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Nicodemus: A Case Study

Being by birth a Jew and as such being entitled to all the privileges of a son of Abraham, it must have perplexed Nicodemus to be told that he must be born again to see the kingdom of God. This was a total setting aside of all his privileges and distinctions. A Pharisee, a ruler, a master, was not one whit nearer to this heavenly kingdom than the most disreputable.

If he could carry all his advantages and distinctions with him, to have them placed to his credit in this new kingdom, it would be something. This would secure for him a position far above that of a harlot or a publican. But to be told that he must be born again left him nothing to glory in. This was deeply humbling to a learned, religious, influential man.

But it was puzzling as well as humbling. "Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Surely not. There would be no more gained by a second natural birth than by a first. If a natural man could enter ten thousand times into his mother's womb and be born, he would still be nothing but a natural man; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Do what you will with flesh, you cannot alter or improve it.

Nothing can change flesh into spirit. You may exalt it to the rank of a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel, but it will be flesh nonetheless.

Flesh, in itself, is withered grass; and its most pious endeavors--works of righteousness--have been

pronounced by the inspired Word to be "as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).

Let us see how our blessed Lord replies to the "How?" of Nicodemus. Jesus answered, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5-8).

Here we are distinctly taught that regeneration is produced by "water and the Spirit." A man must be born of water and of the Spirit before he can see the kingdom of God or enter into its profound and heavenly mysteries. The keenest mortal vision cannot "see" the kingdom of God, nor the most gigantic intellect "enter" into its deep secrets. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Born Of Water

Many are at a loss to know what is meant by being "born of water." Certainly, the expression has been made the ground of much controversy. It is only by comparing scripture with scripture that we can ascertain the real sense of any particular passage. It is a special mercy for the uneducated Christian that he need not travel outside the covers of that volume to interpret any passage.

What, then, is the meaning of being born of water? In the opening of John's Gospel, we read, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (1:11-13).

From this passage we learn that everyone who believes on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is born again--born of God. This is the plain sense of the passage. All who, by the power of God the Holy Spirit, believe on God the Son, are born of God the Father. The source of the testimony is divine; the object of the testimony is divine; the power of receiving the testimony is divine; the entire work of regeneration is divine. Instead of inquiring, How can I be born again? I have simply to cast myself, by faith, on Jesus. Thus, I am born again. All who put their trust in Christ have this new life.

Again, "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; but is passed from death unto life" (Jn. 5:24). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (Jn. 6:47). "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (Jn. 20:31).

All these passages go to prove that the only way we can get this new and everlasting life is by simply receiving the record concerning Christ. All who believe that record have this eternal life. Notice, it is not those who merely say they believe, but those who actually do

believe. There is life-giving power in the Christ whom the Word reveals, and in the Word which reveals Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."

Lest ignorance should marvel, or skepticism sneer, at the idea of dead souls hearing, it is added, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (Jn. 5:25, 28, 29). The Lord Christ can make dead souls, as well as dead bodies, hear His quickening voice. It is by His mighty voice that life can be communicated to either body or soul.

If the infidel or the skeptic reasons and objects, it is simply because he makes his own vain mind the standard of what ought to be, and thus entirely shuts out God. This is the climax of folly.

Begotten By The Word Of Truth

But what has all this to do with the meaning of the word "water" in John 3:5? It shows that the new birth is produced by the voice of Christ, which is really the Word of God. We read in the first chapter of James, "...of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (1:18). So also in 1 Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1:23) In both passages, the Word is expressly set forth as the means by which the new birth is produced. James declares that we are begotten "by the word of truth"; and Peter declares that we are "born again by the word of God." If, then, our

Lord speaks of being "born of water," it is obvious that He represents the Word under the significant figure of "water"-- a figure which a master of Israel might have understood, had he only studied Ezekiel 36:25-27.

There is a beautiful passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians in which the Word is presented under the figure of water. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (5:25-26). So also in the Epistle to Titus: "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; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (3:5-7).

From all these quotations, we learn that the

Word of God is the grand instrument which the Holy Ghost uses in calling dead souls to life. This is confirmed by our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. Instead of replying to the repeated inquiry, "How can these things be?" He sets this master of Israel down to learn the simple lesson taught by the brazen serpent. The bitten Israelite of old was to be healed by simply looking at the serpent of brass on the pole. The dead sinner now is to get life by simply looking at Jesus on the cross, and Jesus on the throne. The Israelite was not told to look at his wound, though it was the sense of his wound that made him look. The dead sinner is not told to look at his sins, though it is the sense of his sins that will make him look. One look at the bronze serpent healed the

Israelite; one look at Jesus quickens the dead sinner.
"Look and live."

Man's Reason vs. God's Word

It was not the way he looked, but the object he looked at, that healed the Israelite. So it is not the way he looks, but the Object he looks at, that saves the sinner. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Such was the precious lesson which Nicodemus was led to learn--such the reply to his "How." If a man begins to reason about the new birth, he will be confounded; but if he believes in Jesus, he is born again. Man's reason can never understand the new birth; but the Word of God produces it. Many are astray on this. They are occupied with the process of regeneration, instead of the Word which regenerates. They are looking at self, instead of at Christ. As there is connection between the object at which we look and the effect of looking at it, we can easily see what must be the effect of looking in on one's self. What would an Israelite have gained by looking at his wound? Nothing. What did he gain by looking at the serpent? Health. What does a sinner gain by looking at himself? Nothing. What does he gain by looking at Jesus? Everlasting life.

The Results Of Regeneration

Who can estimate aright the glorious results of being a child of God? Who can unfold those affections which belong to that high and hallowed relationship in which the soul is placed by being born again? Who can fully explain that precious fellowship which the child of God is privileged to enjoy with his heavenly Father? "Behold,

what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:1-3). "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." (Rom. 8:14-17 rv).

It is most important to understand the distinction between life and peace. Life is the result of being linked with Christ's person; peace is the result of His work. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 Jn. 5:12). But "being justified by faith, we have peace" (Rom. 5:1). "Having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20). The very moment a man receives into his heart the simple truth of the gospel, he becomes a child of God. The truth which he receives is the "incorruptible seed" of "the divine nature" (1 Pet. 1:23, 2 Pet. 1:4).

Many are not aware of all that is involved in simply receiving the truth of the gospel. As in nature, the child of a nobleman may not know the varied results of the relationship, so is it in grace. I may be ignorant of both the relationship and its results; but I am in it, notwithstanding. And being in it, I have the affections which belong to it, and I ought to cultivate them and allow them to entwine themselves artlessly around their

proper Object—the One who has begotten me by the Word of truth (Jas. 1:18). It is my privilege to enjoy the full flow of paternal affection emanating from the bosom of God, and to reciprocate that affection, through the power of the indwelling Spirit. "Now are we the sons of God." He has made us such. He has attached this rare and marvelous privilege to the simple belief of the truth (Jn. 1:12).

We do not reach this position "by works of righteousness which we have done," or could we; but simply "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. That, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). We are "called sons," and "made heirs" and all this simply by the belief of the truth of the gospel.

Take the case of the vilest sinner who receives into his heart the pure gospel of God. Let him heartily believe "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." He then and there becomes a child of God, a thoroughly saved, perfectly justified, and divinely accepted person. In receiving into his heart the simple record concerning Christ, he has received new life. Christ is the truth and the life. When we receive the truth, we receive Christ; and when we receive Christ, we receive life. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (Jn. 3:36). When does he get this life? The moment he believes: "believing, ye might have life through His name" (Jn. 20:31). The truth concerning Christ is the seed of

eternal life; when that truth is believed, life is communicated.

Observe, this is what the Word of God declares. It is a matter of divine testimony, not merely a human feeling. We do not get life by feeling something in ourselves, but by believing something about Christ; and that something we have on the authority of God's eternal Word. Many are looking in for evidences of the new life, instead of looking out at the Object who imparts the life. It is quite true that "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 Jn. 5:10), but remember, it is "the witness" of a life which is received by "believing on the Son of God," not by looking in upon one's self. The more undividedly I am occupied with Christ, the more distinct and satisfactory will be the witness in myself. If I make the witness my object, I shall be plunged in doubt and uncertainty; but if I make Christ my object, I have the witness in all its divine integrity and power.

There is special need of clearness on this point, because of the strong tendency of our hearts to make something within the ground of our peace and contentment, instead of building exclusively on Christ. As soon as we take the eye off Him, we become unhinged and unhappy; but the more simply we cling to Christ, the more peaceful and happy we shall be.

"Life-Works"

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

If anything could enhance the value of these lovely words, it would be the fact of their being found at the close of the Epistle to the Galatians. In the progress of this very remarkable writing, the inspired apostle cuts up by the roots the entire system of legal righteousness. He proves, in the most unanswerable way, that by works of law, of any sort, moral or ceremonial, no man can be justified in the sight of God. He declares that believers are not under law in any way whatsoever, either for life, for justification, or for walk—that if we are under law, we must give up Christ; must give up the Spirit of God; we must give up faith; we must give up the promises. In short, if we take up legal ground, in any shape whatever, we must give up Christianity and lie under the actual curse of the law.

We do not attempt to quote the passages or to go into this side of the question at all, just now. We merely call the earnest attention of the Christian reader to the golden words which stand at the head of this paper—words which, we cannot but feel, come in with incomparable beauty and peculiar moral force at the close of an Epistle in which all human righteousness is withered up and flung into the winds. It is always needful to take in both sides of a subject. We are all so terribly prone to one-sidedness, that it is morally healthful for us to have our hearts brought under the full action of the truth. It is, alas, possible for grace itself to

be abused; and we may sometimes forget that, while we are justified in the sight of God by faith alone, a real faith must be evidenced by works. We have, all of us, to bear in mind that while law-works are denounced and demolished, in the most unqualified manner, in manifold parts of Holy Scripture, yet that life-works are diligently and constantly maintained and insisted upon.

Yes, we have to bend our earnest attention to this. If we profess to have life, this life must express itself in more tangible and forcible than mere words or empty lip-profession. It is quite true that law cannot give life, and hence it cannot produce life-works. Not a single cluster of living fruit ever was, or ever will be, culled from the tree of legality. Law can only produce "dead works," from which we need to have the conscience purged just as much as from "wicked works."

All this is most true. It is demonstrated in the pages of inspiration beyond all possibility of question or demur. But then there must be life-works, or else there is no life. Of what possible use is it to profess to have eternal life; to talk about faith; to advocate the doctrines of grace, while at the same time, the entire life, the whole practical career is marked by selfishness in every shape and form? "Whoso," says the blessed Apostle John, "hat this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

So also the Apostle James puts a very wholesome question to our hearts, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto

them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, not withstanding ye give thm not these things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"

Here we have life-works insisted upon in a way which out to speak home, in the most solemn and forcible way, to our hearts. There is an appalling amount of empty profession-shallow, powerless, worthless talk in our midst. We have a wonderfully clear gospel-thanks be to God for it! We see very distinctly that salvation is by grace, through faith, not by works of righteousness, nor by works of law. Blessedly true, and our heart praises God for it. But when people are saved, ought they not to live as such? Ought the new life to come out in fruits? It must come out if it be in; and if it does not come out, it is not there.

Mark what the Apostle Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith' and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, let any man should boast." Here we have what we may call the upper side of this great practical question. Then the other side, to which every true and earnest Christian will delight will give his attention. The apostle goes on to say, "We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them."

Here we have the whole subject fully and clearly before us. God has created us to walk in a path of good works, and He has prepared the path of good works for us to walk in. It is all of God, from the first to last; all through grace, and all by faith. Thanks and praise be to God that it is so! But, let us remember that it is utterly vain to talk about grace and faith, and eternal life, if the "good

works" are not forthcoming. It is useless to boast of our high truth, our deep, varied, and extensive acquaintance with Scripture, our correct position, our having come out from this, that, and the other, if our feet are not found trading that "path of good works which God hath prepared" for us.

God looks for reality. He is not satisfied with mere words of high profession. he says to us, "My little children. let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth." He, blessed be His name, did not love us in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and He looks for a response from us—a response clear, full, and distinct; a response coming out in a life of good works, a life yielding mellow clusters of the "fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus, to the glory and praise of God."

Do you not consider it to be our duty to apply our hearts to this weighty subject? Ought we not diligently to seek to promote love and good works? And how can this be most effectively accomplished? Surely by walking in love ourselves, and faithfully treading the path of good works in our own private life. For ourselves, we confess we are thoroughly sick of hollow profession. High truth on the lips and low practice in daily life, is one of the crying evils of our day. We talk of grace; but fail in common righteousness—fail in the plainest moral duties in our daily private life. We boast of our "position" and our "standing;" but we are deplorably lax as to our "condition" and "state".

May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, stir up all hearts to more thorough earnestness, in the pursuit of good

works, so that we may more fully adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things!

P.S.—It is very interesting and instructive to compare the teaching of Paul and James—two divinely inspired apostles— on the subject of "works." Paul utterly repudiates law-works. James jealously insists upon life-works. If this fact be seized, all difficulties vanishes, and the divine harmony is clearly seen. Many have failed to do this, and hence have been much perplexed by the seeming difference between Romans 4:5 and James 2:24. We need not say there is the most perfect and beautiful harmony. When Paul says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," he refers to law-works. When James says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," he refers to life-works.

This is abundantly confirmed by the two cases adduced by James in proof of his thesis, namely, Abraham offering up his son and Rahab concealing the spies. If you abstract faith from these cases, they were bad works. Look at them as the fruit of faith, and they were life-works.

How marked is the far-seeing wisdom of the Holy Spirit in all this! He foresaw the use that would be made of this passage; and hence, instead of selecting works abstractedly good, He takes up two from the history of four thousand years, which, if they were not the fruit of faith, were bad works.

A Fragment of Worship

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name (Heb. 13:15).

It is deeply important that the Christian reader should understand the true character of the worship God looks for, and in which He delights. God delights in Christ; and hence it should be our constant aim to present Him to God. Christ should ever be the material of our worship, and He will be, in proportion as we are led by the Holy Spirit. How often, alas! it is otherwise with us the heart can tell. Both in the assembly and in the closet, how often is the tone low, and the spirit dull and heavy! We are occupied with self instead of with Christ; and the Holy Spirit instead of being free to do His own proper work - which is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us—is obliged to occupy us with ourselves, in self-judgment, because our ways have not been right.

All this is deeply deplored. It demands our serious attention, both as assemblies and as individuals, in our public reunions and in our private devotions. Why is the tone of our public meetings frequently so low? Why such feebleness, such barrenness, such wandering? Why are the hymns and prayers so often wide of the true mark? Why is there so little that really deserves the name of worship? Why is there so little in our midst to refresh the heart of God?—so little that He can speak of as "My bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me?" (Lev. 6:15) We are occupied with self and its surroundings—our wants, our weakness, our trials, our difficulties; and leave God without the bread of His

sacrifice. We actually rob Him of His due, and of that which His loving heart desires.

A Risen Savior's Challenge

The period during which our blessed Lord lay in the tomb must needs have proved a dark and bewildering moment to many of those who looked for redemption in Israel. It would demand a calm, clear and vigorous faith to raise the heart above the heavy clouds which gathered just then upon the horizon of God's people, and it does not appear that many possessed such a faith at that trying moment.

We may doubtless look upon the two disciples who travelled together to Emmaus as illustrating the condition of many, if not all, the beloved saints of God during the three days and three nights that our beloved Lord lay in the heart of the earth. They were thoroughly bewildered and at their wits' end. "They talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden (restrained) that they should not know Him." (Lk 24:14-16)

Their minds were full of surrounding circumstances. All hope seemed gone. Their fondly cherished expectations were blasted, apparently. The whole scene was overcast by the dark shadow of death, and their poor hearts were sad.

But mark how the risen Savior's challenge falls upon their drooping spirits! "And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" (verse 17)

Surely this was a reasonable and weighty question for those dear disciples – a question eminently calculated to recall them, as we say, to their senses. It was precisely what they wanted at the moment, occupied as they were with circumstances instead of resting in the eternal and immutable truth of God. Scripture was clear and plain enough had they only hearkened to its voice. But instead of listening only to the distinct testimony of the eternal Spirit in the Word they had allowed their minds to get thoroughly down under the action and influences of outward circumstances. Instead of standing with firm foot on the everlasting rock of divine revelation, they were struggling amid the billows of life's stormy ocean. In a word, they had for a moment fallen under the power of death so far as their minds were concerned, and no marvel if their hearts were sad and their communications gloomy.

And does it not sometimes happen that you and I in like manner get down under the power of things seen and temporal, instead of living by faith in the light of things unseen and eternal? Yes, even we who profess to know and believe in a risen Savior – who believe that we are dead and risen with Him – who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, do not we at times sink and cower? Has not that precious, loving Savior oftentimes occasion to put the question to our hearts, “What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another?”

Does it not often happen that when we come together or when we walk by the way our “communications” are anything but what they ought to be? It may be gloomily moping together over the depressing circumstances which surround us – the weather – the prospects of the country – the state of trade – our poor health – the

difficulty of making both ends meet – anything and everything, in short, but the right thing.

Yes, and so occupied do we become with such things that our spiritual eyes are holden (restrained), and we do not take knowledge of the blessed One who in His tender faithful love is at our side, and He has to challenge our vagrant hearts with His pointed and powerful question, “What manner of communications are these that ye have?”

Let us think of this. It really demands our consideration. We are all far too apt to allow our minds to fall under the power and pressure of circumstances, instead of living in the power of faith. We get occupied with our surroundings instead of dwelling upon “things above” – those bright and blessed realities which are ours in Christ.

And what is the result? Do we better our circumstances, or brighten our prospects by gloomily moping over them? Not in the smallest degree. What then? We simply make ourselves miserable and our communications depressing; and, worst of all, we bring dishonor on the cause of Christ.

Christians forget how much is involved in their temper, manner, look, and deportment in daily life. We forget that the Lord’s glory is intimately bound up with our daily deportments. We all know that, in social life, we judge the character of the head of a household by what we see of his children and servants. If we observed the children looking miserable and downcast, we should be disposed to pronounce their father morose, severe and arbitrary. If we see the servants crushed and overwrought, we consider the master hard-hearted and

grinding. In short, as a rule, you can form a tolerably fair estimate of the head of a house by the tone, spirit, style and manner of the members of his household.

How earnestly, then, should we seek, as members of the household of God, to give a right impression of what He is by our temper, spirit, style and manner! If men of the world – those with whom we come in contact from day to day in the practical details of life – if they see us looking sour, morose, downcast – if they hear us giving utterance to doleful complaints about this, that and the other – if they see us occupied about our own things – grasping, griping, and driving hard bargains like others – if they see us grinding our servants with heavy work, low wages, and poor fare – what estimate can they form of Him whom we call our Father and our Master in Heaven?

Let us not despise and turn away from such homely words. Depend upon it, there is need of such in this day of much profession. There is a vast amount of intellectual traffic in truth which leaves the conscience unreached, the heart untouched, the life unaffected. We know we are dead and risen; but when anything occurs to touch us, either in our persons, in our relations, or in our interests, we speedily show how little power that precious truth has upon us.

May the Lord give us grace to apply our hearts very seriously and earnestly to these things, so that there may be, in our daily course, a more faithful exhibition of a genuine Christianity – such an exhibition as shall glorify our own most gracious God and Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – and such, too, as shall afford to those who come in contact with us a fair

specimen of what pure religion really is in its action upon the entire course and character.

May we all realize more a risen Savior's presence, and find therein a triumphant answer to all the dark suggestions of the enemy, the depressing reasonings of our own hearts, and the deadening influence of surrounding circumstances. God, in His infinite mercy, grant it, for Jesus' sake.

It is impossible to read this charming section of inspiration (Luke 24) and not be struck with what we may venture to call the rallying power of a risen Savior's voice and presence. We see the dear disciples scattered hither and thither in doubt and perplexity, fear and despondency – some running to the sepulchre; some coming from it; some going to Emmaus, and some crowded together at Jerusalem, in various states and conditions.

But the voice and realized presence of Jesus rallied, reassured, and encouraged them all, and brought all together around His own blessed Person in worship, love, and praise. There was an indescribable power in His presence to meet every condition of heart and mind. Thus it was; thus it is; thus it ever must be, blessed and praised be His precious name! There is power in the presence of a risen Savior to solve our difficulties, remove our perplexities, calm our fears, ease our burdens, dry our tears, meet our every need, tranquilize our minds and satisfy every craving of our hearts.

Jesus! Thou are enough,

The mind and heart to fill;

Thy life – to calm the anxious soul,

Thy love – its fear dispel.

The two disciples going to Emmaus proved something of this, if we are to judge from their own glowing words to one another. “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?” (verse 32) Yes, here lay the deep and precious secret: “He talked with us” – and “He opened to us the Scriptures!” What seraphic moments! what high communion! what loving ministry! A risen Savior rallying their hearts by His marvelous words and mighty exposition of the Scriptures.

What was the effect – what the necessary result? The two travellers instantly returned to Jerusalem to seek their brethren. It could not be otherwise. If we lose sight of a risen Savior we are sure to get away from our brethren, sure to get occupied with our own things; to pursue our own way – to get into coldness, deadness, darkness, and selfishness. But, on the other hand, the moment we get really into the presence of Christ, when we hear His voice and feel the sweetness and power of His love, when our hearts are brought under the mighty moral influence of His most precious loving ministry, then we are led out in true affection and interest after all our brethren and in earnest desire to find our place in their midst in order that we may communicate to them the deep joy that is filling our own souls.

We may lay it down as a fixed principle – a spiritual axiom – that it is utterly impossible to breathe the atmosphere of a risen Savior’s presence and remain in an isolated, independent, or fragmentary condition. The necessary effect of His dear presence is to melt the

heart and cause it to flow out in streams of tender affection toward all that belong to Him.

But let us pursue our chapter.

“And they rose up the same hour” of the night (verse 33) – thus proving they had but little business at Emmaus, or how paramount was the blessed object now before them, “and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.” (verses 33–37)

They, too, needed a risen Savior’s challenge to bring them to their senses – to calm their fears and raise their drooping spirits. They needed to realize the power of His presence as the risen One. They had just declared to their two brethren from Emmaus that “The Lord is risen indeed”; but yet when their risen Lord appeared to them they did not know Him, and He had to challenge their hearts with His stirring words, “Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them.” (verses 38–43)

What tender love! What gracious condescension to their weakness and need! What compassionate entrance into all their feelings, in spite of their folly and unbelief! Gracious Savior! Who would not love Thee? Who would not trust Thee? May the whole heart be absorbed with Thee! May the whole life be cordially devoted to Thy blessed service! May Thy cause command all our energies! May all we have and all we love be laid on Thine altar as a reasonable service! May the eternal Spirit work in us for the accomplishment of these grand and longed for objects!

But before closing this brief article there is one point of special interest and value to which we must call attention, and that is, the way in which the risen Savior puts honor upon the written Word. He rebuked the two travellers for their slowness of heart to believe the Scriptures. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (verse 27)

So also in His interview with the eleven and the rest at Jerusalem. No sooner had He satisfied them as to His identity than He sought to conduct their souls to the same divine authority – the Holy Scriptures. "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 (was necessary for) Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins would be

preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (verses 44-47)

All this is of the deepest possible importance at the present moment. We feel persuaded that professing Christians everywhere need to have their hearts stirred up in reference to the paramount claims of the Word of God, its absolute authority over the conscience, its formative power, its complete sway over the entire course, character and conduct.

It is to be feared, greatly feared, that Holy Scripture is fast losing its divine place in the hearts of those who profess to take it as the divine rule of faith and morals. We have often heard that watchword sounded in our ears, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." Alas! if this motto were ever really true we fear that its truth at this moment is more than questionable.

Very few, comparatively, even of those who occupy the very highest platform of profession seem to admit, and still fewer actually acknowledge practically, that in all things, whether of faith or morals, in all the practical details of life, in the Church, in the family, in the business, and in our private walk from day to day - we are to be governed absolutely by that commanding, that mighty, that morally glorious sentence, "It is written" - a sentence enhanced exceedingly in value and heightened in its moral glory by the telling fact that it was used thrice by our adorable Lord at the opening of His public career, in His conflict with the adversary, and sounded in the ears of His loved ones just as He was about to ascend into the heavens.

Yes, "It is written" was a favorite sentence with our divine Master and Lord. He ever obeyed the Word. He yielded a hearty and unqualified submission to its holy authority in all things. He lived on it and by it from first to last. He walked according to it and never acted without it. He did not reason or question, imply or infer. He did not add or diminish, or qualify in any one way - He obeyed. Yes; He, the eternal Son of the Father - Himself God over all blessed forever - having become a man, lived on the Holy Scriptures and walked by their rule continually. He made them the food of His soul, the material and the basis of His marvelous ministry - the divine authority of His perfect path.

In all this He was our great Exemplar. Oh, may we follow His blessed footsteps! May we bring ourselves, our ways, our habits, our associations, our surroundings, to the test of Holy Scripture, and reject with whole-hearted decision everything, no matter what or by whom propounded, that will not bear that searching light.

We are most thoroughly persuaded that in hundreds of thousands of cases the first grand point to be gained is to recall the heart to that delightful attitude in which the Word of God is fully owned and submitted to as an absolute authority. It is positively labor lost to be arguing and disputing with a man who does not give Scripture the self-same place that our Lord Jesus Christ gave it. And when a man does this there is no need of argument. What is really needed is to make the Word of God the basis of our individual peace and authority of our individual path. May we all do so!

A Workman's Motto

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

Here we have an uncommonly fine motto for the Christian workman, and every Christian ought to be a workman. It presents a most valuable balance for the heart. We have immovable stability linked with unceasing activity.

This is of the utmost importance. There are some of us who are such sticklers for what we call principle that we seem almost afraid to embark in any scheme of large-hearted Christian activity. On the other hand, some of us are so bent on what we call service that in order to reach desired ends and realize noticeable results, we do not hesitate to overstep the boundary line of sound principle.

Now, our motto supplies a divine antidote for both these evils. It furnishes a solid basis on which we are to stand with steadfast purpose and immovable decision. We are not to be moved the breadth of a hair from the narrow path of divine truth, though tempted to do so by the most forcible argument of a plausible expediency. "To obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15).

Noble words! May they be engraved in characters deep and broad on every workman's heart. They are absolutely invaluable, and particularly so in this our day when there is such willfulness in our mode of working,

such erratic schemes of service, such self-pleasing, such a strong tendency to do that which is right in our own eyes, such a practical ignoring of the supreme authority of Holy Scripture.

