Miscellaneous Writings, Volume 1

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The All-sufficiency of Christ

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C. H. Mackintosh.

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

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

The unsettled state of so many of God's dear people is the result of not having received into their hearts a full Christ, as God's own very provision for them. No doubt this sad and painful result may be brought about by various contributing causes, such as a legal mind, a morbid conscience, a self-occupied heart, bad teaching, a secret hankering after this present world, some little

reserve in the heart, as to the claims of God, of Christ, and of eternity. But, whatever may be the producing cause, we believe it will be found, in almost every case, that the lack of settled peace, so common amongst the Lord's people, is the result of not seeing, not believing, what God has made His Christ to be to them, and for them, and that for ever:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The living faith of this must tranquilize the conscience. If God has satisfied Himself about my sins, I may well be satisfied also. I know I am a sinner — it may be the chief of sinners. I know my sins are more in number than the

hairs of my head; that they are black as midnight — black as hell itself. I know that any one of these sins, the very least, deserves the eternal flames of hell. I know — because God's word tells me — that a single speck of sin can never enter His holy presence; and hence, so far as I am concerned, there was no possible issue, save eternal separation from God. All this I know, upon the clear and unquestionable authority of that word which is settled for ever in heaven.

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

All these had to be provided for in such wise as to glorify Himself in view of angels, men, and devils. He might have sent me to hell — righteously, justly, sent me to hell — because of my sins. I deserved nothing else. My whole

moral being, from its profoundest depths, owns this — must own it. I have not a word to say in excuse for a single sinful thought, to say nothing of a sin-stained life from first to last — yes, a life of deliberate, rebellious, high-handed sin.

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

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

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

us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4: 10.

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

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

This is a grand, cardinal point for the anxious reader to seize. It cannot fail to emancipate the heart, and tranquilize the conscience. We cannot possibly behold by faith the Man who was nailed to the tree, now crowned on the throne, and not have peace with God. The Lord Jesus Christ, having taken upon Himself our sins, and the judgment due to them, He could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained unatoned for. To see the sin-bearer crowned with glory is to see our sins gone for ever from the divine presence. Where are our sins? They are all obliterated. How do we know this? The One who took them all upon Himself has passed through the heavens to the very highest pinnacle of glory. Eternal justice has wreathed His blessed brow with a diadem of glory, as the Accomplisher of our redemption — the Bearer of our sins; thus proving, beyond all question, or possibility of a question, that our sins are all put away out of God's sight for ever. A crowned Christ, and a clear conscience, are, in the blessed economy of grace, inseparably linked together. Wondrous fact! Well may we chant with all our ransomed powers the praises of redeeming love.

But let us see how this most consolatory truth is set forth in holy scripture. In Romans 3 we read, "But now the righteousness of God, without law [coris nomou], is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission

[or passing over] of sins that are past [in time gone by], through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

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

But we have farther testimony on this grand fundamental truth. In Hebrews 1 we read such soul-stirring words as these: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners [or in divers measures and modes] spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by [His] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins sat down on the right

hand of the Majesty on high." Our Lord Christ, blessed be His name, would not take His seat on the throne of God, until he had, by the offering of Himself on the cross, purged our sins. Hence a risen Christ at God's right hand is the glorious and unanswerable proof that our sins are all gone, for He could not be where He now is if a single one of those sins remained. God raised from the dead the selfsame Man on whom He Himself had laid the full weight of our sins. Thus all is settled — divinely, eternally settled. It is as impossible that a single sin can be found on the very weakest believer in Jesus, as on Jesus Himself. This is a wonderful thing to be able to say, but it is the solid truth of God, established in manifold places in holy scripture; and the soul that believes it must possess a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

PART 2.

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

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

week to week, month to month, and year to year, that the burden of his sins is intolerable?

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

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

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

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

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

But glory be to God, His own testimony assures us that Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; not merely bring us to heaven when we die, but bring us to God now How does He bring us to God? Tied and bound with the chain of our sins? with an intolerable burden of guilt on our souls? Nay, verily; He brings us to God without spot or stain or charge. He brings us to God in all His own

acceptableness. Is there any guilt on Him? No; there was, blessed be His name, when He stood in our stead, but it is gone — gone for ever — cast as lead into the unfathomable waters of divine forgetfulness. He was charged with our sins, on the cross. God laid on Him all our iniquities, and dealt with Him about them. The whole question of our sins, according to God's estimate thereof, was fully gone into and definitively, because divinely settled between God and Christ, amid the awful shadows of Calvary. Yes, it was all done, once and for ever there. How do we know it? By the authority of the only true God. His word assures us that we have redemption through the blood of Christ, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace. He declares to us, in accents of sweetest, richest, deepest mercy, that our sins and our iniquities He will remember no more. Is not this enough? Shall we still continue to cry out that we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins? Shall we thus cast a slur upon the perfect work of Christ? Shall we thus tarnish the lustre of divine grace and give the lie to the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the scripture of truth? Far be the thought! It must not be so. Let us rather hail with thanksgiving the blessed boon so freely conferred upon us by love divine, through the precious blood of Christ. It is the joy of the heart of God to forgive us our sins, Yes, God delights in pardoning iniquity and transgression. It gratifies and glorifies Him to pour into the broken and contrite heart the precious balm of His, own pardoning love and mercy. He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up, and bruised Him on the cursed tree, in order that He might be able, in perfect righteousness, to let the rich streams of grace flow forth from His large, loving heart, to the poor, guilty, self-destroyed, conscience-smitten sinner.

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

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

But where is the authority? "It is written." Blessed, indisputable authority! Nothing can ever shake it. I know, on the solid authority of the word of God, that my sins are all forgiven, all blotted out, all gone for ever, all cast behind God's back, so that they can never, by any possibility, rise against me.

Finally, as to the sphere. It is "all nations." This includes me, beyond all question. There is no sort of exception, condition, or qualification. The blessed tidings were to be wafted, on the wings of love, to all nations — to all the world — to every creature under heaven. How could I exclude myself from this world-wide commission? Do I question, for a moment, that the beams of God's sun are intended for me? Surely not. And why should I question

the precious fact that remission of sins is for me? Not for a single instant. It is for me as surely as though I were the only sinner beneath the canopy of God's heaven. The universality of its aspect precludes all question as to its being designed for me.

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

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

Anxious reader, do you — can you still hesitate as to the forgiveness of your sins? Christ has suffered for sins. God preaches remission of sins. He pledges His own word on the point. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." What more would you have? How can you any longer doubt or delay? What are you waiting for? You have Christ's finished work and God's faithful word. Surely these ought to satisfy your heart and tranquilize your mind. Do then let us entreat you to accept the full and everlasting remission of all your sins. Receive into your heart the sweet tidings of divine love and mercy, and go on your way rejoicing. Hear the voice

of a risen Saviour, speaking from the throne of the majesty in the heavens, and assuring you that your sins are all forgiven. Let those soothing accents from the very mouth of God Himself, fall In their enfranchising power upon your troubled spirit, "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." If God thus speaks to me; if He so assures me that He will no more remember my sins, should I not be fully and for ever satisfied? Why should I go on doubting and reasoning when God has spoken? What can give certainty but the word of God that liveth and abideth for ever? It is the only ground of certainty; and no power of earth or hell, human or diabolical, can ever shake it. The finished work of Christ and the faithful word of God are the basis and the authority of full forgiveness of sins.

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

This is a grand point for every true lover of holiness. According to the glorious economy of grace, the same work which secures the complete remission of sins has broken for ever the power of sin. It is not only that the sins of the life are blotted out, but the sin of the nature is condemned. The believer is privileged to regard himself as dead to sin. He can sing, with a glad heart, "For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died, And I have died in Thee;

Thou'rt risen, my bands are all untied,

And now Thou livest in me.

The Father's face of radiant grace

Shines now in light on me."

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

This is the glorious doctrine of Romans 6-8. The thoughtful student of this most magnificent epistle will observe that, from Rom. 3: 21 to Rom. 5: 11, we have the work of Christ applied to the question of sins. And, from chapter 5: 12 to the end of chapter 8. we have another aspect of that work, namely, its application to the question of sin — "our old man" — "the body of sin" — "sin in the flesh." There is no such thing in scripture as the forgiveness of sin. God has condemned sin, not forgiven it — an immensely important distinction. God has set forth His eternal abhorrence of sin, in the cross of Christ. He has expressed and executed His judgment upon it; and now the believer can see himself as linked and identified with the One who died on the cross, and is raised from the dead. He has passed out of the sphere of sin's dominion into that new and blessed sphere where grace reigns through righteousness. "God be thanked," says the apostle, "that ye were [once, but now no longer are to be] the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from

the heart that type of doctrine to which ye were delivered. (Margin.) Being then made free from sin [not merely sins forgiven], ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Romans 6: 17-22.

Here lies the precious secret of holy living. We are dead to sin; alive to God. The reign of sin is over. What has sin to do with a dead man? Nothing. Well, then, the believer has died with Christ; he was buried with Christ; he is risen with Christ, to walk in newness of life. He lives under the precious reign of grace, and he has his fruit unto holiness. The man who draws a plea from the abundance of divine grace to live in sin, denies the very foundation of Christianity. "How shall we that have died to sin, live any longer therein?" Impossible. It would be a denial of the whole Christian standing. To imagine the Christian as one who is to go on, from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year, sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, is to degrade Christianity and falsify the whole Christian position. To say that a Christian must go on sinning because he has the flesh in him is to ignore the death of Christ in one of its grand aspects, and to give the lie to the whole of the apostle's teaching in Romans 6-8. Thank God, there is no

necessity whatever why the believer should commit sin. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." We should not justify ourselves in a single sinful thought. It is our sweet privilege to walk in the light, as God is in the light; and, most surely, when we are walking in the light, we are not committing sin. Alas! we get out of the light and commit sin; but the normal, the true, the divine idea of a Christian is, walking in the light, and not committing sin. A sinful thought is foreign to the true genius of Christianity. We have sin in us, and shall have it so long as we are in the body: but if we walk in the Spirit, the sin in our nature will not show itself in the life. To say that we need not sin, is to state a Christian privilege; to say that we cannot sin is a deceit and a delusion.

PART 3.

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

Such is the settled standing of the very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ. Nor could it possibly be otherwise. It mast be either this or eternal perdition. There is not the breadth of a hair between this standing of absolute perfectness before God and a condition of guilt and ruin. We are either in our sins, or in a risen Christ. There is no middle ground. We are either

covered with guilt, or complete in Christ. Bat the believer is declared, by the authoritative voice of the Holy Ghost in scripture, to be "complete in Christ" — "Perfect, as pertaining to his conscience" — "Perfected in perpetuity" — "Clean every whit" — "accepted in the beloved" — "Made [or become] the righteousness of God in Christ."

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

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

worshipper perfect peace, perfect liberty, perfect nearness to Himself, and that for ever.

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

All this is most deplorable. It grieves the Holy Spirit, wounds the heart of Christ, dishonours the grace of God, and contradicts the plainest statements of holy scripture. We are most thoroughly persuaded that the condition of thousands of precious souls at this moment is enough to make the heart bleed; and all this, to a large extent, is traceable to Christendom's teachings, its creeds and its formularies. Where will you find, amid the ordinary ranks of Christian profession, a person in the enjoyment of a perfectly purged conscience, of peace with God, of the Spirit of adoption? Is it not true that people are publicly and systematically taught that it is the height of presumption for any one to say that his sins are all forgiven — that he has eternal life — that he is justified from all things — that he is accepted in the Beloved — that he is sealed with the Holy Ghost — that

he cannot be lost, because he is actually united to Christ by the indwelling Spirit? Are not all these Christian privileges practically denied and ignored in Christendom? Are not people taught that it is dangerous to be too confident — that it is morally safer to live in doubt and fear — that the very utmost we can look for is the hope of getting to heaven when we die? Where are souls taught the glorious truths connected with the new creation? Where are they rooted and grounded in the knowledge of their standing in a risen and glorified Head in the heavens? Where are they led into the enjoyment of those things which are freely given of God to His beloved people?

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

Some, perhaps, may think we have drawn too gloomy a picture. We can only say — and we say it with all sincerity — would to God it were so! We fear the picture

is far too true; yea, the reality is far more appalling than the picture. We are deeply and painfully impressed with the fact, that the condition, not merely of the professing church, but of thousands of the true sheep of the flock of Christ, is such, that if we only realised it as God sees it, it would break our hearts.

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

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

Now, if all this be indeed true of every child of God — and scripture says it is — what more do we want? Nothing, as to title; nothing, as to standing; nothing, as to hope. As to all these, we have absolute, divine perfection. But then our state is not perfect, our walk is not perfect. We are still in the body, compassed about with manifold infirmities, exposed to manifold temptations, liable to stumble, to fall, and to wander. We are unable of ourselves to think a right thought, or to

keep ourselves for one moment in the blessed position into which grace has introduced us. True it is, we have everlasting life, and we are linked to the living Head in heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down to earth, so that we are eternally secure. Nothing can ever touch our life, inasmuch as it is "hid with Christ in God.'

But while nothing can touch our life, or interfere with our standing, yet, seeing that our state is imperfect, and our walk imperfect, our communion is liable to be interrupted, and hence it is that we need THE PRESENT WORK OF CHRIST FOR US.

Jesus lives at the right hand of God for us. His active intervention on our behalf never ceases for a single moment. He has passed through the heavens, in virtue of accomplished atonement, and there He ever carries on His perfect advocacy for us before our God. He is there as our subsisting righteousness, to maintain us ever in the divine integrity of the position and relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us. Thus we read, in Romans 5: 10, "If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." So also, in Hebrews 4, we read, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted, in like manner, without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Again, in Hebrews 7: "But this man, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost

that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And in Hebrews 9: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

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

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

For whom, let us ask, is Christ now living and acting at the right hand of God? Is it for the world? Clearly not, for He says, in John 18, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." And who are these? Are they the Jewish remnant? Nay; that remnant is yet to appear on the scene. Who are they then? Believers, children of God, Christians, who are

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

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

It is of the very utmost importance for the Christian reader to be thoroughly clear as to this great cardinal truth of the advocacy or priesthood of Christ. We sometimes erroneously think that when we fail in our work something has to be done on our part to set matters straight between our souls and God. We forget that, ere we are even conscious of the failure — before our conscience becomes really cognisant of the fact — our blessed Advocate has been to the Father about it; and it is to His intercession we are indebted for the grace of repentance, confession, and restoration. "If any

man sin, we have" — what? The blood to return to? No; mark carefully what the Holy Ghost declares. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Why does He say, "the righteous?" Why not the gracious, the merciful, the sympathising? Is He not all this? Most surely; but not any one of these attributes would be in place here, inasmuch as the blessed apostle is putting before us the consolatory truth, that in all our errors, our sins, and our failures, we have "a righteous" representative ever before the righteous God, the holy Father, so that our affairs can never fall through. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us;" and because He ever liveth, "He is able to save to the uttermost" — right through to the very end — "them that come unto God by him."

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

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

PART 4.

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

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

To deprive the unconverted man of such things would almost drive him to despair or lunacy. But the Christian

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

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

And what is a Christian? He is a heavenly man; he is a partaker of the divine nature. He is dead to the world — dead to sin — alive to God. He has not a single link with

the world. He belongs to heaven. He is no more of the world than Christ his Lord. Could Christ take part in the amusements, gaieties, and follies of the world? The very idea were blasphemy. Well, then, what of the Christian? Is he to be found where his Lord could not be? Can he consistently take part in things which he knows in his heart are contrary to Christ? Can he go into places, and scenes, and circumstances in which he must admit his Saviour and Lord can take no part? Can he go and have fellowship with a world which hates the One to whom he professes to owe everything?

It may, perhaps, seem to some of our readers that we are taking too high ground. We would ask such, what ground are we to take? Surely Christian ground, if we are Christians. Well, then, if we are to take Christian ground, how are we to know what that ground really is? Assuredly from the New Testament. And what does it teach? Does it afford any warrant for the Christian to mix himself, in any shape or form, with the amusements and vain pursuits of this present evil world? Let us hearken to the weighty words of our blessed Lord, in John 13. Let us hear from His lips the truth as to our portion, our position, and our path in this world. He says, addressing the Father, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Verses 14-18.

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

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

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

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

Such is the Christian's mission. He is not to shut himself within the walls of a monastery or convent. Christianity does not consist in joining a brotherhood or a sisterhood. Nothing of the kind. We are called to move up and down in the varied relations of life, and to act in our divinely-appointed spheres to the glory of God. It is not a question of what we are doing, but of how we do it. All depends upon the object which governs our hearts. If Christ be the commanding and absorbing object of the heart, all will be right. If He be not, nothing is right. Two persons may sit down at the same table to eat; the one eats to gratify his appetite, the other eats to the glory of God — eats simply to keep his body in proper working order as God's vessel, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the instrument for Christ's service.

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

This makes it all so simple. Christ is the standard and touchstone for everything. It is no longer a question of mere right and wrong according to human rules. It is simply a question of what is worthy of Christ. Would He do this or that? Would He go here or there? "He left us

an example that we should follow His steps;" and, most assuredly, we should not go where we cannot trace His blessed footsteps. If we go hither and thither to please ourselves, we are not treading in His steps, and we cannot expect to enjoy His blessed presence.

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

PART 5.

If the reader has been enabled, through grace, to make his own of what has passed before our minds in this series of papers, he will have a perfect remedy for all uneasiness of conscience and all restlessness of heart. The work of Christ, if only it be laid hold of by an artless faith, must, of blessed necessity, meet the former; and the Person of Christ, if only He be contemplated with a

single eye, must perfectly meet the latter. If, therefore, we are not in the enjoyment of peace of conscience, it can only be because we are not resting on the finished work of Christ; and if the heart is not at ease, it proves that we are not satisfied with Christ Himself.

And yet, alas! how few, even of the Lord's beloved people, know either the one or the other. How rare is it to find a person in the enjoyment of true peace of conscience and rest of heart! In general, Christians are not a whit in advance of the condition of Old Testament saints. they do not know the blessedness of an accomplished redemption. They are not in the enjoyment of a purged conscience. They cannot draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. They do not apprehend the grand truth of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father." They are, as to their experience, under law. They have never really entered into the deep blessedness of being under the reign of grace. They have life. It is impossible to doubt this. They love divine things. Their tastes, their habits, their aspirations, yea, their very exercises, their conflicts, their anxieties, doubts, and fears, all go to prove the existence of divine life. They are, in a way, separated from the world, but their separation is rather negative than positive. It is more because they see the utter vanity of the world, and its inability to satisfy their hearts, than because they have found an object in Christ. They have lost their taste for the things of the world, but they have not found their place and their portion in the Son of God where He now is at the right hand of God. The things of the world cannot satisfy them, and they are not in the enjoyment

of their proper heavenly standing, object, and hope; hence they are in an anomalous condition altogether; they have no certainty, no rest, no fixedness of purpose; they are not happy; they do not know their true bearings; they are neither one thing nor the other.

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

This is Christianity. Nothing else deserves the name. It stands out in bold and striking contrast with the spurious religiousness of the day, which is neither pure Judaism on the one hand, nor pure Christianity on the other, but a wretched mixture, composed of some of the elements of each, which unconverted people can adopt and go on with, because it sanctions the lusts of the flesh, and allows them to enjoy the pleasures and vanities of the world to their heart's content. The arch-enemy of Christ and of souls has succeeded in producing an awful system of religion, half-Jewish, half-Christian, combining, in the most artful manner, the world and the flesh, with a certain amount of scripture so used as to destroy its moral force, and hinder its just application.

In the meshes of this system souls are hopelessly entangled. Unconverted people are deceived into the notion that they are very good Christians indeed, and going on all right to heaven. And, on the other hand, the Lord's dear people are robbed of their proper place and privileges, and dragged down by the dark and depressing influence of the religious atmosphere which surrounds and almost suffocates them.

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

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

Matthew 13 in opposition to the teaching of the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians 5.

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

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

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

regard the traditions of men, whether fathers, brothers, or doctors, if presented as an authority, as the small dust of the balance; and as to human reason, it can only be compared to a bat in the sunshine, dazzled by the brightness, and blindly dashing itself against objects which it cannot see. It is the deepest joy of the Christian's heart to retire from the conflicting traditions and doctrines of men into the calm light of holy scripture; and when encountered by the impudent reasonings of the infidel, the rationalist, and the sceptic, to bow down his whole moral being to the authority and power of holy scripture. He thankfully recognises in the word of God the only perfect standard for doctrine, for morals, for everything. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect [artios], throughly furnished unto all Good works."

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

to betake ourselves to human tradition or human reason to supply some deficiency in divine revelation.

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

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

C.H.M.

Discipleship in an evil day

Discipleship in an evil day.

"Follow thou me." John 21: 22.

C. H. Mackintosh.

Preface.

The following Tract is a reprint of a paper which appeared in a recent number of "The Present Testimony," containing the substance of a Lecture on the first three chapters of the Book of Daniel. It is published in this form, at the request of a number of Christian friends and with earnest desire that the Holy Spirit may be pleased to use it for the purpose of leading many hearts to seek a closer walk with God.

C.H.M.

Discipleship in an evil day.

The first three chapters of the Book of Daniel furnish a most seasonable and important lesson at a time like the present, in which the disciple is in such danger of yielding to surrounding influences, and of lowering his standard of testimony and his tone of discipleship, in order to meet the existing condition of things.

At the opening of chapter 1 we have a most discouraging picture of the state of things, in reference to the ostensible witness of God on the earth. "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the

house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the house of his god." (Daniel 1: 1, 2) Here then we have an aspect of things quite sufficient, if looked at from nature's point of view, to discourage the heart, to damp the spirit, and paralyse the energies. Jerusalem in ruins, the temple trodden down, the Lord's vessels in the house of a false god, and Judah carried away captive. Surely the heart would feel disposed to say, There is no use in seeking to hold up the standard of practical discipleship and personal devotedness any longer. The spirit must droop, the heart must faint, and the hands must hang down, when such is the condition of the people of God. It could be naught but the most contemptible presumption for any of Judah's sons to think of taking up a true Nazarite's position at such a time.

Such would be nature's reasoning; but such was not the language of faith. Blessed be God! there is always a wide sphere in which the spirit of genuine devotedness can develop itself — there is always a path along which the true disciple can run, even though he should have to run in solitude. It matters not what the outward condition of things may be, it is faith's privilege to hang as much on God, to feed as much on Christ, and to breathe as much of the air of heaven, as though all were in perfect order and harmony.

This is an unspeakable mercy to the faithful heart. All who desire to walk devotedly can always find a path to walk in; whereas, on the contrary, the man who draws a plea, from outward circumstances, for relaxing his energy, would not be energetic, though most favourably situated.

If ever there was a time in which one might be excused for taking a low ground, it was the time of the Babylonish captivity. The entire framework of Judaism was broken up; the kingly power had passed out of the hand of David's successor, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; the glory had departed from Israel; and, in one word, all seemed faded and gone, and naught remained for the exiled children of Judah, save to hang their harps upon the willows, and sit down by the rivers of Babylon, there to weep over departed glory, faded light, and fallen greatness.

Such would be the language of blind unbelief; but, blessed be God! it is when everything appears sunk to the lowest possible point, that then faith rises in holy triumph; and faith, we know, is the only true basis of effective discipleship. It asks for no props from the men and things around it; it finds "all its springs" in God; and hence it is that faith never shines so brightly as when all around is dark. It is when nature's horizon is overcast with the blackest clouds, that faith basks in the sunshine of the divine favour and faithfulness.

Thus it was that Daniel and his companions were enabled to overcome the peculiar difficulties of their time. They judged that there was nothing to hinder their enjoying as elevated a Nazariteship in Babylon as ever had been known in Jerusalem; and they judged rightly. Their judgment was the judgment of a pure and well-founded faith. It was the self-same judgment on which the Baraks, the Gideons, the Jephthahs, and the Samsons of old had acted. It was the judgment to which Jonathan gave utterance, when he said, "There is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few." (1 Sam. 14) It was the judgment of David, in the valley of

Elah, when he called the poor trembling host of Israel "the army of the living God." (1 Sam. 17) It was the judgment of Elijah, on Mount Carmel, when he built an altar with "twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob." (1 Kings 18) It was the judgment of Daniel himself when, at a further stage of his history, he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem. (Dan. 6) It was the judgment of Paul when, in view of the overwhelming tide of apostasy and corruption which was about to set in, he exhorts his son Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words." (2 Tim. 1: 18) It was the judgment of Peter when, in prospect of the dissolution of the entire framework of creation, he encourages believers to "be diligent, that they be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Peter 3: 14) It was the judgment of John when, amid the actual breaking up of everything ecclesiastical, he exhorts his well beloved Gaius to "follow not that which is evil but that which is good." (3 John 11) And it was the judgment of Jude when, in the presence of the most appalling wickedness, he encourages a beloved remnant to "build themselves up in their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (Jude 20, 21) In one word, it was the judgment of the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, it was the judgment of faith.

Now, all this attaches immense value and interest to Daniel's determination, as expressed in the first chapter of this book. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not

defile himself." (Ver. 8) He might, very naturally, have said to himself, "There is no use in one poor feeble captive seeking to maintain a place of separation. Everything is broken up It is impossible to carry out the true spirit of a Nazarite amid such hopeless ruin and degradation. I may as well accommodate myself to the condition of things around me."

But no; Daniel was on higher ground than this. He knew it was his privilege to live as close to God in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, as within the gates of Jerusalem. He knew that, let the outward condition of the people of God be what it might, there was a path of purity and devotedness opened to the individual saint, which he could pursue independently of everything.

And may we not say, that the Nazariteship of Babylon possesses charms and attractions fully as powerful as the Nazariteship of Canaan? Unquestionably. It is unspeakably precious and beautiful, to find one of the captives in Babylon breathing after, and attaining unto, so elevated a standard of separation. It teaches a powerful lesson for every age. It holds up to the view of believers, under every dispensation, a most encouraging and soul-stirring example. It proves that, amid the darkest shades, a devoted heart can enjoy a path of cloudless sunshine.

But how is this? Because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever." (Heb. 13) Dispensations change and pass away. Ecclesiastical institutions crumble and moulder into ashes. Human systems totter and fall; but the name of Jehovah endureth for ever, and His memorial unto all generations. It is upon this holy elevation that faith plants its foot. It rises above all

vicissitude, and enjoys sweet converse with the unchangeable and eternal Source of all real good.

Thus it was that, in the days of the judges, faith achieved more glorious triumphs than ever were known in the days of Joshua. Thus it was that Elijah's altar on Mount Carmel was surrounded by a halo fully as bright as that which crowned the altar of Solomon.

This is truly encouraging. The poor heart is so apt to sink, and be discouraged, by looking at the failure and unfaithfulness of man, instead of at the infallible faithfulness of God. "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) What can ever touch this enduring truth? Nothing! And, therefore, nothing can touch the faith which lays hold of it, or the superstructure of practical devotedness which is erected on the foundation of that faith.

And then look at the glorious results of Daniel's devotedness and separation. In the three opening chapters we observe three distinct things, resulting from the position assumed by Daniel and his companions, in reference to "the king's meat." 1, They were let into the secret of "the king's dream." 2, They withstood the seductions of "the king's image." And, 3, They were brought unscathed through "the king's furnace."

1. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." This is beautifully exemplified in the case before us. "The magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans," who were breathing the atmosphere of the royal presence, were all in the dark as to the royal dream. "The Chaldeans answered before

the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter." Very likely; but there was a God in heaven who knew all about it; and who, moreover, could unfold it to those who had faith enough, and devotedness enough, and self-denial enough, to separate themselves from Babylonish pollutions, though involved in the Babylonish captivity. The mazes, the labyrinths, and the enigmas of human things are all plain to God; and He can and does make them plain to those who walk with Him, in the sanctity of His holy presence. God's Nazarites can see farther into human affairs than the most profound philosophers of this world. And how is this? How can they so readily unravel the world's mysteries? Because they are above the world's mists. They are apart from the world's defilements. They are in the place of separation, the place of dependence, the place of communion. "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven, concerning this secret." (Dan. 2: 17, 18) Here we have their place of strength and intelligence. They had only to look up to heaven, in order to be endowed with a clear understanding as to all the destinies of earth.

How real and simple is all this? "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and, hence, if we want light, we can find it only in His presence; and we can only know the power of His presence as we are practically taking the place of separation from all the moral pollutions of earth.

And, observe, a further result of Daniel's holy separation. "Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they

should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him." Here we have earth's proudest and most powerful monarch at the feet of the captive exile. Magnificent fruit of faithfulness! Precious evidence of the truth that God will always honour the faith that can in any measure, rise to the height of His thoughts! He will not, He cannot, dishonour the draft which confidence presents at His exhaustless treasury. Daniel, on this memorable occasion, realised, in his own person, as fully as ever it was realised, God's ancient promise: "And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee…And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath."(Deut. 28: 10, 13)

Assuredly Daniel was, in the above scene, "the head," and Nebuchadnezzar "the tail," as looked at from the divine point of view. Witness, also, the bearing of this holy Nazarite, in the presence of the impious Belshazzar. (Dan. 5: 17-29) Have we not, here, as magnificent a testimony to the destined pre-eminence of the seed of Abraham, as when Joshua's victorious captains placed their feet on the necks of the kings of Canaan (Joshua 10: 24); or, when "all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart?" (1 Kings 10: 24) Unquestionably; and, in a certain sense, it is a more magnificent testimony. It is natural to expect such a scene in the history of Joshua, or of Solomon; but to find the haughty king of Babylon prostrate at the feet of one of his captives, is something far beyond the utmost stretch of nature's expectation.

There it is, however, as a most striking and soul stirring proof of the power of faith to triumph over all manner of

difficulties, and to produce the most extraordinary results. Faith is the same mighty principle, whether it act on the plains of Palestine, on the top of Carmel, by the rivers of Babylon, or amid the ruins of the professing Church. No fetters can bind it, no difficulties deter it, no pressure damp it, no changes affect it. It ever rises to its proper object, and that object is God Himself, and His eternal revelation. Dispensations may change, ages may run their course, the wheels of time may roll on, and crush beneath their ponderous weight the fondest hopes of the poor human heart; but there stands faith, that immortal, divine, eternal reality, drinking at the fountain of pure truth, and finding all its springs in Him, who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

By this "precious faith" it was that Daniel acted, when he "purposed that he would not defile himself with the king's meat." True, he could no longer ascend to that holy and beautiful house, where his fathers had worshipped. The rude foot of a foreign foe had trodden down the holy city. The fire no longer burned on the altar of the God of Israel. The golden candlestick no longer enlightened, with its seven lamps, the holy place. But there was faith in Daniel's heart, and that faith carried him beyond every surrounding influence, and enabled him to appropriate, and act in the power of, "all the promises of God," which are "Yea, and Amen in Christ Jesus." Faith is not affected by ruined temples, fallen cities, faded lights, or departed glories. Why not? Because God is not affected by them. God is always to be found, and faith is always sure to find Him.

2. But the same faith which enabled those holy men of old to refuse the king's meat, enabled them, also, to despise the king's image. They had separated

themselves from defilement, in order that they might enjoy a more intense communion with the true God; and they could not, therefore, bow down to an image of gold, even though it were ever so high. They knew that God was not an image. They knew He was a reality. They could only present worship to Him, for He alone was the true object thereof.

Nor did it make any matter to them that all the world was against them. They had only to live and act for God. It might seem as if they were setting up to be wiser than their neighbours. It might savour of presumption to stand against the tide of public opinion. Some might feel disposed to ask if truth lay only with them? Were all "the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces," sunk in darkness and error? Could it be possible that so many men of rank, of intelligence, and of learning were in the wrong, and only a few strangers of the captivity in the right?

With such questions our Nazarites had nothing to do. Their path lay right onward. Should they bow down and worship an image, in order to avoid the appearance of condemning other people? Assuredly not. And yet how often are those, who desire to keep a conscience void of offence in the sight of God, condemned for setting themselves up and judging others.

Doubtless Luther was condemned by many for setting himself up in opposition to the doctors, the cardinals, and the pope. Should he, in order to avoid such condemnation, have lived and died in error? Who would say so?

"Ah! but," some will reply, "Luther had to deal with palpable error." So thought Luther; but thousands of learned and eminent men thought otherwise. So also in the case of "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," they had to do with positive idolatry; but the whole world differed from them. What then? "We must obey God rather than man." "Let others do as they will; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If people were to remain in error and continue to do what they, at least, feel to be wrong, In order to avoid the appearance of judging others, where should we be?

Ah! no; my beloved reader, do you seek to pursue the steady, onward, upward path of pure and elevated discipleship. And, whether or not you, thereby, condemn others, is no concern of yours. "CEASE TO DO EVIL." This is the first thing for the true disciple to do. When he has yielded obedience to this golden precept, he may expect to "learn to do well." "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." When God speaks, I am not to turn round to see how my obedience to His voice will affect my neighbours, or to consider what they will think about me. When the voice of the risen and glorified Jesus fell upon the ear of the prostrate Saul of Tarsus, he did not begin to inquire what the chief priests and Pharisees would think of him were he to obey. Surely not. "Immediately," he says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Gal. 1: 16) "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." (Acts 26: 19) This is the true spirit and principle of discipleship. "Give glory to God, before he cause darkness, and your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." Nothing can be more dangerous than to hesitate, when divine light shines upon the path. If you do not act upon the light,

when you get it, you will, assuredly, be involved in thick darkness. Hence, therefore, as another has said, "Never go before your faith, nor lag behind your conscience."

3. But, we have said, if our Nazarites refused to bow before the king's image, they had to encounter the king's rage, and the king's furnace. For all this they were, by the grace of God, prepared: their Nazariteship was a real thing; they were ready to suffer the loss of all things, and even life itself, in defence of the true worship of the God of Israel. "They worshipped and served their own God," not merely beneath the peaceful vine and fig-tree in the land of Canaan, but in the very face of "a burning fiery furnace." They acknowledged Jehovah, not merely in the midst of a congregation of true worshippers, but in the presence of an opposing world. Theirs was a true discipleship in an evil day. They loved the Lord; and, therefore, for His sake, they abstained from the king's luxuries, they withstood the king's rage, and they endured the king's furnace. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." This was the language of men who knew whose they were, and where they were — of men who had calmly and deliberately counted the cost — of men to whom the Lord was everything, the world nothing. All that the world could offer, together with life itself, was at stake; but what of that? "They endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Eternal glory lay before them; and they were quite prepared to reach that glory by a fiery pathway.

God can take His servants to heaven by a chariot of fire, or by a furnace of fire, as seems good to Him. Whatever be the mode of going, it is well to get there.

But could not the Lord have preserved His beloved servants from being cast into the furnace? No doubt. This would have been but a very small matter to Him. He did not, however, do so: it was His will that the faith of His servants should be put to the test — should be tried in the furnace — should be passed through the most searching crucible, in order that it "might be found to praise and honour and glory." Is it because the refiner sets no value on the wedge of gold, that he puts it into the furnace? No; but because he does. And, as some one has beautifully remarked, "His object is not merely to remove the dross, but to brighten the metal."

It is very evident that had the Lord, by an act of power, kept His servants out of the furnace, there would have been less glory to Him, and as a consequence, less blessing to them. It was far better to have His presence and sympathy in the furnace, than His power to keep them out of it. What glory to Him in this! And what unspeakable privilege to them! The Lord went down and walked with His Nazarites in the furnace into which their faithfulness had brought them. They had walked with God in the king's palace; and God walked with them in the king's furnace. This was the most elevated moment in the entire career of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. How little had the king imagined the lofty position in which he was placing the objects of his rage and fury! Every eye was turned from the great image of gold, to gaze, in astonishment, upon the three captives. What could it mean? "Three men bound!" "Four men loose!" Could it be real? Was the furnace real? Alas, "the

most mighty men in the king's army" had proved it to be real. And, had Nebuchadnezzar's image been cast into it, it would have proved its reality also. There was no material for the sceptic or the infidel to work upon. It was a real furnace, and a real flame, and the "three men" were "bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments." All was reality.

But there was a deeper reality: God was there. This changed everything: it "changed the king's word," changed the furnace into a place of high and holy fellowship — changed Nebuchadnezzar's bondmen into God's freemen.

God was there! — there, in his power, to write contempt upon all man's opposition — there, in His deep and tender sympathy with His tried and faithful servants — there, in His matchless grace, to set the captives free, and to lead the hearts of His Nazarites into that deep fellowship with Himself for which they so ardently thirsted.

And, my beloved reader, is it not worth passing through a fiery furnace to enjoy a little more of the presence of Christ, and the sympathy of His loving heart? Are not fetters, with Christ, better than jewels without Him? Is not a furnace where He is better than a palace where He is not? Nature says, "No!" Faith says, "Yes!”

It is well to bear in mind that this is not the day of Christ's power; but it is the day of His sympathy. When passing through the deep waters of affliction, the heart may, at times, feel disposed to ask, 'Why does not the Lord display His power, and deliver me?' The answer is, This is not the day of His power. He could avert that sickness — He could remove that difficulty — He could

take off that pressure — He could prevent that catastrophe — He could preserve that beloved and fondly-cherished object from the cold grasp of death. But, instead of putting forth His power to deliver, He allows things to run their course, and pours His own sweet sympathy into the oppressed and riven heart, in such a way as to elicit the acknowledgment that we would not, for worlds, have missed the trial, because of the abundance of the consolation.

Such, my reader, is the manner of our Jesus just now. By and by He will display His power; He will come forth as the Rider on the white horse; He will unsheath His sword; He will make bare His arm; He will avenge His people, and right their wrongs for ever. But now His sword is sheathed, His arm covered. This is the time for making known the deep love of His heart, not the power of His arm, nor the sharpness of His sword. Are you satisfied to have it so? Is Christ's sympathy enough for your heart, even amid the keenest sorrow and the most intense affliction? The restless heart, the impatient spirit, the unmortified will, would lead one to long for escape from the trial, the difficulty, or the pressure; but this would never do. It would involve incalculable loss. We must pass from form to form in the school; but the Master accompanies us, and the light of His countenance, and the tender sympathy of His heart, sustain us under the most severe exercises.

And, then, see what glory redounds to the name of the Lord, when His people are enabled, by His grace, to pass, triumphantly, through a trial! Read Daniel 3: 26-28, and say where you could find richer or rarer fruits of a faithful discipleship. The king and all his nobles, who, just before, had been wholly engrossed

with the bewitching music and the false worship, are now occupied with the amazing fact that the fire, which had slain the mighty men, had taken no effect whatever upon the worshippers of the true God, save to consume their fetters and let them walk free, in company with the Son of God. "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, YE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, come forth and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

Here, then, was a noble testimony — such a testimony as would never have been rendered, had the Lord, by a mere act of power, preserved His servants from being cast into the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was furnished with a striking proof that his furnace was no more to be dreaded than his image was to be worshipped by "the servants of the most high God." In a word, the enemy was confounded; God was glorified; and His dear servants brought forth unscathed from "the burning fiery furnace." Precious fruits, these, of a faithful Nazariteship!

And, observe, further, the honour put upon our Nazarites. "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." Their names are intimately associated with the God of Israel. This was a high honour. They had identified themselves with the true God when it was a

matter of life and death to do so; and, therefore, the true God identified Himself with them, and led them forth into a large and wealthy place. He set their feet upon a rock, and lifted their heads up above all their enemies round about them. How true it is that "them that honour me I will honour!" And it is equally true that "they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. 2: 30)

My beloved reader, have you found settled, divine peace for your guilty conscience, in the perfected atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you simply taken God at His word? Have you set to your seal that God is true? If so, you are a child of God; your sins are all forgiven, and you are accepted as righteous in Christ; heaven, with all its untold glories, is before you; you are as sure of being in the glory as Christ Himself, inasmuch as you are united to Him.

