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Assurance

“Grace with assurance is no less than heaven let down into the soul.”

-BISHOP HOPKINS. 1680.

“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” (2 TIM. 4:6-8)

In the words of Scripture, which head this page, you see the Apostle Paul looking three ways: downward, backward, forward. Downward to the grave,-backward to his own ministry,-forward to that great day, the day of judgment.

I invite you this day to stand by the Apostle’s side a few minutes, and mark the words he uses. Happy is that soul who can look where Paul looked, and then speak as Paul spoke!

He looks downward to the grave, and he does it without fear. Hear what he says.

“I am ready to be offered.” I am like an animal brought to the place of sacrifice, and bound with cords to the very horns of the altar. The wine and oil have been poured on my head, according to the custom. The last ceremonies have been gone through. Every preparation has been made. It only remains to receive the death-blow, and then all is over.

"The time of my departure is at hand." I am like a ship about to unmoor and put to sea. All on board is ready. I only wait to have the moorings cast off that fasten me to the shore, and I shall then set sail and begin my voyage.

Reader, these are glorious words to come from the lips of a child of Adam like ourselves. Death is a solemn thing, and never so much so as when we see it close at hand. The grave is a chilling, heart-sickening place, and it is vain to pretend it has no terrors. Yet here is a mortal man who can look calmly into the narrow house appointed for all living, and say, while he stands upon the brink, "I see it all, and am not afraid."

Let us listen to him again. He looks backward to his ministerial life, and he does it without shame. Hear what he says.

"I have fought a good fight." There he speaks as a soldier. I have fought that good battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, from which so many shrink and draw back.

"I have finished my course." There he speaks as one who has run for a prize. I have run the race marked out for me: I have gone over the ground appointed for me, however rough and steep. I have not turned aside because of difficulties, nor been discouraged by the length of the way. I am at last in sight of the goal.

"I have kept the faith." There he speaks as a steward. I have held fast that glorious Gospel which was committed to my trust. I have not mingled it with man's traditions, nor spoiled its simplicity by adding my own inventions, nor allowed others to adulterate it without withstanding them to the face. "As a soldier,-a runner,-a steward," he seems to say, "I am not ashamed."

Reader, that Christian is happy who, as he quits this world, can leave such testimony behind him. A good conscience will save no man,-wash away no sin,-not lift us one hair's breadth toward heaven. Yet, a good conscience will be found a pleasant visitor at our bedside in a dying hour. Do you remember that place in "Pilgrim's Progress" which describes Old Honest's passages across the river of death? "The river," says Bunyan, "at that time overflowed its banks in some places; but Mr. Honest, in his life-time, had spoken to one, Good Conscience, to meet him there: the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over." Believe me, there is a mine of truth in that passage.

Let us hear the Apostle once more. He looks forward to the great day of reckoning, and he does it without doubt. Mark his words.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." A glorious reward, he seems to say, is ready and laid up in store for me: even that crown which is only given to the righteous. In the great day of judgment the Lord shall give this crown to me, and to all beside me who have loved Him as an unseen Saviour, and longed to see Him face to face. My work on earth is over. This one thing now remains for me to look forward to, and nothing more.

Reader, observe that the Apostle speaks without any hesitation or distrust. He regards the crown as a sure thing: as his own already. He declares with unfaltering confidence his firm persuasion that the righteous Judge will give it to him. Paul was no stranger to all the

circumstances and accompaniments of that solemn day to which he referred. The great white throne,-the assembled world,-the open books,-the revealing of all secrets,-the listening angels,-the awful sentence,-the eternal separation of the lost and saved,-all these were things with which he was well acquainted. But none of these things moved him. His strong faith overleaped them all, and only saw Jesus, his all-prevailing Advocate, and the blood of sprinkling, and sin washed away. "A crown," he says, "is laid up for me." "The Lord Himself shall give it to me." He speaks as if he saw it all with his own eyes.

Such are the main things which these verses contain. Of most of them I cannot pretend to speak, for space would not allow me. I shall only try to set before you one point in the passage, and that is "the assured hope" with which the Apostle looks forward to his own prospects in the day of judgment.

I shall do this the more readily, because of the great importance which I feel attaches to the subject of assurance, and the great neglect with which, I humbly conceive, it is often treated in this day.

But I shall do it at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very difficult ground, and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass, and if I shall be enabled to do good to some without doing harm to others, I shall be very thankful.

Reader, there are four things I wish to bring before you in speaking of the subject of assurance, and it may clear our way if I name them to you at once.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope, such as Paul here expresses, is a true and Scriptural thing.

II. Secondly, I will make this broad concession,-that a man may never arrive at this assured hope, and yet be saved.

III. Thirdly, I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

IV. Lastly, I will try to point out some causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained.

I. First, then, I will try to show you that an assured hope is a true and Scriptural thing.

Assurance, such as Paul expresses in the verses which head this tract, is not a mere fancy or feeling. It is not the result of high animal spirits, or a sanguine temperament of body. It is a positive gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed without reference to men's bodily frames or constitutions, and a gift which every believer in Christ ought to aim at and seek after.

The Word of God appears to me to teach that a believer may arrive at an assured confidence with regard to his own salvation.

I would lay it down fully and broadly, that a true Christian, a converted man, may reach that comfortable degree of faith in Christ, that in general he shall feel entirely confident as to the pardon and safety of his soul,-shall seldom be troubled with doubts,-seldom be distracted with hesitation,-seldom be distressed by anxious questionings,-and, in short, though vexed by many an inward conflict with sin, shall look forward to death without trembling, and to judgment without

dismay.¹ Such is my account of assurance. I will ask you to mark it well. I say neither less nor more than I have here laid down.

Now, such a statement as this is often disputed and denied. Many cannot see the truth of it at all.

The Church of Rome denounces assurance in the most unmeasured terms. The Council of Trent declares roundly, that a “believer’s assurance of the pardon of his sins is a vain and ungodly confidence;” and Cardinal Bellarmine, the well-known champion of Romanism, calls it “a prime error of heretics.”

The vast majority of the worldly among ourselves oppose the doctrine of assurance. It offends and annoys them to hear of it. They do not like others to feel comfortable and sure, because they never feel so themselves. That they cannot receive it is certainly no marvel.

But there are also some true believers who reject assurance, or shrink from it as a doctrine fraught with danger. They consider it borders on presumption. They seem to think it a proper humility never to be confident, and to live in a certain degree of doubt. This is to be regretted, and does much harm.

I frankly allow there are some presumptuous persons who profess to feel a confidence for which they have no Scriptural warrant. There always are some people who think well of themselves when God thinks ill, just as there are some who think ill of themselves when God thinks well. There always will be such. There never yet was a Scriptural truth without abuses and counterfeits. God’s election,-man’s impotence,-salvation by grace,-all are alike abused. There will be fanatics and enthusiasts as long as the world stands. But, for all this, assurance

is a real, sober, and true thing; and God's children must not let themselves be driven from the use of a truth, merely because it is abused.² My answer to all who deny the existence of real, well-grounded assurance is simply this,-What saith the Scripture? If assurance be not there, I have not another word to say.

But does not Job say, "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"? (Job xix. 25, 26.)

Does not David say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me"? (Psalm xxiii. 4.)

Does not Isaiah say, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee"? (Isaiah xxvi. 3.)

And again, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isaiah xxxii.

17.)

Does not Paul say to the Romans, "I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, not 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. viii. 38, 39.)

Does he not say to the Corinthians, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"? (2 Cor. v. 1.)

And again, "We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 6.)

Does he not say to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him"? (2 Tim. i. 12.)

And does he not speak to the Colossians of "the full assurance of understanding" (Coloss. ii. 2), and to the Hebrews of the "full assurance of faith," and the "full assurance of hope"? (Heb. vi. 11; x. 22.)

Does not Peter say expressly, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure"?

(2 Peter i. 10.)

Does not John say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life"? (1 John iii. 14.)

And again, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John v. 13.)

And again, "We know that we are of God." (1 John v. 19.)

Reader, what shall we say to these things? I desire to speak with all humility on any controverted point. I feel that I am only a poor fallible child of Adam myself. But I must say, that in the passages I have just quoted I see something far higher than the mere "hopes" and "trusts" with which so many believers appear content in this day. I see the language of persuasion, confidence, knowledge,-nay, I may almost say, of certainty. And I feel, for my own part, if I may take these Scriptures in

their plain, obvious meaning, the doctrine of assurance is true.

But my answer, furthermore, to all who dislike the doctrine of assurance, as bordering on presumption, is this: it can hardly be presumption to tread in the steps of Peter and Paul, of Job and of John. They were all eminently humble and lowly-minded men, if ever any were; and yet they all speak of their own state with an assured hope. Surely this should teach us that deep humility and strong assurance are perfectly compatible, and that there is not any necessary connection between spiritual confidence and pride.³ My answer, furthermore, is, that many have attained to such an assured hope as our text expresses, even in modern times. I will not concede for a moment that it was a peculiar privilege confined to the Apostolic day. There have been, in our own land, many believers who have appeared to walk in almost uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son,-who have seemed to enjoy an almost unceasing sense of the light of God's reconciled countenance shining down upon them, and have left their experience on record. I could mention well-known names, if space permitted. The thing has been, and is,-and that is enough.

My answer, lastly, is, it cannot be wrong to feel confidently in a matter where God speaks unconditionally,-to believe decidedly when God promises decidedly,-to have a sure persuasion of pardon and peace when we rest on the word and oath of Him that never changes. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the believer who feels assurance is resting on anything he sees in himself. He simply leans on the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Scripture of truth. He believes

the Lord Jesus means what He says, and takes Him at His Word. Assurance, after all, is no more than a fall-grown faith; a masculine faith that grasps Christ's promise with both hands,-a faith that argues like the good centurion, if the Lord "speak the word only," I am healed. Wherefore, then, should I doubt? (Matt. viii. 8.)⁴ Reader, you may be sure that Paul was the last man in the world to build his assurance on anything of his own. He who could write himself down "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15) had a deep sense of his own guilt and corruption. But then he had a still deeper sense of the length and breadth of Christ's righteousness imputed to him.-He, who would cry, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. vii. 24), had a clear view of the fountain of evil within his heart. But then he had a still clearer view of that other Fountain which can remove "all sin and uncleanness." -He, who thought himself "less than the least of all saints" (Ephes. iii. 8), had a lively and abiding feeling of his own weakness. But he had a still livelier feeling that Christ's promise, "My sheep shall never perish" (John x. 28), could not be broken-Paul knew, if ever man did, that he was a poor, frail bark, floating on a stormy ocean. He saw, if any did, the rolling waves and roaring tempest by which he was surrounded. But then he looked away from self to Jesus, and was not afraid. He remembered that anchor within the veil, which is both "sure and steadfast." He remembered the word, and work, and constant intercession of Him that loved him and gave Himself for him. And this it was, and nothing else, that enabled him to say so boldly, "A crown is laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it to me"; and to conclude so surely, "The Lord will preserve me: I shall never be confounded."⁵ I may not dwell longer on this part of the subject. I think you will allow I have shown

ground for the assertion I made,-that assurance is a true thing.

II. I pass on to the second thing I spoke of. I said, a believer may never arrive at this assured hope, which Paul expresses, and yet be saved.

I grant this most freely. I do not dispute it for a moment. I would not desire to make one contrite heart sad that God has not made sad, or to discourage one fainting child of God, or to leave the impression that men have no part or lot in Christ, except they feel assurance.

A person may have saving faith in Christ, and yet never enjoy an assured hope, like the Apostle Paul. To believe and have a glimmering hope of acceptance is one thing; to have joy and peace in our believing, and abound in hope, is quite another. All God's children have faith; not all have assurance. I think this ought never to be forgotten.

I know some great and good men have held a different opinion. I believe that many excellent ministers of the Gospel, at whose feet I would gladly sit, do not allow the distinction I have stated. But I desire to call no man master. I dread as much as any one the idea of healing the wounds of conscience slightly; but I should think any other view than that I have given a most uncomfortable Gospel to preach, and one very likely to keep souls back a long time from the gate of life.⁶ I do not shrink from saying, that by grace a man may have sufficient faith to flee to Christ; sufficient faith really to lay hold on Him, really to trust in Him,-really to be a child of God, really to be saved; and yet to his last day be never free from much anxiety, doubt, and fear.

“A letter,” says an old writer, “may be written, which is not sealed; so grace may be written in the heart, yet the Spirit may not set the seal of assurance to it.”

A child may be born heir to a great fortune, and yet never be aware of his riches; live childish,-die childish, and never know the greatness of his possessions.

And so also a man may be a babe in Christ’s family; think as a babe, speak as a babe; and though saved, never enjoy a lively hope, or know the real privileges of his inheritance.

Reader, do not mistake my meaning, while you hear me dwell strongly on assurance. Do not do me the injustice to say, I told you none were saved except such as could say with Paul, “I know and am persuaded,-there is a crown laid up for me.” I do not say so. I tell you nothing of the kind.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a man must have, beyond all question, if he is to be saved. I know no other way of access to the Father. I see no intimation of mercy, excepting through Christ. A man must feel his sins and lost estate,-must come to Jesus for pardon and salvation,-must rest his hope on Him, and on Him alone. But if he only has faith to do this, however weak and feeble that faith may be, I will engage, from Scripture warrants, he shall not miss heaven.

Never, never let us curtail the freeness of the glorious Gospel, or clip its fair proportions. Never let us make the gate more strait and the way more narrow than pride and love of sin have made it already. The Lord Jesus is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. He does not regard the quantity of faith, but the quality. He does not measure its degree, but its truth. He will not break any

bruised reed, nor quench any smoking flax. He will never let it be said that any perished at the foot of the cross. "Him that cometh unto Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.)⁷ Yes, reader: though a man's faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, if it only brings him to Christ, and enables him to touch the hem of His garment, he shall be saved,-saved as surely as the oldest saint in paradise; saved as completely and eternally as Peter, or John, or Paul. There are degrees in our sanctification. In our justification there are none. What is written, is written, and shall never fail: "Whosoever believeth on Him,"-not whosoever has a strong and mighty faith,-"Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." (Rom. x. 11.)

But all this time, I would have you take notice, the poor soul may have no full assurance of his pardon and acceptance with God. He may be troubled with fear upon fear, and doubt upon doubt. He may have many a question, and many an anxiety,-many a struggle, and many a misgiving,-clouds and darkness,-storm and tempest to the very end.

I will engage, I repeat, that bare simple faith in Christ shall save a man, though he may never attain to assurance; but I will not engage it shall bring him to heaven with strong and abounding consolations. I will engage it shall land him safe in harbour; but I will not engage he shall enter that harbour in full sail, confident and rejoicing. I shall not be surprised if he reaches his desired haven weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, scarcely realizing his own safety, till he opens his eyes in glory.

Reader, I believe it is of great importance to keep in view this distinction between faith and assurance. It explains things which an inquirer in religion sometimes finds it hard to understand.

Faith, let us remember, is the root, and assurance is the flower. Doubtless you can never have the flower without the root; but it is no less certain you may have the root and not the flower.

Faith is that poor trembling woman who came behind Jesus in the press and touched the hem of His garment. (Mark v. 27.) Assurance is Stephen standing calmly in the midst of his murderers, and saying, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts vii. 56.)

Faith is the penitent thief, crying, "Lord, remember me." (Luke xxiii. 42.) Assurance is Job, sitting in the dust, covered with sores, and saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." (Job xix. 25.) "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." (Job xiii. 15.)

Faith is Peter's drowning cry, as he began to sink "Lord, save me." (Matt. xiv. 30.) Assurance is that same Peter declaring before the Council in after-times, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 11, 12.)

Faith is the anxious, trembling voice, "Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief." (Mark ix. 24.) Assurance is the confident challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) Faith is Saul praying

in the house of Judas at Damascus, sorrowful, blind, and alone. (Acts ix. 11.) Assurance is Paul, the aged prisoner, looking calmly into the grave, and saying, "I know whom I have believed. There is a crown laid up for me." (2 Tim. i. 12; iv. 8.)

Faith is life. How great the blessing! Who can tell the gulf between life and death? And yet life may be weak, sickly, unhealthy, painful, trying, anxious, worn, burdensome, joyless, smileless to the very end. Assurance is more than life. It is health, strength, power, vigour, activity, energy, manliness, beauty.

Reader, it is not a question of saved or not saved that lies before us, but of privilege or no privilege.-It is not a question of peace or no peace, but of great peace or little peace.-It is not a question between the wanderers of this world and the school of Christ: it is one that belongs only to the school;-it is between the first form and the last.

He that has faith does well. Happy should I be, if I thought all readers of this tract had it. Blessed, thrice blessed are they that believe. They are safe. They are washed. They are justified. They are beyond the power of hell. Satan, with all his malice, shall never pluck them out of Christ's hand.

But he that has assurance does far better,-sees more, feels more, knows more, enjoys more, has more days like those spoken of in Deuteronomy: even "the days of heaven upon the earth." (Dent. xi. 21.)⁸ III. I pass on to the third thing of which I spoke. I will give you some reasons why an assured hope is exceedingly to be desired.

I ask your attention to this point especially. I heartily wish that assurance was more sought after than it is. Too many among those who believe begin doubting and go on doubting, live doubting and die doubting, and go to heaven in a kind of mist.

It will ill become me to speak in a slighting way of “hopes” and “trusts.” But I fear many of us sit down content with them, and go no farther. I should like to see fewer “peradventurers” in the Lord’s family, and more who could say, “I know and am persuaded.” Oh, that all believers would covet the best gifts, and not be content with less! Many miss the full tide of blessedness the Gospel was meant to convey. Many keep themselves in a low and starved condition of soul, while their Lord is saying, “Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved. Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.” (Cant. v. 1. John xvi. 24.)

1. Let us remember, then, for one thing, that assurance is to be desired, because of the present comfort and peace it affords.

Doubts and fears have power to spoil much of the happiness of a true believer in Christ. Uncertainty and suspense are bad enough in any condition, -in the matter of our health, our property, our families, our affections, our earthly callings, -but never so bad as in the affairs of our souls. And so long as a believer cannot get beyond “I hope” and “I trust,” he manifestly feels a degree of uncertainty about his spiritual state. The very words imply as much. He says, “I hope,” because he dares not say, “I know.”

Now assurance goes far to set a child of God free from this painful kind of bondage, and thus ministers mightily

to his comfort. It enables him to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts, and works, are then by comparison small. In this way assurance makes him patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings; in every condition content, for it gives him a FIXEDNESS of heart. It sweetens his bitter cups, it lessens the burden of his crosses, it smooths the rough places over which he travels, and it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet, and something firm under his hands,-a sure friend by the way, and a sure home at the end.⁹ Assurance will help a man to bear poverty and loss. It will teach him to say, "I know that I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance. Silver and gold have I none, but grace and glory are mine, and these can never make themselves wings and flee away. Though the fig tree shall not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord." (Habak. iii. 17, 18.)

Assurance will support a child of God under the heaviest bereavements, and assist him to feel "It is well." An assured soul will say, "Though beloved ones are taken from me, yet Jesus is the same, and is alive for evermore. Though my house be not as flesh and blood could wish, yet I have an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." (2 Kings iv. 26; Heb. xiii. 8; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.)

Assurance will enable a man to praise God, and be thankful, even in a prison, like Paul and Silas at Philippi. It can give a believer songs even in the darkest night,

and joy when all things seem going against him. (Job ii. 10; Psalm xlii. 8.)

Assurance will enable a man to sleep with the full prospect of death on the morrow, like Peter in Herod's dungeon. It will teach him to say, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." (Psalm iv. 8.)

Assurance can make a man rejoice to suffer shame for Christ's sake, as the Apostles did. It will remind him that he may "rejoice and be exceeding glad " (Matt. v. 12), and that there is in heaven an exceeding weight of glory that shall make amends for all. (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

Assurance will enable a believer to meet a violent and painful death without fear, as Stephen did in the beginning of Christ's Church, and as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and Taylor did in our own land. It will bring to his heart the texts, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." (Luke xii. 4.) "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." (Acts vii. 59.)¹⁰ Assurance will support a man in pain and sickness, make all his bed, smooth down his dying pillow. It will enable him to say, "If my earthly house fail, I have a building of God." (2 Cor. v. 1.) "I desire to depart and be with Christ." (Phil. i. 23.) "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."¹¹ (Psalm lxxiii. 26.)

Reader, the comfort assurance can give in the hour of death is a point of great importance. Believe me, you will never think assurance so precious as when your turn comes to die.

In that awful hour, there are few believers who do not find out the value and privilege of an "assured hope,"

whatever they may have thought about it during their lives. General “hopes” and “trusts” are all very well to live upon, while the sun shines, and the body is strong: but when you come to die, you will want to be able to say, “I know” and “I feel.”

Believe me, Jordan is a cold stream, and we have to cross it alone. No earthly friend can help us. The last enemy, even death, is a strong foe. When our souls are departing there is no cordial like the strong wine of assurance.

There is a beautiful expression in the Prayer-book service for the Visitation of the Sick: “The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, be now and evermore thy defence, and make thee know and feel that there is none other name under heaven, through whom thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The compilers of that service showed great wisdom there. They saw that when the eyes grow dim, and the heart grows faint, and the spirit is on the eve of departing, there must then be knowing and feeling what Christ has done for us, or else there cannot be perfect peace.¹²

2. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian an active working Christian.

None, generally speaking, do so much for Christ on earth as those who enjoy the fullest confidence of a free entrance into heaven. That sounds wonderful, I dare say, but it is true.

A believer who lacks an assured hope will spend much of his time in inward searchings of heart about his own state. Like a nervous, hypochondriacal person, he will be full of his own ailments, his own doubtings and questionings, his own conflicts and corruptions. In short, you will often find he is so taken up with this internal warfare that he has little leisure for other things, little time to work for God.

Now a believer, who has, like Paul, an assured hope, is free from these harassing distractions. He does not vex his soul with doubts about his own pardon and acceptance. He looks at the everlasting covenant sealed with blood, at the finished work and never-broken word of his Lord and Saviour, and therefore counts his salvation a settled thing. And thus he is able to give an undivided attention to the work of the Lord, and so in the long run to do more.¹⁴ Take, for an illustration of this, two English emigrants, and suppose them set down side by side in New Zealand or Australia. Give each of them a piece of land to clear and cultivate. Let the portions allotted to them be the same both in quantity and quality. Secure that land to them by every needful legal instrument; let it be conveyed as freehold to them and theirs for ever; let the conveyance be publicly registered, and the property made sure to them by every deed and security that man's ingenuity can devise.

Suppose, then, that one of them shall set to work to bring his land into cultivation, and labour at it day after day without intermission or cessation.

Suppose, in the meanwhile, that the other shall be continually leaving his work, and going repeatedly to the public registry to ask whether the land really is his own,-

whether there is not some mistake,-whether, after all, there is not some flaw in the legal instruments which conveyed it to him.

The one shall never doubt his title, but just work diligently on.

The other shall hardly ever feel sure of his title, and spend half his time in going to Sydney, or Melbourne, or Auckland with needless inquiries about it.

Which, now, of these two men will have made most progress in a year's time? Who will have done the most for his land, got the greatest breadth of soil under tillage, have the best crops to show, be altogether the most prosperous?

Reader, you know as well as I do. I need not supply an answer. There can only be one reply. Undivided attention will always attain the greatest success.

It is much the same in the matter of our title to "mansions in the skies." None will do so much for the Lord who bought him as the believer who sees his title clear, and is not distracted by unbelieving hesitations. The joy of the Lord will be that man's strength. "Restore unto me," says David, "the joy of Thy salvation; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways." (Psalm li. 12.)

Never were there such working Christians as the Apostles. They seemed to live to labour. Christ's work was truly their meat and drink. They counted not their lives dear to themselves. They spent and were spent. They laid down ease, health, and worldly comfort, at the foot of the cross. And one grand cause of this, I believe, was their assured hope. They were men who could say,

“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” (1 John v. 19.)

3. Let us remember, for another thing, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make a Christian a decided Christian.

Indecision and doubt about our own state in God’s sight is a grievous one, and the mother of many evils. It often produces a wavering and unstable walk in following the Lord. Assurance helps to cut many a knot, and to make the path of Christian duty clear and plain.

Many, of whom we feel hopes that they are God’s children, and have true grace, however weak, are continually perplexed with doubts on points of practice. “Should we do such and such a thing? Shall we give up this family custom? Ought we to go into that company? How shall we draw the line about visiting? What is to be the measure of our dressing and our entertainments? Are we never, under any circumstances, to dance, never to touch a card, never to attend parties of pleasure?” These are a kind of questions which seem to give them constant trouble. And often, very often, the simple root of their perplexity is, that they do not feel assured they are themselves children of God. They have not yet settled the point, which side of the gate they are on. They do not know whether they are inside the ark or not.

That a child of God ought to act in a certain decided way they quite feel, but the grand question is, “Are they children of God themselves?” If they only felt they were so, they would go straightforward, and take a decided line. But not feeling sure about it, their conscience is forever hesitating and coming to a dead lock. The devil

whispers, "Perhaps, after all, you are only a hypocrite: what right have you to take a decided course? Wait till you are really a Christian." And this whisper too often turns the scale, and leads on to some miserable compromise, or wretched conformity to the world.

Reader, I believe you have here one chief reason why so many in this day are inconsistent, trimming, unsatisfactory, and half-hearted in their conduct about the world. Their faith fails. They feel no assurance that they are Christ's, and so feel a hesitancy about breaking with the world. They shrink from laying aside all the ways of the old man, because they are not quite confident they have put on the new. Depend on it, one secret cause of halting between two opinions is want of assurance. When people can say decidedly, "The Lord He is the God," their course becomes very clear. (1 Kings xviii. 39.)

4. Let us remember, finally, that assurance is to be desired, because it tends to make the holiest Christians.

This, too, sounds wonderful and strange, and yet it is true. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel, contrary, at first sight, to reason and common sense, and yet it to a fact. Cardinal Bellarmine was seldom more wide of the truth than when he said, "Assurance tends to carelessness and sloth." He that is freely forgiven by Christ will always do much for Christ's glory, and he that enjoys the fullest assurance of this forgiveness will ordinarily keep up the closest walk with God. It is a faithful saying in 1 John iii. 3: "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." A hope that does not purify is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.¹⁵ None are so likely to maintain a watchful guard over

hearts and lives as those who know the comfort of living in near communion with God. They feel their privilege, and will fear losing it. They will dread falling from their high estate, and marring their own comforts, by bringing clouds between themselves and Christ. He that goes on a journey with little money about him takes little thought of danger, and cares little how late he travels. He, on the contrary, that carries gold and jewels will be a cautious traveller. He will look well to his roads, his house, and his company, and run no risks. The fixed stars are those that tremble most. The man that most fully enjoys the light of God's reconciled countenance, will be a man tremblingly afraid of losing its blessed consolations, and jealously fearful of doing anything to grieve the Holy Ghost.

Reader, I commend these four points to your serious consideration. Would you like to feel the everlasting arms around you, and to hear the voice of Jesus daily drawing nigh to your soul, and saying, "I am thy salvation"?-Would you like to be a useful labourer in the vineyard in your day and generation?-Would you be known of all men as a bold, firm, decided, single-eyed, uncompromising follower of Christ?-Would you be eminently spiritually-minded and holy?-I doubt not some readers will say, "These are the very things our hearts desire. We long for them. We pant after them: but they seem far from us."

Now, has it never struck you that your neglect of assurance may possibly be the main secret of all your failures,-that the low measure of faith which satisfies you may be the cause of your low degree of peace? Can you think it a strange thing that your graces are faint

and languishing, when faith, the root and mother of them all, is allowed to remain feeble and weak?

Take my advice this day. Seek an increase of faith. Seek an assured hope of salvation like the Apostle Paul's. Seek to obtain a simple, childlike confidence in God's promises. Seek to be able to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed: I am persuaded that He is mine, and I am His."

You have very likely tried other ways and methods and completely failed. Change your plan. Go upon another tack. Lay aside your doubts. Lean more entirely on the Lord's arm. Begin with implicit trusting. Cast aside your faithless backwardness to take the Lord at His word. Come and roll yourself, your soul, and your sins upon your gracious Saviour. Begin with simple believing, and all other things shall soon be added to you.¹⁶ IV. I come now to the last thing of which I spoke. I promised to point out to you some probable causes why an assured hope is so seldom attained. I will do it very shortly.

This is a very serious question, and ought to raise in all great searchings of heart. Few, certainly, of Christ's people seem to reach up to this blessed spirit of assurance. Many comparatively believe, but few are persuaded. Many comparatively have saving faith, but few that glorious confidence which shines forth in the language of St. Paul. That such is the case, I think we must all allow.

Now, why is this so?-Why is a thing which two Apostles have strongly enjoined us to seek after, a thing of which few believers have any experimental knowledge? Why is an assured hope so rare?

I desire to offer a few suggestions on this point, with all humility. I know that many have never attained assurance, at whose feet I would gladly sit both in earth and heaven.

Perhaps the Lord sees something in the natural temperament of some of His children, which makes assurance not good for them.

Perhaps, in order to be kept in spiritual health, they need to be kept very low. God only knows. Still, after every allowance, I fear there are many believers without an assured hope, whose case may too often be explained by causes such as these.

1. One most common cause, I suspect, is a defective view of the doctrine of justification.

I am inclined to think that justification and sanctification are insensibly confused together in the minds of many believers. They receive the Gospel truth,-that there must be something done IN US, as well as something done FOR US, if we are true members of Christ; and so far they are right. But, then, without being aware of it, perhaps, they seem to imbibe the idea that their justification is, in some degree, affected by something within themselves. They do not clearly see that Christ's work, not their own work,-either in whole or in part, either directly or indirectly,-is the alone ground of our acceptance with God; that justification is a thing entirely without us, for which nothing whatever is needful on our part but simple faith,-and that the weakest believer is as fully and completely justified as the strongest.¹⁷ Many appear to forget that we are saved and justified as sinners, and only sinners; and that we never can attain to anything higher, if we live to the age of Methuselah.

Redeemed sinners, justified sinners, and renewed sinners doubtless we must be,-but sinners, sinners, sinners, always to the very last. They do not seem to comprehend that there is a wide difference between our justification and our sanctification. Our justification is a perfect finished work, and admits of no degrees. Our sanctification is imperfect and incomplete, and will be to the last hour of our life. They appear to expect that a believer may at some period of his life be in a measure free from corruption, and attain to a kind of inward perfection. And not finding this angelic state of things in their own hearts, they at once conclude there must be something very wrong in their state. And so they go mourning all their days,-oppressed with fears that they have no part or lot in Christ, and refusing to be comforted.

Reader, consider this point well. If any believing soul desires assurance, and has not got it, let him ask himself, first of all, if he is quite sure he is sound in the faith, if his loins are thoroughly "girt about with truth," and his eyes thoroughly clear in the matter of justification. He must know what it is simply to believe before he can expect to feel assured.

Believe me, the old Galatian heresy is the most fertile source of error, both in doctrine and in practice. Seek clearer views of Christ, and what Christ has done for you. Happy is the man who really understands justification by faith without the deeds of the law.

2. Another common cause of the absence of assurance is, slothfulness about growth in grace.

I suspect many true believers hold dangerous and unscriptural views on this point: I do not of course mean

intentionally, but they do hold them. Many appear to me to think that once converted, they have little more to attend to, and that a state of salvation is a kind of easy chair, in which they may just sit still, lie back, and be happy. They seem to fancy that grace is given them that they may enjoy it, and they forget that it is given, like a talent, to be used, employed, and improved. Such persons lose sight of the many direct injunctions "to increase,-to grow,-to abound more and more,-to add to our faith," and the like; and in this little-doing condition, this sitting-still state of mind, I never marvel that they miss assurance.

I believe it ought to be our continual aim and desire to go forward; and our watchword at the beginning of every year should be, "More and more" (1 Thess. iv. 1): more knowledge,-more faith,-more obedience,-more love. If we have brought forth thirty-fold, we should seek to bring forth sixty, and if we have brought forth sixty, we should strive to bring forth a hundred. The will of the Lord is our sanctification, and it ought to be our will too. (Matt. xiii. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 3.)