It fills the thoughtful observer of the present condition of things with the very gravest apprehensions as he sees the positive and deliberate throwing aside of the Word of God, even by those who professedly admit it to be the Word of God. We are not speaking of the insolence of open and avowed infidelity, but of the heartless indifference of respectable orthodoxy. There are millions who profess to believe the Bible is the Word of God, who, nevertheless, do not have the smallest idea of submitting themselves absolutely to its authority. The human will is dominant. Human reason bears sway. Expediency commands the heart. The holy principles of divine revelation are swept away like autumn leaves or the dust of the threshing-floor before the vehement blast of popular opinion.

How immensely valuable and important in view of all this, is the first part of our workman's motto! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable." The "therefore" throws the soul back upon the solid foundation laid in the previous part of the chapter in which the apostle unfolds the most sublime and precious truth that can possibly engage the Christian's heart—truth which lifts the soul completely above the dark and chilling mists of the old creation and plants it on the solid rock of resurrection. It is on this rock we are exhorted to be steadfast and immovable. It is not an obstinate adherence to our own notions—to some favorite dogma or theory which we have adopted—or to any special school of doctrine. It is not anything of

this kind, but a firm grasp and faithful confession of the whole truth of God of which a risen Christ is the everlasting Center.

But we have to remember the other side of our motto. The Christian workman has something more to do than to stand firmly on the ground of truth. He has to cultivate the lovely activities of grace. He is called to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." The basis of sound principle must never be abandoned, but the work of the Lord must be diligently carried on. There are some who are so afraid of doing mischief that they do nothing; and others, who rather than not be doing something, will do wrong. Our motto corrects both. It teaches us to set our faces as a flint where truth is involved; while on the other hand, it leads us to go forth in largeness of heart and throw all our energies into the work of the Lord.

Let the Christian reader specially note the expression, "The work of the Lord." We are not to imagine for a moment that all which engages the energies of professing Christians is entitled to be designated "the work of the Lord." It is far from it! We see a mass of things undertaken as service for the Lord with which a spiritual person could not possibly connect the holy name of Christ. We desire to have the conscience exercised as to the work in which we embark. We deeply feel how needful it is in this day of willfulness, laxity and wild liberalism, to own the authority of Christ in all that we put our hands to, in the way of work or service. Blessed be His name, He permits us to connect Him with the most trivial and commonplace activities of daily life. We can even eat and drink in His holy name and to His glory.

The sphere of service is wide enough; it is only limited by that weighty clause, "The work of the Lord." The Christian workman must not engage in any work which does not place itself under that most holy and all-important heading. He must, before he enters upon any service, ask himself this great practical question, "Can this honestly be called the work of the Lord?"

Being a Nazarite

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord: he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord" (Numbers 6:1-8).

The ordinance of Nazariteship is full of interest and practical instruction. In it we see the case of one setting himself apart, in a very special manner, from things which, though not absolutely sinful in themselves, were nevertheless calculated to interfere with that intense consecration of heart which is set forth in true Nazariteship.

In the first place, the Nazarite was not to drink wine. The fruit of the vine, in every shape and form, was to him a forbidden thing. Now, wine, as we know, is the apt

symbol of earthly joy—the expression of that social enjoyment which the human heart is so fully capable of entering into. From this the Nazarite in the wilderness was to diligently keep himself. With him it was a literal thing. He was not to excite nature by the use of strong drink. All the days of his separation he was called to exercise the strictest abstinence from wine.

Such was the type, and it is written for our learning—written, too, in this marvelous book of Numbers, so rich in its wilderness lessons. This is only what we might expect. The impressive institution of the Nazarite finds its appropriate place in the book of Numbers. It is in perfect keeping with the character of the book which contains all that specially belongs to life in the wilderness.

Let us then inquire into the nature of the lesson taught us in the Nazarite's abstinence from everything pertaining to the vine, from the kernel even to the husk.

There has been but one true and perfect Nazarite in this world. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who maintained, from first to last, the most complete separation from all mere earthly joy. From the moment He entered upon His public work, He kept Himself apart from all that was of this world. His heart was fixed upon God and His work, with a devotion that nothing could shake. No claims of earth or nature were ever allowed, for a single moment, to come in between His heart and that work which He came to do. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). And again, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4).

With such words did the true Nazarite seek to adjust the claims of nature. He had one thing to do, and to that He

separated Himself perfectly. His eye was single and His heart undivided. This is apparent from first to last. He could say to His disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of"; and when they, not knowing the deep significance of His words, said, "Hath any man brought him ought to eat?" He replied, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:33,34). So also at the close of His course here below, we hear Him giving utterance to such words as these, as He took into His hand the paschal cup: "Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:17,18).

Thus we see how the perfect Nazarite carried Himself throughout. He could have no joy in the earth, no joy in the nation of Israel. The time had not come for that, and therefore He detached Himself from all that which mere human affection might find in association with His own, in order to devote Himself to the one grand object which was ever before His mind. The time will come when He, as the Messiah, will rejoice in His people and in the earth, but until that blissful moment arrives, He is apart as the true Nazarite, and His people are linked with Him. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:16-19.)

Christian reader, let us deeply ponder this first grand feature of the Nazarite character. It is important we should faithfully examine ourselves in the light of it. It is a very grave question indeed how far we, as Christians,

are really entering into the meaning and power of this intense separation from all the excitement of nature, and from all merely earthly joy. Perhaps it may be said, "What harm is there in having a little amusement or recreation? Surely, we are not called to be monks. Has not God given us richly all things to enjoy? And while we are in the world, is it not right we should enjoy it?"

To all this we reply, it is not a question of the harm of this, that, or the other. There was no harm, as a general rule, in wine; nothing wrong with the vine-tree either. But the point is, if any one aimed at being a Nazarite, if he aspired to this holy separation unto the Lord, then he was to abstain wholly from the use of wine and strong drink. Others might drink wine, but the Nazarite was not to touch it.

Now, the question for us is this: Do we aim at being Nazarites? do we long for thorough separation and devotion of ourselves, in body, soul, and spirit, unto God? If so, we must be apart from all these things in which mere nature finds its enjoyment. It is upon this one hinge that the whole question turns. The question most assuredly is not "Are we to be monks?" but, "Do we want to be Nazarites?" Is it our heart's desire to be apart, with our Lord Jesus Christ, from all mere earthly joy — to be separated unto God from those things which, though not absolutely sinful in themselves, do nevertheless tend to hinder that entire consecration of heart which is the true secret of all spiritual Nazariteship? Is not the Christian reader aware that there are, indeed, many such things? Is he not conscious that there are numberless things which exert a distracting and weakening influence upon his spirit, and

yet were they to be tried by the standard of ordinary morality, they might be allowed to pass as harmless?

But we must remember that God's Nazarites do not measure things by any such standard. Theirs is not an ordinary morality at all. They look at things from a divine and heavenly standpoint, and hence they cannot allow anything to pass as harmless which tends in any wise to interfere with that high tone of consecration to God after which their souls are fervently breathing.

May we have grace to weigh these things, and to watch against every defiling influence. Each one must be aware of what it is which, in his case, would prove to be wine and strong drink. It may seem to be a trifle, but we may rest assured that nothing is a trifle which breaks the current of our soul's communion with God, and robs us of that holy intimacy which it is our privilege ever to enjoy.

But there was another thing which marked the Nazarite. He was not to shave his head — "All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow" (Numbers 6:5).

In 1 Corinthians 11:14, we learn that it argues a lack of dignity for a man to have long hair. "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" From this we learn that if we really desire to live a life of separation to God, we must be prepared to surrender our dignity in nature. This our Lord Jesus Christ did perfectly. He made Himself of no reputation; He surrendered His rights in everything; He

could say, "I am a worm and no man" (Psalm 22:6); He emptied Himself thoroughly, and took the very lowest place; He neglected Himself, while He cared for others. In a word, His Nazariteship was perfect in this as in all beside.

Now, here is just the very thing which we so little like to do. We naturally stand up for our dignity and seek to maintain our rights. It is deemed manly to do so. But the perfect Man never did so, and if we aim at being Nazarites, we shall not do so either. We must surrender the dignities of nature, and forego the joys of earth, if we would tread a path of thorough separation to God in this world.

Here again, be it remarked, the question is not as to the right and wrong of the case. As a general rule, it was right for a man to shave his locks; but it was not right, nay, it was altogether wrong, for a Nazarite to do so. This made all the difference. It was quite right for an ordinary man to shave and drink wine, but the Nazarite was not an ordinary man; he was one set apart from all that was ordinary, to tread a path peculiar to himself. To use a razor or taste wine would involve the entire surrender of that peculiar path. Hence, if any inquire, "Is it not right to enjoy the pleasures of earth, and maintain the dignities of nature?" We reply, quite right, if we are to walk as men; but wholly wrong, yea, absolutely fatal, if we want to walk as Nazarites.

This simplifies the matter amazingly. It answers a thousand questions and solves a thousand difficulties. It is of little use to split hairs about the harm of this or that particular thing. The question is, What is our real purpose and object? Do we merely want to get on as

men, or do we long to live as true Nazarites? According to the language of 1 Corinthians 3:3, to "walk as men" and to be "carnal" are synonymous.

Does such language really govern us? Do we drink into the spirit and breathe the atmosphere of such a Scripture? Are these things true of us, or are we ruled by the spirit and principles of a godless, Christless world? It is useless to spend our time arguing points which would never be raised at all if our souls were in the right spirit and attitude.

No doubt, it is perfectly right, perfectly natural, and perfectly consistent for the men of this world to enjoy all that it has to offer them, and to maintain their rights and their dignities to the very utmost of their power. But on the other hand, what is right and natural and consistent for the men of this world, is wrong, unnatural, and inconsistent for God's Nazarites. Thus the matter stands for those who desire to be governed by the simple truth of God.

We learn from the sixth chapter of Numbers that if a Nazarite drank wine or shaved his locks, he defiled the head of his consecration. Has this no voice, no lesson for us? Assuredly it has. It teaches us that if our soul's desire is to pursue a path of wholehearted consecration to God, we must abstain from the joys of earth, and surrender the dignities and the rights of nature. It must be thus, seeing that God and the world, flesh and spirit, do not and cannot coalesce. All who will live to God, and walk in the Spirit, must live apart from the world and mortify the flesh. May God, of His great mercy, enable us so to do.

One other feature of the Nazarite remains to be noticed. He was not to touch a dead body—"All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die; because the consecration of his God is upon his head" (Numbers 6:6,7).

Thus we see that whether it was drinking wine, shaving his locks, or touching a dead body, the effect was the same; any one of the three involved the defilement of the head of the Nazarite's consecration. Wherefore it is plain that it was as defiling to the Nazarite to drink wine or to shave his head, as it was to touch a dead body. It is well to see this. We are prone to make distinctions which will not stand for a moment in the light of the divine presence. When once the consecration of God rested upon the head of anyone, that great and important fact became the standard and touchstone of all morality. It placed the individual on entirely new and peculiar ground, and rendered it imperative upon him to look at everything from a new and peculiar point of view. He was no longer to ask what became him as a man, but what became him as a Nazarite. Hence, if his dearest friend lay dead by his side, he was not to touch him. He was called to keep himself apart from the defiling influence of death, and all because "the consecration of God was upon his head."

Now, in this entire subject of Nazariteship, it is needful for the reader to understand very distinctly that it is not by any means a question of the soul's salvation, of eternal life, or of the believer's perfect security in Christ. If this be not clearly seen, it may lead the mind into perplexity and darkness. There are two grand links

in Christianity which, though very intimately connected, are perfectly distinct: namely, the link of eternal life, and the link of personal communion. The former can never be snapped by anything; the latter can be snapped in a moment, by the weight of a feather. It is to the second of these that the doctrine of Nazariteship pertains.

We behold in the person of the Nazarite a type of one who sets out in some special path of devotedness or consecration to Christ. The power of continuance in this path consists in secret communion with God, so that if the communion be interrupted, the power is gone. This renders the subject peculiarly solemn. There is the greatest possible danger of attempting to pursue the path in the absence of that which constitutes the source of its power. This is most disastrous, and demands the utmost vigilance.

We have briefly glanced at the various things which tend to interrupt the Nazarite's communion; but it would be wholly impossible, by any words of ours, to set forth the moral effect of any attempt to keep up the appearance of Nazariteship when the inward reality is gone. It is dangerous in the extreme. It is infinitely better to confess our failure, and take our true place, than to keep up a false appearance.

God will have reality, and we may rest assured that, sooner or later, our weakness and folly will be made manifest to all. It is very deplorable and very humbling when the Nazarites, that were "purer than snow," become "blacker than a coal" (Lamentations 4:7,8), but it is far worse when those who have become thus black, keep up the pretense of being white.

Let us look at the solemn case of Samson, as set before us in Judges.

He, in an evil hour, betrayed his secret and lost his power — lost it though he knew it not. But the enemy soon knew it. It was soon made manifest to all that the Nazarite had defiled the head of his consecration. "And it came to pass, when [Delilah] pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man" (Judges 16:16,17).

Here, alas! was the betrayal of the deep and holy secret of all his power. Up to this, his path had been one of strength and victory, simply because it had been one of holy Nazariteship. But the lap of Delilah proved too much for the heart of Samson, and what a thousand Philistines could not do was done by the ensnaring influence of a single woman. Samson fell from the lofty elevation of the Nazarite down to the level of an ordinary man.

"And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; [alas! alas! a fatal sleep to God's Nazarite!] and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she

said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." (Judges 16:18-21).

Oh, reader, what a picture! How solemn! how admonitory! What a melancholy spectacle was Samson — going out to shake himself, "as at other times"! Alas! the "as" was out of place. He might shake himself, but it was no longer "as at other times," for the power was gone; the Lord was departed from him, and the once-powerful Nazarite became a blind prisoner. Instead of triumphing over the Philistines, he had to grind in their prison house. So much for yielding to mere nature. Samson never regained his liberty. He was permitted, through the mercy of God, to gain one more victory over the uncircumcised, but that victory cost him his life.

God's Nazarites must keep themselves pure or lose their power. In their case, power and purity are inseparable. They cannot get on without inward holiness, and hence the urgent need of being ever on the watch against the various things which tend to draw away the heart, distract the mind, and lower the tone of spirituality. Let us ever keep before our souls those words of our chapter, "All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord." Holiness is the grand and indispensable characteristic of all the days of Nazariteship; so that when once holiness is forfeited, Nazariteship is at an end.

What, then, it may be asked, is to be done? The Scripture before us supplies the answer—"And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration, then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it. And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and the priest shall offer the one for a sinoffering, and the other for a burntoffering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day. And he shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespassoffering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled" (Numbers 6:9-12).

Here we find atonement, in its two grand aspects, as the only ground on which the Nazarite could be restored to communion. He had contracted defilement, and that defilement could only be removed by the blood of the sacrifice. We might deem it a very trifling matter to touch a dead body, and particularly under such circumstances. It might be said, "How could he help touching it, when the man had suddenly dropped dead by his side?" To all this the reply is at once simple and solemn. God's Nazarites must maintain personal purity, and, moreover, the standard by which their purity is to be regulated is not human, but divine. The mere touch of death was sufficient to break the link of communion. Had the Nazarite presumed to go on as though nothing had happened, he would have been flying in the face of God's commandments, and bringing down heavy judgment upon himself.

But, blessed be God, grace had made provision. There was the burnt offering—the type of the death of Christ to Godward, there was the sin offering—the type of that same death to usward, and there was the trespass offering—the type of the death of Christ, not only in its application to the root or principle of sin in the nature, but also to the actual sin committed. In a word, it needed the full virtue of the death of Christ to remove the defilement caused by the simple touch of a dead body. This is peculiarly solemnizing. Sin is a dreadful thing in God's sight—most dreadful. A single sinful thought, a sinful look, a sinful word, is enough to bring a dark, heavy cloud over the soul, which will hide from our view the light of God's countenance, and plunge us into deep distress and misery.

Let us, then, beware how we trifle with sin. Let us remember that ere one stain of the guilt of sin—even the very smallest—could be removed, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ had to pass through all the unutterable horrors of Calvary. That intensely bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is the only thing that can give us any proper idea of what sin is; and into the profound depths of that cry no mortal or angel can ever enter. But though we can never fathom the mysterious depths of the sufferings of Christ, we should at least seek to meditate more habitually upon His cross and passion, and, in this way, reach a much deeper view of the awfulness of sin in the sight of God. If, indeed, sin was so dreadful, so abhorrent to a holy God that He was constrained to turn away the light of His countenance from that blessed One who had dwelt in His bosom from all eternity, if He had to forsake Him because He was

bearing sin in His own body on the tree, then what must sin be?

Oh, reader, let us seriously consider these things. May they ever have a place deep down in these hearts of ours that are so easily betrayed into sin. How lightly, at times, do we think of that which cost the Lord Jesus everything—not only life, but that which is better and dearer than life, even the light of God's countenance! May we have a far deeper sense of the hatefulness of sin. May we most sedulously watch against the bare movement of the eye in a wrong direction; for we may rest assured that the heart will follow the eye, and the feet will follow the heart, and thus we get away from the Lord, lose the sense of His presence and His love, and become miserable, or, if not miserable, what is far worse: dead, cold, and callous—"hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

May God, in His infinite mercy, keep us from falling. May we have grace to watch more jealously against everything, no matter what, that might defile the head of our consecration. It is a serious thing to get out of communion, and a most perilous thing to attempt to go on in the Lord's service with a defiled conscience. True it is that grace pardons and restores, but we never regain what we have lost. This latter is set forth with solemn emphasis in the passage of Scripture before us—"He shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering; but the days that were before shall be lost [or, shall fall, as the margin reads it], because his separation was defiled" (Numbers 6:12).

This is a point, in our subject, full of instruction and admonition for our souls. When the Nazarite became defiled by any means, even by the touch of a dead body, he had to begin over again. It was not merely the days of his defilement that were lost, or let fall, but actually all the days of his previous Nazariteship. All went for nothing, and this simply by reason of touching a dead body.

What does this teach us? It teaches this, at least, that when we diverge, the breadth of a hair, from the narrow path of communion, and get away from the Lord, we must return to the very point from which we left the path, and begin anew. We have many examples of this in Scripture, and it would be wise to consider one of them, and also to weigh the great practical truth which it illustrates.

Take the case of Abraham, in his descent into Egypt, as recorded in Genesis 12. This was very evidently a divergence from his proper path.

And what was the consequence? The days were lost, or let fall, and he had to get back to the point from whence he had swerved, and begin over again. Thus, in Genesis 12:8, we read, "And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord." Then, after his return out of the land of Egypt, we read, "He went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the

Lord." (Genesis 13:3,4). All the time spent in Egypt went for nothing. There was no altar there, no worship, no communion; and Abraham had to get back to the selfsame point from which he had diverged, and begin on the new.

Thus it is in every case, and this will account for the miserably slow progress which some of us make in our practical career. We fail, turn aside, get away from the Lord, are plunged in spiritual darkness, and then His voice of love reaches us in restoring power and brings us back to the point from which we had wandered. Our souls are restored, but we have lost time and suffered incalculably. This is most serious, and it should lead us to walk with holy vigilance and circumspection, so that we may not have to double back upon our path, and lose what can never be regained. True it is that our wanderings and our stumblings and our failings give us an insight into our own hearts, teach us to distrust ourselves, and illustrate the boundless and unchangeable grace of our God. All this is quite true; but there is a much higher way of learning both ourselves and God than by wandering, stumbling, or failing.

Self, in all the terrible depths of that word, should be judged in the light of the divine presence, and there, too, our souls should grow in the knowledge of God as He unfolds Himself, by the Holy Ghost, in the face of Jesus Christ, and in the precious pages of holy Scripture. This surely is the more excellent way of learning both ourselves and God.

This, too, is the power of all true Nazarite separation. The soul that habitually lives in the sanctuary of God, or, in other words, that walks in unbroken communion with

God, is the one who will have a just sense of what nature is, in all its phases, though it be not learned by sad experience.

And not only so, but he will have a deeper and more proper sense of what God is in Himself and to all who put their trust in Him. It is poor work to be learning self by experience. We may depend upon it, the true way to learn it is in communion, and when we learn it thus, we shall not be characterized by perpetually dwelling upon our personal vileness, but rather we shall be occupied with that which is outside and above self altogether: even the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

We shall, in closing this section, quote, at length, for the reader, the statements of "the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and he shall offer his offering unto the Lord, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace-offerings, and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offering. And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and shall offer his sin-offering and his burnt offering. And he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat offering and his drink offering. And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which

is under the sacrifice of the peaceofferings. And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them upon the hands of the Nazarite, after the hair of his separation is shaven: and the priest shall wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord: this is holy for the priest, with the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine. This is the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, and of his offering unto the Lord for his separation, beside that that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation" (Numbers 6:13-21).

This marvelous "law" leads us onward to something future, when the full result of Christ's perfect work shall appear, and when He—as the Messiah of Israel—shall, at the close of His Nazarite separation, taste true joy in His beloved people, and in this earth. The time will then have come for the Nazarite to drink wine. From all this He set Himself apart, for the accomplishment of that great work, so fully set forth, in all its aspects and in all its bearings, in the foregoing "law." He is apart from the nation, and apart from this world, in the power of true Nazariteship, as He said to His disciples on that memorable night, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29).

But there is a bright day coming, when Jehovah-Messiah shall rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in His people. The prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, are full of the most glowing and soulstirring allusions to that bright and blissful day. To quote the passages would literally fill a volume.

But we must draw this section to a close, and leave the reader to meditate alone upon the ordinance of the Nazarite, so pregnant with sacred teaching for the heart. We wish him to ponder, in a special way, the fact that the Holy Ghost has given us the full statement of the law of Nazariteship in the book of Numbers—the wilderness book. And not only so, but let him carefully consider the institution itself. Let him see that he understands why the Nazarite was not to drink wine, why he was not to shave his locks, and why he was not to touch a dead body.

Let him meditate upon these three things, and seek to gather up the instruction contained therein. Let him ask himself, Do I really long to be a Nazarite—to walk along the narrow path of separation unto God? and if so, am I prepared to surrender all those things which tend to defile, to distract, and to hinder God's Nazarites? And finally, let him remember that there is a time coming when "the Nazarite may drink wine," or, in other words, when there will be no need to watch against the varied forms of evil within or around; all will be pure; the affections may flow out without check; the garments may flow around us without a girdle; there will be no evil to be separated from, and therefore there will be no need of separation. In a word, there will be "a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

May God, in His infinite mercy, keep us until that blessed time, in true consecration of heart unto Himself.

Christ In the Vessel

Mark 4:35-41

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." This is a very familiar saying. It often passes among us; and no doubt, we fully believe it; but yet, when we find ourselves brought to our extremity, we are often very little prepared to count on God's opportunity. It is one thing to utter or hearken to a truth, and another thing to realize the power of that truth. It is one thing, when sailing over a calm sea, to speak of God's ability to keep us in the storm, and it is another thing altogether to prove that ability when the storm is actually raging around us. And yet God is ever the same. In the storm and in the calm, in sickness and in health, in pressure and in ease, in poverty and in abundance, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" — the same grand reality for faith to cling to and draw upon, at all times for under all circumstances.

But always, we are unbelieving! Here lies the source of weakness and failure. We are perplexed and agitated, when we ought to be calm and confiding; we are casting about, when we ought to be counting on God; we are "beckoning to our partners," when we ought to be "looking unto Jesus." Thus it is we lose immensely, and dishonour the Lord in our ways. Doubtless there are few things for which we have to be more deeply humbled than our tendency to distrust the Lord when difficulties and trials present themselves; and assuredly we grieve the heart of Jesus by thus distrusting Him, for distrust must always wound a loving heart. Look, for example, at the scene between Joseph and his brethren in Gen. 50.

"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger to Joseph, saying, thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall he say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin, for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him."

It was a sad return for the love and tender care which Joseph had exercised towards them. How could they suppose that one who had so freely and fully forgiven them, and spared their lives when they were entirely in his power, would, after so many years of kindness, turn upon them in anger and revenge? it was indeed a grievous wrong, and it was no marvel that "Joseph wept when they spake unto him." What an answer to all their unworthy fear and dark suspicion! A flood of tears! Such is love! "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for I am in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. and he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

Thus it was with the disciples on the occasion to which our paper refers. Let us meditate a little on the passage.

"And the same day, when the even was come, Jesus saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was on the ship; and there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of

wind, and the waves beat onto the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

Here then we have an interesting and instructive scene. The poor disciples are brought to their extremity. They are at their wits' end. A violent storm—the ship full of water—the Master asleep. This was a trying moment indeed, and assuredly we, if we look at ourselves, need not marvel at the fear and agitation of the disciples. It is not likely that we should have done better had we been there. Still, we cannot but see wherein they failed. The narrative has been penned for our learning, and we are bound to study it, and seek to learn the lesson which it reads out to us.

There is nothing more absurd and irrational than unbelief when we come to look at it calmly. In the scene before us this absurdity is very apparent; for what could be more absurd than to suppose that the vessel could possibly sink with the son of God on board? and yet this was what they feared. It may be said they did not just think of the Son of God at that moment. True, they thought of the storm, the waves, the filling vessel, and after judging after the manner of men, it seemed a hopeless case. Thus it is the unbelieving heart ever reasons. It looks only at the circumstances, and leaves God out. Faith, on the contrary, looks only at God, and leaves circumstances out.

What a difference! Faith delights in man's extremity, simply because it is God's opportunity. It delights in being "shut up" to God—in having the platform thoroughly cleared of the creature, in order that God may display His glory—in the multiplying of "empty

vessels," in order that God may fill them. Such is faith. It would, we may surely say, have enabled the disciples to lie down and sleep beside their Master in the midst of the storm. Unbelief, on the other hand, rendered them uneasy; they could not rest themselves, and they actually aroused the blessed Lord out of His sleep by their unbelieving apprehensions. He, weary with incessant toil, was snatching a few moments' repose while the vessel was crossing the sea. He knew what fatigue was; He had come down into all our circumstances. He made Himself acquainted with all our feelings and all our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted.

He was found as a man in every respect, and as such He slept on a pillow, rocked by the waves of the sea. The storm and the billows beat upon the vessel, although the Creator was on board, in the person of that weary, sleeping Workman.

Profound mystery! the One who made the sea, and could hold the winds in His almighty grasp, lay sleeping in the hinder part of the ship, and allowed the sea and wind to treat Him as unceremoniously as though He were an ordinary man. Such was the reality of the human nature of our blessed Lord. he was weary—He slept, being tossed on the bosom of that sea which His hands had made. O pause and meditate on this wondrous sight. Look closely, think upon it. We cannot expatiate upon the scene; we can only muse and worship.