Thus, everything is settled for you for time and eternity, according to the very utmost desire of your heart. Your need is met, your guilt removed, your peace established, your title sure. Yon have nought to do for yourself All is divinely finished.

What remains? Just this: LIVE, FOR CHRIST! You are left here for "a little while," to occupy for Him, and wait for His appearing. Oh! seek to be faithful to your blessed Master. Be not discouraged by the fragmentary state of everything around you. Let the case of Daniel and his honoured companions encourage your heart to seek after an elevated course here below. It is your privilege to enjoy as much of companionship with the blessed Lord Jesus, as if you were cast amid the palmy days of apostolic testimony.

May the Holy Ghost enable the writer and the reader of these lines to drink into the spirit — walk in the footsteps — manifest the graces — and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

C.H.M.

Forgiveness of sins: What is it?

Forgiveness of sins: What is it?

C. H. Mackintosh.

"Oh! the blessedness; transgression forgiven; sin covered." This truly is blessedness, and without this, blessedness must be unknown. To have the full assurance that my sins are all forgiven, is the only foundation of true happiness. To be happy without this, is to be happy on the brink of a yawning gulf into which I may, at any moment, be dashed for ever. It is utterly impossible that any one can enjoy solid happiness until he is possessed of the divine assurance that all his guilt has been cancelled by the blood of the cross. Uncertainty as to this must be the fruitful source of mental anguish to any soul who has ever been led to feel the burden of sin. To be in doubt as to whether my guilt was all borne by Jesus or is yet on my conscience, is to be miserable.

Now, before proceeding to unfold the subject of forgiveness, I should like to ask my reader a very plain, pointed, personal question, namely, "Dost thou believe that thou canst have the clear and settled assurance that thy sins are forgiven?" I ask this question, at the outset, because there are many, now-a-days, who profess to preach the gospel of Christ, and yet deny any one can be sure that his sins are forgiven. They maintain that it is presumption for any one to believe in the forgiveness of his sins; and, on the other hand, they look upon it as a proof of humility to be always in doubt as to this most momentous point. In other words, it is presumption to believe what God says, and humility to doubt it. This

seems strange in the face of such passages as the following, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24: 46, 47) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1: 7; Col. 1: 14)

Here we have remission or forgiveness of sins (the word is the same in the three passages) preached in the name of Jesus, and possessed by those who believed that preaching. A proclamation was sent to the Ephesians and Colossians, as belonging to the "all nations," telling them of forgiveness of sins, in the name of Jesus. They believed this proclamation, and entered on the possession of the forgiveness of sins. Was this presumption on their part? or would it have been piety and humility to doubt the forgiveness of sins? True, they had been great sinners, indeed in trespasses and sins — children of wrath aliens and foreigners — "enemies by wicked works." Some of them had, doubtless, bowed the knee to Diana They had lived in gross idolatry and all manner of wickedness. But then, "forgiveness of sins" had been preached to them in the name of Jesus. Was this preaching true, or was it not? Was it for them, or was it not? Was it all a dream — a shadow — a myth? Did it mean nothing? Was there nothing sure, nothing certain, nothing solid about it?

These are plain questions, demanding a plain answer from those who assert that no one can know for certain that his sins are forgiven. If indeed no one can know it now, then how should any one have known it in apostolic

times? If it could be known in the first century, then why not in the nineteenth? "David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." (Rom. 4: 6-8) Hezekiah could say, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." (Isaiah 38: 17) the Lord Jesus said to one in His day, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. 9: 2.

Thus, at all times, forgiveness of sins was known with all the certainty which the word of God could give. Any one of the cases adduced above is sufficient to overthrow the teaching of those who assert that no one can know that his sins are forgiven. If I find from scripture that any one ever knew this marvellously precious blessing, that is quite enough for me. Now, when I open my Bible, I find persons, who had been guilty of all manner of sins, brought to the knowledge of forgiveness; and I therefore argue that it is possible for the very vilest sinner to know now, with divine certainty, that his sins are forgiven. Was it presumption in Abraham, in David, in Hezekiah, in the palsied man, and in numbers besides, to believe in the forgiveness of sins? Would it have been a sign of humility and true piety in them to doubt? It will, perhaps, be argued that these were all special and extraordinary cases. Well, it matters not, so far as our present question is concerned, whether they were ordinary or extraordinary. One thing is plain, they completely disprove the assertion that no one can know that his sins are forgiven. The word of God teaches me that numbers, subject to like passions, like infirmities, like failures, and like sins as the writer and reader, were

brought to know and rejoice in the full forgiveness of sins, and hence those who maintain that no one can be sure on this momentous question, have no scriptural foundation for their opinion.

But is it true that the cases recorded in the holy scripture are so special and extraordinary as not to afford any precedent for us? By no means. If any case could be so regarded it is surely that of Abraham, and yet of him we read that "it was not written for his sake alone, that righteousness was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4: 18, 25) Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15: 6) And the Holy Ghost declares that righteousness shall be imputed to us also if we believe. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could tot be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13: 38, 39) "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins." (Acts 10: 43)

Now, the question is, what did the apostles Peter and Paul mean, when they so unreservedly preached the forgiveness of sins to those who listened to them? Did they really mean to convey to their hearers the idea that no one could be sure that he possessed this forgiveness of sins? When in the synagogue of Antioch, Paul said to his audience, "We declare unto you glad tidings," did he entertain the notion that no one could be sure that his sins were forgiven? How could the gospel ever be called

"glad tidings" if its only effect were to leave the soul in doubt and anxiety? If indeed it be true that no one can enjoy the assurance of pardon, then the whole style of apostolic preaching should be reversed. We might then expect to find Paul saying to his hearers, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that no one can ever know, in this life, whether his sins are forgiven or not." Is there ought like this in the entire range of apostolic preaching and teaching? Do not the apostles everywhere set forth, in the fullest and clearest manner, remission of sins as the necessary result of believing in a crucified and risen Saviour? Is there the most remote hint of that which is so much insisted upon by some modern teachers, namely, that it is a dangerous presumption to believe in the full forgiveness of all our sins, and that it argues a pious and humble frame of soul to live in perpetual doubt? Is there no possibility of ever enjoying, in this world, the comfortable certainty of our eternal security in Christ? Can we not rely upon God's word, or commit our souls to the sacrifice of Christ? Can it be possible that the only effect of God's glad tidings is to leave the soul in hopeless perplexity? Christ has put away sin; but I cannot know it! God has spoken; but I cannot be sure! The Holy Ghost has come down; but I cannot rely upon His testimony. It is piety and humility to doubt God's word, to dishonour the atonement of Christ, and to refuse the faith of the heart to the record of the Holy Ghost! Alas! alas! if this is the gospel, then adieu to peace and joy in believing. If this is Christianity, then in vain has "the dayspring from on high visited us to give the knowledge of salvation through the remission of our sins" (Luke 1). If no one can have this "knowledge of Salvation," then to what end has it been given.

And let my reader bear in mind that the question before us is not whether a person may not deceive himself and others. This would be at once ceded. Thousands, alas! have deceived themselves, and thousands more have deceived others. But is that any reason why I cannot possess the absolute certainty that what God has said is true, and that the work of Christ has availed to put away all my sins? Men have deceived themselves. and therefore I am afraid to trust Christ Men have deceived others, and therefore I am afraid that God's word will deceive me! This is really what it all amounts to, when put into plain language. And is it not well to have things thus put? Is it not needs, at times, to strip certain propositions of the dress in which legality and fleshly pietism would clothe them, so that we may see what they are. Does it not behove us, when men stand forth as the professed and authorized exponents of a sound and enlightened Christianity, to test what they say by the unerring standard of holy scripture? Assuredly it does; and if they tell us we can never be sure of salvation; and that it is presumption to think of such a thing; and, further, that the very utmost we can attain to in this life is a faint hope that, through the mercy of God, we may get to heaven when we die; we must utterly reject such teaching, as being in direct opposition to the word of God. False theology tells me I can never be sure, God's word tells me I can. Which am I to believe? The former fills me with gloomy doubts and fears; the latter imparts divine certainty. That casts me upon my own efforts; this upon a finished work. To which shall I attend? Is there a shadow of foundation, throughout the entire volume of God, for the notion that no one can be sure of his eternal salvation? I most fearlessly assert there is not. So far, from this the word of God, in every section of it, sets

before us, in the clearest way, the privilege of the believer to enjoy the most unclouded certainty as to his pardon and acceptance in Christ.

And, let me ask, is it not due to God's faithful word and Christ's finished work, that the soul confiding therein should enjoy the fullest assurance? True, it is by faith that any one can so confide, and this faith is wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost. But all this, in nowise, affects our present question. What I desire is, that my reader should rise from the study of this paper with a full and firm conviction that it is possible for him to possess the present assurance that he is as safe as Christ can make him. If any sinner ever enjoyed this assurance, then why may not my reader now enjoy it? Is Christ's work finished? Is God's word true? Yes, verily. Then, if I simply trust therein, I am pardoned, justified, and accepted. All my sins were laid on Jesus when He was nailed to the cursed tree. Jehovah made them all meet on Him. He bore them and put them away; and, now, He is up in heaven without them. This is enough for me. If the One who stood charged with all my guilt is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, then, clearly, there is nothing against me. All that divine justice had against me was laid on the Sin-bearer, and He endured the wrath of a sin-hating God that I might be freely and for ever pardoned and accepted in a risen and glorified Saviour.

These are glad tidings. Does my reader believe them? Say, beloved, dost thou heartily believe in a dead and risen Christ? Hast thou come to Him as a lost sinner, and put thy hearts full confidence in Him? Dost thou believe that He died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again the

third day according to the scriptures? If so, thou art saved, justified, accepted, complete in Christ. True, thou art, in thyself, a poor feeble creature, having an evil nature to contend with every moment; but Christ is thy life, and He is thy wisdom, and thy righteousness, thy sanctification, thy redemption, thy all. He ever lives for thee up in heaven. He died to make thee clean. He lives to keep thee clean. Thou art made as clean as His death can make thee, and thou art kept as clean as His life can keep thee. He made Himself responsible for thee. God sees thee to be what Christ has made thee to be. He sees thee in Christ, and as Christ. Therefore, then, I pray thee, tread no more those gloomy corridors of legalism, pietism, and false theology, which have resounded for ages with the sighs and groans of poor sin-burdened, and misguided souls; but seeing the fullness of thy portion, and completeness of thy standing in a risen and glorious Christ, rejoice in Him all thy days on earth, and live in the hope of being with Him for ever in His own mansions of heavenly glory.

Having thus sought to establish the fact that is possible for one to know, upon divine authority, that his sins are forgiven, we shall now, in dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit of God, proceed to consider the subject of forgiveness of sins, as unfolded in the word, and doing so, we shall present it under the three following heads, namely: — First, the ground on which God forgives sins; secondly, the extent to which He forgives sins; and, thirdly, the style which He forgives sins. There is value in this threefold presentation, as it gives clearness, fullness, and precision to our apprehension of the object as a whole. The more clearly we understand the ground

of divine forgiveness the more shall we appreciate the extent, and admire the style thereof.

May God the Spirit now be our guide while we ponder for a little, THE GROUND OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

It is of the very last importance that the anxious reader should understand this cardinal point. It is quite impossible that a divinely convicted conscience can enjoy true repose until the ground of forgiveness is clearly seen. There may be certain vague thoughts respecting the mercy and goodness of God, His readiness to receive sinners and pardon their sins, His unwillingness to enter the place of judgment, and His promptness to enter the place of mercy. All this there may be; but until the convicted soul is led to see how God can be just and yet the justifier — how He can be a just God and yet a Saviour-God — how He has been glorified with respect to sin — how all the divine attributes have been harmonized, it must be a stranger to the peace of God which truly passeth all understanding. A conscience on which the light of divine truth has poured itself in convicting power, feels and owns that sin can never enter into the presence of God — that sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the just judgment of a sin-hating God. Hence, until the divine method of dealing with sin is understood and believed, there must be intense anxiety. Sin is a reality, God's holiness is a reality, conscience is a reality, judgment to come is a reality. All these things must be looked at and duly considered. Justice must be satisfied — conscience purged — Satan silenced. How is all this to be done? Only by the cross of Jesus.

Here, then, we have the true ground of divine forgiveness. The precious atonement of Christ forms the base of that platform on which a just God and a justified sinner meet in sweet communion. In that atonement I see sin condemned, justice satisfied, the law magnified, the sinner saved, the adversary confounded. Creation never exhibited ought like this. There the creature enjoyed the manifestation of power, wisdom, and goodness; but the fairest fields of the old creation presented nothing like "grace reigning through righteousness" — nothing like a glorious combination of "righteousness and peace, mercy and truth." It was reserved for Calvary to display all this. There that grand and all important question, "How can God be just and the Justifier?" received a glorious reply. The death of Christ furnishes the answer. A just God dealt with sin at the cross, in order that a justifying God might deal with the sinner on the new and everlasting ground of resurrection. God could not tolerate or pass over a single jot or tittle of sin; but He could put it away. He has condemned sin. He has poured out His righteous wrath upon sin. in order that He might pour the everlasting beams of His favour upon the believing sinner.

"On Jesus' cross this record's graved,

Let sin be judged and sinners saved."

Precious record! may every anxious sinner read it with the eye of faith. It is a record which must impart settled peace to the heart. God has been satisfied as to sin. This is enough for me. Here my guilty, troubled conscience finds sweet repose. I have seen my sins rising like a dark mountain before me, threatening me with eternal wrath;

but the blood of Jesus has blotted them all out from God's view. They are gone, and gone for ever — sunk as lead into the mighty waters of divine forgetfulness, and I am free — as free as the One who was nailed to the cross for my sins, but who is now on the throne without them.

Such, then, is the ground of divine forgiveness. What a solid ground! Who or what can touch it? Justice has owned it. The troubled conscience may rest in it. Satan must acknowledge it. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier, and faith walks in the light and the power of that revelation. Nothing can be simpler, nothing clearer, nothing more satisfactory. If God reveals Himself as a Justifier, then I am justified through faith in the revelation. When the moral glories of the cross shine upon the sinner, he sees and knows, believes and owns, that the One who has judged his sins in death, has justified him in resurrection.

Anxious reader see I beseech thee that thou apprehendest the true ground of the forgiveness of sins. There is no use in our proceeding to the extent and style, until thy poor troubled conscience has been led to rest upon the imperishable ground of forgiveness. Let me reason with thee. What is to hinder thee from this very moment, resting on the foundation of accomplished atonement? Say, does thy conscience need something more to satisfy it than that which has satisfied the inflexible justice of God? Is not the ground on which God reveals Himself as a righteous Justifier sufficiently strong for thee to stand upon as a justified sinner? What sayest thou, friend? Art thou satisfied? Is Christ sufficient for thee? Art thou still searching for something in thyself, thy ways, thy works, thy thoughts, thy

feelings? If so, give up the search as utterly vain. Thou wilt never find anything. And even though thou couldst find something, it would only be an encumbrance a loss, a hindrance. Christ is sufficient for God, let Him be sufficient for thee likewise. Then but not until then, wilt thou be truly happy.

May God the Holy Ghost cause thee to rest this moment, upon an all-sufficient sacrifice, as the only ground of divine forgiveness, so that thou mayest be able to enter, with real intelligence and interest, upon the examination of the second point in our subject, namely, THE EXTENT OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

Very many are perplexed as to this. They do not see the fullness of the atonement. They do not grasp the emancipating fact of its application to all their sins. They do not enter into the full force of those lines, which, perhaps, they often sing:

"All thine iniquities who doth

Most graciously forgive."

They seem to be under the impression that Christ only bore some of their sins, namely, their sins up to the time of their conversion. They are troubled as to the question of their daily sins, as if these were disposed of upon a different ground from their past sins. Thus are they, at times, much cast down and sorely beset. Nor could it be otherwise with them until they see that in the death of Christ, provision was made for the full forgiveness of ALL their sins. True it is that the child of God who commits sin has to go to his Father and confess that sin. But what does the apostle say, in reference to one so confessing his sins? “God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Now, why does he say, faithful and just?" Why does he not say, “Gracious and merciful?" Because he speaks on the ground that the entire question of sin was gone into and settled by the death of Christ. who is now up in heaven as the righteous Advocate. On no other ground could God be faithful and just in connection with the forgiveness of sins. The sins of the believer have all been atoned for on the cross. If one had been left out, he should be eternally lost, inasmuch as it is impossible that a single sin, however trifling, can ever enter the precincts of the sanctuary of God And, further, let me add, if all the believer's sins were not atoned for in the death of Christ, then neither by confession, nor by prayer, nor by fasting, nor by any other means, could they ever be forgiven. The death of Christ is the only ground on which God could, in faithfulness and justice, forgive sin; and we know He must either do it in faithfulness and justice, or not at all This is to His praise and our exceeding comfort.

But I can imagine my reader exclaiming "What! do you mean to say that my future sins were all atoned for?" To this I reply, that all our sins were future when Christ bore them on the cursed tree. The sins of all believers, for the last eighteen centuries, were future when Christ died for them. Hence, if the idea of future sins presents a difficulty in reference to what we may commit, if left here, it presents just as great a difficulty in reference to what we have committed. But, in truth, all this perplexity about future sins arises very much from the habit of looking at the cross from our own point of view, instead of God's — looking at it from earth instead of from heaven. Scripture never speaks of future sins. Past,

present, and future are only human and earthly. All is an eternal now with God.

All our sins were before the eye of infinite Justice, at the cross, and all were laid on the head of Jesus the Sin-bearer who, by His death, laid the eternal foundation of forgiveness of sins, in order that the believer, at any moment of his life, at any point in his history, at any stage of his career, from the time at which the hallowed tidings of the gospel fall upon the ear of faith until the moment in which he steps into the glory, may be able to say, with clearness and decision, without reserve, misgiving, or hesitation, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." To say this is but faith's response to God's own declaration, when He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "Jehovah hath made to meet on him the iniquities of us all."

Let us, by way of illustration, take the case of the thief on the cross. When he, as a convicted sinner, cast the eye of faith upon that blessed One who hung beside him, was he not, then and there rendered fit. to enter the paradise of God? Was he not furnished with a divine title to pass from the cross of a malefactor into the presence of God? Unquestionably. Did he need anything more to be done for him, in him, or with him, in order to fit him for heaven? By no means. Well, then, suppose that, instead of passing into heaven, he had been permitted to come down from the cross. Suppose the nails had been extracted and he allowed to go at liberty. He would have had sin in his nature, and having sin in his nature, he would have been liable to commit sin, in thought, word, and deed. Now, could he ever lose his title, his fitness, his meetness? Surely not. His title was divine and everlasting. All his sins were borne by Jesus. That which

had fitted him to enter heaven at the first, had fitted him once and for ever, so that if he had remained on earth for fifty years he would, at any moment, have been equally fit to enter heaven.

True it is, if the pardoned sinner commits sin, his communion is interrupted, and there must be the hearty confession of that sin ere his communion can be restored. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." But this is, obviously, a different point altogether. My communion may be interrupted, but my title can never be forfeited. All was accomplished on the cross. Every trace of sin and guilt was atoned for by that peerless, priceless sacrifice. By that sacrifice, the believer is transferred from a position of guilt and condemnation into a position of justification and perfect favour. He is translated from a condition in which he had not a single trace of righteousness, into a condition in which he has not a single trace of guilt, nor ever can have. He stands in grace, he is under grace, he breathes the very atmosphere of grace, and he never can be otherwise, according to God's view. If he commits sin — and who does not? — there must be confession. And what then? Forgiveness and cleansing, on the ground of the faithfulness and justice of God which have had their divine answer in the cross. All is founded on the cross. The faithfulness and justice of God — the advocacy of Christ — our confession--our full forgiveness — our perfect cleansing — the restoration of our communion — all rest upon the solid basis of the precious blood of Christ.

My reader will bear in mind that we are, at present, occupied with the one point, namely, the extent of divine

forgiveness. There are other points of great importance, which might be looked at in connection, such as the believer's oneness with Christ. his adoption into the family of God, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, all of which, necessarily, imply the full forgiveness of sins. But we must confine ourselves to our immediate theme, and having endeavoured to set forth the ground and the extent, we shall close with a few words on THE STYLE OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

We are all conscious of how much depends upon the style of an action. Indeed, there is frequently far more power in the style than in the substance. How often have we heard such words as these: "Yes, I own he did me a favour; but, then, he did it in such a way as to take away all the good of it." Now, the Lord has His style of doing things, blessed be His name. He not only does great things, but He does them in such a way as to convince us that His heart is in the doing of them. Not only is the substance of His acts good, but the style most charming.

Let us have a sample or two. Look, for instance, at Christ's touching word to Simon the Pharisee, in Luke 7. "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Now, so far as the mere matter of the debt was concerned, the result would have been the same whatever style had been adopted. But what heart does not receive the moral power of the word, "frankly?" Who would part with it? Who could bear to see the substance stripped of its style? The creditor might forgive with a murmur about the amount. That murmur would, in the judgment of a sensitive heart, rob the act of all its charms. On the other hand, the frankness of the style enhances, beyond expression, the value of the substance.

Again, look for a moment at that familiar but ever fruitful section of inspiration, Luke 15. Each of the parables illustrates the power and beauty of style. When the man finds his sheep, what does he do? Does he complain of all the trouble, and commence to drive the sheep home before him? Ah! no; this would never do. What then? "He layeth it on his shoulders." How? Complaining of the weight or the trouble? Nay; but "rejoicing." Here we have the lovely style. He showed that he was glad to get His sheep back again. The sheep would have been safe on the shoulder, however it had been placed there; but who would part with the word "rejoicing?" Who could bear to see the substance of the action stripped of its charming style?

So also in the case of the woman and her lost piece of silver. "She lights a candle, sweeps the house, and seeks." How? With dullness, weariness, indifference? By no means; but "diligently," like one whose whole heart was in her work. It was quite manifest that she really wanted to find the lost piece of silver. Her style proved this.

Lastly, mark the style of the father in receiving the poor returning prodigal. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." He does not send out a servant to tell the erring one to turn aside into one of the out-offices, or betake himself to the kitchen, or even to confine himself to his own room. No; he himself runs. He, as it were, lays aside his paternal dignity, in order to give expression to his fatherly affection. He is not satisfied with merely receiving the wanderer back. He must prove that his whole heart is in the reception; and

this he does, not merely by the substance of the act, but by his style of doing it.

Various other passages might be adduced to illustrate the style of divine forgiveness; but the above will suffice to prove that God graciously recognizes the power which style has to act upon the human heart. I shall, therefore, in closing this paper, make an earnest appeal to my reader, as to what he now thinks of the ground, the extent,, and the style of divine forgiveness.

Beloved reader, thou seest that the ground is as stable as the very throne of God itself that the extent is infinite; and the style all that the heart could possibly desire. Say, therefore art thou satisfied as to the great question of the forgiveness of sins? Can you any longer doubt God's willingness to forgive when He has set before you, in such a way, the ground on which the extent to which, and the style in which He forgives sin? Can you hesitate when He actually "Opens His own heart to thee And shows His thoughts how kind they be?"

He stands with open arms to receive thee. He points thee to the cross, where His own hand laid the foundation of forgiveness, and assures thee that all is done, and beseeches thee to rest now, henceforth, and for evermore, in that which He has wrought for you. May the blessed Spirit lead thee to see these things in all their clearness and fullness, so that thou mayest not only believe in the forgiveness of sins, but believe also that, thy sins are frankly and for ever forgiven.

C. H. M.

Gideon and his companions

Gideon and his companions.

Judges 6-8.

C. H. Mackintosh.

PART 1.

In studying the history of the nation of Israel, we notice two distinct eras, namely, the era of unity, and the era of individuality — the period in the which the twelve tribes acted as one man, and the period in the which one man was called to act for the twelve tribes. We may take the Book of Joshua as illustrating the former; and the Book of Judges as a sample of the latter. The most cursory reader cannot fail to discern the difference between these two books. The one is characterised by external power and glory; the other by weakness and failure. Power is stamped on the former, ruin on the latter. In that, Jehovah gives the land to Israel; in this, Israel fails to take the land from Jehovah.

Now, all this is expressed in the two words which may be regarded as the motto of the two books, namely, "Gilgal" and "Bochim." In the Book of Joshua we find the congregation always starting from Gilgal to prosecute the war, and returning thither to celebrate their victory. Gilgal was their centre, because there they were circumcised; and there the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. See Joshua 5: 9, 10.

But no sooner have we opened the Book of Judges than the eye rests upon the sad record, "An angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to

go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars; but ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim, that is, weepers; and they sacrificed there unto the Lord." Judges 2: 1-5.

Here, then, we have, very remarkably, the contrast between the two books of Joshua and Judges — the book of unity and the book of individuality — the book of external power and glory, and the book of internal weakness, failure, and ruin. Alas! alas! the glory speedily departed. Israel's national greatness soon faded away. "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.... And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim.... And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies

round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed."

This, truly, is a gloomy and humiliating record. Joshua's sword was sheathed. Those palmy days in the which he had led Israel's compact host to splendid victories over the kings of Canaan, were passed and gone. The moral influence of Joshua and of the elders that survived him had passed away, and the whole nation had rushed, with terrible avidity, into the gross moral evils and abominable idolatries of those nations whom they ought to have driven out from before them. In a word, the ruin was complete, so far as Israel was concerned. Like Adam, in the garden; and Noah, in the restored earth; so Israel, in the land of Canaan, utterly failed. Adam ate the forbidden fruit; Noah got drunk; and Israel bowed before the altars of Baal.

Thus much as to man. But, thank God, there is another side of the picture. There is what we may call a bright and beauteous "Nevertheless;" for God will be God, no matter what man may prove himself to be. This is an unspeakable relief and consolation to the heart. God abideth faithful. Here is faith's stronghold, come what may. God is always to be counted upon, spite of all man's failure and shortcoming. His goodness and faithfulness form the resource and the refuge of the soul amid the darkest scenes of human history.

This soul-sustaining truth shines out with remarkable lustre in the very passage from which we have just given such a depressing quotation. "Nevertheless, the Lord

raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." But mark the following words, so illustrative of the individuality of the Book of Judges: "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." Judges 2: 16, 18.

In these last quoted words, we have the great root principle of the Book of Judges — the divine secret of the ministry of the Baraks, the Gideons, the Jephthas, and the Samsons, the record of whose ministry occupies so large a portion of this most interesting section of inspiration. Israel had failed — sadly, shamefully, inexcusably failed. They had forfeited all claims to the protection of Jehovah's shield. They were justly given over into the ruthless hands of the kings of Canaan. As to all this there could be no possible question. "Nevertheless" Jehovah's heart could feel for his poor, oppressed, and groaning Israel. True, they had proved themselves naughty and unworthy, yet His ear was ever ready to catch their very earliest groan; yea, we are even told, in Judges 10, that "his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel."

What touching words! What exquisite tenderness! What deep compassion! How such a statement lets us into the profound depths of the heart of God! The misery of His people moved the loving heart of Jehovah. The very faintest and earliest symptoms of brokenness and contrition, on the part of Israel, met with a ready and gracious response, on the part of Israel's God. It mattered not how far they had wandered, how deeply

they had sunk, or how grievously they had sinned; God was ever ready to welcome the feeblest breathings of a broken heart. The springs of divine mercy and compassion are absolutely inexhaustible. The ocean of His love is boundless and unfathomable; and hence, the very moment His people take the place of confession, He enters the place of forgiveness. He delights to pardon, according to the largeness of His heart, and according to the glory of His own Name. He finds His peculiar joy in blotting out transgressions, in healing, restoring, and blessing, in a manner worthy of Himself. This glorious truth shines in the history of Israel; it shines in the history of the church; and it shines in the history of every individual believer.

But it is high time we should turn to our immediate subject, namely, "Gideon and his companions," as presented in that portion of the Book of Judges given at the head of this paper. May the eternal Spirit unfold and apply its precious contents to our souls!

Judges 6 opens with a very sad and depressing record — a record only too characteristic of Israel's entire history: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel; and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds." What a humiliating picture! What a reverse for the. Israel of God! What a contrast to the conquering host that had crossed the Jordan and walked across the ruins of Jericho! How sad, how humbling, to think of Israel crouching and hiding in the dens and caves of the

mountains, through terror of the uncircumcised Midianites!

It is well for us to gaze upon this picture, and ponder its salutary lesson. Israel's power and glory consisted simply in having the presence of God with them. Without that, they were as water spilt upon the ground. They were as the autumn leaf before the blast. But the divine presence could not be enjoyed in connection with allowed evil; and therefore, when Israel forgot their Lord, and wandered away from Him into the forbidden paths of idolatry, He had to recall them to their senses by stretching out His governmental rod, and causing them to feel the crushing power of one or another of the nations around.

Now all this has a voice and a lesson for us. So long as God's people walk with Him in holy obedience, they have nothing to fear. They are perfectly safe from the snares and assaults of all their spiritual foes. Nought can, by any means, harm them while they abide in the shelter of God's own presence. But, clearly, that presence demands and secures holiness. Unjudged evil cannot dwell there. To live in sin and talk of security — to attempt to connect the presence of God with sanctioned evil — is wickedness of the very deepest dye. No, it must not be!" God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him." "Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever." If God's people forget these wholesome truths, He knows how to recall them to their remembrance by the rod of discipline, and, blessed for ever be His name, He loves them too well to spare that rod, however reluctant He may be to use it. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth

every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Hebrews 12: 6-12.

These are encouraging words for the people of God, at all times. The discipline may be — and no doubt is — painful; but when we know that a Father's hand is in it, and when we realise what His object is, we can pass through the trial with exercised hearts, and thus reap the peaceable fruits of righteousness. On the other hand, if we meet the discipline with an impatient spirit, a rebellious will, an unsubdued mind, we only render it necessary for the pressure to be continued and augmented, for our loving Father will never let us alone. He will have us in holy subjection to Himself, cost what it may. He graciously takes our part against ourselves, subdues the proud risings of our will, and crushes all that in us which hinders our growth in holiness, grace, and divine knowledge.

Oh! what infinite grace shines in the fact that our God occupies Himself with our very failures and follies, our

waywardness and wilfulness, our sins and shortcomings, in order to deliver us from them! He knows all about us. he understands and takes into account all our surroundings and all our inward tendencies, and He deals with us in infinite wisdom and perfect patience, keeping ever before Him that one gracious object, to make us partakers of His holiness, and — wondrous thought — to bring out in us the expression of His own nature and character. Surely, then, in the presence of such abounding grace and mercy, we may well "lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees."

PART 2

There is one truth which shines out with uncommon lustre in the Book of Judges, and that is, that God is ever to be counted upon, even amid the darkest scenes of human history; and, moreover, faith can always count upon God; God never fails a trusting heart No, never. He never has failed, never will, never can fail the individual soul that confides in Him, that takes hold of His precious word, in the artless simplicity of a faith that trusts Him in the face of man's deepest and most humiliating failure and shortcoming.

This is most consolatory and encouraging, at all times, and under all circumstances. True it is — alas! how true! man fails in everything. Trace him where you will; mark him in whatever sphere of action or responsibility he occupies, and it is the same sad tale, over and over again, of unfaithfulness, failure, and ruin. Let man be set up in business, as often as he may, with the largest capital and the fairest prospects, and he is sure to become a bankrupt. It has ever been so, from the days of Eden down to the present moment. We may assert,

without fear of contradiction, that there has not been one solitary exception to the dismal rule, in the history of Adam's fallen race. We mast never forget this. True faith never forgets it, in its highest flights and brightest visions. It would be the blindest folly to attempt to ignore the fact that ruin is stamped, in characters deep and broad, upon the entire of man's story, from first to last.

But, in the face of all this, God abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. Here is the resource and the resting-place of faith. It recognises and owns the ruin; but it counts on God. Faith is not blind to human failure; but it fixes its gaze on divine faithfulness. It confesses the ruin of man; but it counts on the resources of God.

Now, all this comes strikingly out in the interesting and instructive story of Gideon. He, truly, was made to realise, in his own person and experience, the fact of Israel's fallen condition. The contrast between Joshua and Gideon is as striking as anything can be, so far as regards the question of their condition and circumstances. Joshua could place his foot on the necks of the kings of Canaan. Gideon had to thrash his wheat in a corner to hide it from the Midianites. The day of Joshua was marked by splendid victories; the day of Gideon was a day of small things. But the day of small things for man is the day of great things for God. So Gideon found it. True, it was not permitted him to witness the sun and moon arrested in their course, or the cities of the uncircumcised levelled with the ground. His was a day of barley cakes and broken pitchers, not of astounding miracles and brilliant achievements. But God was with him; and this was enough. "There came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in

Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Judges 6: 11, 12.

What words were these to fall upon the ear of Gideon, cowering in the winepress, through fear of the enemy! They were words from heaven to lift his soul above the trials and sorrows, and humiliations of earth — words of divine power and virtue to infuse vigour into his depressed and sorrowing heart. "Thou mighty man of valour!" How hard was it for Gideon to take such wondrous accents in! How difficult to apply them to himself Where was the might or where was the valour? Most surely not in himself or in his surroundings. Where then? In the living God; precisely where Joshua found his might and his valour. Indeed there is a striking similarity in the terms in which both these eminent servants of God were addressed. The similarity of the terms is quite as marked as is the contrast in their circumstances. Here are the terms to Joshua: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: be not thou afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." And what were the terms to Gideon? Even the very same — "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."

Precious words! Soul-stirring, heart-strengthening accents! Words of light, life, and power! And yet Gideon was slow to make his own of them — slow to grasp them, in the lovely appropriating power of faith, which so delights the heart of God, and glorifies His name. How often is it thus with us! How constantly we fail to rise to the height of God's gracious thoughts and purposes

towards us! We are prone to reason about ourselves and our surroundings, instead of believing God, and resting, in sweet tranquillity, in His perfect love and infallible faithfulness.

Thus it was with that dear man of God on whose history we are dwelling. The divine statement was clear, full, absolute, and unconditional: "The Lord is with thee." There was no ground, in these words, for any question, doubt, or difficulty whatsoever; and yet mark Gideon's reply: "And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Verse 18.

Here, as is evident, Gideon reasons from his surroundings. Hence the "if" — that little monosyllable of unbelief It is a familiar remark amongst us, "If you want to be miserable, look within; if you want to be distracted, look around; if you want to be peaceful and happy, look up — 'look off unto Jesus."' This is most true. So surely as we become occupied with self, or with men and things, the circumstances which surround us, we must be unhinged and unhappy. Our only strength, our only comfort, our only light, is to keep the eye of faith fixed on Jesus, and the heart firmly centred in Him. Most certainly Gideon's surroundings were of the gloomiest character. His "sensible horizon" was overhung with dark and heavy clouds. But there was one bright and blessed ray which shone in upon his depressed spirit — a ray emanating from the very heart of God, and conveyed in that one brief but comprehensive sentence, "The Lord is with thee." There was no "if" in this — no

doubt, no difficulty, no reserve, no condition. It was distinct and unqualified, and needed only one thing to make it a spring of joy, strength, and victory in Gideon's soul, and that was to mix it with faith. But then "if" is not faith. True faith never answers God with ifs, for the simplest of all reasons, that it looks only at God, and there are no ifs with Him. Faith reasons from God downwards; not from man upwards. Faith has only one difficulty, and that difficulty is embodied in the question, "How shall he not?" It never says, "How shall he?" This is the language of sheer unbelief.

But, it may be asked by some, was there not some foundation for Gideon's "if" and "why?" Certainly not in God or in His word, whatever there had been in Israel and their actings. No doubt, if Gideon had only cast his eye back over the pages of his national history, he might have discovered ample reason for the sad and humiliating condition in which he found himself. Those blotted pages would have furnished an abundant answer to his question, "Why then is all this befallen us?" But had Israel's actings dimmed the lustre of Jehovah's mighty "miracles?" Not in the vision of faith, most surely. God had done great and glorious things for His people; and the record of those doings lay ever under the eye of faith, in all its soul-sustaining virtue. No doubt Israel had failed — shamefully failed; and the record of that failure lay also under the eye of faith, and furnished a solemn answer to Gideon's inquiry, "Why is all this befallen us?" Faith recognises God's government as well as His grace, and moreover it bows, in solemn awe, before each stroke of His governmental rod.

It is well to keep all this in mind. We are apt to forget it. God has, at times, to stretch forth his hand and lift the

rod of authority. He cannot own what is contrary to His name and His nature. Now, Gideon needed to remember this. Israel had sinned, and this was the reason why they were under the rod, of which the power of the Midianites was the expression in Gideon's day.

Gideon, we repeat, was called to enter practically into the meaning of all this; and not only so, but to taste the reality of identification with his people in all their pressure and affliction. This latter, as we know, was the portion and experience of every true servant of God in Israel. All had to pass through those deep exercises of soul consequent upon their association with the people of God. It mattered not whether it were a judge, a prophet, a priest, or a king; all had to participate in the sorrows and trials of the nation of Israel; nor could any true heart — any genuine lover of God or His people — desire exemption from such deep and holy exercises. This was pre-eminently true of the only perfect Servant that ever stood upon this earth. He, though personally exempt from all the consequences of Israel's sin and failure — though pure and spotless, divinely holy in nature and in life — did nevertheless, in perfect grace, voluntarily identify Himself with the people in all their sorrow and humiliation. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Thus it was with our blessed Lord Jesus Christ; and all who, in any degree, partook of His Spirit, had, according to their measure, to taste of the same cup, though none could ever come up to Him in this or in aught else.

But when we come to compare closely the angel's words to Gideon, with his reply, we notice a point of deep interest, and one which illustrates the individual character of the Book of Judges. The angel says, "The

Lord is with thee." Gideon replies, "If the Lord be with us." This is very interesting and instructive; moreover it is in full keeping with a passage already referred to, in Judges 3: "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge" — it does not say, "with the people," but adds, with touching grace — "and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." Verse 18.

There is peculiar sweetness and beauty in this. If Jehovah had to hide His face from His people, and give them over, for the time, into the hand of the uncircumcised, yet His loving heart was ever turned towards them, and ever ready to mark and recognise the faintest traces of a repentant spirit. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." Micah 7: 18-20.

PART 3.

Nothing can be more encouraging to the heart than the mode in which the Lord deals with the soul of Gideon — the way in which He prepares him for the course of action to which He was calling him. Gideon, like ourselves, was full of "ifs" and "whys," those little words so big with unbelief The poor human heart is ever slow

to take in the magnificence of divine grace; our feeble vision is dazzled by the brilliancy of divine revelation. It is only artless faith which can cause the soul to feel perfectly at home in the presence of the richest unfoldings of the goodness and loving-kindness of God. Faith never says "if" or "why?" It believes what God says, because He says it. It rests, in sweet tranquillity, upon every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. Unbelief looks at circumstances, and reasons from them. Faith looks at God, and reasons from Him. Hence the vast difference in their conclusions. Gideon, judging from his surroundings, concluded that Jehovah had forsaken His people. A simple faith would have led him to the very opposite conclusion; it would have enabled him to see and know and remember that Jehovah would ever be true to His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, however He might, in His governmental dealings, have to hide His face from their rebellious and sinful offspring. Faith always counts on God; and God, blessed be His name, ever honours faith. He first creates it, and then owns it.

But, not only does God graciously honour faith; He rebukes our fears. He rises above our unbelief, and hushes all our silly reasonings. Thus, in His dealings with His chosen servant Gideon, it would seem as though He heard not the "if" or the "why?" He goes on to unfold His own thoughts, to display His own resources, and to fill the soul of His servant with a confidence and a courage which were to lift him above all the depressing influences with which he was surrounded.

