religious, most moral, most amiable, most benevolent, a most excellent master, a generous friend, a liberal giver, a genial companion, a patron of the poor, upright and honorable in all his dealings, he may be an eloquent preacher and a popular writer, and all the while not be "*in Christ*," but "*in the flesh*," and therefore he "cannot please God."

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

But it may be that, to the reader's view, difficulties and stumbling blocks still surround this most weighty subject. He may still be utterly at a loss to know what is meant by the expression, "In the flesh." If so it will, we fondly hope, help him not a little to remember that Scripture speaks of *two men*—"the first man" and "the Second Man." These two men are presented as the heads of two distinct races. Adam *fallen* is

the head of one race; Christ *risen* is the Head of the other race. Now, the very fact of there being "a Second Man" proves that the first man had been set aside: for if the first man had proved faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. This is clear and unquestionable. The first man is a total wreck—an irreparable ruin. The foundations of the old edifice have given way; and albeit, in man's view, the building seems to stand, and to be capable of being repaired, yet, in God's view it is completely set aside, and a Second Man—a new edifice—set up, on the solid and imperishable ground of redemption.

Hence, we read, in Gen. iii., that God "*drove out the man*; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned *every way*, to keep the way of the tree of life." In other words, the first man was driven out, and every possible way of return was closed against him, as *such*. He could only get back by "a new and living way," namely, through the rent veil of the Saviour's flesh. The flaming sword "turned every way," so that there was positively no way by which the first man could ever get back to his former state. The only hope, now, was through "the seed of the woman"—"the Second Man." The flaming sword declared, in symbolic yet impressive language, the truth, which comes out in the New Testament divested of all symbol and shadow, namely, that "they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God"—"Ye must be born again." Every unconverted man, woman, and child is part and parcel of the first man, fallen, ruined, set aside, and driven out. He is a member of the first Adam—the old race—a stone in the old condemned building.

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

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

But this leads us to another point. How is anyone to get into this marvellous position? How can any soul take up such language? How can anyone whose eyes have been opened to see his utter and hopeless ruin, as connected with the first man, as standing in the old creation, as a stone in the old edifice—how can such an one ever reach a position in which he can please God? The Lord be praised, Scripture gives an answer, full, clear, and distinct, to this serious question. A second Man has appeared upon the scene—the Seed of the woman, and, at the same time, God over all, blessed for ever. In Him all begins afresh. He came into this world born of a woman, made under the law, pure and spotless, free from every taint of sin, personally apart from every claim of sin and death, standing in the midst of a ruined world, a guilty race, Himself that pure, untainted grain of wheat. We see Him lying as a babe in the manger. We see Him growing up as a youth beneath the parental roof. We see Him as a man working in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth. We see Him baptised in Jordan, where all the people were baptised confessing their sins—Himself sinless, but fulfilling all righteousness, and, in perfect grace, identifying Himself with the

repentant portion of the nation of Israel. We see Him anointed with the Holy Ghost for the work that lay before Him. We see Him in the wilderness faint and hungry, unlike the first man who was placed in the midst of a paradise of creature delights. We see Him tempted of Satan and coming off victorious. We trace Him along the pathway of public ministry—and such a ministry! What incessant toil! What weariness and watching! What hunger and thirst! What sorrow and travail! Worse off than the fowls and the foxes, the Son of man had not where to lay His head. The contradiction of sinners by day, the mountain-top by night.

Such was the marvellous life of this blessed One. But this was not all. He died! Yes, He died under the weight of the first man's guilt, He died to take away the sin of the world, and alter completely the ground of God's relationship with the world, so that God might deal with man and with the world on the new ground of redemption, instead of the old ground of sin. He died for the nation of Israel. He tasted death for every man. He died the just for the unjust. He suffered for sins. He died and was buried, according to the Scriptures. He went through all—met all—paid all—finished all. He went down into the dust of death, and lay in the dark and silent tomb. He descended into the lower parts of the earth. He went down to the very bottom of everything. He endured the sentence passed on man. He paid the penalty, bore the judgment, drained the cup of wrath, went through every form of human suffering and trial, was tempted in all points, sin excepted. He made an end of everything that stood in the way, and, having *finished all*, He gave up His spirit into the hand of His Father, and His precious body was laid in a tomb on which the smell of death had never passed.

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

And, now, if it be asked, "How is all this to be attained?" Scripture replies, "BY FAITH." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24).

The reader who has traveled intelligently with us through the opening lines of our chapter will be in a position to understand something of the solemn and momentous subject to which we now approach, namely, the judgment-seat of Christ. If indeed it be true that the believer is God's workmanship—if he is actually a member of Christ—associated with the second Adam—bound up in the bundle of life with the risen and glorified Lord, if all this be true—and God's word declares it is—then it must be perfectly

evident that the judgment-seat of Christ cannot, by any possibility, touch the Christian's position, or prove, in any wise, unfriendly to him. No doubt it is a most solemn and serious matter, involving the most weighty consequences to every servant of Christ, and designed to exert a most salutary influence upon the heart and conscience of every man. But it will do all this just in proportion as it is viewed from the true standpoint, and no further. It is not to be supposed that anyone can reap the divinely appointed blessing from meditating on the judgment-seat, if he is looking forward to it as the place where the grand question of his eternal salvation is to be settled. And yet how many are thus regarding it! How many of God's true people are there, who, from not seeing the simple truth involved in these words, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God," are anticipating the judgment-seat of Christ as something that may, after all, condemn them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No doubt the rejection of the gospel leaves people on the ground of judgment, just as the true belief of the gospel takes people off that ground. But the judgment will be, in every case, according to a man's works. Are we to suppose that the poor ignorant savage, who has lived and died amid the gloomy shades of heathen darkness, will be found in the same "book," or punished with the same severity as a man who has

lived and died in the total rejection of the full blaze of gospel light and privilege? Not for a moment, so long as the words "more tolerable" stand on the page of inspiration. The savage will be judged according to his works, and the baptized sinner will be judged according to his works, but assuredly it will be more tolerable for the former than the latter. God knows how to deal with people. He can discriminate, and He declares that He will give to each according to his works.

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

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

It is most needful to be clear as to this grand fundamental truth. Very many even of the people of God are clouded in reference to it, and hence it is that they are afraid when they think of the judgment-seat. They do not know God as a Justifier. Their faith has not grasped Him as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. They are looking to Christ to keep God out as a Judge, very much in the same way as the Israelites looked to the blood to keep out the destroyer. See Ex. xii. It is true and real enough, so far as it goes; but it falls very far short of the truth revealed in the New Testament. There is a vast difference between keeping God out as a Destroyer and a Judge, and bringing Him in as a Saviour and a Justifier. An Israelite would have dreaded, above all things, God's coming in to him. Why? Because God was passing through the land as a Destroyer. The Christian, on the contrary, delights to be in the presence of God. Why? Because He has revealed Himself as a Justifier. How? By raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

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

Now, there is no distinction in Scripture without a difference; and when we see a distinction it is our business to inquire as to the difference. What then, is the difference between believing in Jesus, and believing in Him that raised up Jesus? We believe it to be this. We may often find souls who are really looking to Jesus and believing in Him, and yet they have, deep down in their hearts a sort of dread of meeting God. It is not that they doubt their salvation, or that they are not really saved. By no means. They are saved, inasmuch as they are looking to Christ, by faith, and all who so look are saved in Him with an

everlasting salvation. All this is most blessedly true: but still there is this latent fear or dread of God, and a shrinking from death. They know that Jesus is friendly to them, inasmuch as He died for them; but they do not see so clearly the friendship of God.