One thing, at all events, we may depend upon,-there is an inseparable connection between diligence and assurance. "Give diligence,"

says Peter, "to make your calling and election sure." (2 Peter i. 10.) "We desire," says Paul, "that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." (Heb. vi. 11.) "The soul of the diligent," says Solomon, "shall be made fat." (Prov. xiii. 4.) There is much truth in the old maxim of the Puritans: "Faith of adherence comes by hearing, but faith of assurance comes not without doing."

Reader, mark my words. Are you one of those who desires assurance, but have not got it? You will never get it without diligence, however much you may desire it. There are no gains without pains in spiritual things, any more than in temporal. "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing." (Prov. xiii. 4.)¹⁸

3. Another common cause of a want of assurance is, an inconsistent walk in life.

With grief and sorrow I feel constrained to say, I fear nothing in this day more frequently prevents men attaining an assured hope than this. The stream of professing Christianity is far wider than it formerly was, and I am afraid we must admit, at the same time, it is much less deep.

Inconsistency of life is utterly destructive of peace of conscience. The two things are incompatible. They cannot and they will not go together. If you will have your besetting sins, and cannot make up your minds to give them up; if you will shrink from cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye, when occasion requires it, I will engage you will have no assurance.

A vacillating walk,-a backwardness to take a bold and decided line,-a readiness to conform to the world, a hesitating witness for Christ,-a lingering tone of religion,-all these make up a sure receipt for bringing a blight upon the garden of your soul.

It is vain to suppose you will feel assured and persuaded of your own pardon and acceptance with God, unless you count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every sin, whether great or small. (Psalm cxix. 128.) One Achan allowed in the camp of your heart will weaken your hands, and lay your

consolations low in the dust. You must be daily sowing to the Spirit, if you are to reap the witness of the Spirit. You will not find and feel that all the Lord's ways are ways of pleasantness, unless you labour in all your ways to please the Lord.¹⁹ I bless God our salvation in no wise depends on our own works. By grace we are saved, - not by works of righteousness, - through faith, - without the deeds of the law. But I never would have any believer for a moment forget that our SENSE of salvation depends much on the manner of our living. Inconsistency will dim your eyes, and bring clouds between you and the sun. The sun is the same behind the clouds, but you will not be able to see its brightness or enjoy its warmth, and your soul will be gloomy and cold. It is in the path of well doing that the day-spring of assurance will visit you, and shine down upon your heart.

"The secret of the Lord," says David, "is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm xxv. 14.)

"To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." (Psalm l. 23.)

"Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm cxix. 165.)

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 John i. 7.)

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." (1 John iii. 18, 19.)

“Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” (1 John ii. 3.)

Paul was a man who exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. (Acts xxiv. 16.) He could say with boldness, “I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith.” I do not wonder that the Lord enabled him to add with confidence, “Henceforth there is a crown laid up for me, and the Lord shall give it me at that day.”

Reader, if any believer in the Lord Jesus desires assurance, and has not got it, let him think over this point also. Let him look at his own heart, look at his own conscience, look at his own life, look at his own ways, look at his own home. And perhaps when he has done that, he will be able to say, “There is a cause why I have no assured hope.”

I leave the three matters I have just mentioned to your own private consideration. I am sure they are worth examining. May you examine them honestly. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

1. And now, in closing this important inquiry, let me speak first to those readers who have not given themselves to the Lord, who have not yet come out from the world, chosen the good part, and followed Christ.

I ask you, then, to learn from this subject the privileges and comforts of a true Christian.

I would not have you judge of the Lord Jesus Christ by His people. The best of servants can give you but a faint idea of that glorious Master. Neither would I have you judge of the privileges of His kingdom by the measure of comfort to which many of His people attain. Alas, we are

most of us poor creatures! We come short, very short, of the blessedness we might enjoy. But, depend upon it, there are glorious things in the city of our God, which they who have an assured hope taste, even in their lifetime. There are lengths and breadths of peace and consolation there, which it has not entered into your heart to conceive. There is bread enough and to spare in our Father's house, though many of us certainly eat but little of it, and continue weak. But the fault must not be laid to our Master's charge: it is all our own.

And, after all, the weakest child of God has a mine of comforts within him, of which you know nothing. You see the conflicts and tossings of the surface of his heart, but you see not the pearls of great price which are hidden in the depths below. The feeblest member of Christ would not change conditions with you. The believer who possesses the least assurance is far better off than you are. He has a hope, however faint, but you have none at all. He has a portion that will never be taken from him, a Saviour that will never forsake him, a treasure that fadeth not away, however little he may realize it all at present. But, as for you, if you die as you are, your expectations will all perish. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you understood these things! Oh, that you would consider your latter end!

I feel deeply for you in these latter days of the world, if I ever did. I feel deeply for those whose treasure is all on earth, and whose hopes are all on this side the grave. Yes: when I see old kingdoms and dynasties shaking to the very foundation,-when I see, as we all saw a few years ago, kings, and princes, and rich men, and great men fleeing for their lives, and scarce knowing where to hide their heads,-when I see property dependent on

public confidence melting like snow in spring, and public stocks and funds losing their value,-when I see these things I feel deeply for those who have no better portion than this world can give them, and no place in that kingdom that cannot be removed.²⁰ Take advice of a minister of Christ this very day. Seek durable riches,-a treasure that cannot be taken from you,-a city which hath lasting foundations. Do as the Apostle Paul did. Give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and seek that incorruptible crown He is ready to bestow. Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him. Come away from a world which will never really satisfy you, and from sin which will bite like a serpent if you cling to it, at last. Come to the Lord Jesus as lowly sinners, and He will receive you, pardon you, give you His renewing Spirit, fill you with peace. This shall give you more real comfort than the world has ever done. There is a gulf in your heart which nothing but the peace of Christ can fill. Enter in and share our privileges. Come with us, and sit down by our side.

2. Lastly, let me turn to all believers who read these pages, and speak to them a few words of brotherly counsel.

The main thing that I urge upon you is this,- if you have not got an assured hope of your own acceptance in Christ, resolve this day to seek it. Labour for it. Strive after it. Pray for it. Give the Lord no rest till you “know whom you have believed.”

I feel, indeed, that the small amount of assurance in this day, among those who are reckoned God’s children, is a shame and a reproach. “It is a thing to be heavily bewailed,” says old Traill, “that many Christians have

lived twenty or forty years since Christ called them by His grace, yet doubting in their life." Let us call to mind the earnest "desire" Paul expresses, that "every one" of the Hebrews should seek after full assurance and let us endeavour, by God's blessing, to roll this reproach away. (Heb. vi. 11.)

Believing reader, do you really mean to say that you have no desire to exchange hope for confidence, trust for persuasion, uncertainty for knowledge? Because weak faith will save you, will you therefore rest content with it? Because assurance is not essential to your entrance into heaven, will you therefore be satisfied without it upon earth? Alas, this is not a healthy state of soul to be in; this is not the mind of the Apostolic day! Arise at once, and go forward. Stick not at the foundations of religion: go on to perfection. Be not content with a day of small things. Never despise it in others, but never be content with it yourselves.

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth the seeking. You forsake your own mercies when you rest content without it. The things I speak are for your peace. If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better is it to be sure in heavenly things. Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? There is nothing unscriptural in this. Paul never saw the book of life, and yet Paul says, "I know, and am persuaded."

Make it, then, your daily prayer that you may have an increase of faith. According to your faith will be your peace. Cultivate that blessed root more, and sooner or later, by God's blessing, you may hope to have the flower, You may not, perhaps, attain to full assurance all

at once. It is good sometimes to be kept waiting. We do not value things which we get without trouble. But though it tarry, wait for it. Seek on, and expect to find.

There is one thing, however, of which I would not have you ignorant:

-You must not be surprised if you have occasional doubts after you have got assurance. You must not forget you are on earth, and not yet in heaven. You are still in the body, and have indwelling sin: the flesh will lust against the spirit to the very end. The leprosy will never be out of the walls of the old house till death takes it down. And there is a devil, too, and a strong devil: a devil who tempted the Lord Jesus, and gave Peter a fall; and he will take care you know it. Some doubts there always will be. He that never doubts has nothing to lose. He that never fears possesses nothing truly valuable. He that is never jealous knows little of deep love. But be not discouraged: you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you.²¹ Finally, do not forget that assurance is a thing that may be lost for a season, even by the brightest Christians, unless they take care.

Assurance is a most delicate plant. It needs daily, hourly watching, watering, tending, cherishing. So watch and pray the more when you have got it. As Rutherford says, "Make much of assurance." Be always upon your guard. When Christian slept, in *Pilgrim's Progress*, he lost his certificate. Keep that in mind.

David lost assurance for many months by falling into transgression. Peter lost it when he denied his Lord. Each found it again, undoubtedly, but not till after bitter tears. Spiritual darkness comes on horseback, and goes away on foot. It is upon us before we know that it is

coming. It leaves us slowly, gradually, and not till after many days. It is easy to run down hill. It is hard work to climb up. So remember my caution,-when you have the joy of the Lord, watch and pray.

Above all, grieve not the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit. Vex not the Spirit. Drive Him not to a distance, by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies, known and allowed, will bring in a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

Hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

The man who walks with God in Christ most closely will generally be kept in the greatest peace.

The believer who follows the Lord most fully will ordinarily enjoy the most assured hope, and have the clearest persuasion of his own salvation.

Footnotes

1 "Full assurance that Christ hath delivered Paul from condemnation, yea, so full and real as produceth thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ, may and doth consist with complaints and outcries of a wretched condition for the indwelling of the body of sin"

-Rutherford's Triumph of

Faith. 1645.

2 "We do not vindicate every vain pretender to 'the Witness of the Spirit;' we are aware that there are those in whose professions of religion we can see nothing but their forwardness and confidence to recommend them. But let us not reject any doctrine of revelation through an over-anxious fear of consequences."-

Robinson's Christian System.

“True assurance is built upon a Scripture basis: presumption hath no Scripture to show for its warrant; it is like a will without seal and witnesses, which is null and void in law. Presumption wants both the witness of the Word and the seal of the Spirit. Assurance always keeps the heart in a lowly posture; but presumption is bred of pride. Feathers fly up, but gold descends; he who hath this golden assurance, his heart descends in humility.”-

Watson's

Body of Divinity. 1650.

“Presumption is joined with looseness of life; persuasion with a tender conscience: this dares sin because it is sure, this dares not for fear of losing assurance.

Persuasion will not sin, because it cost her Saviour so dear; presumption will sin, because grace cloth abound.

Humility is the way to heaven. They that are proudly secure of their going to heaven, do not so often come thither as they that are afraid of going to hell.”-Adams on Second Epistle of Peter. 1633.

3“They are quite mistaken that think faith and humility are inconsistent; they not only agree well together, but they cannot be parted.”-Traill.

4 “To be assured of our salvation,” Augustine saith, “is no arrogant stoutness; it is our faith. It is no pride; it is devotion. It is no presumption; it is God's promise.”-

Bishop

Jewell's Defence of the

Apology. 1570.

"If the ground of our assurance rested in and on ourselves, it might justly be called presumption; but the Lord and the power of His might being the ground thereof, they either know not what is the might of His power, or else too lightly esteem it, who account assured confidence thereon presumption."-

Gouge's

Whole Armour of God. 1647.

"Upon what ground is this certainty built? Surely not upon anything that is in us. Our assurance of perseverance is grounded wholly upon God. If we look upon ourselves, we see cause of fear and doubting; but if we look up to God, we shall find cause enough for assurance."

-Hildersam on John iv. 1632.

"Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, "I imagine so," or "It is likely;" but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity. Our salvation is fastened with God's own hand, and Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature."-

Rutherford's Letters. 1637.

5 "Never did a believer in Jesus Christ die or drown in his voyage to heaven. They will all be found safe and sound with the Lamb on mount Zion. Christ loseth none of them; yea, nothing of them. (John vi. 39.) Not a bone of a believer is to be seen in the field of battle. They are all more than conquerors through Him that loved them." (Rom. viii.

37.)-Traill.

6 Extracts from English divines, showing that there is a difference between faith and assurance,-that a believer may be justified and accepted with God, and yet not enjoy a comfortable knowledge and persuasion of his own safety,-and that the weakest faith in Christ, if it be true, will save a man as surely as the strongest.

1. "Is it not necessary to justification to be assured that my sins are pardoned, and that I am justified? No: that is no act of faith as it justifieth, but an effect and fruit that followeth after justification.

"It is one thing for a man to have his salvation certain, another thing to be certain that it is certain.

"Even as a man fallen into a river, and like to be drowned, as he is carried down with the flood, espies the bough of a tree hanging over the river, which he catcheth at, and clings unto with all his might to save him, and seeing no other way of succour but that, ventures his life upon it. This man, so soon as he has fastened on this bough, is in a safe condition, though all troubles, fears, and terrors are not presently out of his mind, until he comes to himself, and sees himself quite out of danger. Then he is sure he is safe, but he was safe before he was sure. Even so it is with a believer. Faith is but the espying of Christ as the only means to save, and the reaching out of the heart to lay hold upon Him. God hath spoke the word, and made the promise to His Son: I believe Him to be the only Saviour, and remit my soul to Him to be saved by His mediation. So soon as the soul can do this, God imputeth the righteousness of His Son unto it, and it is actually justified in the court of heaven, though it is not presently quieted and pacified in the court of conscience. That is done afterwards: in some

sooner, in some later, and by the fruits and effects of justification.”-Archbishop Usher’s “Body of Divinity.” 1670.

2. “There are those who doubt, because they doubt and multiply distrust upon itself, concluding that they have no faith, because they find so much and so frequent doubting within them. But this is a great mistake. Some doubtings there may be, where there is even much faith; and a little faith there may be, where there is much doubting.

“Our Saviour requires, and delights in a strong, firm believing on Him, though the least and weakest He rejects not.”-

Archbishop

Leighton’s Lectures on the first nine chapters of St. Matthew’s Gospel. 1670.

3. “The mercy of God is greater than all the sins in the world. But we sometimes are in such a case, that we think we have no faith at all; or if we have any, it is very feeble and weak. And, therefore, these are two things; to have faith, and to have the feeling of faith. For some men would fain have the feeling of faith, but they cannot attain unto it; and yet they must not despair, but go forward in calling upon God, and it will come at the length: God will open their hearts, and let them feel His goodness.”-

Bishop

Latimer’s Sermons. 1552.

4. “I know, thou sayest, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: and that ‘Whosoever believeth in

Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.' (John iii. 15.) Neither can I know but that, in a sense of my own 'sinful condition, I do cast myself in some measure upon my Saviour, and lay some hold upon His all-sufficient redemption: but, alas, my apprehensions of Him are so feeble, as that they can afford no sound comfort to my soul!

"Courage, my son. Were it that thou lookest to be justified, and saved by the power of the very act of thy faith, thou hadst reason to be disheartened with the conscience of the weakness thereof; but now that the virtue and efficacy of this happy work is in the object apprehended by thee, which is the infinite merits and mercy of thy God and Saviour, which cannot be abated by thine infirmities, thou hast cause to take heart to thyself, and cheerfully to expect His salvation.

"Understand thy case aright. Here is a double hand, that helps us up toward heaven. Our hand of faith lays hold upon our Saviour; our Saviour's hand of mercy and plenteous redemption lays hold on us. Our hold of Him is feeble and easily loosed; His hold of us is strong and irresistible.

"If work were stood upon, a strength of hand were necessary; but now that only taking and receiving of a precious gift is required, why may not a weak hand do that as well as a strong? As well, though not as forcibly."-

Bishop

Hall's "Balm of Gilead." 1650.

5. "Many formerly, and those of the highest remark and eminency, have placed true faith in no lower degree than

assurance, or the secure persuasion of the pardon of their sins, the acceptation of their persons, and their future salvation.

“But this, as it is very sad and uncomfortable for thousands of doubting and deserted souls, concluding all those to fall short of grace who fall short of certainty, so hath it given the Papists too great advantage.

“Faith is not assurance. But this doth sometimes crown and reward a strong, vigorous, and heroic faith; the Spirit of God breaking in upon the soul with an evidencing light, and scattering all that darkness, and those fears and doubts which before beclouded it.”-

Bishop Hopkins on the Covenants.

1680.

6. “If any persons abroad have thought that a special and full persuasion of the pardon of their sin was of the essence of faith, let them answer for it. Our divines at home generally are of another judgment. Bishop Davenant and Bishop Prideaux, and others, have shown the great difference between recumbence and assurance, and they all do account and call assurance a daughter, fruit, and consequent of faith. And the late learned Arrowsmith tells us, that God seldom bestows assurance upon believers till they are grown in grace: for, says he, there is the same difference between faith of recumbence and faith of assurance, as is between reason and learning. Reason is the foundation of learning; so, as there can be no learning if reason be wanting (as in beasts), in like manner there can be no assurance where there is no faith of adherence. Again: as reason well exercised in the study of arts and sciences arises to learning, so faith, being well exercised

on its proper object and by its proper fruits, arises to assurance. Further, as by negligence, non-attendance, or some violent disease, learning may be lost, while reason doth abide; so, by temptation, or by spiritual sloth, assurance may be lost, while saving faith may abide. Lastly, as all men have reason, but all men are not learned; so all regenerate persons have faith to comply savingly with the gospel method of salvation, but all true believers have not assurance.”-

Sermon by B.

Fairclough, Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in the Morning Exercises, preached at Southwark. 1660.

7. “Weak faith may fail in the applying, or in the apprehension and appropriating of Christ’s benefits to a man’s own self. This is to be seen in ordinary experience. For many a man there is of humble and contrite heart, that serveth God in spirit and truth, yet is not able to say, without great doubtings and waverings, I know and am fully assured that my sins are pardoned. Now shall we say that all such are without faith? God forbid.

“This weak faith will as truly apprehend God’s merciful promises for the pardon of sin as strong faith, though not so soundly. Even as a man with a palsied hand can stretch it out as well to receive a gift at the hand of a king as he that is more sound, though it may be not so firmly and steadfastly.”-

Exposition of the Creed, by William Perkins, Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge. 1612.

8. “A want of assurance is not unbelief. Drooping spirits may be believers. There is a manifest distinction made

between faith in Christ and the comfort of that faith,-
between believing to eternal life and knowing we have
eternal life. There is a difference between a child's
having a right to an estate and his full knowledge of the
title.

"The character of faith may be written in the heart, as
letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much
dust as not to be distinguished. The dust hinders the
reading of the letters, yet doth not raze them out."-

Discourses by Stephen Charnock, of Emmanuel College,
Cambridge. 1680.

9. "This certainty of our salvation, spoken of by Paul,
rehearsed by Peter, and mentioned by David (Psalm iv.
7), is that special fruit of faith which breedeth spiritual
joy, and inward peace which passeth all understanding.
True it is, all God's children have it not. One thing is the
tree, and another thing is the fruit of the tree: one thing
is faith, and another thing is the fruit of faith. And that
remnant of God's elect which feel the want of this faith
have, notwithstanding, faith."

-Sermons by Richard

Greenham, Minister and Preacher of the Word of God.
1612.

10. "You that can clear this to your own hearts that you
have faith, though it be weak, be not discouraged, be not
troubled. Consider that the smallest degree of faith is
true, is saving faith as well as the greatest. A spark of
fire is as true fire as any is in the element of fire. A drop
of water is as true water as any is in the ocean. So the
least grain of faith is as true faith, and as saving as the
greatest faith in the world.

“The least bud draws sap from the root as well as the greatest bough. So the weakest measure of faith doth as truly ingraft thee into Christ, and by that draw life from Christ, as well as the strongest. The weakest faith hath communion with the merits and blood of Christ as well as the strongest.

“The least faith marries the soul to Christ. The weakest faith hath as equal a share in God’s love as the strongest. We are beloved in Christ, and the least measure of faith makes us members of Christ. The least faith hath equal right to the promises as the strongest. And, therefore, let not our souls be discouraged for weakness.”-

Nature and Royalties of Faith, by Samuel Bolton, D.D., of Christ’s College, Cambridge. 1657

11. “A man may be in the favour of God, in the state of grace, a justified man before God, and yet want the sensible assurance of his salvation, and of the favour of God in Christ.

“A man may have saving grace in him, and not perceive it himself; a man may have true justifying faith in him, and not have the use and operation of it, so far as to work in him a comfortable assurance of his reconciliation with God. Nay, I will say more: a man may be in the state of grace, and have true justifying faith in him, and yet be so far from sensible assurance of it in himself, as in his own sense and feeling he may seem to be assured of the contrary. Job was certainly in this case when he cried unto God, ‘Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and boldest me for Thine enemy?’ (Job xiii. 24.)

“The weakest faith will justify. If thou canst receive Christ and rest upon Him, even with the weakest faith, it

will serve thy turn.-Take heed thou think not it is the strength of thy faith that justifieth thee. No, no: it is Christ and His perfect righteousness which thy faith receiveth and resteth upon that doth it. He that hath the feeblest and weakest hand may receive an alms, and apply a sovereign plaster to his wound, as well as he that hath the strongest, and receive as much good by it too."

-Lectures upon the fifty-first Psalm, preached at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, by Arthur Hildersam, Minister of Jesus Christ. 1642.

12. "There are some who are true believers and yet weak in faith. They do indeed receive Christ and free grace, but it is with a shaking hand. They have, as divines say, the faith of adherence: they will stick to Christ, as theirs; but they want the faith of evidence,- they cannot see themselves as His. They are believers, but of little faith. They hope that Christ will not cast them off, but are not sure that He will take them up."-

Sips of Sweetness, or Consolation for Weak Believers, by John Durant, Preacher in Canterbury Cathedral. 1649.

13. "The act of faith is to apply Christ to the soul; and this the weakest faith can do as well as the strongest, if it be true. A child can hold a staff as well, though not so strongly, as a man. The prisoner through a hole sees the sun, though not so perfectly as they in the open air. They that saw the brazen serpent, though a great way off, yet were healed.

"The least faith is as precious to the believer's soul as Peter's or Paul's faith was to themselves, for it lays hold upon Christ and brings eternal salvation."-An Exposition

of the Second Epistle General of Peter, by the Rev Thomas Adams, Rector of St. Gregory's, London. 1633.

14. "Many of God's dear children for a long time may remain very doubtful as to their present and eternal condition, and know not what to conclude, whether they shall be damned, or whether they shall be saved. There are believers of several growths in the Church of God,- fathers, young men, children, and babes; and as in most families there are more babes and children than grown men, so in the Church of God there are more weak, doubting Christians than strong ones, grown up to a full assurance. A babe may be born, and yet not know it; so a man may be born again, and yet not be sure of it.

"We make a difference betwixt saving faith, as such, and a full persuasion of the heart. Some of those that shall be saved may not be certain that they shall be saved; for the promise is made to the grace of faith, and not to the evidence of it, to faith as true, and not to faith as strong. They may be sure of heaven, and yet in their own sense not assured of heaven."

-Sermons by Rev. Thomas Doolittle, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and sometime Rector of St. Alphage, London, in the Morning Exercises, at Cripplegate. 1661.

15. "I find not salvation put upon the strength of faith, but the truth of faith; not upon the brightest degree, but upon any degree of faith. It is not said, If you have such a degree of faith you shall be justified and saved; but simply believing is required. The lowest degree of true faith wilt do it; as Romans x. 9: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' The thief upon the cross had not

attained to such high degrees of faith: he by one act, and that of a weak faith, was justified and saved. (Luke xxiii. 42.)”

-Exposition of the Prophet Ezekiel, by

William Greenhill, Rector of Stepney, London, and Chaplain to the Dukes of York and Gloucester. 1650.

16. “Weak faith is true faith,-as precious, though not so great, as strong faith,-the same Holy Ghost the Author, the same Gospel the instrument.

“If it never proves great, yet weak faith shall save, for it interests us in Christ, and makes Him and all His benefits ours. For it is not the strength of our faith that saves, but truth of our faith; nor weakness of our faith that condemns, but the want of faith,-for the least faith layeth ‘hold on Christ, and so will save us. Neither are we saved by the worth or quantity of our faith, but by Christ, who is laid hold on by a weak faith as well as a strong. Just as a weak hand that can put meat into the mouth, shall feed and nourish the body as well as if it were a strong hand; seeing the body is not nourished by the strength of the hand, but by the goodness of the meat.”-

The

Doctrine of Faith, by John Rogers, Preacher of God’s Word at Dedham, in Essex. 1634.

17. “Though your grace be never so weak, yet if ye have truth of grace, you have as great a share in the righteousness of Christ for your justification as the strong Christian hath. You have as much of Christ imputed to you as any other.”

-Sermons by William Bridge, formerly Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Pastor of the Church of Christ, in Great Yarmouth. 1648.

18. "It is confessed weak faith hath as much peace with God, through Christ, as another hath by strong faith, but not so much bosom peace.

"Weak faith will as surely land the Christian in heaven as strong faith, for it is impossible the least dram of true grace should perish, being all incorruptible seed; but the weak, doubting Christian is not like to have so pleasant a voyage thither as another with strong faith. Though all in the ship come safe to shore, yet he that is all the way sea-sick hath not so comfortable a voyage as he that is strong and healthful."

The Christian in complete Armour, by William Gurnall, sometime Minister at Lavenham, Suffolk. 1680.

19. "A man may have true grace that hath not the assurance of the love and favour of God, or the remission of his sins, and salvation of his soul. A man may be God's, and yet he not know it; his estate may be good, and yet he not see it; he may be in a safe condition, when he is not in a comfortable position. All may be well with him in the court of glory, when he would give a thousand worlds that all were but well in the court of conscience.

"Assurance is requisite to the well-being of a Christian, but not to the being; it is requisite to the consolation of a Christian, but not to the salvation of a Christian; it is requisite to the well-being of grace, but not to the mere being of grace. Though a man cannot be saved without faith, yet he may be saved without assurance. God hath in sunny places of the Scripture declared that without

faith there is no salvation; but God hath not in any one place of Scripture declared that without assurance there is no salvation.”-

Heaven on Earth, by Thomas Brooks, Preacher of the Gospel at St. Margaret’s, Fish Street Hill, London. 1654

20. “We must distinguish between weakness of faith and nullity. A weak faith is true. The bruised reed is but weak, yet it is such as Christ will not break. Though thy faith be but weak, yet be not discouraged. A weak faith may receive a strong Christ: a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage as well as a strong; a weak eye might have seen the brazen serpent. The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true. The promise doth not say, Whosoever hath a giant faith that can remove mountains, that can stop the mouth of lions, shall be saved; but whosoever believes, be his faith never so small.

“You may have the water of the Spirit poured on you in sanctification, though not the oil of gladness in assurance; there may be faith of adherence, and not of evidence; there may be life in the root where there is no fruit in the branches, and faith in the heart where no fruit of assurance.”-

A

Body of Divinity, by Thomas Watson, formerly Minister of St. Stephen’s, Walbrook, London. 1660.

21. “There is a weak faith, which yet is true; and although it be weak, yet, because it is true, it shall not be rejected of Christ.

“Faith is not created perfect at the first, as Adam was, but is like a man in the ordinary course of nature, who is first an infant, then a child, then a youth, then a man.

“Some utterly reject all weak ones, and tax all weakness in faith with hypocrisy. Certainly these are either proud or cruel men.

“Some comfort and establish those who are weak, saying, ‘Be quiet: thou hast faith and grace enough and art good enough; thou needest no more, neither must thou be too righteous.’ (Eccles. vii. 16.) These are soft, but not safe, cushions; these are fawning flatterers, and not faithful friends.

“Some comfort and exhort, saying, ‘Be of good cheer: He who hath begun a good work will also finish it in you; therefore pray that His grace may abound in you; yea, do not sit still, but go forward, and march on in the way of the Lord.’ (Heb. vi. 1.) Now this is the safest and best course.”

-Questions,

Observations, etc., upon the Gospel according to St. Matthew, by Richard Ward, sometime Student at Cambridge, and Preacher of the Gospel in London. 1640.

22. “Be not discouraged if it doth not yet appear to you that you were given by the Father to the Son. It may be, though you do not see it. Many of the given do not for a long time know it; yea, I see no great danger in saying that not a few of the given to the Son may be in darkness, and doubts and fears about it, till the last and brightest day declares it, and till the last sentence proclaims it.

“If therefore any of you be in the dark about your own election, be not discouraged; it may be, though you do not know it.”

-Sermon on the Lord's Prayer, by Robert Traill, Minister of the Gospel in London, and sometime at Cranbrook Kent. 1690.

23. “Some rob themselves of their own comfort by placing saving faith in full assurance. Faith, and sense of faith, are two distinct and separable mercies; you may have truly received Christ, and not receive the knowledge or assurance of it. Some there be that say, ‘Thou art our God,’ of whom God never said, You are my people; these have no authority to be called the sons of God: others there are, of whom God saith, ‘These are my people,’ yet they dare not call God ‘their God;’ these have authority to be called the Sons of God, yet know it not. They have received Christ, that is their safety; but they have not yet received the knowledge and assurance of it, that is their trouble....The father owns his child in the cradle, who yet knows him not to be his father.”-

Method of grace, by John Flavel, Minister of the Gospel at Dartmouth, Devon. 1680.

24. “The faith necessary and sufficient for our salvation is not assurance. Its tendency, doubtless, is to produce that lively expectation of the Divine favour which will issue in a full confidence. But the confidence is not itself the faith of which we speak, nor is it necessarily included in it: nay, it is a totally distinct thing.

“Assurance will generally accompany a high degree of faith. But there are sincere persons who are endued with only small measures of grace, or in whom the exercise of that grace may be greatly obstructed. When

such defects or hindrances prevail, many fears and distresses may be expected to arise.”-

The Christian System, by the Rev. Thomas Robinson, Vicar of St. Mary’s, Leicester. 1795.

25. “Assurance is not essential to the being of faith. It is a strong faith; but we read likewise of a weak faith, little faith, faith like a grain of mustard seed. True saving faith in Jesus Christ is only distinguishable by its different degrees; but in every degree, and in every subject, it is universally of the same kind.”-

Sermons, by the Rev. John Newton, sometime

Vicar of Olney, and Rector of St. Mary’s. Woolnoth, London. 1767.

26. “There is no reason why weak believers should conclude against themselves. Weak faith unites as really with Christ as strong faith,-as the least bud in the vine is drawing sap and life from the root, no less than the strongest branch. Weak believers therefore have abundant cause to be thankful; and while they reach after growth in grace, ought not to overlook what they have already received.”-

Letter of Rev. Henry Venn. 1784.

27. “Salvation, and the joy of salvation, are not always contemporaneous; the latter does not always accompany the former in present experience.

“A sick man may be under a process of recovery and yet be in doubt concerning the restoration of his health. Pain and weakness may cause him to hesitate. A child may be heir to his estate or kingdom, and yet derive no joy from the prospect of his future inheritance. He may be unable to trace his genealogy, or to read his title

deeds, and the testament of his father; or with a capacity of reading them he may be unable to understand their import, and his guardian may for a time deem it right to suffer him to remain in ignorance. But his ignorance does not affect the validity of his title.

“Personal assurance of salvation is not necessarily connected with faith. They are not essentially the same. Every believer might indeed infer, from the effect produced in his own heart, his own safety and privileges; but many who truly believe are unskilful in the word of righteousness, and fail of drawing the conclusion from Scriptural premises which they would be justified in drawing”-

Lectures on the Fifty-first Psalm, by the

Rev. Thomas Biddulph, Minister of St. James’s, Bristol. 1830, 7 “He that believeth on Jesus shall never be confounded. Never was any; neither shall you, if you believe. It was a great word of faith spoken by a dying man, who had been converted in a singular way, betwixt his condemnation and execution: his last words were these, spoken with a mighty shout,-‘Never man perished with his face towards Christ Jesus.’-Traill.

8 “The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation; and, the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth.”-

Joseph Caryl.

9 “It was a saying of Bishop Latimer to Ridley, “When I live in a settled and steadfast assurance about the state of my soul, methinks then I am as bold as a lion. I can laugh at all trouble: no affliction daunts me. But when I am eclipsed in my comforts, I am of so fearful a spirit, that I could run into a very mouse-hole.”-

Quoted by Christopher Love. 1653.

“Assurance will assist us in all duties; it will arm us against all temptations; it will answer all objections; it will sustain us in all conditions into which the saddest of times can bring us. ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’-

Bishop Reynolds on Hosea xiv. 1642.