"And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel out of the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" Here we have the true

secret of strength: "The Lord looked upon him." There was divine power in this look, if Gideon could only have taken it in. But alas! he was still full of questions. "And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

Thus it is ever. Unbelief turns the eye in upon self, or out upon our surroundings. It leads us to compare our visible resources with the work to which God is calling us. Jehovah had said, "Go in this thy might." What was the "might?" In what did it consist? Was it great wealth, lofty position, or great physical power? Nothing of the kind. "Jehovah looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel." This was absolute and unqualified. It left no room for Gideon's "wherewith?" It made it very plain that the might with which he was to deliver Israel was not in himself or in his father's house, but in the God of Israel. It mattered little whether his family was rich or poor; whether he was little or great. It was God who was about to use him. What was wealth or greatness to Him? He could use a barley cake or a broken pitcher. Indeed we may observe this special feature in the varied instruments taken up in the Book of Judges, namely, that "no flesh shall glory in God's presence." How does human glory fade away before the humiliating fact that Israel's hosts were called forth to battle under the leadership of a woman! What a stain on human pride in the fact of deliverance coming through the agency of a "left-handed man!"

But, on the other hand, we find that, just in proportion as man's glory fades away, the divine glory shines out. The humbler the instrument, the more we see the power of God. What difference does it make to the Almighty

God whether His instrument be left-handed or right-handed — a man or a woman — a dwarf or a giant? The instrument is nothing. God is all in all. True, He deigns to use instruments; but all the power is His, and His shall be the eternal and universal praise. Gideon had to learn this; and so had Moses; and so have we all. It is an invaluable lesson. We are all so prone to think of our competency for any work or service which may lie before us, when we ought to remember that the works that are done upon the earth, God is the doer of them. Our sufficiency is of Him. We can do nothing; and if we could do aught it would be badly done. The human finger can only leave a soil behind. The works of men perish like their thoughts. The work of God abideth for ever. Let us remember these things, that we may walk humbly and lean ever and only on the mighty arm of the living God. Thus the soul is kept in a well-balanced condition, free from self-confidence and fleshly excitement, on the one hand; and from gloom and depression, on the other. If we can do nothing, self-confidence is the height of presumption. If God can do everything, despondency is the height of folly.

But in the case of Gideon, as in that of all God's servants, we observe two things worthy of our deepest attention. In the first place, we have the divine commission, as embodied in those weighty words, "Have not I sent thee?" And in the second place, we have the assurance of the divine presence, as set forth in these encouraging words, "Surely I will be with thee."

These are the two grand points for all who will serve God in their day and generation. They must know that the path they tread has been marked out distinctly by the hand of God; and, furthermore, they must have the

sense of His presence with them along the path. These things are absolutely essential. Without them we shall waver and vacillate. We shall be running from one line of work to another. We shall take up certain work, go on with it for a while, and then abandon it for something else. We shall work by fits and starts; our course will be faltering, our light flickering: "Unstable as water, we shall not excel." We shall never succeed at anything. There will be no certainty, no stability, no progress.

These are weighty matters for all of us. It is of immense importance for every servant of Christ, every child of God, to know that he is at his divinely appointed post, and at his divinely given work. This will give fixedness of purpose, moral elevation, and holy independence. It will preserve us from being tossed about by human thoughts and opinions — being influenced by the judgment of one or another. It is our happy privilege to be so sure that we are doing the very work which the Master has given us to do, that the thoughts of our fellows respecting us shall have no more weight with us than the pattering of rain on the window.

Not — be it carefully observed — that we should, for a moment, countenance, much less cultivate, a spirit of haughty independence. Far away be the thought! We, as Christians, can never, in one sense, be independent one of another, How can we, seeing we are members one of another? We are united to one another and to our risen Head in glory, by the one Spirit who is with us and in us. The most intense individuality — and our individuality should be as intense as our unity is indissoluble — can never touch the precious truth of the one body and one Spirit.

All this is divinely true, and most fully and thankfully owned. But, at the same time, we must insist upon the truth of our individuality, and of our personal responsibility. This must be maintained with all possible energy and decision. Each servant has to do with his Lord, in that particular sphere of work to which he has been called. And, moreover, each should know his work, and give himself to it diligently and constantly. He should possess the holy certainty and authority imparted to the soul by that divine and powerful sentence, "Have not I sent thee?"

It will, perhaps, be said, "We are not all Gideons or Joshuas. We are not all called to occupy such a prominent place or tread such a brilliant path as those illustrious servants." True; but we are called to serve; and it is essential to every servant to know his commission, to understand his work, and to be fully assured in his own soul that he is doing the very work which the Lord has given him to do, and treading the very path which the hand of God has marked out for him If there be any uncertainty as to this, we do not see how there can be any progress.

But there is more than this. It is not enough to know that we are treading the divinely appointed path. We want to realise the divine presence. We want to have the precious words made good in our experience, "Surely I will be with thee." This completes the servant's equipment. The divine commission and the divine presence are all we want; but we must have these in order to get on. With these priceless realities it matters not who we are, what we are, or where we are. The Lord can use a feeble woman, a left-handed man, a cake of barley meal, or a broken pitcher. The instrument is

nothing. God is the workman. Unbelief may cry out, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Faith can cry out, in reply, "What of all this if God be for us? Does He want the rich or the noble? What are riches or greatness to Him? Nothing." "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Corinthians 1: 26-29.

These are wholesome words for all of us. It is an unspeakable mercy for every dear servant of Christ to be kept in the abiding sense of his own utter nothingness — to be taught to realise, in some measure, the depth, fulness, and power of that one brief but most comprehensive statement, "Apart from me ye can do nothing." There is not a single branch in all the vine, however imposing or wide-spreading it may seem to be, which, if separated from the parent stem by the thickness of a gold leaf, can produce the very smallest atom of fruit. There must be the abiding realisation of our vital union with Christ the practical, living, abiding in Him, by faith, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, in order to bring forth any fruit that God can accept. It is as we abide in Christ that the living sap circulates freely through us, and gives forth the healthy bud, the green leaf, and the seasonable fruit.

Here lies the grand secret of power. It is abiding in the living vine. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river; and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jeremiah 17: 7, 8.

All this is intensely personal. We must each, for himself and herself, cling, by faith, to Christ. It is of the very last possible importance for Christians to bear in mind that Christianity is a thoroughly individual thing. We are individual in our repentance, in our faith, in our salvation, in our communion, in our service, and in our reward. Look at the addresses to the seven churches in Revelation 2 & 3. Hearken to those pointed words, "He that hath an ear" — "To him that overcometh." What do they mean? Do they not set forth, in the most distinct and forcible manner, that blessed individuality of which we speak? Unquestionably. But do they touch unity? Not in the smallest degree. They leave its sacred domain wholly untouched." There is one body and one Spirit." This must ever hold good, spite of all the ruin and failure of the professing church. Nevertheless, the writings of John are pre-eminently individual. From the opening lines of his Gospel to the closing sentence of his Apocalypse, we trace this feature. He shows us the Philips, the Simons, the Andrews, and the Nathanaels coming, in their individuality, to Jesus. He tells us of a Jewish ruler here, and a Samaritan sinner there, who were drawn by the Father to Jesus. He tells us of the good Shepherd who calleth His sheep by name he tells us of the branches clinging to the living vine. Thus it is

in John's Gospel; and when we turn to his Epistles, we find the same principle running through them all. He writes to an elect lady, and to his beloved Gaius; and if he once speaks of "the church," it is but to weep over its departed glory, and to raise amid its ruins that warning note for individual ears, "Look to yourselves." And as to the Revelation, it ends as it begins, with a solemn appeal "to him that Heareth."

PART 4.

The more closely we study the narrative of the Lord's dealings with Gideon, the more we must be struck with the marvellous way in which He prepares him for his after course. Like all God's servants, in all ages, Gideon had to undergo a course of secret training and discipline, ere he was fit to appear in public The space of time occupied in this training may vary, as may also the character of the discipline; but of this we may rest assured that all who will be used of God in public mast be taught of God in private. It is a fatal mistake for any one to rush into prominence without proper equipment, and that equipment can only be attained in the secret of the divine presence. It is in profound and hallowed retirement with God that vessels are filled and instruments fitted for His work.

Let us never forget this. Moses had to spend forty years at "the back side of the desert" ere he was fit to enter upon his public career. David had to feed his father's flock, ere he was called to rule the nation of Israel. He slew a lion and a bear in secret, ere he was called to slay Goliath in public. The great apostle of the Gentiles spent three years in Arabia, notwithstanding his very remarkable conversion and call. The apostles spent

three years and a half in companionship with their Master, and then had to tarry until they were endued with power from on high. Thus it has been with all those who have ever been called to occupy a prominent place in the Lord's work; and even the blessed Master Himself — though surely needing no training or discipline, inasmuch as He was ever perfect — to set us an example, spent thirty years in retirement ere He came forth in public.

All this is full of most wholesome instruction for our souls. Let us seek to take it in and profit by it. No one can ever get on in public work without this private teaching in the school of Christ. It is this which gives depth, solidity, and mellowness to the character. It imparts a tone of reality and a fixedness of purpose most desirable in all who engage in any department of the Lord's work. It will invariably be found that where anyone goes to work without this divine preparation, there is shallowness and instability, There may perhaps, for a time, be more flash and show in those superficial characters than in those who have been educated in the school of Christ: but it never lasts. It may create a momentary sensation, but it soon passes away like the morning cloud or the early dew. Nothing will stand but that which is the direct result of private communion with God — secret training in His presence — the excellent discipline of the school of God.

Let us see how all this is exemplified in Gideon's case. It is very evident that this honoured servant was called to pass through deep exercises of soul before ever he took a single step in public action, yea before he ever unfurled the standard of testimony in his father's house. He had to begin with himself, with his own personal

condition, with his own heart. Those who will be used for others must begin with themselves. So Gideon found it. Let us pursue his history.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry till thou come again. And Gideon went in and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour; the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." Judges 6: 16-23.

Here we reach a profoundly interesting stage of Gideon's preparatory course. He is called to enter practically and experimentally into the great and universal law for the servants of God, namely, "When I am weak, then I am strong." This is a most precious law, and one which forms an indispensable element in the education of all Christ's servants. Let no one imagine

that he can ever be used in the Lord's work, or ever make progress in the divine life, without some measure of real entrance into this invaluable principle We hold it to be absolutely essential in forming the character of the true servant of Christ. Where it is not known, where it has not been felt, where it has not been, to some extent, realised, there is sure to be unsubduedness, unbrokenness, self-occupation, in some form or another. There will be more or less of self-confidence, and various points and angles turning up, here and there, and acting as a sad hindrance to all that is good, useful, and holy.

On the other hand, when one has learnt that great family motto quoted above — when one has learnt, in the divine presence to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong" — when nature has been weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, there you will always find a measure of brokenness, softness, and tenderness of spirit; and not only so, but also largeness of heart, and readiness for every good work, and that lovely elasticity of mind which enables one to rise above all those petty selfish considerations which so sadly hinder the work of God. In short, the heart must first be broken, then made whole; and, being made whole, be undividedly given to Christ and to His blessed service. It is impossible to run the eye along the brilliant array of Christ's workmen, and not see the truth of this. Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, in Old Testament times; and Peter, Paul, and John, in those of the New, all stand before us as vivid illustrations of the value of broken material. All those beloved and honoured servants had to be broken in order to be made whole — to be emptied in order to be filled — to learn that, of themselves, they

could do nothing, in order to be ready, in Christ's strength, for anything and everything.

Such is the law of the household — the law of the vineyard — the law of the kingdom. So Gideon found it in his day. His "alas!" was followed by Jehovah's "Peace; fear not," and then he Was ready to begin. He had been brought face to face with the angel of God, and there he learnt not only that his family was poor in Manasseh, and he the least in his father's house, but that in himself he was perfectly powerless, and that all his springs must be found in the living God. Priceless lesson this, for the son of Joash, and for us all! a lesson not to be learnt in the schools and colleges of this world, but only in the deep and holy retirement of the sanctuary of God.

And now let us see what was Gideon's first act after his fears were hushed, and his soul filled with divine peace. His very first act was to build an altar. "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites." He takes the happy place of a worshipper, and his worship is characterised by the revelation of the divine character. He calls his altar by that precious title, "The Lord send peace." He had gone through many and deep exercises of soul-exercises which none can know save those who are called out into a prominent place amongst God's people. He felt the ruin and the weakness of all around him. He felt the fallen and humiliating condition of his beloved people. He felt his own littleness, yea his own emptiness and nothingness. How could he come forward? How could he smite the Midianites? How could he save Israel? Who was sufficient for these things? It is all very well for those persons who live an easy, irresponsible kind of life; who

know not the toils, the cares, and anxieties connected with the public service of Christ and the testimony for His name in an evil day. These know nothing of Gideon's painful exercises of soul; nothing of the pressure upon his spirit as he looked forth from beneath the shade of his father's oak tree, and contemplated the dangers and responsibilities of the battle-field. They can enter but feebly into the meaning of those words of one high up in the school of Christ, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead."

These are weighty words for all Christ's servants; but we must be His servants in reality, in order to enter into their deep significance. If we are content to live a life of indolence and ease, a life of self-seeking and self-pleasing, it is impossible for us to understand such words, or indeed to enter into any of those intense exercises of soul through which Christ's true-hearted servants and faithful witnesses, in all ages, have been called to pass. We invariably find that all those who have been most used of God in public have gone through deep waters in secret. It is as the sentence of death is written practically upon self, that the power of resurrection life in Christ shines out. Thus Paul could say to the Corinthians, "Death worketh in us; but life in you." Marvellous words! Words which let us into the profound depths of the apostle's ministry. What a ministry must that have been which was carried on upon such a principle as this! What power! what energy!

Death working in the poor earthen vessel, but streams of life, heavenly grace, and spiritual power flowing into those to whom he ministered.

This, reader, we may depend upon it, is the true secret of all effective ministry. It is an easy matter to talk about ministry; to set up to be ministers of Christ; but oh! how has the professing church departed from the divine reality of ministry! Alas! the heart sinks at the bare thought of it. Where are the Pauls, the Gideons, and the Joshuas? Where are the deep heart searchings and profound soul exercises which have characterised Christ's servants in other days? We are flippant and wordy, shallow and empty, self-sufficient and self-indulgent. Need we wonder at the small results? How can we expect to see life working in others when we know so little about death working in us?

May the eternal Spirit stir us all up, and work in us a more powerful sense of what it is to be the true-hearted, single-eyed, devoted servants of Jesus Christ!

PART 5.

We are now to contemplate Gideon called forth into action. He has received his commission from Jehovah. His questions have been answered, his fears hushed, his heart tranquillised, and he is enabled to build an altar. All this had reference to his own personal condition, to the state of his own soul, to the attitude of his own heart as in the sight of God.

Thus it must ever be. We must all begin in this way, if we are ever to be used of God to act on others. We must have to do with God in the secret of our own souls, else we shall prove to be but sorry workmen in the sequel. All who go forth in public work, without this secret training, are sure to prove flimsy and shallow. Self must be measured in the divine presence. We must learn that nature is of no account in the Lord's work. "Not by

might, nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zechariah 4: 6.

It was not until Gideon had gone through somewhat of this holy discipline in secret that he was led out into service. And let us carefully note where he had to commence. "It came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old" — for Jehovah knew how many bullocks Joash had, and the age of each — "and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it. And build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down."

Here we see that Gideon had to begin at home. He was called to unfurl the standard of testimony in the very bosom of his family — in the very centre of his father's house. This is intensely interesting, and deeply practical. It teaches a lesson to which we should all bend our ears and apply our hearts. Testimony must begin at home. It will never do to rush forth into public work while our private and domestic ways are anything but what they ought to be. It is useless to set about throwing down the altar of Baal in public, while the selfsame altar remains standing at home.

This is of the very last possible importance. We are all of us imperatively called upon to show piety at home. Nothing is more sorrowful than to meet with persons who, abroad amongst their fellow men or their fellow Christians, are marked by a high tone of spirituality — a style of speaking which would lead one to suppose them

far beyond the ordinary level of Christians, and yet when you come to close quarters with them — when you become acquainted with their private life and ways, their actual history from day to day, you find them very far indeed from bearing testimony for Christ to those with whom they come in contact. This is most deplorable. It dishonours the Lord Jesus, grieves the Spirit, stumbles and repulses young believers, gives occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully, and to our brethren to speak doubtfully, of us. Surely these things ought not to be. There ought to be a testimony yielded at home. Those who see most of us should see most of Christ in us. Those who know us best ought best to know that we are Christ's. But alas! how often is it otherwise! How often does it happen that the home circle is just the place where we least exhibit the lovely traits of Christian character! The wife or the husband, the parent or the child, the brother or the sister, the master or the servant, the fellow servant or some other companion in daily life, is just the one in whose sight we least display the beauteous fruits of divine life. It is in private life that all our weak points come out — our oddities and peculiarities, our silly tendencies and sinful tempers: instead of which it ought to be in that very sphere that the grace of Jesus is most faithfully manifested.

Christian reader, let us not turn away from the word of reproof, of admonition, or exhortation. It may not be pleasant; but, we may rest assured it is salutary. It may not be agreeable to the flesh; but it is wholesome to the soul. We are called, like Gideon, to begin at home, if we would prove helpful to our brethren, or act effectively against the common foe.

No doubt, there are difficulties involved in this home testimony. It is often very hard, for example, for a child to bear witness against the worldliness of a parent, or of the whole family; but where there is humility of mind and simple dependence upon God, He maintains and carries us through marvellously. One thing is certain, there is nothing like decision. "The first blow is half the battle," yea, the whole battle is often gained by a single blow, when that blow is dealt in full communion with the mind of Christ.

On the other hand, where there is weakness and vacillation — playing fast and loose with the truth of God, trifling with divine principles and one's own conscience, a looking at consequences and a weighing of probable results — there the enemy is sure to have the upper hand, and the testimony altogether fails. God acts with those who act for Him. This is the grand secret of their success; but where the eye is not single, there is no real progress, no divine result.

Here is where so many of us signally fail. We are not whole hearted, not decided, not thoroughly out — and out for Christ. Hence there is no result for God, no action on others. We have no idea of what may be accomplished by a single devoted heart, one earnest and energetic soul. Such an one may be used to raise up a standard round which thousands will flock who might never have had the courage or energy to unfurl the standard themselves.

Look at Gideon. See how he wrought for God, and how God wrought with him. "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him; and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the

men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. And when the men of the city rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die; because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it."

This is what we may call striking at the very root of the matter. The worship of Baal is completely overturned. This was no trifle. We have little idea of what it cost the son of Joash to do this thing; but, by the grace of God, he did it. True it may have been with fear and trembling, still he did it. He dealt one vigorous blow at the entire system of Baal, and it crumbled into dust beneath his feet. No half measures would have availed. It would have been of no possible use to pick a stone, here and there, out of the idol's altar; the whole fabric had to be overturned from its very foundation, and the idol itself degraded in the very presence of its deluded worshippers. A bold decisive stroke was needed, and that stroke was given by the hand of Gideon the son of Joash, God's "mighty man of valour."

There is nothing, we repeat, like plain decision — bold, uncompromising faithfulness for Christ, cost what it may. Had Gideon been less decided, had his line of action been less thorough, his father Joash would not have been so perfectly won over. It needed just such a method of dealing with Baal to convince a rational person that the worship of such a god was a sham and a

falsehood. "And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar."

This was very simple reasoning, "If he be a god, let him plead for himself." Gideon's decided course had brought matters to a point. Baal was either a reality or a most complete delusion. If the former, let him plead for himself. If the latter, who would think of pleading for him? Nothing could be simpler. Gideon's action was a complete success. The worship of Baal was overturned; and the worship of Jehovah Elohim set up instead.

Thus we see that the divine work in the soul of Gideon is making very rapid but very real progress. He is conducted from strength to strength. How little idea had he, when first the divine voice fell on his ear, that, in so short a time, he would take so bold a step. If anyone had said to him, then, "In a few hours you will overturn the worship of Baal in the very midst of your father's house," he would not have believed it. But the Lord led him along, step by step, gently yet firmly; and as the heavenly light broke in upon his soul his confidence and courage grew.

Thus it is the Lord ever deals with His servants. He does not expect them to run before they have learnt to walk; but where the heart is true, and the purpose honest and firm, He graciously supplies the needed strength, moment by moment. He causes mountains of difficulty to remove, rolls away many a dark and heavy cloud,

fortifies the heart, and girds up the loins of the mind, so that the very feeblest are armed with giant strength, and the coward heart filled with wonder, love, and praise at the triumph of divine grace.

All this is illustrated with great vividness in Gideon's interesting story. No sooner had he levelled Baal's altar, than he was called to encounter Midian's hosts. "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also was gathered after him; and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them."

In short there was a thorough awakening. The tide of spiritual energy rose majestically, and bore hundreds and thousands upon its bosom. The work which had begun in Gideon's heart was extending itself far and wide, throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Spirit of the Lord was displaying His mighty energy, and multitudes were stirred up to gather round the standard which the hand of faith had unfurled.

But just at this point, it would seem that Gideon's faith needed fresh confirmation. It may be his spirit was overawed when he saw the mighty host of the uncircumcised mustering before him; and then, for a moment, his courage failed, and his heart craved a fresh sign from the Lord. "And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said" — alas! the poor heart can place its unbelieving "if" right in

front of the word of God who cannot lie — "behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and if it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said."

How marvellous! And yet we need not marvel if we know aught of our own hearts. Anything for the poor human heart but the naked word of the living God. A sign, a token, something that the eye can see. The word of God is not enough for unbelieving nature.

But oh! the matchless grace of God! His unupbraiding love! His tender considerateness! He graciously meets the weakness of His poor servant, for "It was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowlfull of water." What condescending grace! Instead of severely rebuking Gideon's unbelieving "if," He graciously confirms his wavering faith by superabounding evidence.

And yet all this sufficed not. Gideon seeks still further confirmation. "And he said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once. Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew upon all the ground." Such is the abounding grace and exhaustless patience of the God with whom we have to do. For ever adored be His holy name! Who would not trust Him, and love Him, and serve Him?

PART 6.

We shall now ask the reader to open his Bible at Judges 7. Here Gideon's companions are brought before us; and their history, as well as that of their leader, is full of interest and profit for us. They had to be trained and tested as well as he. Let us ponder the narrative.

"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh in the valley. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."

The clear and soul-stirring blast of Gideon's trumpet had drawn around him a very large and imposing company; but this company had to be tested. It is one thing to be moved by the zeal and energy of some earnest servant of Christ, and it is quite another thing to possess those moral qualities which alone can fit a man to be an earnest servant himself. There is a vast difference between following in the wake of some devoted man of God, and walking with God ourselves — being propped up and led on by the faith and energy of another, and leaning upon God in the power of individual faith for ourselves.

This is a serious consideration for all of us. There is always great danger of our being mere imitators of other people's faith; of copying their example without their spiritual power; of adopting their peculiar line of things without their personal communion. All this must be carefully guarded against. We specially warn the young Christian reader against it. Let us be simple, and

humble, and real. We may be very small, our sphere very narrow, our path very retired; but it does not matter in the least, provided we are precisely what grace has made us, and occupying the sphere in which our blessed Master has set us, and treading the path which He has opened before us. It is by no means absolutely necessary that we should be great, or prominent, or showy, or noisy in the world; but it is absolutely necessary that we should be real and humble, obedient and dependent. Thus our God can use us, without fear of our vaunting ourselves; and then, too, we are safe, peaceful, and happy. There is nothing more delightful to the true Christian, the genuine servant of Christ, than to find himself in that quiet, humble, shady path where self is lost sight of, and the precious light of God's countenance enjoyed — where the thoughts of men are of small account, and the sweet approval of Christ is everything to the soul.

Flesh cannot be trusted. It will turn the very service of Christ into an occasion of self-exaltation. It will use the very name of him who made Himself nothing in order to make itself something. It will build up its own reputation by seeming to further the cause of Him who made Himself of none. Such is flesh! Such are we in ourselves! silly, self-exalting creatures, ever ready to vaunt ourselves, while professing to be nothing in ourselves, and to deserve nothing but the flames of an everlasting hell.

Need we marvel at the testing and proving of Gideon's companions? All must be tested and proved. The service of Christ is a very solemn and a very holy thing; and all who take part therein must be self; judged, self-distrusting, and self-emptied; and not only so, but they

must lean, with unshaken confidence, upon the living God, These are the grand qualities that go to make up the character of the true servant of Christ, and they are strikingly illustrated on the page of inspiration which now lies open before us.

Let us proceed with the narrative.

"The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands…Now, therefore, go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."

Here the first grand test is applied to Gideon's host — a test designed to bring out the measure of the heart's simple confidence in Jehovah. A coward heart will not do for the day of battle; a doubting spirit will not stand in the conflict. The same principle is set forth in Deuteronomy 20: 8: "And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart."

Faint heartedness is terribly contagious. It spreads rapidly. It withers the arm that should bear the shield, and paralyses the hand that should wield the sword. The only cure for this malady is simple confidence in God, a firm grasp of His faithfulness, a child-like trust in His word, true personal acquaintance with Himself. We must know God for ourselves, in such a way that His word is everything to us, and that we can walk alone with Him, and stand alone with Him in the darkest hour.

Reader, is it thus with thee? Hast thou this blessed confidence in God — this solid hold of His word? Hast thou, deep down in thy heart, such an experimental knowledge of God and His Christ as shall sustain thee even though thou hadst not the support or sympathy of another believer under the sun? Art thou prepared to walk alone in the world?

These are weighty questions, and we feel the need of pressing them upon the church of God at the present moment. There is a wide diffusion of the precious truth of God, and numbers are getting hold of it. Like the blast of Gideon's trumpet, so the clear testimony which has gone forth within the last few years has attracted many; and while we quite feel that there is real ground for thankfulness in this, we also feel that there is ground for very serious reflection indeed. Truth is a most precious thing, if it be truthfully found: and truthfully held: but let us remember that in exact proportion to the preciousness of the truth of God is the moral danger of trafficking therein without a self judged heart and an exercised conscience. What we really need is faith — unfeigned, earnest, simple, faith, which connects the soul, in living power, with God, and enables us to overcome all the difficulties and discouragements of the way. Of this faith there can be no imitation. We must either possess it in reality or not at all. A sham faith will speedily come to the ground. The man who attempts to walk by faith, if he have it not must speedily totter and fall. We cannot face the hosts of Midian unless we have full confidence in the living God. "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return." Thus it must ever be. None can go to battle save those who are braced up by a faith that grasps the unseen realities of eternity, and endures

as seeing Him who is invisible. May this faith be ours, in larger measure, beloved reader.

It is full of instruction for the heart to notice the effect of the first test upon the host of Gideon. It thinned his ranks amazingly. "There returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand." This was a serious reduction. But it is far better to have ten thousand that can trust God than ten thousand times ten thousand who cannot. What avails a vast mass of unbelieving flesh? Nothing Of what use are numbers, if they be not energised by a living faith? None whatever. It is comparatively easy to flock around a standard raised by a vigorous hand; but it is a totally different thing to stand, in personal energy, in the actual battle. Nought but genuine faith can do this; and hence when the searching question is put "Who can trust God?" the showy ranks of profession are speedily thinned.

But there was yet another test for Gideon's companions. "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the

Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place." Judges 7: 4-7.

Here then we have another great moral quality which must ever characterise those who will act for God and for His people, in an evil day. They must not only have confidence in God, but they must also be prepared to surrender self. This is a universal law in the service of Christ. If we want to swim in God's current, we must sink self; and we can only sink self in proportion as we trust Christ. Thus it stands ever. It is not, need we say, a question of salvation; it is a question of service It is not a question of being a child of God, but of being a proper servant of Christ. The thirty-one thousand seven hundred that were dismissed from Gideon's army, were just as much Israelites as the three hundred that remained; but they were not fitted for the moment of conflict; they were not the right men for the crisis. And why? Was it that they were not circumcised? Nay. What then? They could not trust God and surrender self. They were full of fear when they ought to have been full of faith. They made refreshment their object instead of conflict.

Here, reader, lay the true and only secret of their moral unfitness. God cannot trust those who do not trust Him and sink self. This is pre-eminently solemn and practical. We live in a day of easy profession and self-indulgence. Knowledge can, now-a-days, be picked up at very small cost. Scraps of truth can be gathered, second hand, in all directions. Truth which cost some of God's dear servants years of deep soul ploughing and heart-searching exercise, is now in free circulation and can be intellectually seized and flippantly professed, by many

who know not what soul ploughing or heart-exercise means.

But let us never forget — yea, let us constantly remember — that the life of faith is a reality; service is a reality; testimony for Christ, a reality. And further let us bear in mind that if we want to stand for Christ in an evil day — if we would be men for the crisis, genuine servants, true witnesses — then verily we must learn the true meaning of those two qualities, namely, confidence in God, and self-surrender.

PART 7.

There is something peculiarly striking in the fact that out of the many thousands of Israel, in the days of Gideon, there were only three hundred men who were really fit for conflict with the Midianites; only this small band fit for the occasion. This truly is a suggestive and admonitory fact. There were hundreds of thousands of true Israelites — truly circumcised sons of Abraham — members of the congregation of the Lord, who were by no means up to the mark, when it was a question of war to the knife with Midian — a question of genuine confidence in God and self-surrender. We are safe in saying that the men who were morally fitted for the grand crisis in the day of battle were not one in a thousand. How solemn! Not one in a thousand who could trust God and deny self.

Christian reader, is not this something worthy of deep and serious thought? Does it not, very naturally, suggest the inquiry as to whether it is otherwise at this moment? Is it not painfully evident that we live in a day in the which little is known of the blessed secret of confidence in God, and still less of the exercise of self-surrender? In

point of fact, these things can never be rightly separated. If we attempt to divorce self-surrender from confidence in God, it will land us in the deep and dark delusions of monasticism, asceticism, or ritualism. It will issue in nature trying to subdue nature. This, we need hardly say, is the direct opposite of Christianity. This latter starts with the glorious fact that the old self has been condemned and set aside by the cross of Christ, and therefore it can be practically surrendered, every day, by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the meaning of those fine words in Colossians 3, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." He does not say, "Ye ought to be dead." No; but "ye are dead." What then? "Mortify your members which are on the earth." So also in the profound and precious teaching in Romans 6, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death?" What then? "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Here then lies the secret of all true surrender. If this be not understood and practically entered into, it will simply be self in one form trying to subdue self in another. This is a fatal delusion. It is a snare of the devil into which earnest souls are in imminent danger of falling, who sigh after holiness of life, but do not know the power of accomplished redemption, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost — are not built upon the solid foundation of Christianity.

We specially warn the reader against this deadly error. It distinctly savours of monasticism or asceticism. It clothes itself in the garb of pietism and

sanctimoniousness, and is peculiarly attractive to a certain class of ardent spirits who long for victory over the lusts, passions, and tendencies of nature; but, not knowing how to attain it, are turning their back upon Christ and His cross, and betaking themselves to the resources of a spurious religion.

It is against this most mischievous and soul-destroying system that the apostle warns us, in such glowing words in Colossians 2. "Let no man," he says, "beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances" — such as, "touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using — after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." Colossians 2: 18-23.

We deem it needful to say thus much lest any of our readers should at all mistake us on the subject of self-surrender. We desire it to be distinctly understood that the only possible ground of self-surrender is the knowledge of accomplished redemption, and our union with Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the essential basis of all Christian conduct. In short, a known salvation is the basis; the Holy Ghost indwelling, the power; and the word of God, the directory of all true self-surrender.

But what did Gideon and his companions know of these things? Nothing, as Christians now know them. But they had confidence in God, and further, they did not make their own refreshment their object, but simply took it up by the way as a means to an end. Herein they teach a fine lesson even to those whose privilege it is to walk in the full orbed light of New Testament Christianity. If they, in the dim twilight in which they lived, could trust God, and surrender self for the moment, even in measure; then what shall we say for ourselves who, with all our light and privileges, are so ready to doubt God and seek our own things?

Is it not painfully evident that, in this our day of light and privilege, there is but little moral preparedness for the path of service and conflict which we are called to tread? Alas! alas! we cannot deny it. There is a deplorable lack of genuine trust in the living God, and of the true spirit of self-surrender. Here, we may rest assured, is the deep secret of the whole matter. God is not practically known and habitually trusted; self is exalted and indulged. Hence our unfitness for the warfare, our failure in the day of battle. It is one thing to be saved, and quite another thing to be a soldier. It is one thing to have our sins forgiven, and quite another to have our swords sharpened and our shields well up. There is a vast difference between talking about conflict and taking part therein; and we cannot shake off the painful conviction that, in this day of widely extended profession, the proportion of workmen and warriors would not be found a whit greater than it was in the days of Gideon and his companions. The fact is we want men of faith, and men of one idea, men whose hearts are fixed and their eyes single, men so absorbed with Christ

and His cause that they have no time for aught beside. We greatly fear that, if the double test which was applied to Israel in the days of Gideon, were to be applied now to those who stand on the very highest platform of profession, the practical result would not differ very materially.

But we must draw this paper to a close, and shall therefore rapidly touch on two leading points, and then leave our readers to meditate closely upon the whole subject for themselves.

The close of Judges 7 shows us Gideon and his companions completely victorious. "The cake of barley bread," and "the broken pitchers," proved a match for all the power of the Midianites and the Amalekites, although the latter "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude, and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude." God was with the cake of barley bread and the pitchers, as He will ever be with those who are prepared to take the low place; prepared to be nothing, but to make Him their all in all; prepared to trust Him and to sink self. This, let it never be forgotten, is the great root principle in all service and in all conflict. Without it, we can never succeed; with it, we can never fail. It matters not what the difficulties, or what the numbers and power of our enemies, all must give way before the presence of the living God; and that presence will ever accompany those who trust Him and sink self.

Nor is this all. Not only is firm trust in God and self-surrender the secret of victory over external enemies; it is also the secret of overcoming, disarming, and melting down jealous and envious brethren, though these latter

are often far more difficult to deal with than open enemies. Thus no sooner had Gideon reached the point of victory over the uncircumcised, than he was called to encounter the petty and contemptible jealousy of his brethren. "And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply." Judges 8: 1.

All this was most uncalled for and unworthy. Had they not heard the sound of the trumpet calling Israel to the battle field? Had they not heard that the standard was unfurled? Why had they not rushed to the battle at the first? It was an easy matter to come in at the close and reap the spoil, and then find fault with the one who had been God's real instrument on the occasion.

However, we shall not dwell upon the unlovely conduct of the men of Ephraim; but turn for a moment, to the exquisite way in which Gideon was enabled to meet them. "And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you?... God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him when he had said that."

Here, Christian reader, is the true way to vanquish jealous and envious brethren. The cake of barley bread and the empty pitcher can vanquish jealous Ephraimites as well as hostile Midianites. A self-hiding spirit is the grand secret of victory over envy and jealousy, in all their odious forms. It is difficult, if not impossible, to quarrel with a man who is down in the dust, in true self-abasement. "What have I done now in comparison of you?" This is the language of one who had learnt

something of the real meaning of self-surrender; and we may safely assert that such language must ever disarm the envy and jealousy of the self-occupied and self-sufficient. May we know more and more of the truth of this!

But we must now contemplate the closing scene of Gideon's remarkable history — a scene full of admonition for every servant of Christ. From it we learn that it is far easier to gain a victory than to make a good use of it; far easier to reach a position than to occupy it aright. We shall quote the passage. "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

So far, this was very fine. It was in full keeping with the self-surrender of Gideon's previous course Every true servant of Christ will ever seek to connect souls with his Master, and not with himself. Gideon would not, for worlds, displace Jehovah as the ruler of Israel. Bat alas! what he shrank from, in one form, he fell into, in another; and this too, simply because his self-surrender was not complete. There has been but One whose self-surrender was, and that One must, in all things, have the pre-eminence. "And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.... And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went

thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." Judges 8: 22-27.

Such is man, even the best of men, when left to himself. Here we see the very man who had led his brethren on to victory over Midian, now leading them into dark and abominable idolatry. The earrings of the Ishmaelites did what their swords could not do; and the love-tokens of the men of Israel proved far more dangerous than the sharp chidings of the men of Ephraim. The latter drew out a lovely spirit of self-emptiness: the former proved a snare to Gideon and to the whole house of Israel.

Reader, let us remember all this. If Gideon had refused the earrings as well as the throne, it would have been well for him and for his brethren; but the devil laid a snare for him into which he fell and carried all his brethren with him. May we all take warning from Gideon's fall, and draw encouragement from Gideon's victories. May we remember that it is one thing to gain a victory, and another to make good use of it; it is easier to reach a position than to occupy it aright. May God grant to the reader and writer of these lines, more simple confidence in Himself, and more of the true spirit of self-surrender. May such be the result of our meditations upon Gideon and his companions.

C. H. M.

Job and His Friends

Job and His Friends.

C. H. Mackintosh.

The book of Job occupies a very peculiar place in the volume of God. It possesses character entirely its own, and teaches lessons which are not to be learnt in any other section of inspiration It is not by any means our purpose to enter upon a line of argument to prove the genuineness, or establish the fact of the Divine inspiration, of this precious book. We take these things for granted; being fully persuaded of them as established facts, we leave the proofs to abler hands. We receive the book of Job as part of the Holy Scriptures given of God for the profit and blessing of His people. We need no proofs of this for ourselves, nor do we attempt to offer any to our reader.

And we may further add, that we have no thought of entering upon the field of inquiry as to the authorship of this book. This, how interesting soever it may be in itself, is to us entirely secondary. We receive the book from God. This is enough for us. We heartily own it to be an inspired document, and we do not feel it to be our province to discuss the question as to where, when, or by whom it was penned. In short, we purpose, with the Lord's help, to offer a few plain and practical remarks on a book which we consider needs to be more closely studied, that it may be more fully understood. May the Eternal Spirit, who indited the book, expound and apply it to our souls!

The opening page of this remarkable book furnishes us with a view of the patriarch Job, surrounded by everything that could make the world agreeable to him, and make him of importance in the world. "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Thus much as to what he was. Let us now see what he had.

"And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them." Then, to complete the picture, we have the record of what he did.

"And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

Here, then, we have a very rare specimen of a man. He was perfect, upright, God-fearing, and eschewed evil. Moreover, the hand of God had hedged him round about on every side, and strewed his path with richest mercies He had all that heart could wish, — children and wealth in abundance, — honour and distinction from all around. In short, we may almost say his cup of earthly bliss was full.

But Job needed to be tested. There was a deep moral root in his heart which had to be laid bare. There was self-righteousness which had to be brought to the surface and judged. Indeed, we may discern this root in the very words which we have just quoted. He says, "It may be that my sons have sinned." He does not seem to contemplate the possibility of sinning himself. A soul really self-judged, thoroughly broken before God, truly sensible of its own state, tendencies, and capabilities, would think of his own sins, and his own need of a burnt-offering.

Now, let the reader distinctly understand that Job was a real saint of God, — a Divinely quickened soul, — a possessor of Divine and eternal life. We cannot too strongly insist upon this. He was just as truly a man of God in the first chapter as he was in the forty-second. If we do not see this, we shall miss one of the grand lessons of the book. Job 1: 8 establishes this point beyond all question. "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?"

But, with all this, Job had never sounded the depths of his own heart. He did not know himself: He had never really grasped the truth of his own utter ruin and total depravity. He had never learnt to say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This point must be seized, or the book of Job will not be understood. We shall not see the specific object of all those deep and painful exercises through which Job was called to pass, unless we lay hold of the solemn fact that his conscience had never been really in the Divine presence, — that he had never seen himself in the light,

— never measured himself by a Divine standard, — never weighed himself in the balances of the sanctuary.

If the reader will turn for a moment to Job 29, he will find a striking proof of what we assert. He will there see distinctly what a strong and deep root of self-complacency there was in the heart of this dear and valued servant of God; and how this root was nourished by the very tokens of Divine favour with which he was surrounded. This chapter is a pathetic lament over the faded light of other days; and the very tone and character of the lament prove how necessary it was that Job should be stripped of everything, in order that he might learn himself in the searching light of the Divine presence.

Let us hearken to his words.

"Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; when I went out to the gate through the city; when I prepared my seat in the street! The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that

was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners. But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock."

This, truly, is a most remarkable utterance. We look in vain for any breathings of a broken and a contrite spirit here. There are no evidences of self-loathing, or even of self-distrust. We cannot find so much as a single expression of conscious weakness and nothingness. In the course of this single chapter, Job refers to himself more than forty times, while the references to God are but five. It reminds us of the seventh of Romans, by the predominance of "I;" but there is this immense difference, that, in the seventh of Romans, "I" is a poor, weak, good-for-nothing, wretched creature in the

presence of the holy law of God; whereas, in Job 29, "I" is a most important, influential personage admired and almost worshipped by his fellows.

Now Job had to be stripped of all this; and when we compare Job 29 with Job 30 we can form some idea of how painful the process of stripping must have been. There is peculiar emphasis in the words, "But now." Job draws a most striking contrast between his past and his present. In Job 30 he is still occupied with himself. It is still "I;" but ah! how changed. The very men who flattered him in the day of his prosperity, treat him with contempt in the day of his adversity. Thus it is ever in this poor, false, deceitful world, and it is well to be made to prove it. All must, sooner or later, find out the hollowness of the world, — the fickleness of those who are ready to cry out "hosanna" today, and "crucify Him" tomorrow. Man is not to be trusted. It is all very well while the sun shines; but wait till the nipping blasts of winter come, and then you will see how far nature's fair promises and professions can be trusted. When the prodigal had plenty to spend, he found plenty to share his portion; but when he began to be in want, "no man gave unto him."

Thus it was with Job in Job 30. But be it well remembered, that there is very much more needed than the stripping of self, and the discovery of the hollowness and deceitfulness of the world. One may go through all these, and the result be merely chagrin and disappointment. Indeed it can be nothing more if God be not reached. If the heart be not brought to find its all-satisfying, portion in God, then a reverse of fortune leaves it desolate; and the discovery of the fickleness and hollowness of men fills it with bitterness. This will

account for Job's language in Job 30. "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." Was this the spirit of Christ? Would Job have spoken thus at the close of the book? He would not. Ah! no, reader; when once Job got into God's presence, there was an end to the egotism of Job 29 and the bitterness of Job 30.

{The reader will bear in mind that, while it is the Holy Ghost who records what Job and his friends said, yet we are not to suppose that they spoke by inspiration.}

But hear Job's further outpourings. "They were children of fools, yea, children of base men; they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Because He hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper. They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me."

Now all this, we may truly say, is very far short of the mark. Lamentations over departed greatness, and bitter invectives against our fellowmen, will not do the heart much good; neither do they display aught of the spirit and mind of Christ, nor bring glory to His holy name. When we turn our eyes toward the blessed Lord Jesus we see something wholly different. That meek and lowly One met all the rebuffs of this world, all the disappointments in the midst of His people Israel, all the

unbelief and folly of His disciples, with an, "Even so, Father." He was able to retire from the rebuffs of men into His resources in God, and then to come forth with those balmy words, "Come unto me... and I will give you rest." No chagrin, no bitterness, no harsh invectives, nothing rough or unkind, from that gracious Saviour who came down into this cold and heartless world to manifest the perfect love of God, and who pursued His path of service spite Or all man's perfect hatred.

But the fairest and best of men must retire into the shade when tested by the perfect standard of the life of Christ. The light of His moral glory makes manifest the defects and blemishes of even the most perfect of the sons of men. "In all things He must have the pre-eminence." He stands out in vivid contrast with even a Job or a Jeremiah in the matter of patient submission to all that He was called upon to endure. Job completely breaks down under his heavy trials. He not only pours forth a torrent of bitter invective upon his fellows, but actually curses the day of his birth. "After this opened Job his mouth and cursed his day. And Job spake and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a manchild conceived" (Job 3: 1-3).

We notice the self-same thing in Jeremiah — that blessed man of God. He, too, gave way beneath the heavy pressure of his varied and accumulated sorrows, and gave vent to his feelings in the following bitter accents: "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and

repented not; and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?" (Jer. 20: 14-18)

What language is here! Only think of cursing the man that brought tidings of his birth! cursing him because he had not slain him! All this, both in the prophet and the patriarch, contrasts strong]y with the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth. 'That spotless One passed through deeper sorrows and more in number than all His servants put together; but not one murmuring word ever escaped His lips. He patiently submitted to all; and met the darkest hour with such words as these, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Blessed Lord Jesus, Son of the Father, we adore Thee! We bow down at Thy feet, lost in wonder, love, and praise, and own Thee Lord of all! — the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

There is no more fruitful field of study than that which is opened before us in the history of God's dealings with souls. It is full of interest, and abounds in instruction and profit. One grand object in those dealings is to produce real brokenness and humility — to strip us of all false righteousness, empty us of all self-confidence, and teach us to lean wholly upon Christ. All have to pass through what may be called the process of stripping and emptying. With some this process precedes, with others it follows, conversion or the new birth. Many are brought to Christ through deep ploughings and painful exercises of heart and conscience — exercises extending

over years, often over the whole lifetime. Others, on the contrary, are brought with comparatively little exercise of soul. They lay hold, speedily, of the glad tidings of forgiveness of sins through the atoning death of Christ, and are made happy at once. But the stripping and emptying come afterwards, and, in many cases, cause the soul to totter on its foundation, and almost to doubt its conversion.

This is very painful, but very needful. The fact is, self must be learnt and judged, sooner or later. If it be not learnt in communion with God, it must be learnt by bitter experience in failures and falls. "No flesh shall glory in God's presence;" and we must all learn our utter powerlessness, in every respect, in order that we may taste the sweetness and comfort of the truth, that Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. God will have broken material. Let us remember this. It is a solemn and necessary truth "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And again, "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 57: 15; Isa. 66: 1, 2).

These are seasonable words for all of us. One special want of the present moment is brokenness of Spirit. Nine-tenths of our trouble and difficulty may be traced

to this want. It is marvellous how we get on from day to day, — in the family, in the assembly, in the world, in our entire practical life, when self is subdued and mortified. A thousand things which else would prove more than a match for our hearts are esteemed as nothing, when our souls are in a truly contrite state. We are enabled to bear reproach and insult, to overlook slights and affronts, to trample upon our crotchets, predilections, and prejudices, to yield to others where weighty principle is not involved, to be ready to every good work, to exhibit a genial large-heartedness in all our dealings, and an elasticity in all our moral movements which so greatly tend to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. How often, alas! it is otherwise with us. We exhibit a stiff, unyielding temper; we stand up for our rights; we maintain our interests; we look after our own things; we contend for our own notions. All this proves, very clearly, that self is not habitually measured and judged in the presence of God.

But, we repeat — and with emphasis — God will have broken material. He loves us too well to leave us in hardness and unsubduedness; and hence it is that He sees fit to pass us through all sorts of exercises in order to bring us into a condition of soul in which He can use us for His own glory. The will must be broken; self-confidence, self-complacency, and self-importance must be cut up by the roots. God will make use of' the scenes and circumstances through which we have to pass, the people with whom we are associated in daily life, to discipline the heart and subdue the will. And, further, He will deal with us directly Himself, in order to bring about these great practical results.

All this comes out with great distinctness in the book of Job, and gives a wonderful interest and charm to its pages. It is very evident that Job needed a severe sifting. Had he not needed it, we may rest assured the gracious, loving Lord would not have passed him through it. It was not for nothing that He let Satan loose upon His dear servant. We may say, with fullest confidence, that nothing but the most stern necessity would have led Him to adopt such a line of action. God loved Job with a perfect love; but it was a wise and faithful love; a love that could take account of everything, and, looking below the surface, could see the deep moral roots in the heart of His servant — roots which Job had never seen, and, therefore, never judged. What a mercy to have to do with such a God! to be in the hands of One who will spare no pains in order to subdue everything in us which is contrary to Himself, and to bring out in us His own blessed image!

But, beloved reader, is there not something profoundly interesting in the fact that God can even make use of Satan as an instrument in the discipline of His people? We see this in the case of the apostle Peter, as well as in that of the patriarch Job. Peter had to be sifted, and Satan was used to do the work." Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Here, too, there was a stern necessity. There was a deep root to be reached in Peter's heart — the root of self-confidence; and his faithful Lord saw it absolutely needful to pass him through a most severe and painful process in order that this root should be exposed and judged; and therefore Satan was permitted to sift him thoroughly, so that he might never again trust his own heart, but walk softly all his days. God will have

broken material, whether it be in a patriarch or a apostle. All must be mellowed and subdued in order that the Divine glory may shine forth with an ever-brightening lustre.

Had Job understood this great principle — had he apprehended the Divine object, — how differently he would have carried himself! But, like ourselves, he had to learn his lesson; and the Holy Ghost has furnished us with the record of the mode in which the lesson was learnt, so that we may profit by it also.

Let us pursue the narrative.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? 'Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." What a view we have here of Satan's malignity! What a striking proof of the way in which he watches and considers the ways and works of God's people! What insight into human character! What an intimate knowledge of man's mental and moral constitution! What a terrible thing to fall into his hands! He is ever on the watch; ever ready,

if permitted of God, to put forth all his malignant energy against the Christian.

The thought of this is most solemn, and should lead us to walk humbly and watchfully through a scene where Satan rules. He has no power whatever over a soul who abides in the place of dependence and obedience; and, blessed be God! he cannot, in any case, go one hair's breadth beyond the limit prescribed by Divine command. Thus, in Job's case, "The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

Here Satan was permitted to lay his hand on Job's possessions — to bereave him of his children, and despoil him of all his wealth. And truly he lost no time in despatching his business. With marvellous rapidity he executed his commission. Blow after blow fell, in quick succession, on the devoted head of the patriarch. Hardly had one messenger told his melancholy tale, ere another arrived with still heavier tidings, until, at length, the afflicted servant of God "arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1: 20-22).

All this is deeply touching. To speak after the manner of men, it was enough to make reason totter to be thus, in a moment, bereft of his ten children, and reduced from princely wealth to absolute penury. What a striking contrast between the opening and the closing lines of our first Job! In the former we see Job surrounded by a

numerous family, and in the enjoyment of vast possessions; in the latter, we see him left alone, in poverty and nakedness. And to think of Satan's being allowed — yea, commissioned of God — to bring about all this! And for what? For the deep and permanent profit of Job's precious soul. God saw that His servant needed to be taught a lesson; and, moreover, that, in no other way, by no other means, could this lesson be taught, than by passing him through an ordeal the bare record of which fills the mind with solemn awe. God will teach His children, even though it be by stripping them of all that the heart clings to in this world.

But we must follow our patriarch into still deeper waters.

"Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, All that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him

a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2: 1-10). This is a very remarkable passage. It instructs us as to the place which Satan occupies in respect to God's government. He is a mere instrument, and, though ever ready to accuse the Lord's people, can do nothing save as he is allowed of God. So far as Job was concerned, the efforts of Satan proved abortive — and having done his utmost he goes away, and we hear nothing more of his actings, whatever may have been his inward temptations. Job was enabled to hold fast his integrity; and, had matters ended here, his patient endurance would only have strengthened the platform of his righteousness, and ministered to his self-complacency. "Ye have heard," says James, "of the patience of Job." And what then? "Ye have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Had it been simply a question of Job's patience, it would have proved an additional ground of self-confidence, and thus "the end of the Lord" would not have been reached. For, be it ever remembered, the Lord's pity and tender mercy can only be tasted by those who are truly penitent and broken-hearted. Now Job was not this, even when he lay amid the ashes. He was not yet thoroughly broken down before God. He was still the great man — great in his misfortunes as he had been in his prosperity — great beneath the keen and withering blasts of adversity as he had been in the sunshine of brighter and better days. Job's heart was still unreached. He was not yet prepared

to cry out, "Behold, I am vile." he had not yet learnt to "abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes."

We are anxious that the reader should distinctly seize this point. It is, to a very great extent, the key to the entire book of Job. The Divine object was to expose to Job's view the depths of his own heart, in order that he might learn to delight in the grace and mercy of God and not in his own goodness, which was as a morning cloud and the early dew, that passeth away. Job was a true saint of God; and all Satan's accusations were flung back in his face; but, all the while, Job was unbroken material, and therefore unprepared for "the end of the Lord" — that blessed end for every contrite heart — that end which is marked by "pity and tender mercy." God, blessed and praised be His name! will not suffer Satan to accuse us; but He will expose us to ourselves, so that we may judge ourselves, and thus learn to mistrust our own hearts, and rest in the eternal stability of his grace.

Thus far, then, we see Job "holding fast his integrity." He meets with calmness all the heavy afflictions which Satan is allowed to bring upon him; and, moreover, he refuses the foolish counsel of his wife. In a word, he accepts all as from the hand of God, and bows his head in the presence of His mysterious dispensations.

All this is well. But the arrival of Job's three friends produces a marked change. Their very presence — the bare fact of their being eye witnesses of his trouble — affects him in a very remarkable manner. "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an

appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voices and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2: 11-13)

Now, we can fully believe that those three men were governed, in the main, by kindly feelings toward Job; and it was no small sacrifice, on their part, to leave their homes and come to condole with their bereaved and afflicted friend. All this we can easily believe. But it is very evident that their presence had the effect of stirring up feelings and thoughts in his heart and mind which had hitherto lain dormant. He had borne submissively the loss of children, property, and of bodily health. Satan had been dismissed, and the wife's counsel rejected; but the presence of his friends caused Job to break down completely. "After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day."

This is very remarkable. It does not appear that the friends had spoken a single sentence. They sat in total silence, with rent garments and covered with dust, gazing on a grief too profound for them to reach. It was Job himself, who first broke silence: and the whole of the third chapter is an outpouring of the most bitter lamentation, affording melancholy evidence of an unsubdued spirit. It is, we may confidently assert, impossible that any one who had learnt in any little measure, to say "Thy will be done," could ever curse his day, or use the language contained in Job 3. It may, doubtless, be said, "It is easy for those to speak who

have never been called to endure Job's heavy trials." This is quite true; and it may further be added, that no other man would have done one whit better under the circumstances. All this we can fully understand; but it in nowise touches the great moral of the book of Job — a moral which it is our privilege to seize. Job was a true saint of God; but he needed to learn himself, as we all do. He needed to have the roots of his moral being laid bare in his own sight, so that he might really abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes And, furthermore, he needed a truer and deeper sense of what God was, so that he might trust Him and justify Him under all circumstances.

But we look in vain for aught of this in Job's opening address. "Job spake and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived.... Why died I not from the womb?" These are not the accents of a broken and contrite spirit, or of one who had learnt to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." It is a grand point in the soul's history when one is enabled to bow with meekness to all the dispensations of our Father's hand. A broken will is a rich and rare endowment. It is a high attainment in the school of Christ to be able to say, "I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4: 11). Paul had to learn this. It was not natural to him; and, most surely, he never learnt it at the feet of Gamaliel. Saul of Tarsus would never have been content with the very highest attainments in this world. He had to be thoroughly broken down at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth, ere he could say from his heart, "I am content." He had to ponder the meaning of those words, "My grace is sufficient for thee" ere he could "take pleasure in

infirmities." The man who could use such language was standing at the very antipodes of the man who could curse his day, and say, "Why died I not from the womb?" Only think of a saint of God, an heir of glory, saying, "Why died I not from the womb?" Ah! if Job had been in the presence of God he never could have uttered such words. He would have known full well why he had not died. He would have had a soul-satisfying sense of what God had in store for him. He would have justified God in all things. But Job was not in the presence of God, but in the presence of his friends; who proved, very distinctly, that they understood little or nothing of the character of God or the real object of His dealings with His dear servant Job.

It is not, by any means, our purpose to enter minutely into the lengthened discussion between Job and his friends — a discussion extending over twenty-nine chapters. We shall merely quote a few sentences from the opening address of each of the friends which will enable the reader to form an idea of the real ground occupied by these mistaken men.

Eliphaz was the first speaker. "Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, If we essay to commune with thee wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking? Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that

plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4: 1-8). And again, "I have seen the foolish taking root; but suddenly I cursed his habitation" (Job 5: 3; see also Job 15: 17).

From these sentences it seems very evident that Eliphaz belonged to that class of people who argue very much from their own experience. His motto was, "As I have seen." Now, what we have seen may be all true enough, so far as we are concerned. But it is a total mistake to found a general rule upon individual experience, and yet it is a mistake to which thousands are prone. What, for instance, had the experience of Eliphaz to do with Job? It may be he had never met a case exactly similar; and if there should happen to be a single feature of dissimilarity between the two cases, then the whole argument based on experience must go for nothing. And that it went for nothing in Job's case is evident, for no sooner had Eliphaz ceased speaking, than, without the slightest attention to his words, Job proceeded with the tale of his own sorrows, intermingled with much self-vindication and bitter complaints against the Divine dealings (Job 6: 7).

Bildad is the next speaker. He takes quite different ground from that occupied by Eliphaz. He never once refers to his own experience, or to what had come under his own observation. He appeals to antiquity. "Inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers. (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow.) Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?"(Job 8: 10)

Now, it must be admitted that Bildad conducts us into a much wider field than that of Eliphaz. The authority of a number of "fathers" has much more weight and respectability than the experience of a single individual. Moreover, it would argue much more modesty to be guided by the voice of a number of wise and learned men than by the light of one's own experience But the fact is that neither experience nor tradition will do. The former may be true, so far as it goes, but you can hardly get two men whose experience will exactly correspond; and as to the latter, it is a mass of confusion, — for one father differs from another; and nothing can be more slippery or uncertain than the voice of tradition — the authority of the fathers.

Hence, as might be expected, Bildad's words had no more weight with Job than those of Eliphaz. The one was as far from the truth as the other. Had they appealed to Divine revelation, it would have been a different matter altogether. The truth of God is the only standard — the one grand authority. By that all must be measured; to that all must, sooner or later, bow down. No man has any right to lay down his own experience as a rule for his fellows; and if no man has a right, neither have any number of men. In other words, it is not the voice of man but the voice of God which must govern us all. It is not experience or tradition which shall judge at the last day, but the word of God. Solemn and weighty fact! May we consider it! Had Bildad and Eliphaz understood it, their words would have had much more weight with their afflicted friend.

Let us now very briefly refer to the opening address of Zophar the Naamathite.

He says, "Oh that God would speak, and open His lips against thee, and that He would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." And again: "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards Him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot: yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear" (Job 11: 5, 6, 13-15).

These words savour strongly of legality. They prove very distinctly that Zophar had no right sense of the Divine character. He did not know God. No one possessing a true knowledge of God could speak of Him as opening His lips against a poor afflicted sinner, or as exacting aught from a needy, helpless creature. God is not against us, but for us, blessed for ever be His Name! He is not a legal exactor, but a liberal giver. Then again, Zophar says, "If thou prepare thine heart." But if not, what then? No doubt a man ought to prepare his heart, and if he were right he would. But then he is not right, and hence, when he sets about preparing his heart, he finds nothing there but evil. He finds himself perfectly powerless. What is he to do? Zophar cannot tell. No; nor can any of his school. How can they? They only know God as a stern exactor — as One who, if He opens His lips, can only speak against the sinner.

Need we marvel, therefore, that Zophar was as far from convincing Job as either of his two companions? They were all wrong. Legality, tradition, experience, were alike defective, one-sided, false. Not any one of them, or all of them put together, could meet Job's case. They only darkened counsel by words without knowledge. Not

one of the three friends understood Job: and what is more, they did not know God's character or His object in dealing with His dear servant. They were wholly mistaken. They knew not how to present God to Job; and, as a consequence, they knew not how to lead Job's conscience into the presence of God. In place of leading him to self-judgment, they only ministered to a spirit of self-vindication. They did not introduce God into the scene. They said some true things; but they had not the truth. They brought in experience, tradition, legality, but not the truth.

Hence the three friends failed to convince Job. Their ministry was one-sided, and instead of silencing Job, they only led him forth into a field of discussion which seemed almost boundless. He gives them word for word, and far more. "No doubt," he says, "but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? "What ye know, the same do I know also; I am not inferior to you." "Ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. "O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom." "I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you." "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times have ye reproached me; ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me." "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

All these utterances prove how far Job was from that true brokenness of spirit and humility of mind which ever flow from being in the Divine presence. No doubt the friends were wrong, quite wrong, — wrong in their notions about God, wrong in their method of dealing with Job. But their being wrong did not make him right. Had Job's conscience been in the presence of God, he would have made no reply to his friends, even though they had been a thousand times more mistaken and severe in their treatment. He would have meekly bowed his head, and allowed the tide of reproof and accusation to roll over him. He would have turned the very severity of his friends to profitable account, by viewing it as a wholesome moral discipline for his heart. But no; Job had not yet reached the end of himself. He was full of self-vindication, full of invective against his fellows, full of mistaken thoughts about God. It needed another ministry to bring him into a right attitude of soul.

The more closely we study the lengthened discussion between Job and his three friends, the more clearly we must see the utter impossibility of their ever coming to an understanding. He was bent upon vindicating himself; and they were bent upon the very reverse. He was unbroken and unsubdued, and their mistaken course of treatment only tended to render him more so. Had they changed sides, they would have reached a different issue altogether. If Job had condemned himself; had he taken a low place, had he owned him self nothing and nobody, he would have left his friends nothing to say. And, on the other hand, had they spoken softly, tenderly, and soothingly to him, they would have been far more likely to melt him down. As it was, the case was hopeless. He could see nothing wrong in himself; and

they could see nothing right. He was determined to maintain his integrity; and they were quite as determined to pick holes and find out flaws. There was no point of contact whatever — no common ground of understanding. He had no penitential breathings for them, and they had no tender compassions for him. They were travelling in entirely opposite directions, and never could meet. In a word, there was a demand for another kind of ministry altogether, and that ministry is introduced in the person of Elihu.

"So these three men ceased to answer Job [high time they should], because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job" (Job 32: 1-3).

Here Elihu, with remarkable force and clearness, seizes upon the very root of the matter on each side. He condenses, in two brief sentences, the whole of the elaborate discussion contained in twenty-nine chapters. Job justified himself instead of justifying God: and they had condemned Job instead of leading him to condemn himself.

It is of the very last moral importance to see that, whenever we justify ourselves, we condemn God; and on the other hand, when we condemn ourselves, we justify God. "Wisdom is justified of all her children." This is a grand point. The truly broken and contrite heart will vindicate God at all cost. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be

justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom. 3: 4) God must have the upper hand in the end; and it is the path of true wisdom to give Him the upper hand now. The very moment the soul is broken down in true self-judgment, God rises before it in all the majesty of His grace as a Justifier. But so long as we are ruled by a spirit of self-vindication or self-complacency, we must be total strangers to the deep blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works. The greatest folly that any one can be guilty of is to justify himself; inasmuch as God must then impute sin. But the truest wisdom is to condemn oneself utterly; for in that case God becomes the Justifier.

But Job had not yet learnt to tread this marvellously blessed path. He was still built up in his own goodness, still clothed in his own righteousness, still full of self-complacency. Hence the wrath of Elihu was kindled against him. Wrath must assuredly fall upon self-righteousness. It cannot be otherwise. The only true ground for a sinner to occupy is the ground of genuine repentance. Here there is nought but that pure and precious grace that reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus it stands ever. There is nothing but wrath for the self-righteous — nothing but grace for the self-judged.

Reader, remember this. Pause for a moment and consider it. On what ground dost thou, at this moment, stand? Hast thou bowed before God in true repentance? Hast thou ever really measured thyself in His holy presence? Or, art thou on the ground of self-righteousness, self-vindication, and self-complacency? Do, we entreat you, weigh these solemn questions. Do

not put them aside. We are most anxious to deal with the heart and conscience of the reader. We do not write merely for the understanding for the mind, for the intelligence. No doubt, it is well to seek to enlighten the understanding, by the word of God, but we should exceedingly regret if our work were to end here. There is far more than this. God wants to deal with the heart, with the moral being, with the inward man. He will have us real before Him. It is of no possible use to build ourselves up in self-opinionativeness; for nothing is surer than that everything of that kind must be broken up. The day of the Lord will be against everything high and lifted up; and hence it is our wisdom now to be low and broken down; for it is from the low place that we get the very best view of God and His salvation. May the reader be led by God's Spirit into the reality of all this! May we all remember that God delights in a broken and contrite spirit — that He ever finds His abode with such; but the proud He knoweth afar off.

Thus, then, we may understand why Elihu's wrath was kindled against Job. He was entirely on God's side. Job was not. We hear nothing of Elihu until Job 32, though it is very evident that he had been an attentive listener to the whole discussion. He had given a patient hearing to both sides, and he found that both were wrong. Job was wrong in seeking to defend himself; and the friends were wrong in seeking to condemn him.

How often is this the case in our discussions and controversies! And oh, what sorrowful work it is! In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred in the which persons are at issue, it will be found to be very much as it was with Job and his friends. A little brokenness on one side, or a little softness on the other, would go a great way

towards settling the question. We speak not, of course, of cases in which the truth of God is concerned. There, one must be bold, decided, and unyielding. To yield where the truth of God or the glory of Christ is concerned, would be disloyalty to the One to whom we owe everything. Plain decision and unflinching firmness alone become us in all cases in which it is a question of the claims of that blessed One who, when our interests were concerned, surrendered everything, even life itself, in order to secure them. God forbid we should drop a sentence or pen a line which might have the effect of releasing our grasp of truth, or abating our ardour in contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Ah! no, reader; this is not the moment for ungirding the loins, laying aside the harness, or lowering the standard. Quite the reverse. Never was there more urgent need of having the loins girt about with truth, of having firm footing, and of maintaining the standard of Divine principle in all its integrity. We say this advisedly. We say it in view of all the efforts of the enemy to drive us off the platform of pure truth by referring us to those who have failed in the maintenance of pure morals. Alas! alas! there is failure — sad, humiliating failure. We do not deny it. Who could? It is too patent — too flagrant — too gross. The heart bleeds as we think of it. Man fails always and everywhere. His history, from Eden to the present hour, is stamped with failure.

All this is undeniable. But, blessed be God! His foundation standeth sure, nor can human failure ever touch it. God is faithful. He knoweth them that are His; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. We have yet to learn that the way to

improve our morals is to lower God's standard. We do not and cannot believe it. Let us humble ourselves in view of our failure; but never surrender the precious truth of God.

But all this is a digression into which we have allowed ourselves to be drawn in order to guard against the thought that, in urging upon the reader the importance of cultivating a broken, yielding spirit, we would have him to yield a single jot or tittle of Divine revelation. We must now return to our subject.

There is something peculiarly marked and striking in the ministry of Elihu. He stands in vivid contrast with the three friends. His name signifies "God is he;" and, no doubt, we may view him as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. He brings God into the scene, and puts a complete stop to the weary strife and contention between Job and his friends. Elihu argues not on the ground of experience; he appeals not to tradition; he breathes not the accents of legality; he brings in God. This is the only way of putting a stop to controversy, of hushing strife, of ending a war of words. Let us hearken to the words of this remarkable personage.

"Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled." Note this, "There was no answer." In all their reasonings, in all their arguments, in all their references to experience, tradition, and legality, there was "no answer." This is very instructive. Job's friends had travelled over a very wide range, had said many true things, had attempted many replies; but, be it carefully noted, they found "no answer." It is not in the

range of earth or of nature to find an answer for a self-righteous heart God alone can answer it, as we shall see in the sequel. To all else but God the unbroken heart can find a ready reply. This is most strikingly proved in the history now before us. Job's three friends found no answer. "And Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show my opinion. I said, days should speak [but alas! they either do not speak at all, or they speak a quantity of error and folly], and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Here Divine light, the light of inspiration, begins to stream in upon the scene, and to roll away the thick clouds of dust raised by the strife of tongues. We are conscious of moral power and weight the very moment this blessed servant opens his lips. We feel we are listening to a man who speaks as the oracles of God — a man who is sensibly standing in the Divine presence It is not a man drawing from the meagre store of his own narrow and one-sided experience; nor yet a man appealing to a hoary antiquity, or to a bewildering tradition, or the ever conflicting voices of the fathers. No; we have before us now a man who introduces us at once into the very presence of "the inspiration of the Almighty."

This is the only sure authority — the only unerring standard. "Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged understand judgment.

[What would Elihu have said to the recent dogma of the infallibility of a man — a dogma accepted by over five hundred rational beings sitting in solemn conclave? And this is to be henceforth part and parcel of the faith of

Christians! Not long since men were called upon to believe in an immaculate woman, now they are called upon to believe in an infallible man! What is to come next? Surely the "strong delusion" must soon set in, when men will be compelled, by God's judicial dealings, to believe a lie, because they would not believe the truth. May the eternal Spirit put forth His mighty energy in the conversion of precious souls ere the day of vengeance sets in!]

Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will show my opinion. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words: lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man. Now he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches. They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking." Experience, tradition, and legality are all swept off the platform to leave room for the "inspiration of the Almighty" — for the direct and powerful ministry of the Spirit of God.

The ministry of Elihu breaks upon the soul with peculiar power and fulness. It stands in vivid contrast with the one-sided and most defective ministry of the three friends. Indeed it is quite a relief to reach the close of a controversy which seemed likely to prove interminable — a controversy between intense egotism on the one hand, and experience, tradition, and legality on the other — a controversy barren of any good, so far as Job was concerned, and leaving all parties at the close very much where they were at the beginning.

Still, however, the controversy is not without its value and interest to us. It teaches us, very distinctly, that when two parties join issue, they never can reach an understanding unless there be a little brokenness and subduedness on one side or the other. This is a valuable lesson, and one to which we all need to give attention. There is a vast amount of headiness and high-mindedness abroad, not only in the world but in the Church. There is a great deal of self-occupation — a quantity of "I, I, I" — and that, too, even where we least suspect it, and where it is, most of all, unsightly, namely, in connection with the holy service of Christ. Never, we may safely assert, is egotism more truly detestable than when it shows itself in the service of that blessed One who made Himself of no reputation - whose whole course was one of perfect self-surrender, from first to last — who never sought His own glory in anything, never maintained His own interest, never pleased Himself.

And yet, for all that, reader, is there not a most deplorable amount of hateful, unsubdued self displayed on the platform of Christian profession and Christian service? Alas! we cannot deny it. We are disposed to marvel, as the eye scans the record of the remarkable discussion between Job and his friends; we are amazed to find close upon a hundred references to himself in Job 29-31 alone. In short, it is all "I" from beginning to end.

But, let us look to ourselves. Let us judge our own hearts in their deeper workings. Let us review our ways in the light of the Divine presence. Let us bring all our work and service, and have it weighed in the holy balances of the sanctuary of God. Then shall we discover how much of hateful self is insinuated, like a dark and

defiling tissue, into the whole web of our Christian life and service. How, for example, comes it to pass that we are so ready to mount the high horse when self is touched, even in the most remote degree? Why are we so impatient of reproof, be it clothed in language ever so refined and gentle? Why so ready to take offence at the slightest disparagement of self? And, further, why is it that we find our sympathies and our regards and our predilections going out, with special energy, after those who think well of us — who value our ministry, agree with our opinions, and adopt our cue?

Do not all these things tell a tale? Do they not prove to us that, ere we condemn the egotism of our ancient patriarch, we should seek to get rid of a vast amount of our own? It is not, surely, that he was right: but we are far more wrong. It is far less to be wondered at that a man, amid the dim twilight of the far-back patriarchal age, was entangled in the snare of self-occupation, than that we, in the full blaze of Christianity, should fall thereinto. Christ had not come. No prophetic voice had fallen on the ear. Even the law had not been given, when Job lived, and spoke, and thought. We can form a very poor conception indeed of the tiny ray of light by which men had to walk in the days of Job. But to us pertain the high privilege and holy responsibility of walking in the very meridian light of a full-orbed Christianity. Christ has come. He has lived, died, risen, and gone back to heaven. He has sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell in our hearts, as the witness of His glory, the seal of accomplished redemption, and the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. The canon of Scripture is closed. The circle of revelation is complete. The word of God is filled up.

We have before us the Divine record of the self-emptied One who went about doing good — the marvellous story of what He did, and how He did it, of what He said, and how He said it, of who He was, and what He was. We know that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that He condemned sin and put it away; that our old nature — that odious thing called self, sin, the flesh — has been crucified and buried out of God's sight — made an end of for ever, so far as its power over us is concerned. Moreover we are made partakers of the Divine nature; we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; we are members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones; we are called to walk even as He walked; we are heirs of glory - heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

What did Job know of all this? Nothing. How could he know what was not revealed till fifteen centuries after his time? The full extent of Job's knowledge is poured upon us in those few glowing and impassioned words at the close of Job 19. "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

This was Job's knowledge — this was his creed. There was a great deal in it, in one sense; but very little indeed, when compared with the mighty circle of truths in the midst of which we are privileged to move. Job looked forward, through the dim twilight, to something that was to be done in the far-off future. We look back,

from amid the full flood-tide of Divine revelation, to something that has been done. Job could say of his Redeemer that "He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth." We know that our Redeemer sitteth on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, after having lived and laboured and died on the earth.

In short, the measure of Job's light and privilege admits of no comparison with that which we enjoy; and for this reason it is the less excusable in us to indulge in the varied forms of egotism and self-occupation. Our self-abnegation should be in proportion to the measure of our spiritual privilege. But alas! it is not so. We profess the very highest truths; but our character is not formed, nor is our conduct governed, by them. We speak of the heavenly calling; but our ways are earthly, sometimes sensual, or worse. We profess to enjoy the very highest standing; but our state does not comport therewith. Our real condition does not answer to our assumed position. We are high-minded, touchy, tenacious, and easily provoked. We are quite as ready to embark in the business of self vindication as was our patriarch Job.

And then, on the other hand, when we feel called upon to approach another in the attitude and tone of reproof, with what rudeness, coarseness, and harshness we discharge the necessary work! How little softness of tone or delicacy of touch! How little of the tender and the soothing! How little of the "excellent oil!" How little of the broken heart and weeping eye! What slender ability to bring our erring brother down into the dust! Why is this? Simply because we are not habitually in the dust ourselves. If, on the one hand, we fail quite as much as Job in the matter of egotism and self-vindication, so, on the other, we prove ourselves fully as incompetent as

Job's friends to produce self-judgment in our brother. For example, how often do we parade our own experience, like Eliphaz; or indulge in a legal spirit, like Zophar; or introduce human authority, like Bildad! How little of the spirit and mind of Christ! How little of the power of the Holy Ghost, or the authority of the word of God!

It is not pleasant to write thus. Quite the contrary. But it is pressed upon us, and we must write. We feel, most solemnly, the growing laxity and indifference of the day in which we live. There is something perfectly appalling in the disproportion between our profession and practice. The highest truths are professed in immediate connection with gross worldliness and self-indulgence. Indeed, it would appear as though, in some cases, the higher the doctrines professed, the lower the walk. There is a wide diffusion of truth in our midst; but where is its formative power? Floods of light are poured upon the intelligence; but where are the profound exercises of heart and conscience in the presence of God? The rigid rule of precise and accurate statement is attended to; but where is the true practical result? Sound doctrine is unfolded in the letter; but where is the spirit? There is the form of words; but where is the living exponent?

Is it that we do not prize sound doctrine and accurate statement? Is it that we undervalue the wide diffusion of precious truth, in its very highest forms? Far, far away be the thought! Human language would utterly fail to set forth our estimate of these things. God forbid we should pen a line which might tend, in any wise, to lower, in the mind of the reader, the sense of the unspeakable value and importance of a lofty — yea, the very loftiest — standard of truth and sound doctrine. We

are most thoroughly convinced that we shall never improve our morals by lowering, the breadth of a hair, the standard of principle.

But, Christian reader, we would lovingly and solemnly ask you, Does it not strike you that there is, in our very midst, a most melancholy lack of the tender conscience and the exercised heart? Does our practical piety keep pace with our profession of principle? Is the standard of morals at all up to the standard of doctrine?

Ah! we anticipate the reply of the grave and thoughtful reader. We know too well the terms in which that reply must be couched. It is but too plain that the truth does not act on the conscience — that the doctrine does not shine in the life — that the practice does not correspond with the profession.

We speak for ourselves. As God is our witness, we pen these lines, in His presence, in a spirit of self-judgment. It is our hearty desire that the knife should enter into our own soul, and reach the deep roots of things there. The Lord knows how much we should prefer laying the axe to the root of self and there leave it to do its work. But we feel we have a sacred duty to discharge to the individual reader and to the Church of God; and, moreover, we feel that that duty would not be discharged were we merely to set forth the precious, and the beautiful, and the true. We are convinced that God would have us not only to be exercised in heart and conscience ourselves, but also to seek to exercise the hearts and consciences of all with whom we have to do.

True it is — a truth often stated and proved - that worldliness, and carnality, and self-indulgence in all its phases, in the wardrobe, the library, the equipage, and

the table — that fashion and style, folly and vanity, pride of caste, of intellect, and of purse — none of these things can be talked down, written, lectured, or scolded down. This we fully believe. But must not conscience be addressed? Must not the voice of holy exhortation fall on the ear? Shall we suffer laxity, indifferentism, and Laodicean lukewarmness to pave the way for a universal scepticism, infidelity, and practical atheism, and not be roused in conscience ourselves, and seek to rouse others? God forbid! No doubt, the higher and the better way is to have the evil expelled by the good; to have the flesh subdued by the Spirit; to have self displaced by Christ; to have the love of the world supplanted by the love of the Father. All this we fully feel and freely admit; but, while feeling and admitting all this, we must still press upon our own conscience, and that of the reader, the urgent demand for solemn and searching review — for deep searchings of heart in the secret of the presence of God — for profound self-judgment, in reference to our whole career. Blessed be God! we can carry on these exercises before the throne of grace, the precious mercy-seat. "Grace reigns." Precious consoling sentence! Should it prevent exercise of soul? Nay, it should only impart the right tone and character thereto. We have to do with victorious grace, not that we may indulge self, but mortify it all the more thoroughly.

May the Lord make us really humble, earnest, and devoted! May the deep utterance of the heart, both of the writer and the reader, be, "Lord, I am Thine — Thine only, Thine wholly, Thine for ever!"

This may seem to some a digression from our special theme; but we trust the digression may not be in vain; but that, by the grace of God, it will yield something for

the heart and conscience of both the writer and the reader; and thus we shall be better prepared to understand and appreciate the powerful ministry of Elihu, to which we shall now turn our attention, in dependence upon Divine guidance.

The reader cannot fail to notice the double bearing of this remarkable ministry — its bearing upon our patriarch, and its bearing upon his friends. This is only what we might expect. Elihu, as we have already remarked, had patiently listened to the arguments on both sides. He had, as we say, heard both parties out. He had allowed them to exhaust themselves — to say all they had to say: "Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he." This was in lovely moral order. It was, most surely, the way of the Spirit of God. Modesty, in a young man, is most graceful. Would there were more of it in our midst! Nothing is more attractive, in the young, than a quiet, retiring spirit. When real worth lies concealed beneath a modest and humble exterior, it is sure to draw the heart with irresistible power. But, on the other hand, nothing is more repulsive than the bold self-confidence — the pushing forwardness, and self-conceit of many of the young men of the present day. All such persons would do well to study the opening words of Elihu, and to imitate his example.

"And Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, I am young, and ye are very old: wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." This is the natural order. We expect hoary heads to contain wisdom; and, hence, it is but right and comely for young men to be swift to hear, slow to speak,

in the presence of their elders. We may set it down as an almost fixed principle, that a forward young man is not led by the Spirit of God — that he has never measured himself in the Divine presence — that he has never been thoroughly broken down before God.