Hence it is that we find so many of God's people in uncertainty and spiritual distress. Their faith has not yet laid hold of God as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. They are not quite sure of how it may go with them. At times they are happy, because by virtue of the new nature, of which they are assuredly the partakers, they get occupied with Christ: but at times they are miserable, because they begin to look at themselves, and they do not see God as their Justifier, and as the One who has condemned sin in the flesh. They are thinking of God as a Judge with whom some question still remains to be settled. They feel as if God's eye were resting on their indwelling sin, and as if they had, in some way or other, to dispose of that question with God.

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

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

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

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

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

Well, then, in the first place, we have to remark that Scripture says nothing of the kind. The passage before us, which contains the great, broad statement of the truth on this weighty subject, simply declares that "we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." But how shall we be manifested? Assuredly, *as we are*. But how is that? As God's workmanship—as perfectly righteous, and perfectly holy, and perfectly accepted in the Person of that very One who shall sit on the judgment-seat, and who Himself bore in His own body on the tree all the judgment due to us, and made a full end of the entire system in which we stood. All that which, as sinners, we had to meet, Christ met in our stead. Our *sins* He bore; our *sin* He was condemned for. He stood in our stead and answered all responsibilities which rested upon us as men alive in the flesh, as members of the first man, as standing on the old creation-ground. The Judge Himself is our righteousness. We are in Him. All that we are and all that we have, we owe it to Him and to His perfect work. If we, as sinners, had to meet Christ as a Judge, escape were utterly impossible; but, inasmuch as He is our righteousness, condemnation is utterly impossible. In short, the matter is reversed. The atoning death and triumphant resurrection of our Divine Substitute have completely changed everything, so that the effect of the judgment-seat of Christ will be to make manifest that there is not, and cannot be, a single stain or spot on that workmanship of God which the saint is declared to be.

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

Ah! Christian reader, dost thou not see how that nearness to the heart of Christ, as well as the knowledge of His perfect work, would completely roll away the mists which enwrap the subject of the judgment-seat? If thou art washed from thy sins in the blood of Jesus, and loved by God as Jesus is loved, what reason hast thou to fear that judgment-seat, or to shrink from the thought of being manifested before it? None whatever. Nothing can possibly come up there to alter thy standing, to touch thy relationship, to blot thy title, or cloud thy prospect. Indeed we are fully persuaded that the light of *the judgment-seat* will chase away many of the clouds that have obscured *the mercy-seat*. Many, when they come to stand before that judgment-seat, will wonder why they ever feared it for themselves. They will see their mistake and adore the grace that has been so much better than all their legal fears. Many who have hardly ever been able to read their title here, will read it there, and rejoice and wonder—they will love and worship. They will then see, in broad daylight, what poor, feeble, shallow, unworthy thoughts they had once entertained of the love of Christ, and of the true character of His work. They will perceive how sadly prone they ever were to measure Him by themselves, and to think and feel as if His thoughts and ways were like their own. All this will be seen in the light of that day, and then the burst of praise—the rapturous hallelujah—will come forth from many a heart that, when down here, had been robbed of its peace and joy by legal

and unworthy thoughts of God and His Christ.

But, while it is divinely true that nothing can come out before the judgment-seat of Christ to disturb, in any way, the standing or relationship of the very feeblest member of the body of Christ, or of any member of the family of God, yet is the thought of that judgment most solemn and weighty. Yes, truly, and none will more feel its weight and solemnity than those who can look forward to it with perfect calmness. And be it well remembered, that there are two things indispensably needful in order to enjoy this calmness of spirit. First, we must have a title without a blot; and, secondly, our moral and practical state must be sound. No amount of mere evangelical clearness as to our title will avail unless we are walking in moral integrity before God. It will not do for a man to say that he is not afraid of the judgment-seat of Christ because Christ died for him, while, at the same time, he is walking in a loose, careless, self-indulgent way. This is a most dreadful delusion. It is alarming in the extreme to find persons drawing a plea from evangelical clearness to shrink the holy responsibility resting upon them as the servants of Christ. Are we to speak idle words because we know we shall never come into judgment? The bare thought is horrible; and yet we may shrink from such a thing when clothed in plain language before us, while, at the same time, we allow ourselves to be drawn, through a false application of the doctrines of grace, into most culpable laxity and carelessness as to the claims of holiness.

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

This is most serious and salutary. It may be asked, "When shall we have to give account to God? When shall we receive for the wrong?" We are not told, because that is not the question. The grand object of the Holy Ghost in the passages just quoted is to lead the conscience into holy exercise in the presence of God and of the Lord Christ. This is good and most needful in a day of easy profession, like the present, when there is much said about grace, free salvation, justification without works, our standing in Christ. Is it that we want to weaken the sense of these things? Far be the thought. Yea, we would, in every possible way, seek to lead souls into the divine knowledge and enjoyment of those most precious privileges. But then we must remember the adjusting power of *truth*. There are always two sides to a question, and we find in the pages of the New Testament the clearest and fullest statements of grace, lying side by side with the most solemn and searching statements as to our responsibility. Do the latter obscure the former? Assuredly not. Neither should the former weaken the latter. Both should have their due place, and be allowed to exert their moulding influence upon our character and ways.

Some professors seem to have a great dislike to the words "duty" and "responsibility;" but we invariably find that those who have the deepest sense of grace have also, and as a necessary consequence, the truest sense of duty and responsibility. We know of no exception. A heart that is duly influenced by divine grace is sure to welcome every reference to the claims of holiness. It is only empty talkers about grace and standing that raise an outcry about duty and responsibility. God deals in moral realities. He is real with us, and He wants us to be real with Him. He is real in His love, and real in His faithfulness; and He would have us real in our dealings with Him, and in our response to His holy claims. It is of little use to

say "Lord, Lord" if we live in the neglect of His commandments. It is the merest sham to say "I go sir" if we do not go. God looks for obedience in His children. "He is a rewarder of them that *diligently* seek Him."

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

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

Is not this enough to settle every question? No doubt. But still we have to think of our individual walk and service. We have to look to it that we bring no wood, hay, and stubble into the light of the coming day, for as surely as we do we shall suffer loss, though we ourselves shall be saved through the fire. We should seek to carry ourselves now as those who are already in the light, and whose one desire is to do what is well pleasing to our adorable Lord, not because of the fear of judgment, but under "the vast constraining influence" of His love. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." This is the true motive-spring in all Christian service. It is not the fear of judgment impelling, but the love of Christ constraining us; and we may say, with fullest assurance, that never shall we have so deep a sense of that love as when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

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

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

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

1. And first, then, as to the foundation on which the ministry of reconciliation rests. This is set before us, in the closing verse of our chapter.