But as we have said, unbelief roused the blessed Lord out of His sleep. "They awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" What a question! Carest Thou not?" how it must have wounded

the sensitive heart of the Lord! How could they ever think that He was indifferent to their trouble and danger? How completely must they have lost sight of His love, to say nothing of His power, when they could bring themselves to say, "Carest Thou not?"

And yet, have we not in all this a mirror in which to see ourselves reflected? Assuredly we have. How often, in moments of pressure and trial, do our hearts conceive, if our lips do not utter the question, "Carest Thou not?" It may be we are laid on a bed of sickness and pain, and we know that one word from the God of all power and might could chase away the malady and raise us up; and yet the word is withheld. Or perhaps we are in need of temporal supplies, and we know that the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, belong to God—yea, that the treasures of the universe are under His hand—and yet day after day rolls on, and our need is not supplied. In a word, we are passing through deep waters, in some way or another; the storm rages, wave after wave rolls over our tiny vessel, and we are brought to our extremity, we are at our wits' end, and our hearts often feel ready to send up that terrible question, "Carest Thou not?" The thought of this is deeply humbling. To think of our grieving the loving heart of Jesus by our unbelief and suspicion should fill us with the deepest contrition.

And then the absurdity of unbelief! How can that One who gave His life for us—who left His glory and came down into this world of toil and misery and died a shameful death to deliver us from eternal wrath—how can such a One ever fail to care for us? But yet we are ready to doubt, or we grow impatient under the trial of our faith, forgetting that the very trial from which we so

shrink and under which we so wince is far more precious than gold, for the former in an imperishable reality, whereas the latter must perish in the using. The more genuine faith is tried, the brighter it shines; and hence the trial, however severe, is sure to issue in praise and honour and glory to Him who not only implants the faith, but also passes it through the furnace and sedulously watches it therein.

But the poor disciples failed in the moment of trial. Their confidence gave way, they roused their Master from His slumber with that most unworthy question, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Alas, what creatures we are! We are ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of a single difficulty. David could say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul"; and how did it turn out? Saul fell on mount Gilboa, and David was established on the throne of Israel. Elijah fled for his life at the threat of Jezebel; and Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elijah was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. So here, the disciples thought they were going to be lost, with the Son of God on board; and what was the result? The storm was hushed into silence, and the sea became as glass, by that Voice which of old had called worlds into existence. "And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

What a combination of grace and majesty is here! Instead of rebuking them for having disturbed His repose, He rebukes those elements which had terrified them. It was thus He replied to their question, "Carest Thou not?" Blessed master! Who would not adore Thee for Thy patient grace and unfailing love?

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential deity. As man, wearied with His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises, and with His almighty voice, hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus—very God and very man—and such He is now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties and remove their fears. Oh that we trusted him more simply! We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus day by day. We are so easily terrified. Every breath of wind, every wave, every cloud, agitates and depresses us. Instead of calmly lying down and reposing beside our Lord, we are full of terror and perplexity. Instead of using the storm as an occasion for trust on Him, we make it an occasion for doubting Him. No sooner does some trifling trouble arise than we think we are going to perish, although He assures us that He has numbered the very hairs of our head. Well may He say to us as He said to His disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

It would indeed seem at times as though we had no faith. But oh, His tender love! He is ever near to shield and succor us, even though our unbelieving hearts are so ready to doubt His Word. He does not deal with us according to our poor thoughts of Him, but according to His own perfect love toward us. This is the solace and stay of our souls in passing across life's stormy sea homeward to our eternal rest. Christ is in the vessel. Let this ever suffice. Let us calmly rely on Him. May there ever be, at the very centre of our hearts, that deep repose which springs from real trust in Jesus! and then,

though the storm rage and the sea run mountains high, we shall not be led to say, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Is it possible we can perish with the Master on board? or can we ever think so with Christ in our hearts? May the Holy Spirit teach us to make a fuller, freer, bolder use of Christ! We really want this just now, and shall want it more and more. It must be Christ Himself, laid hold of and enjoyed in the heart by faith. thus may it be to His praise and our abiding peace and joy!

We may just notice, in conclusion, the way in which the disciples react. Instead of the calm worship of those whose faith had been answered, they manifest the amazement of those whose fears had been rebuked. "They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Surely they ought to have known Him better. Yes, and so should we.

Concerned About Your Assembly? Trust the Lord for the Answer.

When for the first time in the whole canon of Scripture, the Church, properly so called, is named, we have those memorable words,

David's Companions and Paul's Friends

2 Samuel 23 and Romans 16

How precious are those specific links which are formed by the hand of God! There is the great general link which connects us with all the children of God—all the members of the body of Christ; but there are specific links which we should ever recognize and seek to strengthen and perpetuate, in every right way.

We were lately looking, with much interest and profit, at David's mighty men in 2 Samuel 23, and Paul's friends at Rome in Romans 16. Out of the many thousands of Israel—circumcised members of the congregation, children of Abraham—there were comparatively few who distinguished themselves by personal devotedness and wholehearted consecration. Even among those few there were marked differences. There were "the thirty," "the three," and "the first three." Each gets his own specific place on the page of the book of responsible, practical life, according to what he was or what he had done. Moreover, we are told particularly what each one did and how he did it. Nothing is forgotten, but all is faithfully recorded; and no one can ever get another's place. Each does his own work, fills his own niche, and gets his own reward.

[We may observe the same thing in the case of the twelve apostles. We read much more about "Peter, James, and John" than about the other nine. And not only so, but even in the case of those three. we mark a difference. for one is specially named as "the disciple

whom Jesus loved," and who leaned on His breast at supper. Thus it is all through the Word. Look at Abraham and Lot; Elijah and Obadiah; the Shunammite and the Sareptan. Christian reader, let us earnestly seek a closer walk with God—deeper intimacy with the mind of Christ.]

So also in Romans 16. Nothing can be more marked or striking than the beautiful discrimination which characterises this exquisite Scripture. First of all, mark the way in which Phebe is commended to the assembly at Rome. "I commend unto you Phebe our sister." On what ground? Is it that she is "breaking bread" or "in fellowship" at Cenchrea? No; but "she is a servant of the assembly"; and "she has been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

He presents, in touching and forcible language, the moral basis of her claim upon the hospitality and succour of the assembly. To say that a person is "breaking bread" is, alas! no guarantee of personal devotedness. It ought to be; but it is not. And hence, to expect the sympathy, succour, and confidence of the Lord's people on that ground is unwarrantable. Even the blessed apostle himself, when he asks for the prayers of the brethren, presents the moral basis of his claim. "Brethren, pray for us." On what ground? Is it because we are "breaking bread" or "in fellowship"? Nothing of the kind; but because "we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

Then mark the notice of Priscilla and Aquila. What had they done? They had been the apostle's helpers. They had laid down their own necks for his life. And he adds: "Unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the

assemblies of the Gentiles." This is uncommonly fine. They had purchased to themselves a good degree. They had worked their way into the confidence and esteem of the apostle and of all the assemblies. Thus it must be. We cannot jump, all in a moment, into people's confidence and affection. We must commend ourselves by a life of practical righteousness and personal devotedness. "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2).

Again, look at the exquisite touch in verse 12: "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord." See what lovely discrimination is here! Why does he not class all three together? The reason is plain: because two had only laboured, while the third had laboured much. Each one gets his and her place, according to what they were, and according to what they had done.

Nor would Tryphena and Tryphosa have had any cause of envy and jealousy against Persis, because she was characterised as "beloved" while they were not; or because the word "much" was added to her labour and withheld from theirs. Ah! no; envy and jealousy are the pernicious fruit of a miserable self-occupation; they can find no place in a heart wholly devoted to Christ and His precious interests.

Now, I look upon 2 Samuel 23 and Romans 16 as specimen pages of the book of responsible, practical life, in which each one is written down according to what he is and according to what he has done. It is, of course, all by grace. Each one will delight to say that "by the grace of God I am what I am." Moreover, all the children of God and members of Christ, are equally "accepted in the

beloved," all stand in one common relationship. The very feeblest member of the body of Christ is loved by God as Christ is loved. The Head and the members cannot be separated. As He is so are they. The feeblest child in the family has his own place in the Father's heart, with which no one can ever interfere (Eph. 1:6; John 17:26; 1 John 4:17).

All this is blessedly true, and nothing can ever touch it. But when we turn to the grand question of practical life and personal devotedness, what endless variety! We see "the three," "the first three," and "the thirty." It is one thing to be "accepted," and another thing to be "acceptable" or agreeable. It is one thing to be a beloved child and another thing to be a devoted servant. There is the love of relationship and the love of complacency.

These things must not be confounded. And, most assuredly, it should be the earnest desire of every "accepted" child of God to be an "acceptable" servant of Christ. Oh! may it be so more and more in this day of cold indifference and self-seeking, in which so many seem to rest satisfied with the mere fact of being in fellowship, as it is called—the form of breaking bread; and so few, comparatively, are pressing after that high standard of personal devotedness which, we may rest assured, is "agreeable" to the heart of Christ.

Let us not be misunderstood. True fellowship in the Spirit—the communion of saints—is precious beyond all expression; and the breaking of bread, in truth and sincerity, in remembrance of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, is one of the very highest and richest privileges for

those whose hearts are true to Him. All this is clearly understood and fully admitted.

But, on the other hand, we must never forget the strong tendency of our poor hearts to rest in mere forms and formularies when the power is gone. It is one thing to be in nominal fellowship and go through the outward form of breaking bread, and another thing altogether to be an earnest, devoted, pronounced disciple of Christ. This latter is what we should all ardently long for; but to rest in the former is a miserable delusion, deadening the conscience, hardening the heart, and deceiving the soul.

"Bought with a price," and not my own,

No longer to myself to live,

To be for Him, for Him alone,

Who gave me all that grace could give,

Who gave Himself—for me made sin,

My guilty worthless heart to win.

"Bought with a price," I now would seek

A living sacrifice to be,

Conform'd to Him, pure, holy, meek,

Whom on the throne I now can see;

To walk like Him this desert place,

In truth and love and power and grace.

"Bought with a price," to wait for Him,

Resting beneath His gracious smile,

Which brightens hope when faith grows dim,

And cheers me through the "little while,"

Whilst waiting here His face to see,
Who comes Himself to welcome me.

Diversity and Unity

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

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

Nor could we do without any one of the four. There would be a serious blank if one were missing; and it is the Holy Spirit's purpose and joy to set forth every ray of the moral glory of the Son of God. Each Gospel fulfils his own service, under the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost.

So also is it in the Epistles. Paul's line of things is as distinct from Peter's, as Peter's is from John's, or John's from James'. No two are alike, but all agree. There is no

collision, because, like the four Evangelists, each moves in his own appointed orbit, and all revolve round the one common centre. The orbit is distinct, but the centre is one. Paul gives us the great truth of man's relation with God, on the ground of accomplished redemption, together with the counsels of God as to Israel and the Church. Peter gives us the Christian pilgrimage and God's government of the world. James insists upon practical righteousness. John opens up the grand theme of eternal life; first with the Father, then manifested in the Son, communicated unto us, and finally displayed in the glorious future.

Now, it would be the very height of folly on our part to institute any invidious comparison between those varied lines of truth, or the beloved and honoured instruments by whom those lines are presented to us. How silly it would be to set up Matthew against Mark, Mark against Luke, Luke against John, or John against all the rest! How puerile it would be for any one to say, "I go in for Paul's line of things, only. James seems below the mark. Peter and John I do not appreciate. Paul is the man for me. His ministry suits me."

All this we should, at once, denounce as sinful folly, not to be tolerated for a moment. The varied lines of truth all converge upon one glorious and blessed centre. The varied instruments are all employed by one and the self-same inspiring Spirit, for the one grand object of presenting the varied moral glories of Christ. We want them all. We could no more afford to do without Matthew or Mark than we could do without Luke or John; and it is no part of our business to undervalue Peter or James, because they do not give such a lofty or comprehensive range of truth as Paul or John. Each is

needful in his place. Each has his work to do, his appointed line of things to attend to, and we should be doing serious damage to our own souls, as well as marring the integrity of divine revelation, if we were to confine ourselves to any one particular line of truth, or attach ourselves exclusively to any one particular instrument or vessel.

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

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

This is the true and the divine way to look at the matter; and this, too, is the way to avoid sects, parties, cliques and coteries in the Church of God. There is one body, one Head, one Spirit, one divine and perfect revelation—the Holy Scriptures. There are many members, many

gifts, many lines of truth, many distinct characters of ministry. We need them all, and therefore God has given them all.

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

Nor this only; but what must be the effect of going in for any one particular line of truth, or character of ministry? What but to produce an imperfect Christian character? We are all sadly prone to one-sidedness, and nothing more ministers to this evil than an inordinate attachment to some one particular branch of truth, to the exclusion of other branches equally important. It is by "the truth" we are sanctified—by all, not by some truth.

We should delight in every department of truth, and give a cordial welcome to each vessel or instrument which our God may be pleased to use in ministering His truth to our souls. To be puffed up for one against another is to be more occupied with the vessel than with the truth which the vessel contains, more occupied with man than with God—a grievous mistake! "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man."

Here lies the grand principle. God has various instruments for His work, and we should value them all as His instruments, and nothing more. It has ever been Satan's object to lead the Lord's people to set up heads of schools, leaders of parties, centres of cliques, thus

splitting up the Church of God into sects, and destroying its visible unity. Let us not be ignorant of his devices; but in every possible way "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace."

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

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

Divine Titles

It is at once interesting, instructive, and edifying to mark the various titles under which God appears in the Holy Scriptures. These titles are expressive of certain characters and relationships in which God has been pleased to reveal Himself to man' and we are persuaded that the Christian reader will find solid profit and real spiritual refreshment and blessing in the study of this subject. We can do little more in this brief paper than offer a suggestion or two, leaving the reader to search the Scriptures for himself, in order to obtain a full understanding of the true meaning and proper application of the various titles.

In the first chapter of Genesis we have the first great title--"God" (Elohim): "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This presents God in unapproachable, incomprehensible Deity. "No man hath seen God at any time." We hear His voice and see His work in creating; but Himself no man hath seen or can see. He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.

But in Genesis 2, we have another title added to God, namely, "Lord" (Jehovah). Why is this? Because man is now on the scene, and "Lord" is expressive of the divine relation with man. Precious truth! It is impossible to read these two chapters and not be struck with the difference of the titles "God" and "the Lord God"--"Elohim" and "Jehovah Elohim"; and the difference is at once beautiful and instructive.

Gen. 7:16 presents an interesting example. "And they went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had

commanded him: and the Lord shut him in." God, in His government, was about to destroy the human race, and every living thing. But Jehovah, in infinite grace, shut Noah in. Mark the distinction. If a mere man were writing the history, he might transpose the titles, not seeing what was involved. Not so the Holy Spirit. He brings out the lovely point of Jehovah's relationship with Noah. Elohim was going to judge the world; but as Jehovah He had His eye upon His beloved servant Noah, and graciously sheltered him in the vessel of mercy. How perfect is Scripture! How edifying and refreshing to trace the moral glories of the divine volume!

Let us turn to a passage in 1 Sam. 17, where we have the record of David's encounter with Goliath. He boldly tells the giant what he is about to do, both to him and to the host of the Philistines, in order "that all the earth may know that there is a God (Elohim) in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord (Jehovah) saveth not with the sword and spear; for the battle is Jehovah's, and He will give you into our hands" (verse. 46-47).

"All the earth" was to know and own the presence of God in the midst of His people. They could know nothing of the precious relationship involved in the title "Jehovah." This latter was for the assembly of Israel alone. They were to know not only His presence in their midst, but His blessed mode of acting. To the world He was Elohim, to His beloved people He was Jehovah.

Well may these exquisite touches command our heart's admiration. Oh, the living depths, the moral glories, of that peerless Revelation which our Father has graciously penned for our comfort and edification! We must confess it gives us unspeakable delight to dwell on these things

and point them out to the reader, in this infidel day when the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture is boldly called in question, in parts where we should least expect it. But we have something better to do just now than replying to the contemptible assaults of infidelity. We are thoroughly persuaded that the most effective safeguard against all such assaults is to have the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly, in all its living, formative power. To the heart thus filled and fortified, the most plausible and powerful arguments of all infidel writers are but as the pattering of rain on the window.

We shall give the reader only one more illustration of our subject from the Old Testament. It occurs in the interesting history of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 18:31).

"And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord (Jehovah) helped him; and God (Elohim) moved them to depart from him."

This is deeply affecting. Jehoshaphat had put himself into an utterly false position. He had linked himself with the most ungodly of Israel's kings. He had even gone so far as to say to the wicked Ahab, "I am as though art, and my people as they people; and we will be with thee in the war." No marvel, therefore, if the Syrian captains mistook him for Ahab. It was only taking him at his word. But when brought down to the very lowest point--into the very shadow of death-- "he cried out"; and that cry went up to the gracious and ever-attentive ear of Jehovah, who had said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee." Precious grace!

But mark the lovely accuracy in the application of the divine titles--for this is our thesis. "He cried out, and Jehovah helped him;" and--what then? A mere human author would doubtless have put it thus: "Jehovah helped him, and moved them." But no; Jehovah had, as such, nothing to do with the uncircumcised Syrians. His eye was upon his dear, though erring, servant; His heart was toward him, and His everlasting arms around him. There was no link between Jehovah and the Syrians; but Elohim, whom they knew not, moved them away.

Who can fail to see the beauty and perfection of all this? Is it not plain that the stamp of a divine hand is visible upon the three passages which we have culled for consideration? Yes, and so it is upon every clause, from cover to cover, of the divine volume. Let no one suppose for a moment that we want to occupy our readers with curious points, nice distinctions, or learned criticisms. Nothing is further from our thoughts. We would not pen a line for any or all of these objects. As God is our witness, our one great object in writing this paper is to deepen in the hearts of our readers the sense of the preciousness, the beauty and excellence of the Holy Scriptures, given of God for the guidance, help and blessing of His people in the dark world. If this object be gained, we have our full reward.

But we cannot close without referring, for a moment, to the precious pages of the New Testament. We shall ask the reader to turn to Rom. 15, in which we have God presented to us under three distinct titles, each one of which is in perfect and beautiful keeping with the immediate subject in hand. Thus, in the opening verses of the chapter, which properly belong to chapter 14, the inspired apostle is urging upon us the necessity of

patience, forbearance, and kindly consideration one of another.

And to whom does he direct us for power to respond to those holy and much-needed exhortations? "To the God of patience and consolation." He presents God in the very character in which we need Him. Our small stock of patience would soon be exhausted in seeking to meet the varied characters which cross our path, even in intercourse with our brethren. There are constant claims upon our patience and forbearance; and most surely others have need of patience and forbearance with us. Where are we all to get the means of meeting all of these claims"? At the exhaustless treasure of "the God of patience and consolation." Our tiny springs would soon dry up if not kept in unbroken connection with that ever-flowing Fountain. The weight of a feather would be an overmatch for our patience; how much more the ten thousand things that come before us even in the Church of God!

Hence the need of the beautiful prayer of the apostle, "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

Here lies the grand secret, the divine power of receiving one another, and going together in holy love, heavenly patience, and tender consideration. We cannot get on otherwise. It is only by habitual communion with the God of patience and consolation that we shall be able to rise above the numberless hindrances to confidence and

fellowship that continually present themselves, and walk in fervent love to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

But we must draw this paper to a close, and shall merely glance at the other divine titles presented in our chapter. When the apostle speaks of the future of glory, his heart at once turns to God in the very character suited to the subject before him. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." If we would have the hope of glory heightened in our souls--and truly we need it--we must turn our eyes to "the God of hope."

How marked and striking is the application of the divine titles, wherever we turn! Whatever may be the character of our need, God presents himself to our hearts in the very way adapted to meet it. Thus, at the close of the chapter, when the apostle turns his eyes towards Judaea, and the difficulties and the dangers awaiting him, his heart springs up to the God of peace." Precious resource in all our varied exercises, anxieties, sorrows, and cares!

In a word, whatever we want, we have just to turn in simple faith to God, and find it all in Him. God--blessed forever be His name--is the one grand and all-sufficient answer to our every need, from the starting point to the goal of our Christian career. Oh for artless faith to use Him!

Epaphras - The Service of Prayer

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians 4:12).

There is a very striking difference between the inspired records of the people of God and all human biographies. The former may truly be said to be “much in little”; while many of the latter may as truly be said to be “little in much.” The history of one of the Old Testament saints—a history stretching over a period of 365 years—is summed up in two short clauses—“Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (Gen. 5:24). How brief! but yet how full, how comprehensive! How many volumes would man have filled with the records of such a life! And yet, what more could he have said? To walk with God comprehends all that could possibly be said of any one.

A man may travel round the globe; he may preach the gospel in every climate; he may suffer in the cause of Christ; he may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick; he may read, write, print and publish; in short, he may do all that ever man could or did do; and yet it may be all summed up in that brief clause, “He walked with God.” And right well it will be for him if it can be so summed up. One may do nearly all that has been enumerated and yet never walk with God one hour; yea, one may not even know the meaning of a walk with God. The thought of this is deeply solemnizing and practical. It should lead us to the earnest cultivation of the hidden

life, without which the most showy services will prove to be but mere flash and smoke.

There is something peculiarly touching in the mode in which the name of Epaphras is introduced to our notice in the New Testament. The allusions to him are very brief, but very pithy. He seems to have been the very stamp of man which is so much needed at the present moment. His labors, so far as the inspired penman has recorded them, do not seem to have been very showy or attractive. They were not calculated to meet the human eye or elicit human praise. But oh, they were most precious labors—peerless, priceless labors! They were the labors of the closet, labors within the closed door, labors in the sanctuary, labors without which all beside must prove barren and worthless. He is not placed before us by the sacred biographer as a powerful preacher, a laborious writer, a great traveler, which he may have been, and which are all truly valuable in their place.

The Holy Spirit, however, has not told us that Epaphras was any of the three; but then, He has placed this singularly interesting character before us in a manner calculated to stir the depths of our moral and spiritual being. He has presented him to us as a man of prayer—earnest, fervent, agonizing prayer; prayer not for himself, but for others. Let us harken to the inspired testimony: “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently (agonizing) for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.” (Col. 4:12,13) Such was Epaphras! Would there were hundreds like

him in this our day! We are thankful for preachers, thankful for writers, thankful for travelers in the cause of Christ; but we want men of prayer, men of the closet, men like Epaphras.

We are happy to see men on their feet preaching Christ; happy to see them able to ply the pen of a ready writer in the noble cause; happy to see them making their way, in the true evangelistic spirit, into "the regions beyond"; happy to see them, in the true pastoral spirit, going again and again to visit their brethren in every city. God forbid that we should undervalue or speak disparagingly of such honorable services; yea, we prize them more highly than words could convey. But then, at the back of all we want a spirit of prayer – fervent, agonizing, persevering prayer. Without this, nothing can prosper. A prayerless preacher is a profitless preacher. A prayerless writer will send forth barren pages. A prayerless evangelist will do but little good. A prayerless pastor will have but little food for the flock. We want men of prayer, men like Epaphras, men whose closet walls witness their agonizing labors. These are, unquestionably, the men for the present moment.

There are immense advantages attending the labors of the closet, advantages quite peculiar, advantages for those who engage in them, and advantages for those who are the subjects of them. They are quiet, unobtrusive labors. They are carried on in retirement, in the hallowed, soul-subduing solitude of the divine presence, outside the range of mortal vision.

How little would the Colossians have known of the loving, earnest labors of Epaphras had the Holy Spirit not mentioned them! It is possible that some of them

might have deemed him deficient in zealous care on their behalf. It is probable that there were persons then, as there are those now, who would measure a man's care or sympathy by his visits or letters. This would be a false standard. They should see him on his knees to know the amount of his care and sympathy. A love of travel might take me from London to Edinburgh to visit the brethren. A love of scribbling might lead me to write letters by every mail. Naught save a love for souls, a love for Christ, could ever lead me to agonize as Epaphras did, on behalf of the people of God, "that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Again, the precious labors of the closet demand no special gift, no peculiar talents, no preeminent mental endowments. Every Christian can engage in them. A man may not have the ability to preach, teach, write, or travel; but every man can pray. One sometimes hears of a gift of prayer. It is not a pleasant expression. It falls gratingly on the ear. It often means a mere fluent utterance of certain known truths which the memory retains and the lips give forth. This is poor work to be at. This was not the way with Epaphras. This is not what we want and long for. We want a real spirit of prayer. We want a spirit that enters into the present need of the Church, and bears that need in persevering, fervent, believing intercession before the throne of grace. This spirit may be exercised at all times, and under all circumstances. Morning, noon, eventide, or midnight will answer for the closet laborer.

The heart can spring upward to the throne in prayer and supplication at any time. Our Father's ear is ever open. His presence-chamber is ever accessible. Come when or with what we may, He is always ready to hear, ready to

answer. He is the Hearer, the Answerer and the Lover of importunate prayer. He Himself has said, "Ask...Seek... Knock"; "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint"; "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"; "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God." These words are of universal application. They are intended for all God's children. The feeblest child of God can pray, can watch, can get an answer, and return thanks.

Furthermore, nothing is so calculated to give one a deep interest in people as the habit of praying constantly for them. Epaphras would be intensely interested in the Christians at Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. His interest made him pray, and his prayers made him interested. The more we are interested for any one, the more we shall pray for him; and the more we pray, the more interested we become. Whenever we are drawn out in prayer for people, we are sure to rejoice in their growth and prosperity. So, also, in reference to the unconverted. When we are led to wait on God about them, their conversion is looked for with the deepest anxiety, and hailed, when it comes, with unfeigned thankfulness. The thought of this should stir us up to imitate Epaphras, on whom the Holy Spirit has bestowed the honorable epithet of "a servant of Christ," in connection with his fervent prayers for the people of God.

Finally, the highest inducement that can be presented to cultivate the spirit of Epaphras is the fact of its being so directly in unison with the spirit of Christ. This is the most elevated motive. Christ is engaged on behalf of His people. He desires that they should "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God"; and those who are led

forth in prayer in reference to this object are privileged to enjoy high communion with the great Intercessor. How marvelous that poor, feeble creatures down here should be permitted to pray about that which engages the thoughts and interests of the Lord of glory! What a powerful link there was between the heart of Epaphras and the heart of Christ when the former was laboring for his brethren at Colosse!