No doubt, it may often happen, as in the case of Job and his friends, that old men give utterance to very foolish things. Grey hairs and wisdom do not always go together; and it not infrequently happens that aged men, relying upon the mere fact of their years, assume a place for which they have no sort of power, either moral, intellectual, or spiritual. All this is perfectly true, and it has to be considered by those whom it may concern. But it leaves wholly untouched the fine moral sentiment contained in Elihu's opening address: "I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion." This is always right. It is always comely for a young man to be afraid to show his opinion. We may rest assured that a man who possesses inward moral power — who, as we say, has it in him — is never in haste to push himself forward; but yet, when he does come forward, he is sure to be heard with respect and attention. The union of modesty and moral power imparts an irresistible charm to the character; but the most splendid abilities are marred by a self-confident style "But," continues Elihu, "there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." This introduces another element altogether. The moment the Spirit of God enters the scene, it ceases to be a question of youth or old age, inasmuch as He can speak by old or young. "Not by might or by power; but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This holds good always. It was true for the

patriarchs; true for the prophets; true for apostles; true for us; true for all. It is not by human might or power, but by the eternal Spirit.

Here lay the deep secret of Elihu's quiet power. He was filled with the Spirit, and hence we forget his youth, while hearkening to the words of spiritual weight and heavenly wisdom that proceed out of his mouth, and we are reminded of Him who spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes. There is a striking difference between a man who speaks as an oracle of God, and one who speaks in mere official routine — between one who speaks from the heart, by the Spirit's holy unction, and one who speaks from the intellect by human authority. Who can duly estimate the difference between these two? None but those who possess and exercise the mind of Christ.

But let us proceed with Elihu's address. "Great men," he tells us, "are not always wise." How true! "Neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will show mine opinion. Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words."

Let us specially note this. "There was none of you that convinced Job." This was clear enough. Job was just as far from being convinced at the close of the discussion as he was at the commencement. Indeed we may say that each fresh argument drawn from the treasury of experience, tradition, and legality, only served to stir some fresh and deeper depth of Job's unjudged, unsubdued, unmortified nature. This is a grand moral

truth, illustrated on every page of the book which lies open before us.

But how instructive the reason for all this! "Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom; God thrusteth him down, not man." No flesh shall glory in the presence of God. It may boast itself outside. It may put forth its pretensions, and glory in its resources, and be proud of its undertakings, so long as God is not thought of. But only introduce Him, and all the vauntings, the boastings, the vain-gloryings, the lofty pretensions, the self-complacency, and the self-conceit will be withered up in a moment.

Reader, let us remember this. "Boasting is excluded." Yes; all boasting — the boasting of Job, the boasting of his friends. If Job had succeeded in establishing his cause, he would have boasted. If, on the other hand, his friends had succeeded in silencing him, they might have boasted. But no; "God thrusteth him down, not man."

Thus it was; thus it is; and thus it must ever be. God knows how to humble the proud heart and subdue the stubborn will. It is utterly vain for any one to set himself up; for we may rest assured that every one who is set up must, sooner or later, be up-set. The moral government of God has so ordered and enacted that all that is high and lifted up must come down. This is a salutary truth for us all; but especially for the young, the ardent, and the aspiring. It is well to keep in the shade, for there it is we most enjoy the sunshine. This may seem a paradox, but, to faith, it is plain. The humble, retired, shady path is, unquestionably, the safest, the happiest, and the best. May we ever be found treading it, until we reach that

bright and blessed scene where pride and ambition are unknown!

The effect of Elihu's opening words upon Job's three friends was most striking. "They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking. When I had waited — for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more — I said, I will answer also my part; I also will show mine opinion." And then, lest any should suppose that he was speaking his own words, he adds, "For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me." This is the true spring and power of all ministry, in all ages. It must be "the inspiration of the Almighty," or it is worth absolutely nothing.

We repeat, this is the only true source of ministry, at all times and in all places. And, in saying this, we do not forget that a mighty change took place when our Lord Christ ascended to heaven and took His seat at the right hand of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption. To this glorious truth we have often referred the readers of our magazine, Things New and Old; and, hence, we shall not now permit ourselves to dwell upon it. We merely touch upon it in this place, lest the reader might imagine that, when we speak of the true source of ministry in all ages, we were forgetting what is marked and distinctive in the Church of God now, in consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the individual believer, and in the Church, which is the body of Christ on earth. Far from it. Thanks and praise be to God! we have too deep a sense of the value, importance, and practical weight of that grand and glorious truth ever to lose sight of it for a moment. Indeed it is just this deep sense, together with the remembrance of Satan's ceaseless effort to ignore

the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, that leads us to pen this cautionary paragraph.

Still, Elihu's principle must ever hold good. If any man is to speak with power and practical effect, he must be able, in some measure, to say, "I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me.* Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer." Thus it must ever be, in measure at least, with all who will speak, with real power and effect, to the hearts and consciences of their fellows. We are forcibly reminded, by Elihu's glowing words, of that memorable passage in the seventh of John, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." True it is that Elihu knew not the glorious truth set forth in these words of our Lord, inasmuch as they were not made good till fifteen centuries after his time. But then he knew the principle — he possessed the germ of what was afterwards to come out in full flow and rich mellow fruit. He knew that a man, if he is to speak with point, pungency, and power, must speak by the inspiration of the Almighty. He had listened till he was tired, to men talking a quantity of powerless matter — saying some truisms — drawing from their own experience, or from the musty stores of human tradition. He was well-nigh wearied out with all this, and he rises, in the mighty energy of the Spirit, to address his hearers as one fitted to speak like an oracle of God.

{*Let the reader distinctly understand that Elihu, in the above quotation. speaks not of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as believers now know it. This was wholly unknown to saints in Old Testament times, and was the

direct result of accomplished redemption — the special fruit of the glorification of Christ, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. This important truth has been repeatedly referred to and dwelt upon at other times, and hence we shall not go into it now but we would request the reader to turn to John 7: 39, and John 16: 7, and meditate upon the doctrine there taught, apart from all preconceived thoughts of his own, and irrespective of all the opinions of men. From these Scriptures he will see distinctly that the Holy Ghost did not and could not come, until Jesus was glorified. This is not a mere speculation — a human theory — the dogma of a certain school. It is a grand foundation truth of Christianity, to be reverently received tenaciously held, and faithfully confessed by every true Christian. May all the Lord's people be led to see and believe it!}

Here lies the deep and blessed secret of ministerial power and success. "If any man speak, says Peter, "let him speak as the oracles of God." It is not, be it carefully observed, merely speaking according to Scripture — an all-important and essential matter, most surely. It is more. A man may rise and address his fellows for an hour, and, from beginning to end of his discourse, he may not utter so much as a single unscriptural sentence; and all the while, he may not have been God's oracle at the time; he may not have been God's mouthpiece, or the present exponent of His mind to the souls before him.

This is peculiarly solemn, and demands the grave consideration of all who are called to open their lips in the midst of God's people. It is one thing to utter a certain amount of true sentiment, and quite another to be the living channel of communication between the

very heart of God and the souls of God's people. It is this latter, and this alone, that constitutes true ministry. A man who speaks according to this most excellent principle will so affect the hearts and consciences of his hearers that each one will feel tempted to think that some one has been telling tales to the speaker, and revealing to him the very feelings of his own heart. In short, a man who speaks as an oracle of God will bring the conscience of the hearer so into the very light of the Divine presence, that every chamber of the heart is laid open, and every moral spring touched. This is true ministry. All else is powerless, valueless, fruitless. Nothing is more deplorable and humiliating than to listen to a man who is evidently drawing from his own poor and scanty resources, or trafficking in second-hand truth, in borrowed thoughts. Better far for such to be silent — better for their hearers, better for themselves. Nor this only. We may often hear a man giving forth to his fellows that on which his own mind has been dwelling in private with much interest and profit. He may utter truth, and important truth; but it is not the truth for the souls of the people — the truth for the moment. He has spoken according to Scripture, so far as his matter is concerned; but he has not spoken as an oracle of God.

Thus, then, may all learn a valuable lesson from Elihu; and, most surely, it is a needed lesson. Some may feel disposed to say it is a difficult lesson — a hard saying. But no; if we only live in the Lord's presence, in the abiding sense of our own nothingness and of His all-sufficiency, we shall know the precious secret of all effective ministry; we shall know how to lean upon God alone, and thus be independent of men, in the right

sense; we shall be able to enter into the meaning and force of Elihu's further words, "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away" (Job 32: 21, 29).

In studying the ministry of Elihu, we find in it two grand elements, namely, "grace and truth." Both these were essential in dealing with Job; and, consequently, we find both coming out with extraordinary power. He tells Job and his friends very distinctly that he knows not how to give flattering titles unto man. Here the voice of "truth" falls, with great clearness on the ear. Truth puts every one in his right place; and, just because it does so, it cannot bestow titles of flattery upon a poor guilty mortal, however much that mortal might be gratified by them. Man must be brought to know himself, to see his true condition, to confess what he really is. This was precisely what Job needed. He did not know himself, and his friends could not give him that knowledge. He needed to be led down into the depths; but his friends could not conduct him thither. He needed self-judgment; but his friends were wholly unable to produce it.

But Elihu begins by telling Job the truth. He introduces God into the scene in His true character. This was just what the three friends had failed to do. No doubt they had referred to God; but their references were cloudy, distorted, and false. This is plain from Job 42: 7, 8, where we are told that, "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my

servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job." [The reader will bear in mind that the above words were spoken after Job's repentance. It is of the very last importance to see this.] They had utterly failed to bring God before the soul of their friend, and there they failed in producing the needed self-judgment.

Not so Elihu. He pursues a totally different line of things. He brings the light of "truth" to bear upon Job's conscience; and at the same time he administers the precious balm of "grace" to his heart. Let us quote his further sayings: "Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart, and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee."

In these accents, the ministry of "grace" unfolds itself, sweetly and powerfully, to the heart of Job. Of this most excellent ingredient there was a total absence in the ministry of the three friends. They showed themselves only too ready to bear down upon Job with "a heavy hand." They were stern judges, severe censors, false interpreters. They could fix their cold, grey eye upon the wounds of their poor afflicted friend, and wonder how they came there They looked on the crumbling ruins of

his house; and drew the harsh inference that the ruin was but the result of his bad behaviour. They beheld his fallen fortunes, and, with unmitigated severity, concluded that those fortunes had fallen because of his faults. They had proved themselves to be entirely one-sided judges. They had wholly misunderstood the dealings of God. They had never seized the full moral force of that one weighty sentence, "God trieth the righteous." In a word, they were utterly astray. Their standpoint was false, and hence their whole range of vision was defective. There was neither "grace" nor "truth" in their ministry, and therefore they failed to convince Job. They condemned him without convincing him, whereas they ought to have convinced him and made him condemn himself.

Here it is that Elihu stands out in vivid contrast. He tells Job the truth; but he lays no heavy hand upon him. Elihu has learnt the mighty mysterious power of "the still small voice" — the soul-subduing, heart-melting virtue of grace. Job had given utterance to a quantity of false notions about himself, and those notions had sprouted from a root to which the sharp axe of "truth" had to be applied. "Surely," says Elihu, "thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.

What words for any poor sinful mortal to utter! Surely, though "the true light" in which we may walk had not shone on the soul of this patriarch, we may well marvel at such language. And yet, mark what follows. Although he was so clean, so innocent, so free from iniquity, he nevertheless says of God that, "He findeth occasions, he counteth me for His enemy. He putteth my feet in the

stocks, He marketh all my paths." Here is a palpable discrepancy. How could a holy, just, and righteous Being count a pure and innocent man His enemy? Impossible. Either Job was self-deceived, or God was unrighteous; and Elihu, as the minister of truth, is not long in pronouncing a judgment, and telling us which is which. "Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man." What a simple truth! And yet how little understood! If God is greater than man, then, obviously, He, and not man, must be the Judge of what is right. This the infidel heart refuses; and hence the constant tendency to sit in judgment upon the works and ways and word of God — upon God Himself. Man, in his impious and infidel folly, undertakes to pronounce judgment upon what is and what is not worthy of God; to decide upon what God ought and what He ought not to say and to do. He proves himself utterly ignorant of that most simple, obvious, necessary truth, that "God is greater than man."

Now, it is when the heart bows under the weight of this great moral truth, that we are in a fit attitude to understand the object of God's dealings with us. Assuredly He must have the upper hand. "Why dost thou strive against him? for He giveth not account of any of His matters. For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword."

The real secret of all Job's false reasoning is to be found in the fact that he did not understand the character of God, or the object of all His dealings. He did not see that God was trying him, that He was behind the scenes and using various agents for the accomplishment of His wise and gracious ends. Even Satan himself was a mere instrument in the hand of God; nor could he move the breadth of a hair beyond the divinely prescribed limit; and moreover, when he had executed his appointed business, he was dismissed, and we hear no more about him. God was dealing with Job. He was trying him in order that He might instruct him, withdraw him from his purpose, and hide pride from him. Had Job seized this grand point, it would have saved him a world of strife and contention. Instead of getting angry with people and things, with individuals and influences, he would have judged himself and bowed low before the Lord in meekness and brokenness and true contrition.

This is immensely important for us all. We are all of us prone to forget the weighty fact that "God trieth the righteous." "He withdraweth not His eyes from them." We are in His hands, and under His eye continually We are the objects of His deep, tender, and unchanging love; but we are also the subjects of His wise moral government. His dealings with us are varied. They are sometimes preventive; sometimes corrective; always instructive. We may be bent on some course of our own, the end of which would be moral ruin. He intervenes and withdraws us from our purpose. He dashes into fragments our air-built castles, dissipates our golden dreams, and interrupts many a darling scheme on which our hearts were bent, and which would have proved to be certain destruction "Lo, all these things worketh God

oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."

If the reader will turn for a moment to Hebrews 12: 3-12, he will find much precious instruction on the subject of God's dealings with His people. We do not attempt to dwell upon it, but would merely remark that it presents three distinct ways in which we may meet the chastening of our Father's hand. We may "despise" it, as though His hand and His voice were not in it; we may "faint" under it, as though it were intolerable, and not the precious fruit of His love; or, lastly, we may be; "exercised by it," and thus reap, in due time "the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

"Now, if our patriarch had only seized the great fact that God was dealing with him; that He was trying him for his ultimate good; that He was using circumstances, people, the Sabeans, Satan himself, as His instruments; that all his trials, his losses, his bereavements, his sufferings, were but God's marvellous agency in bringing about His wise and gracious end; that He would assuredly perfect that which concerned His dear and much-loved servant, because His mercy endureth for ever; in a word, had Job only lost sight of all second causes, and fixed his thoughts upon the living God alone, and accepted all from His loving hand, he would have more speedily reached the Divine solution of all his difficulties.

But it is precisely here that we are all apt to break down. We get occupied with men and things; we view them in reference to ourselves. We do not walk with God through, or rather above, the circumstances; but, on the contrary, we allow the circumstances to get power over

us. In place of keeping God between us and our circumstances, we permit these latter to get between us and God. Thus we lose the sense of His presence, the light of His countenance, the holy calmness of being in His loving hand, and under His fatherly eye. We become fretful, impatient, irritable, fault-finding. We get far away from God, out of communion, thoroughly astray, judging every one except ourselves, until at length God takes us in hand, and by His own direct and powerful ministry, brings us back to Himself in true brokenness of heart and humbleness of mind. This is "the end of the Lord."

We must, however, draw this paper to a close. Gladly would we expatiate further on Elihu's remarkable ministry; with pleasure and profit could we quote his further appeals to Job's heart and conscience, his pungent arguments, his pointed questions. But we must forbear, and leave the reader to go through the remaining chapters for himself. In so doing, he will find that when Elihu closes his ministry, God Himself begins to deal directly with the soul of His servant (Job 38-41). He appeals to His works in creation as the display of a power and wisdom which ought assuredly to make Job feel his own littleness. We do not attempt to cull passages from one of the most magnificent and sublime sections of the inspired canon. It must be read as a whole. It needs no comment. The human finger could but tarnish its lustre. Its plainness is only equalled by its moral grandeur. All we shall attempt to do is to call attention to the powerful effect produced upon the heart of Job by this the most marvellous ministry surely under which mortal man was ever called to sit — the immediate ministry of the living God Himself.

This effect was threefold. It had reference to God, to himself, and to his friends — the very points on which he was so entirely astray. As to God, Elihu had declared Job's mistake in the following words: "Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers for wicked men. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin; he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.... Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst: My righteousness is more than God's?" But mark the change. Hearken to the breathings of a truly repentant spirit; the brief yet comprehensive statement of a corrected judgment. "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak I will demand of Thee, and declare Thou unto me. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42: 1-9).

Here, then, was the turning point. All his previous statements as to God and His ways are now pronounced to be "words without knowledge." What a confession! What a moment in a man's history, when he discovers that he has been all wrong! What a thorough breakdown! What profound humiliation! It reminds us of Jacob getting the hollow of his thigh touched, and thus learning his utter weakness and nothingness. These are weighty moments in the history of souls — great epochs which leave an indelible impress on the whole moral being and character. To get right thoughts about God is

to begin to get right about everything. If I am wrong about God, I am wrong about myself, wrong about my fellows, wrong about all.

Thus it was with Job. His new thoughts as to God were immediately connected with new thoughts of himself; and hence we find that the elaborate self-vindication, the impassioned egotism, the vehement self-gratulation, the lengthened arguments in self-defence, all is laid aside; all is displaced by one short sentence of three words: "I am vile." And what is to be done with this vile self? Talk about it? Set it up? Be occupied with it? Take counsel for it? Make provision for it? Nay, "I abhor it."

This is the true moral ground for every one of us. Job took a long time to reach it; and so do we. Many of us imagine that we have reached the end of self when we have given a nominal assent to the doctrine of human depravity, or judged some of those sprouts which have appeared above the surface of our practical life. But, alas! it is to be feared that very few of us indeed really know the full truth about ourselves. It is one thing to say "We are all vile," and quite another to feel, deep down in the heart, that "I am vile." This latter can only be known and habitually realised in the immediate presence of God. The two things must ever go together, "Mine eye seeth Thee" — "Wherefore I abhor myself." It is as the light of what God is shines in upon what I am, that I abhor myself. And then my self-abhorrence is a real thing. It is not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. It will be seen in a life of self-abnegation, an humble spirit, a lowly mind, a gracious carriage in the midst of the scene through which I am called to pass. It is of little use to profess very low thoughts of self, while, at the same time, we are quick to resent any

injury done to us, any fancied insult, slight, or disparagement. The true secret of a broken and contrite heart is to abide ever in the Divine presence, and then we are able to carry ourselves right toward those with whom we have to do.

Thus we find that when Job got right as to God and himself, he soon got right as to his friends, for he learned to pray for them. Yes, he could pray for the "miserable comforters," the "physicians of no value," the very men with whom he had so long, so stoutly, and so vehemently contended! "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

This is morally beautiful. It is perfect. It is the rare and exquisite fruit of Divine workmanship. Nothing can be more touching than to see Job's three friends exchanging their experience, their tradition, and their legality for the precious "burnt-offering;" and to see our dear patriarch exchanging his bitter invectives for the sweet prayer of charity. In short, it is a most soul-subduing scene altogether. The combatants are in the dust before God and in each other's arms. The strife is ended; the war of words is closed; and instead thereof, we have the tears of repentance, the sweet odour of the burnt-offering, the embrace of love.

Happy scene! Precious fruit of Divine ministry! What remains? What more is needed? What but that the hand of God should lay the top-stone on the beauteous structure? Nor is this lacking, for we read, "The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." But how? By what agency? Was it by his own independent industry and clever management? No; all is changed. Job is on new moral ground. He has new thoughts of God, new

thoughts of himself, new thoughts of his friends, new thoughts of his circumstances; all things are become new. "Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.... After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days."

Final Perseverance: What is it?

Final Perseverance: What is it?

C. H. Mackintosh.

Dear Friend,

The question of final perseverance, though, in our judgment, a very simple one, has perplexed a great many; and the questions which you introduce to our notice, and the passages of scripture which you adduce, furnish abundant proof that your own mind is not quite clear or settled on the point. It may be, however, that the object of your communication is rather to superinduce such a discussion of the doctrine, in the light of holy scripture, as may prove helpful to others, than to obtain any aid for yourself. However this may be, we are always happy to give to others the benefit of any light with which the Lord may have graciously favoured us, in reference to subjects of common interest to all lovers of truth.

In seeking, then, to reply to your interesting letter, we have three things to do, namely, first, to establish the doctrine of final perseverance, or in other words, the eternal security of all Christ's members; secondly, to answer the questions which you have given us, and which we take to be those usually or frequently put by the opposers of the doctrine; and, thirdly, to expound those tests which you have quoted, and in which you seem to find considerable difficulty. May the Holy Spirit be our teacher, and may He give us minds entirely subject to scripture, so that we may be able to form a sound judgment on the question now before us.

1. And, first, as to the doctrine of final perseverance; it seems to us exceedingly clear and simple, if only we look at it in immediate connection with Christ Himself. This indeed is the only true way to look at any doctrine. Christ is the soul, centre, and life of all doctrine. A doctrine separated from Christ becomes a lifeless powerless, worthless dogma — a mere idea in the mind — a mere item in the creed. Hence, therefore, we must look at every truth as it stands connected with Christ. We must make Him our point of view. It is only as we keep near to Him, and look at all points from that one grand point, that we can have a correct view of any point. If, for example, I make self my point of view and look from thence at the subject of final perseverance, I shall be sure to get a false view altogether, inasmuch as it then becomes a question of my perseverance, and anything of mine must, necessarily, be doubtful.

But if, on the other hand, I make Christ my viewing point, and look at the subject from thence, I shall be sure to have a correct view inasmuch as it then becomes a question of Christ's perseverance, and I am quite sure that He must persevere, and that no power of the world, the flesh, or the devil can ever hinder His final perseverance in the salvation of those whom He has purchased with His own blood, seeing "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." This, surely, is final perseverance. It matters not what the difficulty, or what the hostile power may be. "He is able to save to the uttermost." The world, with its ten thousand snares, is against us; but "he is able." Indwelling sin, in its ten thousand workings, is against us; but "he is able." Satan, with his ten thousand devices, is against us; but "he is able." In a word, it is

Christ's ability, not ours; it is Christ's faithfulness, not ours; it is Christ's final perseverance, not ours. All depends upon Him, as to this weighty matter. He has purchased His sheep, and surely He will keep them to the best of His ability; and, seeing that all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth, His sheep must be perfectly and for ever safe. If aught could touch the life of the feeblest lamb in all the flock of Christ, He could not be said to have "all power."

Thus it is immensely important to consider the question of final perseverance in inseparable connection with Christ. Difficulties vanish. Doubts and fears are chased away. The heart becomes established, the conscience relieved, the understanding enlightened. It is impossible that one who forms a part of Christ's body can ever perish; and the believer is this, We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph 5: 30) Every member of the body of Christ was written in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world, nor can anything or any one ever obliterate that writing. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith in reference to those that are His: "My sheep hear my voice, and know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man, devil, or any one else] pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10: 27-29)

Here then, most assuredly, we have final perseverance, and that moreover, not merely the perseverance of the saints, but of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Yes, dear friend, this is the way we would have you view the matter. It is the final perseverance of the

Holy Trinity. It is the perseverance of the Holy Ghost in opening the ears of the sheep. It is the perseverance of the Son in receiving all whose ears are thus opened. And, finally, it is the perseverance of the Father in keeping through His own name, the blood-bought flock in the hollow of His everlasting hand. This is plain enough. We must either admit the truth — the consolatory and sustaining, truth of final perseverance, or succumb to the blasphemous proposition that the enemy of God and man can carry his point against the holy and eternal Trinity. We see no middle ground. "Salvation is of the Lord," from first to last. It is free, unconditional, everlasting salvation. It reaches down to where the sinner is in all his guilt, ruin, and degradation, and bears him up to where God is, in all His holiness, truth, and righteousness. and it endures for ever. God the Father is its source, God the Son is its channel, and God the Holy Ghost is the power of application and enjoyment. It is all of God, from beginning to end, from foundation to top-stone, from everlasting to everlasting. If it were not so, it would be presumptuous folly to speak of final perseverance; but, seeing it is so, it would be presumptuous unbelief to think of aught else.

True, there are great and manifold difficulties in the way — difficulties before, and difficulties after, conversion. There are many and powerful adversaries; but that is the very reason why we must keep the question of final perseverance entirely clear of self and all its belongings, and make it repose simply upon God. It matters not in the least what the difficulties or the adversaries may be, for faith can ever triumphantly inquire, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And again, "Who shall separate

us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8: 35-39)

Here, again, we have final perseverance taught in the clearest and strongest way possible: "Not any creature shall be able to separate us." Neither self, in all its forms; nor Satan, in all his wiles and machinations; nor the world, in all its allurements, or all its scorn, can ever separate the "us" of Romans 8: 39, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No doubt, persons may be deceived, and they may deceive others. Spurious cases may arise; counterfeit conversions may take place. Persons may seem to run well for a time and then break down. The blossoms of spring-time may not be followed by the mellow fruits of autumn. Such things may be; and, moreover, true believers may tail in many things, they may stumble and break down in their course. They may have ample cause for self judgment and humiliation, in the practical details of life. But, allowing the widest possible margin for all these things, the precious doctrine of final perseverance remains unshaken — yea, untouched — upon its own divine and eternal foundation. "I give unto my sheep eternal [not temporary or conditional] life, and they shall never perish." And again, "Upon this rock I will build my

church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." People may argue as they will, and base their arguments on cases which have come under their notice, from time to time, in the history of professing Christians; but, looking at the subject from a divine point of view, and basing our convictions on the sure and unerring word of God, we maintain that all who belong to the "us" of Romans 8, the "sheep" of John 10, and the "church" of Matthew 16, are as safe as Christ can make them, and this we conceive to be the sum and substance of the doctrine of final perseverance.

2 And now, dear friend, we shall, in the second place, briefly and pointedly reply to the questions which you have put before us.

1. "Will a believer be saved, no matter into what course of sin he may fall, and die in?" A true believer will, infallibly, be saved; but we consider that salvation includes, not only full deliverance from the future consequences of sin, but from the present power and practice thereof. And, hence, if we find a person living in sin, and yet talking about his assurance of salvation, we look upon him as an antinomian and not a saved person at all. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." The believer may fall, but he will be lifted up; he may be overtaken, but he will be restored; he may wander, but he will be brought back because Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and not one of His little ones shall perish.

2. "Will the Holy Spirit dwell in a heart where evil and unholy thoughts are indulged? The body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 6: 19) And this precious truth is the ground of exhortation to purity and

holiness of heart and life. We are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit. To "indulge" evil and unholy thoughts is not Christian walk at all. The Christian may be assaulted, grieved, and harassed, by evil thoughts, and in such a case he has only to look to Christ for victory. Proper Christian walk is thus expressed in John's first epistle; "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 John 5: 18) This is the divine side of the question. Alas! we know there is the human side likewise; but we judge the human side by the divine. We do not lower the divine to meet the human, but ever aim at the divine notwithstanding the human. We should never be satisfied with anything lower than 1 John 5: 18. It is by keeping up the true standard that we may expect to raise our moral tone. To talk of having the Spirit and yet "indulge" in evil and unholy thoughts, is in our judgment, the ancient Nicolaitanism (Rev. 2: 6, 15), or modern antinomianism.

3 "If it be so, then, will not people say, they may live as they like?" Well, how does a true Christian like to live? As like Christ as possible. If one had put this question to Paul, what would have been his answer 2 Cor 5: 14, 15, and Philippians 3: 7-14, furnish the reply. It is to be feared that the persons who ask such questions know but little of Christ. We can quite understand a person getting entangled in the meshes of a one-sided theological system, and being perplexed by the conflicting dogmas of systematic divinity; but we believe that the man who draws a plea from the freedom, sovereignty, and eternal stability of the Grace of God, to continue in sin, knows nothing of Christianity at all, has

neither part nor lot in the matter, but is in a truly awful and dangerous condition.

As to the case which you adduce, of the young man who heard a minister state in his sermon, that "Once a child, always a child," and who took occasion from that to plunge into, and continue in, open sin; it is only one of thousands We believe the minister was right in what he said, but the young man was wrong in what he did. To judge the words of the former by the acts of the latter is utterly false. What should I think of my son, if he were to say, "Once a son always a son, and therefore I may proceed to smash my father's windows and do all sorts of mischief"? We judge the ministers statement by the word of God, and pronounce it true. We judge the young man's conduct by the same rule and pronounce it false. The matter is quite simple. We have no reason to believe that the unhappy young man ever really tasted the true grace of God, for if he had, he would love and cultivate and exhibit holiness. The Christian has to struggle with sin; but struggling with it and wallowing in it, are two totally different ideas. In the one case, we can count on Christ's sympathy and grace; in the other, we are actually blaspheming His name by implying that He is the minister of sin.

We consider it a very serious mistake to set about judging the truth of God by the actings of men. All who do so must reach a false conclusion. The true way is just to reverse the order. Get hold of God's truth first, and then judge everything by that. Set up the divine standard and test everything thereby. Set up the public scales and weigh every man's load therein. The scales must not be regulated by every mans load, but each mans load tested by the scales. If ten thousand

professors were to fall away, and live and die in open sin, it would not shake our confidence in the divine doctrine of final perseverance. The self-same word that proves the doctrine to be true, proves them to be false. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2: 19) "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)

3. We shall now proceed to examine the various passages of scripture, which, as you say, are generally adduced by those who seek to overthrow the doctrine of final perseverance. But, before doing so, we deem it of importance to lay down the following fundamental principle, which will, in our judgment, be found most helpful in the interpretation of scripture generally. The principle is very simple. No one passage of holy scripture can, by any possibility, contradict another. If, therefore, there be a seeming contradiction, it must arise from our want of spiritual intelligence. Thus, for example, if any one were to quote James 2: 24, in defence of the doctrine of justification by works, I might not be able to answer him. It is quite possible that thousands, like Luther, have been sadly perplexed by that passage. They may feel the fullest and clearest assurance that they are justified, and that not by any works that they have done, but simply "by faith of Jesus Christ," and yet be wholly unable to explain these words of James, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

Now, how is one to meet such a difficulty as this? He really does not understand the apostle James. He is involved in much perplexity by the apparent contradiction between James and Paul. What is he to do? Just to apply the principle above stated. No one passage of scripture can possibly contradict another. As well might we apprehend a collision between two of the heavenly bodies, while moving in their divinely appointed orbits, as that two inspired writers could possibly clash in their statements. Well, then, I read in Romans 4: 5 such plain words as these: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Here I find works entirely excluded as a ground of justification, and faith alone recognised. So also in Romans 3 I read: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without [or apart from] works of law." And, again, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Exactly similar is the teaching in the Epistle to the Galatians, where we read such plain words as these, "Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by faith of Jesus Christ, even we [Jews] have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith of Christ, and not by works of law: for by works of law shall no flesh he justified." (Rom. 2: 16)

In all these passages, and many more which might be quoted, works are sedulously excluded as a ground of justification, and that, too, in language so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. If, therefore, we cannot explain James 2: 24, we must either deny its inspiration, or have recourse to our principle, namely, that no one passage of holy scripture can possibly contradict another, and so remain, with

unshaken confidence, and unruffled repose, rejoicing in the grand foundation truth of justification by faith alone, apart from law-works altogether.

Having called the readers attention to the famous passage in James 2, it may not be amiss to offer him, in passing, a word or two of exposition which will help him in the understanding of it. There is a little word in verse 14 which will furnish the key to the entire passage. The inspired apostle inquires, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith?" Had he said, "What doth it profit though a man have faith?" the difficulty would be insuperable, the perplexity hopeless. But the important word "say" quite removes all difficulty, and unfolds, in the simplest possible way, the point which the apostle has in his mind. We might inquire, "What doth it profit though a man say he hath ten thousand a year, if he hath it not?"

Now, we are aware that the word "say" is constantly left out in quoting James 2: 14. Some have even ventured to assert that it is not in the original. But any one who can read Greek has only to look at the passage, and he will see the word legee (say) placed there by the Holy Ghost, and left there by all our leading, editors and biblical critics; nor can we well conceive a word of more vital importance in a passage. Its influence, we believe, is felt throughout the entire context in which it occurs. There is no use in a man merely saying he has faith, but if he really has it, it "profits" him for time and eternity, inasmuch as it connects him with Christ, and puts him in full inalienable possession of all that Christ has done, and all that He is for us before God.

This leads us to another point, which will greatly tend to clear away the seeming contradiction between the two inspired apostles, Paul and James. There is a very material difference between law-works and life-works. Paul jealously excludes the former; James as jealously insists on the latter. But, be it carefully noted, that it is only the former Paul excludes; as it is only the latter that James insists on. The acts of Abraham and Rahab were not law-works, but life-works. They were the genuine fruits of faith, apart from which they would have possessed no justifying virtue whatever.

It is well worthy of note that, with the history of four thousand years before Him, the Holy Ghost, in the apostle, should have fixed upon two such works as that of Abraham in Genesis 22 and that of Rahab in Joshua 2. He does not adduce some acts of charity, or benevolence, though surely He might easily have selected many such from the vast mass of materials which lay before Him. But, as if anticipating the use that the enemy would make of the passage now before us, He takes care to select two such illustrations of His thesis as prove. beyond all question, that it is life-works, and not law-works, He is insisting upon, and leaves wholly untouched the priceless doctrine of justification by faith, apart from works of law.

Finally, if any should feel disposed to inquire as to the difference between law-works and life. works, it is simply this: law-works are such as are done in order to get life; life-works are the genuine fruits of life possessed. And how do we get life? By believing on the Son of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life." (John 5: 24) We must have life

before we can do anything; and we get life, not by "saying" we have faith, but by really having it, and when we have it, we shall manifest the precious fruits thereof, to the glory of God.

Thus, then, we not only implicitly believe that Paul and James must harmonise, but we can plainly see that they do.

Having thus sought to define and illustrate our principle, we shall leave you, dear friend, to apply it in the various cases of difficulty and perplexity which come before you in the study of scripture, while we endeavour to expound, as the Lord may enable us, the important passages of scripture which you have laid before us.

1. The first quotation is from the second Epistle of Peter: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2: 1) The difficulty of this passage arises, we suppose, from the expression, "Denying, the Lord that bought them." But there is, in reality, no difficulty whatever in these words. The Lord has a double claim on every man, woman, and child beneath the canopy of heaven. He has a claim founded on creation, and a claim founded on redemption. It is to the latter of these two that the apostle refers. The false teachers will not merely deny the Lord that made them, but even the Lord that bought them. It is of importance to see this. It will help to clear away many difficulties. The Lord Jesus has a purchased right over every member of the human family. The Father has given Him power over all flesh. Hence the sin of those who deny

Him. It would be sin to deny Him as Creator; it is a greater sin to deny Him as Redeemer. It is not at all a question of regeneration. The apostle does not say, 'Denying the Lord that quickened them.' This would indeed be a difficulty; but as the passage stands, it leaves wholly untouched the truth of final perseverance.

2. The second passage occurs at the close of the same chapter, verses 20 and 22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning..... But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again: and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The diffusion of scriptural knowledge and evangelical light may and does frequently exert an amazing influence upon the conduct and character of persons who have never known the saving, quickening, emancipating power of the gospel of Christ. Indeed, it is hardly possible for an open Bible to be circulated, or a free gospel to be preached, without producing very striking results which, after all, will be found to fall far short of the grand result of regeneration. Many gross habits may be abandoned, many pollutions" laid aside, under the influence of a merely intellectual "knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" while, at the same time, the heart has never really been savingly reached at all. Now, it will be invariably found that when persons shake off the influence of evangelical light — even though that influence never extended beyond their outward conduct — they are sure to plunge into greater depths of evil, and greater excesses of worldliness and folly than ever;

"The latter end is worse with them than the beginning." The devil takes delight in dragging the quondam professor through deeper mire than that in which he wallowed in the days of his ignorance and thoughtless folly. Hence the urgent need of pressing on all with whom we have to do, the importance of making sure work of it, so that the knowledge of truth may not merely affect their external conduct, but reach the heart and impart that life which, when once possessed, can never be lost. There is nothing in this passage to terrify the sheep of Christ; but very much to warn those who, though they may for a time put on the outward appearance of sheep, have never been, inwardly, aught but as the dog and the sow.

3. Ezekiel 18: 24, 26; "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.... When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity, that he hath done, shall he die." With this we may connect your reference to 2 Chronicles 15: 2: "The Lord is with you while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." We feel constrained, dear friend, to say that it evidences a sad want of spiritual intelligence to adduce such passages of scripture as bearing, in any way, upon the truth of the final perseverance of Christ's members. These, and numberless other scriptures in the Old Testament, as well as similar passages in the New

Testament, unfold to us the deeply important subject of God's moral government. Now to be merely a subject of God's government, is one thing; to be a subject of His unchangeable grace is another. We should never confound them. To elaborate this point, and to refer to the various passages which illustrate and enforce it. would demand a volume; we would here only add our full persuasion that no one can understand the word of God who does not accurately distinguish between man under government, and man under grace. In the one case, he is looked at as walking down here, in the place of responsibility and danger; in the other, he is looked at as associated with Christ above, in the place of inalienable privilege and eternal security. These two Old Testament scriptures to which you have referred us, are entirely governmental, and, as a consequence, have nothing whatever to do with the question of final perseverance.

4. Matthew 12: 45: "Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation." The closing sentence of this passage quite explains the whole context. Our Lord is describing the moral condition of the Jewish people. The spirit of idolatry had gone out of them, but only for a time, and to return again in sevenfold energy and intensity, rendering their last state worse, by far, than ought that has yet appeared in their most marvellous history. This passage, taken in a secondary way, may be very intelligently, applied to an individual who, having undergone a certain moral change, and exhibited a measure of improvement in his outward conduct,

afterwards falls back and becomes more openly corrupt and vicious than ever.

5. 2 John 8, 9: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." In verse 8, the apostle exhorts the elect lady and her children to look to themselves lest, by any means, he should lose ought of the fruit of his ministry. They were to form part of his reward in the coming day of glory, and he longed to present them faultless, in the presence of that glory, that his reward might be full. Verse 9 needs no explanation; it is solemnly plain. If one does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, he has got nothing. Let slip the truth as to Christ, and you have no security as to anything. The Christian most assuredly needs to walk watchfully in order to escape the manifold snares and temptations which surround him; but whether is that watchfulness better promoted by placing his feet upon the shifting sand of his own performances, or by fixing them firmly upon the rock of God's eternal salvation? Whether am I in a more favourable position for the exercise of watchfulness and prayer, while living in perpetual doubt and fear, or reposing in artless confidence in the unchangeable love of my Saviour God? We think, dear friend, we may very safely anticipate your reply.

6. Revelation 3: 11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Two things are here to be considered, namely, first, this is an address to an assembly; and, secondly, it does not say, That no man take thy life." A servant may lose his

reward; but a child can never lose his eternal life. Attention to this would remove a host of difficulties. Sonship is one thing; discipleship is quite another. Security in Christ is one thing; testimony for Christ is quite another. If our security were dependent upon our testimony — our sonship upon our discipleship where should we be? True, the more I know my security and enjoy my sonship, the more effective will be my testimony, and the more faithful my discipleship, but these things must never be confounded.

In conclusion, dear friend, you say that "All those texts which speak of enduring to the end, and overcoming, are thought to mean that, since there is a possibility of our not doing so, we may not be saved in the end." As to this we would merely add that we shall be most happy, at any time, to enter with you upon the close examination of every one of those passages to which you in this general way refer, and to prove, by the grace of God, that not one of them, when rightly interpreted, militates, in the smallest degree, against the precious truth of final perseverance; but that on the contrary, each passage contains within itself, or within its immediate context that which will clearly prove its perfect harmony with the truth of the eternal security of the very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ.

May the Lord establish our souls more and more firmly in His own truth, and preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom, to the glory of His holy name! C. H. M.

P.S. — Paley observes that "we should never suffer what we know to be disturbed by what we know not." And Butler remarks nearly the same when he says, "If a truth

be established, objections are nothing. The one is founded on our knowledge. and the other on our ignorance"

(See Jay's Autobiography, p.170)

A SACRED UNION.