"For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

We have here three parties, namely, God, Christ, and sin. This latter is simply the expression of what we are by nature. There is in "*us*" nought but "*sin*," from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, the whole man is sin. The principle of sin pervades the entire system of fallen humanity. The root, trunk, branches, leaves, blossom, fruit—all is sin. It is not only that we have committed sins; we are actually *born* in sin. True, we have, all of us, our characteristic sins. We have not only, all of us, "gone astray," but "we have turned every one to his own way." Each has pursued his own specific path of evil and folly; and all this is the fruit of that thing called "sin." The outward life of each is but a stream from the fountain—a branch from the stem; that fountain is sin.

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

What was to be done? Hear the answer: "God hath made Christ to be sin." But where? Reader, look well at this. Where was Christ made sin? Was it in His birth? or in Jordan's flood? or in the garden of Gethsemane? Nay; though, most assuredly, in that garden the shadows were lengthening, the darkness was thickening, the gloom was deepening. But where and when was the holy, spotless, precious Lamb of God

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

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

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

Nor was this all. Our blessed Lord Himself declares, over and over again, the absolute and indispensable necessity of His death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth *alone*; but if it *die*, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii.). "Thus it is written, and thus *it behoved* (or was necessary for) Christ to suffer" (Luke xxiv. 46). "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it *must* be" (Matt. xxvi.)? In a word, death was the only pathway of life, the only basis of union, the only ground of reconciliation. All who speak of incarnation as being the basis of our union with Christ deny, in the plainest way, the whole range of truth connected with a dead and risen Christ. Many may not see this; but Satan sees it, and he sees too how it will work. He knows what he is about, and surely the servants of Christ ought to know what is involved in the error against which we are warning our readers.

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

Now, it must be plain to the reader who bows to Scripture, that incarnation did not, and could not accomplish all this. Incarnation did not put away sin. Need we stop here to dwell upon the glories of the mystery of incarnation? Will anyone imagine that we take away from the value, or mar the integrity of that priceless fundamental truth, because we deny that it puts away sin, or forms the basis of our union with Christ? We trust not. That incarnation was essentially necessary for the accomplishment of redemption is

plain to all. Christ had to become a man in order to die. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." He had to give His flesh for the life of the world. But this only goes to prove the absolute necessity of death. It was the *giving* of His flesh, not the *taking* of it, that laid the foundation of the whole fabric—life, pardon, peace, righteousness, union, glory, all. Apart from death, there is, and could be, absolutely nothing. Through death we have all.

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

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

It is well to see clearly the distinction between "atonement" and "reconciliation." They are often confounded, through inattention to Scripture; and the honored translators of our excellent Authorised Version have not, with sufficient accuracy, marked this distinction. For example, in Rom. v. 11, they have the word "atonement" where it ought to be rendered "reconciliation" and in Heb. ii. 17, we have the word "reconciliation" where it ought to be "atonement."

Nor is the distinction by any means unimportant. The word "atonement," or "propitiation," occurs, in some one or other of its forms, six times in the Greek New Testament. (See carefully Luke xviii. 13; Rom. iii. 25; Heb. ii. 17; ix. 5; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10.) The word "reconciliation" occurs, in one or other of its forms, thirteen times in the New Testament. (See Rom. v. 10, 11; xi. 15; 1 Cor. vii. 11; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20; Eph. ii. 16; Col. i. 20, 21.) If the reader will take the trouble of examining and comparing these passages, he will see that atonement and reconciliation are not the same thing, but that the former is the foundation of the latter. Sin had made man an enemy and thrown things into confusion; and in Col. i. 20, 21, we read, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross (here is the foundation), by Him to reconcile all *things* unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And *you*, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now *hath he reconciled*, in the body of His flesh, *through death*, to present you holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight." Here we have the death of Christ set forth as the ground of the reconciliation of both men and things.^[16]

Now this leads to another point of immense importance. We often hear it said that "the death of Christ was necessary in order *to reconcile God to man*." This is a pious mistake, arising from inattention to the language of the Holy Ghost, and indeed to the plain meaning of the word "reconcile." God never changed—never stepped out of His normal and true position. He abideth faithful. There was, and could be, no derangement, no confusion, no alienation, so far as He was concerned; and hence there could be no need of reconciling Him to us. In fact, it was exactly the contrary. Man had gone astray; he was the enemy, and needed to be reconciled. But this was wholly impossible if *sin* were not righteously disposed of; and sin could only be disposed of by *death*—even the death of One, who, as being a man, could die, and being God, could impart all the dignity, value, and glory of His divine Person to the atoning sacrifice which He offered.

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

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

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

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

1. And first, let us mark God's attitude. He is beseeching sinners. What a thought! It seems too much for the heart to conceive. Only think, reader, of the Most High and Mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth—the One who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell—think of Him as beseeching and praying you to be friends with Him! It is not a question of your praying to Him and His hearing you. No: but the very reverse—He is praying you. And for what does He ask you? Is it to do anything or to give anything? Nay; He simply asks you to be friends with Him because He has befriended you at the cost of

His own Son. Think of this. He spared not His only begotten and well-beloved Son, but bruised Him in your stead. He made Him to be sin for you. He judged your sin in the person of His Son, on the cross, in order that He might be able to reconcile you. And now He stretches forth His arms and opens His heart to you, and prays you to be reconciled—to be friends with Him. Surpassing grace! It really seems to us as though human language can only tend to weaken and impoverish this grand reality.

We would only further suggest that the force of ver. 20 is greatly weakened by the word "you," which, as the reader will observe, ought not to be inserted. It makes it appear as though the apostle were beseeching the Corinthian saints to be reconciled, whereas he is only setting forth the terms and the style adopted by all "ambassadors" for Christ wherever they went through the wide world—the language in which they were to address "every creature" under heaven. It is not, "Do this or that"—"Give this or that." It was not command or prohibition; but simply, "Be reconciled."

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

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

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

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

Dear friend, let us remind you that this glorious ministry will very soon close. The acceptable year, the day of salvation, shall ere long come to an end. The ambassadors shall soon be all called home and their embassy be closed forever. The door shall soon be shut, and the day of vengeance set in in terror and wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world. Let us entreat of you to flee from the wrath to come. Remember that the One who is now praying and beseeching you to be reconciled, has uttered the following awful words, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. But ye have

set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. i. 24-26). May the reader escape the unutterable horrors of the day of wrath and judgment!

C. H. M.

THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS

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

Some style Him "the Pearl of great price,"
And say, He's the fountain of joys;
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys:
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And while they salute Him, betray:
Oh! what will profession like this
Avail in His terrible day?

If asked what of Jesus *I* think,
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, He's my meat and my drink,
My life and my strength and my store;
My Shepherd, my trust and my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
My Hope from beginning to end,
My Portion, my Lord and my All.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father unto you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 44-49).

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

THE COMMISSION ITSELF.

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

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

We are not now inquiring what repentance is; that we shall do, if God permit. But, whatever it is, do we preach it? That our Lord commanded His apostles to preach it is plain; and not only so, but He preached it Himself, as we read it in Mark i. 14, 15: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel."