Let us ponder the example of Epaphras. Let us imitate it. Let us fix our eyes on some Colosse or other, and labor fervently in prayer for the Christians therein. The present is a deeply solemn moment. Oh for men like Epaphras—men who are willing to labor on their knees for the cause of Christ, or to wear, if it should be so, the noble bonds of the gospel. Such was Epaphras. We see him as a man of prayer (Col. 4:12), and as a companion in bonds with the devoted apostle of the Gentiles (Philemon 23).

May the Lord stir up amongst us a spirit of earnest prayer and intercession. May He raise up many of those who shall be cast in the same spiritual mould as Epaphras. These are the men for the present need.

Eternal Punishment

John 3:36

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the Word of God is against them. It speaks of "unquenchable fire"—of an "undying worm"—of a "fixed gulf"—of "abiding wrath" What, I would ask, is the meaning of such words, in the judgement of any honest, unprejudiced mind? It may besaid that these are figures. Granted that the "fire," the "worm," and the "gulf" are figures, but figures of what? Of something ephemeral—something which must, sooner or later, have an end?

Nay; but something which is eternal, if anything is eternal.

If we deny eternal punishment, we must deny an eternal anything, inasmuch as it is the same word which is used in every instance to express the idea of endless continuance. There are about seventy passages in the Greek New Testament where the word "everlasting" occurs. It is applied, amongst many other things, to the life which believers possess, and to the punishment of the wicked, as in Matthew 25:46. Now, upon what principle can any one attempt to take out the six or seven passages in which it applies to the punishment of the wicked, and say that in all these instances it does not mean for ever; but that in all the rest it does? I confess this seems to be perfectly unanswerable. If the Holy Ghost, if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had thought proper to make use of a different word, when speaking of the punishment of the wicked, from what He uses when speaking of the life of believers, I grant there might be some basis for an objection.

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

Indeed, I cannot but believe that here lies the real root of the matter. The enemy desires to get rid of the Word of God, of the Spirit of God, the Christ of God, and God Himself; and he craftily begins by introducing the thin end of his fatal wedge, in the denial of eternal punishment; and when this is admitted, the soul has

taken the first step on the inclined plane which leads down to the dark abyss of atheism.

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

How much better and wiser and safer it would be for our fellow men to flee from the wrath to come than to deny that it is coming; or that, when it does come, it will be eternal.

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God In Everything

God In Everything

C. H. Mackintosh

C. H. Mackintosh, the widely known author of Notes on the Pentateuch and Miscellaneous Writings, was born in 1820 in County Wicklow, Ireland. After a time in business in Limerick, he opened a school at Westport, then gave this up in 1853 to concentrate on preaching and writing. He was active in the Irish Revival of 1859-60, and for some forty years edited the magazine, Things New and Old.

His article in this issue has been in the Editor's possession in tract form for many years. There was no copyright on it. Its message is fresh and applicable for the Lord's people today, and every serious reader will be blessed by it.

Nothing so much helps the Christian to endure the trials of his path as the habit of seeing God in everything. There is no circumstance, be it ever so trivial or ever so common-place, which may not be regarded as a messenger from God, if only the ear be circumcised to hear, and the mind spiritual to understand the message. If we lose sight of this valuable truth life, in many instances at least, will be but a dull monotony, presenting nothing beyond the most ordinary circumstances. On the other hand, if we could but remember, as we start each day on our course, that the hand of our Father can be traced in every scene — if we could see in the smallest, as well as in the most weighty

circumstances, traces of the divine presence, how full of deep interest would each day's history be found!

The Book of Jonah illustrates this truth in a very marked way. There we learn, what we need so much to remember, that there is nothing ordinary to the Christian; everything is extraordinary. The most commonplace things, the simplest circumstances, exhibit in the history of Jonah, the evidences of special interference. To see this instructive feature, it is not needful to enter upon the detailed exposition of the Book of Jonah; we only require to notice one expression, which occurs in it again and again, namely, "THE LORD PREPARED."

In chapter one the Lord sends out a great wind into the sea, and this wind had in it a solemn voice for the prophet's ear, had he been wakeful to hear it. Jonah was the one who needed to be taught; for him the messenger was sent forth. The poor pagan mariners, no doubt, had often encountered a storm; to them it was nothing new, nothing special, nothing but what fell to the common lot of seamen; yet it was special and extraordinary for one individual on board, though that one was asleep in the sides of the ship. In vain did the sailors seek to counteract the storm; nothing would avail until the Lord's message had reached the ears of him to whom it was sent.

Following Jonah a little further, we perceive another instance of what we may term GOD IN EVERYTHING. He is brought into new circumstances, yet he is not beyond the reach of the messengers of God. The Christian can never find himself in a position in which his Father's voice cannot reach his ear, or his Father's

hand meet his view; for His voice can be heard, His hand seen, in everything. Thus, when Jonah had been cast forth into the sea, “the Lord prepared a great fish.” Here, too, we see that there is nothing ordinary to the child of God. A great fish was nothing uncommon; there are many such in the sea; yet did the Lord prepare one for Jonah, in order that it might be the messenger of God to his soul.

Again, in chapter four, we find the prophet sitting on the east side of the city of Nineveh, in sullenness and impatience, grieved because the city had not been overthrown, and entreating the Lord to take away his life. He would seem to have forgotten the lesson learnt during his three days’ sojourn in the deep, and he therefore needed a fresh message from God: “And the Lord prepared a gourd.” This is very instructive. There was surely nothing uncommon in the mere circumstance of a gourd; other men might see a thousand gourds, and, moreover, might sit beneath their shade, and yet see nothing extraordinary in them. But Jonah’s gourd exhibited traces of the hand of God, and forms a link—an important link—in the chain of circumstances through which, according to the design of God, the prophet was passing. The gourd now, like the great fish before, though very different in its kind, was the messenger of God to his soul. “So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.” He had before longed to depart, but his longing was more the result of impatience and chagrin, than of holy desire to depart and be at rest forever. It was the painfulness of the present, rather than the happiness of the future, that made him wish to be gone.

This is often the case. We are frequently anxious to get away from present pressure; but if the pressure were

removed, the longing would cease. If we longed for the coming of Jesus, and the glory of His blessed presence, circumstances would make no difference; we should then long as ardently to get away from those of pressure and sorrow. Jonah while he sat beneath the shadow of the gourd, thought not of departing, and the very fact of his being "exceeding glad of the gourd" proved how much he needed that special messenger from the Lord; it served to make manifest the true condition of his soul, when he uttered the words, "Take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." The Lord can make even a gourd the instrument for developing the secrets of the human heart. Truly the Christian can say, God is in everything. The tempest roars, and the voice of God is heard; a gourd springs up in silence, and the hand of God is seen. Yet the gourd was but a link in the chain; for "the Lord prepared a worm," and this worm, trifling as it was when viewed in the light of an instrument, was, nevertheless, as much the divine agent as was the "great wind," or the "great fish." A worm, when used by God, can do wonders; it withered Jonah's gourd, and taught him, as it teaches us, a solemn lesson. True, it was only an insignificant agent, the efficacy of which depended upon its conjunction with others; but this only illustrates the more strikingly the greatness of our Father's mind. He can prepare a worm, and He can prepare a vehement east wind, and make them both, though so unlike, conducive to His great designs.

In a word, the spiritual mind sees God in everything. The worm, the whale, and the tempest, all are instruments in His hand. The most insignificant, as well as the most splendid agents, further His ends. The east wind would

not have proved effectual, though it had been ever so vehement, had not the worm first done its appointed work. How striking is all this! Who would have thought that a worm and an east wind could be joint agents in doing a work of God? Yet so it was. Great and small are only terms in use amongst men, and cannot apply to Him “who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven,” as well as “the things that are on earth.” They are all alike to Him “who sitteth on the circle of the earth.” Jehovah can tell the number of stars, and while He does so He can take knowledge of a falling sparrow; He can make the whirlwind His chariot, and a broken heart His dwelling place. Nothing is great or small with God.

The believer, therefore, must not look upon anything as ordinary, for God is in everything. True, he may have to pass through the same circumstances — to meet the same trials — to encounter the same reverses as other men; but he must not meet them in the same way, nor interpret them on the same principle; nor do they convey the same report to his ear. He should hear the voice of God, and heed His message, in the most trifling as well as in the most momentous occurrence of the day. The disobedience of a child, or the loss of an estate, the obliquity of a servant or the death of a friend, should all be regarded as divine messengers to his soul.

So also, when we look around us in the world, God is in everything. The overturning of thrones, the crashing of empires, the famine, the pestilence, and every event that occurs amongst nations, exhibit traces of the hand of God, and utter a voice for the ear of man. The devil will seek to rob the Christian of the real sweetness of this thought; he will tempt him to think that, at least, the

common-place circumstances of every-day life exhibit nothing extraordinary, but only such as happen to other men. But we must not yield to him in this. We must start on our course every morning, with this truth vividly impressed on our mind — God is in everything. The sun that rolls along the heavens in splendid brilliancy, and the worm that crawls along the path, have both alike been prepared of God, and, moreover, could both alike co-operate in the development of His unsearchable designs.

I would observe, in conclusion, that the only one who walked in the abiding remembrance of the above precious and important truth was our blessed Master. He saw the Master's hand and heard the Father's voice in everything. This appears pre-eminently in the season of the deepest sorrow. He came forth from the garden of Gethsemane with those memorable words, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" thus recognizing in the fullest manner, that GOD IS IN EVERYTHING.

—C. H. M.

God's Way and How to Find It

"There is a path which no fowl knoweth and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it nor the fierce lion passed by it".

Job 28:7-8.

What an unspeakable mercy for one who really desires to walk with God, to know that there is a way for him to walk in! God has prepared a pathway for His redeemed in which they may walk with all possible certainty, calmness and fixedness. It is the privilege of every child of God, and every servant of Christ, to be as sure that he is in God's way as that his soul is saved. This may seem a strong statement; but the question is, Is it true? If it be true, it cannot be too strong. No doubt it may, in the judgment of some, savor a little of self-confidence and dogmatism to assert, in such a day as that in which we live, and in the midst of such a scene as that through which we are passing, that we are sure of being in God's path. But what saith the Scripture? It declares "there is a way", and it also tells us how to find and how to walk in that way. Yes; the self-same voice that tells us of God's salvation for our souls, tells us also of God's pathway for our feet; — the very same authority that assures us that he that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life", assures us also that there is a way so plain that "the wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein".

This, we repeat, is a signal mercy — a mercy at all times, but especially in a day of confusion and perplexity like the present. It is deeply affecting to notice the state of uncertainty in which many of God's dear people are found at the present moment. We do not refer now to

the question of salvation, of this we have spoken largely elsewhere; but that which we have now before us is the path of the Christian — what he ought to do, where he should be found, how he ought to carry himself in the midst of the professing Church. Is it not too true that multitudes of the Lord's people are at sea as to these things? Are there not many who, were they to tell out the real feelings of their hearts, would have to own themselves in a thoroughly unsettled state — to confess that they know not what to do, or where to go, or what to believe? Now, the question is, Would God leave His children, would Christ leave His servants, in such darkness and confusion?

No; my dear Lord, in following Thee, And not in dark uncertainty, This foot obedient moves.

May not a child know the will of his father? May not a servant know the will of his master? And if this be so in our earthly relationships, how much more fully may we count upon it in reference to our Father and Master in Heaven. When Israel of old emerged from the Red Sea, and stood upon the margin of that great and terrible wilderness which lay between them and the land of promise, how were they to know their way? The trackless sand of the desert lay all around them. It was vain to look for any footprint there. It was a dreary waste in which the vulture's eye could not discern a pathway. Moses felt this when he said to Hobab, "Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes" (Numbers 10:31). How well our poor unbelieving hearts can understand this touching appeal! How one craves a human guide in the midst of a scene of perplexity! How fondly the heart clings to one whom

we deem competent to give us guidance in moments of darkness and difficulty!

And yet, we may ask, what did Moses want with Hobab's eyes? Had not Jehovah graciously undertaken to be their guide? Yes, truly; for we are told that "on the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of testimony; and at even, there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed; and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days on the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed; whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents and journeyed not, but when it was taken up they journeyed. At the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the

charge of the Lord at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses" (Numbers 9:15-23).

Here was divine guidance — a guidance, we may surely say, quite sufficient to render them independent of their own eyes, of Hobab's eyes, and the eyes of any other mortal. It is interesting to note that in the opening of the book of Numbers, it was arranged that the ark of the covenant was to find its place in the very bosom of the congregation; but in chapter 10 we are told that when "they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey, the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them". What touching grace is here! and what faithfulness! If Moses will ask Hobab to be their guide, and that, too, in the very face of God's provision — even the cloud and the silver trumpet, then will Jehovah leave His place in the centre of the tribes, and go before them to search them out a resting-place. And did not He know the wilderness well? Would not He be better for them than ten thousand Hobabs? Might they not fully trust Him? Assuredly. He would not lead them astray. If His grace had redeemed them from Egypt's bondage, and conducted them through the Red Sea, surely they might confide in the same grace to guide them across that great and terrible wilderness, and bring them safely into the land flowing with milk and honey.

But it must be borne in mind that, in order to profit by divine guidance, there must be the abandonment of our own will, and of all confidence in our own reasonings, as well as all confidence in the thoughts and reasonings of others. If I have Jehovah as my Guide, I do not want my own eyes or the eyes of a Hobab either. God is sufficient: I can trust Him. He knows all the way across the desert;

and hence, if I keep my eye upon Him, I shall be guided aright.

But this leads us on to the second division of our subject, namely, How am I to find God's way? An all-important question, surely. Whither am I to turn to find God's pathway? If the vulture's eye, so keen, so powerful, so far-seeing, hath not seen it — if the young lion, so vigorous in movement, so majestic in mien, hath not trodden it — if man knoweth not the price of it, and if it is not to be found in the land of the living — if the depth saith, It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not with me — if it cannot be gotten for gold or precious stones — if the wealth of the universe cannot equal it, and no wit of man discover it — then whither am I to turn? where shall I find it?

Shall I turn to those great standards of orthodoxy which rule the religious thought and feeling of millions throughout the length and breadth of the professing Church? Is this wondrous pathway of wisdom to be found with them? Do they form any exception to the great, broad, sweeping rule of Job 28? Assuredly not.

What, then, am I to do? I know there is a way. God, who cannot lie, declares this, and I believe it; but where am I to find it? "Whence, then, cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and Death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears". (Job 28:20-22). Does it not seem like a hopeless case for any poor ignorant mortal to search for this wondrous pathway? No, blessed be God, it is by no means a hopeless case, for "He understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. For

He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; to make the weight for the winds; and He weigheth the waters by measure. When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then did He see it and declare it; He prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding'". (Job 28:23-28).

Here, then, is the divine secret of wisdom: "The fear of the Lord". This sets the conscience directly in the presence of God, which is its only true place. The object of Satan is to keep the conscience out of this place — to bring it under the power and authority of man — to lead it into subjection to the commandments and doctrines of men — to thrust in something between the conscience and the authority of Christ the Lord, it matters not what it is; it may be a creed or a confession containing a quantity of truth — it may be the opinion of a man or a set of men — the judgment of some favorite teacher — anything, in short, to come in and usurp, in the heart, the place which belongs to God's Word alone. This is a terrible snare, and a stumbling-block — a most serious hindrance to our progress in the ways of the Lord. God's Word must rule me — God's pure and simple Word, not man's interpretation thereof. No doubt, God may use a man to unfold that Word to my soul; but then it is not man's unfolding of God's Word that rules me, but God's Word by man unfolded. This is of all importance.

We must be exclusively taught and exclusively governed by the Word of the living God. Nothing else will keep us straight, or give solidity and consistency to our character and course as Christians. There is a strong tendency within and around us to be ruled by the

thoughts and opinions of men — by those great standards of doctrine which men have set up.

Those standards and opinions may have a large amount of truth in them — they may be all true so far as they go; that is not the point in question now. What we want to impress upon the Christian reader is, that he is not to be governed by the thoughts of his fellow-man, but simply and solely by the Word of God. It is of no value to hold a truth from man; I must hold it directly from God Himself. God may use a man to communicate His truth; but unless I hold it as from God, it has no divine power over my heart and conscience; it does not bring me into living contact with God, but actually hinders that contact by bringing in something between my soul and His holy authority.

We should greatly like to enlarge upon and enforce this great principle; but we must forbear, just now, in order to unfold to the reader one or two solemn and practical points set forth in the eleventh chapter of Luke, points which, if entered into, will enable us to understand a little better how to find God's way. We shall quote the passage at length. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light". (Luke 11:34-36).

Here, then, we are furnished with the true secret of discerning God's way. It may seem very difficult, in the midst of the troubled sea of christendom, to steer one's

course aright. So many conflicting voices fall on the ear. So many opposing views solicit our attention, men of God differ so in judgment, shades of opinion are so multiplied, that it seems impossible to reach a sound conclusion. We go to one man who, so far as we can judge, seems to have a single eye, and he tells us one thing; we go to another man who also seems to have a single eye, and he tells the very reverse. What, then, are we to think?

Well, one thing is certain, that our own eye is not single when we are running, in uncertainty and perplexity, from one man to another. The single eye is fixed on Christ alone, and thus the body is filled with light. The Israelite of old had not to run hither and thither to consult with his fellow as to the right way. Each had the same divine guide, namely, the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. In a word, Jehovah Himself was the infallible Guide of each member of the congregation. They were not left to the guidance of the most intelligent, sagacious, or experienced man in the assembly; neither were they left to follow their own way; each was to follow the Lord. The silver trumpet announced to all alike the mind of God; and no one whose ear was open and attentive was left at any loss. The eye and the ear of each were to be directed to God alone, and not to a fellow-mortal. This was the secret of guidance in the trackless desert of old, and this is the secret of guidance in the vast moral wilderness through which God's redeemed are passing now. One man may say, Listen to me; and another may say, Listen to me; and a third may say, Let each one take his own way. The obedient heart says, in opposition to all, I must follow my Lord.

This makes all so simple. It will not, by any means, tender to foster a spirit of haughty independence; quite the reverse. The more I am taught to lean on God alone for guidance, the more I shall distrust and look off from myself; and this, assuredly, is not independence. True, it will deliver me from servile following of any man, but giving me to feel my responsibility to Christ alone; but this is precisely what is so much needed at the present moment. The more closely we examine the elements that are abroad in the professing Church, the more we shall be convinced of our personal need of this entire subjection to divine authority, which is only another name for "the fear of the Lord", or, "a single eye".

There is one brief sentence, in the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, which furnishes a perfect antidote to the self-will and the servile fear of man so rife around us, and that is, "We must obey God". What an utterance! "We must obey". This is the cure for self-will. "We must obey God". This the cure for servile subjection to the commandments and doctrines of men. There must be obedience; but obedience to what? To God's authority, and to that alone. Thus the soul is preserved from the influence of infidelity on the one hand, and superstition on the other. Infidelity says, Do as you like. Superstition says, Do as man tells you. Faith says, "We must obey God".

Here is the holy balance of the soul in the midst of the conflicting and confounding influences around us in this our day. As a servant, I am to obey my Lord; as a child, I am to hearken to my Father's commandments. Nor am I the less to do this although my fellow-servants and my brethren may not understand me. I must remember that the immediate business of my soul is with God Himself.

He before whom the elders bow, With Him is all my business now.

It is my privilege to be as sure that I have my Master's mind as to my path as that I have His Word for the security of my soul. If not, where am I? Is it not my privilege to have a single eye? Yes, surely. And what then? "A body full of light". Now, if my body is full of light, can my mind be full of perplexity? Impossible. The two things are wholly incompatible; and hence, when one is plunged "in dark uncertainty", it is very plain his eye is not single. He may seem very sincere, he may be very anxious to be guided aright; but he may rest assured there is the lack of a single eye — that indispensable prerequisite to divine guidance. The Word is plain — "If thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light".

God will ever guide the humble, obedient soul; but on the other hand, if we do not walk according to the light communicated, we shall get into darkness. Light not acted upon becomes darkness, and oh, "how great the darkness"! Nothing is more dangerous than tampering with the light which God gives. It must, sooner or later, lead to the most disastrous consequences. "Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness". "Hear ye, and give ear: be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness". (Jeremiah 13:15-16).

This is deeply solemn. What a contrast between a man having a single eye, and a man not acting on the light

which God has given him! The one has his body full of light; the other has his body full of darkness. The one has no part dark; the other is plunged in gross darkness. The one is a light-bearer for others; the other is a stumbling block in the way. We know nothing more solemn than the judicial acting of God, in actually turning our light into darkness, because we have refused to act on the light which He has been pleased to impart.

Christian reader, art thou acting up to thy light? Has God sent a ray of light into thy soul? Has He shown thee something wrong in thy ways or associations? Art thou persisting in any line of action which conscience tells thee is not in accord with thy Master's will? Search and see. "Give glory to the Lord thy God". Act on the light. Do not hesitate. Think not of consequences. Obey, we beseech thee, the Word of thy Lord. This very moment, as thine eye scans these lines, let the purpose of thy soul be to depart from iniquity wherever thou findest it. Say not, Whither shall I go? What shall I do next? There is evil everywhere. It is only escaping from one evil to plunge into another. Say not these things; do not argue or reason; do not look at results; think not of what the world or the world-church will say of thee; rise above all these things, and tread the path of light — that path which shineth more and more unto the perfect day of glory.

Remember, God never gives light for two steps at a time. If he has given thee light for one step, then, in the fear and love of His Name, take that one step, and thou wilt assuredly get more light — yes, "more and more". But if there be the refusal to act, the light which is in thee will become gross darkness, thy feet will stumble on the

dark mountains of error which lie on either side of the straight and narrow path of obedience; and thou wilt become a stumbling-block in the path of others.

Some of the most grievous stumbling-blocks that lie, at this moment, in the pathway of anxious inquirers are found in the persons of those who once seemed to possess the truth, but have turned from it. The light which was in them has become darkness, and oh, how great and how appalling is that darkness! How sad it is to see those who ought to be light-bearers, acting as a positive hindrance to young and earnest Christians! But let not young Christians be hindered by them. The way is plain. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding". Let each one hear and obey for himself the voice of the Lord. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me". The Lord be praised for this precious Word! It puts each one in the place of direct responsibility to Christ Himself; it tells us plainly what is God's way, and, just as plainly, how to find it.

Good Works

It is, alas, possible for grace itself to be abused. We may forget that, while we are justified in the sight of God by faith alone, a real faith must be evidenced by works. We have to bear in mind that while law-works are denounced and demolished in manifold parts of Holy Scripture, life-works are diligently and constantly insisted upon.

If we profess to have life, this life must express itself in something more tangible and forcible than mere words. There is an appalling amount of empty profession—shallow, powerless, worthless talk—today. We have a wonderfully clear gospel; we see very distinctly that salvation is by grace, through faith, not by works of righteousness, nor by works of law. Blessedly true, and our heart praises God for it! But when people are saved, ought they not to live as such? Ought not the new life to come out in fruits? It must come out if it be in; if it does not come out, it is not there.

The apostle Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9). Here we have one side of this great practical question. Then comes the other side, to which every true and earnest Christian will delight to give his attention: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (v. 10).

Here we have the whole subject fully and clearly before us. God has created us to walk in a path of good works,

and He has prepared the path of good works for us to walk in. It is all of God, from first to last.

Thanks and praise be to God that it is so!

Grace and Holiness

Thank God we are under grace. But does this blessed fact weaken in any way the truth that "Holiness becometh God's house forever?" Has it ceased to be true that "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints; and to be held in reverence of all those who are about Him?" Is the standard of holiness lower for the Church of God now than it was for Israel of old? Has it ceased to be true that "our God is a consuming fire." Is evil to be tolerated because "we are not under law, but under grace?" Why were many of the Corinthians weak and sickly? Why did many of them die? Why were Ananias and Sapphira struck dead in a moment? Did that solemn judgment touch the truth that the Church was under grace? Assuredly not. But neither did grace hinder the action of judgment. God can no more tolerate evil in His assembly now, than He could in the days of Achan.

You say, "we must not draw comparisons between God's dealings with His earthly people and His dealings with His Church." What is the meaning of the following words in 1 Corinthians 10? "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil

things as they also lusted....Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Is not this drawing a comparison between God's dealing with His earthly people and His Church now? Yes indeed; and well will it be for us all to ponder and be admonished by the comparison. It would be sad indeed if we were to plead from the pure and precious grace in which we stand to lower the standard of holiness. We are called to purge out the old leaven on the blessed ground that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Is not this "drawing a comparison?"

The assembly at

Corinth was commanded - woe be unto them if they refused - to put away from among them the wicked person, to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

True, they were not called to stone him or to burn him; and here we have a contrast rather than a comparison. But thy had to put him out from among them if they would have the divine presence in the midst. "Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, forever." Can you not praise Him for the holiness as the grace? Can you not, as the standard of holiness rises before you, add your doxology, "blessed be His name forever and ever! Amen and amen?" We trust you can.

We must never forget that, while we stand in grace, we are to walk in holiness; and regards the assembly, if we refuse to judge bad doctrine and bad morals, we are not on the ground of the Assembly of God at all. People say

we must not judge; God says we must. "Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." If the assembly at Corinth had refused to judge that wicked person, it would have forfeited all title to be regarded as the assembly of God, and all who feared the Lord would have had to leave it. It is a very solemn matter indeed to take the ground of the Assembly of God. All who do so have to bear in mind that it is not a question of whom we can receive or what we can tolerate, but what is worthy of God? We hear a great deal nowadays about the "broad" and the "narrow;" we have just to be as broad and as narrow as the Word of God.

Grace Makes A Difference

(Excerpt from Notes on Leviticus)

Nothing can be more dishonoring to the pure grace of the gospel than the supposition that a man may belong to God while his conduct and character exhibit not the fair traces of practical holiness. "Known unto God are all His works," no doubt; but He has given us, in His holy Word, those evidences by which we can discern those that belong to Him. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.' And, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" (2 Tim. 2:19). We have no right to suppose that an evil-doer belongs to God. The holy instincts of the divine nature are shocked by the mention of such a thing. People sometimes express much difficulty in accounting for such and such evil practices on the part of those whom they cannot help regarding in the light of Christians. The Word of God settles the matter so clearly and so authoritatively, as to leave no possible ground for any such difficulty. - "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." It is well to remember this, in this day of laxity and self-indulgence. There is a fearful amount of easy, uninfluential profession abroad, against which the genuine Christian is called upon to make a firm stand, and bear a severe testimony - a testimony resulting from the steady exhibition of "the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." It is most deplorable to see so many going along the beaten path -

the well- trodden highway of religious profession, and yet manifesting not a trace of love or holiness in their conduct. Christian reader, let us be faithful; let us rebuke, by a life of self-denial and genuine benevolence, the self-indulgence and culpable inactivity of evangelical, yet worldly, profession. May God grant unto all His true-hearted people abundant grace for these things!