“We cannot come amiss to him that hath assurance: God is his. Hath he lost a friend?-His Father lives. Hath he lost an only child? God hath given him His only Son. Hath he scarcity of bread?-God hath given him the finest of the wheat, the bread of life.-Are his comforts gone?-he hath a Comforter. Doth he meet with storms?-he knows where to put in for harbour.-God is his portion, and heaven is his haven.”-

Thomas Watson. 1662

10 These were John Bradford’s words in prison, shortly before his execution. “I have no request to make. If Queen Mary gives me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her.”

This was Rutherford’s experience, when banished to Aberdeen. ‘How blind are my adversaries, who sent me to a banqueting house, and not to a prison or a place of

exile." "My prison is a palace to me, and Christ's banqueting house."-

Letters.

11 These were the last words of Hugh Mackail on the scaffold at Edinburgh, 1666. "Now I begin my intercourse with God, which shall never be broken off. Farewell, father and mother, friends and relations; farewell, the world and all its delights; farewell, meat and drinks; farewell, sun, moon, and stars. Welcome, God and Father; welcome, sweet Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; welcome, blessed Spirit of grace and God of all consolation; welcome, glory; welcome, eternal life; welcome, death. O Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit; for Thou hast redeemed my soul, O Lord God of truth."

12 These were Rutherford's words on his death bed. "O that all my brethren did know what a Master I have served, and what I have this day! I shall sleep in Christ, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with his likeness." 1661.

These were Baxter's words on his death bed. "I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within." Towards the close he was asked how he did? The answer was, "Almost well." 1691.

13 The least degree of faith takes away the sting of death, because it takes away guilt; but the full assurance of faith breaks the very teeth and jaws of death, by taking away the fear and dread of it."

-Fairclough's

Sermon in the Morning Exercises.

14 "Assurance would make us active and lively in God's service; it would excite prayer, quicken obedience. Faith would make us walk, but assurance would make us run; we should think we could never do enough for God. Assurance would be as wings to the bird, as weights to the clock, to set all the wheels of obedience a-running."

-Thomas Watson.

"Assurance will make a man fervent, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord. When the assured Christian hath done one work, he is calling out for another. What is next, Lord, says the assured soul: what is next? An assured Christian will put his hand to any work, he will put his neck in any yoke for Christ; he never thinks he hath done enough, he always thinks he hath done too little, and when he hath done all he can, he sits down, saying, I am an unprofitable servant." -

Thomas Brooks.

15 "The true assurance of salvation, which the Spirit of God hath wrought in any heart, hath that force to restrain a man from looseness of life, and to knit his heart in love and obedience to God, as nothing else hath in all the world. It is certainly either the want of faith and assurance of God's love, or a false and carnal assurance of it, that is the true cause of all the licentiousness that reigns in the world."

-Hildersam on 51st Psalm.

"None walk so evenly with God as they who are assured of the love of God. Faith is the mother of obedience, and sureness of trust makes way for strictness of life. When men are loose from Christ, they are loose in point of duty, and their floating belief is soon discovered in their

inconstancy and unevenness of walking. We do not with alacrity engage in that of the success of which we are doubtful: and therefore when we know not whether God will accept us or not, when we are off and on in point of trust, we are just so in the course of our lives, and serve God by fits and starts. It is the slander of the world to think assurance an idle doctrine.”

-Manton’s Exposition of James. 1660.

“Who is more obliged, or who feels the obligation to observance more cogently,-the son who knows his near relation, and knows his father loves him, or the servant that hath great reason to doubt it? Fear is a weak and impotent principle in comparison of love. Terrors may awaken; love enlivens. Terrors may ‘almost persuade;’ love over-persuades. Sure am I that a believer’s knowledge that his Beloved is his, and he is his Beloved’s (Cant. vi. 3), is found by experience to lay the most strong and cogent obligations upon him to loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. For as to him that believes Christ is precious (1 Peter ii. 7), so to him that knows he believes Christ is so much the more precious, even the ‘chiefest of ten thousand.’” (Cant. v. 10)-

Fairclough’s

Sermon in Morning

Exercises. 1660.

“Is it necessary that men should be kept in continual dread of damnation, in order to render them circumspect and ensure their attention to duty? Will not the well-grounded expectation of heaven prove far more efficacious? Love is the noblest and strongest principle

of obedience: nor can it be but that a sense of God's love to us will increase our desire to please Him.”-

Robinson’s Christian System.

16 “That which breeds so much perplexity is, that we would invert God’s order. ‘If I knew,’ say some, ‘that the promise belonged to me, and Christ was a Saviour to me, I could believe:’ that is to say, I would first see, and then believe. But the true method is just the contrary: ‘I had fainted,’ says David, ‘unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord.’ He believed it first, and saw it afterwards.”

-Archbishop Leighton.

“It is a weak and ignorant, but common, thought of Christians, that they ought not to look for heaven, nor trust Christ for eternal glory, till they be well advanced in holiness and meetness for it. But as the first sanctification of our natures flows from our faith and trust in Christ for acceptance, so our further sanctification and meetness for glory flows from the renewed and repeated exercise of faith on Him.”

-Traill.

17The Westminster Confession of Faith gives an admirable account of justification. “Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other Evangelical obedience, to them, as their righteousness: but by imputing the obedience and righteousness of Christ unto

them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith."

18"Whose fault is it that thy interest in Christ is not put out of question? Were Christians more in self-examination, more close in walking with God; and if they had more near communion with God, and were more in acting of faith, this shameful darkness and doubting would quickly vanish."-

Trail

"A lazy Christian shall always want four things: viz., comfort, content, confidence, and assurance. God hath made a separation between joy and idleness, between assurance and laziness, and therefore it is impossible for thee to bring these together, that God hath put so far asunder."-

Thomas

Brooks.

"Are you in depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have any interest in the forgiveness that is of God? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, and want peace consolation, and establishment? Why lie you upon your faces? Get up: watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruptions; fear not, startle not at their crying to be spared; press unto the throne of grace by prayer, supplications, importunities, restless requests: this is the way to take the kingdom of God. These things are not peace, are not assurance; but they are part of the means God hath appointed for the attainment of them."-

Owen on the 130th Psalm.

19 "Wouldest thou have thy hope strong?-Then keep thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile one without weakening the other. The godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking will soon find his hope languishing. All sin disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears and shakings of heart."

-Gurnall

"One great and too common cause of distress is the secret maintaining some known sin. It puts out the eye of the soul, or dimmeth it and stupifies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provoketh God to withdraw Himself, His comforts, and the assistance of His Spirit."-

Baxter's

Saints' Rest.

"The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole; and men whose hearts are least entangled with the world are always nearest to God, and to the assurance of His favour. Worldly Christians, remember this. You and the world must part, or else assurance and your souls will never meet."-

Thomas

Brooks.

20 "They are doubly miserable that have neither Heaven nor earth, temporals nor eternal, made sure to them in changing times."

-Thomas

Brooks.

21 “None have assurance at all times. As in a walk that is shaded with trees and checkered with light and shadow, some tracks and paths in it are dark, and others are sunshine: such is usually the life of the most assured Christian.”

-Bishop Hopkins.

“It is very suspicious that that person is a hypocrite that is always in the same frame, let him pretend it to be never so good.”

-Traill.

© Bible

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Bible #1 - Bible-Reading

"Study the Scriptures" (John 5:39).

"How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26).

Next to praying there is nothing so important in practical religion as Bible-reading. God has mercifully given us a book which is "able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). By reading that book we may learn what to believe, what to be, and what to do; how to live with comfort, and how to die in peace. Happy is that man who possesses a Bible! Happier still is he who reads it! Happiest of all is he who not only reads it, but obeys it, and makes it the rule of his faith and practice!

Nevertheless it is a sorrowful fact that man has a sad ability to abuse God's gifts. His privileges, and power, and abilities, are all ingeniously perverted to other ends than those for which they were bestowed. His speech, his imagination, his intellect, his strength, his time, his influence, his money—instead of being used as instruments for glorifying his Maker—are generally wasted, or employed for his own selfish ends. And just as man naturally makes a bad use of his other mercies from God, so he does of the written Word. One sweeping charge may be brought against the whole of Christendom, and that charge is neglect and abuse of the Bible.

To prove this charge we have no need to look elsewhere: the proof lies at our own doors. I have no doubt that there are more Bibles in our country at this moment than there ever were since the world began. There is

more Bible buying—and Bible selling—more Bible printing and Bible distributing—than ever was since we were a nation. We see Bibles in every bookstore, Bibles of every size, price, and style—large Bibles, and small Bibles—Bibles for the rich, and Bibles for the poor. There are Bibles in almost every house in the land. But all this time I fear we are in danger of forgetting, that to "have" the Bible is one thing and to "read" it quite another.

This neglected Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper today. Surely it is no small thing what you are doing with the Bible. Surely, when the plague is spreading in other lands, you should search and see whether the plague-spot is on you. Give me your attention while I supply you with a few plain reasons why every one who cares for his soul ought to value the Bible highly, to study it regularly, and to make himself thoroughly acquainted with its contents.

I. In the first place, "there is no book in existence written in such a manner as the Bible."

The Bible is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). In this respect it is utterly unlike all other writings. God taught the writers of it what to say. God put into their minds thoughts and ideas. God guided their pens in writing down those thoughts and ideas. When you read it, you are not reading the self-taught compositions of poor imperfect men like yourself, but the words of the eternal God. When you hear it, you are not listening to the erring opinions of short-lived mortals, but to the unchanging mind of the King of kings. The men who were employed to write the Bible did not speak themselves. They "spoke from God as they were carried

along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). All other books in the world, however good and useful in their way, are more or less defective. The more you look at them the more you see their defects and blemishes. The Bible alone is absolutely perfect. From beginning to end it is "the Word of God."

I will not waste time by attempting any long and labored proof of this. I say boldly, that the Book itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. It is the greatest standing miracle in the world. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired must give an explanation why he believes this, if he can. Let him explain the peculiar nature and character of the Book in a way that will satisfy any man of common sense. The burden of proof seems to my mind to lie on him.

It proves nothing against inspiration, as some have asserted, that the writers of the Bible have each different style. Isaiah does not write like Jeremiah, and Paul does not write like John. This is perfectly true, and yet the works of these men are not a bit less equally inspired. The waters of the sea have many different shades. In one place they look blue, and in another green. And yet the difference is due to the depth or shallowness of the part we see, or to the nature of the bottom. The water in every case is the same salt sea. The breath of a man may produce different sounds according to the character of the instrument on which he plays. The flute, the bagpipe, and the trumpet, have each their peculiar note. And yet the breath that calls forth the notes is in each case one and the same. The light of the planets we see in heaven is extremely various. Mars, and Saturn, and Jupiter, each have a individual color. And yet we know that the light of the

sun, which each planet reflects, is in each case one and the same. Just in the same way the books of the Old and New Testaments are all inspired truth, and yet the aspect of that truth varies according to the mind through which the Holy Spirit makes it flow. The handwriting and style of the writers differ enough to prove that each had a distinct individual being; but the Divine Guide who dictates and directs the whole is always one. All are inspired. Every chapter, and verse, and word, is from God.

Oh, that men who are troubled with doubts, and thoughts about inspiration, would calmly examine the Bible for themselves! Oh, that they would take the advice which was the first step to Augustine's conversion, "Pick it up and read it! Pick it up and read it!" How many difficulties and objections would vanish away at once like mist before the rising sun! How many would soon confess, "The finger of God is here! God is in this Book, and I did not know it."

This is the Book about which I address the readers of this paper. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with this Book." It is no light thing that God should have caused this Book to be "written to teach us," and that you should have before you "the very words of God" (Romans 3:2; 15:4). I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my questions. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it at all? How do you read it?

II. In the second place, "there is no knowledge absolutely needful to a man's salvation, except a knowledge of the things which are to be found in the Bible."

We live in days when the words of Daniel are fulfilled before our eyes: "Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (Daniel 12:4). Schools are multiplying every where you look. New colleges are set up. Old Universities are reformed and improved. New books are continually coming out. More is being taught—more is being learned—more is being read than there ever was since the world began. It is all good. I rejoice at it. An ignorant population is a perilous and expensive burden to any nation. It is a ready prey to the first who may arise to entice it to do evil. But this I say—we must never forget that all education a man's head can receive will not save his soul from hell, unless he knows the truths of the Bible.

A man "may have immense learning and yet never be saved." He may be master of half the languages spoken around the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books till he is like a walking encyclopedia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven—the birds of the air—the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able, like Solomon, to "describe plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls, and also teach about animals and birds, reptiles and fish" (1 Kings 4:33). He may be able to lecture on all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a destitute man! Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the sciences in the world never soothed a dying man. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the prospect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth and

can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little time here on earth with a more dignified manner of walking than his fellow-mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them, will find in time that without Bible knowledge he has no lasting possession. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

A man "may be a very ignorant man, and yet be saved." He may be unable to read a word, or write a letter. He may know nothing of geography beyond the bounds of his own city or county, and be utterly unable to say which is nearest to England, Paris or New York. He may know nothing of arithmetic, and not see any difference between a million and a thousand. He may know nothing of history, not even of his own land, and be quite ignorant whether his country is headed up by a Tribal Chief or by Queen Elizabeth. He may know nothing of science and its discoveries—and whether Julius Caesar won his victories with gunpowder, or the apostles had a printing press, or the sun orbits around the earth—may be matters about which he has not an idea. And yet, if that very man has heard Bible truth with his ears and believed it with his heart, he knows enough to save his soul. He will be found in the end with Lazarus in heaven, while his scientific fellow-creature, who has died unconverted, is lost forever.

There is much talk in these days about science and "useful knowledge." But a knowledge of the Bible is the one knowledge that is needful and eternally useful. A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends, but without Bible knowledge he will never get

there at all. A man may have the mightiest of minds, and a memory stored with all that strong mind can grasp—and yet, if he does not know the things of the Bible, his soul is damned forever. Woe! woe! woe to the man who dies in ignorance of the Bible!

This is the Book about which I am addressing the readers of these pages today. It is no light matter "what you do with such a book." It concerns the life of your soul. I summon you, I charge you to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

III. In the third place, "no book in existence contains such important matter as the Bible."

Time would fail me if I were to enter fully into all the great things which are to be found in the Bible, and only in the Bible. It is not by any sketch or outline that the treasures of the Bible can be displayed. It would be easy to fill a volume with a list of the exceptional truths it reveals, and yet the half of its riches would be left untold.

How glorious and soul-satisfying is the description it gives us of God's plan of salvation, and the way by which our sins can be forgiven! The coming into the world of Jesus Christ, the God-man, to save sinners—the redemption He has accomplished for man by His suffering, in our place, the just for the unjust—the complete payment He has made for our sins by His own blood—the justification of every sinner who simply believes on Jesus—the readiness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to receive, pardon, and save to the uttermost—how unspeakably grand and comforting are

all these truths! We would know nothing of them without the Bible.

How comforting is the account it gives us of the great Mediator of the New Testament—the man Christ Jesus! Four times over His picture is graciously drawn before our eyes. Four separate witnesses tell us of His miracles and His ministry—His sayings and His actions—His life and His death—His power and His love—His kindness and His patience—His ways, His words, His works, His thoughts, His heart. Blessed be God, there is one thing in the Bible which the most prejudiced reader can hardly fail to understand, and that is the character of Jesus Christ!

How encouraging are the examples the Bible gives us of good people! It tells us of many who were of like passions with ourselves—men and women who had cares, crosses, families, temptations, afflictions, diseases, like ourselves—and yet "through faith and patience inherited what has been promised," and got safely home (Hebrews 6:12). It keeps back nothing in the history of these people. Their mistakes, their weaknesses, their conflicts, their experience, their prayers, their praises, their useful lives, their happy deaths—all are fully recorded. And it tells us the God and Savior of these men and women is still the same today as yesterday, and still waits to be gracious.

How instructive are the examples the Bible gives us of bad people! It tells us of men and women who had light and knowledge and opportunities like ourselves, and yet hardened their hearts, loved the world, clung to their sins, would have their own way, despised reproof, and ruined their own souls forever. And it warns us that the

God who punished Pharaoh, and Saul, and Ahab, and Jezebel, and Judas, is a God who never changes, and that there is a real hell.

How precious are the promises which the Bible contains for the use of those who love God! There is hardly any possible emergency or condition for which it does not have a word of hope and encouragement. And it tells men that God loves to be put in remembrance of these promises, and that if He has said He will do something, His promise will certainly be fulfilled.

How blessed are the hopes which the Bible holds out to the believer in Christ Jesus! Peace in the hour of death—rest and happiness on the other side of the grave—a glorious body in the morning of the resurrection—a full and triumphant acquittal in the day of judgment—an everlasting reward in the kingdom of Christ—a joyful meeting with the Lord's people in the day of gathering together—these, these are the future prospects of every true Christian. They are all written in the book—in the book which is all true.

How striking is the light which the Bible throws on the character of man! It teaches us what men may be expected to be and do in every position and occupation of life. It gives us the deepest insight into the secret springs and motives of human actions, and the ordinary course of events under the control of human agents. It is the true "judge of the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). How deep is the wisdom contained in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastics! I can correctly understand an old Christian saying, "Give me a candle and a Bible and shut me up in a dark

dungeon, and I will tell you everything that the whole world is doing."

All these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Bible. We probably do not have the least idea how little we would know about these things if we did not have the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Well might old John Newton say that some books were copper books in his estimation, some were silver, and a few were gold but the Bible alone was like a book all made up of bank-notes.

This is the Book about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. It is no light matter in what way you are using this treasure. I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question—What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

IV. In the fourth place, "no book in existence has produced such wonderful effects on mankind at large as the Bible."

(a) This is the Book whose doctrines turned the world upside down in the days of the Apostles.

Many centuries have now passed away since God sent forth a few Jews from a remote corner of the earth to do a work which according to man's judgment, must have seemed impossible. He sent them out at a time when the

whole world was full of superstition, cruelty, lust, and sin. He sent them out to proclaim that the established religions of the earth were false and useless, and must be forsaken. He sent them out to persuade men to give up old habits and customs, and to live different lives. He sent them out to do battle with the most perverted idolatry, with the vilest and most disgusting immorality, with a bigoted priesthood, with sneering philosophers, with an ignorant population, with bloody-minded emperors, with the whole influence of Rome. Never was there an enterprise for all appearances more unrealistic and less likely to succeed!

And how did He arm them for this battle? He gave them no worldly weapons. He gave them no worldly power to compel agreement, and no worldly riches to bribe belief. He simply put the Holy Spirit into their hearts, and the Scriptures into their hands. He simply commanded them to expound and explain, to require compliance and to publish the doctrines of the Bible. The preacher of Christianity in the first century was not a man with a sword and an army to frighten people, or a man with a license to be sensual, to allure people, like the priests of the shameful idols of the Hindus. No, he was nothing more than one holy man with one holy book.

And how did these men of one book prosper? In a few generations they entirely changed the face of society by the doctrines of the Bible. They emptied the temples of the heathen gods. They starved out idolatry and left it high and dry like a stranded ship. They brought into the world a higher condition of morality between man and man. They raised the character and position of woman. They altered the standard of purity and decency. They put an end to man's cruel and bloody customs, such as

the gladiatorial fights—there was no stopping the change. Persecution and opposition were useless. One victory after another was won. One bad thing after another melted away. Whether men liked it or not, they were slowly affected by the movement of the new religion and drawn within the whirlpool of its power.

The earth shook, and their rotten shelters fell to the ground. The flood rose, and they found themselves obliged to rise with it. The tree of Christianity swelled and grew, and the chains they had thrown around it to arrest its growth, snapped like string. And all this was done by the doctrines of the Bible! Talk about great victories! What are the victories of Alexander, and Caesar, and Napoleon, compared with those I have just mentioned? For magnitude, for completeness, for results, for permanence, there are no victories like the victories of the Bible.

(b) This is the Book which turned Europe upside down in the days of the glorious Protestant Reformation.

No man can read the history of Christendom as it was five hundred years ago, and not see that darkness covered the whole professing Church of Christ, even a darkness that could be felt. So great was the change which had come over Christianity, that if an apostle had risen from the dead he would not have recognized it, and would have thought that heathenism had revived again. The doctrines of the Gospel lay buried under a dense mass of human traditions. Penances, and pilgrimages, and indulgences, relic-worship, and image-worship, and saint-worship, and worship of the Virgin Mary, formed the sum and substance of most people's religion. The Church was made an idol. The priests and

ministers of the Church usurped the place of Christ. And by what means was all this miserable darkness cleared away? By simply bringing forth once more the Bible.

It was not merely the preaching of Luther and his friends, which established Protestantism in Germany. The great weapon which overthrew the Roman Catholic Church's power in that country, was Luther's translation of the Bible into the German tongue. It was not merely the writings of English Reformers which threw down Roman Catholicism in England. The seeds of the work carried forward were first sown by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible many years before. It was not merely the quarrel of Henry VIII and the Pope of Rome, which loosened the Pope's hold on English minds. It was the royal permission to have the Bible translated and set up in churches, so that every one who wanted might read it. Yes! it was the reading, and circulation of the Scripture which mainly established the cause of Protestantism in England, in Germany, and Switzerland. Without it the people would probably have returned to their former bondage when the first reformers died. But by the reading of the Bible the public mind became gradually leavened with the principles of true religion. Men's eyes became thoroughly open. Their spiritual understandings became thoroughly enlarged. The abominations of Roman Catholicism became distinctly visible. The excellence of the pure Gospel became a rooted idea in their hearts. It was then in vain for Popes to thunder forth excommunications. It was useless for Kings and Queens to attempt to stop the course of Protestantism by fire and sword. It was all too late. The people knew too much. They had seen the light. They had heard the joyful sound. They had tasted the truth. The sun had

risen on their minds. The scales had fallen from their eyes. The Bible had done its appointed work within them, and that work was not to be overthrown. The people would not return to Egypt. The clock could not be pushed back again. A mental and moral revolution had been effected, and mainly effected by God's Word. Those are the true revolutions which the Bible effects. What are all the revolutions which France and England have gone through, compared to these? No revolutions are so bloodless, none so satisfactory, none so rich in lasting results, as the revolutions accomplished by the Bible!

This is the book upon which the well-being of nations has always hinged, and with which the best interests of everyone in Christendom at this moment are inseparably tied. By the same proportion that the Bible is honored or not, light or darkness, morality or immorality, true religion or superstition, liberty or tyranny, good laws or bad, will be found in a nation. Come with me and open the pages of history, and you will read the proofs in times past.

Read it in the history of Israel under the Kings. How great was the wickedness that then prevailed! But who can wonder? The law of the Lord had been completely lost sight of, and was found in the days of Josiah thrown aside in a corner of the temple. (2 Kings 22:8). Read it in the history of the Jews in our Lord Jesus Christ's time. How awful the picture of Scribes and Pharisees, and their religion! But who can wonder? The Scripture was "nullified for the sake of man's tradition" (Matthew 15:6). Read it in the history of the Church of Christ in the middle ages. What can be worse than the accounts we have of its ignorance and superstition? But who can

wonder? The times were very dark, when men did not have the light of the Bible.

This is the Book to which the civilized world is indebted for many of its best and most praiseworthy institutions. Few probably are aware how many good things that men have adopted for the public benefit, of which the origin may be clearly traced to the Bible. It has left lasting marks wherever it has been received. From the Bible are drawn many of the best laws by which society is kept in order. From the Bible has been obtained the standard of morality about truth, honesty, and the relations of man and wife, which prevails among Christian nations, and which—however feebly respected in many cases—makes so great a difference between Christians and heathen. To the Bible we are indebted for that most merciful provision for the poor working man, the Lord's Day of rest—Sunday. To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the insane, the retarded, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible influenced the world. You may search in vain for any record of institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or of Rome. Yes! there are many who sneer at the Bible, and say the world would get on well enough without it, who don't think how great are their own obligations to the Bible. Little does the unbeliever think, as he lies sick in some of our great hospitals, that he owes all his present comforts to the very book he despises. Had it not been for the Bible, he might have died in misery, uncared for, unnoticed and alone. Truly the world we live in is unconscious of its debts. The day of judgment, I believe, will reveal the full amount of benefit conferred upon mankind by the Bible.

This wonderful book is the subject about which I address the reader of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. The swords of conquering Generals—the ship in which Nelson led the fleets of England to victory—the hydraulic press which raised the tubular bridge at the Menai; each and every of these are objects of interest as instruments of great power. The Book I speak of this day is an instrument a thousand-fold mightier still. Surely it is no light matter whether you are paying it the attention it deserves. I charge you, I summon you to give me an honest answer this day—What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

V. In the fifth place, "no book in existence can do so much for every one who reads it with an open heart, as the Bible."

The Bible does not profess to teach the wisdom of this world. It was not written to explain geology or astronomy. It will neither instruct you in mathematics, nor in natural philosophy. It will not make you a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer.

But there is another world to be thought of besides that world in which man now lives. There are other ends for which man was created, besides making money and working. There are other interests which he is meant to attend to, besides those of his body, and those interests are the interests of his soul. It is the interests of the immortal soul which the Bible is especially able to promote. If you want to know law, you may study Blackstone or Sugden. If you would know astronomy or geology, you may study Herschel and Lyell. But if you

would know how to have your soul saved, you must study the written Word of God.

The Bible is "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). It can show you the way which leads to heaven. It can teach you everything you need to know, point out everything you need to believe, and explain everything you need to do. It can show you what you are—a sinner. It can show you what God is—perfectly holy. It can show you the great giver of pardon, peace, and grace—Jesus Christ. I have read of an Englishman who visited Scotland in the days of Blair, Rutherford, and Dickson, three famous preachers, and heard all three in succession. He said that the first showed him the majesty of God—the second showed him the beauty of Christ—and the third showed him everything in his heart. It is the glory and beauty of the Bible that it is always teaching these three things more or less, from the first chapter of it to the last.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, "is the grand instrument by which souls are first converted to God." That mighty change is generally begun by some text or doctrine of the Word, brought home to a man's conscience. In this way the Bible has worked moral miracles by the thousands. It has made drunkards become sober—immoral people become pure—thieves become honest and violent-tempered people become meek. It has wholly altered the course of men's lives. It has caused their old things to pass away, and made all their ways new. It has taught worldly people to seek first the kingdom of God. It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God. It has taught the stream of men's affections to run upwards instead of running

downwards. It has made men think of heaven, instead of always thinking of earth, and live by faith, instead of living by sight. It has done all this in every part of the world. It is still all being accomplished. What are the Roman Catholic miracles which weak men believe, compared to all this, even if they were true? Those are the truly great miracles which are constantly being worked by the Word.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, is "the chief means by which men are built up and strengthened in the faith," after their conversion. It is able to make them pure, to sanctify them, to train them in righteousness, and to thoroughly equip them for every good work. (Psalm 119:9; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Spirit ordinarily does these things by the written Word; sometimes by the Word read, and sometimes by the Word preached, but seldom, if ever, without the Word. The Bible can show a believer how to walk in this world so as to please God. It can teach him how to glorify Christ in all the relationships of life, and can make him a good leader, employee, subordinate, husband, father, or son. It can enable him to bear misfortunes and loss without murmuring, and say, "It is well." It can enable him to look down into the grave, and say, "I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4). It can enable him to think about judgment and eternity, and not feel afraid. It can enable him to bear persecution without flinching and to give up liberty and life rather than deny Christ's truth.

Is he weary in soul? It can awaken him.

Is he mourning? It can comfort him.

Is he erring? It can restore him.

Is he weak? It can make him strong.

Is he in the company of the unbeliever? It can keep him from evil.

Is he alone? It can talk with him. (Psalm 6:22).

All this the Bible can do for all believers—for the least as well as the greatest—for the richest as well as the poorest. It has done it for thousands already, and is doing it for thousands every day.

The man who has the Bible, and the Holy Spirit in his heart, has everything which is absolutely necessary to make him spiritually wise. He needs no priest to break the bread of life for him. He needs no ancient traditions, no writings of the Fathers, no voice of the Church, to guide him into all truth. He has the well of truth open before him, and what more can he want? Yes! though he be shut up alone in a prison, or cast on a desert island—though he never sees a church, or minister again—if he only has the Bible, he has got the infallible guide, and needs no other. If he only has the will to read that Bible properly, it will certainly teach him the road that leads to heaven. It is here alone that infallibility resides. It is not in the Church. It is not in the Councils. It is not in ministers. It is only in the written Word.

(a) I know well that many say they have found no saving power in the Bible.

They tell us they have tried to read it, and have learned nothing from it. They can see in it nothing but burdensome and abstract things. They ask us what we mean by talking of its power.

I answer, that the Bible no doubt contains some difficult things, or else it would not be the book of God. It

contains things hard to comprehend, but only hard because we do not have the understanding of mind to comprehend them. It contains things above our reasoning powers, but nothing that might not be explained if the eyes of our understanding were not feeble and dim. But is not an acknowledgment of our own ignorance the very cornerstone and foundation of all knowledge? Must not many things be taken for granted in the beginning of every science, before we can proceed one step towards acquaintance with it? Do we not require our children to learn many things of which they cannot see the meaning at first? And ought we not then to expect to find "deep things" when we begin studying the Word of God, and yet to believe that if we persevere in reading it the meaning of many of them will one day be made clear? No doubt we ought so to expect, and so to believe. We must read with humility. We must take much on trust. We must believe that what we don't know now, we will know later, some part in this world, and all in the world to come.

But I ask that man who has given up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, whether he did not find many things in it easy and plain? I put it to his conscience whether he did not see great landmarks and principles in it all the way through? I ask him whether the things needful to salvation did not stand out boldly before his eyes, like lighthouses. What should we think of the captain of a steamer who came, at night, into the entrance of the Channel, and claimed that he did not know every parish, and village, and creek, along the British coast? Should we not think him a lazy coward, when the lights on the Lizard, and Eddystone, and the Start, and Portland, and St. Catherine's, and Beachy

Head, and Dungeness, and the Forelands, were shining forth like so many lamps, to guide him up to the river? Should we not say, Why did you not steer by the great leading lights? And what should we say to the man who gives up reading the Bible because it contains hard things, when his own state, and the path to heaven, and the way to serve God, are all written down clearly and unmistakably, as with a sunbeam? Surely we ought to tell that man that his objections are no better than lazy excuses, and do not deserve to be heard.

(b) I know well that many raise the objection, that thousands read the Bible and are not a bit the better for their reading.

And they ask us, when this is the case, what becomes of the Bible's boasted power?

I answer, that the reason why so many read the Bible without any benefit is plain and simple—they do not read it in the right way. There is generally a right way and a wrong way of doing everything in the world; and just as it is with other things, so it is in the matter of reading the Bible. The Bible is not so entirely different from all other books as to make it of no importance in what spirit and manner you read it. It does not do any good, as a matter of course, by merely running our eyes over the print, any more than Baptism and the Lord's Supper do any good by the mere virtue of our receiving them. It does not ordinarily do any good, unless it is read with humility and earnest prayer. The best engine that was ever built is useless if a man does not know how to operate it. The best sundial that was ever constructed will not tell its owner the time of day if he is so ignorant as to put it in the shade. Just as it is with

that engine, and that sundial, so it is with the Bible. When men read it without benefit, "the fault is not in the Book, but in themselves."

I tell the man who doubts the power of the Bible, because many read it, and are no better for the reading, that the abuse of a thing is no argument against the use of it. I tell him boldly, that never did man or woman read that book in a childlike persevering spirit—like the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Bereans (Acts 8:28; 17:11), and miss the way to heaven. Yes, many will be exposed to shame in the day of judgment; but there will not rise up one soul who will be able to say, that he went thirsting to the Bible, and found in it no living water—he searched for truth in the Scriptures, and searching did not find it. The words which are spoken of Wisdom in the Proverbs are strictly true of the Bible: "If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5).

This wonderful Book is the subject about which I address the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with the Bible." What should you think of the man who in time of cholera despised a sure prescription for preserving the health of his body? What must be thought of you if you despise the only sure prescription for the everlasting health of your soul? I charge you, I entreat you, to give an honest answer to my question. What do you do with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VI. In the sixth place, "the Bible is the only standard by which all questions of doctrine or of duty can be tested."