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

What is our reply to all this? A very simple one indeed—Our Lord knows better than all the theologians

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

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

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

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

We should, in the very strongest possible manner, insist upon this. But at the same time we must jealously keep to the terms of "the great commission." We cannot depart the breadth of a hair from these without serious damage to our testimony, and to the souls of our hearers. If we fail to preach repentance, we are "keeping back" something "profitable." What should we say to a husbandman, if we saw him scattering his precious grain along the beaten highway? We should justly pronounce him out of his mind. The ploughshare must do its work. The fallow ground must be broken up ere the seed is sown; and we may rest assured that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of grace, the ploughing must precede the

sowing. The ground must be duly prepared for the seed, else the operation will prove altogether defective. Let the gospel be preached as God has given it to us in His Word. Let it not be shorn of one of its moral glories; let it flow forth as it comes from the deep fountain of the heart of God, through the channel of Christ's finished work, on the authority of the Holy Ghost. All this is not only most fully admitted but peremptorily insisted upon; but at the same time we must never forget that our Lord and Master called upon men to "repent and believe the gospel;" that He strictly enjoined it upon His holy apostles to preach repentance; and that the blessed apostle Paul, the chief of apostles, the profoundest teacher the Church has ever known, did preach repentance, calling upon men everywhere to repent and do works meet for repentance.

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

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

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

We seriously question if this aspect of the subject is sufficiently understood. Let not the reader mistake us. We do not mean for a moment to teach that the soul should be always bowed down under the sense of unforgiven sin. Far be the thought! But we greatly fear that some of us, in running away from *legality* on the question of repentance, have fallen into *levity*. This is a serious error. We may depend upon it that levity is no remedy for legality: were it proposed as such, we should have no hesitation in pronouncing the remedy much worse than the disease. Thank God we have His own sovereign remedy for levity, on the one hand, and legality on the other. "*Truth*,"—insisting upon "repentance," is the remedy for the former. "*Grace*"—publishing "remission of sins," is the remedy for the latter. And we cannot but believe that the more profound our repentance, the fuller will be our enjoyment of remission.

We are inclined to judge that there is a sad lack of depth and seriousness in much of our modern preaching. In our anxiety to make the gospel simple, and salvation easy, we fail to press on the consciences of our hearers the holy claims of truth. If a preacher now-a-days were to call upon his hearers to "repent and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance," he would, in certain circles, be pronounced legal, ignorant, below the mark, and such like. And yet this was precisely what the blessed apostle Paul did, as he himself tells us. Will any of our modern evangelists have the temerity to say that

Paul was a legal or an ignorant preacher? We trust not. Paul carried with him the full, clear, precious gospel of God—the gospel of the grace, and the gospel of the glory. He preached the kingdom of God—He unfolded the glorious mystery of the Church—yea, that mystery was specially committed to him.

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

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

Man must take his true place before God, and that is the place of self-judgment, contrition of heart, real sorrow for sin, and true confession. It is here the gospel meets him. The fulness of God ever waits on an empty vessel, and a truly repentant soul is the empty vessel into which all the fulness and grace of God can flow in saving power. The Holy Ghost will make the sinner *feel* and *own* his real condition. It is He alone who can do so: but He uses preaching to this end. He brings the word of God to bear on man's conscience. The Word is His hammer, wherewith He breaks the rock in pieces—His plowshare, wherewith He breaks up the fallow ground. He makes the furrow, and then casts in the incorruptible seed, to germinate and fructify to the glory of God. True, the furrow, how deep soever it may be, can produce no fruit. It is the seed, and not the furrow; but there must be the furrow for all that.

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

PART II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It will perhaps be said that the words just quoted apply to Israel. Primarily, they do; but morally they apply to every contrite heart on the face of the earth. And, further, it cannot be said that Luke xv. applies

specially to Israel. It applies to all. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that"—What? Does his duty? Nay, it does not even say, "that believeth." No doubt believing is essential in every case; but the interesting point here is that a truly repentant sinner causes joy in heaven. A person may say, "I fear I do not believe." Well, but do you repent? Have your eyes been opened to see your true condition before God? Have you taken your true place before God as utterly lost? If so, you are one of those over whom there is joy in heaven. What gave joy to the shepherd's heart? Was it the ninety and nine sheep that went not astray? Nay, it was finding the lost sheep.^[17] What gave joy to the woman's heart? Was it the nine pieces in her possession? Nay, it was finding the one lost piece. What gave joy to the father's heart? Was it the service and the obedience of the elder son? Nay, it was getting back his lost son. A repentant, broken-hearted, returning sinner wakens up heaven's joy. "Let us eat and be merry." Why? Because the elder son has been working in the fields and doing his duty? No; but "This my son was *dead*, and is alive again; he was *lost*, and is found."

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

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

No man can meet God on the ground of duty; but God can meet any man—the very chief of sinners—on the ground of repentance, for that is man's true place; and we may say with all possible confidence that when the sinner, as he is, meets God as He is, the whole question is settled once and forever. "I said, *I will confess* my transgressions unto the Lord, and *Thou forgavest* the iniquity of my sin." The moment man takes his true place—the place of repentance—God meets him with a full forgiveness, a divine and everlasting righteousness. It is His joy to do so. It gratifies His heart and it glorifies His name to pardon, justify and accept a penitent soul that simply believes in Jesus. The very moment the prophet cried, "Woe is me; for I am undone,"—"Then *flew* one of the seraphims with a live coal from off the altar," to touch his lips, and to purge his sins (Isa. vi. 5-7).

Thus it is always. The fulness of God ever waits on an empty vessel. If I am full of myself, full of my own fancied goodness, my own morality, my own righteousness, I have no room for God, no room for Christ. "He filleth the *hungry* with good things; but the *rich* He hath sent *empty* away." A self-emptied soul can be filled with the fulness of God; but if God sends a man empty away, whither can he go to be filled? All Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, goes to prove the deep blessedness as well as the moral necessity

of repentance. It is the grand turning-point in the soul's history—a great moral epoch which sheds its influence over the whole of one's after life. It is not, we repeat, a transient exercise, but an abiding moral condition. We are not now speaking of how repentance is produced; we are speaking of what it is according to Scripture, and of the absolute need of it for every creature under heaven. It is the sinner's true place; and when through grace he takes it, he is met by the fulness of God's salvation.

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

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

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

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

But let us turn for a moment to Acts iii. Here the preacher, after charging his hearers with this awful act of wickedness against God, even the rejection and murder of His Son, adds these remarkable words: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, *He hath so fulfilled*. *Repent ye* therefore, and be converted, that *your sins may be blotted out*."

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

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

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

But when were these words uttered? Not until the guilty brethren had felt and owned their guilt. Repentance preceded the remission. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Joseph "spake roughly" to his brethren at the first. He brought them through deep waters, and made them feel and confess their guilt. But the very moment they took the ground of repentance, he took the ground of forgiveness. The penitent brethren were met by a pardoning Joseph, and the whole house of Pharaoh was made to ring with the joy which filled the heart of Joseph on getting back to his bosom the very men that had flung him into the pit.