"What shall we say then? Shall We continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Rom. 6:1,2).

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Hiss of the Serpent

There is a remarkable contrast between God's testimony in Eden and His message to men now. Then, when all around was life, God spoke of death. Now, when all around is death, God speaks of life. Then the word was, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now the word is, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."

In Eden the enemy sought to make void God's testimony as to the result of eating the fruit. Now he seeks to make void God's testimony as to the result of believing the gospel. God had said, "Thou shalt surely die," but the serpent said, "Ye shall not surely die." Now, when God's Word plainly declares that, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36), the same serpent seeks to persuade believers that they do not have everlasting life, nor should they presume to think so until they have first done, felt, and experienced all manner of things.

If my reader has not yet believed and rested on the divine record, let me beseech you to allow the voice of the Lord to prevail above the hiss of the serpent. Jesus says, "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

How to Study Scripture

It is a very difficult for anyone to attempt to prescribe for another the proper method of studying Scripture. The infinite depths of Holy Scripture, like the exhaustless resources that are in God and the moral glories of the Person of Christ, are only unfolded to faith and need. This makes it so very simple. It is not cleverness or intellectual power we need, but the simplicity of a little child. The One who composed the Holy Scriptures must open our understandings to receive their precious teaching. And He will do so, if only we wait on Him in real earnestness of heart.

We must never lose sight of the weighty fact that it is as we act on what we know that our knowledge shall increase. It will never do to sit down like a bookworm to read the Bible. We may fill our intellect with biblical knowledge, we may have the doctrines of the Bible and the letter of Scripture at our finger-tips without one particle of unction or spiritual power. We must go to Scripture as a thirsty man goes to a well; as a hungry man goes to a meal; as a mariner goes to a chart. We must go to it because we cannot do without it. We go, not merely to study, but to feed. The instincts of the divine nature lead us to the Word of God as the newborn babe desires the milk by which he is to grow. It is by feeding on the Word that the new man grows.

Hence we may see how very real and practical is this question of how to study Scripture. It is intimately connected with our entire moral and spiritual condition, our daily walk, our actual habits and ways. God has given us His Word to form our character, to govern our

conduct and shape our course. Therefore, if the Word has not a formative influence and a governing power over us, it is the height of folly to think of storing up a quantity of scriptural knowledge in the intellect. It can only puff us up and deceive us. It is a most dangerous thing to traffic in unfelt truth; it brings on a heartless indifference, levity of spirit, insensibility of conscience, which is appalling to people of serious piety. There is nothing that tends so to throw us completely into the hands of the enemy as a quantity of head knowledge of truth without a tender conscience, a true heart, an upright mind. The mere profession of truth which does not act on the conscience and come out in the life, is one of the special dangers of the day in which our lot is cast. Better by far only to know a little in reality and power, than profess a quantity of truth that lies powerless in the region of the understanding, exerting no formative influence upon the life. I would much rather be honestly in Romans 7 than fictitiously in chapter 8. In the former case I am sure to come right, but in the latter there is no telling what I may come to.

As to the question of making use of human writings to help us in the study of Scripture, great caution is needed. No doubt the Lord may and does make use of the writings of His servants, just as He uses their oral ministry for our instruction and edification. Indeed, in the present broken and divided state of the Church, it is wonderful to mark the Lord's rich grace and tender care in feeding His beloved people with the writings of His servants.

But, we repeat, great caution is needed, earnest waiting on the Lord, that we may not abuse so precious a gift, that it may not lead us to trade on borrowed capital. If

we are really dependent upon God, He will give us the right thing; He will put the fight book into our hands; He will feed us with food suitable for us. Thus we receive it from Himself and hold it in communion with Himself. It is fresh, living, powerful, formative; it tells on the heart and shines in the life; and we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Precious growth! Would there were more of it!

Finally, we have to remember that Holy Scripture is the voice of God and the written Word is the transcript of the living Word. It is only by the Holy Spirit's teaching we can really understand Scripture, and He reveals its living depths to faith and need. Let us never forget this.

Inside the Veil, Outside the Camp

"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,...let us draw near..."

Hebrews 10:9-16.

The power of our path—of our walk in this world is the understanding, through the Holy Ghost, of our identification with Christ in all our ways, and our being set in the world to manifest Him, not merely to know that we have salvation, and the purging of our consciences through His most precious blood. The testimony of a Christian bears this character, he is treading in the footsteps of Christ. "To me, to live is Christ:" again, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" — (faith not in but "of the Son of God," that is, the same faith by which Jesus walked up and down in the world, is the faith by which we are called to live.) That puts each of us in the place of responsibility as to our ways, our habits, our feelings, and objects. Are we realising the responsibility of living Christ? That is really what the church of God is set in the world for—to be the expression of Christ in His absence. A Christian's conscience often satisfies itself with handing to the unconverted man the Bible, so that he may read what Christ was; but this is not the object for which Christ has left us here,— "Ye are the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." Are we such an epistle as persons can read? It is not a person's coming to me, and saying, What is your creed? What views do you hold? and the like. If I am not an

expression of the ways and feelings of Christ, I am a stumbling block, rather than otherwise. The Christian should be the living breathing expression of Christ—of the principles, features, graces, of the character of Christ. Alas! The whole of Christianity is often made to consist in a set of opinions: one gets his place and is characterised by what opinions he holds. We are called upon necessarily to live the Christ in whom we believe; we are one with Him, and are called to shew forth what He is. But the whole power, by which I am to act, and to shew that, is the understanding that I am one with Him.

There are two great stages of Christ's path, and of the believer's, as identified with him, presented to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The first ends (chap. 10) where the soul is set in "the holiest." Up to that the Holy Ghost is conducting us along, step by step; there He sets us down in this blessed place, "having boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus by the new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

The power of intelligent devotedness is the understanding of the perfect purging of our consciences. Many do not understand this; they are aiming at getting it, and that is a complete reversing of God's order. I have a purged conscience; I go on, not to obtain it, but because I have it. How do I get it? Not by anything that I have done, by my frames or feelings, as a matter of attainment or experience; the Holy Ghost teaches us, that it is by the blood of Jesus.

He shews the glory of the Person of Christ, as contrasted with angels and with Moses; that of His priesthood, as contrasted with Aaron's; that of His sacrifice, as

contrasted with the sacrifices under the law. And what is the result? We have a purged conscience. He has set us down within the veil. It is not what one Christian has, and what another is struggling after but the common platform of all—we all have a purged conscience. Some suppose that the blood of Christ has put away our sins before conversion; and then as to what becomes of those after, they are met by the priesthood of Christ; but this is not what He says, it is by the blood of Christ; we are within the holiest with a perfectly purged conscience, with "no more conscience of sins." It is just worthy of the sacrifice of Christ to put me in possession of this, and nothing short of it; all my sins, not some of them, blotted out. There, where the high priest could go in once every year, and only then, the simplest believer is set down.

When one comes to deal closely with souls, one discovers what doubts, fears, and anxieties take possession of and distress them. If the blood of Christ does anything for us, it sets us there without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,...let us draw near," &c. There is no difference here between apostles and others; the Apostle Paul and the thief on the cross: in other words, all alike have a common place within the veil.

The priesthood of Christ comes in to maintain me practically where the blood of Christ has set me. As in the expression in the Epistle of John, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous [Jesus Christ is at God's right hand on all principles of righteousness], and He is the propitiation [the mercy-seat] for our sins." We are never told, in the New Testament, that we are to ask for the pardon of

sins, there is not such an expression as this. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Nor is this distinction unimportant. It is a much easier thing for a child to ask for pardon for some fault than to confess it. We may be asking for pardon for any special sin, and we have no scripture warrant to know that it is put away; but when we confess it, it is a matter of faith to know that it is put away. I am speaking now of a believer: were it the question of the unconverted person, the blood of Christ meets that. God is "faithful and just (not gracious and merciful merely,) to forgive us our sins," &c. The moment I have judged myself about it, I am entitled to know that it is gone.

What a very wondrous place to set the believer in at the very outset of his course of discipleship!—washed from his sins, his conscience purged, set down in the unclouded sense of the light of God's own countenance! But what to do? To rest there? No—that is the foundation on which the superstructure of practical devotedness is based. Legalism and antinomianism are alike met. What does the system of legalism say? You must work yourself up into this place of acceptance. The gospel says, Christ has put me there. I never could get there; the law has proved that. When God gave the law, what was He doing? 'You shall do this,' 'You shall not do that,' brought out what man's heart was; it was impossible he could do what God was telling him he ought to do and impossible he should not be what God was telling him not to be: — "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." I can never, by works of law, get into the holiest of all. I am put there as the result of what Christ has accomplished for me on the

cross; and this is stated at the very outset of the epistle: "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Chapter I, 3.) Why does it say "sat down"? To evidence the completion of the work. Aaron never sat down; there was no seat prepared for the priest in the tabernacle or the temple.

What does the error lead men to say? 'I have it, I possess it all in Christ,' and there it ends. But no! the gospel puts me there, to run the blessed race that is set before me in ardent, earnest breathing of soul to become like Christ.

If the first division sets me down within the holiest, the second places me without the camp. I find Christ as it regards my conscience, "inside the veil." I find Christ, as it regards my heart, "outside the camp."

It does not become us to take only the comfort, which flows from our knowing Christ to be within the veil—the comfort, His sacrifice gives us; I must seek practical identification with Him outside the camp. Christ within the veil tranquillises my conscience. Christ outside the camp quickens, energizes my soul to run more devotedly the race set before me. "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." (Vers. 11-13.) No two points are morally more remote than inside the veil and outside the camp, and yet they are brought together here. Inside the veil was the place where the shekinah of God's glory dwelt; outside the camp the place where the sin-offering was

burned—no place gives such an idea of distance from God as that. It is blessed to know, that the Holy Ghost presents to me Jesus filling up all that is between these two points. I have nothing to do whatever with the camp. The camp was the place of ostensible profession (in type, the camp of Israel; in antitype, the city of Jerusalem). Why did Christ suffer without the gate? In order to shew the setting aside of the mere machinery of Israel's outward profession.

We may be clear as to the work of Christ being done for us (and God forbid there should be a cloud cast across the blessedness of that), knowing the conscience to be made perfect; but is tranquility of conscience all I want? Is there no responsibility? Is Christ's voice from within the veil all? Has He no voice outside the camp? It will be found that, after all, the joy, peace, liberty, flowing from our hearing Christ's voice inside the veil, is very much dependent on our listening to His voice outside the camp. Those who know most of suffering with Him, and bearing His reproach, will know most of the blessedness of His place within the veil. Our conduct, our ways, our path through the earth, must be tested by Christ. "Would Christ be there? Would Christ do this?" The Holy Ghost must be grieved if the saint pursues a course contrary to that which Christ would have pursued; and then the soul must be lean. How can a grieved Spirit testify of Christ—how can He give the soul comfort and joy, and peace of His testimony to Him? How can I be enjoying Christ if I am not walking in company with Him? We know that we cannot enjoy the company of a person unless we are where that person is—where then is Christ? "Outside the camp."—

"Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." This is not to go forth to men, or to opinions, to a church, or to a creed, but to Christ Himself. We are not of the world—Why? Because Christ is not of the world; the measure of our separation from the world is the measure of Christ's separation. "For here have we no continuing city;" do our hearts seek one?—some set of circumstances or the like, a something on which to lean? Are we saying, as it were, "Oh do leave me something?" like Lot pleading for Zoar, "Is it not a little one? Do not take it all away, 'is it not a little one; and my soul shall live!" Lot's was a heart going out after a little of the world still. When the heart is filled with Christ it can give up the world, there is no difficulty in doing it then. The mere saying, 'Give up this' or 'give up that, ' to one loving the world, will be of no avail; what I have to do is to seek to minister to that soul more of Christ.

I am outside the camp, I am seeking a city that is to come, I am waiting for Him who is to come. In this position, of dislodgement from the world and from its system, I find myself in two positions—one toward God, and the other towards man. The first, "By him, therefore let us offer the sacrifices of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." (Ver. 15.) The second, the lovely development of the spirit of active benevolence of the next verse, "But to do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Ver. 16.)

I am within the veil with Christ—outside the camp in the world, "bearing his reproach;" and, whilst thus delivered from the profession around me, that is not of Him, I am engaged in worship and doing good to all.

In regard to my hope, it is not as people say, the "holding the doctrine of the second advent," but "waiting for God's Son from heaven." This is not a dead, dry doctrine. If we are really waiting for God's Son from heaven, we shall be sitting loose to the world.

I have Christ for my soul's need, and I am only waiting for God's Son from heaven, for Christ to come from heaven, to take His Church unto Himself, that where He is we may be also, and that may be this night. I am not looking for antichrist, for signs, for movement amongst the nations, but for this one holy, happy thing, I am waiting for God's Son from heaven. Oh do not let us be inconsistent, do not let us contradict that, seeking to grasp Christ with one hand, and hold fast the world with the other.

If we know our position "within the veil," we must know our position "outside the camp," reproached, it may be, scorned, hated, suspected, of all who are not outside, but in the joy of fellowship with Him. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also, then shall appear with him in glory."

Isolation

...to combine a narrow path with a wide heart

It is one of our great difficulties at the present moment—indeed it has ever been a difficulty—to combine a narrow path with a wide heart. There is very much on all sides tending to produce isolation. We cannot deny it. Links of human friendship seem so fragile; so many things crop up to shake confidence; so many things which one cannot possibly sanction, that the path becomes more and more isolated.

All this is unquestionably true. But we must be very careful as to how we meet this condition of things. We have little idea how much depends on the spirit in which we carry ourselves in the midst of scenes and circumstances which, all must admit, are uniquely trying.

For example, I may retreat in upon myself and become bitter, gloomy, severe, repulsive, withered up, having no heart for the Lord's people, for His service, for the holy and happy exercises of the assembly. I may become barren of good works, having no sympathy with the poor, the sick, the sorrowful. I may live in the narrow circle in which I have withdrawn, thinking only of myself and my personal and family interests.

What can be more miserable than this? It is the most deplorable selfishness, but we do not see it because we are blinded by our inordinate occupation with other people's failures.

Now it is a very easy matter to find flaws and faults in our brethren and friends. But the question is, How are

we to meet these things? Is it by retreating in upon ourselves? Never! To do this is to render ourselves as miserable in ourselves as we are worthless, and worse than worthless, to others. There are few things more pitiable than what we call "a disappointed man." He is always finding fault with others. He has never discovered the real root of the matter or the true secret of dealing with it. He has retired, but within himself He is isolated, but his isolation is utterly false. He is miserable; and he will make all who come under his influence—all who are weak and foolish enough to listen to him—as miserable as himself. He has completely broken down in his practical career; he has succumbed to the difficulties of his time and proved himself wholly unequal to meet the stern realities of actual life. Then, instead of seeing and confessing this, he retires into his own narrow circle and finds fault with everyone except himself.

How truly delightful and refreshing to turn from this dismal picture to the only perfect Man who ever trod this earth! His path was indeed an isolated one—none more so. He had no sympathy from the scene around Him. "The world knew Him not." "He came unto His own (Israel), and His own received Him not." "He looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but He found none." Even His own beloved disciples failed to sympathize with, or understand Him. They slept on the mount of transfiguration in the presence of His glory and they slept in the garden of Gethsemane in the presence of His agony. They roused Him out of His sleep with their unbelieving fears and were continually intruding upon Him with their ignorant questions and foolish notions.

How did He meet all this? In perfect grace, patience and tenderness. He answered their questions; He corrected their notions; He hushed their fears; He solved their difficulties; He met their need; He made allowance for their infirmities; He gave them credit for devotedness in the moment of desertion; He looked at them through His own loving eyes and loved them, notwithstanding all. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Christian reader, let us seek to drink into our blessed Master's spirit and walk in His footsteps. Then our isolation will be of the right kind, and though our path may be narrow, the heart will be large.

Jesus and the Gospel

The gospel tells you who Jesus is and what He has done, and if you believe its message in your heart, and confess Him with your mouth, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

Jesus—God's eternal Son—God manifest in the flesh—co-equal with the Father, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, was born of a woman, took upon Him a body prepared by the power of the Highest, and thus became a REAL MAN—very God and very man. Having lived a life of perfect obedience to God, He died on the cross, being made sin and a curse, and having exhausted the cup of Jehovah's righteous wrath, endured the sting of death, spoiled the grave of its victory, and destroyed him that had the power of death. He went up into heaven, and took His seat at the right hand of God.

Such is the infinite merit of His perfect sacrifice, that all who believe in Jesus are justified from all things—yea, stand in His acceptableness before God, and can never come into judgment, but are passed from death unto life.

This is the gospel!—the glad tidings of salvation which is preached in all the world.

Jonathan

1 Samuel 18:1-4

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David: and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.... Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."

What an exquisite picture we have here! A picture of love stripping itself to clothe its object. There is a vast difference between Saul and Jonathan in this scene. Saul took David home with him in order to magnify himself by keeping such a one about his person and in his house. But Jonathan stripped himself to clothe David. This was love in one of its charming activities. Jonathan, in common with many thousands of Israel, has watched with breathless interest, the scene in the valley of Elah. He had seen David go forth, single handed, to meet the terrible foe whose height, demeanour, and words had struck terror into the hearts of the people. He had seen that haughty giant laid low by the hand of faith. He participated with all in the splendid victory.

But there was more than this. It was not merely the victory but the victor that filled the heart of Jonathan—not merely the work done, but the one who had done it. Jonathan did not rest satisfied with saying, "Thank God, the giant is dead, and we are delivered, and may return to our homes and enjoy ourselves." Ah! no; he felt his heart drawn and knit to the person of the conqueror. It

was not that he valued the victory less, but he valued the victor more, and hence he found his joy in stripping himself of his robes and his armour in order to put them upon the object of his affection.

Christian reader, there is a lesson here for us; and not only a lesson but a rebuke. How prone we are to be occupied with redemption rather than the Redeemer—with salvation rather than with the Saviour! No doubt we should rejoice in our salvation; but should we rest here? Should we not, like Jonathan, seek to strip ourselves in order to magnify the Person of Him who went down into the dust of death for us? Assuredly we should, and all the more because He does not exact aught of us. David did not ask Jonathan for his robe or his sword. Had he done so, it would have robbed the scene of all its charms. But no; it was a purely voluntary act. Jonathan forgot himself and thought only of David. Thus it should be with us and the true David. Love delights to strip itself for its object. "The love of Christ constraineth us." And again, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." Phil. 3:7, 8.

Oh ! for more of this spirit! May our hearts be drawn out and knit, more and more, to Christ, in this day of hollow profession, and empty, religious formality! May we be so filled with the Holy Spirit, that with purpose of heart we may cleave unto our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Let Us Not Forsake the Gathering of Ourselves Together

Gather the people together, men and women and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, who have not known it, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it (Deut. 31:12,13)

Two things in the foregoing passage claim our special attention:

1. The fact that Jehovah attached the most solemn importance to the public assembly of His people for the purpose of hearing His Word. "All Israel" – men, women, and children – with the stranger who had cast in his lot among them, were commanded to assemble themselves together to hear the reading of the book of the law of God, that all might learn His holy will and their duty. Each member of the assembly, from the eldest to the youngest, was to be brought into direct personal contact with the revealed will of Jehovah, that each one might know his solemn responsibility.

2. We have to weigh the fact that the children were to be gathered before the Lord to hearken to His Word. Both these facts are full of weighty instruction for all the members of the Church of God – instruction urgently called for on all sides.

There is a most deplorable amount of failure as to these two points. We sadly neglect the assembling of ourselves

together for the simple reading of the Holy Scriptures. There does not seem to be sufficient attraction in the Word of God itself to bring us together. There is an unhealthy craving for other things. Human oratory, music, religious excitement of some kind or other seems needful to bring people together; anything and everything but the precious Word of God.

It will perhaps be said that people have the Word of God in their houses, that it is quite different now from what it was with Israel. Everyone can read the Scriptures at home, and there is not the same necessity for the public reading. Such a plea will not stand the test of truth for a moment. We may rest assured, if the Word of God were loved and prized and studied in private and in the family, it would be loved and prized and studied in public. We should delight to gather together around the fountain of Holy Scripture, to drink, in happy fellowship, of the living water, for our common refreshment and blessing.

But it is not so. The Word of God is not loved and studied, either privately or publicly. Trashy literature is devoured in private, and music, ritualistic services, and imposing ceremonies are eagerly sought after in public. Thousands will flock to hear music, and pay for admission, but how few care for a meeting to read the Holy Scriptures! These are facts, and facts are powerful arguments. We cannot get over them. There is a growing thirst for religious excitement, and a growing distaste for the calm study of Holy Scripture and the spiritual exercises of the Christian assembly. It is perfectly useless to deny it. We cannot shut our eyes to it. The evidence of it meets us on every hand.

Thank God, there are a few, here and there, who really love the Word of God, and delight to meet, in holy fellowship, for the study of its precious truths. May the Lord increase the number of such, and bless them abundantly.

And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up to love and helpful deeds and noble activities; not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together (as believers), as is the habit of some people, but admonishing (warning, urging and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24,25).

Living By Faith

"The just shall live by his faith."

The weighty statement occurs in the second chapter of the prophet Habakkuk; and it is quoted by an inspired apostle in three of his Epistles, namely, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, with a distinct application in each. In Rom. 1:17 it is applied to the great question of righteousness. The blessed apostle declares himself not ashamed of the gospel;

"for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, on the principle of faith, to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

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

Finally, in the tenth of Hebrews, where the object is to exhort believers to hold fast their confidence, we read, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, he might receive the promise. For yet a little while, He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith."

Here we have faith presented not only as the ground of righteousness, but as the vital principle by which we are to live, day by day, from the starting-post to the goal of

the Christian course. There is no other way of righteousness, no other way of living, but by faith. It is by faith we are justified, and by faith we live. By faith we stand, and by faith we walk.

Now this is true of all Christians, and all should seek to enter into it fully. Every child of God is called to live by faith. It is a very grave mistake indeed to single out certain individuals who happen to have no visible source of temporal supplies, and speak of them as though they alone lived by faith. According to this view of the question, ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians would be deprived of the precious privilege of living by faith. If a man has a settled income' if he has a certain salary' if he has what is termed a secular calling, by which he earns bread for himself and his family, is he not privileged to live by faith? Do none live by faith save those who have no visible means of support? Is the life of faith to be confined to the matter of trusting God for food and raiment?

What lowering of the life of faith it is to confine it to the question of temporal supplies! No doubt it is a very blessed and a very real thing to trust God for everything; but the life of faith has a far higher and wider range than mere bodily wants. It embraces all that in any wise concerns us, in body, soul, and spirit. To live by faith is to walk with God: to cling to Him; to lean on Him; to draw from His exhaustless springs; to find all our resources in Him; and to have Him as a perfect covering for our eyes and a satisfying object for our hearts—to know Him as our only resource in all difficulties, and in our trials. It is to be absolutely, complete, and continually shut up to Him; to be undividedly dependent upon Him, apart from and above every creature

confidence, every human hope, and every earthly expectation.

Such is the life of faith. Let us see that we understand it. It must be a reality or nothing at all. It will not do to talk about the life of faith; we must live it; and in order to live it we must know God practically—know Him intimately, in the deep secret of our own souls. It is utterly vain and delusive to profess to be living by faith and looking to the Lord, while in reality our hearts are looking to some creature resource. How often do people speak and write about their dependence upon God to meet certain wants, and by the very fact of their making it known to a fellow-mortal they are, in principle, departing from the life of faith!

If I write to a friend, or publish to the church, the fact that I am looking to the Lord to meet a certain need, I am virtually off the ground of faith in that matter. The language of faith is this: "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being, is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and god, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to him.

This is serious work, and it demands our most solemn attention. God deals in realities. He can never fail a trusting heart. But then, He must be trusted. It is of no possible use to talk about trusting Him when our hearts are really looking to creature streams. "What doth it

profit, my brethren though a man say he hath faith?" Empty profession is but a delusion to the soul and a dishonor to God. The true life of faith is a grand reality. God delights in it, and He is glorified by it. There is nothing in all this world that so gratifies and glorifies God as the life of faith. "Oh how great is thy goodness, which Thou has wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! (Psa. 31:19)

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

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

And yet it is not that God does not use the creature to help and bless us. He does so constantly; and the man of faith will be deeply conscious of this fact, and truly grateful to every human agent that God uses to help him. God comforted Paul by the coming of Titus; but had Paul been looking to Titus, he would have had but little

comfort. God used the poor widow to feed Elijah; but Elijah's dependence was not upon the widow, but upon God. Thus it is in every case.

Nicodemus

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night”(John 3:1,2).

When we turn in the Bible to John chapter three we find recorded for our learning the interesting interview between the Lord and Nicodemus—a dialogue full of the very deepest and most important instruction. We may truly say, if ever there was a time in which the history of Nicodemus claimed special attention, it is just today, in this day of man’s proud pretensions, when the utter and hopeless ruin of human nature and the absolute need of the new birth are so loudly and extensively called in question.

When we look at Nicodemus, “a man of the Pharisees,” “a ruler of the Jews,” “a master of Israel,” we find a man of the very highest position and religious reputation. To be a Pharisee in the days of Nicodemus was something to be proud of as a man. It was viewed as an advantage of the very highest order. Yet Nicodemus gave clear indication by the fact of his coming to Jesus by night that he felt in himself that all was not right, that he lacked something which could not be found in all his religion. We may here learn that no system of religion under the sun can ever satisfy the cravings of an awakened conscience, or hush the anxieties of an earnest soul that has been roused to a sense of the reality of eternal things.

How much is wrapped up in the words, “The same came to Jesus by night”? This fact is noted three times by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, Nicodemus is never once named,

save in immediate connection with his coming to Jesus by night. See John 7:50; 19:39. This fact is never forgotten. Why did Nicodemus seek the cover of darkness for his interview with One whom he recognized as a Teacher come from God? He was not prepared to break with Judaism, or abandon his position, because the natural heart of man clings to these things with a fond and earnest tenacity. He was not prepared to meet the scorn and derision of those with whom he was socially and religiously associated. He was not yet able to count his own righteousness and all his religious advantages as dung and dross.

“Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him” (John 3:2). The very opening words of Nicodemus to the Lord reveal his misapprehension of Him. It was most assuredly true that our blessed Lord was a Teacher come from God, but He was much more than that. He was Himself God over all blessed for ever, whose mission in the world was to save men from their sins by imparting life—that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested in the Son. Nicodemus needed more than a teacher or some new system of doctrine or morals. He needed a Saviour, though he had not yet learned this. Just like many today, Nicodemus did not realize that the whole system in which he stood was a wreck, corrupt and condemned. It was not a question of some defective points, which a Teacher come from God may set right. The fact is, there is nothing right. Human nature, in its very deepest springs, is utterly and hopelessly corrupt. Man was dead, morally and spiritually. There was not so much as a single pulsation of spiritual life in man.

It is most important to lay hold of this great foundation truth of our common ruin. We are all born in sin, and “there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22,23). The moment you take “the glory of God” as the standard by which every man must be judged, at once all distinctions fade away. Whatever does not come up to that high and holy standard must be rejected. A man may try to do his best, to live according to the dictates of his conscience, to live up to the light he has. But the question is, “Have you lived up to the glory of God?”

Now this “no difference” doctrine is most unpopular to all those who pride themselves on their reputation, and are seeking to work out a righteousness for themselves by their good works, prayers, religious services, good morality, benevolence, or philanthropy. Such people cannot endure the thought of being classed with the very scum of society. They cannot believe that all men are alike. Why is this? Simply because they are measuring themselves by a false standard. They “measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves;” and in so doing, “are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). No one can form a proper estimate of himself by comparing himself with his fellows. It is only in the divine presence we can get a true view of ourselves.

Jesus answered Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). This brief yet comprehensive utterance went down to the very deepest roots of man’s condition, and there applied the sharp axe of God’s eternal truth. It declared in the very plainest terms the absolute necessity of a new birth for

every man, woman and child. It matters not to God what a man may possess in the way of human righteousness, moral character, social standing or reputation. He must be born again, get a new life, to see and enter the kingdom of God. The absolute, indispensable necessity of the new birth, for every man, proves beyond all possible question the utter and hopeless ruin of man.

Reformation in any shape or form is of no avail. The most improved, cultivated, polished, religious man in nature is as far from the kingdom of God as the most degraded sinner on the face of the earth. New birth is not the old nature improved, but the new nature imparted.

The devil is seeking, in every possible way, to cast dust in people's eyes, to prevent them from seeing this truth as to themselves. He has no objection to moral reform or religiousness without Christ, anything and everything but this—"Ye must be born again."

Nicodemus then asked Jesus the oft-repeated question, "How can a man be born when he is old?" (John 3:4). We believe Nicodemus was thoroughly in earnest, and his soul anxiously sought the answer to his question. How is the new birth accomplished? He now realized he was not in the kingdom of God, for he had never been born again, nor did he even know the meaning of it. This being born again was entirely beyond his grasp. He had no doubt considered himself in the kingdom of God, inasmuch as he was one of Abraham's seed; but now this heavenly Teacher insists on new birth as indispensable for entrance into the kingdom. How is it possible for a man to be born again?

Mark the divine reply. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). It is perfectly evident that a man can have nothing to do either with his being born, or his being born again. Both are independent of himself. The very idea of a man having anything to do with his new birth is as irrational as it is unscriptural. New birth is wholly and absolutely of God. It is an essentially divine operation in every respect. It is wrought by the Word of God and Spirit of God, and nothing else. It is not of man in any way, but altogether of God.

Yet new birth is in itself most simple. It is nothing more than receiving into the heart the precious, incorruptible seed of the Word of God, unfolded and applied by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus we read in James 1:18, "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth." So also in 1 Peter 1:23-25, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.... This is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you." "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13). From these passages we learn that the Word of God is the grand agency employed in producing the new birth. The gospel of the grace of God, implanted in the heart by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is the incorruptible seed whereby the soul is given new life. Wherever the glad tidings of salvation come with power to the heart, there the new birth takes place.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:6,7). Man cannot be trusted. He has been weighed in the divine balance, and found wanting. He has been tried and tested in every possible way, and proved to be utterly worthless. Man, in his very best estate, is unfit for the kingdom of God. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6) and “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). These are conclusive statements. When the Holy Ghost uses the term “flesh,” He means the whole human family—the first man and all his posterity. It is therefore wholly impossible for any man, woman, or child to avoid the application of these statements.

What, then, is the meaning of being “in the flesh”? Is it the same as being “in the body”? Most certainly not. True Christians, children of God, genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are in the body, but the Holy Ghost in Romans 8:9 expressly tells such that they “are not in the flesh.” What does this mean? It means that they are no longer viewed by God as connected with the first man—the old Adam—in the old creation. They have entered upon an entirely new footing; they belong to the second Man, the last Adam. They are “in the Spirit,” in Christ, members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. They are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Hence, although they are in the body, as to the fact of their condition, they are not in the flesh as to the ground of their standing before God.

Looked at personally, Adam was pardoned and saved; but he could not transmit his pardon, his salvation, or his new life to his race, or to any member thereof. These

things are not hereditary. They are the fruit of faith; and a father cannot believe for his son. All that belonged to the first man, personally and naturally, he could transmit to his posterity; but all that which he enjoyed by grace, through faith, was peculiar to himself, because faith is intensely individual.

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14,15). In the course of our Lord’s reply to Nicodemus, He unfolds the great foundation truth on which the new birth, together with the whole fabric of Christianity, rests. He speaks of the absolute necessity of the death of the Son of man. If it was essential that man should be born again and get new life, then it was also essential that the Son of man should die. A new Adam has entered the scene, the second Man, the Lord from heaven. For what purpose? To improve the first man? To give him a fresh start? No, but to die: to be lifted up on the cross; to close forever the history of the first man, and to become in resurrection the Head of a new race, a new creation. Here then the cross, the death of the sinless Saviour, is presented as the only ground on which a new and everlasting life can be communicated to man. It is on the ground of accomplished redemption alone that we are brought into association with Christ. The Word and Spirit of God are the only agency in new birth, and the cross is the only basis thereof.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Not only is the cross the grand foundation of the new birth, but now the Lord reveals to Nicodemus that the love of

God's heart is the blessed source from which it emanates.

Did Nicodemus believe the words of this Teacher come from God?

Was he born again? Yes, Nicodemus through grace received into his divinely prepared heart the good seed and was born again. Though the narrative in John three does not inform us of his immediate reception of the truth, yet the Scriptures reveal he was truly born again and a genuine disciple of Jesus. See John 7:50,51; 19:38-42.

Now we must bring things home to ourselves. Have you, dear reader, received the glad tidings in your heart? Have you come to Jesus as one utterly and hopelessly lost in yourself? If you have not experienced the new birth, then you are dead in trespasses and sins, far off from God, and on the way to eternal damnation.

Nicodemus took the first step in the right direction when he came to One who has said "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). These words assure every comer, no matter who he is, or what he is, of a hearty and immediate welcome to Jesus. It matters not how deep the guilt, how many or how great the sins, how unworthy, how miserable, Jesus says, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Come believing on the Lord Jesus Christ now. Take no rest until you know you are born again, and have passed from death unto life, and are a child of God, and have actually entered into the kingdom of God.

Abridged from Things New and Old, Vol.18.

One-Sided Theology

One-Sided Theology

C. H Mackintosh

Charles Henry Mackintosh (1820-1896) endowed his own and succeeding generations with a rich deposit of written ministry. Of his volumes, the late Dr. Wilbur M. Smith said that they were "One of the richest devotional works in the English language. A precious spiritual help to many of God's choicest servants for two generations. They should be possessed, read, and meditated upon by every Bible student, especially every Sunday School teacher."

Each generation generally fosters its own doctrinal imbalances and over-emphases, and ours is no exception. It is extremely important to hold God's truth in balance. C. H. Mackintosh is a commendable example of one of Christ's servants who did. His comments of almost a century ago on "One-sided Theology" address a current need and problem today.

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

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

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

Now, can we suppose for a moment that the blessed apostle Paul would accept as "the faith of God's elect" a system which leaves out that glorious mystery of the Church of which he was specially made the minister? Suppose any one had shown Paul "the five points" of

Calvinism, as a statement of the truth of God, what would he have said? What! “The whole truth of God;” “the faith of God’s elect;” “all that is essential to be believed;” and yet not a syllable about the real position of the Church — its calling, its standing, its hopes, its privileges! And not a word about Israel’s future! A complete ignoring, or at best a thorough alienation, of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David! The whole body of prophetic teaching subjected to a system of spiritualizing, falsely so called, whereby Israel is robbed of its proper portion, and Christians dragged down to an earthly level —and this presented to us with the lofty pretension of “The faith of God’s elect!”

Thank God it is not so. He, blessed be His name, has not confined Himself within the narrow limits of any school of doctrine, high, low, or moderate. He has revealed Himself. He has told out the deep and precious secrets of His heart. He has unfolded His eternal counsels, as to the Church, as to Israel, the Gentiles, and the wide creation. Men might as well attempt to confine the ocean in buckets of their own formation as to confine the vast range of divine revelation within the feeble enclosures of human systems of doctrine. It cannot be done, and it ought not to be attempted. Better far to set aside the systems of theology and schools of divinity, and come like a little child to the eternal fountain of Holy Scripture, and there drink in the living teachings of God’s Spirit.

Nothing is more damaging to the truth of God, more withering to the soul, or more subversive of all spiritual growth and progress than mere theology, high or low — Calvinistic or Arminian. It is impossible for the soul to make progress beyond the boundaries of the system to

which it is attached. If I am taught to regard "The five points" as "the faith of God's elect," I shall not think of looking beyond them; and then a most glorious field of heavenly truth is shut out from the vision of my soul. I am stunted, narrowed, one-sided; and not only so, but I am in danger of getting into that hard, dry state of soul which results from being occupied with mere points of doctrine instead of with Christ. A disciple of the high school of doctrine will not hear of a world-wide gospel — of God's love to the world — of glad tidings to every creature under heaven. He has only gotten a gospel for the elect. On the other hand, a disciple of the low or Arminian school will not hear of the eternal security of God's people. Their salvation depends partly upon Christ, and partly upon themselves. According to this system, the song of the redeemed should be changed. Instead of "Worthy is the Lamb," we should have to add, "and worthy are we." We may be saved to-day, and lost to-morrow. All this dishonors God, and robs the Christian of all true peace.

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

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

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

If we are to be taught by Scripture we must believe that every man is responsible according to his light. The Gentile is responsible to listen to the voice of creation. The Jew is responsible on the ground of the law. Christendom is responsible on the ground of the full-

orbed revelation contained in the whole Word of God. If God commands all men, everywhere to repent, does He mean what He says, or merely all the elect? What right have we to add to, or alter, to pare down, or to accommodate the Word of God? None whatever. Let us face Scripture as it stands, and reject everything which will not stand the test. We may well call in question the soundness of a system which cannot meet the full force of the Word of God as a whole. If passages of Scripture seem to clash, it is only because of our ignorance. Let us humbly own this, and wait on God for further light. This, we may depend upon it, is safe moral ground to occupy. Instead of endeavoring to reconcile apparent discrepancies, let us bow at the Master's feet and justify Him in all His sayings. Thus shall we reap a harvest of blessing, and grow in the knowledge of God and His Word as a whole.

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

But there is not a word about "God's chosen people" in the passage. It refers to the great propitiatory work of Christ, in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be obliterated from the wide creation of God. We shall only see the full application of that blessed Scripture in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth

righteousness. To confine it to the sin of God's elect can only be viewed as the fruit of theological bias.

Note — It is deeply interesting to mark the way in which Scripture guards against the repulsive doctrine of reprobation. Look, for example, at Matthew xxv. 34. Here, the King, in addressing those on His right hand, says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Contrast with this the address to those on His left hand: "Depart from me ye cursed (He does not say 'of my Father') into everlasting fire, prepared, not for you, but) for the devil and his angels." So also, in Romans ix. In speaking of the "vessels of wrath," it says "fitted to destruction" —fitted not by God surely, but by themselves. On the other hand, when speaking of the "vessels of mercy," it says, "which He had afore prepared unto glory." The grand truth of election is fully established; the repulsive error of reprobation, sedulously avoided.

Our Standard and Our Hope

There are two very important principles presented in Revelation 3:3,11, which are profoundly interesting, but clear, simple, easily grasped, and full of power, when understood—two distinct things which characterize the overcomer. The first is the truth that has been communicated; and the second, the hope that is set before us.

We find these two things illustrated in Israel's history, and in the history of the Church of God—what He has given us, and what is held out before us. These two things are to form your character and mine. We are not to be influenced by the character of things around, or the present condition of the people of God; but we are to be influenced by what God has given, and what He will give. We are apt to be discouraged and disheartened by the state of things around, and to surrender everything because of the ruin, and thus get paralyzed; but if you get hold of these two things, or rather if they get hold of you, they will enable you to stem the tide, and to be an overcomer. You are to remember that you have received and heard, and cherish the hope of glory.

We have Protestantism before us in Sardis. You must always distinguish the work of the Spirit of God and the state of things resulting from it through man's interference, human management, earthly machinery, stereotyping the form when the power was gone. The Reformation was a distinct work of the Spirit of God, a wave of spiritual power. Protestantism is the powerless form which, through human weakness and Satan's craft has followed that glorious season of divine visitation.

Fifty years ago [ed.: 19th century] there was a very distinct movement of the Spirit of God, which drew many out of the enclosures of Christendom. But what use has been made of it? When the energy, freshness, and bloom of the Spirit had departed, what followed, in many cases? Why, people slipped into what may be called dead brethrenism, and there is nothing worse than that, because the corruption of the best thing is the worst corruption. What is our moral safeguard? Simply to hold fast to what we have received, and to live in the blessed hope of Christ's coming, to realize in our own souls the power of what God has given and what He will give.

We find illustrations of this in Old Testament times. All the great reformatory movements in Israel were characterized by this very thing. It was so in Jehoshaphat's time, and in Hezekiah's time. The Lord calls back His people to the original standard, to what they had received at the first. Hezekiah goes back to Moses, as his authority to maintain the divine standard in the celebration of the Passover. Many might have said, Oh, it is all hopeless; your national unity is gone. Even Solomon had left abominations behind him. The devil suggests to lower the standard because of the ruin; but Hezekiah did not listen to that. He was an overcomer. A tide of blessing rolled in, such as had not been known since the days of Solomon (2 Chron. 30).

So again, in the days of Josiah: a child was on the throne; a woman filling the prophetic office; Nebuchadnezzar almost at the gates. What did Josiah do? The book of the law was read. Instead of lowering the standard on account of the state of things, he acted on the Word of God; that was his standard of action, and

he kept the Passover in the first month. The result was, there had not been such a Passover since the days of Samuel.

Thus it was with Hezekiah and Josiah; and we have a still more beautiful example of it in Ezra and Nehemiah. In those days a feast was kept which had not been observed since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. It was reserved for that poor, little remnant to keep that feast. They were overcomers; they went back to God, and to what He had given at the beginning.

Again, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego gained a magnificent victory when they refused to eat the king's meat. They would not yield one hair's breadth. Were not they overcomers? They might have said, God in His governmental dealings has sent us into captivity; why should we refuse to eat the king's meat? But no! They were enabled to hold up the standard of God in the midst of the ruin around.

It was the same with Daniel. He stood in unshaken faithfulness, and gained a splendid victory. It was not to make a show that he opened his windows, and prayed towards Jerusalem, but to maintain the truth of God; he prayed towards God's centre, and he was called the servant of the living God. If these had surrendered, they would have lost their victories, and God would have been dishonored.

All this bears upon us in a very distinct way, in the midst of Protestantism. It makes the Word of God of unspeakable value to us. It is not a question of setting up our own opinion or authority, but we are called on to maintain the truth of God, and nothing else; and if you do not get hold of that, you do not know where you are.

It might have been said to Josiah, when he broke down the high places built by Solomon (2 Kings 23:13), Who are you, to set yourself up against Solomon, and the institutions set up by a great man like him? But it was not a question of Josiah versus Solomon, but of God versus error.

And now, as to our second great principle, namely, that our character is also to be formed by what is before us—the coming of the Lord. But mark here, the church of Sardis, instead of being cheered by the Church's proper hope, the bright and Morning Star is warned, "If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." This is how He will come upon the world—as a thief. We belong to the region of light; our proper hope is the Morning Star, which is only seen by those who are watching during the night. The reason why Sardis is warned, instead of cheered by the hope of His coming, is that it has sunk down to the world's level; low, lifeless, sapless Christianity; and it will overtake them as a thief.

This is what Protestantism is threatened with, and what you are threatened with, if you let yourself go down with the stream, like a dead fish. The Lord is awakening the hearts of His people to a deeper sense of this. He is giving them to see that nothing will do, save downright reality. If we have not this, we have nothing. It is one thing to have doctrines in the mind, and another thing altogether to have Christ in the heart and Christ in the life.

He is coming for me, and I have to watch for the bright and Morning Star. Now let my heart rise up, and overcome the condition of things around. If I find saints

in that condition, I seek to rouse them out of it. I you want to instruct saints, you must bring them back to the truth you have received, what God gave at the beginning. Build on what God has given you, and on the hope that is set before you. I find it a great thing to say to any one, Are you prepared to abandon everything that will not bear the test of the Word of God—to take your stand on that?

Hold fast the standard of the truth of God, and do not accept anything less; even though you may be alone. If a regiment were cut to pieces, and only one man left, if he hold the colors, the dignity of the regiment is maintained. It is not a question of results, but of being true to Christ, to be really alive in a scene which is characterized by having "a name to live, while dead." We want something more than mere profession. Even the breaking of bread may become an empty formality. We want more power and freshness, more living devotedness to the Person of Christ. We are called to overcome. The hearing ear is found only with the overcomer. May our hearts be stirred up to desire it increasingly.

Ready

We want the reader to dwell for a few moments on the little word "ready." If we mistake not, he will find it to be a word of immense depth and suggestive power, as used by the Holy Ghost in Scripture. We shall just now refer to four passages in which our word occurs; and may the One who penned these passages be pleased to open and apply them in divine power and freshness to the heart of both writer and reader.

1. And first we shall turn to 1 Peter 1:5 where it is used in connection with the word "salvation." Believers are said to be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Here, then, we are taught that salvation is ready to be revealed at this moment; for we are, as John tell us, in "the last times." And be it noted that salvation as here used is not to be confined to the mere matter of the soul's deliverance from hell and perdition: it refers, rather, to the deliverance of the body of the believer from the power of death and corruption. In short, it takes in all that stands in anywise connected with the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We already possess the salvation of our souls, as we are told in the very context from which our text is taken. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls...wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Thus we learn in the clearest way that the "salvation ready to be revealed" is linked on to "the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is confirmed, were confirmation

needful, by Hebrews 9:28, where we read, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many' and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, apart from sin, unto salvation.

From all this we learn that the salvation which is ready to be revealed is at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this we are taught, as Christians, to look at any moment. There is literally nothing so far as the work of Christ is concerned, nothing so far as the testimony of the Holy Ghost is concerned, to hinder our hearing "the shout of the archangel and the trump of God" this very night, this very hour. All is done that needed to be done. Atonement is made, redemption is accomplished, God has been glorified by the work of Christ, as is proved by the fact of Christ's present place on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. From the moment that our Lord Christ took His seat upon that throne, it could always be said that "salvation is ready to be revealed."

But it could not have been said before. Salvation could not be said to be ready until the divine groundwork thereof was laid in the death and resurrection of the Saviour. But when once that most glorious work of all works was accomplished, it could at any moment be said that "salvation is ready to be revealed." "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1).

2. The apostle Peter gives us another instance and application of our word in chap. 4:5 where he refers to some "who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Here the word stands before us in a form of awful solemnity. If on the one hand it be true that salvation is

ready to be revealed for the everlasting joy of God's redeemed, it is equally true on the other hand that judgement is ready to take its course, for the everlasting misery of those who neglect God's proffered salvation. This one is as true, and as pointed, and as forcible, as the other. There is nothing to wait for in respect to judgement, any more than there is in respect to salvation. The one is as "ready" as the other.

God has gone to the utmost in demonstrating His grace: and man has gone to the utmost in demonstrating his guilt. Both have reached their climax in the death of Christ; and when we see Him crowned with glory and seated on the throne, we have the most powerful evidence that could possibly be afforded that nothing remains but for salvation to be revealed on the one hand, and for judgement to take its course on the other.

Hence it follows that man is no longer under probation. It is a grand mistake for any one to think so. It falsifies man's entire position and state. If I am under probation; if God is still testing me; if He is even now occupied in testing whether I am good for anything; if I am capable of producing any fruit for Him—if this be indeed the case, then it is not and cannot be true that "He is ready to judge." Nature is not ripe for judgement so long as a probationary process is pending, if there is yet something to wait for ere judgement can take its course.

But no; we feel bound to press upon you the fact that the period of your probation is over forever, and the period of God's long-suffering is nearly run out. It is of the utmost importance to seize this truth. It lies at the very foundation of the sinner's position. Judgement is actually impending. It is "ready" at this moment to fall upon the

head of the unrepentant—the ready of these lines should he be one of them. The entire history of human nature—of man, of the world—has been wound up and closed forever. The cross of Christ has made perfectly manifest the guilt of ruin of the human race. It has put an end to man's probationary season; and from that solemn hour until now the true position of the world as a whole, and of each individual sinner—man, woman, and child—has been that of a culprit tried, found guilty, and condemned, but the sentence was not executed. This is the present awful position of the unconverted, unbelieving reader.

Wilt thou not think of this? Fellow immortal soul, wilt thou not, even this very moment, bend the undivided attention of thy soul to this eternal question? We must speak plainly and pointedly. We feel in some small degree the awfulness of the sinner's state and prospect, in view of these weighty words, "ready to judge." We are convinced that the present is a moment which calls for serious and faithful dealing with the souls of our readers. We do not, as God is our witness, want to write essays or sermons; we want to reach souls. We want the ready to be assured of this; that he is not now read an article on a religious subject prepared for some literary purpose, but a solemn appeal made to his heart and conscience in the immediate presence of "Him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

3. But this leads us to the third passage of Holy Scripture in which our weighty motto occurs. The reader will find it in Luke 12:40: "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

If salvation is "ready" to be revealed, and if judgement is "ready" to be executed, what becomes us but to be 'ready also?

And in what does this readiness consist? How are we to be ready? It strikes us that there are two things included in the answer.

First, we must be "ready" in title; and, secondly, we must be "ready" in our moral state—ready in conscience, and ready in heart. The one is founded upon the work of Christ for us; the other is connected with the work of the Spirit in us. If we are simply resting by faith on the finished work of Christ, if we are leaning exclusively on what He has done and what He is, then are we in very truth ready in title, and we may rest assured of being with Him when He comes.

But, on the other hand, if we are leaning upon our fancied goodness, upon any righteousness which we think we possess, upon not having done any harm to any one, upon our not being worse than some of our neighbours, upon our church membership, upon our attention to the ordinances of religion; if we are leaning upon any or all of these things, or if we are adding these things to Christ, then we may be assured we are not ready in title, not ready in conscience. God can accept nothing, absolutely nothing, as a title, but Christ. To bring anything else is to declare that Christ is not needful: to bring anything besides is to affirm that He is not enough. But God has borne ten thousand testimonies to the fact that we can do with nothing less, and that we want nothing more than Christ. Hence, therefore, Christ is our all-essential and all-sufficient title.

But, then, there is such a thing as professing to be ready in title while at the same time we are not ready in our moral condition or practical state. This demands our gravest attention. There is a vast amount of easy-going evangelical profession abroad at the present moment. The atmosphere is permeated by the rays of gospel light. The darkness of the Middle Ages has been chased away by the brightness of a free gospel and an open Bible.

We are thankful for a free gospel and an open Bible. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is a fearful amount of laxity, unsubduedness, and self-indulgence going hand in hand with the evangelical profession of the day. We notice with the deepest anxiety many young professors who have, or seem to have, a very clear insight, so far as the intellect goes, into the truth of the sinner's title, who, if we are to judge from their style, deportment, and habits, are not "ready" in their moral condition—in the real state of their hearts. We are at times, we must confess, sadly cast down when we see our young friends decking their persons in the vain fashions of a vain and sinful world; feeding upon the vile literature that issues in such frightful profusion from the press; and actually singing vain songs and engaging in light and frivolous conversation. It is impossible to reconcile such with "Be ye also ready."

We may perhaps be told that these things are externals, and that the grand point is to be occupied with Christ. It may be said—it has been said—"Provided we have Christ in our hearts, it does not matter what we have on our heads or in our hands." We reply, "If we really have Christ in our hearts, it will regulate what we put on our heads and take into our hands; yea, it will exert a

manifest influence upon our whole deportment and character."

We should like to ask some of our young friends this question, "Would you like the Lord Christ to come and find you reading a love story, or singing a song?" We feel assured you would not. Well then, let us, in the name of the Lord, see to it that we do not engage in anything which does not comport with our being "ready."

We specially urge this upon the young Christian reader. Let this question be ever before us, "Am I ready?—ready in title, ready in state, ready in conscience, ready in heart?" The times are really very solemn, and it behoves us to think seriously of our true state. We feel persuaded that there is a lack of real, godly heart-exercise amongst us. There are, we fear, many—God only knows how many—who are not ready; many who would be taken aback and terribly surprised by death or the coming of the Lord. There are things said and done by those who occupy the very highest platform of profession which we dare not indulge in if we are really looking for the Lord.

God grant that the ready may know what it is to be ready in title and ready in state; that he may have a purged conscience and a truly exercised heart. Then he will be able to enter into the meaning of the fourth and last passage, to which we call his attention. It occurs in Matt. 25:10.

4. "And while they [the foolish virgins] went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage' and the door was shut."

How solemn! How awfully solemn! Those who ready went in, and those who were not ready were shut out. Those who have life in Christ, who are indwelt by the

Holy Ghost, will be ready. But the mere professor—the one who has the truth in the head and on the lip, but not in the heart; who has the lamp of profession, but not the Spirit of life in Christ—will be shut out into outer darkness—in the everlasting misery of gloom and hell.

Let us, as we take a solemn leave of you, put this question home to your very inmost soul, "Art thou ready?"