'TWIXT Jesus and the heavenly race

Subsists a bond of sovereign grace —

A tie which hell's tremendous train

Can ne'er dissolve or rend in twain.

Life's sacred bond shall never break,

Though earth should to its centre shake:

We rest in hope, assured of this;

For God has pledged His righteousness.

By Him 'twas counselled, planned, and done,

Wrought in the blood of His dear Son —

The Christ appointed to redeem

All that the Father chose in Him.

Oh sacred union, firm and strong!

How great the grace! How sweet the song!

To God alone be all the praise

Of rich, eternal, heavenly grace.

In spirit one with Him who rose

Victorious o'er His mighty foes;

Who went on high and took His seat,

Pledge of the serpents full defeat.

Triumphant thus o'er adverse powers, (For all He is and has is ours), With Him, the Head, we stand or fall —

Our Life, our Surety, and our All.

Thus saved in Him, a chosen race,

Here may we prove our faithfulness,

And live to Him who for us died,

With whom we shall be glorified.

The Christian: His position and his work

The Christian: His position and his work.

C. H. Mackintosh.

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

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

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

the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Verse 9-14.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The all-important thing for every true servant is to be found exactly where his Master would have him. The question is not, "Am I doing a great deal of work? but am I pleasing my Master? I may seem to be doing wonders in the way of work; my name may be heralded to the ends of the earth, as a most laborious, devoted, and successful workman; and, all the while, I may be in an utterly false position, indulging my own unbroken will, pleasing myself, and seeking some personal end or object.

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

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

What, then, have we got to do? Two things; and these two in their comprehensive range take in the whole of a Christian's life in its two grand aspects. They give us the inner and the outer life of the true believer. In the first place, we read, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise of God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

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

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

Again, there are some who vainly imagine that they can please God by punishing their bodies. They think that He delights in their vigils, fastings, floggings, and flagellations. Miserable, soul-destroying, God dishonouring delusion! Will not those who harbour it and act upon it bend their ears and their hearts to those gracious words which we have just penned, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me?" True, it is, that those words are immediately followed by that grand practical statement, is And to him that ordereth his conversation

aright, will I show the salvation of God." But still, here, as every where, the highest place is assigned to praise, not to work. And, most assuredly, no man can be said to be ordering his conversation aright who abuses his body and renders it unfit to be the vessel or instrument by which he can serve God.

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

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

Thus it should ever be. Nothing is so unworthy of a Christian as a fretful spirit, a gloomy temper, a sour morose-looking face. And not only is it unworthy of a Christian but it is dishonouring to God, and it causes the enemies of truth to speak reproachfully. No doubt, tempers and dispositions vary; and much allowance must be made in cases of weak bodily health. It is not easy to look pleasant when the body is racked with gout, neuralgia, or rheumatism; and, farther, we should be

very far indeed from commending anything like levity or the everlasting smile of mere unsubdued nature.

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

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

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

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

And He is our life, and He is our model on which the life is to be formed. The Christian should be the living expression of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It

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

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

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

PART 2.

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

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

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

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

of sin in him, but he ought to have no conscience of sins on him, inasmuch as he is purged once and for ever, by the precious blood of Christ.

Some of the Lord's people have a habit of speaking of their continual need of applying to the blood of Christ, which, to say the least of it, is by no means intelligent, or in accordance with the accurate teaching of holy scripture. It seems like humility; but, we may rest assured, true humility can only be found in connection with the full, clear, settled apprehension of the truth of God, and as to His gracious will concerning us. If it be His will, that we should have "no more conscience of sins," it cannot be true humility, on our part, to go on, from day to day, and year to year, with the burden of sins upon us. And, further, if it be true that Christ has borne our sins and put them away, for ever — if He has offered one perfect sacrifice for sins, ought we not to know, assuredly, that we are perfectly pardoned and perfectly purged?

Is it — can it be, true humility to reduce the blood of Christ to the level of the blood of bulls and of goats? But this is what is virtually done, though, no doubt, unwittingly, by all who speak of applying continually to the blood of Christ. One reason why God found fault with the sacrifices under the law was, as the apostle tells us, "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." This, blessed be His name, was not according to His mind. He desired that every trace of guilt and every remembrance of it should be blotted out, once and for ever; and hence it cannot be His will that His people should be continually bowed down under the terrible burden of unforgiven sin. It is contrary to His will; it is subversive of their peace, and

derogatory to the glory of Christ and the efficacy of His one sacrifice.

One grand point of the inspired argument, in Hebrews 10, is to show that the continual remembrance of sins and the continual repetition of the sacrifice go together; and therefore, if Christians now are to have the burden of sins constantly on the heart and conscience, it follows that Christ should be offered again and again, which were a blasphemy. His work is done, and hence our burden is gone — gone for ever.

"It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified [or set apart] by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once."

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

work which was to be the foundation of the divine glory and of all the counsels and purposes of the Trinity.

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

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

All this gives immense stability to the soul of the believer. Indeed it is utterly impossible for human language to set forth the preciousness and blessedness of this line of truth. It is such rich consolation to every pious soul to know that One has appeared in this world to do the will of God — whatever that will might be. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Such was the one undivided purpose and object of that perfect human heart. He never did His own will in anything. He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." It mattered not to Him what that will might involve to Himself, personally. The decree was written down in the eternal volume that He should come and do the divine will; and, all homage to His peerless name! He came and did it perfectly. He could say, "A body hast thou prepared me." "Mine ears hast thou opened."

"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Isaiah 1: 3-6.

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

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

It was ever the delight of the heart of Jesus to do His Father's will and finish His work. From the manger at Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, the one grand object

that swayed His devoted heart was the accomplishment of the will of God. He perfectly glorified God, in all things. This, blessed be God, perfectly secures our full and everlasting salvation, as the apostle, in this passage, so distinctly states. "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once."

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

And — for ever be His name adored — He has finished His work. He has perfectly glorified God in the midst of the scene in which He had been so dishonoured. At all cost He vindicated Him and made good His every claim. He magnified the law and made it honourable. He vanquished every foe, removed every obstacle, swept away every barrier, bore the judgment and wrath of a sin-hating God, destroyed death and him that had the power of it, extracted its sting, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, He gloriously accomplished all that was written in the volume of the book concerning Him; and now we see Him crowned with glory and honour, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

He travelled from the throne to the dust of death, in order to accomplish the will of God, and having done so, He has gone back to the throne, in a new character and

on a new footing. His pathway from the throne to the cross was marked by the footprints of divine and everlasting love; and His pathway from the cross back to the throne is sprinkled by His atoning blood. He came from heaven to earth to do the will of God, and, having done it, He returned to heaven again, thus opening up for us "a new and living way" by which we draw nigh to God, in holy boldness and liberty, as purged worshippers.

All is done. Every question is settled. Every barrier is removed. The veil is rent. That mysterious curtain which, for ages and generations, had shut God in from man, and shut man out from God, was rent in twain, from top to bottom, by the precious death of Christ; and now we can look right up into the opened heavens and see on the throne the man who bore our sins, in His own body, on the tree. A seated Christ tells out, in the ear of faith, the sweet emancipating tale that all that had to be done is done — done for ever — done for God — done for us. Yes; all is settled, now, and God can, in perfect righteousness, indulge the love of His heart, in blotting out all our sins and bringing us nigh unto Himself in all the acceptance of the One who sits beside Him on the throne.

And let the reader carefully note the striking and beautiful way in which the apostle contrasts a seated Christ in heaven with the standing priest on earth. "Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever [eis to dienekes — in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his

footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever [in perpetuity] them that are sanctified."

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

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

never take away sins; and they have been for ever abolished.

Now, in view of all this, what shall we say of Christendom's priests and Christendom's sacrifices? What will a righteous Judge say to them? We cannot attempt to dwell upon such an awful theme. We can merely say, alas! alas! for the poor souls that are deluded and ruined by such antichristian absurdities. May God in His mercy deliver them and lead them to rest in the one offering of Jesus Christ — that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. May many be led to see that a repeated sacrifice and a seated Christ are in positive antagonism.

If the sacrifice must be repeated, Christ has no right to His seat and to His crown — God pardon the very penning of the words! If Christ has a divine right to His seat and to His crown, then to repeat a sacrifice is simply a blasphemy against His cross, His name, His glory. To repeat, in any way, or under any form whatsoever, the sacrifice is to deny the efficacy of Christ's one offering, and to rob the soul of anything like an approach to the knowledge of remission of sins. A repeated sacrifice and perfect remission are an absolute contradiction in terms.

But we must turn, for a moment, to the third grand point in our subject, namely, THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

This is of the deepest possible moment for the reader to understand. It gives great completeness to the subject. How are we to know that Christ has, by His work on the cross, absolutely and divinely accomplished the will of God? Simply by the witness of the Holy Ghost in

scripture. This is the third pillar on which the Christian's position rests, and it is as thoroughly divine and, therefore, as thoroughly independent of man as the other two. It is very evident that man had nothing to do with the eternal counsels of the Trinity — nothing to do with the glorious work accomplished on the cross. All this is clear; and it is equally clear that man has nothing to do with the authority on which our souls receive the joyful news as to the will of God, and the work of Christ, inasmuch as it is nothing less than the witness of the Holy Ghost.

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

Here, then, we have fully before us the solid foundation of the Christian's position and the Christian's peace. It is all of God, from first to last. The will, the work, and the witness are all divine. The Lord be praised for this glorious fact! What should we do, what would become of us, were it otherwise? In this day of confusion, when souls are tossed about by every wind of doctrine — when the beloved sheep of Christ are driven hither and thither, in bewilderment and perplexity — when ritualism with its ignorant absurdities, and rationalism

with its impudent blasphemies, and spiritualism with its horrible traffic with demons, are threatening the very foundations of our faith, how important it is for Christians to know what those foundations really are, and that they should be consciously resting thereon!

PART 3.

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

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

The reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this point. He must rest like a little child upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word. It is blessedly true that "He that believeth hath the witness in himself" And again, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." All this is essential to Christianity; but it must, in no wise, be confounded with the witness of the Holy Ghost, as given to us in holy scripture. The Spirit of God never leads any one to build upon His work as the ground of peace, but only upon the finished work of Christ, and the

unchangeable word of God; and we may rest assured that the more simply we rest on these the more settled our peace will be, and the clearer our evidences, the brighter our frames, the happier our feelings, the richer our experiences.

In short, the more we look away from self and all its belongings, and rest in Christ, on the clear authority of scripture, the more spiritually minded we shall be; and the inspired apostle tells us that "to be spiritually minded (or, the minding of the Spirit) is life and peace." The best evidence of a spiritual mind is child-like repose in Christ and His word. The clearest proof of an unspiritual mind is self-occupation. It is a poor affair to be trafficking in our evidences, or our anything. It looks like piety, but it leads away from Christ — away from scripture — away from God; and this is not piety or faith, or Christianity.

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

Thus much, then, as to the divine and everlasting basis of the Christian's position, as set forth in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. Let us, now, see

what this same scripture tells as of the Christian's work, and of the sphere in which that work is to be carried on.

The Christian is brought into the immediate presence of God, inside the veil, into the holiest of all. This is his proper place, if indeed we are to listen to the voice of scripture. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

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

blood that fits and entitles us. It is offering dishonour to the eternal Trinity not to draw near.

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

How truly deplorable is all this! And then the sad condition of the Lord's dear people, the lambs and sheep of that precious flock for which He died! It is this that so deeply affects us. It is of little use attacking Christendom. We quite admit this; but we yearn over the souls of God's people. We long to see them fully delivered from false teaching, from Judaism, legalism, and every other ism that robs them of a full salvation and a precious Saviour. We long to reach them with the clear and soul-satisfying teachings of holy scripture, so that they may know and enjoy the things that are freely given to them of God.

We can truly say there is nothing which gives us such painful concern as the state of the Lord's dear people, scattered upon the dark mountains and desolate moors; and one special object for which we desire to live is to be the instrument of leading them into those green pastures and beside those still waters where the true Shepherd and Bishop of their souls longs to feed them, according to all the deep and tender love of His heart. He would have them near Himself, reposing in the light of His blessed countenance.

It is not according to His mind or His loving heart that His people should be kept at a dim cold distance from His presence, in doubt and darkness. Ah! no; reader, His word tells us to draw near — to come boldly — to appropriate freely — to make our very own of all the precious privileges to which a Father's love invites us, and a Saviour's blood entitles us.

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

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

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

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

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

This is in lovely moral keeping with all that has gone before. The grace of God has so richly met all our personal need — setting before us such an array of

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

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

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

The veil is rent: — our souls draw near

Unto a throne of grace;

The merits of the Lord appear,

They fill the holy place.
His precious blood has spoken there
Before and on the throne:
And His own wounds in heaven declare,
The atoning work is done.
'Tis finish'd! — here our souls have rest
His work can never fail:
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,
We pass within the veil.
Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood,
Before the throne we prostrate fall
And worship Thee, O God!

The Christian Priesthood

The Christian Priesthood.

C. H. Mackintosh.

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2: 9.

We want the reader to open his bible and read 1 Peter 2: 1-9. In this lovely scripture he will find Three words on which we shall ask him to dwell with us for a little. They are words of weight and power — words which indicate three great branches of practical Christian truth — words conveying to our hearts a fact which we cannot too deeply ponder, namely, that Christianity is a living and divine reality. It is not a set of doctrines, however true; a system of ordinances, however imposing; a number of rules and regulations, however important. Christianity is far more than any or all of these things. It is a living, breathing, speaking, active, powerful reality — something to be seen in the every-day life — something to be felt in the scenes of personal, domestic history, from hour to hour — something formative and influential — a divine and heavenly power introduced into the scenes and circumstances through which we have to move, as men, women, and children, from Sunday morning till Saturday night. It does not consist in holding certain views, opinions, and principles, or in going to this place of worship or that.

Christianity is the life of Christ communicated to the believer — dwelling in him — and flowing out from him,

in the ten thousand little details which go to make up our daily practical life. It has nothing ascetic, monastic, or sanctimonious about it. It is genial, cordial, lightsome, pure, elevated, holy, heavenly, divine. Such is the Christianity of the New Testament. It is Christ dwelling in the believer, and reproduced, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the believer's daily practical career. This is Christianity — nothing else, nothing less, nothing different.

But let us turn to our three words; and may the Eternal Spirit expound and apply their deep and holy meaning to our souls!

And first, then, we have the word "living." "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up."

Here we have what we may call the foundation of Christian priesthood. There is evidently an allusion here to that profoundly interesting scene in Matthew 16 to which we must ask the reader to turn for a moment.

"When Jesus was come into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?* And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

{*Let the reader note this title, "Son of man." It is infinitely precious. It is a title indicating our Lord's rejection as the Messiah, and leading out into that wide, that universal sphere over which He is destined, in the counsels of God, to rule. It is far wider than Son of David, or Son of Abraham, and has peculiar charms for us, inasmuch as it places Him before our hearts as the

lonely, outcast stranger, and yet as the One who links Himself in perfect grace with us in all our need — One whose footprints we can trace all across this dreary desert. "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And yet it is as Son of man that He shall, by-and-by, exercise that universal dominion reserved for Him according to the eternal counsels of God. See Daniel 7.}

There was endless speculation, simply because there was no real heart-work respecting the blessed One. Some said this, some said that; and, in result, no one cared who or what He was; and hence He turns away from all this heartless speculation, and puts the pointed question to His own, "But whom say ye that I am? "He desired to know what they thought about Him — what estimate their hearts had formed of Him. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Here we have the true confession. Here lies the solid foundation of the whole edifice of the Church of God and of all true practical Christianity — "Christ the Son of the living God." No more dim shadows — no more powerless forms — no more lifeless ordinances — all must be permeated by this new, this divine, this heavenly life which has come into this world, and is communicated to all who believe in the name of the Son of God.

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

Now, it is evidently to this magnificent passage that the apostle Peter refers in the second chapter of his first epistle, when he says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones [the same words], are built up," &c. All who believe in Jesus are partakers of His risen, victorious rock life. The life of Christ, the Son of the living God, flows through all His members, and through each in particular. Thus we have the living God, the living Stone, and living stones. It is all life together — life flowing down from a living source, through a living channel, and imparting itself to all believers, thus making them living stones.

Now, this life having been tried and tested, in every possible way, and having come forth victorious, can never again be called to pass through any process of trial, testing, or judgment whatsoever. It has passed through death and judgment. It has gone down under all the waves and billows of divine wrath, and come forth, at the other side, in resurrection, in divine glory and power — a life victorious, heavenly, and divine, beyond the reach of all the powers of darkness. There is no power of earth or hell, men or devils, that can possibly touch the life which is possessed by the very smallest and most insignificant stone in Christ's assembly. All believers are built upon the living Stone, Christ; and are thus constituted living stones He makes them like Himself, in every respect, save of course, in His incommunicable Deity. Is he a living Stone? They are living stones. Is He a precious Stone? They are precious stones. Is he a rejected Stone? They are rejected stones — rejected, disallowed of men. They are, in every respect, identified with Him. Ineffable privilege!

Here, then, we repeat, is the solid foundation of the Christian priesthood — the priesthood of all believers. Before any one can offer up a spiritual sacrifice, he must come to Christ, in simple faith, and be built on Him, as the foundation of the whole spiritual building. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture (Isa. 28: 16), Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded."

How precious are these words! God Himself has laid the foundation, and that foundation is Christ, and all who simply believe in Christ — all who give Him the confidence of their hearts — all who rest satisfied with Him, are made partakers of His resurrection life, and thus made living stones.

How blessedly simple is this! We are not asked to assist in laying the foundation. We are not called upon to add the weight of a feather to it. God has laid the foundation, and all we have to do is to believe and rest thereon; and He pledges His faithful word that we shall never be confounded. The very feeblest believer in Jesus has God's own gracious assurance that he shall never be confounded — never be ashamed — never come into judgment. He is as free from all charge of guilt and every breath of condemnation as that living Rock on whom he is built.

Beloved reader, are you on this foundation? Are you built on Christ? Have you come to Him as God's living stone, and given Him the full confidence of your heart? Are you thoroughly satisfied with God's foundation? or are you seeking to add something of your own — your own works, your prayers, your ordinances, your vows and

resolutions, your religious duties? If so, if you are seeking to add the smallest jot or tittle to God's Christ, you may rest assured, you will be confounded. God will not suffer such dishonour to be offered to His tried, elect, precious chief — corner Stone. Think you that He could allow aught, no matter what, to be placed beside His beloved Son, in order to form, with Him, the foundation of His spiritual edifice? The bare thought were an impious blasphemy. No; it must be Christ alone. He is enough for God, and He may well be enough for us; and nothing is more certain than that all who reject, or neglect, turn away from, or add to, God's foundation, shall be covered with everlasting confusion.

But, having glanced at the foundation, let us look at the superstructure. This will lead us to the second of our three weighty words. "To whom coming as unto a... living stone ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

All true believers are holy priests. They are made this by spiritual birth, just as Aaron's sons were priests in virtue of their natural birth. The apostle does not say, Ye ought to be living stones, and, Ye ought to be holy priests. He says ye are such. No doubt, being such, we are called upon to act accordingly; but we must be in a position before we can discharge the duties belonging to it. We must be in a relationship before we can know the affections which flow out of it. We do not become priests by offering priestly sacrifices. But being, through grace, made priests, we are called upon to present the sacrifice. If we were to live a thousand years twice told, and spend all that time working, we could not work ourselves into the position of holy priests; but the

moment we believe in Jesus — the moment we come to Him in simple faith — the moment we give Him the full confidence of our hearts, we are born anew into the position of holy priests, and are then privileged to draw nigh and offer the priestly sacrifice. How could any one, of old, have constituted himself a son of Aaron? Impossible. But being born of Aaron, he was thereby made a member of the priestly house. We speak not now of capacity, but simply of the position. This latter was reached not by effort, but by birth And now, let us inquire as to the nature of the sacrifice which, as holy priests, we are privileged to offer. We are "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." So also in Hebrews 13: 15, we read, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."

Here, then, we have the true nature and character of that sacrifice which, as holy priests, we are to offer. It is praise — "praise to God continually." Blessed occupation! Hallowed exercise! Heavenly employment! And this is not to be an occasional thing. It is not merely at some peculiarly favoured moment, when all looks bright and smiling around us. It is not to be merely amid the glow and fervour of some specially powerful public meeting, when the current of worship flows deep, wide, and rapid. No; the word is, "praise continually." There is no room, no time for complaining and murmuring, fretfulness and discontent, impatience and irritability, lamenting about our surroundings, whatever these may be, complaining about the weather, finding fault with those who are associated with as whether in public or in private, whether in the congregation, in the business, or in the family circle.

Holy priests should have no time for any of these things. They are brought nigh to God, in holy liberty, peace, and blessing. They breathe the atmosphere and walk in the sunlight of the divine presence, in the new creation, where there are no materials for a sour and discontented mind to feed upon. We may set it down as a fixed principle — an axiom — that whenever we hear any one pouring out a string of complaints about circumstances and about his neighbours, such an one is not realising the place of holy priesthood, and, as a consequence, not exhibiting its practical fruits. A holy priest is always happy, always bright, always praising God. True, he may be tried in a thousand ways; but he brings his trials to God in communion, not to his fellow-man in complaining. 'hallelujah" is the proper utterance of the very feeblest member of the Christian priesthood.

But we must now look, for a moment, at the third and last branch of our present theme. This is presented in that highly expressive word "royal." The apostle goes on to say, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal… priesthood that ye should show forth the virtues [see margin] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

This completes the lovely picture of the Christian priesthood.* As holy priests, we draw nigh to God, and present the sacrifice of praise. As royal priests we go forth among our fellow-men, in all the details of practical daily life, to show forth the virtues — the graces — the lovely moral features of Christ. Every movement of a royal priest should emit the fragrance of the grace of Christ.

{*The intelligent reader does not need to be told that all believers are priests, and, further, that there is no such thing as a priest upon earth save in the sense in which all true Christians are priests. The idea of a certain set of men, calling themselves priests in contrast with the people - a certain caste distinguished by title and dress from the body of Christians, is not Christianity at all, but Judaism or worse. All who read the bible and bow to its authority are thoroughly clear as to these things.}

Mark, again, the apostle does not say, "Ye ought to be royal priests." He says "ye are;" and as such we are to show forth the virtues of Christ. Nothing else becomes a member of the royal priesthood. To be occupied with myself; to be taking counsel for my own ease, my own interest, my own enjoyment, to be seeking my own ends, and caring about my own things, is not the act of a royal priest at all. Christ never did so; and I am called to show forth His virtues. He, blessed be His name, grants to His people, in this the time of His absence, to anticipate the day when He shall come forth as a Royal Priest, and sit upon His throne, and send forth the benign influence of His dominion to the ends of the earth. We are called to be the present expression of the kingdom of Christ — the expression of Himself.

And let none suppose that the actings of a royal priest are to be confined to the matter of giving. This would be a grave mistake. No doubt, a royal priest will give, and give liberally if he has it; but to limit him to the mere matter of communicating would be to rob him of some of the most precious functions of his position. The very man who penned the words on which we are dwelling said on one occasion — and said it without shame, "Silver and gold have I none;" and yet at that very

moment, he was acting as a royal priest, by bringing the precious virtue of the Name of Jesus to bear on the impotent man. (Acts 3) The blessed Master Himself, we may safely affirm, never possessed a penny; but He went about doing good, and so should we, nor do we need money to do it. Indeed it very often happens that we do mischief instead of good with our silver and gold. We may take people off the ground on which God has placed them, namely, the ground of honest industry, and make them dependent upon human alms. Moreover, we may often make hypocrites and sycophants of people by our injudicious use of money.

Hence, therefore, let no one imagine that he cannot act as a royal priest without earthly riches. What riches are required to speak a kindly word — to drop the tear of sympathy — to give the soothing genial look? None whatever save the riches of God's grace — the unsearchable riches of Christ, all of which are laid open to the most obscure member of the Christian priesthood. I may be in rags, without a penny in the world, and yet carry myself blessedly as a royal priest, by diffusing around me the fragrance of the grace of Christ.

But, perhaps, we cannot more suitably close these few remarks on the Christian priesthood, than by giving a very vivid illustration drawn from the inspired page — the narrative of two beloved servants of Christ who were enabled, under the most distressing circumstances, to acquit themselves as holy and royal priests.

Turn to Acts 16: 19-34. Here we have Paul and Silas thrust into the innermost part of the prison at Philippi, their backs covered with stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks, in the darkness of the midnight hour. What

were they doing? murmuring and complaining? Ah, no. They had something better and brighter to do. Here were two really "living stones," and nothing that earth or hell could do could hinder the life that was in them expressing itself in its proper accents.

But what, we repeat, were these living stones doing? these partakers of the rock life — the victorious — resurrection life of Christ — how did they employ themselves? Well, then, in the first place, as holy priests they offered the sacrifice of praise to God. Yes, "at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God." How precious is this! How morally glorious! How truly refreshing! What are stripes or stocks, or prison walls, or gloomy nights, to living stones and holy priests? Nothing more than a dark background to throw out into bright and beauteous relief the living grace that is in them. Talk of circumstances! Ah! it is little any of us know of trying circumstances. Poor things that we are, the petty annoyances of daily life are often more than enough to cause us to lose our mental balance. Paul and Silas were really in trying circumstances; but they were there as living stones and holy priests.

Yes, reader, and they were there as royal priests, likewise. How does this appear? Certainly not by scattering silver and gold. It is not likely the dear men had much of these to scatter. But oh! they had what was better, even "the virtues of him who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And where do these virtues shine out? In those touching words addressed to the gaoler, "Do thyself no harm." These were the accents of a royal priest, just as the song of praise was the voice of a holy priest. Thank God for both! The voices of the holy priests went directly up to

the throne of God and did their work there; and the words of the royal priests went directly to the gaoler's hard heart and did their work there. God was glorified and the gaoler saved by two men rightly discharging the functions of "the Christian priesthood."

Regeneration: What is it?

Regeneration: What is it?

C. H. Mackintosh.

There are few subjects which have given rise to more difficulty and perplexity than that of regeneration, or the new birth. Very many who are, themselves, the subjects of this new birth are at a loss to know what it is, and filled with doubt as to whether they have ever really experienced it. Many there are who, were they to clothe their desire in words, would say, "Oh! that I knew for certain, that I had passed from death unto life. If only I were sure that I was born again, I should be happy indeed." Thus they are harassed with doubts and fears, from day to day, and from year to year. Sometimes they are full of hope that the great change has passed upon them; but, anon, something springs up within them which leads them to think their former hopes were a delusion. Judging from feeling and experience, rather than from the plain teaching of the word of God, they are, of necessity, plunged in uncertainty and confusion as to the whole matter.

Now I would desire to enter in company with my reader. Upon an examination in the light of scripture, of this most interesting subject. It is to be feared that very much of the misapprehension which prevails in reference thereto, arises from the habit of preaching regeneration and its fruits instead of Christ. The effect is put before the cause, and this must always produce derangement of thought.

Let us, then, proceed to consider this question. What is regeneration? How is it produced? What are its results?

1. And, first, what is regeneration? Very many look upon it as a change of the old nature, produced, no doubt, by the influence of the Spirit of God. This change is gradual in its operation, and proceeds from stage to stage, until the old nature is completely brought under. This view of the subject involves two errors, namely, first, an error as to the real condition of our old nature; and, secondly, as to the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost. It denies the hopeless ruin of nature; and represents the Holy Ghost more as an influence than as a Person.

As to our true state by nature, the word of God presents it as one of total and irrecoverable ruin. Let us adduce the proofs. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. 6: 5) The words "every" "only" and "continually" set aside every idea of a redeeming feature in man's condition before God. Again, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Ps. 14: 2, 3) Here, again, the expressions "all" — "none" — "no, not one" — preclude the idea of a single redeeming quality in man's condition, as judged in the presence of God. Having thus drawn a proof from Moses and one from the Psalms, let us take one or two from the prophets. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it." (Isa. 1: 5, 6) "The voice said, Cry. And he said,

What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." (Isa. 40: 6) "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? " (Jer. 17: 9)

The above will suffice from the Old Testament. Let us, now, turn to the New. "Jesus did not commit himself, because he knew all, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." (John 2: 24, 25) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3: 6) Read, also, Romans 3: 9-19. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." (Rom. 8: 7) "Having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2: 12) These quotations might be multiplied, but there is no need. Sufficient proof has been adduced to show forth the true condition of nature. It is "lost" — "guilty" — "alienated" — "without strength" — "evil only" — "evil continually."

How, then, we may lawfully inquire, can that which is spoken of in such a way, ever be changed or improved? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." The fact is, the more closely we examine the word of God, the more we shall see that it is not the divine method to improve a fallen, ruined thing, but to bring in something entirely new. It is precisely thus in reference to man's natural condition. God is not seeking to improve it. The gospel does not propose as its object, to better man's nature, but to give him a new one. It seeks not to put a new piece upon an old garment, but to impart a new garment altogether. The law looked for something in man, but never got it. Ordinances were given, but man used them to shut out God. The gospel, on the contrary, shows us Christ magnifying the law and

making it honourable; it shows Him dying on the cross, and nailing ordinances thereto, it shows Him rising from the tomb and taking His seat as a Conqueror at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; and, finally, it declares that all who believe in His name are partakers of His risen life, and are one with Him. (See, carefully, the following passages: John 20: 31; Acts 13: 39; Rom. 6: 4-11; Eph. 2: 1-6; Eph. 3: 13-18; Col. 2: 10-15.)

It is of the very last importance to be clear and sound as to this. If I am led to believe that regeneration is a certain change in my old nature, and that this change is gradual in its operation, then, as a necessary consequence, I shall be filled with continual anxiety and apprehension, doubt and fear, depression and gloom, when I discover, as I surely shall, that nature is nature, and will be naught else but nature to the end of the chapter. No influence or operation of the Holy Ghost can ever make the flesh spiritual. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" and can never be ought else but "flesh;" and "all flesh is as grass" — as withered grass. The flesh is presented in scripture not as a thing to be improved, but as a thing which God counts as "dead," and which we are called to "mortify" — subdue and deny, in all its thoughts and ways. In the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see the end of everything pertaining to our old nature. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5: 24) He does not say "They that are Christ's are improving, or trying to improve the flesh". No; but they have crucified it. It is utterly unimprovable. How can they do this! By the energy of the Holy Ghost, acting not on the old nature, but in the new, and enabling them to keep the old nature where the cross has put it, namely, in the place of death.

God expects nothing from the flesh; neither should we. He looks upon it as dead; so should we. He has put it out of sight, and we should keep it so. The flesh should not be allowed to show itself. God does not own it. It has no existence before Him. True, it is in us, but God gives us the precious privilege of viewing and treating it as dead. His word to us is, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6: 11)

This is an immense relief to the heart that has struggled for years in the hopeless business of trying to improve nature. It is an immense relief, moreover, to the conscience which has been seeking a foundation for its peace in the gradual improvement of a totally unimprovable thing. Finally, it is an immense relief to any soul that may, for years, have been earnestly breathing after holiness, but has looked upon holiness as consisting in the improvement of that which hates holiness and loves sin. To each and all of such it is infinitely precious and important to understand the real nature of regeneration. No one who has not experienced it can conceive the intensity of anguish and the bitterness of the disappointment which a soul feels, who, vainly expecting some improvement in nature, finds, after years of struggling, that nature is nature still. And just in proportion to the anguish and disappointment will be the joy of discovering that God is not looking for any improvement in nature — that He sees it as dead, and us as alive in Christ — one with Him, and accepted in Him for ever. To be led into a clear and full apprehension of this, is divine emancipation to the conscience, and true elevation for the whole moral being.

Let us, then, see clearly what regeneration is. It is a new birth — the imparting of a new life — the implantation of a new nature — the formation of a new man. The old nature remains in all its distinctness; and the new nature is introduced in all its distinctness. This new nature has its own habits, its own desires, its own tendencies, its own affections. All these are spiritual, heavenly, divine. Its aspirations are all upward. It is ever breathing after the heavenly source from which it has emanated. As in nature, water always finds its own level; so in grace, the new, the divine nature always tends towards its own proper source. Thus regeneration is to the soul what the birth of Isaac was to the household of Abraham. (Gen. 21) Ishmael remained the same Ishmael; but Isaac was introduced. So the old nature remains the same, but the new is introduced. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It partakes of the nature of its source. A child partakes of the nature of its parents; and the believer is made "a partaker of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1: 4) "Of His own will begat he us." (James 1)

In a word, then, regeneration is God's own work, from first to last. God is the Operator, man is the happy, privileged subject. His cooperation is not sought in a work which must ever bear the impress of one almighty hand. God was alone in creation — alone in redemption — and he must be alone in the mysterious and glorious work of regeneration.

2 Having endeavoured to show, from various passages of scripture, that regeneration, or the new birth, is not a change of man's fallen nature, but the imparting of a new — a divine nature, we shall now, in dependence upon the blessed Spirit's teaching, proceed to consider how the new birth is produced — how the new nature is

communicated. This is a point of immense importance, inasmuch as it places the word of God before us as the grand instrument which the Holy Ghost uses in quickening dead souls. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;" and by the word of the Lord are dead souls called into new life. The word of the Lord is creative and regenerating. It called worlds into existence; it calls sinners from death to life. The same voice which of old said "Let there he light," must in every instance say "Let there be life."

If my reader will turn to the third chapter of John's Gospel, he will find, in our Lord's interview with Nicodemus, much precious instruction in reference to the mode in which regeneration is produced. Nicodemus held a very high place in what would be termed the religious world. He was "a man of the Pharisees" — "a ruler of the Jews" — "a master of Israel." He could hardly have occupied a more elevated or influential position. But yet, it is very evident that this highly-privileged man was ill at ease. Despite of all his religious advantages, his heart felt a restless craving after something which neither his Pharisaism, nor yet the entire system of Judaism could supply. It is quite possible he might not have been able to define what he wanted; but he wanted something, else he never would have come to Jesus by night. It was evident that the Father was drawing him, by a resistless though most gentle hand, to the Son; and the way He took of drawing him was by producing a sense of need which nothing around him could satisfy. This is a very common case. Some are drawn to Jesus by a deep sense of guilt — some by a deep sense of need. Nicodemus, obviously, belongs to the latter class. His position was such as to

preclude the idea of anything like gross immorality; and, hence, it would not, in his case, be so much guilt on his conscience as a void in his heart. But it comes to the same in the end. The guilty conscience and the craving heart must both be brought to Jesus, for He alone can perfectly meet both the one and the other. He can remove, by His precious sacrifice, every stain from the conscience; and He can fill up, by His peerless Person, every blank in the heart The conscience which has been purged by the blood of Jesus is perfectly clean; and the heart which is filled with the Person of Jesus is perfectly satisfied.

However, Nicodemus had, like many beside, to unlearn a great deal, ere he could really grasp the knowledge of Jesus. He had to lay aside a cumbrous mass of religious machinery, ere he could apprehend the divine simplicity of God's plan of salvation. He had to descend from the lofty heights of Rabbinical learning and traditional religion, and learn the alphabet of the gospel, in the school of Christ. This was very humiliating to a "man of the Pharisees" — "a ruler of the Jews" — "a master of Israel." There is nothing of which man is so tenacious as his religion and his learning; and, in the case of Nicodemus, it must have sounded passing strange upon his ear when "a teacher come from God" declared to him "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Being by birth a Jew, and, as such, entitled to all the privileges of a son of Abraham, it must have involved him in strange perplexity, to be told that he must be born again — that he must be the subject of a new birth, in order to see the kingdom of God. This was a total setting aside of all his privileges and distinctions. It called him down, at once

from the very highest to the very "lowest step of the ladder." A Pharisee, a ruler, a master. was not one whit nearer to, or fitter for, this heavenly kingdom, than the most disreputable of the children of men. This was deeply humbling. If he could carry all his advantages and distinctions with him, so as to have them placed to his credit in this new kingdom, it would be something. This would secure for him a position in the kingdom of God far above that of a harlot or a publican. But, then, to be told that he must be born again, left him nothing to glory in. This, I repeat, was deeply humbling to a learned, religious, and influential man.

But it was puzzling as well as humbling. "Nicodemus saith 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 be naught but a natural man after all; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Do what you will with flesh — with nature, and you cannot alter or improve it. Nothing could change flesh into spirit. You may exalt it? the rank of Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel — and you could hardly make it higher — but it will be flesh, notwithstanding. If this were more generally and clearly apprehended, it would prove the saving of fruitless labour to hundreds. Flesh is of no value whatever. In itself, it is but withered grass; and as to its most pious endeavours, its religious advantages and attainments, its works of righteousness, they have been pronounced by the pen of inspiration to be as filthy rags. (Isa. 64: 6)

But let us see the mode in which our blessed Lord replies to the "how?" of Nicodemus. It is peculiarly interesting. 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. 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." (John 3: 5-8) Here we are distinctly taught that regeneration, or the new birth, is produced by "water and the Spirit." A man must be born of water and of the Spirit ere 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 human intellect "enter" into the deep secrets thereof. "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) "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

It may be, however, that many are at a loss to know what is meant by being "born of water." Certainly, the expression has been made the ground of very much discussion and 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 unlettered Christian — the humble student of the inspired volume, that he need not travel outside the covers of that volume, in order to interpret any passage contained therein.

What, then, is the meaning of being " born of water?" We must reply to this question by quoting two or three passages from the word. 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." (John 1: 11-13.) From this passage, we learn that every one who believes on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is born again — born of God, This is the plain sense is the passage. All who by the power of God the Holy Ghost, 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. Hence, instead of being occupied with myself, and inquiring, like Nicodemus, how can I be born again, I have simply to cast myself, by faith, on Jesus; and thus I am born again. All who put their trust in Christ have gotten a new life, are regenerated.

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 judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5: 24) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 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." (John 20: 31) All these passages go to prove that the only way in which we can get this new and everlasting life is by simply receiving the record concerning Christ All who believe that record, have this new, this eternal life.

Mark, it is not those who merely say they believe, but those who actually do believe, according to the sense of the word in the foregoing passages. There is life-giving power in the Christ whom the word reveals, and in the word that 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." And then, lest ignorance should marvel, or scepticism 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" (John 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 sceptic 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.

But the reader may feel disposed to inquire, "What has all this to do with the meaning of the word “water,” in John 3: 5?" It has to do with it, inasmuch as it shows that the new birth is produced, the new life communicated, by the voice of Christ — which is, really, the word of God, as we read in the first chapter of James, “of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." (Ver. 18) So also, in first Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1: 23) In both these passages, the word is expressly set forth as the instrument 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 aright 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." (Eph. 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." (Titus 3: 5-7)

From all these quotations, we learn that the word of God is the grand instrument of which the Holy Ghost makes use in calling dead souls into life. This truth is confirmed, in a peculiarly interesting manner, by our Lords conversation with Nicodemus, for, 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 serpent healed the Israelite; one look at Jesus quickens the dead sinner. The former had not to look a second time to be healed; the latter has not to look a second time to get life. It was not the way he looked, but the object he looked at, that healed the Israelite; 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 called to learn — such the reply to his "how?" If a man begins to reason about the new birth, he must 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 as to this. They are occupied with the process of regeneration, instead of the word which regenerates. Thus are they perplexed and confounded. They are looking at self, instead of at Christ; and as there is an inseparable 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 upon oneself 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."

3. We come, now, to consider, in the third and last place, the results of regeneration — a point of the deepest interest 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: there fore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth 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 John 3: 1-3) "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself 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; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom. 8: 14-17)

It is most important to understand the distinction between life and peace. The former is the result of being linked with Christ's Person; the latter is the result of His work. "He that hath the Son hath Life." (1 John 5: 12) But, "being justified by faith we have peace." (Rom. 5: l) "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 Peter 1: 23; 2 Peter 1: 4) Many are not aware of all that is involved in thus 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 it is, likewise, in

grace. I may be ignorant both as to 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, even Him who has begotten me by the word of truth. (James 1: 18) It is my privilege to enjoy the full flow of parental 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 marvellous privilege to the simple belief of the truth. (John 1: 12) We do not reach this position "by works of righteousness which we have done," or could do; 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, which is God's " incorruptible seed."