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

Yes, beloved reader, if you have been brought to feel the burden of your guilt, then be assured it is your privilege this very moment to receive a divine and everlasting remission of all your sins. The blood of Jesus Christ has perfectly settled the question of your guilt, and you are now invited to rejoice in the God of your salvation.

PART III.

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

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

glorified Head in heaven.

Paul received his own special commission, of which he gives a very beautiful statement in his address to Agrippa, in Acts xxvi., "Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests,"—what a different "commission" he received ere he entered Damascus!—"at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Here the glorious truth of the intimate union of believers with the glorified Man in heaven, though not stated, is beautifully and forcibly implied. "But rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins" (the same word as in the commission to the twelve in Luke xxiv.) "and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in Me."^[18]

What depth and fulness in these words! What a comprehensive statement of man's condition! What a blessed presentation of the resources of divine grace! There is a very remarkable harmony between this commission to Paul and that to the twelve in Luke xxiv. It will perhaps be said there is nothing about repentance. True, the word does not occur; but we have the moral reality, and that with singular force and fulness. What mean the words, "*To open their eyes?*" Do they not most certainly involve the discovery of our condition? Assuredly. A man who has his eyes opened is brought to the knowledge of himself, the knowledge of his condition, the knowledge of his ways; and this is true repentance. It is a wonderful moment in a man's history when his eyes are opened. It is the grand crisis, the momentous epoch, the one turning-point. Till then he is blind—morally and spiritually blind. He cannot see a single divine object. He has no perception of anything pertaining to God, to Christ, to heaven.

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

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

But there is more than this. Man is not only blind, but he is in "darkness." Supposing for a moment that a person has his eyesight, of what use is it to him if he is in the dark? It is the double statement as to man's

state and position. As to his state, he is blind. As to his position, he is in darkness; and when his eyes are opened, and divine light streams in upon his soul, he then judges himself and his ways according to God. He sees his folly, his guilt, his rebellion, his wild, infidel reasonings, his foolish notions, the vanity of his mind, his pride and ambition, his selfishness and worldliness—all these things are judged and abhorred. He repents, and turns right round to the One who has opened his eyes and poured in a flood of living light upon his heart and conscience.

But, further, not only is man—every man—Jew and Gentile, blind and in darkness, but, as if to give the climax of all, he is under the power of Satan. This gives a terrible idea of man's condition. He is the slave of the devil. He does not believe this. He imagines himself free—thinks he is his own master—fancies he can go where he pleases, do what he likes, think for himself, speak and act as an independent being. But he is the bondsman of another, he is sold under sin, Satan is his lord and master. Thus Scripture speaks, and it cannot be broken. Man may refuse to believe, but that cannot in the least change the fact. A condemned criminal at the bar may refuse to believe the testimony from the witness table, the verdict from the jury-box, the sentence from the bench; but that in nowise alters his terrible condition. He is a condemned criminal all the same. So with man as a sinner; he may refuse the plain testimony of Scripture, but that testimony remains notwithstanding. Even if the thousand millions that people this globe were to deny the truth of God's word, that Word would still stand unmoved. Scripture does not depend for its truth upon man's belief. It is true whether he believes it or not. Blessed forever is the man who believes; doomed forever is the man who refuses to believe; but the word of God is settled forever in heaven, and it is to be received on its own authority, apart from all human thoughts for or against it.

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

It is not that we undervalue human testimony, or reject what are called the external evidences of the truth of the Holy Scripture. All these things must go for what they are worth; they are by no means essential in laying the foundation of saving faith. We are perfectly sure that all genuine history, all true science, all sound human evidence, must go to establish the divine authenticity of the Bible; but we do not rest our faith upon them, but upon the Scriptures to which they bear witness; for if all human evidence, all science, and every page of history, were to speak against Scripture, we should utterly and absolutely reject them; reverently and implicitly believe it. Is this narrow? Be it so. It is the blessed narrowness in which we gladly find our peace and our portion forever. It is the narrowness that refuses to admit the weight of a feather as an addition to the word of God. If this be narrowness,—we repeat it with emphasis, and from the very centre of our ransomed being,—let it be ours forever. If to be broad we must look to man to confirm the truth of God's word, then away with such broadness; it is the broad way that leadeth straight down to hell. No, reader, your life, your salvation, your everlasting peace, blessedness and glory, depend upon your taking God at His word, and believing what He says because He says it. This is faith—living, saving, precious faith. May you possess it!

God's word, then, most distinctly declares that man in his natural, unrenowned, unconverted state is Satan's bondsman. It speaks of Satan as "the god of this world," as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit

that now worketh in the children of disobedience." It speaks of man as "led captive by the devil at his will." Hence, in Paul's commission, the third thing which the gospel is to do is to turn man from "the power of Satan to God." Thus his eyes are opened; divine light comes streaming in; the power of Satan is broken, and the delivered one finds himself, peacefully and happily, in the presence of God. Like the demoniac in Mark v., he is delivered from his ruthless tyrant, his cruel master; his chains are broken and gone; he is clothed and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

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

Let us, ere we close this paper, listen for a moment to our apostle as he discharges his blessed commission in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. Most gladly would we transcribe the whole of his precious discourse, but our limited space compels us to confine ourselves to the powerful appeal at the end. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through *THIS MAN*" (Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and glorified) "is preached"—not promised in the future, but preached *now*, announced as a present reality—is preached "*unto you* the remission of sins. And by Him all who believe *ARE* justified from *all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

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

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

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

PART IV.

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

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

We have already had occasion to guard the reader against the false notion that any amount of repentance on the part of the sinner could possibly form the meritorious ground of forgiveness. But inasmuch as we write for those who may be ignorant of the foundations of the gospel, we feel bound to put things in the very simplest possible form, so that all may understand. We know how prone the human heart is to build upon something of our own—if not upon good works, at least upon our penitential exercises. Hence, it becomes our bounden duty to set forth the precious truth of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ as the only righteous ground of the forgiveness of sins.

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

Nor is this all. It is not merely that it becomes us, once in a way, to repent. There is far more than this. The spirit of self-judgment, genuine contrition and true humility must characterize every one who enters at all into the profound mystery of the sufferings of Christ. Indeed, it is only as we contemplate and deeply ponder those sufferings that we can form anything approaching to a just estimate of the hatefulness of sin on the one hand, and the divine fulness and perfectness of remission on the other. Such was the hatefulness of sin, that it was absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer; but—all praise to redeeming love!—such were the sufferings of Christ, that God can forgive us our sins according to the infinite value which He attaches to those sufferings. Both go together; and both, we may add, exert a formative influence, under the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost, on the Christian character from first to last. Our sins are all forgiven; but "it behooved Christ to suffer;" and hence, while our peace flows like a river, we must never forget the soul-subduing fact that the basis of our peace was laid in the ineffable sufferings of the Son of God.