The Lord God knows the weakness and infirmities of our poor fallen understandings. He knows that, even after conversion, our perceptions of right and wrong are extremely vague. He knows how artfully Satan can overlay error with an appearance of truth, and can dress up wrong with plausible arguments, till it looks like right. Knowing all this, He has mercifully provided us with an unerring standard of truth and error, right and wrong, and has taken care to make that standard a written book—the Scripture.

No one can look around the world, and not see the wisdom of such a provision. No one can live long, and not find out that he is constantly in need of a counselor and adviser—of a rule of faith and practice, on which he can depend. Unless he lives like a beast, without a soul and conscience, he will find himself constantly assailed by difficult and puzzling questions. He will be often asking himself, What must I believe? and what must I do?

(a) The world is full of difficulties about points of doctrine. The house of error lies close alongside the house of truth. The door of one is so like the door of the other that there is continual risk of mistakes.

Does a man read or travel much? He will soon find the most opposite opinions prevailing among those who are called Christians. He will discover that different persons give the most different answers to the important question, What must I do to be saved? The Roman Catholic, the Protestant, and the Mormon each will assert that he alone has the truth. Each will tell him that safety is only to be found in his party. Each says, "Come with us." All this is puzzling. What will a man do?

Does he settle down quietly in some church here at home? He will soon find that even in our own land the most conflicting views are held. He will soon discover that there are serious differences among Christians as to the comparative importance of the various parts and articles of the faith. One man thinks of nothing but Church government—another of nothing but sacraments, services, and forms—a third of nothing but preaching the Gospel. Does he apply to ministers for a solution? He will perhaps find one minister teaching one doctrine, and another another. All this is puzzling. What will a man do?

There is only one answer to this question. A man must make the Bible alone his rule. He must receive nothing and believe nothing which is not according to the Word. He must try all religious teaching by one simple test—Does it square with the Bible? What does the Scripture say?

I pray to God that the eyes of the Christians of this country were more open on this subject. I pray to God that they would learn to weigh sermons, books, opinions, and ministers, in the scales of the Bible, and to value all according to their conformity to the Word. I pray to God that they would see that it matters little who says a thing. The question is—Is the thing said Scriptural? If it is, it ought to be received and believed. If it is not, it ought to be refused and cast aside. I fear the consequences of that submissive acceptance of everything which "the preacher" says, which is so common among many Christians. I fear lest they be led where they know not where, like the blinded Syrians, and awake some day to find themselves in the power of Rome. (2 Kings 6:20). Oh, that men would only

remember for what purpose the Bible was given to them!

I tell Christians that it is nonsense to say, as some do, that it is arrogant to judge a minister's teaching by the Word. When one doctrine is proclaimed in one church, and another in another, people must read and judge for themselves. Both doctrines cannot be right, and both ought to be tried by the Word. I charge them, above all things, never to suppose that any true minister of the Gospel will dislike his people measuring all he teaches by the Bible. On the contrary, the more they read the Bible, and prove all he says by the Bible, the better he will be pleased. A false minister may say, "You have no right to use your private judgment: leave the Bible to us who are ordained." A true minister will say "Search the Scriptures, and if I do not teach you what is Scriptural, do not believe me." A false minister may cry, "Listen to the Church," and "Listen to me." A true minister will say, "Listen to the Word of God."

(b) But the world is not only full of difficulties about points of doctrine, it is equally full of difficulties about points of "practice."

Every processing Christian, who wishes to act conscientiously, must know that it is so. The most puzzling questions are continually arising. He is tried on every side by doubts as to the line of duty, and can often hardly see what is the right thing to do.

He is tried by questions connected with the management of his "worldly calling," if he is in business or in trade. He sometimes sees things going on that are of a very doubtful character—things that can hardly be called fair, straightforward, truthful, and things that you

would not want done to you. But then everybody in business does these things. They have always been done in the most respectable houses. There would be no carrying on of a profitable business if they were not done. They are not things distinctly named and prohibited by God. All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about worldly amusements. Horse Races, and balls, and operas, and theaters, and card parties, are all very doubtful methods of spending time. But then he sees numbers of great people taking part in them. Are all these people wrong? Can there really be such mighty harm in these things? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about the education of his children. He wishes to train them up morally and religiously, and to remember their souls. But he is told by many sensible people, that young persons will be young—that it is not right to check and restrain them too much, and that he ought to attend shows, and children's parties, and give children's balls himself. He is informed that this noble person, or that lady of rank, always does so, and yet they are considered religious people. Surely it cannot be wrong. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

There is only one answer to all these questions. A man must make the Bible his rule of conduct. He must make its leading principles the compass by which he steers his course through life. By the letter or spirit of the Bible he must test every difficult point and question. "To the law and to the testimony! What does the Scripture say?" He ought to care nothing for what other people may think

right. He ought not to set his watch by the clock of his neighbor, but by the watch of the Word.

I charge my readers solemnly to act on the maxim I have just laid down, and to adhere to it rigidly all the days of their lives. You will never repent of it. Make it a leading principle never to act contrary to the Word. Do not care for the charge of being overly strict, and a person of needless precision. Remember you serve a strict and holy God. Do not listen to the common objection that the rule you have laid down is impossible, and cannot be observed in such a world as this. Let those who make such an objection speak out plainly, and tell us for what purpose the Bible was given to man. Let them remember that by the Bible we will all be judged at the last day, and let them learn to judge themselves by it here, lest they be judged and condemned by it on Judgment Day.

This mighty rule of faith and practice is the book about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter "what you are doing with the Bible." Surely when danger is near on the right hand and on the left, you should consider what you are doing with the safeguard which God has provided. I charge you, I beg you, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VII. In the seventh place, "the Bible is the book which all true servants of God have always lived by and loved."

Every living thing which God creates requires food. The life that God imparts needs sustaining and nourishing. It is true with animal and vegetable life—with birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, insects, and plants. It is equally true with spiritual life. When the Holy Spirit raises a

man from the death of sin and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, the new principle in that man's heart requires food, and the only food which will sustain it is the Word of God.

There never was a man or woman truly converted, from one end of the world to the other, who did not love the revealed will of God. Just as a child born into the world naturally desires the milk provided for its nourishment, so does a soul "born again" desire the sincere milk of the Word. This is a common mark of all the children of God—they "delight in the law of the LORD" (Psalm 1:2).

Show me a person who despises Bible reading, or thinks little of Bible preaching, and I hold it to be a certain fact that he is not yet "born again." He may be zealous about forms and ceremonies. He may be diligent in attending church and the taking of the Lord's Supper. But if these things are more precious to him than the Bible, I cannot believe that he is a converted man. Tell me what the Bible is to a man and I will generally tell you what he is. This is the pulse to try—this is the barometer to look at—if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man and not giving clear evidence of His presence. And I believe it to be clear evidence of the Spirit's presence when the Word is really precious to a man's soul.

Love of the Word is one of the characteristics we see in Job. Little as we know of this Patriarch and his age this, at least, stands out clearly. He says, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread" (Job 23:12).

Love of the Word is a shining feature in the character of David. Note how it appears all through that wonderful

part of Scripture, the 119th Psalm. He might well have said, "Oh, how I love your law!" (Psalm 119:97).

Love of the Word is a striking point in the character of Paul. What were he and his companions but men mighty in the Scriptures? What were his sermons but expositions and applications of the Word?

Love of the Word appears preeminently in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He read it publicly. He quoted it continually. He expounded it frequently. He advised the Jews to "search" it. He used it as His weapon to resist the devil. He said repeatedly, "The Scripture must be fulfilled." Almost the last thing He did was to "open their minds [Disciples] so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). I am afraid that man cannot be a true servant of Christ, who has not something of his Master's mind and feeling towards the Bible.

Love of the Word has been a prominent feature in the history of all the saints, of whom we know anything, since the days of the Apostles. This is the lamp which Athanasius and Chrysostom and Augustine followed. This is the compass which kept the Vallenses and Albigenses from making shipwreck of the faith. This is the well which was reopened by Wycliffe and Luther, after it had been long stopped up. This is the sword with which Latimer, and Jewell, and Knox won their victories. This is the manna which fed Baxter and Owen, and the noble host of the Puritans, and made them strong in battle. This is the armory from which Whitefield and Wesley drew their powerful weapons. This is the mine from which Bickersteth and M'Cheyne brought forth rich gold.

Differing as these holy men did in some matters, on one point they were all agreed—they all delighted in the Word.

Love of the Word is one of the first things that appears in the converted heathen, at the various Missionary stations throughout the world. In hot climates and in cold—among savage people and among civilized—in New Zealand, in the South Sea Islands, in Africa, in Hindostan—it is always the same. They enjoy hearing it read. They long to be able to read it themselves. They wonder why Christians did not send it to them before. How striking is the picture which Moffat draws of Africaner, the fierce South African chieftain, when first brought under the power of the Gospel! "Often have I seen him," he says, under the shadow of a great rock nearly the whole day, eagerly perusing the pages of the Bible." How touching is the expression of a poor converted Black, speaking of the Bible! He said, "It is never old and never cold." How affecting was the language of another old Black man, when some would have discourage him from learning to read, because of his old age. "No!" he said, "I will never give it up till I die. It is worth all the labor to be able to read that one verse, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Love of the Bible is one of the grand points of agreement among all converted men and women in our own land. People from many Evangelical denominations all unite in honoring the Bible, as soon as they are real Christians. This is the manna which all the tribes of our new Israel feed upon, and find satisfying food. This is the fountain around which all the various portions of Christ's flock

meet together, and from which no sheep goes away thirsty.

Oh, that believers in this country would learn to cleave more closely to the written Word! Oh, that they would see that the more the Bible, and the Bible only, is the substance of men's religion, the more they agree! It is probable there never was an uninspired book more universally admired than Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." It is a book which all denominations of Christians delight to honor. It has won praise from all parties. Now what a striking fact it is, that the author was preeminently a man of one book! He had read hardly anything but the Bible.

It is a blessed thought that there will be "many people" in heaven in the end. Few as the Lord's people undoubtedly are at any one given time or place, yet all gathered together in the end, they will be "a great multitude that no one could count" (Revelation 7:9; 19:1). They will be of one heart and mind. They will have passed through the same experience. They will all have repented, believed, lived holy, prayerful, and humble lives. They will all have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But one thing besides all this they will have in common: they will all love the texts and doctrines of the Bible. The Bible will have been their food and delight in the days of their pilgrimage on earth. And the Bible will be a common subject of joyful meditation and retrospect, when they are gathered together in heaven.

This Book, which all true Christians live upon and love, is the subject about which I am addressing the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter what

you are doing with the Bible. Surely it is matter for serious inquiry, whether you know anything of this love of the Word, and have this mark of following "in the tracks of the sheep" (Song of Solomon 1:8). I charge you, I entreat you to give me an honest answer. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

VIII. In the last place, "the Bible is the only book which can comfort a man in the last hours of his life."

Death is an event which in all probability is before us all. There is no avoiding it. It is the river which each of us must cross. I who write, and you who read, have to die one day. It is good to remember this. We are all sadly apt to put away the subject from us. "Each man thinks each man mortal but himself." I want everyone to do his duty in life, but I also want everyone to think of death. I want everyone to know how to live but I also want everyone to know how to die.

Death is a solemn event to everyone. It is the winding up of all earthly plans and expectations. It is a separation from all we have loved and live with. It is often accompanied by much bodily pain and distress. It brings us to the grave, the maggot, and corruption. It opens the door to judgment and eternity—to heaven or to hell. It is an event after which there is no change, or space for repentance. Other mistakes may be corrected or retrieved, but not a mistake on our death beds. As the tree falls, there it must lie. No conversion in the coffin! No new birth after we have ceased to breathe! And death is before us all. It may be close at hand. The time of our departure is quite uncertain. But sooner or later

we must each lie down alone and die. All these are serious considerations.

Death is a solemn event even to the believer in Christ. For him no doubt the "sting of death" is taken away. (1 Corinthians 15:55). Death has become one of his privileges, for he is Christ's Living or dying, he is the Lord's. If he lives, Christ lives in him; and if he dies, he goes to live with Christ. To him, "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Death frees him from many trials—from a weak body, a corrupt heart, a tempting devil, and an ensnaring or persecuting world. Death admits him to the enjoyment of many blessings. He rests from his labors—the hope of a joyful resurrection is changed into a certainty: he has the company of holy redeemed spirits—he is "with Christ." All this is true, and yet, even to a believer, death is a solemn thing. Flesh and blood naturally shrink from it. To part from all we love, is a strain and trial to the feelings. The world we go to is a world unknown, even though it is our home. Friendly and harmless as death is to a believer, it is not an event to be treated lightly. It must always be a very solemn thing.

It is good for every thoughtful and sensible man to consider calmly how he is going to meet death. Be strong, like a man, and look the subject in the face. Listen to me while I tell you a few things about the end to which we are coming to.

The good things of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. All the gold of California and Australia will not provide light for the dark valley of death. Money can buy the best medical advice and

attendance for a man's body; but money cannot buy peace for his conscience, heart, and soul.

Relatives, lovers, friends and coworkers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. They may minister affectionately to his bodily wants. They may watch by his bedside tenderly, and anticipate his every wish. They may smooth down his dying pillow, and support his sinking frame in their arms. But they cannot "minister to a mind diseased." They cannot stop the aching of a troubled heart. They cannot screen an uneasy conscience from the eye of God.

The pleasures of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The brilliant ballroom—the merry dance—the midnight frolic—the party at the races—the card table—the box at the opera—the voices of singing men and singing women—all these are finally distasteful things. To hear of hunting and shooting engagements gives him no pleasure. To be invited to feasts, and regattas, and fancy fairs, gives him no ease. He cannot hide from himself that these are hollow, empty, powerless things. They are noise to the ear of his conscience. They are out of harmony with his condition. They cannot stop one gap in his heart, when the last enemy is coming in like a flood. They cannot make him calm in the prospect of meeting a holy God.

Books and newspapers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The most brilliant writings of Dickens will be gloom to his ear. The most able article in the Times will fail to interest him. The Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews will give him no pleasure. The Illustrated News, and the latest new novel, will lie unopened and unheeded. Their time will be past. Their

calling will be gone. Whatever they may be in health, they are useless in the hour of death.

There is but one fountain of comfort for a man drawing near to his end, and that is the Bible. Chapters out of the Bible—texts out of the Bible—statements of truth taken out of the Bible—books containing matter drawn from the Bible—these are a man's only chance of comfort when he comes to die. I do not say that the Bible will do good, as a matter of course, to a dying man, if he has not valued it before. I know, unhappily, too much of death-beds to say that. I do not say whether it is probable that he who has been unbelieving and neglectful of the Bible in life, will at once believe and get comfort from it in death. But I do say positively, that no dying man will ever get real comfort, except from the contents of the Word of God. All comfort from any other source is a house built upon sand.

I lay this down as a rule of universal application. I make no exception in favor of any class on earth. Kings and poor men, learned and unlearned—all are equal in this matter. There is not a bit of real consolation for any dying man, unless he gets it from the Bible. Chapters, passages, texts, promises, and doctrines of Scripture heard, received, believed, and rested on—these are the only comforters I dare promise to any one, when he leaves the world. Taking communion will do a man no more good than the Roman Catholic sacrament of "extreme unction," so long as the Word is not received and believed. The Roman Catholic Priest's absolution will no more ease the conscience than the incantations of a heathen magician, if the poor dying sinner does not receive and believe Bible truth. I tell everyone who reads this paper, that although men may seem to get on

comfortably without the Bible while they live, they may be sure that without the Bible they cannot comfortably die. It was a true confession of the learned Selden, "There is no book upon which we can rest in a dying moment but the Bible."

I might easily confirm all I have just said, by examples and illustrations. I might show you the deathbeds of men who have despised the Bible. I might tell you how Voltaire and Paine, the famous atheists died in misery, bitterness, rage, fear, and despair. I might show you the happy deathbeds of those who have loved the Bible and believed it, and the blessed effect the sight of their deathbeds had on others. Cecil, a minister whose praise ought to be in all churches, says, "I will never forget standing by the bedside of my dying mother. 'Are you afraid to die?' I asked. 'No!' she replied. 'But why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?' 'Because God has said, When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you'" (Isaiah 43:2). I might easily multiply illustrations of this kind. But I think it better to conclude this part of my subject by giving the result of my own observations as a minister.

I have seen many dying persons in my time. I have seen great varieties of character and behavior among them. I have seen some die bad-tempered, silent, and comfortless. I have seen others die ignorant, unconcerned, and apparently without much fear. I have seen some die so wearied out with a long illness that they were quite willing to depart, and yet they did not seem to me at all in a fit state to go before God. I have seen others die with professions of hope and trust in God, without leaving satisfactory evidences that they

were on the rock. I have seen others die who, I believe, were "in Christ," and safe, and yet they never seemed to enjoy much tangible comfort. I have a few dying in the full assurance of hope, and like Bunyan's "Standfast," giving glorious testimony to Christ's faithfulness, even in the river. But one thing I have never seen. I never saw anyone enjoy what I would call real, solid, calm, reasonable peace on his deathbed, who did not draw his peace from the Bible. And this I am bold to say, that the man who thinks to go to his deathbed without having the Bible for his comforter, his companion, and his friend, is one of the greatest madmen in the world. There are no comforts for the soul but Bible comforts, and he who does not have a hold of these, does not have a hold of anything at all, unless it be a broken reed.

The only comforter for a deathbed is the book about which I address the readers of this paper this day. Surely it is no light matter whether you read that book or not. Surely a dying man, in a dying world, should seriously consider whether he has got anything to comfort him when his turn comes to die. I charge you, I entreat you, for the last time, to give an honest answer to my question. What are you doing with the Bible? Do you read it? How do you read it?

I have now given the reasons why I press on every reader the duty and importance of reading the Bible. I have shown that no book is written in such a manner as the Bible, —that knowledge of the Bible is absolutely necessary to salvation —that no book contains such matter —that no book has done so much for the world generally —that no book can do so much for every one who reads it —that this Book is the only rule of faith and practice —that it is, and always has been, the food of all

true servants of God —and that it is the only Book which can comfort men when they die.

All these are ancient things. I do not pretend to tell anything new. I have only gathered together old truths, and tried to mold them into a new shape. Let me finish everything by addressing a few plain words to the conscience of every group of readers.

(1) This paper may fall into the hands of some who "can read, but never do read the Bible at all."

Are you one of them? If you are, I have something to say to you. I cannot comfort you in your present state of mind. It would be mockery and deceit to do so. I cannot speak to you of peace and heaven, while you treat the Bible as you do. You are in danger of losing your soul.

You are in danger, because "your neglected Bible is plain evidence that you do not love God." The health of a man's body may generally be known by his appetite. The health of a man's soul may be known by his treatment of the Bible. Now you are manifestly living with a serious disease. Will you not repent?

I know I cannot reach your heart. I cannot make you see and feel these things. I can only enter my solemn protest against your present treatment of the Bible, and lay that protest before your conscience. I do so with all my soul. Oh, beware lest you repent too late! Beware lest you put off reading the Bible till you send for the doctor in your last illness, and then find the Bible a sealed book, and dark, as the cloud between the hosts of Israel and Egypt, to your anxious soul! Beware lest you go on saying all your life, "Men get along very well without all this Bible-reading" and find in time, to your cost, that men without the Bible do very poorly, and end up in hell! Beware lest

the day come when you will feel, "Had I but honored the Bible as much as I have honored the newspaper, I should not have been left without comfort in my last hours!

"Bible neglecting reader, I give you a plain warning. Judgment is outside your door ready to come in and destroy you. The Lord have mercy upon your soul!

(2) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who is "willing to begin reading the Bible, but wants advice on how to begin."

Are you that man? Listen to me, and I will give a few short hints.

(a) For one thing, "begin reading your Bible this very day."

The way to do a thing is to do it, and the way to read the Bible is actually to read it. It is not meaning, or wishing, or resolving, or intending, or thinking about it, which will not advance you one step. You must positively read. There is no royal road in this matter, any more than in the matter of prayer. If you cannot read yourself, you must persuade somebody else to read to you. But one way or another, through eyes or ears, the words of Scripture must actually pass before your mind.

(b) For another thing "read the Bible with an earnest desire to understand it."

Do not think for a moment that the great object is to turn over a certain quantity of printed paper, and that it matters nothing whether you understand it or not. Some ignorant people seem to fancy that all is done if they read so many chapters every day, though they may not have an idea what they are all about, and only know that they have pushed on their bookmark so many pages.

This is turning Bible-reading into a mere form. It is almost as bad as the Roman catholic habit of buying indulgences, by saying an almost incredible number of "Hail Mary's" and "Our Fathers." Settle it in your mind as a general principle, that a Bible not understood is a Bible that does no good. Say to yourself often as you read, "What is all this about?" Dig for the meaning like an man digging for gold. Work hard, and do not give up the work in a hurry.

(c) For another thing, "read the Bible with childlike faith and humility."

Open your heart as you open your book, and say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Resolve to believe implicitly whatever you find there, however much it may run counter to your own prejudices. Resolve to receive heartily every statement of truth, whether you like it or not.

Beware of that miserable habit of mind into which some readers of the Bible fall. They receive some doctrines because they like them: they reject others because they are condemning to themselves, or to some lover, or relation, or friend. At this rate the Bible is useless. Are we to be judges of what ought to be in the Word? Do we know better than God? Settle it in your mind that you will receive everything and believe everything, and that what you cannot understand you will take on trust. Remember, when you pray, you are speaking to God and God hears you. But, remember, when you read, God is speaking to you, and you are not to "talk back" but to listen.

(d) For another thing, "read the Bible in a spirit of obedience and self-application.

Sit down to the study it with a daily determination that "you" will live by its rules, rest on its statements, and act on its commands. Consider, as you travel through every chapter, "How does this affect "my"- view and course of conduct? What does this teach "me?" It is improper to read the Bible from mere curiosity, and for speculative purposes, in order to fill your head and your mind with opinions, while you do not allow the book to influence your heart and life. That Bible is read best which is put into practice in our daily lives.

(e) For another thing, "read the Bible every day."

Make it a part of every day's business to read and meditate on some portion of God's Word. Private means of grace are just as needful every day for our souls as food and clothing are for our bodies. Yesterday's meal will not feed the worker today, and today's meal will not feed the worker tomorrow. Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Gather your manna fresh every morning. Choose your own periods and hours. Do not hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best and not the worst part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

(f) For another thing, "read all the Bible, and read it in an orderly way."

I fear there are many parts of the Word which some people never read at all. This is a very arrogant habit. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching" (2 Timothy 3:16). To this habit may be traced that want of broad, well-proportioned views of truth, which is so common in this day. Some people's Bible-reading is a system of perpetual dipping and picking.

They do not seem to have an idea of regularly going through the whole book. This is also a great mistake. No doubt in times of sickness and affliction it is allowable to search out seasonable portions. But this exception, I believe it is by far the best plan to begin the Old and New Testaments at the same time, to read each straight through to the end, and then begin again. This is a matter in which everyone must be persuaded in his own mind. I can only say it has been my own plan for nearly forty years, and I have never seen cause to alter it.

(g) For another thing, "read the Bible fairly and honestly."

Determine to take everything in its plain, obvious meaning, and regard all forced interpretations with great suspicion. As a general rule, whatever a verse of the Bible seems to mean, it does mean. Cecil's rule is a very valuable one, "The right way of interpreting Scripture is to take it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system." Well said Hooker, "I hold it for a most infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when the literal construction will stand, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst."

(h) In the last place, "read the Bible with Christ continually in view."

The primary object of all Scripture is to testify about Jesus:

Old Testament ceremonies are shadows of Christ.

Old Testament judges and deliverers are types of Christ.

Old Testament history shows the world's need of Christ.

Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's sufferings.

Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's glory yet to come.

The first coming and the second.

The Lord's humiliation.

The Lord's kingdom.

The Lord's cross and crown.

All these shine forth everywhere in the Bible. Remember this clue, if you would read the Bible right.

I might easily add to these hints, if space permitted. Few and short as they are, you will find them worth your attention. Act upon them, and I firmly believe you will never be allowed to miss the way to heaven. Act upon them, and you will find light continually increasing in your mind. No book of evidence can be compared with that internal evidence which he obtains who daily uses the Word in the right way. Such a man does not need the books of learned men—he has the witness in himself. The book satisfies and feeds his soul. A poor Christian woman once said to an unbeliever, "I am no scholar. I cannot argue like you. But I know that honey is honey, because it leaves a sweet taste in my mouth. And I know the Bible to be God's book, because of the taste it leaves in my heart."

(3) This paper may fall into the hands of some one who "loves and believes the Bible, and yet reads it only a little."

I fear there are many such people in this day. It is a day of hustle and hurry. It is a day of talking, and committee meetings, and public work. These things are all very well in their way, but I fear that they sometimes clip and cut short the private reading of the Bible. Does your

conscience tell you that you are one of the persons I speak of? Listen to me, and I will say a few things which deserve your serious attention.

You are the man that is likely to "get little comfort from the Bible in time of need." Trials come at various times. Affliction is a searching wind, which strips the leaves off the trees, and exposes the birds' nests. Now I fear that your stores of Bible consolations may one day run very low. I fear lest you should find yourself at last on very short allowance, and come into the harbor weak, worn and thin.

You are the man that is likely "never to be established in the truth." I will not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questions about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, and the like. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. Like the Benjamites, he can "sling a stone at a hair and not miss" (Judges 20:16). He can quote Scripture easily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to be able to fight a good fight with him. Your armor does not fit well. Your sword sits loosely in your hand.

You are the man that is likely to "make mistakes in life." I will not wonder if I am told that you have erred about your own marriage—erred about your children's education of spiritual things—erred about the conduct of your household—erred about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, and reefs, and sand bars. You are not sufficiently familiar either with the search lights or your charts.

You are the man that is likely to "be carried away by some deceptive false teacher for a time." It will not surprise me if those clever, eloquent men, who can

"make the lie appear to be the truth," is leading you into many foolish notions. You are out of balance. No wonder if you are tossed to and from, like a cork on the waves.

All these are uncomfortable things. I want every reader of this paper to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you this day. Do not merely read your Bible "a little," but read it a great deal. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). Do not be a mere babe in spiritual knowledge. Seek to become "well instructed in the kingdom of heaven," and to be continually adding new things to old. A religion of feeling is an uncertain thing. It is like the tide, sometimes high, and sometimes low. It is like the moon, sometimes bright, and sometimes dim. A religion of deep Bible knowledge, is a firm and lasting possession. It enables a man not merely to say, "I feel hope in Christ," but "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12).

(4) This paper may fall into the hands of someone who "reads the Bible a lot, and yet believes he is no better because of his reading."

This is a crafty temptation of the devil. At one stage he says, "do not read the Bible at all." At another he says, "Your reading does you no good: give it up." Are you that man? I feel for you from the bottom of my soul. Let me try to do you good.

Do not think you are getting no good from the Bible, merely because you do not see that good day by day. The greatest effects are often silent, quiet, and hard to detect at the time they are being produced. Think of the influence of the moon upon the earth, and of the air upon the human lungs.

Remember how silently the dew falls, and how unperceptively the grass grows. There may be far more going on than you think in your soul by your Bible-reading.

The Word may be gradually producing deep "impressions" on your heart, of which you are not presently aware. Often when the memory is retaining no facts, the character of a man is receiving some everlasting impression. Is sin becoming every year more hateful to you? Is Christ becoming every year more precious? Is holiness becoming every year more lovely and desirable in your eyes? If these things are so, take courage. The Bible is doing you good, though you may not be able to trace it out day by day.

The Bible may be restraining you from some sin or delusion into which you would otherwise run. It may be daily keeping you back, and hedging you up, and preventing many a false step. Yes, you might soon find this out to your hurt, if you were to cease reading the Word! The very familiarity of blessings sometimes makes us insensible to their value. Resist the devil. Settle it in your mind as an established rule, that, whether you feel it at the moment or not, you are inhaling spiritual health by reading the Bible, and unknowingly becoming more strong.

(5) This paper may fall into the hands of some who "really love the Bible, live upon the Bible, and read it regularly."

Are you one of these? Give me your attention, and I will mention a few things which we will do well to lay to heart for time to come.

Let us resolve to "read the Bible more and more" every year we live. Let us try to get it rooted in our memories, an engraved into our hearts. Let us be thoroughly well provisioned with it against the voyage of death. Who knows but we may have a very stormy passage? Sight and hearing may fail us, and we may be in deep waters. Oh, to have the Word "hid in our hearts" in such an hour as that! (Psalm 119:11).

Let us resolve to be "more watchful over our Bible-reading" every year that we live. Let us be jealously careful about the time we give to it, and the manner that time is spent. Let us beware of omitting our daily reading without sufficient cause. Let us not be gaping, and yawning and dozing over our book, while we read. Let us read like a London merchant studying the city article in the Times—or like a wife reading a husband's letter from a distant land. Let us be very careful that we never exalt any minister, or sermon, or book, or tract, or friend above the Word. Cursed be that book, or tract, or human counsel, which creeps in between us and the Bible, and hides the Bible from our eyes! Once more I say, let us be very watchful. The moment we open the Bible the devil sits down by our side. Oh, to read with a hungry spirit, and a simple desire for edification!

Let us resolve to "honor the Bible more in our families." Let us read it morning and evening to our children and spouses, and not be ashamed to let men see that we do so. Let us not be discouraged by seeing no good arise from it. The Bible-reading in a family has kept many a one from the jail and the prison, and from the eternal fires of hell.

Let us resolve to "meditate more on the Bible." It is good to take with us two or three texts when we go out into the world, and to turn them over and over in our minds whenever we have a little leisure. It keeps out many vain thoughts. It tightens the nail of daily reading. It preserves our souls from stagnating and breeding corrupt things. It sanctifies and quickens our memories, and prevents them becoming like those ponds where the frogs live but the fish die.

Let us resolve to "talk more to believers about the Bible" when we meet them. Sorry to say, the conversation of Christians, when they do meet, is often sadly unprofitable! How many frivolous, and trifling, and uncharitable things are said! Let us bring out the Bible more, and it will help to drive the devil away, and keep our hearts in tune. Oh, that we may all strive so to walk together in this evil world, that Jesus may often draw near, and go with us, as He went with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus!

Last of all, let us resolve "to live by the Bible more and more" every year we live. Let us frequently take account of all our opinions and practices—of our habits and tempers—of our behavior in public and in private—in the world, and in our own homes. Let us measure everything by the Bible, and resolve, by God's help, to conform to it. Oh that we may learn increasingly to "keep our way pure? By living according to the Word." (Psalm 119:9).

I commend all these things to the serious and prayerful attention of every one into whose hands this paper may fall. I want the ministers of my beloved country to be Bible-reading ministers—the congregations, Bible-reading congregations—and the nation, a Bible-reading

nation. To bring about this desirable end I cast in my resources into God's treasury. The Lord grant that it may prove not to have been in vain!

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Bible #2 - Inspiration

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” [2 Tim 3:16]

How was the Bible written?—“Whence is it? From heaven, or of men?”—Had the writers of the Bible any special or peculiar help in doing their work?—Is there anything in the Bible which makes it unlike all other books, and therefore demands our respectful attention? These are questions of vast importance. They are questions to which I wish to offer an answer in this paper. To speak plainly, the subject I propose to examine is that deep one, the inspiration of Scripture. I believe the Bible to have been written by inspiration of God, and I want others to be of the same belief.

The subject is always important. I place it purposely in the very forefront of the papers which compose this volume. I ask a hearing for the doctrines which I am about to handle, because they are drawn from a book which is the “Word of God.” Inspiration, in short, is the very keel and foundation of Christianity. If Christians have no Divine book to turn to as the warrant of their doctrine and practice, they have no solid ground for present peace or hope, and no right to claim the attention of mankind. They are building on a quicksand, and their faith is vain. We ought to be able to say boldly, “We are what we are, and we do what we do, because we have here a book which we believe to be the “Word of God.”