Righteousness

Christ is the believer's righteousness, as we read in

1 Corinthians 1:30, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Again in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in Him." When we had no righteousness for God, He provided a righteousness for us, and that righteousness is Christ—a crucified, risen, and glorious Christ. In the law, God was demanding righteousness from man. In the Gospel, God is providing righteousness for man. This makes a vast and marvelous difference to anyone who is honestly struggling and toiling to work out righteousness for himself before God.

There was a great difference between Adam's apron and God's coat. God never set a stitch in the former, and man never set a stitch in the latter. There was nothing for God in the apron; there was nothing of man in the coat. Hence we find that Adam's apron proved useless in the hour of need. The very moment he heard the voice of the Lord God, he was afraid and fled to hide because, as he said, "I was naked." He ignored his own apron! It was of no use whatever to him. It could not even satisfy his own conscience. Not so, however, when he got on God's coat. He could then say "I am clothed" because God had clothed him. The coat he wore was of God's own making. Moreover, it was founded on the shedding of blood—an all-important cardinal truth. Divine righteousness rests on the basis of accomplished redemption. The cross is

the grand foundation, the great central truth of Christianity.

Second Timothy - Provision for Perilous Times

The house which, in the first epistle, was looked at in its rule, is here contemplated in its ruin. The church, as an economy set up on the earth, like every other economy, had utterly failed. Man fails in everything. The apostle seems, as it were, to be weeping over the ruins of that once beautiful structure. He calls to remembrance the tears of his beloved Timothy. He is glad to have even one sympathizing bosom into which to pour his sorrows.

Who can fail to see that our lot is cast in the very midst of the evils and dangers here contemplated? Why should we desire to blind our eyes as to the truth? Why deceive ourselves with vain dreams of increasing light and spiritual prosperity? Is it not better far to look the true condition of things straight in the face? Why should we imagine that man, under the Christian dispensation, would prove a single whit better than man under all the dispensations which have gone before, or under the millennial dispensation which is yet to follow? Let my reader ponder these things, and then accompany me, while I seek by the grace of God, to unfold some of the divine provisions for "perilous times."

THE UNFEIGNED FAITH (1:5)

This connects the soul immediately with

Christ, in the power of a link which must, of necessity, be placed in front of all ecclesiastical associations however important they may be in their due place. It is a link which shall endure when all earthly associations

shall have been dissolved for ever. Timothy had this faith dwelling in him before ever he entered the house of God. He was connected with the God of the house previous to his manifested association with the house of God. If a man be destitute of this faith, he must, sooner or later, break down. He may be urged on, for a time, by the impulses of surrounding circumstances and their influence, but the perilous times will soon rise to a head, and then will come the awful crisis of judgment, from which none can escape save the happy possessors of "unfeigned faith."

THE SURE FOUNDATION (2:19)

The soul that is built upon this, in the divine energy of "unfeigned faith," is able to resist the rapidly rising tide of evil and is divinely furnished for the most appalling times. The church may go to pieces, and all who love that church may have to sit down and weep over its ruins; but there stands that imperishable foundation, laid by God's own hand, against which the surging tide of error and evil may roll with all its fury, and have no effect, save to prove the eternal stability of that rock and of all who are built thereon. If we suffer our feet to be moved from the rock, if we surrender ourselves to the impulse of surrounding circumstances and influences, we shall never be able to make head against the special forms of evil and error in these "perilous times."

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES (3:15)

We must hold truth directly from God, through the medium, and on the authority of "the holy Scriptures." God may use a man to show me certain things in the Word; but I do not hold them from man, but from God. It

is in the very midst of the perils of the "last days," that one has the most urgent need of "unfeigned faith" and "the holy Scriptures." We cannot get on without them. When every heart is full to overflowing of deep and earnest attachment to the Person and cause of Christ, then it is comparatively easy to get on. But the condition of things in Second Timothy is the very reverse of all this. Unless one is abiding in unquestionable knowledge of "the holy Scriptures", he must assuredly make shipwreck. Let us never stoop to purchase fellowship at the heavy price of all that is "lovely and of good report" (Phil. 4:8).

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (4:8)

The venerable pilgrim looks back over the course which he had run and over the battlefield whereon he had fought. He stands on the confines of the earth and in the very midst of the ruins of that church whose rise and progress he had watched with such intense solicitude. He had poured forth the tears of tender though disappointed affection over its decline and fall. He fixes his eye on the goal of immortality which no power of the enemy can prevent his reaching in triumph. It teaches us that the more vividly we enter into the glories of heaven, the more faithfully shall we discharge the functions of earth - the more we realize the nearness of eternity, the more effectively shall we order the things of time.

Self-surrender in the Assembly

I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord (Philippians 4:2).

If Euodias and Syntyche could have walked alone, there would have been no collision - no strife. But they were called to walk together, and here was the demand for self-surrender. We are living members of a living body, each one having to do with other members, with whom we are connected by a bond which no power of earth or hell can sever. And be it ever remembered, that Christians are not members of a club, of a sect, or of an association; they are members of a body, each connected with all, and all connected, by the fact of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, with the risen and glorified Head in heaven.

There is no place in all the universe where SELF will be so pulled to pieces, as in the assembly of God. And is it not well? Is it not a powerful proof of the divine ground on which that assembly is gathered? Are we not (should we not be) glad to have our hateful self thus pulled to pieces? Shall we run away from those who do it for us? Are we not glad and do we not often pray to get rid of self? And shall we quarrel with those who are God's instruments in answering our prayers? True, they may do the work roughly and clumsily; but no matter for that. Whoever helps me to crush and sink self does me a kind turn, however awkwardly he may do it. One thing is certain, no man can ever rob us of that which, after all, is the only thing worth having, namely, Christ. This is a precious consolation. Let self go; we shall have the more of Christ. Euodias might lay the blame on Syntyche, and

Syntyche on Euodias; the apostle does not raise the question of which was right or of which was wrong, but he beseeches both to be "of the same mind in the Lord."

Here lies the divine secret. It is self-surrender. But this must be a real thing. There is no use in talking about sinking self, while at the same time, self is fed and patted on the back. We sometimes pray with marvelous fervor to be enabled to trample self in the dust, and the very next moment, if any one seems to cross our path, self is like a porcupine with all its quills up. This will never do. God will have us real, and surely we can say, with all our weakness and folly, we want to be real, real in everything; and therefore real when we pray for the power of self-surrender. But, most assuredly, there is no place where there is more urgent demand for this lovely grace than in the bosom of the assembly of God.

Temperance or Self-Control

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Peter 1:5-7).

The word "temperance" means a great deal more than what is usually understood by that term. It is customary to apply the expression "temperance" to a habit of moderation in reference to eating and drinking. No doubt it fully involves this, but it involves very much more. Indeed, the Greek word used by the inspired apostle may be rendered "self-control." It gives the idea of one who has self habitually well reined in.

This is a rare and admirable grace, diffusing its hallowed influence over the entire course, character, and conduct. It not only bears directly upon one, or two, or twenty selfish habits, but upon self, in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive and most odious term.

Some may ask, "How can we control self?" The answer is blessedly simple: "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Salvation in Christ means more than deliverance from the wrath to come, the pardon of our sins, and the assurance of exemption from the lake of fire. It is far more than these, precious and priceless though they be. In a word, "salvation" implies a full and hearty acceptance of Christ to guide me out of folly's dark and devious paths, into paths of heavenly light and peace. Hence, therefore, it is evident that "self-control" is included in the salvation which we

have in Christ. It is a result of that practical sanctification with which divine grace has endowed us.

Now, in presenting to my reader a few practical sentences on the subject of self-control, I shall contemplate it under the three following divisions, namely, the thoughts, the tongue, and the temper.

OUR THOUGHTS

I suppose there are few Christians who have not suffered from evil thoughts. They are truly hateful and should be judged, condemned, and expelled. I cannot prevent birds from flying over me, but I can prevent their alighting upon me. In like manner, I cannot prevent evil thoughts, but I can refuse them a lodgment therein.

But how can we control our thoughts? No more than we could blot out our sins, or create a world. What are we to do? Look to Christ. This is the true secret of self-control. The more excellent way to be preserved from the suggestions of evil is by the power of pre-occupation with good. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:8,9).

OUR TONGUE

That influential member, so fruitful in good, so fruitful in evil. How deeply important is the grace of self-control in its application to such a member! Mischief, which years cannot repair, may be done by the tongue in a moment.

Who, then, can control the tongue? No man can do it; but Christ can; and we have only to look to Him, in simple faith, which implies the sense of our own utter helplessness and His all-sufficiency. How often, when suffering under the effects of some outrageous blunder of the tongue, have we resolved to command that unruly member somewhat better next time. But, alas, our resolution proved to be like the morning cloud that passes away, and we had only to retire and weep over our lamentable failure in the matter of self-control. Now, why was this? Simply because we undertook the matter in our own strength, or, at least, without a sufficiently deep consciousness of our weakness. We must cling to Christ as the babe clings to its mother.

But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison....Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter (Ja. 3:8-11)?

OUR TEMPER

The temper is intimately connected with both the tongue and the thoughts. When the spring of thought is spiritual, and the current heavenly, the tongue is only the active agent for good, and the temper is calm and unruffled. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith regulates everything. Without Him, all is worse than worthless. I can no more control my temper than my tongue or my thoughts; and if I set about it, I shall be sure to break down every hour. Let us look to Christ to control our temper. No amount of knowledge, either of doctrine or the letter of Scripture, will preserve the soul from this

awful condition. Nothing but "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" will avail.

Put off anger.....put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created Him (Col. 3:8,10).

The Bible: Whence Is It? - From Heaven Or Of Men?

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Precious words! Would they were more thoroughly understood in this our day! It is of the utmost possible importance that the Lord's people should be rooted, grounded and settled in the grand truth of the plenary inspiration of holy scripture.

It is to be feared that laxity as to this most weighty subject is spreading in the professing church to an appalling extent. In many quarters it has become fashionable to pour contempt upon the idea of plenary inspiration. It is looked upon as childishness and ignorance. It is regarded by many as a great proof of profound scholarship, breadth of mind and original thinking to be able by free criticism to find out flaws in the precious volume of God, then presume to sit in judgement upon the Bible as though it were a mere human composition. They undertake to pronounce upon what is, and what is not, worthy of God. In fact, they do, virtually, sit in judgement upon God Himself.

The present result is, as might be expected, utter darkness and confusion, both for those learned doctors themselves and for all who are so foolish as to listen to them. And as for the future, who can conceive the eternal destiny of all those who shall have to answer before the judgement-seat of Christ for the sin of blaspheming the word of God, and leading hundreds astray by their infidel teaching?

We shall not, however, occupy time in dwelling upon the sinful folly of infidels and sceptics-even though called Christians-or their puny efforts to cast dishonour upon that peerless volume which our gracious God has caused to be written for our learning. They will some day or other find out their fatal mistake. God grant it may not be too late! And as for us, let it be our deep joy and consolation to meditate upon the word of God, that so we may ever be discovering some fresh treasure in that exhaustless mine, some new moral glories in that heavenly revelation which speaks to us with a point and freshness as if it were written expressly for us-written this very day.

There is nothing like scripture.

Take, for instance, any human writing of the same date as the Bible; if you could lay your hand on some volume written three thousand years ago what would you find? A curious relic of antiquity, something to be placed in the British Museum side by side with an Egyptian mummy, having no application whatever to us or to our time, a musty document, a piece of obsolete writing, practically useless to us, referring only to a state of society and to a condition of things long since passed away and buried in oblivion.

The Bible, on the contrary, is the book for to-day. It is God's own book, His perfect revelation. It is His own very voice speaking to each one of us. It is a book for every age, for every clime, for every class, for every condition, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young. It speaks in a language so simple that a child can understand it, and yet so profound that the most gigantic intellect cannot exhaust

it. Moreover, it speaks right home to the heart; it touches the deepest springs of our moral being; it goes down to the hidden roots of thought and feeling in the soul; it judges us thoroughly. In a word, it is, as the inspired apostle tells us, "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12.)

And then mark the marvellous comprehensiveness of its range. It deals as accurately and forcibly with the habits and customs, the manners and maxims of the nineteenth century of the Christian era as with those of the very earliest ages of human existence. It displays a perfect acquaintance with man in every stage of his history. The London of to-day and the Tyre of three thousand years ago are mirrored with like precision and faithfulness on the sacred page. Human life in every stage of its development is portrayed by a master hand in that wonderful volume which our God has graciously penned for our learning.

What a privilege to possess such a book! to have in our hands a divine revelation! to have access to a book, every line of which is given by inspiration of God! to have a divinely given history of the past, the present and the future! Who can estimate aright such a privilege as this?

But then this book judges man-judges his ways-judges his heart. It tells him the truth about himself. Hence man does not like God's book. An unconverted man would vastly prefer a newspaper or a sensational novel to the Bible. He would rather read the report of a trial in

one of our criminal courts than a chapter in the New Testament.

Hence, too, the constant effort to pick holes in God's blessed book. Infidels, in every age and of every class, have laboured hard to find out flaws and contradictions in holy scripture. The determined enemies of the word of God are to be found, not only in the ranks of the vulgar, the coarse and the demoralised, but amongst the educated, the refined and the cultivated. Just as it was in the days of the apostles, "Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," and "Devout and honourable women "-two classes so far removed from each other, socially and morally-found one point in which they could heartily agree, namely, the utter rejection of the word of God and of those who faithfully preached it. (Compare Acts 13:50 with Acts 17:5.) So we ever find that men who differ in almost everything else agree in their determined opposition to the Bible.

Other books are let alone. Men care not to point out defects in Virgil, in Horace, in Homer or Herodotus; but the Bible they cannot endure, because it exposes them and tells them the truth about themselves and the world to which they belong.

And was it not exactly the same with the living Word-the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was here among men? Men hated Him because He told them the truth. His ministry, His words, His ways, His whole life was a standing testimony against the world; hence their bitter and persistent opposition: other men were allowed to pass on; but He was watched and waylaid at every turn of His path. The great leaders and guides of the people "sought to entangle him in his talk," to find

occasion against Him in order that they might deliver Him to the power and authority of the governor. Thus it was during His marvellous life; and at the close. when the blessed One was nailed to the cross between two malefactors, these latter were let alone; there were no insults heaped upon them; the chief priests and elders did not wag their heads at them. No; all the insults, all the mockery, all the coarse and heartless vulgarity-all was heaped upon the divine Occupant of the centre cross.

Now it is well we should thoroughly understand the real source of opposition to the word of God-whether it be the living Word or the written word. It will enable us to estimate it at its real worth. The devil hates the word of God-hates it with a perfect hatred, and hence he employs learned infidels to write books to prove that the Bible is not the word of God, that it cannot be, inasmuch as there are mistakes and discrepancies in it; and not only so, but in the Old Testament we find laws and institutions, habits and practices unworthy of a gracious and benevolent Being.

To all this style of argument we have one brief and pointed reply; of all these learned infidels we simply say, they know nothing whatever about the matter. They may be very learned, very clever, very deep and original thinkers, well made up in general literature, very competent to give an opinion on any subject within the domain of natural and moral philosophy, very able to discuss any scientific question. Moreover, they may be very amiable in private life, estimable characters, kind, benevolent and philanthropic, beloved in private and respected in public. All this they may be, but being unconverted, and not having the Spirit of God, they are

wholly unfit to form, much less to give, a judgement on the subject of holy scripture. If any one wholly ignorant of astronomy were to presume to sit in judgement on the principles of the Copernican system, these very men of whom we speak would, at once, pronounce him utterly incompetent to speak, and unworthy to be heard on such a subject. In short, no one has any right whatever to offer an opinion on a matter with which he is unacquainted. This is an admitted principle on all hands, and therefore its application in the case now before us cannot justly be called in question.

Now the inspired apostle tells us, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, that, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This is conclusive. He speaks of man in his natural state, be he ever so learned, ever so cultivated. He is not speaking of any special class of men; but simply of man in his unconverted state, man destitute of the Spirit of God. Some may imagine that the apostle refers to man in a state of barbarism, or savage ignorance. By no means; it is simply man in nature, be he a learned philosopher or an ignorant clown. He cannot know the things of the Spirit of God. How then can he form or give a judgement as to the word of God? How can he take it upon him to say what is, or what is not worthy of God to write? And if he is audacious enough to do so- as alas! he is-who will be foolish enough to listen to him? His arguments are baseless; his theories worthless; his books only fit for the waste paper basket. And all this, be it observed, on the universally admitted principle above

stated, that no one has any title to be heard on a subject of which he is wholly ignorant.

In this way we dispose of the whole tribe of infidel writers. Who would think of listening to a blind man on the subject of light and shade? And yet such a man has much more claim to be heard than an unconverted man on the subject of inspiration. Human learning, however extensive and varied, human wisdom, however profound cannot qualify a man to form a judgement upon the word of God. No doubt a scholar may examine and collate MSS. simply as a matter of criticism; he may be able to form a judgement as to the question of authority for any particular reading of a passage; but this is a different matter altogether from an infidel writer undertaking to pronounce judgement upon the revelation which God has, in His infinite goodness given to us. We maintain that no man can do this. It is only by the Spirit who Himself inspired the holy scriptures that those scriptures can be understood and appreciated.

The word of God must be received upon its own authority. If man can judge it or reason upon it, it is not the word of God at all. Has God given us a revelation or has He not? If He has it must be absolutely perfect in every respect; and being such, it must be entirely beyond the range of human judgement. Man is no more competent to judge scripture than he is to judge God. The scriptures judge man, not man the scriptures.

This makes all the difference. Nothing can be more miserably contemptible than the books which infidels write against the Bible. Every page, every paragraph, every sentence only goes to illustrate the truth of the apostle's statement, that "The natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God:.... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Their gross ignorance of the subject with which they undertake to deal is only equalled by their self-confidence. Of their irreverence we say nothing, for who would think of looking for reverence in the writings of infidels? We might perhaps look for a little modesty, were it not that we are fully aware of the bitter animus which lies at the root of all such writings, and renders them utterly unworthy of a moment's consideration.

Other books may have a dispassionate examination: but the precious book of God is approached with the foregone conclusion that it is not a divine revelation; because, forsooth, infidels tell us that God could not give us a written revelation of His mind.

How strange! Men can give us a revelation of their thoughts; and infidels have done so pretty plainly; but God cannot. What folly! What presumption! Why, we may lawfully inquire, could not God reveal His mind to His creatures? Why should it be thought a thing incredible? For no reason whatever, but because infidels would have it so. The wish is in this case assuredly father to the thought. The question raised by the old serpent in the garden of Eden nearly six thousand years ago has been passed on from age to age by all sorts of sceptics, rationalists and infidels, namely, "Hath God said?" We reply with intense delight, Yes, blessed be His holy name, He has spoken-spoken to us. He has revealed His mind; He has given us the holy scriptures.

"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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

And again,

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4.)

The Lord be praised for such words! They assure us that all scripture is given of God, and that all scripture is given to us. Precious link between the soul and God! What tongue can tell the value of such a link? God has spoken-spoken to us. His word is a rock against which all the waves of infidel thought dash themselves in contemptible impotency, leaving it in its own divine strength and eternal stability. Nothing can touch the word of God. Not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined can ever move the word of God. There it stands in its own moral glory, spite of all the assaults of the enemy, from age to age.

"For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

"Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

What remains for us? Just this,

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Here lies the deep secret of peace. The heart is linked to the throne, yea, to the very heart of God by means of His most precious word, and is thus put in possession of a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. What can all the theories, the reasonings and the arguments of infidels effect? Just nothing. They are esteemed as the dust of the summer threshing floor. To one who has really learnt through grace to confide in the

word of God -to rest on the authority of holy scripture, all the infidel books that ever were written are utterly worthless, pointless, powerless; they display the ignorance and terrible presumption of the writers; but as to the scripture, they leave it just where it ever has been and ever will be, "settled in heaven", as immovable as the throne of God.

[In referring to infidel writers, we should bear in mind that by far the most dangerous of such are those calling themselves Christians. In our young days, whenever we heard the word "infidel" we at once thought of a Tom Paine or a Voltaire; now, alas! we have to think of so-called bishops and doctors of the professing church. Tremendous fact!]

The assaults of infidels cannot touch the throne of God neither can they touch His word; and blessed be His name, neither can they touch the peace that flows through the heart that rests on that imperishable foundation.

"Great peace have they that love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

"The word of our God shall stand for ever."

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:24, 25.)

Here we have the same precious golden link again. The word which has reached us in the form of glad tidings is the word of the Lord which endureth for ever: and hence our salvation and our peace are as stable as the word on

which they are founded. If all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, then what are the arguments of infidels worth? They are as worthless as withered grass or a faded flower; and the men who put them forth and those who are moved by them will find them to be so sooner or later. Oh! the sinful folly of arguing against the word of God - arguing against the only thing in all this world that can give rest and consolation to the poor, weary human heart - arguing against that which brings the glad tidings of salvation to poor lost sinners - brings them fresh from the heart of God!

But we may perhaps here be met by the question so often raised, and which has troubled many and led them to fly for refuge to what is called, "The authority of the church." The question is this, "How are we to know that the book which we call the Bible is the word of God?" Our answer to this question is a very simple one, it is this, The One who has graciously given us the blessed book can give us also the certainty that the book is from Him. The same Spirit who inspired the various writers of the holy scriptures can make us know that those scriptures are the very voice of God speaking to us. It is only by the Spirit that any one can discern this. As we have already seen, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." If the Holy Spirit does not make us know and give us the certainty that the Bible is the word of God, no man or body of men can possibly do it: and, on the other hand, if He does give us the blessed certainty we do not need the testimony of man.

We freely admit that on this great question a shadow of uncertainty would be positive torture and misery. But who can give us certainty? God alone. If all the men upon earth were to agree in their testimony to the authority of holy scripture; if all the councils that ever sat, all the doctors that ever taught, all the fathers that ever wrote were in favour of the dogma of plenary inspiration; if the universal church, if every denomination in Christendom were to assent to the truth that the Bible is in very deed the word of God; in a word, if we had all the human authority that could possibly be had in reference to the integrity of the word of God, it would be utterly insufficient as a ground of certainty; and if our faith were founded on that authority it would be perfectly worthless. God alone can give us the certainty that He has spoken in His word; and blessed be His name, when He gives it all the arguments, all the cavillings, all the quibblings, all the questionings of infidels, ancient and modern, are as the foam on the water, the smoke from the chimney top, or the dust on the floor. The true believer rejects them as so much worthless rubbish and rests in holy tranquility in that peerless revelation which our God has graciously given us.

It is of the very last possible importance for the reader to be thoroughly clear and settled as to this grave question if he would be raised above the influence of infidelity on the one hand and superstition on the other.

- Infidelity undertakes to tell us that God has not given us a book - revelation of His mind - that He could not give it.

- Superstition undertakes to tell us that even though God has given us a revelation yet we cannot be assured of it without man's authority nor understand it without man's interpretation.

Now it is well to see that by both alike we are deprived of the precious boon of holy scripture. And this is precisely what the devil aims at. He wants to rob us of the word of God; and he can do this quite as effectually by the apparent self-distrust that humbly and reverently looks to wise and learned men for authority as by an audacious infidelity that boldly rejects all authority, human or divine.

Take a case. A father writes a letter to his son at Canton, a letter full of the affection and tenderness of a father's heart. He tells him of his plans and arrangements, tells him of everything that he thinks would interest the heart of a son - everything that the love of a father's heart could suggest. The son calls at the post-office in Canton to inquire if there is a letter from his father. He is told by one official that there is no letter, that his father had not written and could not write, could not communicate his mind by such a medium at all, that it is only folly to think of such a thing. Another official comes forward and says, "Yes, there is a letter here for you, but you cannot possibly understand it; it is quite useless to you, indeed it can only do you positive mischief inasmuch as you are quite unable to read it aright. You must leave the letter in our hands, and we will explain to you such portions of it as we consider suitable for you." The former of these two officials represents infidelity; the latter, superstition. By both alike would the son be deprived of the longed-for letter - the precious communication from his father's heart. But what, we may inquire, would be his answer to

these unworthy officials? A very brief and pointed one we may rest assured. He would say to the first, "I know my father can communicate his mind to me by letter, and that he has done so." He would say to the second, "I know my father can make me understand his mind far better than you can." He would say to both, and that too with bold and firm decision, "Give me up at once my father's letter; it is addressed to me, and no man has any right to withhold it from me."

Thus, too, should the simple-hearted Christian meet the insolence of infidelity and the ignorance of superstition—the two special agencies of the devil, in this our day, in setting aside the precious word of God. "My Father has communicated His mind, and He can make me understand the communication." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." And "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." Magnificent answer to every enemy of God's precious and peerless revelation, be he rationalist or ritualist!

We feel it to be our sacred duty, as most surely it is our high privilege, to press upon all to whom we have access the immense importance, yea, the absolute necessity of the most uncompromising decision on this point. We must faithfully maintain at all cost the divine authority, and therefore the absolute supremacy and all-sufficiency of the word of God at all times, in all places, for all purposes. We must hold to it that the scriptures having been given of God are complete in the very highest and fullest sense of the word; that they do not need any human authority to accredit them or any human voice to make them available; they speak for themselves and carry their credentials with them. All we have to do is to believe and obey, not to reason or discuss. God has

spoken: it is ours to hearken and yield an unreserved and reverent obedience.

Never was there a moment in the history of the church of God in which it was more needful to urge home on the human conscience the necessity of implicit obedience to the word of God. It is, alas! but little felt. Professing Christians for the most part seem to consider that they have a right to think for themselves, to follow their own reason, their own judgement, or their own conscience. They do not believe that the Bible is a divine and universal guide-book. They think there are very many things in which we are left to choose for ourselves. Hence the almost numberless sects, parties, creeds and schools of thought. If human opinion be allowed at all, then as a matter of course one man has as good a right to think as another; and thus it has come to pass that the professing church has become a proverb and a byword for division.