Take the case of the very vilest sinner who, up to this moment, has been living a life of gross wickedness. Let that person receive 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;" and he there, then, and thus, 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, and 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." (John 3: 36) When does he get this life? The very moment he believes. "Believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20: 31) The truth concerning Christ is the seed of eternal life, and 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 of 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 — "the holy scriptures." It is well to understand this. Many are looking in, for evidences of the new life, instead of looking out at the object which imparts the life. It is quite true that, "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself " (1 John 5: 10); but, be it remembered, it is "the witness" of a life which is received by "believing on the Son of God," not by looking in upon oneself; and 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 as to this, because of the strong tendency of our hearts to make something within the ground of our peace and contentment, instead of building, absolutely and exclusively, upon Christ The more simply we cling to Christ, apart from all beside, the more peaceful and happy we shall be; but directly we take the eye off Him, we become unhinged and unhappy.

In a word, then, my reader should seek to understand, with scriptural accuracy, the distinction between life and peace. The former is the result of the connection with Christ's Person; the latter is the result of believing in His finished work. We very frequently meet with quickened souls who are in sad trouble and disquietude as to their acceptance with God. They really do believe on the name of the Son of God, and, believing, they have life; but from not seeing the fullness of the work of Christ, as to their sins, they are troubled in conscience, they have no mental repose. Take an illustration. If you place a hundredweight upon the bosom of a dead man he does not feel it. Place another, and another, and another, he is wholly unconscious Why? Because there is no life. Let us suppose for a moment, the entrance in of life, and what will be the result? A most distressing sensation occasioned by the terrible weight upon the bosom. What, then, will be needful in order to the full enjoyment of the life which had been imparted? Clearly, the removal of the burden. It is somewhat thus with the sinner who receives life by believing on the Person of the Son of God. So long as he was in a state of spiritual death he had no spiritual sensations, he was unconscious of any weight pressing upon him. But the entrance in of spiritual life has imparted spiritual sensibilities, and he now feels a burden pressing upon his heart and conscience, which he knows not exactly how to get rid of. He sees not as yet all that is involved in believing on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. He does not see that Christ is, at once, his righteousness and his life. He needs a simple view of the finished atonement of Christ, whereby all his sins were plunged in the waters of eternal oblivion, and he himself introduced into the full favour of God. It is this, and this

alone, that can remove the heavy burden off the heart, and impart that profound mental repose which nothing can ever disturb.

If I think of God as a judge, and myself as a sinner, I need the blood of the cross to bring me into His presence, in the way of righteousness. I must fully understand that every claim which God, the righteous Judge, had upon me, a guilty sinner, has been divinely answered, and eternally settled, by "the precious blood of Christ." This gives my soul peace. I see that, through that blood, God can be "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3: 29) I learn that, in the cross, God has been glorified about my sins; yea, that the whole question of sin was fully gone into and perfectly settled between God and Christ, amid the deep and awful solitudes of Calvary. Thus my load is taken off, my weight removed, my guilt cancelled; I can breathe freely; I have perfect peace; there is literally nothing against me; I am as free as the blood of Christ can make me. The Judge has declared himself satisfied as to sin, by raising the sinner's Surety from the dead, and placing Him at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

But, then, there comes another thing of immense value. I not only see myself as a guilty sinner provided with a way of access to God, as a righteous Judge; but I see God, in pursuance of His eternal counsels of electing love, begetting me through the word of truth, making me His child, adopting me into His family, and setting me before Him in such a way as that I can enjoy communion with Him as my Father, in the midst of all the tender endearments of the divine family circle. This is, obviously, another phase of the believer's position and character. It is no longer a question of his coming to God

in the full and settled consciousness that every just claim has been met; This, in itself, is ineffably precious to every sin-burdened heart. But there is far more than this. God is my Father, and I am His child. He has a Father's heart, and I can count on the tender affections of that heart in the midst of all my feebleness and need. He loves me, not because of what I am enabled to do, but because I am His child.

Look at yonder tottering babe, the object of ceaseless care and solicitude, wholly unable to promote his father's interests in any one way, yet so loved by the father that he would not exchange him for ten thousand worlds; and if it be thus with an earthly father, what must it be with our heavenly Father? He loves us, not for ought that we are able to do, but because we are His children. He has begotten us, of His own will, by the word of truth. (James 1: 18) We could no more earn a place in the heart of the Father than we could satisfy the claims of the righteous Judge. All is of free grace. The Father has begotten us; and the Judge has found a ransom. (Job 33: 24) We are debtors to grace for both the one and the other.

But, be it remembered, while we are wholly unable to earn, by our works, a place in the Father's heart, or to satisfy the claims of the righteous Judge, we are, nevertheless, responsible to "believe the record which God has given of His Son." (1 John 5: 9-11) I say this, lest by any means, my reader should be one of those who entrench themselves behind the dogmas of a one sided theology, while refusing to believe the plain testimony of God. Many there are — intelligent people, too — who, when the gospel of the grace of God is pressed upon their acceptance, are ready to reply, "I

cannot believe unless God gives me power to do so; nor shall I ever be endowed with that power unless I am one of the elect If I belong to the favoured number I must be saved — if not I can't."

This is a thoroughly one-sided theology; and not only so, but its one side is turned the wrong way; yea, it is so turned as to wear the form of an absurd but most dangerous fatalism, which completely destroys man's responsibility, and casts dishonour upon God's moral administration. It sends man forth upon a wild career of reckless folly, and makes God the author of the sinner's unbelief. This is, in good truth, to add insult to injury. It is, first, to make God a liar, and then charge Him with being the cause of it. It is to reject His proffered love, and blame Him for the rejection. This is, indeed, the most daring wickedness, though based, as I have said, upon a one-sided theology.

Now, does any one imagine that an argument so flimsy will hold good, for a single moment, in the presence of the king of terrors, or before the judgment seat of Christ? Is there a soul throughout the gloomy regions of the lost that would ever think of charging God with being the author of its eternal perdition? Ah! no; it is only upon earth that people argue thus. Such arguments are never breathed in hell. When men go to hell they blame themselves. In heaven they praise the Lamb. All who are lost will have to thank self; all who are saved will have to thank God. It is when the impenitent soul has passed through the narrow archway of time into the boundless ocean of eternity, that it will enter into the full depth and power of those solemn words, "I would, but ye would not."

In truth, human responsibility is as distinctly taught in the word of God as is divine sovereignty. Man finds it impossible to frame a system of divinity which will give each truth its proper place; but he is not called upon to frame systems, but to believe a plain record, and be saved thereby.

Having said thus much by way of caution, to any who may be in danger of falling under the power of the above line of argument, I shall proceed to unfold a little further the results of regeneration, as seen in the matter of the discipline of the Father's house.

As the children of God, we are admitted to all the privileges of His house, and, in point of fact, the discipline of the house is as much a privilege as anything else. It is on the ground of the relationship in which God has set us, that He acts in discipline towards us. A father disciplines his children because they are his. If I see a strange child doing wrong, I am not called upon to chasten him. I am not in the relationship of a father to him, and, as a consequence, I neither know the affections nor the responsibilities of that relationship. I must be in a relationship in order to know the affections which belong to it. Now, as our Father, God, in His great grace and faithfulness, looks after us in all our ways; He will not suffer ought upon us, or about us, which would be unworthy of Him, and subversive of our real peace and blessedness. " Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. 12: 9, 10) Thus the discipline is a

positive privilege, inasmuch as it is a proof of our Father's care, and has for its object our participation in the divine holiness.

But, then, we must ever bear in mind that the discipline of our Father's hand is to be interpreted in the light of our Father's countenance, and the deep mysteries of His moral government to be contemplated through the medium of His tender love. If we lose sight of this, we shall be sure to get into a spirit of bondage as respects ourselves, and a spirit of judgment as respects others, both of which are in direct opposition to the spirit of Christ. All our Father's dealings with us are in perfect love. When He furnishes us with bread, it is in love, and when He takes down the rod, it is in love also. "God is love." It may frequently happen that we are at a loss to know the why and the wherefore of some special dispensation of our Father's hand. It seems dark and inexplicable. The mist, which enwraps our spirits, is so thick and heavy as to prevent our catching the bright and cheering beams from our Father's countenance. This is a trying moment — a solemn crisis in the soul's history. We are in great danger of losing the sense of divine love, through inability to understand the profound secrets of divine government. Satan, too, is sure to be busy at such a time. He will ply his fiery darts, and throw in his dark and diabolical suggestions. Thus, between the filthy reasonings which spring up within, and the horrible suggestions which come from without, the soul is in danger of losing its balance, and of getting away from the precious attitude of artless repose in divine love, let the divine government be what it may.

Thus much, with reference to our own souls, while under any special visitation of the hand of God. The

effect as to others is equally bad. How often may we have detected ourselves in the habit of cherishing a spirit of judgment, in reference to a child of God whom we found in circumstances of trial, either of "mind, body, or estate." This should be carefully guarded against. we aught not to imagine that every visitation of the hand of God must necessarily be on account of some special sin in the person. This would be an entirely false principle. The dealings of God are preventive as well as corrective.

Take a case in point. My child may be in the room with me enjoying all the sweet intimacies which belong to our relationship. A person enters who I know will utter things which I do not wish my child to hear. I, therefore, without assigning any reason, tell my child to go to his room. Now, if he has not the fullest confidence in my love, he may entertain all manner of false notions about my act. He may reason about the why and wherefore to such a degree as almost to question my affection. However, directly the visitor takes his leave, I call the child into my presence and explain the whole matter to him; and. in the renewed experience of a father's love, he gets rid of the unhappy suspicions of a few dark moments.

Thus it is often with our poor hearts, in the matter of the divine dealings both with ourselves and others. We reason when we ought to repose: we doubt when we ought to depend. Confidence in our Father's love is the true corrective in all things.

We should ever hold fast the assurance of that changeless, infinite, and everlasting love which has taken us up in our low and lost estate, made us "sons of God," and will never fail us, never let us go, until we

enter upon the unbroken and eternal communion of our Father's house above. May that love dwell more abundantly in our hearts, that so we may enter more fully into the meaning and power of regeneration — what it is — how it is produced — and what are its results. God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

C. H. M.

Sanctification: What is it?

Sanctification: What is it?

C. H. Mackintosh.

To minister peace and comfort to those who, though truly converted, have not laid hold of a full Christ, and who, as a consequence, are not enjoying the liberty of the gospel, is the object we have in view in considering the important and deeply-interesting subject of sanctification. We believe that very many of those, whose spiritual welfare we desire to promote, suffer materially from defective, or erroneous, ideas on this vital question. Indeed, in some cases, the doctrine of sanctification is so entirely misapprehended as to interfere with the truth of the believer's perfect justification before God.

For example, we have frequently heard persons speak of sanctification as a progressive work, in virtue of which our old nature is to be made gradually better; and, moreover, that until this process has reached its climax, until fallen and corrupt humanity has become completely sanctified, we are not fit for heaven.

Now, so far as this view of the question is concerned, we have only to say that both scripture and the truthful experience of all believers are entirely against it. The word of God never once teaches us that the Holy Ghost has for His object the improvement either gradual or otherwise, of our old nature — that nature which we inherit, by natural birth, from fallen Adam, The inspired apostle expressly declares 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. (1 Cor. 2: 14) This one passage is clear and conclusive on the point. If "the natural man" can neither "receive" nor "know" "the things of the Spirit of God," then how can that "natural man" be sanctified by the Holy Ghost? Is it not plain that to speak of "the sanctification of our nature" is opposed to the direct teaching of 1 Corinthians 2: 14? Other passages might be adduced to prove that the design of the Spirit's operations is not to improve or sanctify the flesh, but there is no need to multiply quotations. An utterly ruined thing can never be sanctified. Do what you will with it, and it is ruined; and, most assuredly, the Holy Ghost did not come down to sanctify a ruin, but to lead the ruined one to Jesus. So far from any attempt to sanctify the flesh, we read that "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." (Gal. 5: 17) Could the Holy Ghost be represented as carrying on a warfare with that which He is gradually improving and sanctifying? Would not the conflict cease so soon as the process of improvement had reached its climax? But does the believer's conflict ever cease so long as he is in the body?

This leads us to the second objection, to the erroneous theory of the progressive sanctification of our nature, namely, the objection drawn from the truthful experience of all believers. Is the reader a true believer ? If so, has he found any improvement in his old nature? Is it a single whit better now than it was when he first started on his Christian course ? He may, through grace, be able to subdue it more thoroughly; but it is nothing better. If it be not mortified, it is just as

ready to spring up and show itself in all its vileness as ever. "The flesh" in a believer is in no wise better than "the flesh" in an unbeliever. If this be forgotten, it would be hard to calculate the result. If the Christian does not bear in mind that self must be judged, he will soon learn, by bitter experience, that his old nature is as bad as ever; and, moreover, that it will be the very same to the end.

It is difficult to conceive how any one who is led to expect a gradual improvement of his nature, can enjoy an hour's peace, inasmuch as he cannot but see, if he only looks at himself in the light of God's holy word, that there is not the smallest change in the true character of his own heart, that his heart is so deceitful and desperately wicked as when he walked in the moral darkness of his unconverted state. his own condition and character are, indeed, greatly changed by the possession of a new, yea, a "divine nature," and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to give effect to its desires; but the moment the old nature is at work, he finds it as opposed to God as ever. We doubt not but that very much of the gloom and despondency, of which so many complain, may be justly traced to their misapprehension of this important point of sanctification. They are looking for what they can never find. They are seeking for a ground of peace in a sanctified nature instead of in a perfect sacrifice — in a progressive work of holiness instead of in a finished work of atonement. They deem it presumptuous to believe that their sins are forgiven until their evil nature is completely sanctified, and, seeing that this end is not reached, they have no settled assurance of pardon, and are therefore miserable. In a word, they are seeking for "a foundation" totally

different from that which Jehovah says He has laid, and, therefore, they have no certainty whatever. The only thing that ever seems to give them a ray of comfort is some apparently successful effort in the struggle for personal sanctity. If they have had a good day — if they are favoured with a season of comfortable communion, if they happen to enjoy a peaceful devotional frame, they are ready to cry out, "Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong; I shall never be moved." (Ps. 30)

But, ah! these things furnish a sorry foundation for the soul's peace. They are not Christ; and, until we have Christ, we have nothing; but when we get Him we get all. The soul that has really got hold of Christ is desirous indeed of holiness; but if intelligent of what Christ is to him, he has done with all thoughts about sanctified nature. He has found his all in Christ, and the paramount desire of his heart is to grow into His likeness. This is true, practical sanctification.

It frequently happens that persons, in speaking of sanctification, mean a right thing, although they do not express themselves according to the teaching of holy scripture. There are many also, who see one side of the truth as to sanctification, but not the other; and, although we should be sorry to make any one an offender for a word, yet it is always most desirable, in speaking of any point of truth, and especially of so vital a point as that of sanctification, to speak according to the divine integrity of the word. We shall, therefore, proceed to quote for our readers a few of the leading passages from the New Testament in which this doctrine is unfolded. These passages will teach us two things, namely, what Sanctification is, and how it is effected.

The first passage to which we would call attention is 1 Corinthians 1: 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Here we learn that Christ "is made unto us" all these four things. God has given us, in Christ, a precious casket, and when we open that casket with the key of faith, the first gem that glitters in our view is "wisdom;" the second is "righteousness;" the third is "sanctification;" and the fourth is "redemption." We have them all in Christ. As we get one so we get all. And how do we get one and all? By faith. But why does the apostle name redemption last ? Because it takes in the final deliverance of the body of the believer from under the power of mortality, when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall either raise it from the tomb, or change it, in the twinkling of an eye. Will this act be progressive? Clearly not; it will be done "in the twinkling of an eye." The body is in one state now, and "in a moment" it will be in another. In the brief point of time expressed by the rapid movement of the eyelash, will the body pass from corruption to incorruption; from dishonour to glory; from weakness to power. What a change! It will be immediate, complete, eternal. divine.

But what are we to learn from the fact that "sanctification" is placed in the group with "redemption?" We learn that what redemption will be to the body, that sanctification is now to the soul. In a word, sanctification, in the sense in which it is here used, is an immediate, a complete, an eternal, a divine work. The one is no more progressive than the other. The one is as immediate as the other. The one is as complete and as independent of man as the other. No

doubt, when the body shall have undergone the glorious change, there will be heights of glory to be trodden, depths of glory to be penetrated, wide fields of glory to be explored. All these things shall occupy us throughout eternity. But, then the work which is to fit us for such scenes will be done in a moment. So also is it, in reference to sanctification, the practical results of the thing will be continually developing themselves; but the thing itself, as spoken of in this passage, is done in a moment.

What an immense relief it would be to thousands of earnest, anxious, struggling souls to get a proper hold of Christ as their sanctification How many are vainly endeavouring to work out a sanctification for themselves! They have come to Christ for righteousness after many fruitless efforts to get a righteousness of their own; but they are seeking after sanctification in a different way altogether. They have gotten "righteousness without works," but they imagine that they must get sanctification with works. They have gotten righteousness by faith, but they imagine they must get sanctification by effort. Thus it is they lose their peace. They do not see that we get sanctification in precisely the same way as we get righteousness, inasmuch as Christ "is made unto us" the one as well as the other. Do we get Christ by effort? No; by faith. It is; “to him that worketh not." (Rom. 4: 5) This applies to all that we get in Christ. We have no warrant whatever to single out from 1 Corinthians 1: 30, the matter of "sanctification," and place it upon a different footing from all the other blessings which it unfolds. We have neither wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, nor redemption in ourselves; nor can we procure them by

aught that we can do; but God has made Christ to be unto us all these things. In giving us Christ, He gave us all that is in Christ. The fullness of Christ is ours, and Christ is the fullness of God.

Again, in Acts 26: 18, the converted Gentiles are spoken of as "receiving forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith." Here, faith is the instrument by which we are said to be sanctified, because it connects us with Christ. The very moment the sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ he becomes linked with Him. He is made one with Him, complete in Him, accepted in Him. This is true sanctification and justification. It is not a process. It is not a gradual work. It is not progressive. The word is very explicit. It says, "them which are sanctified by faith which is in me." It does not say, "which shall be sanctified, or "which are being sanctified." If such were the doctrine it would have been so stated.

No doubt, the believer grows in the knowledge of this sanctification, in his sense of its power and value, its practical influence and results, the experience and enjoyment of it. As "the truth" pours its divine light upon his soul, he enters into a more profound apprehension of what is involved in being "set apart" for Christ, in the midst of this evil world. All this is blessedly true; but the more its truth is seen, the more clearly we shall understand that sanctification is not merely a progressive work, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, but that it is one result of our being linked to Christ, by faith, whereby we become partakers of all that He is. This is an immediate, a complete, and an eternal work. "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." (Ecc. 3: 14)

Whether He justifies or sanctifies, "it shall be for ever." The stamp of eternity is fixed upon every work of God's hand: "nothing can be put to it," and, blessed be His name, "nothing can be taken from it.

There are passages which present the subject in another aspect, and which may require a fuller consideration hereafter. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 23 the apostle prays for the saints whom he addresses, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here, the word is applied to a sanctification admitting of degrees. The Thessalonians had, along with all believers, a perfect sanctification in Christ; but as to the practical enjoyment and display of this, it was only accomplished in part, and the apostle prays that they may be wholly sanctified.

In this passage, it is worthy of notice, that nothing is said of "the flesh." Our fallen, corrupt nature is always treated as a hopelessly ruined thing. It has been weighed in the balance, and found wanting. It has been measured by a divine rule and found short. It has been tried by a perfect plummet and proved crooked. God has set it aside. Its "end has come before him." He has condemned it and put it to death. It is crucified, dead, and buried. To adduce proofs would demand a volume. Are we, then, to imagine for a moment, that God the Holy Ghost came down from heaven for the purpose of exhuming a condemned, crucified, and buried nature, so that He might sanctify it? The idea has only to be named to be abandoned for ever by every one who bows to the authority of scripture. The more closely we study the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the entire New Testament, the more closely we shall see that the flesh is

wholly unmendable. It is, absolutely, good for nothing. The Spirit does not sanctify it, but He enables the believer to mortify it. We are told to "put off the old man." This precept would never have been delivered to us if the object of the Holy Ghost were the sanctification of that "old man."

We trust that no one will accuse us of entertaining a desire to lower the standard of personal holiness, or to weaken the soul's earnest aspirations after a growth in that purity for which every true believer must ardently long. God forbid! If there is one thing above another which we desire to promote in ourselves and others, it is intense personal purity — an elevated tone of practical sanctity — a whole-hearted separation from moral evil, in every shape and form. For this we long, for this we pray, in this we desire to grow daily, and hourly.

But then we are fully convinced that a superstructure of true, practical holiness can never be erected on a legal basis; and hence it is that we press 1 Corinthians 1: 30 upon the attention of our readers. It is to be feared that many who have, in some measure abandoned the legal ground, in the matter of "righteousness" are yet lingering thereon for "sanctification." We believe this to be the mistake of thousands, and we are most anxious to see it corrected. The passage before us would, if simply received into the heart by faith, entirely correct this serious mistake.

All intelligent Christians are agreed as to the fundamental truth of "Righteousness without works." All freely and fully admit that we cannot, by any efforts of our own, work out a righteousness for ourselves before God. But it is not just so clearly seen that righteousness

and sanctification are put upon precisely the same ground in the word of God. We can no more work out a sanctification than we can work out a righteousness. We may try it, but we shall, sooner or later, find out that it is utterly vain. We may vow and resolve; we may labour and struggle; we may cherish the fond hope of doing better tomorrow than we have done today; but, in the end, we must be constrained to see, and feel, and own, that as regards the matter of sanctification, we are as completely "without strength" as we have already proved ourselves to be in the matter of righteousness.

And, oh! what sweet relief to the one who has been stumbling along the path of personal holiness to find after years of unsuccessful struggle, that the very thing he longs for is treasured up in Christ, and is ready to his hand this moment. even a complete sanctification to be enjoyed by faith! Such an one may have been battling with his habits, his lusts, his tempers, his passions; he has been making the most laborious efforts to subdue his flesh and grow in inward holiness, but alas! he has failed. He finds, to his deep sorrow, that he is not holy, and yet he reads that "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12) Not, observe, without a certain measure, or attainment in holiness, but without the thing itself; which every Christian has, from the moment he believes, whether he knows it or not. Perfect sanctification is as fully included in the word "salvation" as is "wisdom, righteousness, or redemption." He did not get Christ by effort, but by faith; and when he laid hold on Christ he received all that is in Christ. Hence, therefore, he has only to look to Jesus by faith, for the subjugation of his lusts, passions, tempers, habits, circumstances, and influences. He must look to Jesus for

all. He can no more subdue a single lust than he could cancel the entire catalogue of his sins, work out a perfect righteousness, or raise the dead. "Christ is all and in all." Salvation is a golden chain which stretches from everlasting to everlasting, and every link of that chain is Christ. It is all Christ from first to last.

All this is as simple as possible. The believer's standing is in Christ, and if in Christ for one thing, he is in Christ for all. I am not in Christ for righteousness, and out of Christ for sanctification. If I am a debtor to Christ for righteousness, I am equally debtor to Him for sanctification. I am not a debtor to legality for either the one or the other. I get both by grace, through faith, and all in Christ. Yes all — all in Christ. The moment the sinner comes to Christ, and believes on Him, he is taken completely off the old ground of nature; he loses his old level standing and all its belongings, and is looked at as in Christ. God only sees him in Christ, and as Christ. He becomes one with Christ for ever. "As he is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4) Such is the absolute standing, the settled and eternal position, of the very feeblest babe in the family of God. There is but one standing for every child of God, every member of Christ. Their knowledge, experience, power, gift, and intelligence, may vary; but their standing is one. Whatever of righteousness or sanctification they possess, they owe it all to their being in Christ; consequently, if they have not gotten a perfect sanctification, neither have they gotten a perfect righteousness. But 1 Cor 1: 30 distinctly teaches that Christ "is made" both one and the other to all believers. It does not say that we have righteousness and "a measure of sanctification." We have just as much scripture authority for putting the word "measure"

before righteousness as before sanctification. The Spirit of God does not put it before either. Both are perfect, and we have both in Christ. God never does anything by halves. There is no such thing as a half justification. Neither is there such a thing as a half sanctification. The idea of a member of the family of God, or of the body of Christ, wholly justified, but only half sanctified, is at once opposed to scripture, and revolting to all the sensibilities of the divine nature.

It is not improbable that very much of the misapprehension which prevails in reference to sanctification, is justly traceable to the habit of confounding two things which differ very materially, namely, standing and walk, or position and condition. The believer's standing is perfect, eternal, unchangeable, divine. His walk is imperfect, fluctuating, and marked with personal infirmity. His position is absolute and unalterable. His practical condition may exhibit manifold imperfections, inasmuch as he is still in the body, and surrounded by various hostile influences which affect his moral condition, from day to day. If then. his standing be measured by his walk, his position by his condition, what he is in God's view by what he is in man's the result must be false. If I reason from what I am in myself, instead of from what I am in Christ, I must, of necessity, arrive at a wrong conclusion.

We should look carefully to this. We are very much disposed to reason upwards from ourselves to God, instead of downwards from God to us. We should bear in mind that "Far as heaven's resplendent orbs Beyond earth's spot extend, As far my thoughts, as far my ways, Your ways and thoughts transcend."

God can only think and speak of His people, and act toward them, too, according to their standing in Christ. He has given them this standing. He has made them what they are. They are His workmanship. Hence, therefore, to speak of them as half justified would be a dishonour cast upon God; and to speak of them as half sanctified would be just the same.

This train of thought conducts us to another weighty proof drawn from the authoritative and conclusive page of inspiration, namely, 1 Corinthians 6: 11. In the verses preceding, the apostle draws a fearful picture of fallen humanity, and he plainly tells the Corinthian saints that they had been just like that. "such were some of you." This is plain dealing. These are no flattering words — no daubing with untempered mortar — no keeping back the full truth as to nature's total and irretrievable ruin. "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

What a striking contrast between the two sides of the apostle's "but!" On the one side, we have all the moral degradation of man's condition; and, on the other side, we have all the absolute perfectness of the believer's standing before God. This, truly, is a marvellous contrast; and be it remembered that the soul passes, in the twinkling of an eye, from one side to the other of this "but." "Such were some of you: but ye are," now, something quite different. The moment in which they received Paul's gospel, they were "washed, sanctified, and justified." They were fit for heaven; and had they not been so, it would have been a slur upon the divine workmanship.

"Clean every whit; thou saidst it, Lord;

Shall one suspicion lurk?

Thine, surely, is a faithful word,

And Thine a finished work."

This is divinely true. The most inexperienced believer is "clean every whit," not as a matter of attainment, but as the necessary result of being in Christ. "We are in Him that is true." (1 John 5) Could any one be in Christ, and at the same time, be only half sanctified? Assuredly not. He will, no doubt, grow in the knowledge and experience of what sanctification really is. He will enter into its practical power; its moral effects upon his habits, thoughts, feelings, affections, and associations: in a word, he will understand and exhibit the mighty influence of divine sanctification upon his entire course, conduct, and character. But, then, he was as completely sanctified, in God's view, the moment he became linked to Christ by faith, as he will be when he comes to bask in the sunlight of the divine presence, and reflect back the concentrated beams of glory emanating from the throne of God and of the Lamb. He is in Christ now; and he will be in Christ then. His sphere and his circumstances will differ. His feet shall stand upon the golden pavement of the upper sanctuary, instead of standing upon the arid sand of the desert. He will be in a body of glory, instead of a body of humiliation; but as to his standing, his acceptance, his completeness, his justification, and sanctification, all was settled the moment he believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God — as settled as ever it will be, because as settled as God could make it. All this seems to flow as a necessary and unanswerable inference from 1 Cor 6: 11.

It is of the utmost importance to apprehend, with clearness, the distinction between a truth and the practical application and result of a truth. This distinction is ever maintained in the word of God. "Ye are sanctified." Here is the absolute truth as to the believer, as viewed in Christ, and as the fruit of an eternally-perfect work. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it." (Eph. 5: 25, 26) "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." (1 Thess. 5: 23) Here we have the practical application of the truth to the believer, and its results in the believer.

But how is this application made, and this result reached? By the Holy Ghost, through the written word. Hence we read, "Sanctify them through thy truth." (John 17) And again, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2: 13) So also, in Peter, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit." (1 Peter 1: 2) The Holy Ghost carries on the believer's practical sanctification on the ground of Christ's accomplished work; and the mode in which He does so is by applying to the heart and conscience the truth as it is in Jesus. He unfolds the truth as to our perfect standing before God in Christ, and by energising the new man in us, He enables us to put away everything incompatible with the perfect standing. A man who is "washed, sanctified, and justified," ought not to indulge in any unhallowed temper, lust, or passion. He should "cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." It is his holy and happy privilege to breathe after the very loftiest heights of personal sanctity. His heart and his habits

should be brought and held under the power of that grand truth that he is perfectly "washed, sanctified, and justified."

This is true practical sanctification. It is not any attempt at the improvement of our old nature. It is not a vain effort to reconstruct an irretrievable ruin. No; it is simply the Holy Ghost, by the powerful application of "the truth," enabling the new man to live, and move, and have his being in that sphere to which he belongs. Here there will, undoubtedly, be progress. There will be growth in the moral power of this precious truth — growth in spiritual ability to subdue and keep under all that pertains to nature — a growing power of separation from the evil around us — a growing meetness for that heaven to which we belong, and toward which we are journeying — a growing capacity for the enjoyment of its holy exercises. All this there will be, through the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost, who uses the word of God to unfold to our souls the truth as to our standing in Christ, and as to the walk which comports with that standing. But let it be clearly understood that the work of the Holy Ghost in practical sanctification, day by day, is founded upon the fact that believers "are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." (Heb. 10: 10) The object of the Holy Ghost is to lead us into the knowledge, the experience, and the practical exhibition of that which was true of us in Christ the very moment we believed. As regards this, there is progress; but our standing in Christ is eternally complete.

"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." (John 17: 17) And again, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." (1 Thess. 5: 23) In these passages,

we have the grand practical side of this question. Here we see sanctification presented, not merely as something absolutely and eternally true of us in Christ, but also as wrought out in us, daily and hourly, by the Holy Ghost through the word. Looked at from this point of view, sanctification is, obviously, a progressive thing. I should be more advanced in personal holiness in the year 1861 than I was in the year 1860. I should, through grace, be advancing, day by day, in practical holiness. But what, let me ask, is this? What, but the working out in me of that which was true of me in Christ, the very moment I believed? The basis upon which the Holy Ghost carries on the subjective work in the believer, is the objective truth of his eternal completeness in Christ.

Again, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12: 14) Here, holiness is presented as a thing to be "followed after" — to be attained by earnest pursuit — a thing which every true believer will long to cultivate.

May the Lord lead us into the power of these things! May they not dwell as doctrines and dogmas in the region of our intellect, but enter into and abide in the heart, as sacred and powerfully influential realities! May we know the sanctifying power of the truth (John 17: 17), the, sanctifying power of faith (Acts 26: 18); the sanctifying power of the name of Jesus (1 Cor. 1: 30; 1 Cor. 6: 11); the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost (1 Peter 1: 2); the sanctifying grace of the Father. (Jude 1.)

And, now, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, world without end Amen.

C.H.M.

The Unequal Yoke

The Unequal Yoke.

C. H. Mackintosh.

Preface.

The following paper appeared in a recent number of "The Present Testimony;" but, inasmuch as that periodical is out of the reach of a large number of Christian readers, I have been requested by many, in various places, to send it forth, in the form of a separate tract. One shrinks from multiplying books at a time like the present, when it may, in good truth, be said, "of making of books there is no end;" still, if the enemy is making diligent use of the press, for the purpose of diffusing abroad infidelity, profanity superstition, and impurity, I believe the servant of Christ may feel perfectly free to make use of the same powerful engine for the purpose of disseminating doctrinal and practical truth. No doubt, we have to watch against the evil of allowing human writings to usurp that place in our minds which belongs to sacred scripture alone. We have to remember that the soundest and most excellent of such writings are only the pure ore, beaten out into thin plates, and that they owe all their value, and all their truth, to the fact of their being based upon or connected with, the word of God. But how often does it happen that we read scripture over and over again, and fail to apprehend the truth contained therein, until the Lord graciously makes use of the lips or pen of another to point it out? Thus, for example, how many have read the words, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," without ever being aware of their just

application? The remembrance of this should be sufficient to keep us from despising human writings. We find God using books and tracts for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of His people; and, assuredly, what He uses, we should not make light of There is a great difference between God's using a book for the purpose of teaching me more of the value, the beauty, and authority of His word, and my abusing the book by allowing it to displace that word altogether. In this, as in everything else, we have to watch against dangerous extremes. We know that "the word of God is quick and powerful," and that the Holy Spirit makes use of it, and it alone, to quicken, enlighten, and build up souls; but we know also that He makes man's lips and man's pen His instruments in bringing that word home to the heart.

In the full confidence that He will graciously use the following pages, I now send them forth to the Church of God C. H. M. Clontarf, March, 1856.

THE UNEQUAL YOKE.

No one who sincerely desires to attain, in his own person, or promote in others, a purer and more elevated discipleship, can possibly contemplate the Christianity of the present day without an indescribable feeling of sadness and heaviness. Its tone is so excessively low, its aspect so sickly, and its spirit so enfeebled, that one is, at times, tempted to despair of anything like a true and faithful witness for an absent Lord. All this is the more truly deplorable, when we remember the commanding motives by which it is our special privilege ever to be actuated. Whether we look at the Master whom we are called to follow — the path which we are called to tread

— the end which we are called to keep in view — or the hopes by which we are to be animated — we cannot but own that, were all these entered into, and realised by a more simple faith, we should, assuredly, exhibit a more ardent discipleship. "The love of Christ," says the apostle, "constraineth us." This is the most powerful motive of all. The more the heart is filled with Christ's love, and the eye filled with His blessed Person, the more closely shall we seek to follow in His heavenly track. His footmarks can only be discovered by "a single eye;" and unless the will is broken, the flesh mortified, and the body kept under, we shall utterly fail in our discipleship, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

Let not my reader misunderstand me. It is not, here, by any means, a question of personal salvation. It is quite another thing. Nothing can be more basely selfish than, having received salvation as the fruit of Christ's agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, to keep at as great a distance from His sacred Person as we can, without forfeiting our personal safety. This is, even in the judgement of nature, deemed a character of selfishness worthy of unmingled contempt; but when exhibited by one who professes to owe his present and his everlasting all to a rejected, crucified, risen, and absent Master, no language can express its moral baseness. "Provided I escape hell-fire, it makes little matter as to discipleship." Reader, do you not, in your inmost soul, abhor this sentiment? If so, then earnestly seek to flee from it, to the very opposite point of the compass; and let your truthful language be: "Provided that blessed Master is glorified, it makes little matter, comparatively, about my personal safety." Would to God

that this were the sincere utterance of many hearts in this day, when, alas it may be too truly said that, "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." (Phil. 2: 21) Would that the Holy Ghost would raise up, by His own resistless power, and send forth by His own heavenly energy, a band of separated and consecrated followers of the Lamb, each one bound, by the cords of love, to the horns of the altar — a company, like Gideon's three hundred of old, able to confide in God, and deny the flesh. How the heart longs for this! How the spirit, bowed down at times beneath the chilling and withering influence of a cold and uninfluential profession, earnestly breathes after a more vigorous and whole-hearted testimony for that One, who emptied Himself, and laid aside his glory, in order that we, through His precious bloodshedding, might be raised to companionship with Him in eternal blessedness.

Now, amongst the numerous hindrances to this thorough consecration of heart to Christ which I earnestly desire for myself and my reader, "the unequal yoke" will be found to occupy a very prominent place indeed. "Be ye not unequally yoked together [eterozugountes] with unbelievers: for what partnership [metoch] hath righteousness with unrighteousness [or rather lawlessness — anomia]? and what communion [koinonia] hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath a believer with an unbeliever [apistou] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and

be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6: 14-18.

Under the Mosaic economy, we learn the same moral principle. "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together." Deut. 22: 9-11; Lev. 19: 19.

These scriptures will suffice to set forth the moral evil of an unequal yoke. It may, with full confidence be asserted that no one can be an unshackled follower of Christ who is, in any way, "unequally yoked." He may be a saved person, he may be a true child of God — a sincere believer, but he cannot be a thorough disciple; and not only so, but there is a positive hindrance to the full manifestation of that which he may really be, notwithstanding his unequal yoke. "Come out... and I will receive you... and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." That is to say, "Get your neck out of the unequal yoke, and I will receive you, and there shall be the full, public, practical manifestation of your relationship with the Lord Almighty." The idea, here, is evidently different from that set forth in James: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." And also in Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." And, again, in 1 John: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." So also, in John's gospel, "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." In all these passages, the relationship of sons is founded upon the divine counsel and the divine operation, and is not set before us as the consequence of any acting of ours; whereas, in 2 Corinthians 6, it is put as the result of our getting out of the unequal yoke. In other words, it is entirely a practical question.

Thus, in Matthew 5, we read, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; in order that [hupos] ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven; because he causeth his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." Here, too, it is the practical establishment and public declaration of the relationship, and its moral influence. It becomes the sons of such a Father to act in such a way. In short, we have the abstract position or relationship of sons founded upon God's sovereign will and operation; and we have the moral character consequent upon and flowing out of this relationship which affords just ground for God's public acknowledgment thereof. God cannot fully and publicly own those who are unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for, were He to do so, it would be an acknowledgment of the unequal yoke. He cannot acknowledge "darkness," "unrighteousness," "Belial," "idols," and "an infidel." How could He! Hence, if I yoke myself with any of these, I am morally and publicly identified with them, and not with God at all. I have put

myself into a position which God cannot own, and, as a consequence, He cannot own me; but if I withdraw myself from that position — if I "come out and be separate" — if I take my neck out of the unequal yoke — then, but not until then, can I be publicly and fully received and owned as a "son or daughter of the Lord Almighty."

This is a solemn and searching principle for all who feel that they have unhappily gotten themselves into such a yoke. They are not walking as disciples, nor are they publicly or morally on the ground of sons. God cannot own them. Their secret relationship is not the point; but they have put themselves thoroughly off God's ground. They have foolishly thrust their neck into a yoke which, inasmuch as it is not Christ's yoke, must be Belial's yoke; and until they cast off that yoke, God cannot own them as His sons and daughters. God's grace, no doubt, is infinite, and can meet us in all our failure and weakness; but if our souls aspire after a higher order of discipleship, we must at once cast off the unequal yoke, cost what it may; that is, if it can be cast off; but, if it cannot, we must only bow our heads beneath the shame and sorrow thereof, looking to God for full deliverance.

Now, there are four distinct phases in which "the unequal yoke" may be contemplated, viz., the domestic, the commercial, the religious, and the philanthropic. Some may be disposed to confine 2 Corinthians 6: 14 to the first of these; but the apostle does not so confine it. The words are "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." He does not specify the character or object of the yoke, and therefore we are warranted in giving the passage its widest application, by bringing its edge to bear directly upon every phase of the unequal yoke;

and we shall see the importance of so doing, ere we close these remarks, if the Lord permit.