The subject is one of peculiar importance in the present day. Infidelity and scepticism abound everywhere. In one

form or another they are to be found in every rank and class of society. Thousands of Englishmen are not ashamed to say that they regard the Bible as an old obsolete Jewish book, which has no special claim on our faith and obedience, and that it contains many inaccuracies and defects. Myriads who will not go so far as this are wavering and shaken in their belief, and show plainly by their lives that they are not quite sure the Bible is true. In a day like this the true Christian should be able to set his foot down firmly, and to render a reason of his confidence in God's Word. He should be able by sound arguments to meet and silence the gainsayer, if he cannot convince him. He should be able to show good cause why he thinks the Bible is "from heaven, and not of men."

The subject without doubt is a very difficult one. It cannot be followed up without entering on ground which is dark and mysterious to mortal man. It involves the discussion of things which are miraculous, and supernatural, and above reason, and cannot be fully explained. But difficulties must not turn us away from any subject in religion. There is not a science in the world about which questions may not be asked which no one can answer. It is poor philosophy to say we will believe nothing unless we can understand everything! We must not give up the subject of inspiration in despair because it contains things "hard to be understood." There still remains a vast amount of ground which is plain to every common understanding. I invite my readers to occupy this ground with me today, and to hear what I have got to say on the Divine authority of God's Word.

In considering the subject before us, there are two things which I propose to do:-

I. In the first place, I shall try to show the general truth, that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.

II. In the second place, I shall try to show the extent to which the Bible is inspired.

I trust that all who read this paper will take up the subject in a serious and reverent spirit. This question of inspiration is no light one. It involves tremendously grave consequences. If the Bible is not the Word of God and inspired, the whole of Christendom for 1800 years has been under an immense delusion; half the human race has been cheated and deceived, and churches are monuments of folly.-If the Bible is the Word of God and inspired, all who refuse to believe it are in fearful danger;-they are living on the brink of eternal misery. No man, in his sober senses, can fail to see that the whole subject demands most serious attention.

I. In the first place, I propose to show the general truth,- that the Bible is given by inspiration of God.

In saying this, I mean to assert that the Bible is utterly unlike all other books that were ever written, because its writers were specially inspired, or enabled by God, for the work which they did. I say that the Book comes to us with a claim which no other book possesses. It is stamped with Divine authority. In this respect it stands entirely alone. Sermons, and tracts, and theological writings of all kinds, may be sound and edifying, but they are only the handiwork of uninspired man. The Bible alone is the Book of God.

Now I shall not waste time in proving that the Scriptures are genuine and authentic, that they were really written by the very men who profess to have written them, and that they contain the very things which they wrote. I shall not touch what are commonly called external evidences. I shall bring forward the book itself, and put it in the witness box. I shall try to show that nothing can possibly account for the Bible being what it is, and doing what it has done, except the theory that it is the Word of God. I lay it down broadly, as a position which cannot be turned, that the Bible itself, fairly examined, is the best witness of its own inspiration. I shall content myself with stating some plain facts about the Bible, which can neither be denied nor explained away. And the ground I shall take up is this,-that these facts ought to satisfy every reasonable inquirer that the Bible is of God, and not of man. They are simple facts, which require no knowledge of Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, in order to be understood; yet they are facts which prove to my own mind conclusively that the Bible is superhuman, or not of man.

(a) It is a fact, that there is an extraordinary fullness and richness in the contents of the Bible. It throws more light on a vast number of most important subjects than all the other books in the world put together. It boldly handles matters which are beyond the reach of man, when left to himself. It treats of things which are mysterious and invisible,-the soul, the world to come, and eternity, depths which man has no line to fathom. All who have tried to write of these things, without Bible light, have done little but show their own ignorance. They grope like the blind; they speculate; they guess; they generally make the darkness more visible, and land

us in a region of uncertainty and doubt. How dim were the views of Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca! A well-taught Sunday scholar, in this day, knows more spiritual truth than all these sages put together.

The Bible alone gives a reasonable account of the beginning and end of the globe on which we live. It starts from the birthday of sun, moon, stars, and earth in their present order, and shows us creation in its cradle. It foretells the dissolution of all things, when the earth and all its works shall be burned up, and shows us creation in its grave. It tells us the story of the world's youth; and it tells us the story of its old age. It gives us a picture of its first days; and it gives us a picture of its last. How vast and important is this knowledge! Can this be the handiwork of uninspired man? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives a true and faithful account of man.

It does not flatter him as novels and romances do; it does not conceal his faults and exaggerate his goodness; it paints him just as he is. It describes him as a fallen creature, of his own nature inclined to evil,-a creature needing not only a pardon, but a new heart, to make him fit for heaven. It shows him to be a corrupt being under every circumstance, when left to himself,-corrupt after the loss of paradise,-corrupt after the flood,-corrupt when fenced in by divine laws and commandments, corrupt when the Son of God came down and visited him in the flesh,-corrupt in the face of warnings, promises, miracles, judgments, mercies. In one word, it shows man to be by nature always a sinner. How important is this knowledge! Can this be the work of uninspired minds? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone gives us true views of God. By nature man knows nothing clearly or fully about Him. All his conceptions of Him are low, grovelling, and debased. What could be more degraded than the gods of the Canaanites and Egyptians, -of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome? What can be more vile than the gods of the Hindus and other heathen in our own time? -By the Bible we know that God hates sin. The destruction of the old world by the flood; the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; the drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the Red Sea; the cutting off the nations of Canaan; the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Temple; the scattering of the Jews; all these are unmistakable witnesses. -By the Bible we know that God loves sinners. His gracious promise in the day of Adam's fall; His longsuffering in the time of Noah; His deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt; His gift of the law at Mount Sinai; His bringing the tribes into the promised land; His forbearance in the days of the Judges and Kings; His repeated warnings by the mouth of His prophets; His restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity; His sending His Son into the world, in due time, to be crucified; His commanding the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles, all these are speaking facts. -By the Bible we learn that God knows all things. We see Him foretelling things hundreds and thousands of years before they take place, and as He foretells so it comes to pass. He foretold that the family of Ham should be a servant of servants, -that Tyre should become a rock for drying nets, -that Nineveh should become a desolation, -that Babylon should be made a desert -that Egypt should be the basest of kingdoms, that Edom should be forsaken and uninhabited, -and that the Jews should not be reckoned among the nations. All these things were utterly unlikely and improbable. Yet

all have been fulfilled. Once more I say, how vast and important all this knowledge is! Can this Book be the work of uninspired man? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone teaches us that

God has made a full, perfect, and complete provision for the salvation of fallen man. It tells of an atonement made for the sin of the world, by the sacrifice and death of God's own Son upon the cross. It tells us that by His death for sinners, as their Substitute, He obtained eternal redemption for all that believe on Him. The claims of God's broken law have now been satisfied. Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. God can now be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It tells us that there is now a complete remedy for the guilt of sin,-even the precious blood of Christ; and peace, and rest of conscience for all who believe on Christ.

"Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." It tells us that there is a complete remedy for the power of sin,-even the almighty grace of the Spirit of Christ. It shows us the Holy Ghost quickening believers, and making them new creatures. It promises a new heart and a new nature to all who will hear Christ's voice, and follow Him. Once more I say, how important this knowledge is! What should we know of all this comfortable truth without the Bible? Can this Book be the composition of uninspired men? Let us try to answer that question.

The Bible alone explains the state of things that we see in the world around us. There are many things on earth which a natural man cannot explain. The amazing inequality of conditions,-the poverty and distress; the

oppression and persecution,-the shakings and tumults,- the failures of statesmen and legislators,-the constant existence of uncured evils and abuses,-all these things are often puzzling to him. He sees, but does not understand. But the Bible makes it all clear. The Bible can tell him that the whole world lieth in wickedness; that the prince of the world, the devil, is everywhere,- and that it is vain to look for perfection in the present order of things. The Bible will tell him that neither laws nor education can ever change men's hearts,-and that just as no man will ever make a machine work well, unless he allows for friction,-so also no man will do much good in the world, unless he always remembers that human nature is fallen, and that the world he works in is full of sin. The Bible will tell him that there is "a good time" certainly coming,-and coming perhaps sooner than people expect it,-a time of perfect knowledge, perfect justice, perfect happiness, and perfect peace. But the Bible will tell him this time shall not be brought in by any power but that of Christ coming to earth again. And for that second coming of Christ, the Bible will tell him to prepare. Once more, I say, how important is all this knowledge!

All these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Scriptures. We have probably not the least idea how little we should know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one

volume contains. Set down that fact in your mind, and do not forget it. The extraordinary contents of the Bible are a great fact which can only be explained by admitting its inspiration. Mark well what I say. It is a simple broad fact that, in the matter of contents, the Bible stands entirely alone, and no other book is fit to be named in the same day with it. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of this fact, if he can.

(b) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary unity and harmony in the contents of the Bible, which is entirely above man. We all know how difficult it is to get a story told by any three persons, not living together, in which there are not some contradictions and discrepancies. If the story is a long one, and involves a large quantity of particulars, unity seems almost impossible among the common run of men. But it is not so with the Bible. Here is a long book written by not less than thirty different persons. The writers were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawgiver. One was a warlike king. One was a peaceful king. One was a herdsman. One had been brought up as a publican, another as a physician, another as a learned Pharisee, two as fishermen,-several as priests. They lived at different intervals over a space of 1500 years; and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face. And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers? They all write as if they were under one dictation. The style and hand-writing may vary, but the mind that runs through their work is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man,-one account of God,-one account of the way of salvation,-one account of the human heart. You

see truth unfolding under their hands as you go through the volume of their writings,-but you never detect any real contradiction, or contrariety of view.

Let us set down this fact in our minds, and ponder it well. Tell us not that this unity might be the result of chance. No one can ever believe that but a very credulous person. There is only one satisfactory account to be given of the fact before us.-The Bible is not of man, but of God.

(c) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary wisdom, sublimity and majesty in the style of the Bible, which is above man. Strange and unlikely as it was, the writers of Scripture have produced a book which even at this day is utterly unrivalled. With all our boasted attainments in science and art and learning, we can produce nothing that can be compared with the Bible. Even at this very hour, in 1877, the book stands entirely alone. There is a strain and a style and a tone of thought about it, which separate it from all other writings. There are no weak points, and motes, and flaws, and blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness, such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. "Holy, holy, holy," seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with other "sacred books" so called, such as the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a rushlight,-or Skiddaw with a molehill,-or St. Paul's with an Irish hovel,-or the Portland vase with a garden pot,-or the Kohinoor diamond with a bit of glass.¹ God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations, in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own Word. To talk of the inspiration of

the Bible, as only differing in degree from that of such writings as the works of Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton, is simply a piece of blasphemous folly. Every honest and unprejudiced reader must see that there is a gulf between the Bible and any other book, which no man can fathom. You feel, on turning from the Scriptures to other works, that you have got into a new atmosphere. You feel like one who has exchanged gold for base metal, and heaven for earth. And how can this mighty difference be accounted for? The men who wrote the Bible had no special advantages. They lived in a remote corner of the civilized earth. They had, most of them, little leisure, few books, and no learning, - such as learning is reckoned in this world. Yet the book they compose is one which is unrivalled! There is but one way of accounting for this fact.

They wrote under the direct inspiration of God.

(d) It is another fact that there is an extraordinary accuracy in the facts and statements of the Bible, which is above man.

The Bible was written by inspiration of God. Here is a book which has been finished and before the world for nearly 1800 years. These 1800 years have been the busiest and most changeful period the world has ever seen. During this period the greatest discoveries have been made in science, the greatest alterations in the ways and customs of society, the greatest improvements in the habits and usages of life. Hundreds of things might be named which satisfied and pleased our forefathers, which we have laid aside long ago as obsolete, useless, and old-fashioned. The laws, the books, the houses, the furniture, the clothes, the arms,

the machinery, the carriages of each succeeding century, have been a continual improvement on those of the century that went before. There is hardly a thing in which faults and weak points have not been discovered. There is scarcely an institution which has not gone through a process of sifting, purifying, refining, simplifying, reforming, amending, and changing. But all this time men have never discovered a weak point or a defect in the Bible. Infidels have assailed it in vain. There it stands, -perfect, and fresh, and complete, as it did eighteen centuries ago. The march of intellect never overtakes it. The wisdom of wise men never gets beyond it. The science of philosophers never proves it wrong. The discoveries of travellers never convict it of mistakes. -Are the distant islands of the Pacific laid open? Nothing is found that in the slightest degree contradicts the Bible account of man's heart. -Are the ruins of Nineveh and Egypt ransacked and explored? Nothing is found that overturns one jot or tittle of the Bible's historical statements. -How shall we account for this fact? Who could have thought it possible that so large a book, handling such a vast variety of subjects, should at the end of 1800 years, be found so free from erroneous statements? There is only one account to be given of the fact. - (e) It is another fact that there is in the Bible an extraordinary suitableness to the spiritual wants of all mankind. It exactly meets the heart of man in every rank or class, in every country and climate, in every age and period of life. It is the only book in existence which is never out of place and out of date. Other books after a time become obsolete and old-fashioned: the Bible never does. Other books suit one country or people, and not another: the Bible suits all. It is the book of the poor and unlearned no less than of the rich and the philosopher. It

feeds the mind of the labourer in his cottage, and it satisfies the gigantic intellects of Newton, Chalmers, Brewster, and Faraday. Lord Macaulay, and John Bright, and the writers of brilliant articles in the Times, are all under obligations to the same volume. It is equally valued by the converted New Zealander in the southern hemisphere, and the Red River Indian in the cold north of America, and the Hindu under the tropical sun.

It is the only book, moreover, which seems always fresh and evergreen and new. For eighteen centuries it has been studied and prayed over by millions of private Christians, and expounded and explained and preached to us by thousands of ministers. Fathers, and Schoolmen, and Reformers, and Puritans, and modern divines, have incessantly dug down into the mine of Scripture, and yet have never exhausted it. It is a well never dry, and a field which is never barren. It meets the hearts and minds and consciences of Christians in the nineteenth century as fully as it did those of Greeks and Romans when it was first completed. It suits the "Dairyman's daughter" as well as Persis, or Tryphena, or Tryphosa, -and the English Peer as well as the converted African at Sierra Leone. It is still the first book which fits the child's mind when he begins to learn religion, and the last to which the old man clings as he leaves the world.² In short, it suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the world.

Now how shall we account for this singular fact? What satisfactory explanation can we give? There is only one account and explanation.-

The Bible was written by Divine inspiration. It is the book of the world, because He inspired it who formed

the world,-who made all nations of one blood,-and knows man's common nature. It is the book for every heart, because He dictated it who alone knows all hearts, and what all hearts require.

It is the book of God.

(f) Last, but not least, it is a great fact that the Bible has had a most extraordinary effect on the condition of those nations in which it has been known, taught, and read.

I invite any honest-minded reader to look at a map of the world, and see what a story that map tells. Which are the countries on the face of the globe at this moment where there is the greatest amount of idolatry, or cruelty, or tyranny, or impurity, or misgovernment, or disregard of life and liberty and truth? Precisely those countries where the Bible is not known.-Which are the Christian countries, so-called, where the greatest quantity of ignorance, superstition, and corruption, is to be found at this very moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book, such countries as Spain and the South American States.-Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England, Scotland, Germany, and the United States. Yes! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible, you may generally know what a nation is.

But this is not all. Let us look nearer home. Which are the cities on earth where the fewest soldiers and police are required to keep order? London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York, Philadelphia,-cities where Bibles abound. -Which are the countries in Europe where there are the fewest murders and illegitimate births? The

Protestant countries, where the Bible is freely read.- Which are the Churches and religious bodies on earth which are producing the greatest results by spreading light and dispelling darkness? Those which make much of the Bible, and teach and preach it as God's Word. The Romanist, the Neologian, the Socinian, the deist, the sceptic, or the friends of mere secular teaching, have never yet shown us one Sierra Leone, one New Zealand, one Tinnevely, as the fruit of their principles. We only can do that who honour the Bible and reverence it as God's Word. Let this fact also be remembered. He that denies the Divine inspiration of the Bible, let him explain this fact if he can.³ I place these six facts about the Bible before my readers, and I ask them to consider them well. Take them all six together, treat them fairly, and look at them honestly. Upon any other principle than that of divine inspiration, those six facts appear to me inexplicable and unaccountable. Here is a book written by a succession of Jews, in a little corner of the world, which positively stands alone. Not only were its writers isolated and cut off in a peculiar manner from other nations, but they belonged to a people who have never produced any other book of note except the Bible! There is not the slightest proof that, unassisted and left to themselves, they were capable of writing anything remarkable, like the Greeks and Romans. Yet these men have given the world a volume which for depth, unity, sublimity, accuracy, suitableness to the wants of man, and power of influencing its readers, is perfectly unrivalled. How can this be explained? How can it be accounted for? To my mind there is only one answer. The writers of the Bible were divinely helped and qualified for the work which they did. The book which they have given to us was written by inspiration of God.⁴ For my

own part, I believe that in dealing with sceptics, and unbelievers, and enemies of the Bible, Christians are too apt to stand only on the defensive. They are too often content with answering this or that little objection, or discussing this or that little difficulty, which is picked out of Scripture and thrown in their teeth. I believe we ought to act on the aggressive far more than we do, and to press home on the adversaries of inspiration the enormous difficulties of their own position. We have a right to ask them, how can they possibly explain the origin and nature of the Bible, if they will not allow that it is of Divine authority? We have a right to say, "Here is a book which not only courts inquiry but demands investigation. We challenge you to tell us how that Book was written." -How can they account for this Book standing so entirely alone, and for nothing having ever been written equal to it, like it, near it, or fit to be compared with it for a minute? I defy them to give any rational reply on their own principles. On our principles we can. To tell us that man's unassisted mind could have written the Bible is simply ridiculous. It is worse than ridiculous it is the height of credulity. In short, the difficulties of unbelief are far greater than the difficulties of faith. No doubt there are things "hard to be understood" if we accept the Scriptures as God's Word. But, after all, they are nothing compared to the hard things which rise up in our way, and demand solution if we once deny inspiration. There is no alternative. Men must either believe things which are grossly improbable, or else they must accept the great general truth that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

II. The second thing which I propose to consider is the extent to which the Bible is inspired. Assuming, as a

general truth, that the Bible is given by Divine inspiration, I wish to examine how far and to what degree its writers received Divine help. In short, what is it exactly that we mean when we talk of the Scriptures as "the Word of God"?

This is, no doubt, a difficult question, and one about which the best Christians are not entirely of one mind. The plain truth is that inspiration is a miracle; and, like all miracles, there is much about it which we cannot fully understand.-We must not confound it with intellectual power, such as great poets and authors possess. To talk of Shakespeare and Milton and Byron being inspired, like Moses and St. Paul, is to my mind almost profane.-Nor must we confound it with the gifts and graces bestowed on the early Christians in the primitive Church. All the Apostles were enabled to preach and work miracles, but not all were inspired to write.-We must rather regard it as a special supernatural gift, bestowed on about thirty people out of mankind, in order to qualify them for the special business of writing the Scriptures; and we must be content to allow that, like everything miraculous, we cannot entirely explain it, though we can believe it. A miracle would not be a miracle, if it could be explained. That miracles are possible, I do not stop to prove here. I never trouble myself on that subject until those who deny miracles have fairly grappled with the great fact that Christ rose again from the dead. I firmly believe that miracles are possible, and have been wrought; and among great miracles I place the fact that men were inspired by God to write the Bible. Inspiration, therefore, being a miracle, I frankly allow that there are difficulties about it which at present I cannot fully solve.

The exact manner in which the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture worked when they wrote, I do not pretend to explain. Very likely they could not have explained it themselves. I do not admit for a moment that they were mere machines holding pens, and, like type-setters in a printing-office, did not understand what they were doing. I abhor the “mechanical” theory of inspiration. I dislike the idea that men like Moses and St. Paul were no better than organ pipes, employed by the Holy Ghost, or ignorant secretaries or amanuenses who wrote by dictation what they did not understand. I admit nothing of the kind. I believe that in some marvellous manner the Holy Ghost made use of the reason, the memory, the intellect, the style of thought, and the peculiar mental temperament of each writer of the Scriptures. But how and in what manner this was done I can no more explain than I can the union of two natures, God and man, in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. I only know that there is both a Divine and a human element in the Bible, and that while the men who wrote it were really and truly men, the book that they wrote and handed down to us is really and truly the Word of God. I know the result, but I do not understand the process. The result is, that the Bible is the written Word of God; but I can no more explain the process than I can explain how the water became wine at Cana, or how five loaves fed five thousand men, or how a word raised Lazarus from the dead. I do not pretend to explain miracles, and I do not pretend to explain fully the miraculous gift of inspiration. The position I take up is that, while the Bible-writers were not “machines,” as some sneeringly say, they only wrote what God taught them to write. The Holy Ghost put into their minds thoughts and ideas, and then guided their pens in

writing them. When you read the Bible you are not reading the unaided, self-taught composition of erring men like ourselves, but thoughts and words which were suggested by the eternal God. The men who were employed to indite the Scripture spake not of themselves. They "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter i. 21.) He that holds a Bible in his hand should know that he holds "not the word of man but of God." (1 Thess. ii. 13.) Concerning the precise extent to which the Bible is inspired, I freely admit that Christians differ widely. Some of the views put forth on the subject appear to me erroneous in the extreme. I shall not shrink from giving my own opinion and stating my reasons for maintaining it. In matters like these I dare not call any man master. Painful as it is to disagree with able and gifted men on religious questions, I dare not take up views of inspiration which my head and heart tell me are unsound, however high and honoured the names of those who maintain them. I believe in my conscience that low and defective views of the subject are doing immense damage to the cause of Christ in these last days.

Some hold that some of the books of Scripture are not inspired at all, and have no more authority or claim to our reverence than the writings of any ordinary man. Others who do not go so far as this, and allow that all the books in the Bible are inspired, maintain that inspiration was only partial, and that there are portions in almost every book which are uninspired.-Others hold that inspiration means nothing more than general superintendence and direction, and that, while the Bible writers were miraculously preserved from making mistakes in great things and matters necessary to

salvation, in things indifferent they were left to their own unassisted faculties, like any other writers.-Some hold that all the ideas in the Bible were given by inspiration, but not the words and language in which they are clothed,-though how to separate ideas from words it is rather hard to understand!-Some, finally, allow the thorough inspiration of all the Bible, and yet maintain that it was possible for the writers to make occasional mistakes in their statements, and that such mistakes do exist at this day.

From all these views I totally and entirely dissent. They all appear to me more or less defective, below the truth, dangerous in their tendency, and open to grave and insuperable objections. The view which I maintain is that every book, and chapter, and verse, and syllable of the Bible was originally given by inspiration of God. I hold that not only the substance of the Bible, but its language,-not only the ideas of the Bible, but its words; not only certain parts of the Bible, but every chapter of the book,-that all and each are of Divine authority. I hold that the Scripture not only contains the Word of God, but is the Word of God. I believe the narratives and statements of Genesis, and the catalogues in Chronicles, were just as truly written by inspiration as the Acts of the Apostles. I believe Ezra's account of the nine-and-twenty knives, and St. Paul's message about the cloak and parchments, were as much written under Divine direction as the 20th of Exodus, the 17th of John, or the 8th of Romans. I do not say, be it remembered, that all these parts of the Bible are of equal importance to our souls. Nothing of the kind! But I do say they were all equally given by inspiration.⁵ In making this statement I ask the reader not to misunderstand my meaning. I do

not forget that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The inspiration of every word, for which I contend, is the inspiration of every original Hebrew and Greek word, as the Bible writers first wrote it down. I stand up for nothing more and nothing less than this. I lay no claim to the inspiration of every word in the various versions and translations of God's Word. So far as those translations and versions are faithfully and correctly done, so far they are of equal authority with the original Hebrew and Greek. We have reason to thank God that many of the translations are, in the main, faithful and accurate. At any rate our own English Bible, if not perfect, is so far correct, that in reading it we have a right to believe that we are reading in our own tongue not the word of man; but of God.

Now the view for which I contend,-that every word of the Bible is inspired,-is not accepted by many good Christians, and is bitterly opposed in many quarters. I shall therefore mention a few reasons why it appears to me the only safe and tenable view which can be adopted, and the only one which is free from innumerable objections. If I err in maintaining it I have the comfort, at any rate, of erring in good company. I only take up the same ground which almost all the Fathers occupied; which Bishop Jewell, and Hooker, and Owen, took up long ago; and which Chalmers, Robert Haldane, Gaussen, Bishop Wordsworth, M'Caul, Burgon, and Archdeacon Lee of the Irish Church, have ably defended in modern days. I know, however, that men's minds are variously constituted. Arguments and reasons which appear weighty to some are of no weight with

others. I shall content myself with setting down in order the reasons which satisfy me.

(a) For one thing, I cannot see how the Bible can be a perfect rule of faith and practice if it is not fully inspired, and if it contains any flaws and imperfections. If the Bible is anything at all it is the statute-book of God's kingdom, the code of laws and regulations by which the subjects of that kingdom are to live, -the register-deed of the terms on which they have peace now and shall have glory hereafter. Now, why are we to suppose that such a book will be loosely and imperfectly drawn up, any more than legal deeds are drawn up on earth? Every lawyer can tell us that in legal deeds and statutes every word is of importance, and that property, life, or death may often turn on a single word. Think of the confusion that would ensue if wills, and settlements, and conveyances, and partnership-deeds, and leases, and agreements, and acts of parliament were not carefully drawn up and carefully interpreted, and every word allowed its due weight. Where would be the use of such documents if particular words went for nothing, and every one had a right to add, or take away, or alter, or deny the validity of words, or erase words at his own discretion? At this rate we might as well lay aside our legal documents altogether. Surely we have a right to expect that in the book which contains our title-deeds for eternity every word will be inspired, and nothing imperfect admitted. If God's statute-book is not inspired, and every word is not of Divine authority, God's subjects are left in a pitiable state. I see much in this.

(b) For another thing, if the Bible is not fully inspired and contains imperfections, I cannot understand the language which is frequently used about it in its own

pages. Such expressions as “The oracles of God;”-“He saith;”-“God saith”-“the Holy Ghost spake by Esaias the prophet;” “the Holy Ghost saith, “Today if ye will hear His voice,”-would appear to me inexplicable and extravagant if applied to a book containing occasional blemishes, defects, and mistakes. (Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2; Heb. v. 12; 1 Peter iv. 11; Ephes. iv. 8; Heb. i. 8; Acts xxviii. 25; Heb. iii. 7; x. 15; Rom. ix. 25.) Once grant that every word of Scripture is inspired, and I see an admirable propriety in the language. I cannot understand “the Holy Ghost” making a mistake, or an “oracle” containing anything defective! If any man replies that the Holy Ghost did not always speak by Isaiah, I will ask him who is to decide when He did and when He did not? I see much in this.

(c) For another thing, the theory that the Bible was not given by inspiration of God, appears to me utterly at variance with several quotations from the Old Testament which I find in the New. I allude to those quotations in which the whole force of the passage turns on one single word, and once even on the use of the singular instead of the plural number. Take, for instance, such quotations as “The Lord said unto my Lord.” (Matt. xxii. 44). “I said, Ye are gods.” (John x. 34.) “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Gal. iii. 16.)-“He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren.” (Heb. ii. 11, 12.)-In every one these cases the whole point of the quotation lies in a single word.⁶ But if this is so, it is hard to see on what principle we can deny the inspiration of all the words of Scripture. At any rate, those who deny verbal inspiration will find it difficult to

show us which words are inspired and which are not. Who is to draw the line, and where is it to be drawn? I see much in this.

(d) For another thing, if the words of Scripture are not all inspired, the value of the Bible as a weapon in controversy is greatly damaged, if not entirely taken away. Who does not know that in arguing with Jews, Arians, or Socinians, the whole point of the texts we quote against them often lies in a single word? What are we to reply if an adversary asserts that the special word of some text, on which we ground an argument, is a mistake of the writer, and therefore of no authority? To my mind it appears that the objection would be fatal. It is useless to quote texts if we once admit that not all the words of which they are composed were given by inspiration. Unless there is some certain standard to appeal to we may as well hold our tongues. Argument is labour in vain if our mouths are to be stopped by the retort, "That text is not inspired." I see much in this.

(e) For another thing, to give up verbal inspiration appears to me to destroy the usefulness of the Bible as an instrument of public preaching and instruction. Where is the use of choosing a text and making it the subject of a pulpit address, if we do not believe that every word of the text is inspired? Once let our hearers get hold of the idea that the writers of the Bible could make mistakes in the particular words they used, and they will care little for any reproofs, or exhortations, or remarks which are based on words.—"How do you know," they might ask us, "that this word, about which you made such ado yesterday, was given by the Holy Ghost? How do you know that St. Paul, or St. Peter, or St. John did not make a mistake, and use the wrong word? That

they could make mistakes about words you yourself allow.”-I know not what others may think. For myself, I could give no answer. I see much in this.

(f) Last, but not least, the denial of verbal inspiration appears to me to destroy a great part of the usefulness of the Bible as a source of comfort and instruction in private reading. Where is the true Christian student of the Bible who does not know that words, particular words, afford a large portion of the benefit which he derives from his daily reading? How much the value of many a cherished text depends on some single phrase, or the number of a substantive, or the tense of a verb? Alas! there would be an end of all this if we once concede that each word is not inspired; and that, for anything we know, some much loved favourite substantive, or verb, or pronoun, or adverb, or adjective, was an Apostle’s mistake, and the word of man, not of God! What others might think I know not. For myself, I should be tempted to lay aside my Bible in despair, and become of all men most miserable. I see much in this.

Now, I freely grant that many excellent Christians think that the view I maintain is open to serious objections. That the Bible, generally speaking, is given by inspiration, they firmly maintain. But they shrink from maintaining that inspiration extends to every word of Scripture. I am sorry to differ from these worthy people. But I cannot see the weight and force of their objections. Fairly and honestly examined, they fail to carry conviction to my mind.

(a) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which contradict the facts of history. Are these all verbally inspired?-My answer is that it is far more

easy to assert this than to prove it. There is nothing of which we have so few trustworthy remains as very ancient history, and if ancient uninspired history and Bible history seem to disagree, it is generally safer and wiser to believe that Bible history is right and other history wrong. At any rate, it is a singular fact that all recent researches in Assyria, Babylon, Palestine, and Egypt, show an extraordinary tendency to confirm the perfect accuracy of the Word of God. The lamented Mr. Smith's discoveries at Babylon are a remarkable example of what I mean. There are buried evidences which God seems to keep in reserve for these last days. If Bible history and other histories cannot be made to agree at present, it is safest to wait.

(b) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which contradict the facts of natural science. Are these all inspired?—My answer is again, that it is far more easy to assert this than to prove it. The Bible was not written to teach a system of geology, botany, or astronomy, or a history of birds, insects, and animals, and on matters touching these subjects it wisely uses popular language, such as common people can understand. No one thinks of saying that the Astronomer Royal contradicts science because he speaks of the sun's "rising and setting." If the Bible said anywhere that the earth was a flat surface,—or that it was a fixed globe round which the sun revolved,—or that it never existed in any state before Adam and Eve,—there might be something in the objection. But it never does so. It speaks of scientific subjects as they appear. But it never flatly contradicts science.⁷ (c) Some object that there are occasional statements in the Bible which are monstrous, absurd, and incredible. Are they really

obliged to believe that Eve was tempted by the devil in the form of a serpent,-that Noah was saved in an ark,-that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea between two walls of water,-that Balaam's ass spoke, and that Jonah actually went into the whale's belly? Are all these statements inspired?-My answer is that Christ's apostles speak of these things as historical facts, and were more likely to know the truth about them than we are. After all, do we believe in miracles or not? Do we believe that Christ Himself rose from the dead? Let us stick to that one grand miracle first, and disprove it if we can. If we do believe it, it is foolish to object to things because they are miraculous.