And what is the sovereign remedy for this widespread disease? Here it is, absolute and complete subjection to the authority of holy scripture. It is not men going to scripture to get their opinions and their views confirmed, but going to scripture to get the mind of God as to everything, and bowing down their whole moral being to divine authority. This is the one pressing need of the day in which our lot is cast—reverent subjection, in all things, to the supreme authority of the word of God. No doubt there will be a variety in our measure of intelligence, in our apprehension and appreciation of scripture; but what we specially urge upon all Christians is that condition of soul, that attitude of heart expressed in those precious words of the psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

This, we may rest assured, is grateful to the heart of God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Here lies the true secret of moral security. Our knowledge of scripture may be very limited; but if our reverence for it be profound, we shall be preserved from a thousand errors, a thousand snares. And then there will be steady growth. We shall grow in the knowledge of God, of Christ and of the written word. We shall delight to draw from those living and exhaustless depths of holy scripture, and to range through those green pastures which infinite grace has so freely thrown open to the flock of Christ. Thus shall the divine life be nourished and strengthened; the word of God will become more and more precious to our souls, and we shall be led by the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost into the depth, fullness, majesty and moral glory of holy scripture. We shall be delivered completely from the withering influences of all mere systems of theology, high, low or moderate-a most blessed deliverance! We shall be able to tell the advocates of all the schools of divinity under the sun that, whatever elements of truth they may have in their systems, we have in divine perfectness in the word of God; not twisted and tortured to make them fit into a system, but in their right place in the wide circle of divine revelation which has its eternal centre in the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Dew of Hermon

Psalm 133

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

Let us quote the entire psalm.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion; [The interpolated words, "and as the dew," spoil the beauty of the figure.] for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

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

How truly delightful! And yet they are but figures used to set forth the divine idea of unity among brethren. But how is the unity to be promoted? By living sufficiently near to our great priestly Head to catch the fragrant

ointment as it descends from Him—to be living so near the Man in the glory as that the refreshing dew of His grace may drop upon our souls, thus rendering us fragrant and fruitful to His praise.

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

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

and not self; and this is what we want, if we are to "dwell together in unity."

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

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

Then, what joy to be enabled, in any little measure, to refresh the heart of God! He delights to see His children walking in love. It is He who says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Surely this ought to stir our hearts to seek in every possible way to promote this lovely unity. It should lead us to sink self and all its belongings, to surrender everything that might tend in any measure to alienate

our hearts from Christ, or from one another. The Holy Ghost exhorts us to "endeavour" to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Let us remember this. It is the unity of the Spirit, not the unity of the body, we are to keep in the uniting bond of peace. This will cost us something. The word "endeavouring" shows that it cannot be done without sacrifice. But the One who so graciously exhorts us to the service will ever supply the needed grace. The ointment and the dew will flow down from Him in refreshing power, knitting our hearts together in holy love, and enabling us to deny ourselves, and surrender everything which might tend to hinder that true unity which we are imperatively called upon to maintain.

The Perfect Word of God

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (Psalm 19:7).

We are not in any wise dependent upon human testimony in forming our conclusions as to the divine origin of the Bible, inasmuch as these conclusions rest upon a foundation furnished by the Bible itself. God's Word, as well as His work, speaks for itself; it carries its own credentials with it; it speaks to the heart; it reaches down to the great moral roots of our being; it penetrates the very innermost chambers of the soul; it shows us what we are; it speaks to us as no other book can speak. As the woman of Sychar argued that Jesus must be the Christ because He told her all things that ever she did (John 4:39), so may we say, in reference to the Bible, it tells us all that ever we did, is not this the Word of God? No doubt it is only by the Spirit's teaching that we can discern and appreciate the evidence and credentials with which Holy Scripture presents itself before us; but still it does speak for itself, and needs not human testimony to make it of value to the soul. We should no more think of having our faith in the Bible established upon man's testimony in its favor, than we should think of having it shaken by his testimony against it.

It is of the very last possible importance, at all times, but more especially at a moment like the present, to have the heart and mind established in the grand truth of the divine authority of Holy Scripture; its plenary inspiration; its all sufficiency for all purposes, for all people, at all times. There are two hostile influences

abroad, namely, infidelity on the one hand, and superstition on the other. The former denies that God has spoken to us in His Word; the latter admits that He has spoken, but it denies that we can understand what He says, save by the interpretation of the church.

Now, while there are very many who recoil with horror from the impiety and audacity of infidelity, they do not see that superstition just as completely deprives them of the Scriptures. For wherein, let us ask, lies the difference between denying that God has spoken and denying that we can understand what He says? In either case, are we not deprived of the Word of God?

Unquestionably. If God cannot make me understand what He says – if He cannot give me the assurance that it is He Himself who speaks, I am in no wise better off than if He had not spoken at all. If God's Word is not sufficient without human interpretation, then it cannot be God's Word at all. That which is insufficient is not God's Word. We must admit either of two things, namely, that God has not spoken at all, or if He has spoken, His Word is perfect. There is no neutral ground in reference to this question. Has God given us a revelation?

Infidelity says, "No". Superstition says, "Yes, but you cannot understand it without human authority." Thus are we, in the one case as well as in the other, deprived of the priceless treasure of God's own precious Word; and thus, too, infidelity and superstition, though apparently so unlike, meet in the one point of depriving us of a divine revelation.

But, blessed be God, He has given us a revelation. He has spoken, and His Word is able to reach the heart and the understanding also. God is able to give the certainty that it is He who speaks, and we do not want any human

authority to intervene. We do not want a poor candle to enable us to see that the sun is shining. The beams of that glorious luminary are quite enough without any such miserable addition. All we want is to stand in the sunshine, and we shall be convinced that the sun shines. If we retire into a vault, or into a tunnel, we shall not feel its influence; and just so is it with regard to Scripture – if we place ourselves beneath the chilling and darkening influences of superstition or infidelity, we shall not experience the genial and enlightening power of that divine revelation.

The Sin Offering

We shall now proceed to compare the sin-offering with the burnt-offering, in doing which we shall find the two very different aspects of Christ. But although the aspects are different, it is one and the same Christ; and hence the sacrifice in each case was "without blemish." This is easily understood. It matters not in what aspect we contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ, He must ever be seen as the same pure, spotless, holy, perfect One. True, He did, in His abounding grace, stoop to be the Sin-bearer of His people; but it was a perfect, spotless Christ who did so. The intrinsic excellence, the unsullied purity, and the divine glory of our blessed Lord appear in the sin-offering as fully as in the burnt-offering. It matters not in what relationship He stands, what office He fills, what work He performs, what position He occupies, His personal glories shine out in all their divine effulgence.

The truth of one and the same Christ, whether in the burnt-offering or in the sin-offering, is seen not only in the fact that in each case the offering was "without blemish," but also in "the law of the sin-offering," where we read, This is the law of the sin-offering: In the place where the burnt-offering is killed shall the sin-offering be killed before the Lord: it is most holy (Lev. 6:25).

Both types point to one and the same great Antitype, though they present Him in such contrasted aspects of His work. In the burnt-offering, Christ is seen meeting the divine affections; in the sin-offering, He is seen meeting the depths of human need. One presents Him to us as the Accomplisher of the will of God; the other, as

the Bearer of the sin of man. In the former, we are taught the preciousness of the Sacrifice; in the latter, the hatefulness of sin.

We shall now consider the typical act of "laying on of hands." This act was common both to the burnt-offering and the sin-offering; but in the case of the former, it identified the offerer with an unblemished offering; in the case of the latter, it involved the transfer of the sin of the offerer to the head of the offering.

What, then, is the doctrine set forth in the laying on of hands? It is this: Christ was "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). He took our position with all its consequences, in order that we might get His position with all its consequences. He was treated as sin upon the cross, that we might be treated as righteousness in the presence of Infinite Holiness. He had to endure the hiding of God's countenance, that we might bask in the light of that countenance. He had to pass through three hours of darkness, that we might walk in everlasting light. He was forsaken of God for a time, that we might enjoy His presence forever. All that was due to us as ruined sinners was laid upon Him, in order that all that was due to Him as the Accomplisher of redemption might be ours. There was every thing against Him when He hung upon the cursed tree, in order that there might be nothing against us. He drank the cup of wrath, that we might drink the cup of salvation—the cup of infinite favor. He was treated according to our desserts, that we might be treated according to His.

Such is the wondrous truth illustrated by the ceremonial act of imposition of hands. When the worshiper had laid

his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, it ceased to be a question as to what he was or what He deserved, and became entirely a question of what the offering was in the judgment of Jehovah. If the offering was without blemish, so was the offerer; if the offering was accepted, so was the offerer. They were perfectly identified. The act of laying on of hands constituted them one in God's view. He looked at the offerer through the medium of the offering.

But in the sin offering, when the offerer had laid his hand upon the head of the offering, it became a question of what the offerer was, and what he deserved. The offering was treated according to the desserts of the offerer. They were perfectly identified. The act of laying on of hands constituted them one in the judgment of God. The sin of the offerer was dealt with in the sin-offering; the person of the offerer was accepted in the burnt-offering. This made a vast difference. Hence, though the act of laying on of hands was common to both types, and was expressive of identification, yet were the consequences as different as possible. The just treated as the unjust; the unjust accepted in the just.

The Sympathy and Grace of Jesus

(Read carefully Matthew 14:1-21 and Mark 6:30-44)

In these two parallel scriptures we are presented with two distinct conditions of heart which both find their answer in the sympathy and grace of Jesus. Let us look closely at them and may the Holy Spirit enable us to gather up and bear away their precious teaching!

It was a moment of deep sorrow to John's disciples when their master fell by the sword of Herod, when the one on whom they had been accustomed to lean and from whose lips they had been accustomed to drink instruction, was taken from them after such a fashion. This was indeed a moment of gloom and desolation to the followers of the Baptist.

But there was One to whom they could come in their sorrow and into whose ear they could pour their tale of grief - the One of whom their master had spoken, to whom he had pointed and of whom he had said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." To Him the bereaved disciples betook themselves. We read, "They came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus" (Matt. 14: 12). This was the very best thing they could have done. There was not another heart on earth in which they could have found such a response as in the tender, loving heart of Jesus. His sympathy was perfect. He knew all about their sorrow. He knew their loss and how they would be feeling it. They therefore acted wisely when "they went and told Jesus." His ear was ever open and His heart ever prepared to soothe and sympathize. He perfectly exemplified the precept afterwards embodied in the words of the Holy Spirit,

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12: 15).

Who can tell the value of genuine sympathy? Who can declare the value of having one who can really make your joys and sorrows his own? Thank God! we have such an one in the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Although we cannot see Him with the bodily eye, yet can faith use Him in all the preciousness and power of His perfect sympathy. We can, if only our faith is simple and childlike, come from the tomb where we have just deposited the remains of some fondly-cherished person, to the feet of Jesus and there pour out the anguish of a bereaved and desolate heart. We shall there meet no rude repulse, no heartless reproof for our folly and weakness in feeling so deeply. Nor any clumsy effort to say something suitable, an awkward effort to put on some expression of condolence. Ah! no; Jesus knows how to sympathize with a heart that is crushed and bowed down beneath the heavy weight of sorrow. His is a perfect human heart. What a thought! What a privilege to have access at all times, in all places and under all circumstances, to a perfect human heart! We may look in vain for this down here. In many cases, there is a real desire to sympathize, but a total lack of capacity. I may find myself, in moments of sorrow, in company with one who knows nothing about my sorrow or the source thereof. How could he sympathize? And even though I should tell him, his heart might be so occupied with other things as to have no room and no time for me.

Not so with the perfect Man, Christ Jesus. He has both room and time for each and all. No matter when, how or with what you come, the heart of Jesus is always open. He will never repulse, never fail, never disappoint. If we

are in sorrow, what should we do? We should just do as the disciples of the Baptist did, "go and tell Jesus." This is the right thing to do. Let us go straight from the tomb to the feet of Jesus. He will dry up our tears, soothe our sorrows, heal our wounds and fill up our blanks. In this way we shall be able to enter into the truth of Rutherford's words when he says, "I try to lay up all my good things in Christ and then a little of the creature goes a great way with me." This is an experience which we may well covet. May the blessed Spirit lead us more into it!

We may now contemplate another condition of heart as furnished by the twelve apostles on their return from a successful mission. "And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught" (Mark 6: 30). Here we have not a case of sorrow and bereavement, but one of rejoicing and encouragement. The twelve made their way to Jesus to tell Him of their success, just as the disciples of the Baptist made their way to Him in the moment of their loss. Jesus was equal to both. He could meet the heart that was crushed with sorrow and He could meet the heart that was flushed with success. He knew how to control, to moderate and to direct both the one and the other. Blessings forever be upon His honored name!

"And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark 6: 31). Here we are conducted to a point at which the moral glories of Christ shine out with uncommon luster and correct the selfishness of our poor narrow hearts. Here we are taught with unmistakable

clearness that to make Jesus the depository of our thoughts and feelings will never produce in us a spirit of haughty self-sufficiency and independence, or a feeling of contempt for others. Quite the reverse. The more we have to do with Jesus, the more will our hearts be opened to meet the varied forms of human need which may present themselves to our view from day to day. It is when we come to Jesus and empty our whole hearts to Him, tell Him of our sorrows and our joys, and cast our whole burden at His feet, that we really learn how to feel for others.

There is great beauty and power in the words, "come ye yourselves apart." He does not say, "Go ye." This would never do. There is no use in going apart into a desert place if Jesus is not there to go to. To go into solitude without Jesus is but to make our cold, narrow hearts, colder and narrower still. I may retire from the scene around me in chagrin and disappointment, only to wrap myself up in an impenetrable selfishness. I may fancy that my fellows have not made enough of me and I may retire to make much of myself. I may make myself the center of my whole being and thus become a coldhearted, contracted, miserable creature. But when Jesus says "come," the case is totally different. Our finest moral lessons are learned alone with Jesus. We cannot breathe the atmosphere of His presence without having our hearts expanded. If the apostles had gone into the desert without Jesus, they would have eaten the loaves and fishes themselves, but having gone with Jesus they learned differently. He knew how to meet the need of a hungry multitude, as well as that of a company of sorrowing or rejoicing disciples. The sympathy and grace of Jesus are perfect. He can meet all. If one is

sorrowful, he can go to Jesus; if he is happy, he can go to Jesus; if he is hungry, he can go to Jesus. We can bring everything to Jesus, for in Him all fullness dwells, and, blessed be His name, He never sends anyone away empty.

Not so, regretfully, with His poor disciples. How forbidding is their selfishness when viewed in the light of His magnificent grace! "And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." He had gone to a desert place to give His disciples rest, but no sooner does human need present itself than the deep flowing tide of compassion rolls forth from His tender heart.

"And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far past: send them away." What words from men who had just returned from preaching the gospel! "Send them away." Ah! it is one thing to preach grace and another thing to act it. It is well to preach, but it is also well to act. Indeed, the preaching will be worth little if not combined with acting. It is well to instruct the ignorant, but it is also well to feed the hungry. The latter may involve more self-denial than the former. It may cost us nothing to preach, but it may cost us something to feed, and we do not like to have our private store intruded upon. The heart is ready to put forth its ten thousand objections, "What shall I do for myself? What will become of my family? We must act judiciously. We cannot do impossibilities." These and similar arguments the selfish heart can urge when a needy object presents itself.

"Send them away." What made the disciples say this? What was the real source of this selfish request? Simply unbelief. Had they only remembered that they had in their midst the One who of old had fed "600,000 footmen" for forty years in the wilderness, they would have known that He would not send a hungry multitude away. Surely the same hand that had nourished such a host for so long a time could easily furnish a single meal for five thousand. Thus faith would reason, but unbelief darkens the understanding and contracts the heart. There is nothing so absurd as unbelief and nothing which so shuts up the bowels of compassion. Faith and love always go together, and in proportion to the growth of the one is the growth of the other. Faith opens the floodgates of the heart and lets the tide of love flow forth. Thus the apostle could say to the Thessalonians, "Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." This is the divine rule. A heart full of faith can afford to be charitable; an unbelieving heart can afford nothing.

Faith places the heart in immediate contact with God's exhaustless treasury and fills it with the most benevolent affections. Unbelief throws the heart in upon itself and fills it with all manner of selfish fears. Faith conducts us into the soul-expanding atmosphere of heaven. Unbelief leaves us enwrapped in the withering atmosphere of this heartless world. Faith enables us to hearken to Christ's gracious words, "Give ye them to eat." Unbelief makes us utter our own heartless words, "Send the multitude away." In a word, there is nothing which enlarges the heart like simple faith, and nothing so contracting as unbelief. Oh! that our faith may grow exceedingly so that our love may abound more and

more! May we reap much permanent profit from the contemplation of the sympathy and grace of Jesus!

What a striking contrast between "Send the multitude away" and "Give ye them to eat." Thus it is ever. God's ways are not as our ways. It is by looking at His ways that we learn to judge our ways - by looking at Him that we learn to judge ourselves. In this lovely scene Jesus corrects the selfishness of the disciples, first by making them the channels through which His grace may flow to the multitude, and secondly, by making them gather up "twelve baskets full of the fragments" for themselves.

Nor is this all. Not merely is selfishness rebuked, but the heart is most blessedly instructed. Nature might say, "What need is there of the five loaves and two fishes at all? Surely, the One who can feed such a multitude with the loaves and fishes, can as easily feed them without such an instrumentality." Nature might argue thus, but Jesus teaches us that we are not to despise God's creatures. We are to use what we have with God's blessing. This is a fine moral lesson for the heart. "What hast thou in the house?" is the question. It is just that and nothing else that God will use. It is easy to be liberal with what we have not, but the thing is to bring out what we have and with God's blessing, apply it to the present need.

So also in the gathering up of the fragments. The foolish here might say, "What need of gathering up those scattered crumbs? Surely the One who has wrought such a miracle can have no need of fragments." Yes, but we are not to waste God's creatures. If in the using of the loaves and fishes we are taught not to despise any creature of God, in the gathering up of the fragments we

are taught not to waste it. Let human need be liberally met, but let not a single crumb be wasted. How divinely perfect! How unlike us! Sometimes we are stingy, at other times extravagant. Jesus was never either the one or the other. "Give ye them to eat." But, "Let nothing be lost." Perfect grace! Perfect wisdom! May we adore it and learn from it! May we rejoice in the assurance that the blessed One who manifested all this wisdom and grace is our life. Christ is our life, and it is the manifestation of this life that constitutes practical Christianity. It is not living by rules and regulations, but simply having Christ dwelling in the heart by faith - Christ the source of perfect sympathy and perfect grace.

C H Mackintosh

What Should I Read? - A Question for the Times

The question which forms the heading of this paper is one of real weight and practical importance. There is much more involved in it than we might want to admit. It is a common saying, "Show me your company and I will tell you what you are." It may, with equal truth, be said, "Show me your library and I will tell where you are." Our reading may be taken as the great indicator of our moral, intellectual and spiritual condition. Our books are our mental and spiritual food, the material on which the inner man feeds. Hence the seriousness of the entire question of Christian reading. Indeed we may freely own to our readers that this subject has engrossed us much of late. Therefore, we feel constrained in faithfulness to the Lord and to the souls of our readers, to offer a few words of admonition in reference to what we regard as a matter of real importance to all Christians.

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

All this we consider most deplorable. We look upon it as a most alarming indication of a low spiritual condition. Indeed it is difficult to conceive how anyone possessing a single spark of divine life can find pleasure in such defiling rubbish as one sees now-a-days in the hands of many who occupy the high ground of Christian

profession. The inspired apostle exhorts all Christians, "As newborn babes, to desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." How can we grow if we neglect the Word of God and yet devour newspapers and light, worthless books? How is it possible for any Christian to be in a healthy condition of soul who can barely find a few hasty moments to run his eye over a verse or two of Scripture, but can give hours to light and useless reading? We may depend upon it: our reading proves beyond question what we are and where we are. If our reading is light and frivolous, our state is the same. If our Christianity is of a solid and earnest type, it will be distinctly evidenced by our habitual and voluntary reading—the reading to which we turn for our recreation and refreshment.

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

It is a poor, low thing to hear a Christian say, "How can we be always reading the Bible?" or "What harm is there

in reading a story book?" All such questions evidence the fact that the soul has got far away from Christ. This is what makes it so very serious. Spiritual decline must have set in and made alarming progress before a Christian could think of asking such questions. Hence there is little use in arguing about the right or the wrong of things. There is no ability to argue aright, no capacity to weigh evidence. The whole spiritual and moral condition is wrong. "There is death in the pot." What is needed is thorough restoration of soul. You must "bring meal," or in other words, apply a divine remedy to meet the diseased state of the constitution.

We feel pressed in spirit to call the serious attention of the Christian reader to this great practical question. We deem it to be one of deepest seriousness. The extremely low spiritual tone of Christianity among us is owing, in many cases, to the reading of light and worthless literature. The moral effect of all such is most harmful. How can a soul prosper, how can there be growth in the divine life where there is no real love for the Bible or for books which unfold the precious contents of the Bible to our souls? Is it possible that a Christian can be in a healthy condition of soul who really prefers some light work to a volume designed for true spiritual edification? We cannot believe it. We are persuaded that all true-hearted, earnest Christians—all who truly desire to get on in divine things, all who really love Christ and desire heaven and heavenly things—all such will be found diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and thankfully availing themselves of all good, helpful books which come within their reach. They will have neither time nor taste for newspapers or light literature. With them it will not be a question as to the right or the wrong of such

reading: they simply have no desire for it, do not want it, would not have it. They have something far better. "With ashes who would grudge to part, when called on angels' bread to feast?"

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

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

Well, as to this, each one must judge for himself. No one can be a rule for another. But we certainly cannot take this high ground. We bless the Lord each day more and more for all the gracious helps given us by means of the writings of His beloved servants. We look upon them as a most precious stream of refreshment and spiritual blessing flowing down from our glorified Head in the heavens, for which we can never praise Him enough. We should just as soon think of refusing to hear a brother speak in the assembly as of refusing to read his writings, for what is either but a branch of ministry given of God for our profit and edification? We do need to exercise care lest we make too much of ministry, whether oral or written, but the possible abuse of a thing is no valid argument against the use of it. There is danger on every side, and most surely it is a very dangerous thing to despise ministry. None of us are self-sufficient. It is the divine purpose that we should be helpful one to another. We cannot do without "that which every joint supplieth."

How many will have to praise God throughout eternity for blessing received through books and tracts! How many there are who never get an atom of spiritual ministry except what the Lord sends them through the press. It will be said, "They have the Bible." True, but all have not the same ability to fathom the living depths or seize the moral glories of the Bible. No doubt, if we cannot have either oral or written ministry, the Spirit of God can feed us directly in the green pastures of Holy Scripture. But who will deny that the writings of God's servants are used by the Holy Spirit as a most powerful agency in building up the Lord's people in their most holy faith?

Cannot we praise Him for it? Truly so. We should praise Him with full and glowing hearts. And we should earnestly pray Him to grant still further blessing on the writings of His servants—to deepen their tone, increase their power and widen their sphere. Human writings, if not clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, are just so much waste paper. In like manner the voice of the public preacher or teacher, if not the living vehicle of the Holy Spirit, is but a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. But the Holy Spirit does make use of both agencies for the blessing of souls and the spread of the truth, and we deem it a serious mistake for anyone to despise an agency which God is pleased to adopt. Indeed we have rarely met anyone who refused the help of human writings who did not prove exceedingly narrow, crude and one-sided. This is only what we might expect, inasmuch as it is the divine method to make us mutually helpful one to another. Hence, if anyone claims to be independent or self-sufficient, he must sooner or later find out his mistake.

Yes, The Israelites Did Bake with Leaven

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the first-fruits unto the Lord. (Lev. 23:15-17)

This is the feast of Pentecost - the type of God's people, gathered by the Holy Spirit, and presented before Him, in connection with all the preciousness of Christ. In the passover we have the death of Christ, in the sheaf of first-fruits we have the resurrection of Christ, and in the feast of Pentecost we have the descent of the Holy Spirit to form the Church. The death and resurrection of Christ had to be accomplished ere the Church could be formed. The sheaf was offered and then the loaves were baked.

And observe, "they shall be baked with leaven." Why was this? Because they were intended to foreshadow those who, though filled with the Holy Spirit, and adorned with His gifts and graces, had, nevertheless, evil dwelling in them. The assembly, on the day of Pentecost, stood in the full value of the blood of Christ, was crowned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit; but there was leaven there also. No power of the Spirit could do away with the fact that there was evil dwelling in the people of God. It might be suppressed and kept out of view, but it was there. The fact is foreshadowed in the

type by the leaven in the two loaves, and it is set forth in the actual history of the Church; for albeit God the Holy Spirit was present in the assembly, the flesh was there likewise to lie unto Him. Flesh is flesh, nor can it ever be made aught else than flesh. The Holy Spirit did not come down on the day of Pentecost to improve nature or do away with the fact of its incurable evil, but to baptize believers into one body, and connect them with their living Head in heaven.

Leaven was permitted in connection with the peace offering (Lev. 7:13). It was the divine recognition of the evil in the worshiper. Thus is it also in the ordinance of the "two wave-loaves"; they were to be "baked with leaven," because of the evil in the antitype.

But, blessed be God, the evil which was divinely recognized was divinely provided for. It is a comfort to be assured that God knows the worst of us; and, moreover, that He has made provision according to His knowledge, and not merely according to ours.

And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams; they shall be for a burnt-offering unto the Lord, with their meat-offering and their drink-offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savor unto the Lord (Lev. 23:18).

Here, then, we have, in immediate connection with the leavened loaves, the presentation of an unblemished sacrifice, typifying the great and all-important truth that it is Christ's perfectness, and not our sinfulness, that is ever before the view of God. Observe particularly the words, "ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish." Precious truth! Not I, but Christ!

It may be objected that the fact of Christ being a spotless Lamb is not sufficient to roll the burden of guilt from a sin-stained conscience. This objection might be urged, but our type fully meets and entirely removes it. It is quite true that a burnt-offering would not have been sufficient where "leaven" was in question; and hence we read: Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace-offerings (Lev. 23:19). The "sin-offering" was the answer to the "leaven" in the loaves; "peace" was established, so that communion could be enjoyed, and all went up in immediate connection with the "sweet savor" of the "burnt-offering" unto the Lord.

Thus, on the day of Pentecost, the Church was presented in all the value and excellency of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Though having in itself the leaven of the old nature, that leaven was not reckoned, because the divine Sin-offering had perfectly answered for it. The power of the Holy Spirit did not remove the leaven, but the blood of the Lamb had atoned for it. This is a most interesting and important distinction. The work of the Spirit in the believer does not remove indwelling evil. It enables him to detect, judge, and subdue the evil; but no amount of spiritual power can do away with the fact that the evil is there; however, blessed be God, the conscience is at perfect ease, inasmuch as the blood of our Sin-offering has eternally settled the whole question; and therefore, instead of our evil being under the eye of God, it has been put out of sight forever, and we are accepted in all the acceptableness of Christ, Who offered Himself to God as a sweet-smelling sacrifice, that He might perfectly glorify Him in all things, and be the food of His people forever.