This is most needful, owing to the excessive levity of our hearts. We are ready enough to receive the truth of the remission of sins, and then go on in an easy, self-indulgent, world-loving spirit, thus proving how feebly we enter into the sufferings of our blessed Lord, or into the real nature of sin. All this is truly

deplorable, and calls for the deepest exercise of soul. There is a sad lack amongst us of that real brokenness of spirit which ought to characterize those who owe their present peace and everlasting felicity and glory to the sufferings of Christ. We are light, frivolous, and self-willed. We avail ourselves of the death of Christ to save us from the consequences of our sins, but our ways do not exhibit the practical effect of that death in its application to ourselves. We do not walk as those who are dead with Christ—who have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts—who are delivered from this present evil world. In a word, our Christianity is sadly deficient in depth of tone; it is shallow, feeble, and stunted. We profess to know a great deal of truth; but it is to be feared it is too much in theory—therefore not turned to practical account as it should be.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We earnestly hope that the Christian reader may not feel unduly depressed by the perusal of these lines. God knows we would not pen a line to discourage the feeblest lamb in all the precious flock of Christ. We desire to write in the divine presence. We have entreated the Lord that every line of this paper, and of all our papers, should come directly from Himself to the reader.

Hence, therefore, we must ask the reader—and we do so most faithfully and affectionately—to ponder what is here put before him. We cannot hide from him the fact that we are most seriously impressed with the condition of things around us. We feel that the tone and aspect of much of the so-called Christianity of

this our day are such as to awaken the gravest apprehension in the mind of every thoughtful observer. We perceive a terribly rapid development of the features of the last days, as detailed by the pen of inspiration. "This know also that, in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, *disobedient to parents*, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, *despisers of those that are good*, traitors, *heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*: from such turn away" (2 Tim. iii. 1-5).

What an appalling picture! How solemn to find the same evils that characterize the heathen, as recorded in Rom. i., reproduced in connection with the profession of Christianity! Should not the thought of this awaken the most serious apprehensions in the mind of every Christian? Should it not lead all who are engaged in the holy service of preaching and teaching amongst us to examine themselves closely as to the tone and character of their ministry, and as to their own private walk and ways? We want a more searching style of ministry on the part of evangelists and teachers. There is a lack of hortatory and prophetic ministry. By prophetic ministry we mean that which brings the conscience into the immediate presence of God. (See 1 Cor. xiv. 1-3, 23-26.)

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

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

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

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

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

PART V.

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

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

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

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

But we repeat the question, Who uttered those words at the opening of Psa. xxii.? If he was not a sinner, who was he? Wonderful to declare, He was the only spotless, perfectly holy, pure and sinless Man that ever trod this earth. He was more. He was the eternal Son of the Father, the object of God's ineffable delight, who had dwelt in His bosom from all eternity, "the brightness of His glory and the exact expression of His substance."

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

Marvelous question! It stands alone in the annals of eternity. No such question had ever been asked

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

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

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

Such, then, reader, is the *basis* of "the great commission" whereof we speak. Need we wonder at the *terms*, when we contemplate the basis? Can there be anything too good, anything too great, anything too glorious, for the God of all grace to bestow upon us poor sinners of the Gentiles, seeing He has been so fully glorified in the death of Christ? That most precious death furnishes a divinely righteous ground on which our God can indulge the deep and everlasting love of His heart in the perfect remission of our sins. It has removed out of the way every barrier to the full flood-tide of redeeming love which can now flow through a perfectly righteous channel, to the very vilest sinner that repents and believes in Jesus. A Saviour-God can now publish a full and immediate remission of sins to every creature under heaven. There is positively no hindrance. God has been glorified as to the question of sin; and the time is coming when every trace of sin shall be forever obliterated from His fair creation, and those words of John the Baptist shall have their full accomplishment, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Meanwhile, the heralds of salvation are commanded to go forth to the ends of the earth and publish, without let or limitation, perfect remission of sins to every soul that believes. It is the joy of God's heart to pardon sins; and it is due to the One who bore the judgment of sin on the cross that in His name forgiveness of sins should be thus freely published, fully received, and abidingly enjoyed.

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

questioning, that all who die in their sins—all who die out of Christ—must inevitably perish eternally, must bear the consequences of their sins, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

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

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

But if men reject all this, and go on in their sins, in their rebellion, in their infidel reasonings and impious speculations—what then? If men maintain that suffering for sin is not necessary, and that there is another and a better way of disposing of the matter—what then? Our Lord declared in the ears of His apostles that "it was necessary that Christ should suffer"—that there was no other way possible by which the great question could be settled. Whom are we to believe? Was the death of Christ gratuitous? Was His heart broken for nothing? Was the Cross a work of supererogation? Did Jehovah bruise His Son and put Him to grief for an end which might be gained some other way?

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

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

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

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

PART VI.

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

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

Harken to Peter on the day of Pentecost, or rather to the Holy Ghost, just come down from the risen, ascended and glorified Saviour. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: *whom God hath raised up*, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.... *This Jesus hath God raised up*, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts ii.). So also in chapter iii.: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, *whom God hath raised from the dead*; whereof we are witnesses.... Unto you first *God, having raised up His Son Jesus*, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.... And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and *preached*

through Jesus the resurrection from the dead."

Their preaching was characterized by the prominent place which it assigned to the glorious, powerful and telling fact of resurrection. True, there was the full and clear statement of incarnation and crucifixion, with the great moral bearings of these facts. How could it be otherwise? The Son of God had to become a man to die, in order that by death He might glorify God as to the entire question of sin; destroy the power of Satan; rob death of its sting, and the grave of its victory; put away forever the sins of His people, and associate them with Himself in the power of eternal life in the new creation, where all things are of God, and where a single trace of sin or sorrow can never enter. Eternal and universal homage and adoration to His peerless name!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. And as concerning that *He raised Him up from the dead*, no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but *He whom God raised again* saw no corruption."

Then follows the powerful appeal which, though not bearing upon our present line of argument, we cannot omit in this place. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and *by Him* all that believe *are justified from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. *Beware* therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts xiii. 26-41).

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

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

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

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

We shall now turn for a moment to the Epistles, and see the wondrous way in which the Holy Ghost unfolds and applies the fact of resurrection. But ere doing so we would call the reader's attention to a passage which is sadly misunderstood and misapplied. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "We preach Christ crucified." These words are continually quoted for the purpose of casting a damper on those who earnestly desire to advance in the knowledge of divine things. But a moment's serious attention

to the context would be sufficient to show the true meaning of the apostle. Did he confine himself to the fact of the crucifixion? The bare idea, in the face of the body of Scripture which we have quoted, is simply absurd. The fact is, the glorious truth of resurrection shines out in all his discourses.

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

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

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

Here lies the grand point of the apostle's blessed and powerful argument. We must, if we would have settled peace, believe in God as the One who raised up Jesus from the dead, and who in so doing proved Himself friendly to us, and proved too His infinite satisfaction in the work of the Cross. Jesus, having been "delivered for our offenses," could not be where He now is if a single one of these offenses remained unatoned for. But, blessed forever be the God of all grace, He raised from among the dead the One who had been delivered for our offenses; and to all who believe in Him righteousness shall be reckoned. "It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." See how this glorious theme, the *basis* of the great commission, expands under our gaze as we pursue our study of it!

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

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

sheep."

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

PART VII.

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

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

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

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

confidence, to offer an opinion on such a subject, what man in his sober senses would think of giving the slightest heed?