(d) Some object that there are things mentioned occasionally in the Bible which are so trifling that they are unworthy to be called inspired. They point to St. Paul's writing about his cloak, and books, and parchments, and ask if we really think that the Apostle wrote about such little matters by inspiration of God?-I answer that the least things affecting any of God's children are not too small for the notice of Him who "numbers the hairs of our heads." There are excellent and edifying lessons to be learned from the cloak and the parchments, as Robert Haldane has shown most convincingly, in his work on the Evidences of Divine Revelation. After all, man knows very little what is great and what is small in God's sight. The history of Nimrod "the mighty hunter" is dispatched in three verses of Genesis, and the history of a Syrian dwelling in tents, called Abraham, fills up no less than fourteen chapters. The microscope applied to the book of nature, can show us God's hand in the least lichen that grows on the top of Scawfell as well as in the cedar of Lebanon. The

veriest trifles, as they seem to us in the Book of Scripture, may turn out to be most striking confirmations of its truth. Paley has shown this admirably in his "Horae Paulinae," and Professor Blunt in his "Undesigned Coincidences."

(e) Some object that there are grave discrepancies in some of the Bible histories, especially in the four Gospels, which cannot be made to harmonize and agree. Are the words, they ask, all inspired in these cases? Have the writers made no mistakes?-I answer that the number of these discrepancies is grossly exaggerated, and that in many cases they are only apparent, and disappear under the touch of common sense. Even in the hardest of them we should remember, in common fairness, that circumstances are very likely kept back from us which entirely reconcile everything, if we only knew them. Very often in these days when two honest, veracious men give a separate account of some long story, their accounts do not quite tally, because one dwells on one part and the other on another. All well-informed students of history know that the precise day when Charles I erected his standard at Nottingham, in the Parliamentary war, has not been settled to this hour.

(f) Some object that

Job's friends, in their long speeches, said many weak and foolish things. Were all their words inspired?-An objection like this arises from an illogical and confused idea of what inspiration means. The book of Job contains an historical account of a wonderful part of the old patriarch's history, and a report both of his speeches and of those of his friends. But we are nowhere told that either Job or Eliphaz and his companions spoke all that

they spoke by the Holy Ghost. The writer of the book of Job was thoroughly inspired to record all they said. But whether they spoke rightly or wrongly is to be decided by the general teaching of Scripture. No one would say that St. Peter was inspired when he said, "I know not the Man," in the High Priest's palace. But the writer of the Gospel was inspired when he wrote it down for our learning. In the Acts of the Apostles the letter of Claudius Lysias was certainly not written by inspiration, and Gamaliel, and the town clerk of Ephesus and Tertullus were not inspired when they made their speeches. But it is equally certain that St. Luke was inspired to write them down and record them in his book.

(g) Some object that St. Paul, in the 7th chapter of the 1st epistle to the Corinthians, when giving certain advice to the Corinthian Church, says at one time, "Not I, but the Lord," and at another, "I, not the Lord." And they ask, Does not this show that in part of his advice he was not inspired?—I answer, Not at all. A careful study of the chapter will show that when the Apostle says "Not I, but the Lord," he lays down some principles on which the Lord had spoken already; and when he says "I, not the Lord," he gives advice on some point about which there had been no revelation hitherto. But there is not the slightest proof that he is not writing all the way through under direct inspiration of God.

(h) Some object that there are many various readings of the words of Scripture, and that we cannot, therefore, feel sure that we have the original inspired Word of God. I answer that the various readings, when fairly examined, will prove to be absurdly exaggerated in number and importance. Dr. Kennicott, Bengel, and

others have proved this long ago. No doubt we may have lost a few of the original words. We have no right to expect infallibility in transcribers and copyists, before the invention of printing. But there is not a single doctrine in Scripture which would be affected or altered if all the various readings were allowed, and all the disputed or doubtful words were omitted. Considering how many hands the Bible passed through before printing was invented, and who the transcribers were, it is marvellous that the various readings are so few! The fact that about the immense majority of all the words in the old Hebrew and Greek Scriptures there is no doubt at all, is little short of a miracle, and demands much thanksgiving to God. One thing is very certain. There is no ancient book which has been handed down to us with so good a text and so few various readings as the Bible.

(i) Finally, some object that occasional parts of the Bible are taken out, copied, and extracted from the writings of uninspired men, such as historical chronicles, and pedigrees, and lists of names. Are all these to be regarded as inspired?-I reply that there seems no reason why the Holy Ghost should not direct the Bible writers to use materials made ready to their hands, as well as facts which they had seen themselves, and by so directing them, invested such words as they used with Divine authority. When St. Paul quoted lines from heathen poets he did not mean us to regard them as inspired. But he was taught by God to clothe his ideas in the words which they had used, and by so doing he very likely obtained a favourable reading from many. And when we read such quotations, or read lists of names taken from Jewish chronicles and registers, we need not

doubt that Bible writers were taught to use such materials by inspiration of God.

I leave the objections to verbal inspiration at this point, and will detain my readers no longer with them. I will not pretend to deny that the subject has its difficulties, which will probably never be completely solved. I cannot perhaps clear up such difficulties as the mention of "Jeremy the prophet" in Matthew xxvii., or reconcile the third and sixth hour in St. John's and St. Mark's account of the crucifixion, or explain Stephen's account of Jacob's burial in the seventh chapter of Acts, to my own entire satisfaction. But I have no doubt these difficulties can be explained, and perhaps will be some day. These things do not move me. I expect difficulties in such a deep and miraculous matter as inspiration, which I have not eyes to see through. I am content to wait. It was a wise saying of Faraday, that "there are many questions about which it is the highest philosophy to keep our minds in a state of judicious suspense." It should be a settled rule with us never to give up a great principle, when we have got hold of it, on account of difficulties. Time often makes things clear which at first look dark. The view of inspiration which presents to my own mind the fewest difficulties, is that in which all the words of Scripture, as well as the thoughts, are regarded as inspired. Here I take my stand.

Remember what I have just said. Never give up a great principle in theology on account of difficulties. Wait patiently, and the difficulties may all melt away. Let that be an axiom in your mind. Suffer me to mention an illustration of what I mean. Persons who are conversant with astronomy know that before the discovery of the planet Neptune there were difficulties which greatly

troubled the most scientific astronomers, respecting certain aberrations of the planet Uranus. These aberrations puzzled the minds of astronomers; and some of them suggested that they might possibly prove the whole Newtonian system to be untrue. But just at that time a well-known French astronomer, named Leverrier, read before the Academy of Science at Paris a paper, in which he laid down this great axiom, that it did not become a scientific man to give up a principle because of difficulties which apparently could not be explained. He said in effect, "We cannot explain the aberrations of Uranus now; but we may be sure that the Newtonian system will be proved to be right, sooner or later. Something may be discovered one day which will prove that these aberrations may be accounted for, and yet the Newtonian system remain true and unshaken." A few years after, the anxious eyes of astronomers discovered the last great planet, Neptune. This planet was shown to be the true cause of all the aberrations of Uranus; and what the French astronomer had laid down as a principle in science was proved to be wise and true. The application of the anecdote is obvious. Let us beware of giving up any first principle in theology. Let us not give up the great principle of plenary verbal inspiration because of apparent difficulties. The day may come when they will all be solved. In the meantime we may rest assured that the difficulties which beset any other theory of inspiration are tenfold greater than any which beset our own.

Let me now conclude this paper with a few words of plain application. Let us lay aside all deep discussion of hard things about the manner of inspiration. Let us take it for granted that, in some way or other, whether we

can explain it or not, we hold the Bible to be the Word of God. Let us start from this point. Let my readers give me a hearing, while I say a few things which appear to me to deserve their attention.

1. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then mind that you do not neglect it. Read it! read it! Begin to read it this very day. What greater insult to God can a man be guilty of than to refuse to read the letter God sends him from heaven? Oh, be sure, if you will not read your Bible, you are in fearful danger of losing your soul!

You are in danger, because

God will reckon with you for your neglect of the Bible in the day of judgment. You will have to give account of your use of time, strength, and money; and you will also have to give account of your use of the Word. You will not stand at that bar on the same level, in point of responsibility, with the dweller in central Africa, who never heard of the Bible. Oh, no! To whom much is given, of them much will be required. Of all men's buried talents, none will weigh them down so heavily as a neglected Bible. As you deal with the Bible, so God will deal with your soul. Will you not repent and turn over a new leaf in life, and read your Bible?

You are in danger, because there is no degree of error in religion into which you may not fall. You are at the mercy of the first clever Jesuit, Mormonite, Socinian, Turk, or Jew, who may happen to meet you. A land of unwall'd villages is not more defenceless against an enemy than a man who neglects his Bible. You may go on tumbling from one step of delusion to another, till at length you are landed in the pit of hell. I say once more, Will you not repent and read your Bible?

You are in danger, because there is not a single reasonable excuse you can allege for neglecting the Bible. You have no time to read it forsooth! But you can make time for eating, drinking, sleeping, getting money and spending money, and perhaps for newspaper reading and smoking. You might easily make time to read the Word. Alas, it is not want of time, but waste of time that ruins souls!-You find it too troublesome to read, forsooth! You had better say at once it is too much trouble to go to heaven, and you are content to go to hell. Truly these excuses are like the rubbish round the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days. They would all soon disappear if, like the Jews, you had "a mind to work." I say for the last time, Will you not repent and read your Bible?

Believe me, believe me, the

Bible itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. The men who quibble and make difficulties about inspiration are too often the very men who never read the Scriptures at all. The darkness and hardness and obscurity they profess to complain of are far more often in their own hearts than in the book. Oh, be persuaded! Take it up and begin to read.

2. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you always read it with deep reverence. Say to your soul, whenever you open the Bible, "O my soul, thou art going to read a message from God." The sentences of judges, and the speeches of kings, are received with awe and respect. How much more reverence is due to the words of the Judge of judges and King of kings! Avoid, as you would cursing and swearing, that irreverent habit of mind into which some modern divines have unhappily

fallen, in speaking about the Bible. They handle the contents of the holy book as carelessly and disrespectfully as if the writers were such men as themselves. They make one think of a child composing a book to expose the fancied ignorance of his own father, - or of a pardoned murderer criticising the handwriting and style of his own reprieve. Enter rather into the spirit of Moses on Mount Horeb: "Put thy shoes from off thy feet; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

3. Is the Bible the Word of God? Then be sure you never read it without fervent prayer for the help and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Here is the rock on which many make shipwreck. They do not ask for wisdom and instruction, and so they find the Bible dark, and carry nothing away from it. You should pray for the Spirit to guide you into all truth. You should beg the Lord Jesus Christ to "open your understanding," as He did that of His disciples. The Lord God, by whose inspiration the book was written, keeps the keys of the book, and alone can enable you to understand it profitably. Nine times over in one Psalm does David cry, "Teach me." Five times over, in the same Psalm, does he say, "Give me understanding." Well says John Owen, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, "There is a sacred light in the Word: but there is a covering and veil on the eyes of men, so that they cannot behold it aright. Now, the removal of this veil is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit." Humble prayer will throw more light on your Bible than Poole, or Henry, or Scott, or Burkitt, or Bengel, or Alford, or Wordsworth, or Barnes, or Ellicott, or Lightfoot, or any commentary that ever was written.

The Bible is a large book or a small one, a dark or a bright one, according to the spirit in which men read it. Intellect alone will do nothing with it. Wranglers and

first-class men will not understand it unless their hearts are right as well as their heads. The highest critical and grammatical knowledge will find it a sealed book without the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Its contents are often "hid to the wise and prudent and revealed to babes." Remember this, and say always, when you open your Bible, "O God, for Christ's sake, give me the teaching of the Spirit."

4. Finally, is the Bible the Word of God? Then let us all resolve from this day forward to prize the Bible more. Let us not fear being idolaters of this blessed book. Men may easily make an idol of the Church, of ministers, of sacraments, or of intellect. Men cannot make an idol of the Word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority of the Bible, or impugn its credit, as spiritual robbers. We are travelling through a wilderness: they rob us of our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea: they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a weary road: they pluck our staff out of our hands. And what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the Bible? What do they offer as a safer guide and better provision for our souls? Nothing! absolutely nothing! Big swelling words! Empty promises of new light! High sounding jargon; but nothing substantial and real! They would fain take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the more it is assaulted.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; God has given us the Bible to be a light to guide us to everlasting life. Let us not neglect this precious gift. Let us read it diligently, walk in its light, and we shall be saved.

The following quotations about inspiration, from the works of four eminent British theologians, I venture to think deserve attentive perusal. They are valuable in themselves on account of the arguments which they contain. They also supply abundant proof that the high view of verbal inspiration, which I advocate in this paper, is no modern invention, but an “old path,” in which many of God’s ablest children have walked, and found it a good way.

1. Bishop Jewell, author of the “Apology,” was unquestionably one of the most learned of the English Reformers. Let us hear what he says:-

“St. Paul, speaking of the Word of God, saith, ‘the whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.’ Many think the Apostle’s speech is hardly true of the whole Scripture,-that all and every part of the Scripture is profitable. Much is spoken of genealogies and pedigrees, of lepers, of sacrificing goats and oxen, etc. These seem to have little profit in them: to be idle and vain. If they show vain in thine eyes, yet hath not the Lord set them down in vain? The words of the Lord are pure words, as the silver tried in a furnace of earth refined seven times. There is no sentence, no clause, no word, no syllable, no letter, but it is written for thy instruction: there is not one jot but it is sealed and signed with the blood of the Lamb. Our imaginations are idle, our thoughts are vain: there is no idleness, no vanity, in the Word of God. Those oxen and goats which were sacrificed teach thee to kill the uncleanness and filthiness of thine heart: they teach thee that thou art guilty of death, when thy life must be redeemed by the death of some beast: they lead thee to believe the forgiveness of sins by a more perfect sacrifice, since it

was not possible that the blood of bulls or of goats should take away sins. That leprosy teacheth thee the uncleanness and leprosy of thy soul. These genealogies and pedigrees lead us to the birth of our Saviour Christ, so that the whole Word of God is pure and holy. No word, no letter, no syllable, nor point or tittle thereof, but is written and preserved for thy sake.”-

Jewell on the Holy Scriptures.

2. Richard Hooker, author of the “Ecclesiastical Polity,” is justly respected by all schools of thought in the Church of England as the judicious Hooker.” Let us hear what he says:-

“Touching the manner how men, by the Spirit of Prophecy in Holy Scripture, have spoken and written of things to come, we must understand that as the knowledge of that they spake, so likewise the utterance of that they knew, came not by those usual and ordinary means whereby we are brought to understand the mysteries of our salvation, and are wont to instruct others in the same. For whatsoever we know, we have it by the hands and ministry of men, who led us along like children from a letter to a syllable, from a syllable to a word, from a word to a line, from a line to a sentence, from a sentence to a side, and so turn over. But God Himself was their instructor. He Himself taught them, partly by dreams and visions in the night, partly by revelations in the day, taking them aside from amongst their brethren, and talking with them as a man would talk with his neighbours in the way. Thus they became acquainted even with the secret and hidden counsels of God; they saw things which themselves were not able to utter, they beheld that whereat men and angels are

astonished, they understood in the beginning what should come to pass in the last days. God, who lightened thus the eyes of their understanding, giving them knowledge by unusual and extraordinary means, did also miraculously Himself frame and fashion their words and writings, insomuch that a greater difference there seemeth not to be between the manner of their knowledge, than there is between the manner of their speech and ours. 'We have received,' saith the Apostle, 'not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are given to us of God: which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost doth teach.' This is that which the Prophets mean by those books written full within and without; which books were so often delivered them to eat, not because God fed them with ink and paper, but to teach us that so often as He employed them in this heavenly work, they neither spake nor wrote any word of their own, but uttered syllable by syllable as the Spirit put it in their mouths, no otherwise than the harp or the lute doth give a sound according to the direction of his hands that holdeth it and striketh it with skill."

Hooker's Works. Vol. iii. pp. 537, 540.

3. John Owen, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, was the most learned and argumentative of the Puritans. Let us hear what he says:-

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. When the word was thus brought to them it was not left to their own understandings, wisdom, minds, memories, to order, dispose, and give it out; but they were borne, actuated, carried out by the Holy Ghost, to

speak, deliver, and write all that, and nothing but that,-
to very tittles,-that was so brought unto them. They
invented not words themselves, suited to the things they
had learned, but only expressed the word that they
received. Though their mind and understanding were
used in the choice of words (whence arise all the
differences in their manner of expression), yet they were
so guided that their words were not their own, but
immediately supplied unto them. Not only the doctrine
they taught was the word of truth,-truth itself,-but the
words whereby they taught it were words of truth from
God Himself. Thus, allowing the contribution of proper
instruments for the reception and representation of
words which answer to the mind and tongue of the
Prophets in the coming of the voice of God to them,-
every apex of the written Word is equally divine, and as
immediately from God as the voice wherewith, or
whereby, He spake to us in the Prophets; and is
therefore accompanied with the same authority in itself
and to us." -

Owen on the Divine

Original of the Scripture. Vol xvi. p. 305.

4. Dr. Chalmers was probably the most intellectual and
deep-thinking theologian that intellectual Scotland has
ever produced. Let us hear what he says:

(a) "The subject-matter of the Bible had to pass through
the minds of the selected Prophets and Apostles, and to
issue thence in language ere it comes forth in the shape
of Scripture upon the world. Now it is here that we meet
the advocates of a partial or mitigated inspiration, and
would make common cause against one and all of them.
There is not one theory short, by however so little, of a

thorough and perfect inspiration,-there is not one of them but is chargeable with the consequence, that the subject-matter of revelation suffers and is deteriorated in the closing footsteps of its progress; and just before it settles into that ultimate position, where it stands forth to guide and illuminate the world. It existed purely in heaven. It descended purely from heaven to earth. It was deposited purely by the great Agent of revelation in the minds of the Apostles. But then we are told that when but a little way from the final landing place, then, instead of being carried forward purely to the situation where alone the great purpose of the whole movement was to be fulfilled, then was it abandoned to itself, and then were human infirmities permitted to mingle with it, and to mar its lustre. Strange, that just when entering on the functions of an authoritative guide and leader to mankind, that then, and not till then, the soil and the feebleness of humanity should be suffered to gather around it. Strange, that, with the inspiration of thoughts, it should make pure ingress into the minds of the Apostles; but wanting the inspiration of words should not make pure egress to that world in whose behalf alone, and for whose admonition alone, this great movement originated in heaven, and terminated in earth. Strange, more especially strange, in the face of the declaration that not unto themselves but unto us they ministered these things,-strange, nevertheless, that this revelation should come in purely to themselves, but to us should come forth impurely, with somewhat, it would appear, with somewhat the taint and the obscuration of human frailty attached to it.-It matters not at what point in the progress of this celestial truth to our world the obscuration has been cast upon it. It comes to us a dim and desecrated thing at last; and man

instead of holding converse with God's unspotted testimony, has an imperfect, a mutilated Bible put into his hands."

(b) "Such being our views, it is the unavoidable consequence of them that we should hold the Bible, for all the purposes of a revelation, to be perfect in its language, as well as perfect in its doctrine. And for this conclusion it is not necessary that we should arbitrate between the theories of superintendence and suggestion. The superintendence that would barely intercept the progress of error, we altogether discard, conceiving, that, if this term be applicable to the process of inspiration at all, it must be that efficient superintendence which not only secures that, negatively, there shall be nothing wrong, -but which also secures that, affirmatively, there should at all times have emanated from the sacred penmen, the fittest topics, and these couched in the fittest and most appropriate expression. Whether this has been affected partly by superintendence and partly by suggestion, or wholly by suggestion, we care not. We have no inclination and no taste for these distinctions. Our cause is independent of them; nor can we fully participate in the fears of those alarmists who think that our cause is materially injured by them. The important question with us is not the process of the manufacture, but the qualities of the resulting commodity. The former we hold not to be a relevant, and we are not sure that it is a legitimate inquiry. It is on the latter we take our stand; and the superabundant testimonies of Scripture on the worth and the perfection and the absolute authority of the Word-these form the strongholds of an argument that goes to establish all which the most rigid advocates for a

total and infallible inspiration ought to desire. Our concern is with the work, and not with the workmanship; nor need we intrude into the mysteries of the hidden operation, if only assured by the explicit testimonies of Scripture that the product of that operation, is, both in substance and expression, a perfect directory of faith and practice. We believe that, in the composition of that record, men not only thought as they were inspired, but spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But our argument for the absolute perfection of Holy Writ is invulnerably beyond the reach even of those who have attempted to trace with geographical precision the line which separates the miraculous from the natural; and tell us when it was that Apostles wrote the words which the Spirit prompted them, and when it was that they wrote the words which the Spirit permitted them. To the result, in our humble apprehension, it positively matters not. Did they speak the words that the Spirit prompted, - these words were therefore the best. Did they speak the words which the Spirit permitted, - it was because these words were the best.

The optimism of the Bible is alike secured in both these ways; and the sanction of the Spirit extended, both in respect of sentiments and of sayings, to every clause of it. In either way, they effectively are the words of the Spirit; and God through the Bible is not presenting truths through the medium of others' language. He in effect has made it His own language; and God, through the Bible, is speaking to us."

(c) "It is the part of Christians to rise like a wall of fire around the integrity and inspiration of Scripture; and to hold them as intact and inviolable as if a rampart were

thrown around them whose foundations are on earth and whose battlements are in heaven. It is this tampering with limits that destroys and defaces everything; and therefore it is precisely when the limit is broken that the alarm should be sounded. If the battle-cry is to be lifted at all, it should be lifted at the outset; and so on the first mingling, by however so slight an infusion, of things human with things divine, all the friends of the Bible should join heart and hand against so foul and fearful a desecration.”-

Chalmers’ Christian Evidences, Vol. ii. pp. 371, 372, 375, 376, 396.

FOOTNOTES

1 Carlyle’s estimate of the Koran is given, in “Hero-worship,” in the following words. “It is a wearisome, confused jumble, crude, recondite, abounding in endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement, insupportable stupidity. In short nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Koran, with its unreadable masses of lumber.”

John Owen says, “There are no other writings in the world, beside the Bible, that ever pretended unto a divine original, but they are not only from their matter, but from the manner of their writing, and the plain footsteps of human artifice and weakness therein, sufficient for their own conviction, and do openly discover their own vain pretensions.” (

The Reason of Faith. Works, vol iv., p. 34, Johnston’s Edition.)

2 “I have always been strongly in favour of secular education in the sense of education without theology.

But I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, could be kept up in the present chaotic state of opinion on these matters without the use of the Bible.”

“Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history;-that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is as familiar to noble and simple from John o’ Groat’s Home to the Land’s End, as Dante and Tasso once were to the Italians;-that it is written in the best and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form,-and finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work?”-
Professor Huxley on School Boards (

Huxley’s Critiques and Essays, p 51.)

3 “The Bible is the fountain of all true patriotism and loyalty in States,-it is the source of all true wisdom, sound policy, and equity in Senates, Council-chambers, and Courts of Justice -it is the spring of all true discipline and obedience, and of all valour and chivalry, in armies and fleets, in the battlefield and on the wide

sea;-it is the origin of all probity and integrity in commerce and in trade, in marts and in shops, in banks and exchanges, in the public resorts of men and the secret silence of the heart; it is the pure, unsullied fountain of all love and peace, happiness, quietness and joy, in families and households.-Wherever it is duly obeyed it makes the desert of the world to rejoice and blossom as the rose.”-

Wordsworth on Inspiration, p. 113.

4 “The little ark of Jewish literature still floats above the surges of time, while mere fragments of the wrecked archives of the huge oriental empires, as well as of the lesser kingdoms that surrounded Judea, are now and then cast on our distant shores. “-

Rogers on the Superhuman Origin of the Bible, p. 311,

5 “We affirm that the Bible is the Word of God, and that it is not marred with human infirmities. We do not imagine, with some, that the Bible is like a threshing-floor, on which wheat and chaff lie mingled together, and that it is left for the reader to winnow and sift the wheat from the chaff by the fan and sieve of his own mind.”-

Wordsworth on “Inspiration.” (P.

11.)

6 It would be easy to multiply texts in proof of this point. I will only name the following: Heb. ii. 8; iii. 7-19; iv. 2-11; xii. 27.

7 “The language of Scripture is necessarily adapted to the common state of man’s intellectual development, in which he is not supposed to be possessed of science. Hence the phrases used by Scripture are precisely those which science soon teaches man to consider inaccurate.

Yet they are not on that account the less fitted for their purpose, for if any terms had been used adapted to a more advanced state of knowledge, they must have been unintelligible to those to whom the Scripture was first addressed.”-

Whewell’s

Philosophy of Inductive Science. Vol. i., p. 636.

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Bible #4 - Prove All Things

"Prove all things: hold fast that which is good."--1
Thessalonians 5:21 _____

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Scotland

You live in days when the text before your eyes is one of the first importance. The truths it contains are especially truths for the times. Give me your attention for a few minutes, and I will try to show you what I mean.

There were three great doctrines or principles which won the battle of the Protestant Reformation. These were first, the sufficiency and supremacy of Holy Scripture:—secondly, the right of private judgment and thirdly, justification by faith only, without the deeds of the law.

These three principles were the keys of the whole controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome. Keep firm hold of them when you argue with a Roman Catholic, and your position is unassailable: no weapon that the Church of Rome can forge against you shall prosper. Give up any one of them, and your cause is lost. Like Samson, with his hair shorn, your strength is gone. Like the Spartans, betrayed at Thermopylae, you are outflanked and surrounded. You cannot maintain your ground. Resistance is useless. Sooner or later you will have to lay down your arms, and surrender at discretion.

Remember this. The Roman Catholic controversy is upon you once more. You must put on the old armour if you

would not have your faith overthrown. The sufficiency of Holy Scripture,—the right of private judgment,—justification by faith only,—these are the three great principles to which you must always cling. Grasp them firmly, and never let them go.

Reader, one of the three great principles to which I have referred appears to me to stand forth in the verse of Scripture which heads this tract,—I mean the right of private judgment. I wish to say something to you about that principle.

The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of St Paul, says to us, "Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good." In these words you have two great truths:

I.—The right, duty, and necessity of private judgment.
"Prove all things."

II.—The duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth. "Hold fast that which is good."

I propose to dwell a little on both these heads.

I.—Let me speak first, of the right, duty, and necessity of private judgment.

When I say the right of private judgment, I mean that every individual Christian has a right to judge for himself by the Word of God, whether that which is put before him as religious truth, is God's truth, or is not.

When I say the duty of private judgment, I mean that God requires every Christian man to use the right of which I have just spoken;—to compare man's words and man's writings with God's revelation, and to make sure that he is not deluded and taken in by false teaching.

And when I say the necessity of private judgment, I mean this,—that it is absolutely needful for every Christian who loves his soul and would not be deceived, to exercise that right, and discharge that duty to which I have referred; seeing that experience shows that the neglect of private judgment has always been the cause of immense evils in the Church of Christ.

Now the Apostle Paul urges all these three points upon your notice when he uses those remarkable words, "Prove all things." I ask your particular attention to that expression. In every point of view it is most weighty and instructive.

Here, you will remember, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Thessalonians,—to a Church which he himself had founded. Here is an inspired Apostle writing to young inexperienced Christians,—writing to the whole professing Church in a certain city, containing laity as well as clergy,—writing too with especial reference to matters of doctrine and preaching, as we know by the verse preceding the text: "Despise not prophesyings." And yet mark what he says: "Prove all things."

He does not say, "Whatsoever apostles,—whatsoever evangelists, pastors and teachers,—whatsoever your bishops,—whatsoever your ministers tell you is truth: that you are to believe." No: he says, "Prove all things." He does not say, "Whatsoever the universal Church pronounces true, that you are to hold." No: he says, "Prove all things."

The principle laid down is this, "Prove all things by the Word of God.—All ministers, all teaching, all preaching, all doctrines, all sermons, all writings, all opinions, all practices,—prove all by the Word of God. Measure all by

the measure of the Bible.—Compare all with the standard of the Bible. Weigh all in the balances of the Bible.—Examine all by the light of the Bible.—Test all in the crucible of the Bible. That which can abide the fire of the Bible, receive, hold, believe and obey. That which cannot abide the fire of the Bible, reject, refuse, repudiate, and cast away."

Reader, this is private judgment. This is the right you are to exercise if you love your soul. You are not to believe things in religion merely because they are said by Popes or Cardinals,—by Bishops or Priests,—by Presbyters or Deacons,—by Churches, Councils, or Synods,—by Fathers, Puritans, or Reformers. You are not to argue, "Such and such things must be true, because these men say so." You are not to do so. You are to prove all things by the Word of God I know such doctrine sounds shocking in some men's ears. But I write it down advisedly, and believe it cannot be disproved. I want to encourage no man in ignorant presumption or ignorant contempt. I praise not the man who seldom reads his Bible, and yet sets himself up to pick holes in his minister's sermons. I praise not the man who knows nothing but a few texts in the New Testament, and yet undertakes to settle questions in divinity which have puzzled God's wisest children. But still I hold with Bishop Bilson (A.D. 1575), that "all hearers have both liberty to discern and a charge to beware seducers; and woe to them that do it not." And I say with Bishop Davenant (A. D. 1627), "We are not to believe all who undertake to teach in the Church, but must take care and weigh with serious examination, whether their doctrine be sound or not." *(see footnote at end of page.)

Reader, men may dislike the doctrine of private judgment, but there is no doubt that it is continually taught in the Word of God.

This is the principle laid down in the eighth chapter of Isaiah, 19th verse. These words were written, remember, at a time when God was more immediately King over His Church, and had more direct communication with it than He has now. They were written at a time when there were men upon earth who had direct revelations from God. Yet what does Isaiah say? "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." If this be not private judgment what is?

This again is the principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Remember what He says:— "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruit." (Matt. vii. 15.) How is it possible that men shall know these false prophets, except they exercise their private judgment as to what their fruits are?

This is the practice you find commended in the Bereans, in the Acts of the Apostles. They did not take the Apostle Paul's word for granted, when he came to preach to them. You are told, that they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so," and "therefore," it is said, "many of them believed." (Acts xvii. 11, 12.) What was this again but private judgment?

This is the spirit of the advice given in 1 Cor. x. 15, "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say;" and in Coloss. ii. 18,— "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit:" and in 1 John iv. 1, —"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God:" and in 2 John 10,— "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house."

If these passages do not recommend the use of private judgment, I do not know what words mean. To my mind they seem to say to every individual Christian, "Prove all things."

Reader, whatever men may say against private judgment, you may depend it cannot be neglected without immense danger to your soul. You may not like it, but you never know what you may come to if you refuse to use it No man can say into what depths of false doctrine you may be drawn if you will not do what God requires of you, and "Prove all things."

Suppose that, in fear of private judgment, you resolve to believe whatever the Church believes. Where is your security against error? The Church is not infallible. There was a time when almost the whole of Christendom embraced the Arian heresy, and did not acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be equal with the Father in all things. There was a time, before the reformation, when the darkness over the face of Europe was a darkness that might be felt. The General Councils of the Church are not infallible. When the whole Church is gathered together in a General Council, what says our Twenty-first Article? "They may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things

ordained by them as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture." The particular branches of the Church are not infallible. Any one of them may err. Many of them have fallen foully, or have been swept away. Where is the Church of Ephesus at this day? Where the Church of Sardis at the present time? Where the Church of Hippo in Africa? Where the Church of Carthage? They are all gone! Not a vestige of any of them is left! Will you then be content to err merely because the Church errs? Will your company be any excuse for your error? Will your erring in company with the Church remove your responsibility for your own soul? Oh, reader, it were surely a thousand times better for a man to stand alone and be saved, than to err in company with the Church, and be lost! It were better to prove all things, and go to heaven, than to say, "I dare not think for myself," and go to hell.

But suppose that, to cut matters short, you resolve to believe whatever your minister believes. Once more I ask, Where is your safety?—Where is your security? Ministers are not infallible, any more than Churches. All of them have not the Spirit of God. The very best of them are only men. Call us Bishops, Priests, Deacons, or whatever names you please, we are all earthen vessels. I speak not merely of Popes, who have promulgated awful superstitions and led abominable lives. I would rather point to the very best of Protestants and say, "Beware of looking upon them as infallible,—beware of thinking of any man (whoever that man may be) that he cannot err." Luther held consubstantiation;—that was a mighty error.