1. And first, then, let us consider the domestic or marriage yoke. What pen can portray the mental anguish, the moral misery, together with the ruinous consequences, as to spiritual life and testimony, flowing from a Christian's marriage with an unconverted person? I suppose nothing can be more deplorable than the condition of one who discovers, when it is too late, that he has linked himself for life with one who cannot have a single thought or feeling in common with him. One desires to serve Christ; the other can only serve the devil: one breathes after the things of God the other sighs for the things of this present world the one earnestly seeks to mortify the flesh, with all its affections and desires; the other only seeks to minister to and gratify these very things. Like a sheep and a goat linked together, the sheep longs to feed on the green pasture in the field, while, on the other hand, the goat craves the brambles which grow in the ditch. The sad consequence is that both are starved. One will not feed on the pasture, and the other cannot feed upon the brambles, and thus neither gets what his nature craves, unless the goat, by superior strength, succeeds in forcing his unequally yoked companion to remain amongst the brambles, there to languish and die.

The moral of this is plain enough; and, moreover, it is, alas! of but too common occurrence. The goat generally succeeds in gaining his end. The worldly partner carries his or her point, in almost every instance. It will be found, almost without exception, that in cases of the unequal marriage yoke, the poor Christian is the sufferer, as is evidenced by the bitter fruits of a bad

conscience, a depressed heart a gloomy spirit, and a desponding mind. A heavy price, surely, to pay for the gratification of some natural affection, or the attainment, it may be, of some paltry worldly advantage. In fact, a marriage of this kind is the death-knell of practical Christianity, and of progress in the divine life. It is morally impossible that any one can be an unfettered disciple of Christ with his neck in the marriage yoke with an unbeliever.

As well might a racer in the Olympic or Isthmian games have expected to gain the crown of victory by attaching a heavy weight or a dead body to his person. It is enough, surely, to have one dead body to sustain, without attaching another. There never was a true Christian yet who did not find that he had abundant work to do in endeavouring to grapple with the evils of one heart, without going to burden himself with the evils of two; and, without doubt, the man who, foolishly and disobediently, marries an unconverted woman; or the woman who marries an unconverted man, is burdened with the combined evils of two hearts; and who is sufficient for these things? One can most fully count upon the grace of Christ for the subjugation of his own evil nature; but he certainly cannot count, in the same way, upon that grace in reference to the evil nature of his unequal yoke-fellow. If he have yoked himself ignorantly, the Lord will meet him personally, on the ground of full confession, with entire restoration of soul, but in the matter of his discipleship, he will never recover it.

Paul could say, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disapproved of." And he said

this, too, in immediate connection with "striving for the mastery." "Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one obtaineth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate [self-controlled] in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air," &c. 1 Cor. 9: 24-27.

Here, it is not a question of life or salvation, but simply one of "running in a race," and "so running that we obtain," not life, but "an incorruptible crown." The fact of being called to run assumes the possession of life, for no one would call upon dead men to run in a race. I have got life, evidently, before I begin to run at all, and, hence, though I should fail in the race, I do not lose my life, but only the crown, for this and not that was the object proposed to be run for. We are not called to run for life, inasmuch as we get that, not by running, but "by faith of Jesus Christ," who by His death has purchased life for us, and implants it in us, by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost. Now, this life, being the life of a risen Christ, is eternal, for He is the eternal Son; as He says Himself, in His address to the Father, in John 17, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." This life is not conditional. He does not give us life, as sinners, and then set us to run for it as saints, with the gloomy foreboding, that we may lose the precious boon by failing in the race. This would be to "run uncertainly," as many alas! are trying to do, who profess to have entered upon the course, and yet know not whether they have life or not. Such persons are running for life, and not for a crown; but God does not set up life at the goal, as the

reward of victory, but gives it at the starting post, as the power by which we run. The power to run, and the object of running, are two very different things; yet they are constantly confounded by persons who are ignorant of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, in which Christ is set forth as the life and righteousness of all who believe on His name; and all this, moreover, as the free gift of God, and not as the reward of our running.

Now, in considering the terribly evil consequences of the unequal marriage yoke, it is mainly as bearing upon our discipleship that we are looking at them. I say, mainly, because our entire character and experience are deeply affected thereby. I very much question if any one can give a more effectual blow to his prosperity in the divine life, than by assuming an unequal yoke. Indeed, the very fact of so doing proves that spiritual decline has already set in, with most alarming symptoms; but as to his discipleship and testimony, the lamp thereof may be regarded as all but gone out; or if it does give an occasional faint glimmer, it only serves to make manifest the awful gloom of his unhappy position, and the appalling consequences of being "unequally yoked together with an unbeliever."

Thus much as to the question of the unequal yoke, in its influence upon the life, the character, the testimony, and the discipleship, of a child of God. I would now say a word as to its moral effect, as exhibited in the domestic circle. Here, too, the consequences are truly melancholy. Nor could they possibly be otherwise. Two persons have come together in the closest and most intimate relationship, with tastes, habits, feelings, desires, tendencies, and objects diametrically opposite. They have nothing in common; so that, in every movement,

they can but grate one against the other. The unbeliever cannot, in reality, go with the believer; and if there should, through excessive amiability, or downright hypocrisy, be a show of acquiescence, what is it worth in the sight of the Lord, who judges the true state of the heart in reference to Himself? But little indeed; yea, it is worse than worthless. Then, again, if the believer should, unhappily go in any measure with his unequal yoke-fellow, it can only be at the expense of his discipleship, and the consequence is, a condemning conscience in the sight of the Lord; and this, again, leads to heaviness of spirit, and, it may be, sourness of temper, in the domestic circlet so that the grace of the gospel is, by no means commended, and the unbeliever is not attracted or won. Thus it is, in every way, most sorrowful. It is dishonouring to God, destructive of spiritual prosperity, utterly subversive of discipleship and testimony, and entirely hostile to domestic peace and blessing. It produces estrangement, coldness, distance, and misunderstanding; or, if it does not produce these, it will, doubtless, lead, on the part of the Christian, to a forfeiture of his discipleship and his good conscience, both of which he may be tempted to offer as a sacrifice upon the altar of domestic peace. Thus, whatever way we look at it, an unequal yoke must lead to the most deplorable consequences.

Then, as to its effect upon children, it is equally sad. These are almost sure to flow in the current with the unconverted parent. "Their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." There can be no union of heart in the training of the children; no joint and mutual confidence in

reference to them. One desires to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the other desires to bring them up in the principles of the world, the flesh, and the devil: and as all the sympathies of the children, as they grow up, are likely to be ranged on the side of the latter, it is easy to see how it will end. In short, it is an unseemly, unscriptural, and vain effort to plough with an "unequal yoke," or to "sow the ground with mingled seed;" and all must end in sorrow and confusion.

{There are many cases in which one finds persons united, who, though they cannot exactly be said to be "unequally yoked," are, to say the least, very badly matched. Their tempers, tastes, habits, and views, are totally different; and so different, that instead of maintaining a desirable balance (which opposite tempers, it properly arranged, might do), they keep up a perpetual jar, to the sad derangement of the domestic circle, and the dishonour of the Lord's name. All this might be very much obviated if Christians would only wait upon God, and make His glory more their object than personal interest or affection.}

I shall, ere turning from this branch of our subject, offer a remark as to the reasons which generally actuate Christians in the matter of entering into the unequal marriage yoke. We all know, alas! how easily the poor heart persuades itself of the rightness of any step which it desires to take, and how the devil furnishes plausible arguments to convince us of its rightness — arguments which the moral condition of the soul causes us to regard as clear, forcible, and satisfactory. The very fact of our thinking of such a thing, proves our unfitness to weigh, with a well-balanced mind and spiritually-adjusted conscience, the solemn consequences of such a

step. If the eye were single (that is, if we were governed but by one object, namely, the glory and honour of the Lord Jesus Christ) we should never entertain the idea of putting our necks into an unequal yoke; and, consequently, we should have no difficulty or perplexity about the matter. A racer, whose eye was resting on the crown, would not be troubled with any perplexity as to whether he ought to stop and tie a hundred-weight round his neck. Such a thought would never cross his mind: and not only so, but a thorough racer would have a distinct and almost intuitive perception of everything which would be likely to prove a hindrance to him in running the race; and, of course, with such a one, to perceive would be to reject with decision.

{It is important for the Christian to bear in mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." whenever I am in perplexity as to my path, I have reason to suspect that my eye is not single; for assuredly, perplexity is not compatible with a "body full of light." we frequently go to pray for guidance in matters with which, if the eye were single, and the will subject, we would have nothing whatever to do, and hence we should have no need to pray about them. To pray about aught concerning which the word of God is plain marks the activity of a rebellious will. As a recent writer has well remarked, "we sometimes Seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which it is not His wilt that we should be found at all; if conscience were in real healthful activity, if first effect would he to make us quit them. It is our own will which sets us there, and we would like, nevertheless, to enjoy the consolation of God's direction in a path which ourselves have chosen.

such is a very common case. Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall have no trouble to know His will.... However, 'if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light — ' whence it is certain that if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, That is poor consolation. I answer, "It is a rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single and to walk with God." [See an admirable article in "The Present Testimony," January 1856. entitled, "How to know the Will of the Father." I cannot too highly recommend this paper to the attention of the Christian reader, it is deeply practical]}

Now, were it thus with Christians, in the matter of unscriptural marriage, it would save them a world of sorrow and perplexity; but it is not thus. The heart gets out of communion, and is morally incompetent to "try the things that differ;" and when in this condition, the devil gains an easy conquest, and speedy success in his wicked effort to induce the believer to yoke himself with "Belial" — with "unrighteousness" — with "darkness" — with "an infidel." When the soul is in full communion with God, it is entirely subject to His word; it sees things as He sees them, calls them what He calls them, and not what the devil or his own carnal heart would call them. In this way, the believer escapes the ensnaring influence of a deception which is very frequently brought to bear upon him in this matter, namely, a false profession of religion on the part of the person whom he desires to marry. This is a very common case. It is easy to show symptoms of leaning towards the things of God; and the heart is treacherous and base enough to make a profession of religion in order to gain its end; and not only so, but the devil, who is "transformed into an angel

of light," will lead to this false profession, in order thereby the more effectually to entrap the feet of a child of God. Thus it comes to pass that Christians, in this matter, suffer themselves to be satisfied, or at least profess themselves satisfied, with evidence of conversion, which, under any other circumstances, they would regard as utterly lame and flimsy.

But alas! experience soon opens the eyes to the reality. It is speedily discovered that the profession was all a vain show, that the heart is entirely in and of the world. Terrible discovery! Who can detail the bitter consequences of such a discovery — the anguish of heart — the bitter reproaches and cuttings of conscience — the shame and confusion — the loss of power and blessing — the forfeiture of spiritual peace and joy — the sacrifice of a life of usefulness? Who can describe all these things The man awakes from his delusive dream, and opens his eyes upon the tremendous reality, that he is yoked for life with "Belial!" Yes, this is what the Spirit calls it. It is not an inference, or a deduction arrived at by a process of reasoning; but a plain and positive statement of Holy Scripture, that thus the matter stands in reference to one who, from whatever motive, or under the influence of whatever reasons, or deceived by whatever false pretences, has entered into an unequal marriage-yoke.

Oh, my beloved Christian reader, if you are in danger of entering into such a yoke, let me earnestly, solemnly, and affectionately entreat of you to pause first, and weigh the matter in the balances of the sanctuary, ere you move forward a single hair's breadth on such a fatal path You may rest assured that you will no sooner have taken the step, than your heart will be assailed by

hopeless regrets, and your life embittered by unnumbered sorrows. LET NOTHING INDUCE YOU TO YOKE YOURSELF WITH AN UNBELIEVER. Are your affections engaged? Then, remember, they cannot be the affections of your new man; they are, be assured of it, those of the old or carnal nature, which you are called upon to mortify and set aside. Wherefore you should cry to God for spiritual power to rise above the influence of such affections; yea, to sacrifice them to Him. Again, are your interests concerned? Then remember that they are only your interests; and if they are promoted, Christ's interests are sacrificed by your yoking yourself with "Belial." Furthermore, they are only your temporal, and not your eternal interests. In point of fact, the interests of the believer and those of Christ ought to be identical; and it is plain that His interests, His honour, His truth, His glory, must inevitably be sacrificed, if a member of His body is linked with "Belial." This is the true way to look at the question. What are a few hundreds, or a few thousands, to an heir of heaven? "God is able to give thee much more than this." Are you going to sacrifice the truth of God, as well as your own spiritual peace, prosperity, and happiness, for a paltry trifle of gold, which must perish in the using of it? Ah! no. God forbid! Flee from it, as a bird from the snare, which it sees and knows. Stretch out the hand of genuine, well-braced whole-hearted discipleship, and take the knife and slay your affections and your interests on the altar of God and then, even though there should not be an audible voice from heaven to approve your act, you will have the invaluable testimony of an approving conscience and an ungrieved Spirit — an ample reward, surely, for the most costly sacrifice which you can make. May the Spirit of God give power to resist Satan's temptations!

It is hardly needful to remark, here, that in cases where conversion takes place after marriage, the complexion of the matter is very materially altered. There will then be no smitings of conscience, for example; and the whole thing is modified in a variety of particulars. Still there will be difficulty, trial, and sorrow unquestionably. The only thing is that one can, far more happily, bring the trial and sorrow into the Lord's presence, when he has not deliberately and wilfully plunged himself thereinto; and, blessed be God, we know how ready He is to forgive, restore, and cleanse from all unrighteousness, the soul that makes full confession of its error and failure. This may comfort the heart of one who has been brought to the Lord after marriage. Moreover, to such an one the Spirit of God has given specific direction and blessed encouragement in the following passage: "If any brother have an unbelieving wife, and she think proper to dwell with him, let him not put her away: and if any woman have an unbelieving husband, and he think proper to dwell with her, let her not put him away (for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy) for what knowest thou, O wife, if thou shalt save thy husband? Or what knowest thou, O husband, if thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. 7: 12-16.)

2. We shall now consider "the unequal yoke,' in its commercial phase, as seen in cases of partnership in business. This, though not so serious an aspect of the yoke as that which we have just been considering, will, nevertheless, be found a very positive barrier to the believer's testimony. When a Christian yokes himself, for business purposes, with an unbeliever — whether that

unbeliever be a relative or not — or when he becomes a member of a worldly firm, he virtually surrenders his individual responsibility. Henceforth the acts of the firm become his acts, and it is perfectly out of the question to think of getting a worldly firm to act on heavenly principles. They would laugh at such a notion, inasmuch as it would be an effectual barrier to the success of their commercial schemes. They will feel perfectly free to adopt a number of expedients in carrying on their business, which would be quite opposed to the spirit and principles of the kingdom in which he is, and of the Church of which he forms a part. Thus he will find himself constantly in a most trying position. He may use his influence to christianise the mode of conducting affairs; but they will compel him to do business as others do, and he has no remedy save to mourn in secret over his anomalous and difficult position, or else to go out at great pecuniary loss to himself and his family. Where the eye is single, there will be no hesitation as to which of these alternatives to adopt; but, alas! the very fact of getting into such a position proves the lack of a single eye; and the fact of being in it argues the lack of spiritual capacity to appreciate the value and power of the divine principles which would infallibly bring a man out of it. A man whose eye was single could not possibly yoke himself with an unbeliever for the purpose of making money Such an one could only set, as au object before his mind, the direct glory of Christ; and this object could never be gained by a positive transgression of divine principle.

This makes it very simple. If it does not glorify Christ for a Christian to become a partner in a worldly firm, it must, without doubt, further the designs of the devil.

There is no middle ground; but that it does not glorify Christ is manifest, for His word says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Such is the principle, which cannot be infringed without damage to the testimony, and forfeiture of spiritual blessing. True, the conscience of a Christian, who transgresses in this matter, may seek relief in various ways — may have recourse to various subterfuges — may set forth various arguments to persuade itself that all is right. It will be said that, "We can be very devoted and very spiritual, so far as we are personally concerned, even though we are yoked, for business purposes, with an unbeliever." This will be found fallacious when brought to the test of the actual practice. A servant of Christ will find himself hampered in a hundred ways by his worldly partnership. If in matters of service to Christ he is not met with open hostility, he will have to encounter the enemy's secret and constant effort to damp his ardour, and throw cold water on all his schemes. He will be laughed at and despised — he will be continually reminded of the effect which his enthusiasm and fanaticism will produce in reference to the business prospects of the firm. If he uses his time, his talents, or his pecuniary resources, in what he believes to be the Lord's service, he will be pronounced a fool or a madman, and reminded that the true, the proper way for a commercial man to serve the Lord is to "attend to business, and nothing but business;" and that it is the exclusive business of clergymen and ministers to attend to religious matters, inasmuch as they are set apart and paid for so doing.

Now, although the Christian's renewed mind may be thoroughly convinced of the fallacy of all this reasoning — although he may see that this worldly wisdom is but a

flimsy, threadbare cloak, thrown over the heart's covetous practices — yet who can tell how far the heart may be influenced by such things? We get weary of constant resistance. The current becomes too strong for us, and we gradually yield ourselves to its action, and are carried along on its surface. Conscience may have some death-struggles; but the spiritual energies are paralysed, and the sensibilities of the new nature are blunted, so that there is no response to the cries of conscience, and no effectual effort to withstand the enemy; the worldliness of the Christian's heart leagues itself with the opposing influences from without — the outworks are stormed, and the citadel of the soul's affections vigorously assaulted; and, finally, the man settles down in thorough worldliness, exemplifying, in his own person, the prophet's touching lament, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick." (Lam. 4: 7, 8) The man who was once known as a servant of Christ — a fellow-helper unto the kingdom of God — making use of his resources only to further the interests of the gospel of Christ, is now, alas, settled down upon his lees, only known as a plodding, keen, bargain-making man of business, of whom the apostle might well say, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present age." (ton nun aiona)

But, perhaps, nothing so operates on the hearts of Christians, in inducing them to yoke themselves commercially with unbelievers, as the habit of seeking to maintain the two characters of a Christian and a man of

business. This is a grievous snare. In point of fact there can be no such thing. A man must be either the one or the other. If I am a Christian, my Christianity must show itself, as a living reality, in that in which I am; and, if it cannot show itself there, I ought not to be there; for, if I continue in a sphere or position in which the life of Christ cannot be manifested, I shall speedily possess naught of Christianity but the name, without the reality — the outward form without the inward power — the shell without the kernel. I should be the servant of Christ, not merely on Sunday, but from Monday morning to Saturday night. I should not only be a servant of Christ in the public assembly, but also in my place of business, whatever it may happen to be. But I cannot be a proper servant of Christ with my neck in the yoke with an unbeliever; for how could the servants of two hostile masters work in the same yoke? It is utterly impossible; as well might one attempt to link the sun's meridian beams with the profound darkness of midnight. It cannot be done; and I do, therefore, most solemnly appeal to my reader's conscience, in the presence of Almighty God, who shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ, as to this important matter. I would say to him, if he is thinking of getting into partnership with an unbeliever, FLEE FROM IT! yes, flee from it, though it promises you the gain of thousands. You will plunge yourself into a mass of trouble and sorrow. You are going to "plough" with one whose feelings, instincts, and tendencies are diametrically opposed to your own. "An ox and an ass" are not so unlike, in every respect, as a believer and an unbeliever. How will you ever get on? He wants to make money — to profit himself — to get on in the world; you want (at least you ought to want) to grow in grace and holiness — to advance the interests of

Christ and His gospel on the earth, and to push onward to the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. His object is money; yours, I trust, is Christ: he lives for this world; you for the world to come: he is engrossed with the things of time; you with those of eternity. How, then, can you ever take common ground with him? Your principles, your motives, your objects, your hopes, are all opposed. How is it possible you can get on? How can you have aught in common Surely, all this needs only to be looked at with a single eye in order to be seen in its true light. It is impossible that any one whose eye is filled and whose heart is occupied with Christ, could ever yoke himself with a worldly partner, for any object whatsoever. Wherefore, my beloved Christian reader, let me once more entreat you, ere you take such a tremendous step — a step fraught with such awful consequences — so pregnant with danger to your best interests, as well as to the testimony of Christ, with which you are honoured — to take the whole matter, with an honest heart, into the sanctuary of God, and weigh it in His sacred balance. Ask Him what He thinks of it, and hearken, with a subject will, and a well-adjusted conscience, to His reply. It is plain and powerful — yea, as plain and as powerful as though it fell from the open heavens — Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

But, if, unhappily, my reader is already in the yoke, I would say to him, disentangle yourself as speedily as you can. I am much mistaken if you have not already found the yoke a burdensome one. To you, it were superfluous to detail the sad consequences of being in such a position; you, doubtless, know them all. It is needless to print them on paper, or paint them on

canvas, to one who has entered into all their reality. My beloved brother in Christ, lose not a moment in seeking to throw off the yoke. This must be done before the Lord, on His principles, and by His grace. It is easier to get into a wrong position than to get out of it. A partnership of ten or twenty years' standing cannot be dissolved in a moment. It must be done calmly, humbly, and prayerfully, as in the sight of the Lord, and with entire reference to His glory. I may dishonour the Lord as much in my way of getting out of a wrong position, as by getting into it at the first. Hence, if find myself in partnership with an unbeliever, and my conscience tells me I am wrong, let me honestly and frankly state to my partner, that I can no longer go on with him; and having done that, my place is to use every exertion to wind up the affairs of the firm in an upright, a straightforward, and business-like manner, so as to give no possible occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, and that my good may not be evil spoken of We must avoid rashness, headiness, and high-mindedness, when apparently acting for the Lord, and in defence of His holy principles. If a man gets entangled in a net, or involved in a labyrinth, it is not by bold and violent plunging he will extricate himself. No; he must humble himself, confess his sins before the Lord, and then retrace his steps, in patient dependence upon that grace which can not only pardon him for being in a wrong position, but lead him forth into a right one.

Moreover, as in the case of the marriage yoke, the matter is very much modified by the fact of the partnership having been entered into previous to conversion. Not that this would, in the slightest degree, justify a continuance in it. By no means; but it does away

with much of the sorrow of heart and defilement of conscience connected with such a position, and will also, very materially, affect the mode of escape therefrom. Besides, the Lord is glorified by, and He assured]y accepts, the moral bent of the heart and conscience in the right direction. If I judge myself for being wrong and that the moral bent of my heart and conscience is to get right, God will accept of that, and surely set me right. But if He sets me right, He will not suffer me to do violence to one truth while seeking to act in obedience to another. The same word that says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," says also, "render, therefore, to all their dues" — "owe no man anything" — "provide things honest in the sight of all" — "walk honestly toward them that are without." If I have wronged God by getting into partnership with an unbeliever, I must not wrong man in my way of getting out of it. Profound subjection to the word of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, will set all to rights, will lead us into straight paths, and enable us to avoid all dangerous extremes.

3. In glancing for a moment at the religious phase of the unequal yoke, I would assure my reader that it is, by no means, my desire to hurt the feelings of any one by canvassing the claims of the various denominations around me. Such is not my purpose. The subject of this paper is one of quite sufficient importance to prevent its being encumbered by the introduction of other matters. Moreover, it is too definite to warrant any such introduction. "The unequal yoke" is our theme, and to it we must confine our attention.

In looking through scripture we find almost numberless passages setting forth the intense spirit of separation

which ought ever to characterise the people of God. Whether we direct our attention to the Old Testament, in which we have God's relationship and dealings with His earthly people, Israel; or, to the New Testament, in which we have His relationship and dealings with His heavenly people, the Church; we find the same truth prominently set forth, namely, the entire separation of those who belong to God. Israel's position is thus stated in Balaam's parable, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned amongst the nations." Their place was outside the range of all the nations of the earth; and they were responsible to maintain that separation. Throughout the entire Pentateuch, they were instructed, warned, and admonished as to this; and, throughout the Psalms and the Prophets we have the record of their failure in the maintenance of this separation, which failure, as we know, has brought down upon them the heavy judgements of the hand of God. It would swell this little paper into a volume were I to attempt a quotation of all the passages in which this point is put forward. I take it for granted that my reader is sufficiently acquainted with his Bible, to render such quotation unnecessary. Should he not be so, however, a reference, in his Concordance, to the words "separate," "separated," and "separation," will suffice to lay before him at a glance the body of scripture evidence on this subject. The passage just quoted, from the Book of Numbers, is the expression of God's thoughts about His people Israel: "The people shall dwell ALONE."

The same is true, only upon a much higher ground in reference to God's heavenly people, the Church — the body of Christ — composed of all true believers. They, too, are a separated people.

We shall now proceed to examine the ground of this separation. There is a great difference between being separate on the ground of what we are, and of what God is. The former makes a man a Pharisee; the latter makes him a saint. If I say to a poor fellow sinner, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," I am a detestable Pharisee and a hypocrite; but if God, in His infinite condescension and perfect grace, says to me, "I have brought you into relationship with Myself in the person of My Son Jesus Christ, therefore be holy and separate from all evil; come out from among them and be separate;" I am bound to obey, and my obedience is the practical manifestation of my character as a saint — a character which I have, not because of anything in myself, but simply because God has brought me near unto Himself through the precious blood of Christ.

It is well to be clear as to this. Pharisaism and divine sanctification are two very different things: and yet they are often confounded. Those who contend for the maintenance of that place of separation which belongs to the people of God, are constantly accused of setting themselves up above their fellow-men, and of laying claim to a higher degree of personal sanctity than is ordinarily possessed. This accusation arises from not attending to the distinction just referred to. When God calls upon men to be separate, it is on the ground of what He has done for them upon the cross, and where He has set them, in eternal association with Himself, in the person of Christ. But if I separate myself on the ground of what I am in myself, it is the most senseless and vapid assumption, which will sooner or later be made manifest. God commands His people to be holy on the ground of what He is: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

This is evidently a very different thing from "stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." If God brings people into association with himself, He has a right to prescribe what their moral character ought to be, and they are responsible to answer thereto. Thus we see that the most profound humility lies at the bottom of a saint's separation. There is nothing so calculated to put one in the dust as the understanding of the real nature of divine holiness. It is an utterly false humility which springs from looking at ourselves — yea, it is, in reality, based upon pride, which has never yet seen to the bottom of its own perfect worthlessness. Some imagine that they can reach the truest and deepest humility by looking at self, whereas it can only be reached by looking at Christ. "The more thy glories strike mine eye, the humbler I shall be." This is a just sentiment, founded upon divine principle. The soul that loses itself in the blaze of Christ's moral glory, is truly humble, and none other. No doubt, we have a right to be humble when we think of what poor creatures we are; but it only needs a moment's just reflection to see the fallacy of seeking to produce any practical result by looking at self. It is only when we find ourselves in the presence of infinite excellency, that we are really humble.

Hence, therefore, a child of God should refuse to be yoked with an unbeliever, whether for a domestic, a commercial, or a religious object, simply because God tells him to be separate, and not because of his own personal holiness. The carrying out of this principle, in matters of religion, will necessarily involve much trial and sorrow; it will be termed intolerance, bigotry, Narrow-mindedness, exclusiveness, and such like; but we cannot help all this. Provided we keep ourselves

separate upon a right principle and in a right spirit, we may safely leave all results with God. No doubt, the remnant, in the days of Ezra, must have appeared excessively intolerant in refusing the co-operation of the surrounding people in building the house of God; but they acted upon divine principle in the refusal. "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him, since the days of Esar-haddon, king of Assur, which brought us up hither." This might seem a very attractive proposal — a proposal evidencing a very decided leaning toward the God of Israel; yet the remnant refused, because the people, notwithstanding their fair profession, were, at heart, uncircumcised and hostile. "But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel." (Ezra 4: 1-3.) They would not yoke themselves with the uncircumcised — they would not "plough with an ox and ass" — they would not "sow their field with mingled seed" — they kept themselves separate, even though, by so doing, they exposed themselves to the charge of being a bigoted, narrow-minded, illiberal, uncharitable set of people.

So, also, in Nehemiah, we read, "And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers." (Neh. 9: 2.) This was not sectarianism, but positive obedience. Their separation was essential to

their existence as a people. They could not have enjoyed the divine presence on any other ground. Thus it must ever be with God's people on the earth. They must be separate, or else they are not only useless, but mischievous. God cannot own or accompany them if they yoke themselves with unbelievers, upon any ground, or for any object whatsoever. The grand difficulty is to combine a spirit of intense separation with a spirit of grace, gentleness, and forbearance; or, as another has said, "to maintain a narrow circle with a wide heart." This is really a difficulty. As the strict and uncompromising maintenance of truth tends to narrow the circle around us, we shall need the expansive power of grace to keep the heart wide, and the affections warm. If we contend for truth otherwise than in grace, we shall only yield a one-sided and most unattractive testimony. And, on the other hand, if we try to exhibit grace at the expense of truth, it will prove, in the end, to be only the manifestation of a popular liberality at God's expense — a most worthless thing.

Then, as to the object for which real Christians usually yoke themselves with those who, even on their own confession, and in the judgment of charity itself, are not Christians at all, it will be found, in the end, that no really divine and heavenly object can be gained by an infringement of God's truth. Per fas aut nefas can never be a divine motto. The means are not sanctified by the end; but both means and end must be according to the principles of God's holy word, else all must eventuate in confusion and dishonour. It might have appeared to Jehoshaphat a very worthy object, to recover Ramoth Gilead out of the hand of the enemy; and, moreover, he might have appeared a very liberal, gracious, popular,

large-hearted man, when, in reply to Ahab's proposal, he said, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war." It is easy to be liberal and large-hearted at the expense of divine principle; but how did it end? Ahab was killed, and Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped with his life, having made total shipwreck of his testimony.

Thus we see that Jehoshaphat did not even gain the object for which he unequally yoked himself with an unbeliever; and even had he gained it, it would have been no justification of his course.* Nothing can ever warrant a believer's yoking himself with an unbeliever; and, therefore, however fair, attractive, and plausible the Ramoth expedition might seem in the eye of man, it was, in the judgment of God, "helping the ungodly, and loving them that hate the Lord." (2 Chr. 19: 2.) The truth of God strips men and things of the false colours with which the spirit of expediency would deck them, and presents them in their proper light; and it is an unspeakable mercy to have the clear judgment of God about all that is going on around us: it imparts calmness to the spirit, and stability to the course and character, and saves one from that unhappy fluctuation of thought, feeling, and principle which so entirely unfits him for the place of a steady and consistent witness for Christ. We shall surely err, if we attempt to form our judgment by the thoughts and opinions of men; for they will always judge according to the outward appearances, and not according to the intrinsic character and principle of things. Provided men can gain what they conceive to be a right object, they care not about the mode of gaining it. But the true servant of Christ knows that he must do his Master's work upon his Master's principles and in his

Master's spirit. It will not satisfy such an one to reach the most praiseworthy end, unless he can reach it by a divinely appointed road. The means and the end must both be divine. I admit it, for example, to be a most desirable end to circulate the scriptures — God's own pure, eternal word; but if I could not circulate them save by yoking myself with an unbeliever, I should refrain, inasmuch as I am not to do evil that good may come.

{*The unequal yoke proved a terrible snare to the amiable heart of Jehoshaphat. He yoked himself with Ahab for a religious object and, notwithstanding the disastrous termination of this scheme, we find him yoking himself with Ahaziah for a commercial object, which likewise ended in loss and confusion; and, lastly, he yoked himself with Jehoram for a military object. Compare 2 Chr. 18; 2 Chr. 20: 32-37; 2 Kings 3.}

But, blessed be God, His servant can circulate His precious book without violating the precepts contained in that book. He can, upon his own individual responsibility, or in fellowship with those who are really on the Lord's side, scatter the precious seed everywhere, without leaguing himself with those whose whole course and conduct prove them to be of the world. The same may be said in reference to every object of a religious nature. It can and should be gained on God's principles, and only thus. It may be argued, in reply, that we are told not to judge — that we cannot read the heart — and that we are bound to hope that all who would engage in such good works as the translation of the Bible, the distribution of tracts, and the aiding of missionary labours, must be Christians; and that, therefore, it cannot be wrong to link ourselves with them. To all this I reply, that there is hardly a passage in

the New Testament so misunderstood and misapplied as Matthew 7: 1: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In the very same chapter we read, "Beware of false prophets by their fruits ye shall know them." Now, how are we to "beware," if we do not exercise judgment? Again, in 1 Corinthians 5 we read, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here we are distinctly taught that those "within" come within the immediate range of the Church's judgment; and yet, according to the common interpretation of Matthew 7: 1, we ought not to judge anybody; that interpretation, therefore, must needs be unsound. If people take, even in profession, the ground of being "within," we are commanded to judge them. "Do not ye judge them that are within?" As to those "without," we have naught to do with them, save to present the pure and perfect, the rich, illimitable, and unfathomable grace which shines, with unclouded effulgence, in the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

All this is plain enough. The people of God are told to exercise judgment as to all who profess to be "within;" they are told to "beware of false prophets;" they are commanded to "try the spirits:" and how can they do all this, if they are not to judge at all? What, then, does our Lord mean, when he says, "Judge not?" I believe He means just what St. Paul, by the Holy Ghost, says, when he commands us to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of

God." (1 Cor. 4: 5) We have nothing to do with judging motives; but we have to judge conduct and principles; that is to say, the conduct and principles of all who profess to be "within." And, in point of fact, the very persons who say, "We must not judge," do themselves constantly exercise judgment. There is no true Christian in whom the moral instincts of the divine nature do not virtually pronounce judgment as to character, conduct, and doctrine; and these are the very points which are placed within the believer's range of judgment.

All, therefore, that I would press upon the Christian reader is, that he should exercise judgment as to those with whom he yokes himself in matters of religion. If he is, at this moment, working in yoke or in harness with an unbeliever, he is positively violating the command of the Holy Ghost. He may be ignorantly doing so up to this; and if so, the Lord s grace is ready to pardon and restore; but if he persist in disobedience after having been warned, he cannot possibly expect God's blessing and presence with him, no matter how valuable or important the object which he may seek to attain. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

4. We have only now to consider the philanthropic phase of the unequal yoke. Many will say, "I quite admit that we ought not to mingle ourselves with positive unbelievers in the worship or service of God; but, then, we can freely unite with such for the furtherance of objects of philanthropy — such, for instance, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, reclaiming the vicious, in providing asylums for the blind and Lunatic, hospitals and infirmaries for the sick and infirm, places of refuge for the homeless and houseless, the fatherless and the

widow; and, in short, for the furtherance of everything that tends to promote the amelioration of our fellow-creatures, physically, morally, and intellectually."

This, at first sight, seems fair enough; for I may be asked, if I would not help a man, by the road-side, to get his cart out of the ditch? I reply, Certainly; but if I were asked to become a member of a mixed society for the purpose of getting carts out of ditches, I should refuse — not because of my superior sanctity, but because God's word says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This would be my answer, no matter what were the object proposed by a mixed society. The servant of Christ is commanded "to be ready to every good work" — "to do good unto all" — "to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction;" but then, it is as the servant of Christ, and not as the member of a society or a committee in which there may be infidels and atheists, and all sorts of wicked and godless men. Moreover, we must remember, that all God's philanthropy is connected with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the channel through which God will bless — that the mighty lever by which He will elevate man, physically, morally, and intellectually. "After that the kindness and philanthropy (philanthropia) of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Titus 3: 4-6) This is God's philanthropy. This is His mode of ameliorating man's condition. With all who understand its worth the Christian can readily yoke himself, but with none other.

The men of the world know naught of this, care not for it. They may seek reformation, but it is reformation without Christ. They may promote amelioration, but it is amelioration without the cross. They wish to advance, but Jesus is neither the starting-post nor the goal of their course. How, then, can the Christian yoke himself with them? They want to work without Christ, the very One to whom he owes everything. Can he be satisfied to work with them? Can he have an object in common with them? If men come to me and say, "We want your co-operation in feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, in founding hospitals and lunatic asylums, in feeding and educating orphans, in improving the physical condition of our fellow mortals; but you must remember that a leading rule of the society, the board, or the committee, formed for such objects, is, that the name of Christ is not to be introduced, as it would only lead to controversy. Our objects being not at all religious, but undividedly philanthropic, the subject of religion must be studiously excluded from all our public meetings. We are met as men, for a benevolent purpose, and therefore Infidels, Atheists, Socinians, Arians, Romanists, and all sorts, can happily yoke themselves to move onward the glorious machine of philanthropy." What should be my answer to such an application? The fact is, words would fail one, who really loved the Lord Jesus, in attempting to reply to an appeal so monstrous. What! benefit mortals by the exclusion of Christ? God forbid! If I cannot gain the objects of pure philanthropy without setting aside that blessed One who lived and died, and lives eternally for me, then away with your philanthropy, for it, assuredly, is not God's, but Satan's. If it were God's, the word is, "He shed it on us abundantly THROUGH Jesus Christ," the very One whom your rule

leaves entirely out. Hence your rule must be the direct dictation of Satan, the enemy of Christ. Satan would always like to leave out the Son of God; and when he can get men to do the same, he will allow them to be benevolent, charitable, and philanthropic.

But, in good truth, such benevolence and philanthropy ought to be termed malevolence and misanthropy, for how can you more effectually exhibit ill-will and hatred toward men, than by leaving out THE ONLY ONE who can really bless them, for time or for eternity. But what must be the moral condition of a heart, in reference to Christ, who could take his seat at a board, or on a platform, on the condition that that name must not be introduced? It must be cold indeed; yea, it,proves that the plans and operations of unconverted men are of sufficient importance, in his judgment, to lead him to throw his Master overboard, for the purpose of carrying them out. Let us not mistake matters. This is the true aspect in which to view the world's philanthropy. The men of this world can "sell ointment for three hundred pence, and give to the poor;" while they pronounce it waste to pour that ointment on the head of Christ. Will the Christian consent to this? Will he yoke himself with such? Will he seek to improve the world without Christ? Will he join with men to deck and garnish a scene which is stained with his Master's blood? Peter could say, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Peter would heal a cripple by the power of the name of Jesus; but what would he have said, if asked to join a committee or society to alleviate cripples, on the condition of leaving that name out altogether? It requires no great stretch of imagination to conceive; his

answer. His whole soul would recoil from such a thought. He only healed the cripple for the purpose of exalting the name of Jesus, and setting forth its worth, its excellency, and its glory, in the view of men; but the very reverse is the object of the world's philanthropy; inasmuch as it sets aside His blessed name entirely, and banishes Him from its boards, its committees, and its platforms.

May we not, therefore, well say, "Shame on the Christian who is found in a place from which his Master is shut out?" Oh! let him go forth, and, in the energy of love to Jesus, and by the power of that name, do all the good he can; but let him not yoke himself with unbelievers, to counteract the effects of sin by excluding the cross of Christ. God's grand object is to exalt His Son — "that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." This should be the Christian's object likewise; to this end he should "do good unto all;" but if he join a society or a committee in order to do good, it is not "in the name of Jesus" he acts, but in the name of the society or committee, without the name of Jesus. This ought to be enough for every true and loyal heart. God has no other way of blessing men, but through Christ; and no other object in blessing them but to exalt Christ. As with Pharaoh of old, when the hungry Egyptians flocked to his presence, his word was, "Go to Joseph;" so God's word to all is, "Come to Jesus." Yes, for soul and body, time and eternity, we must go to Jesus; but the men of the world know Him not, and want him not; what, therefore, has the Christian to do with such? How can He act in yoke with them? He can only do so on the ground of practically denying his Saviour's name. Many do not see this; but that does not alter the case for those

who do. We ought to act honestly, as in the light; and, even though the feelings and affections of the new nature were not sufficiently strong in us to lead us to shrink from ranking ourselves with the enemies of Christ, the conscience ought, at least, to bow to the commanding authority of that word, BE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS.

May the Holy Ghost clothe His own word with heavenly power, and make its edge sharp to pierce the conscience, that so the saints of God may be delivered from everything that hinders their "running the race that is set before them!" Time is short. The Lord Himself will soon be here. Then many an unequal yoke will be broken in a moment; many a sheep and goat shall then be eternally severed. May we be enabled to purge ourselves from every unclean association and every unhallowed influence, so that, when Jesus returns, we may not be ashamed, but meet Him with a joyful heart and an approving conscience!

C.H.M.