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

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

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

But how truly delightful and refreshing to turn from man's worthless notions, and see the way in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ prized and used the Holy Scriptures! In His conflict with Satan, He appeals three times over to the book of Deuteronomy. "*It is written*" is His one simple and unanswerable reply to the suggestions of the enemy. He does not reason. He does not argue or explain. He does not refer to His own personal feelings, evidences, or experiences. He does not argue from the great facts of the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the voice of the Father—precious and real as all these things were. He

simply takes His stand upon the divine and eternal authority of the Holy Scriptures, and of that portion of the Scriptures in particular which modern infidels have audaciously attacked. He uses as His authority that which they are not afraid to pronounce an imposture! How dreadful for them! What will be their end, unless they repent?

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

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

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

But we must pass on, and turn for a moment to the last chapter of Luke—that precious section which contains "the great commission" whereof we speak. We might refer with profit and blessing to those occasions in which our blessed Lord, in His interviews with Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers, ever and only appeals to the Holy Scriptures. In short, whether in conflict with men or devils, whether speaking in private or in public, whether for His public ministry or for His private walk, we find the perfect Man, the Lord from heaven, always putting the very highest honor upon the writings of Moses and the Prophets,

thus commending them to us in all their divine integrity, and giving us the very fullest and most blessed encouragement to commit our souls, for time and eternity, with absolute confidence, to those peerless writings.

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

Beloved reader, have we not much cause to bless the Lord for these words of His addressed to His poor perplexed ones on their way to Emmaus? They may seem severe; but it is the necessary severity of a pure, a perfect, and a divinely wise love. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And"—mark these words!—"beginning at *Moses and all the Prophets*, He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself." He Himself—all homage to His glorious person!—is the divine centre of all the things contained in the Scriptures from cover to cover. He is the golden chain that binds into one marvelous and magnificent whole every part of the inspired volume, from Genesis to Revelation. Hence the man that touches a single section of the sacred canon is guilty of the heinous sin of seeking to overthrow the word of God; and of such a man even charity itself must say he knows neither the Christ of God nor God Himself. The man who dares to tamper in any way with the word of God has taken the first step on that inclined plane that leads inevitably down to eternal perdition. Let men beware, then, how they speak against the Scriptures; and if some *will* speak, let others beware how they listen. If there were no infidel listeners, there would be few infidel lecturers. How awful to think that there should be either the one or the other in this our highly favored land! May God have mercy upon them, and open their eyes ere it be too late! Five minutes in hell will quash forever all the infidel theories that ever were propounded in this world. Oh, the egregious folly of infidelity!

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

Here again we have the divine seal put upon all the grand divisions of the Old Testament. This is most comforting and strengthening for all pious lovers of Scripture. To find our Lord Himself on all occasions, and under all circumstances, referring to Scripture, using it at all times and for all purposes, feeding upon it Himself and commending it to others, wielding it as the sword of the Spirit, bowing to its holy authority in all things, appealing to it as the only perfect standard, test and touchstone, the only infallible guide for

man in this world, the only unfailing light amid all the surrounding moral gloom—all this is comforting and encouraging in the very highest degree, and it fills our hearts with deepest praise to the Father of mercies who has so provided for us in all our weakness and need.

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

We turn now to 2 Tim. iii. 14-17. The aged apostle, at the close of his marvelous career, from his prison at Rome, looking back at the whole of his ministry, looking around at the failure and ruin so sadly apparent on every side, looking forward to the terrible consummation of the "last days," and looking beyond all to "the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give *in that day,*" thus addresses his beloved son: "But *continue thou* in the things which thou hast learned and *hast been assured of,* knowing of whom thou hast learned; and that *from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,* and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that *the man of God may be perfect* (complete), *thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

All this is unspeakably precious to every true lover of the word of God. The place here assigned, and the virtues here attributed, to the Holy Scriptures are beyond all price. In short, it is utterly impossible to overstate the value and importance of the foregoing quotation. It is deeply touching to find the revered and beloved old veteran, in the full power of the Holy Ghost, recalling Timothy to the days of his childhood, when, at the knees of his pious mother, he drank at the pure fountain of inspiration. How did the dear child know that these holy writings were the word of God? He knew it just in the same way that the blessed apostle himself knew it, by their divine power and effect upon his heart and conscience through the Holy Ghost. Did the Holy Scriptures need man's credentials? What an insult to the dignity of Scripture to imagine that any human seal or guarantee is necessary to accredit it to the soul! Do we want the authority of the Church, the judgment of the Fathers, the decrees of councils, the consent of the doctors, the decision

of the universities, to accredit the word of God? Far away be the thought! Who would think of bringing out a rushlight at noon to prove that the sun shines, or to bring home its beams in their genial virtue to the human frame? What son would think of taking his father's letter to an ignorant crossing-sweeper to have it accredited and interpreted to his heart?

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

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

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

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

PART VIII.

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

This was to be a mission exclusively to the house of Israel. There was no message for the Gentiles, no

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

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

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

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

And then, that not a single feature might be lacking to set forth with all possible force and fulness the royal grace which breathes in "the great commission," our blessed Lord does not fail to point out to His servants the remarkable spot which was to be the centre of their *sphere*. He tells them to "begin at Jerusalem." Yes, Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified; where every indignity that human enmity could invent was heaped upon His divine person; where a murderer and a robber was preferred to "God manifest in the flesh;" where human iniquity had reached its culminating point in nailing the Son of God to a malefactor's cross—there the messengers were to begin their blessed work; that was to be the centre of the sphere of their gracious operations; and from thence they were to travel to the utmost bounds of the habitable globe. They were to begin with "Jerusalem sinners"—with the very murderers of the Son of God, and then go forth to publish everywhere the glorious tidings, so that all might know that precious grace of God which was sufficient to meet the crimson guilt of Jerusalem itself.

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

"Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding:
Ransomed souls the tidings swell;
'Tis a deep that knows no sounding;
Who its length or breadth can tell?"

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

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

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

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

Some there are who speak disparagingly of the blessed and holy work of evangelization. We tremble for them. We feel persuaded they are not in the current of the Master's mind, and hence we utterly reject their thoughts. It is to be feared that their hearts are cold in reference to an object that engages the heart of God.

If so, they would need to humble themselves in His presence, and seek to get their souls restored to a true sense of the magnitude, importance and interest of the grand question before us. At least let them beware of how they seek to discourage and hinder others whose hearts the Lord has moved to care for precious, immortal souls. The present is most assuredly not the time for raising difficulties, and starting questions which can only prove stumbling-blocks in the pathway of earnest workers. It becomes us to seek in every right way to strengthen the hands of all who are endeavoring, according to their measure, to publish the glad tidings, and make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let us see that we do so, so far as in us lies; and above all things, let us never utter a sentence calculated to hinder any one in the blessed work of winning souls to Christ.