Zuinglius, the Swiss Reformer, went on to battle, and died in the fight;—that was a mighty error. Calvin, the

Geneva Reformer, advised the burning of Servetus;—that was a mighty error. Cranmer and Ridley urged the putting of Hooper into prison because of some trifling dispute about vestments;—that was a mighty error. Whitgift persecuted the Puritans;—that was a mighty error. Wesley and Toplady in the last century quarrelled fiercely about Calvinism;—that was a mighty error. All these things are warnings, if you will only take them. All say, "Cease ye from man." All show us that if a man's religion hangs on ministers, whoever they may be, and not on the Word of God, it hangs on a broken reed. Never make ministers Popes. Follow us so far as we follow Christ, but not a hair's breadth further. Believe whatever we can show you out of the Bible, but do not believe a single word more.

Neglect the duty of private judgment, and you may find, to your cost, the truth of what Whitby says: The best of overseers do sometimes make oversights. You may live to experience the truth of what the Lord said to the Pharisees: When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch. Reader, be very sure no man is safe against error, unless he acts on St. Paul's injunction,—unless he "proves all things" by the Word of God.

Reader, I have said that it is impossible to overrate the evils that may arise from neglecting to exercise your private judgment. I will go further, and say that it is impossible to overrate the blessings which private judgment has conferred both on the world and on the Church.

I ask you to remember that the greatest discoveries in science and in philosophy, beyond all controversy, have arisen from the use of private judgment. To this we owe

the discovery of Galileo, that the earth went round the sun, and not the sun round the earth. To this we owe Columbus's discovery of the new continent of America. To this we owe Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood. To this we owe Jenner's discovery of vaccination. To this we owe the printing press, the steam engine, the power-loom, the electric telegraph, railways, and gas. For all these discoveries we are indebted to men who dared to think for themselves. They were not content with the beaten path of those who had gone before. They were not satisfied with taking for granted that what their fathers believed must be true. They made experiments for themselves. They brought old established theories to the proof; and found that they were worthless. They proclaimed new systems, and invited men to examine them, and test their truth. They bore storms of obloquy and ridicule unmoved. They heard the clamour of prejudiced lovers of old traditions without flinching. And they prospered and succeeded in what they did. We see it now. And we who live in the nineteenth century are reaping the fruit of their use of private judgment.

And, reader, as it has been in science, so also it has been in the history of the Christian religion. The martyrs who stood alone in their day, and shed that blood which has been the seed of Christ's Gospel throughout the world,—the Reformers, who, one after another, rose up in their might to enter the lists with the Church of Rome,—all did what they did, suffered what they suffered, proclaimed what they proclaimed, simply because they exercised their private judgment about what was Christ's truth. Private judgment made the Waldenses, the Albigenses, and the Lollards, count not their lives

dear to them, rather than believe the doctrines of the Church of Rome. Private judgment made Wyckliffe search the Bible in our land, denounce the Romish Friars, and all their impostures,—translate the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and become "the morning star" of the Reformation. Private judgment made Luther examine Tetzel's abominable system of indulgences by the light of the Word. Private judgment led him on, step by step, from one thing to another, guided by the same light, till at length the gulf between him and Rome was a gulf that could not be passed, and the Pope's power in Germany was completely broken. Private judgment made our own English Reformers examine for themselves, and inquire for themselves, as to the true nature of that corrupt system under which they had been born and brought up. Private judgment made them cast off the abominations of Popery, and circulate the Bible among the laity. Private judgment made them draw from the Bible our Articles, compile our Prayer-book, and constitute the Church of England as it is. They broke the fetters of tradition, and dared to think for themselves. They refused to take for granted Rome's pretensions and assertions. They examined them all by the Bible, and because they would not abide the examination, they broke with Rome altogether. All the blessing of Protestantism in England, all that we are enjoying at this very day, we owe to the right exercise of private judgment. Surely if we do not honour private judgment, we are thankless and ungrateful indeed!

Reader, I warn you not to be moved by the common argument, that the right of private judgment is liable to be abused,—that private judgment has done great harm, and should be avoided as a dangerous thing. Never was

there a more miserable argument! Never was there one which when thrashed proves so full of chaff!

Private judgment has been abused! I would like the objector to tell me what good gift of God has not been abused! What high principle can be named that has not been employed for the very worst of purposes? Strength may become tyranny when it is employed by the stronger to coerce the weaker, yet strength is a blessing when properly employed. Liberty may become licentiousness when every man does that which is right in his own eyes, without regarding the rights and feelings of others; yet liberty, rightly used, is a mighty blessing. Because many things may be used improperly, are we, therefore, to give them up altogether? Because opium is used improperly by some, is it not to be used as a medicine on any occasion at all? Because money may be used improperly, is all money to be cast into the sea? You cannot have good in this world without evil. You cannot have private judgment without some abusing it, and turning it to bad account.

But private judgment, people say, has done more than good!

What harm has private judgment done, I would like to know, in matters of religion, compared to the harm that has been done by the neglect of it? Grant, for a moment, that among Protestants who allow private judgment, there are divisions. Grant that in the Church of Rome, where private judgment is forbidden, there are no divisions. I might easily show that Romish unity is far more seeming than real. Bishop Hall, in his book called *The Peace of Rome*, numbers up no less than three hundred differences of opinion maintained in the Romish

Church. I might easily show that the divisions of Protestants are exceedingly exaggerated, and that most of them are upon points of minor importance. I might show that, with all the varieties of Protestantism, as men call them, there is still a vast amount of fundamental unity and substantial agreement among Protestants. No man can read the "Harmony of Protestant Confessions" without seeing that.

But grant for a moment that private judgment has led to divisions, and brought about varieties. I say that these divisions and varieties are but a drop of water when compared with the torrent of abominations that have arisen from the Church of Rome's practice of disallowing private judgment altogether. Place the evils in two scales,—the evils that have arisen from private judgment, and those that have arisen from no man being allowed to think for himself. Weigh the evils one against another, and I have no doubt as to which will be the greatest. Give me Protestant divisions, certainly, rather than Popish unity, with the fruit that it brings forth. Give me Protestant variations, whatever a man like Bossuet may say about them, rather than Romish ignorance,—Romish superstition,—Romish darkness,—and Romish idolatry. Give me the Protestant diversities of England and Scotland, with all their disadvantages, rather than the dead level, both intellectual and spiritual, of the Italian peninsula. Let the two systems be tried by their fruits,—the system that says, "Prove all things," and the system that says, "Dare to have no opinion of your own,"—let them be tried by their fruits in the hearts, in the intellects, in the lives, in all the ways of men, and I have no doubt as to the result.

Reader, I warn you above all things not to be moved by the specious argument, that it is humility to disallow private judgment, that it is humility to have no opinion of your own, that it is the part of a true Christian not to think for himself!

I tell you that such humility is a false humility, a humility that does not deserve that blessed name. Call it rather laziness. Call it rather idleness. Call it rather sloth. It makes a man strip himself of all his responsibility, and throw the whole burden of his soul into the hands of the minister and the Church. It gives a man a mere vicarious religion, a religion by which he places his conscience and all his spiritual concerns under the care of others. He need not trouble himself! He need no longer think for himself! He has embarked in a safe ship, and placed his soul under a safe pilot, and will get to heaven! Oh, beware of supposing that this deserves the name of humility. It is refusing to exercise the gift that God has given you. It is refusing to employ the sword of the Spirit which God has forged for the use of your hand. Blessed be God, our forefathers did not act upon such principles! Had they done so, we should never have had the Reformation. Had they done so, we might have been bowing down to the image of the virgin Mary at this moment, or praying to the spirits of departed saints, or having a service performed in Latin. From such humility may the good Lord ever deliver you!

Reader, as long as you live resolve that you will read for yourself; think for yourself, judge of the Bible for yourself; in the great matters of your soul. Have an opinion of your own. Never be ashamed of saying, "I think that this is right, because I find it in the Bible," and "I think that this is wrong, because I do not find it in

the Bible." "Prove all things," and prove them by the Word of God.

As long as you live, beware of the blindfold system, which many commend in the present day,—the system of following a leader, and having no opinion of their own—the system which practically says, "Only keep your Church, only receive the sacraments, only believe what the ordained ministers who are set over you tell you, and then all shall be well" I warn you that this will not do. I warn you that if you are content with this kind of religion, you are periling your immortal soul. Let the Bible, and not any Church upon earth, or any minister upon earth, be your rule of faith. "Prove all things" by the Word of God.

And, above all, as long as you live, look forward to the great day of judgment. Think of the solemn account which every one of us shall have to give in that day before the judgment seat of Christ. We shall not be judged by Churches. We shall not be judged by whole congregations. We shall be judged individually, each by himself. What shall it profit you or me in that day to say, "Lord, Lord, I believed everything the Church told me. I received and believed everything ordained ministers set before me. I thought that whatever the Church and the ministers said must be right"? What shall it profit us to say this, if we have held some deadly error? Surely, the voice of Him that sits upon the throne will reply, "You had the Scriptures. You had a book plain and easy to him that will read it and search it in a childlike spirit. Why did you not use the Word of God when it was given to you? You had a reasonable soul given you to understand that Bible. Why did you not 'Prove all things,' and thus keep clear of error?" Oh, reader, if you refuse to exercise

your private judgment, think of that awful day, and beware!

II And now let me speak of the duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth.

The words of the Apostle on this subject are pithy and forcible. "Hold fast," he says, "that which is good." It is as if he said to us, "When you have found the truth for yourself; and when you are satisfied that it is Christ's truth,—that truth which the Scriptures set forth,—then get a firm hold upon it, grasp it, keep it in your heart, never let it go."

He speaks as one who knew what the hearts of all Christians are. He knew that our grasp of the Gospel, at our best, is very cold,—that our love soon waxes feeble,—that our faith soon wavers,—that our zeal soon flags,—that familiarity with Christ's truth often brings with it a species of contempt,—that, like Israel, we are apt to be discouraged by the length of our journey,—and, like Peter, ready to sleep one moment and fight the next,—but, like Peter, not ready to watch and pray. All this St. Paul remembered, and, like a faithful watchman, he cries, by the Holy Ghost, "Hold fast that which is good."

He speaks as if he foresaw by the Spirit that the good tidings of the Gospel would soon be corrupted, spoiled, and plucked away from the Church at Thessalonica. He speaks as one who foresaw that Satan and all his agents would labour hard to cast down Christ's truth. He writes as though he would forewarn men of this danger, and he cries, "Hold fast that which is good."

Reader, the advice is always needed as long as the world stands. There is a tendency to decay in the very best of human institutions. The best visible Church of Christ is

not free from this liability to degenerate. It is made up of fallible men. There is always in it a tendency to decay. We see the leaven of evil creeping into many a Church, even in the Apostle's time. There were evils in the Corinthian Church, evils in the Ephesian Church, evils in the Galatian Church. All these things are meant to be our warnings and beacons in these latter times. All show the great necessity laid upon the Church to remember the Apostle's words: "Hold fast that which is good."

Many a Church of Christ since then has fallen away for the want of remembering this principle. Their ministers and members forgot that Satan is always labouring to bring in false doctrine. They forgot that he can transform himself into an angel of light,—that he can make darkness appear light, and light darkness; truth appear falsehood, and falsehood truth. If he cannot destroy Christianity, he ever tries to spoil it. If he cannot prevent the form of godliness, he endeavours to rob Churches of the power. No Church is ever safe that forgets these things, and does not bear in mind the Apostle's injunction: "Hold fast that which is good."

Reader, if ever there was a time in the world when Churches were put upon their trial, whether they would hold fast the truth or not, that time is the present time, and those Churches are the Protestant Churches of our own land. Popery, that old enemy of our nation, is coming in upon us in this day like a flood. We are assaulted by open enemies without, and betrayed continually by false friends within. The numbers of Roman Catholic churches, and chapels, and schools, and conventual and monastic establishments, are continually increasing around us. Month after month brings tidings of some new defection from the ranks of the Church of

England to the ranks of the Church of Rome. Already the clergy of the Church of Rome are using great swelling words about things to come, and boasting that, sooner or later, England shall once more be brought back to the orbit from whence she fell, and take her place in the Catholic system. Already the Pope is parcelling our country into bishoprics, and speaks like one who fancies that by-and-by he shall divide the spoil. Already he seems to foresee a time when England shall be as the patrimony of St. Peter's, when London shall be as Rome, when St Paul's shall be as St. Peter's, and Lambeth Palace shall be as the Vatican itself. Surely, now or never, we ought all of us to awake, and "Hold fast that which is good."

We supposed, some of us, in our blindness, that the power of the Church of Rome was ended. We dreamed, some of us, in our folly, that the Reformation had ended the Popish controversy, and that if Romanism did survive, Romanism was altogether changed. If we did think so, we have lived to learn that we made a most grievous mistake. Rome never changes. It is her boast that she is always the same. The snake is not killed. He was scotched at the time of the Reformation, but was not destroyed. The Romish Antichrist is not dead. He was cast down for a little season, like the fabled giant buried under Etna, but his deadly wound is healed, the grave is opening once more, and Antichrist is coming forth. The unclean spirit of Popery is not laid in his own place. Rather he seems to say, "My house in England is now swept and garnished for me; let me return to the place from whence I came forth."

And, reader, the question is now, whether we are going to abide quietly, sit still, and fold our hands, and do

nothing to resist the assault. Are we really men of understanding of the times? Do we know the day of our visitation? Surely, this is a crisis in the history of our Churches and of our land. It is a time which will soon prove whether we know the value of our privileges, or whether, like Amalek, "the first of the nations," our "latter end shall be that we perish for ever." It is a time which will soon prove whether we intend to allow our candlestick to be quietly removed, or repent, and do our first works, lest any man should take our crown. If we love the open Bible,—if we love the preaching of the Gospel,—if we love the freedom of reading that Bible, no man letting or hindering us, and the opportunity of hearing that Gospel, no man forbidding us —if we love civil liberty—if we love religious liberty—if these are precious to our souls, we must all make up our minds to hold fast, lest by and by we lose all.

Reader, if we mean to hold fast, every parish, every congregation, every Christian man, and every Christian woman, must do their part in contending for the truth. Each should work, and each should pray, and each should labour as if the preservation of the pure Gospel depended upon himself or herself, and upon no one else at all. The bishops must not leave the matter to the priests, nor the priests leave the matter to the bishops. The clergy must not leave the matter to the laity, nor the laity to the clergy. The Parliament must not leave the matter to the country, nor the country to the Parliament. The rich must not leave the matter to the poor, nor the poor to the rich. We must all Work. Every living soul has a sphere of influence. Let him see to it that he fills it. Every living soul can throw some weight into the scale of the Gospel. Let him see to it that he casts it in. Let

every one know his own individual responsibility in this matter; and all, by God's help, will be well.

If we would hold fast that which is good, we must never tolerate or countenance any doctrine which is not the pure doctrine of Christ's Gospel. There is a hatred which is downright charity—that is the hatred of erroneous doctrine. There is an intolerance which is downright praiseworthy—that is the intolerance of false teaching in the pulpit. Who would ever think of tolerating a little poison given to him day by day? If men come among you who do not preach "all the counsel of God," who do not preach of Christ, and sin, and holiness, of ruin, and redemption, and regeneration; and do not preach of these things in a Scriptural way, you ought to cease to hear them. You ought to act upon the injunction given by the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction which causes to err from the words of knowledge." (Prov. xix. 27.) You ought to carry out the spirit shown by the Apostle Paul, in Gal. i. 8: "Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other doctrine unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." If we can bear to hear Christ's truth mangled or adulterated,—and can see no harm in listening to that which is another Gospel,—and can sit at ease while sham Christianity is poured into our ears,—and can go home comfortably afterwards, and not burn with holy indignation,—if this be the case, there is little chance of our ever doing much to resist Rome. If we are content to hear Jesus Christ not put in His rightful place, we are not men and women who are likely to do Christ much service, or fight a good fight on His side. He that is not zealous against error, is not likely to be zealous for truth.

If we would hold fast the truth, we must be ready to unite with all who hold the truth, and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We must be ready to lay aside all minor questions as things of subordinate importance. Establishment or no establishment, liturgy or no liturgy, —surplice or no surplice,—bishops or presbyters,—all these points of difference however important they may be in their place and in their proportion,—all ought to be regarded as subordinate questions. I ask no man to give up his private opinions about them. I wish no man to do violence to his conscience. All I say is, that these questions are wood, hay, and stubble, when the very foundations of the faith are in danger. The Philistines are upon us. Can we make common cause against them, or can we not? This is the one point for our consideration. Surely it is not right to say that we expect to spend eternity with men in heaven, and yet cannot work for a few years with them in this world. It is nonsense to talk of alliance and union, if in a day like this there is to be no co-operation. The presence of a common foe ought to sink minor differences. We must hold together. Depend upon it, all Protestants must hold together, if they mean to "hold fast that which is good."

Some men may say, "This is very troublesome." Some may say, "Why not sit still and be quiet?" Some may say, "Oh, that horrid controversy! What need is there for all this trouble? Why should we care so much about these points of difference?" I ask, what good thing was ever got or ever kept without trouble? Gold does not lie in English cornfields, but at the bottom of Californian rivers. Pearls do not grow in English hedges, but deep down in Indian seas. Difficulties are never overcome without struggles. Mountains are seldom climbed

without fatigue. Oceans are not crossed without tossings on the waves. Peace is seldom obtained without war. And Christ's truth is seldom made a nation's property, and kept a nation's property, without pains, without struggles, and without trouble.

Let the man who talks of

"trouble" tell me where we should be at this day if our forefathers had not taken some trouble? Where would be the Gospel of England if martyrs had not given their bodies to be burned? Who shall estimate our debt to Cranmer, Latimer, Hooper, Ridley and Taylor, and their brethren? They held fast that which is good. They would not give up one jot. They counted not their lives dear for the Gospel's sake. They laboured, and they travailed, and we have entered into their labours. Shame upon us if we will not take a little trouble to keep with us what they so nobly won! Trouble or no trouble,—pains or no pains,—controversy, or no controversy,—one thing is very sure: that nothing but Christ's Gospel will ever do good to our own souls. Nothing else will maintain our Churches. Nothing else will ever bring down God's blessing upon our land. If, therefore, we love our own souls, or if we love our country's prosperity, or if we love to keep our Churches standing, we must remember the Apostles words, and "hold fast" firmly the Gospel, and refuse to let it go.

And now, reader, I have set before you two things.

One is the right, the duty, and necessity of private judgment.

The other is the duty and necessity of keeping firm hold upon truth.—It only remains for me to apply these things

to your own individual conscience by a few concluding words.

For one thing, if it be your duty to "prove all things," let me beseech and exhort you to arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of the written Word of God. Read your Bible regularly. Become familiar with your Bible. Prove all religious truth when it is brought before you by the Bible. A little knowledge of the Bible will not suffice. Depend upon it, a man must know his Bible well if he is to prove religious teachings by it; and he must read it regularly if he would know it well. There is no royal road to a knowledge of the Bible. There must be reading daily, regular reading of the Book, or the Book will not be known. As one said quaintly, but most truly, "Justification may be by faith, but a knowledge of the Bible comes only by works." The devil can quote Scripture. He could go to our Lord and quote Scripture when he wished to tempt Him. A man must be able to say, from his knowledge of Scripture, when he hears Scripture falsely quoted, "Thus it is written again," lest he be deceived. Neglect your Bible, and nothing that I know of can prevent your becoming a Roman Catholic, an Arminian, a Socinian, a Jew, or a Turk, if a plausible advocate of any of these false systems shall happen to meet you.

For another thing, if it be right to "prove all things," take care to try every Roman Catholic doctrine, by whomsoever put forward, by the written Word of God. Believe nothing, however speciously advanced—believe nothing, with whatever weight of authority brought forward,—believe nothing, though supported by all the Fathers,—believe nothing, except it can be proved to you out of Scripture. That alone is infallible. That alone is

light. That alone is God's measure of truth and falsehood. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The New Zealanders' answer to the Romish priests who went among them is an answer never to be forgotten. They heard these priests urge upon them the worship of the Virgin Mary. They heard them recommend them to pray to saints. They heard them advocate the use of images. They heard them speak of the authority of the Church of Rome, the supremacy of the Pope, the antiquity of the Romish communion. They knew the Bible, and they heard all this calmly, and gave one simple but memorable answer:

"It cannot be true, because it is not in the Book." All the learning in the world could never have supplied a better answer than that. Latimer, or Knox, or Owen, could never have made a more crushing reply. Let this be our rule when we are attacked by Romanists; let us hold fast the sword of the Spirit, and say in reply to all their arguments, "It cannot be true, because it is not in the Book."

Last of all, if it be right to "hold fast that which is good," let us make sure that we have each laid hold personally upon Christ's truth for ourselves. Reader, it will not save you and me to know all controversies, and to be able to detect everything which is false. Head knowledge will never bring you and me to heaven. It will not save us to be able to argue and reason with Roman Catholics, or to detect the errors of Popes' Bulls, or Pastoral Letters. Let us see that we each lay hold upon Jesus Christ for ourselves, by our own personal faith. Let us see to it that we each flee for refuge, and lay hold upon the hope set before us in His glorious Gospel. Let us do this, and all shall be well with us, whatever else may go ill. Let us do

this, and then all things are ours. The Church may fall. The State may go to ruin. The foundations of all establishments may be shaken. The enemies of truth may for a season prevail. But as for us, all shall be well. We shall have in this world peace, and, in the world which is to come life everlasting, for we shall have Christ, and having Him, we have all. This is real good, lasting good,—good in sickness, good in health, good in life, good in death, good in time, and good in eternity. All other things are but uncertain. They all wear out. They fade. They droop. They wither. They decay. The longer we have them the more worthless we find them, and the more satisfied we become that everything here below is "vanity and vexation of spirit." But as for hope in Christ, that is always good. The longer we use it the better it seems. The more we wear it in our hearts the brighter it will look. It is good when we first have it. It is better far when we grow older. It is better still in the day of trial, and the hour of death. And best of all, depend upon it, will it prove in the day of judgment.

Reader, if you have not yet laid hold on this hope in Christ, seek it at once. Call on the Lord Jesus to give it to you. Give Him no rest till you know and feel that you are His.

If you have laid hold on this hope, hold it fast. Prize it highly, for it will stand by you when everything else fails.

* "The people of God are called to try the truth, to judge between good and ill, between light and darkness. God hath made them the promise of His Spirit, and hath left unto them His Word. They of Berea, when they heard the preaching of Paul, searched the Scriptures daily,

whether those things were so as he taught them, and many of them believed. So do you: give heed to instruction and yet receive not all things without proof and trial that they are not contrary to the wholesome doctrine of the Word of God."

—Bishop

Jewell, author of the *Apology of the Church of England*. 1553.

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Calvary!

You probably know that Calvary was a place close to Jerusalem, where the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified. We know nothing else about Calvary beside this. I call this tract "Calvary," because I am going to speak to you about the sufferings and crucifixion of Christ.

I am afraid that much ignorance prevails among people on the subject of Jesus Christ's sufferings. I suspect that many see no peculiar glory and beauty in the history of the crucifixion: on the contrary; they think it painful, humbling, and degrading. They do not see much profit in the story of Christ's death and sufferings: they rather turn from it as an unpleasant thing.

Now I believe that such persons are quite wrong. I cannot agree with them. I believe it is an excellent thing for us all to be continually dwelling on the crucifixion of Christ. That is a good thing to be often reminded how Jesus was betrayed into the hands of wicked men,-how they condemned Him with most unjust judgment,-how they spit on Him, scourged Him, beat Him, and crowned Him with thorns,-how they led Him forth as a lamb to the slaughter, without His murmuring or resisting, -how they drove the nails through His hands and feet, and set Him on Calvary between two thieves, how they pierced His side with a spear, mocked Him in His suffering, and let Him hang there naked and bleeding till He died. Of all these things, I say, it is good to be reminded. It is not for nothing that the crucifixion is described four times over in the New Testament. There are very few things that all the four writers of the Gospel describe: generally

speaking, if Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell a thing in our Lord's history, John does not tell it; but there is one thing that all the four give us most fully, and that one thing is the story of the cross. This is a telling fact, and not to be overlooked.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were fore-ordained. They did not come on Him by chance or accident: they were all planned, counselled, and determined from all eternity; the cross was foreseen, in all the provisions of the everlasting Trinity for the salvation of sinners. In the purposes of God the cross was set up from everlasting. Not one throb of pain did Jesus feel, not one precious drop of blood did Jesus shed, which had not been appointed long ago. Infinite wisdom planned that redemption should be by the cross: infinite wisdom brought Jesus to the cross in due time. He was crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings at Calvary were necessary for man's salvation. He had to bear our sins, if ever they were to be borne at all: with His stripes alone could we be healed. This was the one payment of our debts that God would accept; this was the great sacrifice on which our eternal life depended. If Christ had not gone to the cross and suffered in our stead, the just for the unjust, there would not have been a spark of hope for us; there would have been a mighty gulf between ourselves and God, which no man ever could have passed. The cross was necessary, in order that there might be an atonement for sin.

People seem to me to forget that all Christ's sufferings were endured voluntary and of His own free will. He was

under no compulsion: of His own choice He laid down His life: of His own choice He went to Calvary to finish the work He came to do. He might easily have summoned legions of angels with a word, and scattered Pilate and Herod, and all their armies, like chaff before the wind; but He was a willing sufferer: His heart was set on the salvation of sinners. He was resolved to open a fountain for all sin and uncleanness, by shedding His own blood.

Reader, when I think of all this, I see nothing painful or disagreeable in the subject of Christ's crucifixion; on the contrary, I see in it wisdom and power, peace and hope, joy and gladness, comfort and consolation. The more I keep the cross in my mind's eye, the more fulness I seem to discern in it; the longer I dwell on the crucifixion in my thoughts, the more I am satisfied that there is more to be learned at Calvary than anywhere else in the world.

Would I know the length and breadth of

God the Father's love towards a sinful world? Where shall I see it most displayed? Shall I look at His glorious sun, shining down daily on the unthankful and evil? Shall I look at the seed time and harvest, returning in regular yearly succession? Oh, no! I can find a stronger proof of love than anything of this sort. I look at the cross of Christ: I see in it not the cause of the Father's love, but the effect. There I see that God so loved this wicked world, that He gave His only begotten Son, -gave Him to suffer and die-that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. I know that the Father loves us, because He did not withhold from us His Son, His only Son. Ah, reader, I might sometimes

fancy that God the Father is too high and holy to care for such miserable, corrupt creatures as we are: but I cannot, must not, dare not think it, when I look at Christ's sufferings on Calvary.

Would I know how exceedingly sinful and abominable sin is in the sight of God? Where shall I see that most fully brought out? Shall I turn to the history of the flood, and read how sin drowned the world? Shall I go to the shore of the Dead Sea, and mark what sin brought on Sodom and Gomorrah? Shall I turn to the wandering Jews, and observe how sin has scattered them over the face of the earth? No: I can find a clearer proof still, I look at what happened on Calvary. There I see that sin is so black and damnable that nothing but the blood of God's own Son can wash it away; there I see that sin has so separated me from my holy Maker that all the angels in heaven could never have made peace between us: nothing could reconcile us, short of the death of Christ. Ah, if I listened to the wretched talk of proud men I might sometimes fancy sin was not so very sinful; but I cannot think little of sin when I look at Calvary.

Would I know the fullness and completeness of the salvation God has provided for sinners? Where shall I see it most distinctly? Shall I go to the general declarations in the Bible about God's mercy? Shall I rest in the general truth that God is a God of love? Oh, no! I will look at the crucifixion at Calvary. I find no evidence like that: I find no balm for a sore conscience and a troubled heart like the sight of Jesus dying for me on the accursed tree. There I see that a full payment has been made for all my enormous debts. The curse of that law which I have broken, has come down on One who there suffered in my stead; the demands of that law are all

satisfied: payment has been made for me even to the uttermost farthing. It will not be required twice over. Ah, I might sometimes imagine I was too bad to be forgiven; my own heart sometimes whispers that I am too wicked to be saved. But I know in my better moments this is all my foolish unbelief; I read an answer to my doubts in the blood shed on Calvary. I feel sure that there is a way to heaven for the very vilest of men, when I look at the cross.

Would I find strong reasons for being a holy man? Whither shall I turn for them? Shall I listen to the ten commandments merely? Shall I study the examples given me in the Bible of what grace can do? Shall I meditate on the rewards of heaven, and the punishments of hell? Is there no stronger motive still? Yes: I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. There I see the love of Christ constraining me to live not unto myself, but unto Him: there I see that I am not my own now, - I am bought with a price: I am bound by the most solemn obligations to glorify Jesus with body and spirit, which are His. There I see that Jesus gave Himself for me, not only to redeem me from iniquity, but also to purify me, and make me one of a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He bore my sins in His own body on the tree, that I being dead unto sin should live unto righteousness. Ah, reader, there is nothing so sanctifying as a clear view of the cross of Christ! It crucifies the world unto us, and us unto the world. How can we love sin when we remember that because of our sins Jesus died? Surely none ought to be so holy as the disciples of a crucified Lord.

Would I learn how to be contented and cheerful under all the cares and anxieties of life? What school shall I go to? How shall I attain this state of mind most easily?

Shall I look at the sovereignty of God, the wisdom of God, the providence of God, the love of God? It is well to do so: but I have a better argument still. I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. I feel that He who spared not His only begotten Son but delivered Him up to die for me, will surely with Him give me all things that I really need: He that endured that pain for my soul, will surely not withhold from me anything that is really good: He that has done the greater things for me, will doubtless do the lesser things also. He that gave His own blood to procure me a home, will unquestionably supply me with all that is really profitable for me by the way. Ah, reader, there is no school for learning contentment that can be compared with Calvary and the foot of the cross.

Would I gather arguments for hoping that I shall never be cast away?

Where shall I go to find them? Shall I look at my own graces and gifts? Shall I take comfort in my own faith and love, and penitence and zeal, and prayer? Shall I turn to my own heart, and say, "This same heart will never be false and cold"? Oh, no! God forbid! I will look at Calvary and the crucifixion. This is my grand argument: this is my mainstay. I cannot think that He who went through such sufferings to redeem my soul, will let that soul perish after all, when it has once cast itself on Him. Oh, no! What Jesus paid for Jesus will surely keep. He paid dearly for it: He will not let it easily be lost. He died for me when I was yet a dark sinner: He will never forsake me after I have believed. Ah, reader, when Satan tempts you to doubt whether Christ's people will be kept from falling, you should tell Satan that you cannot despair when you look at the cross. And now,

reader, will you marvel when I say that all Christians ought to make much of the crucifixion? Will you not rather wonder that any can hear of Christ's sufferings on Calvary and remain unmoved? I declare I know no greater proof of man's depravity than the fact that thousands of so-called Christians see nothing lovely in the cross. Well may our hearts be called stony, well may the eyes of our mind be called blind, well may our whole nature be called diseased, well may we all be called dead,-when the cross of Christ is heard of, and yet neglected. Surely we may take up the words of the prophet, and say, "Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth: a wonderful and horrible thing is done," -Christ was crucified for sinners, and yet many Christians live as if He was never crucified at all!

Reader, if you never thought much about Calvary and the crucifixion before,-I trust you will have learned something today.

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Child of God

HEIRS OF GOD

"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15)

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16)

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory." (Romans 8:17)

The people of whom the Apostle Paul speaks of in the verses before us today are the richest people on the earth. It just has to be. They are called "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

The inheritance of these people is the only inheritance really worth having; all others are unsatisfying and disappointing .

They bring with them many concerns. They cannot cure an aching heart, or lighten a heavy conscience; they cannot prevent family troubles; they cannot prevent sicknesses, misfortunes, separations, and deaths. But there are no disappointments among the "heirs of God."

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance which can be kept forever; all others must be left in the hour of death, if they have not been taken away before. Those

who are extremely wealthy cannot carry anything with them beyond the grave. But it is not so with the "heirs of God." Their inheritance is eternal.

The inheritance I speak of is the only inheritance which is within everybody's reach.

Most men can never obtain riches and greatness, though they work hard for them all of their lives; but glory, honor, and eternal life, are offered to every man freely, who is willing to accept them on God's terms. "Whoever wants to," may be an "heir of God and co-heirs with Christ."

If any reader of this paper wishes to have a portion of this inheritance, let him know that he must be a member of that one family on earth to which it belongs, and that is the family of all true Christians. If you desire to have glory in heaven, then you must become one of God's children on earth. I write this paper in order to persuade you to become a child of God today, if you are not one already. I write it to persuade you to be absolutely certain that you are one, if at present you only have a vague hope, and nothing more. No one but true Christians are the children of God! No one but the children of God are heirs of God! Give me your attention, while I try to unfold these things to you, and to show you the lessons contained in the verses which head this paper.