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

Our blessed Lord, in closing His commission to His disciples, said, "And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This promise was fulfilled, this power was communicated on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost came down from the ascended and glorified Man, to qualify His servants for the glorious work for which He had called them. They had to "tarry" until they got the power. How could they go without it? Who but the Holy Ghost could speak adequately of the love of God, of the person, work and glory of Christ? Who but He could enable any one to preach repentance and remission of sins? Who but He could properly handle all the weighty subjects comprehended in "the great commission?" In a word, the power of the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential in every branch of Christian service, and all who go to work without it will find it to be barrenness, misery, and desolation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C. H. M.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The two Greek words to which we have alluded in the text are, πλεονεξία (pleonexia—the desire to get more), and φιλαργυρία (philarguria—the love of money). Now it is the former that occurs in Col. iii. 5—"Covetousness, which is idolatry;" and there it stands in the terrible category with some of the very vilest sins that stain the pages of human history.

[2] It is remarkable that both in Eph. vi. and Col. iii. the address to servants is far more elaborate than to any of the other classes. In Titus ii. servants are specially singled out. There is no address to husbands, none to masters, none to children. We do not attempt to account for this, but we cannot help noticing it as a very interesting fact; and most assuredly it teaches us what a very important place is assigned in Christianity to one who, in those early days of the Church's history, occupied the place of a slave. The Holy Ghost took special pains to instruct such an one as to how he was to carry himself in his most trying sphere of work. The poor slave might think himself shut out from the service of God. So far from this, he is sweetly taught that by simply doing his duty as in the sight of

God he could adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour, and bring glory to the name of Jesus. Nothing can exceed the grace that shines in this.

[3] The "prophets," in this passage, are those of the New Testament. This is evident from the expression, "*Now revealed*." He could not speak of a thing being "now revealed" to men who had been dead for hundreds of years. Besides, had the apostle meant Old Testament prophets, the order would assuredly have been "Prophets and apostles." We have a similar expression in Eph. ii. 20: "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." He does not say, "prophets and apostles." The truth is that the apostles and prophets formed the first layer of the foundation of the Church of which Jesus Christ is the chief Corner-stone; and this is an additional proof that the Church had no existence save in the secret counsels of God until our Lord Christ, having accomplished the work of redemption, ascended into the heavens, and sent down the Holy Ghost to baptize believers—Jews and Gentiles—into one body.

The reader may also refer with real profit and interest to Rom. xvi. 25, 26: "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to *the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest*, and by the scriptures of the prophets (literally, by the prophetic writings, that is, of the New Testament), according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

[4] We have no record of Peter's first meeting with his Lord, after the resurrection.

[5] In many of the Old Testament narratives, however, the instruction is so manifestly typical that even the most cautious reader, if at all familiar with Scripture, cannot refuse to look at it in that point of view.

[6] The reader will, of course, bear in mind that what is stated about Levi in this paper is to be regarded as *typical* of that which the believer now knows in *reality* through the Holy Ghost.

[7] It may be well just to observe here that in considering the offerings above referred to I have merely looked at them with reference to the question of Levi's history.

[8] We may also observe, in the act of cutting the offering into his pieces, this important truth, that in whatever relationship of life we contemplate the Lord Jesus, we find the same unsullied perfection; whether we consider Him as a public or as a private character, in one position or another, all is alike. Not so with man—here there must be failure in one way or another. If a man is a good public character, he may be the very plague of the family circle, and *vice versa*. And, surely, in all this we learn the glorious truth which shall shortly be owned by all created intelligences, that "He *alone* is worthy."

[9] I would observe here that in speaking of "the imputation of righteousness," I by no means desire to be understood as giving any countenance to the prevailing theory of "the imputed righteousness of Christ." Of this expression, so much in use in the theology of the present day, it would be sufficient to say that it is nowhere to be found in the oracles of God. I read of "the righteousness of God" (Rom. iii. *passim*), and, moreover, of the imputation of righteousness (Rom. iv. 11), but never of "the righteousness of Christ." It is true, we read of the Lord Jesus being "*made of God* unto us righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6), but these passages do not support the above theory. I would further add that the moral effect of this idea will be found to be decidedly pernicious, because it of *necessity* supposes the believer as standing apart from the Lord Jesus, whereas the doctrine of Scripture is that the believer is "*made the righteousness of God IN HIM*" (2 Cor. v. 21). And again, "*we are IN HIM* that is true, even in *His Son Jesus Christ*" (1 Jno. v. 20).

[10] It is worthy the serious attention of the Christian reader who may desire the unity of the Church, that the tribe of Levi in the desert was a truly striking example of what may be termed "unity in diversity." Gershon was in one sense totally different from Merari, and Merari was totally different from Kohath; and yet Gershon, Merari and Kohath were *one*: they should not, therefore, contend about their service, because they were *one*; nor yet would it have been right to confound their services, because they were totally different. Thus, attention to *unity* would have saved them from contention, and attention to *diversity* would have saved them from confusion. In a word, all things could only be "done decently and in order" by a due attention to the fact of there being "unity in diversity."

[11] I say "one of the ends," for we should ever remember that the grand object before the divine mind in redemption is to show in the ages to come His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus; and this object will be secured even though our poor puny services had never been heard of.

[12] It would surely be of all importance in this day, when so many are declining from the narrow path of obedience to the written Word, and entering upon the wide and bewildering field of human tradition, to bear in mind that the Levite, when carrying the tabernacle through the desert, found no support nor guide *from beneath*; no, *the grace* in which he stood was his *sole support*, and *the pillar above his sole guide*. It would have been miserable indeed had he been left to find a guide in the footmarks on the sand, which would change at every wind that blew. *But all the sand did for him was to add to his labor and toil while he endeavored to follow the*

heavenly guide above his head.

[13] It has been well observed that in the tabernacle God was seen bringing all His glory into immediate connection with *the sand of the desert*: and when the high priest went into the holy place, he found himself in the very presence of that glory, *with his feet upon the sand of the desert* likewise. In the temple, however, this was not the case, for the floor of the house was *overlaid with gold* (1 Kings vi. 30).

So is it with the Christian now; he has not as yet his feet upon the "pure gold" of the heavenly city, but his deepest and most abiding knowledge of God is that which he obtains in connection with his sorrow, toil and conflict in the wilderness.

[14] I say, *one in worship*; and I would press this point, because at the present day it seems to be a thought in the minds of many that there may be unity in service and at the same time the greatest diversity in worship. I would appeal to the spiritual mind of the Christian reader, and I would ask him, Can this really be? What should we say to a family who would unite, or appear to do so, for the purpose of carrying on their father's work, but who could not, by reason of division, meet around their father's table? Could such unity satisfy a father who loved his children?

[15] For a full examination of this subject, the reader is referred to "Facts and Theories as to a future state,—the Scripture doctrine considered with reference to current denials of eternal punishment," by F. W. Grant, 640 pp., \$1.50 (with full index of texts and subjects examined.)

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

[17] Let the reader note that the "ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance" and the elder son that "never transgressed his father's commandment" is the expression of their own thoughts as to themselves. When God's judgment of man is expressed, the Scriptures declare, "There is none righteous, no, not one.... They are all gone out of the way; ... there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. iii. 10, 12).—*Ed.*

[18] "By faith" is connected with remission of sins and inheritance among the sanctified.

Transcriber's note:

Variations in spelling, punctuation and hyphenation have been retained except in obvious cases of typographical error.

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