I. Let me show the relationship of all true Christians to God. They are "sons of God."

II. Let me show the special evidences of this relationship. True Christians are "led by the Spirit." They have "the Spirit of sonship." They have the

"testimony of the Spirit." They "share in the sufferings of Christ."

III. Let me show the privileges of this relationship. True Christians are "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

I. First let me show the relationship of all true Christians to God. They are God's "SONS"

I know of no greater and more wonderful word that could have been chosen. To be servants of God—to be subjects, soldiers, disciples, friends—all these are excellent titles; but to be the "sons" of God is even a more superior designation. The Scripture says, "A slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever." (John 8:35)

To be a son of the rich and noble people in this world—to be the son of princes and kings of the earth—this is commonly considered a great temporary advantage and privilege. But to be a son of the King of kings, and Lord of lords—to be a son of the High and Holy One—who lives and dwells in eternity—this is something far greater. And yet this is the privilege of every true Christian.

The son of an earthly parent naturally looks to his father for affection, support, provision, and education. There is a home always open to him. There is love which, generally speaking, no amount of bad behavior can completely extinguish. All these are things that generally belong to all the sons of this world. Think then how great is the privilege of that poor sinner of mankind who can say of God, "He is my Father."

But how can sinful men like ourselves become sons of God? When do we enter into this glorious relationship?

We are not the sons of God by nature. We were not born as "sons of God" when we came into the world. No man has a natural right to look to God as His Father. It is a vile heresy to say that he has. Men are said to be born poets and painters—but men are never born sons of God. The Book of Ephesians tells us, "Like the rest, we were by nature objects (children) of wrath." (Ephesians 2:3) The Book of John says, "We know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God." (1 John 3:10) The doctrine of the Church of England wisely follows the doctrines of the Bible, and teaches, "By nature we are born in sin, and children of wrath." Yes: we are all, in our natural state, children of the devil, rather than children of God! Sin is indeed hereditary, and runs in the family of Adam. Grace is not hereditary, and holy men have not, as a matter of course, holy sons. Then, how and when does this mighty change and transformation take place? When and in what manner do sinners become the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?" (2 Corinthians 6:18)

Men become sons of God in the day that the Holy Spirit leads them to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, and not before. (Note: the reader will of course understand that I am not speaking of children who die in infancy, or of persons who live and die so mentally retarded that they could not begin to understand the gospel) What does the Book of Galatians say? "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26) What does the Book of 1 Corinthians say? "It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus." (1 Corinthians 1:30) What does the Book of John say? "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the

right (or privilege) to become children of God." (John 1:12) Faith unites the sinner to the Son of God and makes him one of His members. Faith makes him one of those in whom the Father sees no spot, and is well-pleased.

Faith marries him to the beloved Son of God, and entitles him to be counted among the sons. Faith gives him fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3) Faith grafts him into the Father's family, and opens up to him a room in the Father's house. Faith gives him life instead of death, and makes him a son, instead of being a servant. Show me a man that has this faith, and then despite whatever church he goes to, I will say that he is a son of God.

This is one of those points we should never forget. You and I know nothing of a man's sonship until he believes. No doubt the sons of God are foreknown and chosen from all eternity, and predestinated to adoption. But remember, it is not until they are called in due time, and believe—it is not until then that you and I can be certain they are sons. It is not until they repent and believe, that the angels of God rejoice over them. The angels cannot read the book of God's election: they do not know who "His cherished ones" are on the earth. (Psalm 83:3) They rejoice over no man until he believes. But when they see some poor sinner repenting and believing, then there is joy among them—joy that one more burning stick is snatched from the fire, and one more son and heir is born again to the Father in heaven. (Amos 4:11; Luke 15:10) But once more I say, you and I know nothing certain about a man's sonship to God until he believes in Christ.

I warn you to beware of the delusive notion that all men and women are children of God, whether they have faith in Christ or not. It is a wild theory which many are clinging to in these days, but one which cannot be proved out of the Word of God. It is a dangerous dream, with which many are trying to soothe themselves, but one from which there will be a fearful waking up in the last day.

I do not pretend to deny that God, in a certain sense, is the universal Father of all mankind,. He is the Great First Cause of all things. He is the Creator of all mankind, and in Him alone, all men, whether Christians or heathens, "live and move and have their being." All this is unquestionably true. In this sense Paul told the Athenians, that their own poet had said, "We are His offspring." (Acts 17:28) But this "offspring" status gives no man a title to heaven. The "offspring" status which we have by creation is one which belongs to stones, trees, animals, or even to the demons, as much as to us. (Job 1:6)

I do not deny that God loves all mankind with a love of pity and compassion. "He has compassion on all He has made." "He does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." "He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone." All this I admit completely. In this sense our Lord Jesus tells us, "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." (Psalm 145:9; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:32; John 3:16)

I utterly deny the doctrine that God is a reconciled and pardoning Father to anyone except those who have united themselves to His Son Jesus Christ, and that no

one can be united with Jesus Christ who does not believe in Him for salvation. The holiness and justice of God stand against such a doctrine. They make it impossible for sinful men to approach God, except through the Mediator. They tell us that God is "a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29) against those who are without Christ. The whole New Testament is against the doctrine. It teaches that no man can claim an interest in Christ unless he will receive Him as his Mediator, and believe on Him as his Savior. Where there is no faith in Christ it is a dangerous error to say that a man may take comfort in God as his Father. God is a reconciled Father to no one but those who are united with Christ.

It is unreasonable to talk of the view I am now upholding as being narrow-mined and harsh. The Gospel sets an open door before every man. Its promises are wide and full. Its invitations are earnest and tender. Its requirements are simple and clear, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." But to say that proud men, who will not bow their necks to the easy yoke of Christ, and worldly men who are determined to have their own way and their sins—to say that such men have a right to claim an interest in Christ, and a right to call themselves sons of God, is to say what never can be proved from Scripture. God offers to be their Father; but He does it on certain clear terms—they must draw near to Him through Christ. Christ offers to be their Savior; but in doing so He gives one simple requirement—they must commit their souls to Him, and give Him their hearts. They refuse the terms, and yet dare to call God their Father! They scorn the requirement, and yet dare to hope that Christ will save them! God is to be their Father—but on their own terms! Christ is to be their

Savior—but on their own conditions! What can be more unreasonable? What can be more proud? What can be more unholy than such a doctrine as this? Let us beware of it, for it is a common doctrine in these latter days. Let us beware of it, for it is often falsely put forward and sounds beautiful and loving in the mouth of poets, novelists, sentimentalists, and tender-hearted women. Let us beware of it, unless we intend to throw aside our Bible altogether, and set up ourselves to be wiser than God. Let us stand fast on the old Scriptural ground:

No sonship to God without Christ! No interest in Christ without faith!

I pray to God there was not a need to give this kind of warning. But I have every reason to think they need to be given clearly and unmistakably. There is a school of theology rising up in this day, which appears to me most eminently calculated to promote unfaithfulness, to help the devil, and to ruin souls. It comes to us like Joab to Amasa, with the highest professions of kindness, generosity, and love. According to this theology, God is all mercy and love—His holiness and justice are completely ignored! Hell is never spoken of in this theology—it speaks only of heaven! Damnation is never mentioned—it is treated as an impossible thing—they say that all men and women will saved! Faith, and the work of the Spirit, are refined away into nothing at all! "Everyone who believes anything has faith! Everyone who thinks anything has the Spirit! Everyone is right! No one is wrong! No one is to blame for any action they may commit! It is the result of his position in life. It is because of his circumstances! He is not accountable for his opinions, any more than for the color of his skin! He must be what he is! The Bible is a imperfect book! It is

old-fashioned! It is obsolete! We may believe just as much of it as we please, and no more!" I solemnly warn men to beware of all this kind of theology. In spite of all the fashionable words used, such as, "generosity," and "kindness," and "openness," and "freedom from bigotry," and so forth, I do believe it is a theology that leads people directly into hell.

(a) Facts speak directly against the teachers of this theology.

Let them visit Mesopotamia, and see what desolation reigns where Nineveh and Babylon once stood. Let them go to the shores of the Dead Sea, and look down into its mysterious bitter waters. Let them travel in Palestine, and ask what has turned that fertile country into a wilderness. Let them observe the wandering Jews, scattered over the face of the world, without a land of their own, and yet never absorbed among other nations. And then let them tell us, if they dare, that God is so entirely a God of mercy and love that He never does and never will punish sin.

(b) The conscience of man speaks directly against these teachers.

Let them go to the bedside of some dying child, and try to comfort him with their doctrines. Let them see if their puffed up theories will calm his gnawing, restless anxiety about the future, and enable him to die in peace. Let them show us, if they can, a few well-authenticated cases of joy and happiness in death without Bible promises—without conversion, and without that faith in the blood of Christ, which old-fashioned theology commands. Yes, when men are leaving this world, conscience makes sad work of the new systems of

theology preached in these latter days. Conscience is not easily satisfied, in a dying hour, that there is no such place as hell.

(c) Every reasonable conception that we can form of a future state speaks directly against these teachers.

Imagine a heaven which would contain all of mankind! Imagine a heaven in which holy and unholy, pure and impure, good and bad, would be all gathered together in one confused mass! What point of union would there be in such a company? What would be the common bond of harmony and brotherhood? What unity, what harmony, what peace, what oneness of spirit could exist? Surely the mind rebels against the idea of a heaven in which there would be no distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between Pharaoh and Moses, between Abraham and the Sodomites, between Paul and Nero, between Peter and Judas Iscariot, between the man who dies in the act of murder or drunkenness, and men like Baxter, and McCheyne! Surely an eternity in such a miserably confused crowd would be worse than annihilation itself! Surely such a heaven would be no better than hell!

(d)

Holiness and morality speak directly against these teachers.

If all men and women are God's children, regardless of the difference between them in their lives—and everyone one of them is going to heaven, however different they may be from one another here in the world, then what is the use of striving after holiness? What motive remains for living soberly, righteously, and godly? What does it matter how men conduct

themselves, if everyone goes to heaven, and nobody goes to hell? Surely the heathen poets and philosophers of Greece and Rome could tell us something better and wiser than this! Surely a doctrine which is subversive of holiness and morality, and takes away all motives to seek to be pure carries on the face of it the stamp of its origin. It is of earth, and not of heaven. It is of the devil, and not of God.

(e) The Bible speaks against these teachers from first to last.

Hundreds of texts might be quoted which are diametrically opposed to their theories. These texts must be totally rejected, if the Bible is to square with their views. To suit their theology, these Bible truths must be thrown away! At this rate the authority of the whole Bible is soon destroyed. And what do men give us in its place? Nothing, nothing, at all! They rob us of the bread of life, and do not even give us a stone in its place.

Once more I warn everyone into whose hands this paper may fall to beware of this theology. I charge you to hold fast to the doctrine which I have been endeavoring to uphold in this paper. Remember what I have said, and never let it go. No inheritance of glory without sonship to God! No sonship to God without an interest in Christ! No interest in Christ without your own personal faith! This is God's truth. Never forsake it.

Who now among the readers of this paper desires to know whether he is a son of God? Ask yourself this question, and ask it this day—and ask it in God's sight, whether you have repented and believed. Ask yourself whether you are personally acquainted with Christ, and united to Him in heart. If not you may be very sure you

are no son of God. You are not yet born again. You are still in your sins. God may be your Creator, but He is not your reconciled and pardoning Father.

Yes! though the Church and the world may agree to tell you to the contrary—though clergy and laity unite in flattering you—your sonship is worth little or nothing in the sight of God. Let God be true and every man a liar. Without faith in Christ you are no son of God: you are not born again.

Who is there among the readers of this paper who desires to become a son of God? Let that person see and feel his sins, and flee to Christ for salvation, and this day he will be placed among the children. Only acknowledge your iniquity, and grab hold of the hand that Jesus holds to you this day, and sonship, with all its privileges, is yours. Only confess your sins, and bring them to Christ, and God is "faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) This very day old things will pass away, and all things become new. This very day you will be forgiven, pardoned, "to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves." (Ephesians 1:6) This very day you will have a new name given to you in heaven. You began reading this paper as a child of wrath. You will lie down tonight as a child of God. Mark this, if your professed desire after sonship is sincere—if you are truly weary of your sins, and have really something more than a lazy wish to be free—there is real comfort for you. It is all true. It is all written in Scripture, just like I have written it in this paper. I dare not raise barriers between you and God. This day I say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," and you will become "a son," and be saved.

Who is there among the readers of this paper that is truly a son of God? Rejoice, I say, and be extremely thankful and joyful of your privileges. Rejoice, for you have good cause to be thankful. Remember the words of the beloved apostle: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1) How wonderful that heaven should look down on earth—that the Holy God should set His affections on sinful man, and admit him into His family! Even though the world does not understand you! Even though the men of this world laugh at you, and reject your name as evil! Let them laugh if they will. God is your Father. You have no need to be ashamed. The Queen can create a nobleman. The Bishops can ordain clergymen. But Queen, Bishops, priests, and deacons—all together cannot, of their own power, make one son of God, or one of greater dignity than a son of God. The man that can call God his Father, and Christ his elder brother—that man may be poor and lowly, yet he never needs to be ashamed.

II. Let me show, in the second place, the special evidences of the true Christian's relation to God.

How can a man be sure of his own sonship? How can he find out whether he is one that has come to Christ by faith and been born again? What are the marks and signs by which the "sons of God" may be known? This is a question which all who love eternal life ought to ask. This is a question to which the verses of Scripture, which I am asking you to consider, like many others, supply an answer.

(1) The sons of God, for one thing, are all led by His Spirit.

What does the Scripture say, which heads this paper?
"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

They are all under the leading and teaching of a power which is Almighty, though unseen—the power of the Holy Spirit. They no longer turn to their own way, nor walk in the light of their own eyes, nor follow their own natural heart's desire. The Spirit leads them. The Spirit guides them. There is a movement in their hearts, lives, and affections, which they feel, though they may not be able to explain, and a movement which is always more or less in the same direction.

They are led away from sin—away from self-righteousness—away from the world. This is the road by which the Spirit leads God's children. Those whom God adopts He teaches and trains. He shows them their own hearts. He makes them weary of their own ways. He makes them long for inward peace.

They are led to Christ. They are led to the Bible. They are led to prayer. They are led to holiness. This is the beaten path along which the Spirit makes them travel. Those whom God adopts He always sanctifies. He makes sin very bitter to them. He makes holiness very sweet.

It is the Spirit who leads them to Sinai, and first shows them the law, so that their hearts may be broken. It is He who leads them to Calvary, and shows them the cross, so that their hearts may be healed. It is He who leads them up the slopes to the top of Pisgah, and gives them a clear view of the promised land, so that their hearts may be cheered. When they are taken into the wilderness, and taught to see their own emptiness, it is the leading of the Spirit. When they are carried up to

Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon, and uplifted with glimpses of the glory to come, it is the leading of the Spirit. Each and every one of God's sons is the subject of these leadings. Each and every one is "willing in the day of [God's] power," and yields himself to it. And each and every one is led by the straight way to a city where they could settle. (Psalm 110:3 KJV); 107:7 NIV)

Settle this in your heart, and do not let it go. The sons of God are a people "led by the Spirit of God, and always led more or less in the same way. Their experience will wonderfully agree when they compare notes in heaven. This is one mark of sonship.

(2) Furthermore, all the sons of God have the feelings of adopted children towards their Father in heaven.

What does the Scripture say which heads this paper?

"You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15)

The sons of God are delivered from that cringing fear of God which sin generates in the natural heart. They are redeemed from that feeling of guilt which made Adam "hide from the LORD God among the trees of the garden," and Cain to go, "out from the LORD'S presence." (Genesis 3:8; 4:16) They are no longer afraid of God's holiness, and justice, and majesty. They no longer feel that there is a great gulf and barrier between themselves and God. They no longer feel that God is angry with them, and must be angry with them, because of their sins. The sons of God are delivered from these chains and shackles of the soul.

Their feelings towards God are now those of peace and confidence. They see Him as a Father reconciled in

Christ Jesus. They look on Him as a God whose justice and holiness is satisfied by their great Mediator and Peacemaker, the Lord Jesus. They see Him as a God who is "just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:26) As a Father, they draw near to Him with boldness: as a Father, they can speak to Him with freedom. They have exchanged the spirit of bondage for that of liberty, and the spirit of fear for that of love. They know that God is holy, but they are not afraid: they know that they are sinners, but they are still not afraid. Though holy, they believe that God is completely reconciled: though sinners, they believe they are completely clothed with Jesus Christ. Such is the feeling of the sons of God.

I admit that some of them have this feeling more vividly than others. There are some of them who still carry about scraps and remnants of the old spirit of bondage to their dying day. Many of them still have moments when they shake with the resurrected fears of their old sin nature. But the overwhelming majority of the sons of God would say, if cross-examined, that since they knew Christ their feelings towards God are very different from what they had ever been before. They feel as if something like the old Roman form of adoption had taken place between themselves and their Father in heaven. They feel as if He had said to each one of them, "Will you be my son?" and their hearts had replied, "I will."

Let us also try to understand this, and hold on to it tightly. The sons of God are a people who feel towards God in a way that the children of the world do not. God's children no longer feel a cringing fear of God; rather,

their feelings towards Him is as a reconciled parent. This, then, is another mark of sonship.

(3) But, again, the sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences.

What does the Scripture say which heads this paper? "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16)

The sons of God have got something within their hearts which tells them there is a relationship between themselves and God. They feel something which tells them that old things have passed away and all things have become new: that guilt is gone, that peace is restored, that heaven's door is open, and hell's door is shut. They have, in short, what the children of the world have not—a felt, positive, and reasonable hope. They have what Paul calls the "seal" and "deposit" of the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13)

I do not for a moment deny that this witness of the Spirit varies to the extent to which the sons of God possess it. With some it is a loud, clear, ringing, distinct testimony of conscience: "I am Christ's, and Christ is mine." With others it is a little, feeble, stammering whisper, which the devil and the flesh often prevent from being heard. Some of the children of God race on their course towards heaven with full assurance. Others are tossed back and forth on their voyage, and will scarcely believe they have got faith. But take the least and lowest of the sons of God: ask him if he will give up the little bit of religious hope which he has attained? Ask him if he will exchange his heart, with all its doubts and conflicts, its wrestlings and fears—ask him if he will exchange that heart for the heart of the downright worldly and

careless man? Ask him if he would be content to turn around and throw down the things he has got hold of, and go back to the world? Who can doubt what the answer would be? "I cannot do that," he would reply. "I do not know whether I have faith, and I do not feel sure I have got grace; but I have got something within me I would not like to part with." And what is that "something"? I will tell you—it is the witness of the Spirit.

Let us also try to understand this, that the sons of God have the witness of the Spirit in their consciences. This is another mark of sonship.

(4) Let me add one thing more. All the sons of God take part in suffering with Christ.

What does the Scripture say which heads this paper? "If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings." (Romans 8:17)

All the children of God have a cross to carry. They have trials, troubles, and afflictions to go through for the Gospel's sake. They have trials from the world, trials from the flesh, and trials from the devil. They have trials of hurt feelings from their relatives and friends—cruel words, harsh treatment, and unmerciful judgment. They have trials in the matter of character; slander, misrepresentation, mockery, insinuation of false motives—all these often fall heavily on them. They have trials in the matter of worldly interests. They often have to choose whether they will please man and lose glory for God, or gain glory for God and offend man. They have trials from their own hearts. In general, they each have their own thorn in the flesh—their own resident-devil,

who is their worst foe. This is the experience of the sons of God.

Some of them suffer more, and some less. Some of them suffer in one way, and some in another. God measures out their portions like a wise physician, and cannot error. But I believe there never was one child of God who reached paradise without a cross.

Suffering is the daily provision of the Lord's family. "The Lord disciplines those He loves." "If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons." "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (Hebrews 12:6, 8; Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12) When the godly Latimer was told by his landlord that he had never had any trouble in his life, "Then," said Latimer, "God cannot be here."

Suffering is a part of the process by which the sons of God are made holy. They are chastened to wean them from the world, and make them partakers of God's holiness. The Captain of their salvation was made "perfect through suffering," and so are they. (Hebrews 2:10; 12:10) There never was a great saint who had not experienced either great hardships, or great persecutions. An early church father, Melancthon said, "Where there are no cares there will generally be no prayers."

Let us try to settle this in our hearts also. The sons of God all have a cross to bear. A suffering Savior generally has suffering disciples. The Bridegroom was a man of sorrows. Therefore, the Bride must not be a woman of pleasures and unacquainted with grief. Blessed are they

that mourn! Let us not murmur at the cross. This also is a sign of sonship.

I warn men never to assume that they are sons of God unless they have the scriptural marks of sonship. Beware of a sonship without evidences. Again I say, Beware. When a man has no leading of the Spirit to show me, no spirit of adoption to tell of, no witness of the Spirit in his conscience, no cross in his experience—is this man a son of God? Whatever others may think I would not dare to say he is! It is to his shame that he is not one of God's children. (Deuteronomy 32:5) He is no heir of glory.

Do not tell me that you have been baptized and taught the catechism of the Church, and therefore must be a child of God. I tell you that the church register is not the book of life. I tell you that to be christened a child of God, and called regenerate as an infant is one thing; but to be a child of God in fact, is another thing altogether. Go and read that catechism again. It is the "death unto sin and the new birth unto righteousness," which makes men children of grace. Unless you know these things by experience, you are no son of God.

Do not tell me that you are a member of Christ's Church and therefore you must be a son. I answer that the sons of the Church are not necessarily the sons of God. Such sonship is not the sonship of the eighth chapter of Romans. That is the sonship you must have if you are to be saved.

And now, I do not doubt that some reader of this paper will want to know if he may be saved without the witness of the Spirit.

I answer, if you mean by the witness of the Spirit, the full assurance of hope—then without question you may be saved. But if you want to know whether a man can be saved without any inward sense, or knowledge, or hope of salvation, I answer that ordinarily, He cannot. I warn you plainly to cast away all indecision as to your state before God, and to make your calling sure. Clear up your position and relationship. Do not think there is anything praiseworthy in always doubting. Leave that to the Roman Catholics. "Assurance," said a godly Puritan, "may be attained: and what have we been doing all our lives, since we became Christians, if we have not attained it? "

I do not doubt that some true Christians who read this paper will think their evidence of sonship is too small to be good, and will think bad things about themselves. Let me try to cheer them up. Who gave you the feelings you possess? Who made you hate sin? Who made you love Christ? Who made you long and strive after holiness? Where did these feelings come from? Did they come from nature? There are no such feelings in a natural man's heart. Did they come from the devil? He would try to prevent such feelings at any cost. Cheer up, and take courage. Fear not, and do not be downcast. Press forward, and go on. There is hope for you after all. Strive. Labor. Seek. Ask. Knock. Press on. You will yet see that you are "sons of God."

III. Let me show you, in the last place, the privileges of the true Christian's relation to God.

Nothing can be conceived more glorious than the prospects of the sons of God. The words of Scripture which head up this paper contain a rich mine of good

and comfortable things. "If we are children," says Paul, "then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory." (Romans 8:17)

True Christians then are "heirs." Something is prepared for each one of them which is yet to be revealed.

They are "heirs of God." To be heirs of the rich on earth is something. How much more then is it to be son and heir of the King of kings!

They are "co-heirs with Christ." They will share in His majesty, and take part in His glory. They will be glorified together with Him.

And this, we must remember, is for all the children of God. Abraham took care to provide for all his children, and God takes care to provide for His. None of them are disinherited. None will be cast out. None will be cut off. Each will stand in his place and have a share, in the day when the Lord brings many sons and daughters to glory.

Who can tell us of the full nature of the inheritance of the saints? Who can describe the glory which is yet to be revealed and given to the children of God? Words fail us. Language falls short. Mind cannot fully conceive, and tongue cannot express perfectly, the things which are comprised in the glory yet to come upon the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Oh, it is indeed a true saying of the Apostle John: "What we will be has not yet been made known." (1 John 3:2)

The very Bible itself only lifts a little of the veil which hangs over this subject. How could it do more? We could not thoroughly understand more if more had been told us. Our mental capacity is as yet too earthly—our

understanding is as yet too carnal to appreciate more if we had it. The Bible generally deals with the subject in negative terms and not in positive assertions. It describes what there will not be in the glorious inheritance that we may, therefore, have some faint idea of what there will be. It paints the absence of certain things, in order that we may drink in a little the blessedness of the present things.

It tells us that the inheritance "can never perish, spoil or fade." It tells us that "the crown of glory will never fade away." It tells us that the devil is to be "bound," that "there will be no night there and no longer will there be any curse," that "death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire," that "every tear will be wiped from their eyes," and that the inhabitant will never say, "I am ill." And these are indeed glorious things. No corruption! No fading! No withering! No devil! No curse of sin! No sorrow! No tears! No sickness! No death! Surely the cup of the children of God will surely run over! (1 Peter 1:4; 5:4; Revelation 20:2; 21:25; 22:3; 20:14; 21:4; Isaiah 33:24)

But there are positive things told to us about the glory yet to come upon the heirs of God, which ought not to be kept back. There are many sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comforts in their future inheritance, which all true Christians would do well to consider. There are enjoyable refreshments for fainting pilgrims in many words and expressions of Scripture, which you and I ought to store up for the time of need.

(a) Is knowledge pleasant to us now?

Is the little that we know of God, and Christ, and the Bible precious to our souls, and do we long for more? We

will have perfect knowledge in heaven. What does the Scripture say? "Then I will know fully, even as I am fully known." (1 Corinthians 13:12) Blessed be God, there will be no more disagreements among believers! All will finally see eye to eye. The former ignorance will have passed away. We will marvel to find how childish and blind we have been.

(b) Is holiness pleasant to us now?

Is sin the burden and bitterness of our lives? Do we long for entire conformity to the image of God? We will have perfect holiness in heaven. What does the Scripture say? "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her," not only that He might sanctify it on earth, but also "to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (Ephesians 5:27) Oh, the blessedness of an eternal good-bye to sin! Oh, how little even the best of us are presently doing! Oh, what unutterable evil sticks, like glue, to all of our motives, all of our thoughts, all of our words, and all of our actions! Oh, how many of us are godly in our words, but, so weak in our works! Thank God, all this will be changed.

(c) Is rest pleasant to us now?

Do we often feel "exhausted yet keeping up the pursuit?" (Judges 8:4) Do we long for a world in which we will not need to always be watching and doing battle? We will have perfect rest in glory. What does the Scripture say? "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God." (Hebrews 4:9) The daily, hourly conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, will finally come to an end. The enemy will be subdued. The warfare will be over. The wicked will finally stop causing

us trouble. The weary will finally be at rest. There will be a great calm.

(d) Is service pleasant to us now?

Do we find it sweet to work for Christ, and yet groan being burdened by such a feeble body? Is our spirit often willing, but hampered and clogged by the poor weak flesh? Have our hearts burned within us when we have been allowed to give a cup of cold water for Christ's sake, and have we sighed to think what unprofitable servants we are? Let us take comfort. We will be able to serve perfectly in glory, and without weariness. What does the Scripture say? "They serve Him day and night in His temple." (Revelation 7:15)

(e) Is satisfaction pleasant to us now?

Do we find the world empty? Do we long for the filling up of every empty place in our hearts? We will have perfect satisfaction in glory. We will no longer have to mourn over cracks in all our earthen vessels, and thorns in all our roses, and bitter residue in all our sweet cups. We will no longer lament with Jonah over withered gourds. We will no longer say with Solomon, "All of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind." We will no longer cry with aged David, "To all perfection I see a limit" What does the Scripture say? "When I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing Your likeness." (Ecclesiastes 1:14; Psalm 119:96; Psalm 17:15)

(f) Is communion with the saints pleasant to us now?

Do we feel that we are never so happy as when we are with the "glorious ones?" Do we feel most at home when we are in their company? (Psalm 16:3) We will have perfect communion in heaven. What does the Scripture

say? "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil." "He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds." (Matthew 13:41; 24:31) Praise be to God! We will see all the saints of whom we have read about in the Bible, and in whose steps we have tried to walk. We will see apostles, prophets, patriarchs, martyrs, reformers, missionaries, and ministers, of whom the world was not worthy. We will see the faces of those we have known and loved in Christ while on earth, and over whose departure we shed bitter tears. We will see them more bright and glorious than they ever were before. And best of all, we will see them without hurry and anxiety, and without feeling that we only meet to part again. In the coming glory there is no death, no parting, no farewell.

(g) Is communion with Christ pleasant to us now?

Do we find His name precious to us? Do we feel our hearts burn within us at the thought of His dying love? We will have perfect communion with Him in heaven. "We will be with the Lord forever." (1 Thessalonians 4:17) We will be with Him in paradise. (Luke 23:43 43) We will see His face in the kingdom. These eyes of ours will behold those hands and feet which were pierced with nails, and that head which was crowned with thorns. Where He is, there also will be the sons of God. When He comes, they will come with Him. When He sits down in His glory, they will sit down by His side. This is indeed a blessed expectation! I am a dying man in a dying world. All before me is dark. The world to come is a unknown harbor. But Christ is there, and that is enough. Surely if there is rest and peace in following Him by faith on earth, there will be far more rest and

peace when we see Him face to face. If we have found it good to follow the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, we will find it a thousand times better to sit down in our eternal inheritance, with our Joshua, in the promised land.

If any one among the readers of this paper is not yet among the sons and heirs, I do pity you with all my heart! How much you are missing! How little true comfort you are enjoying! There you are, struggling on, and toiling in the fire, and wearing yourself out for mere earthly ends—seeking rest and finding none—chasing shadows and never catching them—wondering why you are not happy, and yet refusing to see the cause—hungry, and thirsty, and empty, and yet blind to the abundance within your reach. Oh, that you were wise! Oh, that you would hear the voice of Jesus, and learn from Him!

If you are one of those who are sons and heirs, you may rightly rejoice and be happy. You can wait with joy, like the boy Patience in Pilgrim's Progress: your best things are yet to come. You can easily bear crosses without murmuring: your light affliction is but for a moment. Your "present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed." "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Romans 8:18; Colossians 3:4) You have no need to envy the sinner and his prosperity. You are the truly rich. It was well said by a dying believer in my own church: "I am richer than I ever was in my life." You may say as Mephibosheth said to David: "Let him take everything, now that my lord the king has arrived home safely." (2 Samuel 19:30) You may say as Alexander said when he gave all his riches away, and was asked what he

kept for himself: "I have hope." You need not be discouraged by sickness: the eternal part of you is safe and provided for, despite what happens to your body. You can calmly look at death: it opens a door between you and your inheritance. You need not have excessive sorrow over the things of the world—over partings and bereavements, over losses and crosses: the day of gathering is before you. Your treasure is beyond reach of harm. Every year heaven is becoming more full of those you love, and earth more empty. Glory in your inheritance. It is all yours if you are a son of God: "If we are children, then we are heirs."

(1) And now, in concluding this paper, let me ask every one who reads it, Whose child are you?

Are you the child of nature or the child of grace? Are you the child of the devil or the child of God? You cannot be both at once. Which are you?

Settle the question without delay, for eventually you must die as either one or the other. Settle it, for it can be settled, and it is folly to leave it in doubt. Settle it, for time is short, the world is getting old, and you are quickly drawing near to the judgment seat of Christ. Settle it, for death is near, the Lord is at hand, and who can tell what a day might bring forth? Oh, that you would never rest till the question is settled! Oh, that you may never feel satisfied till you can say, "I have been born again: I am a son of God!"

(2)

If you are not a son and heir of God, I plead with you to become one without delay.

Do you want to be rich? There are unsearchable riches in Christ. Do you want to be exalted? You will be a king. Do you want to be happy? You will have a peace which transcends understanding and which the world can never give and never take away. Oh, come out and take up the cross and follow Christ! Come out from among the thoughtless and worldly, and hear the word of the Lord: "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:18)

(3)

If you are a son of God, I plead with you to walk worthy of your Father's house.

I solemnly charge you to honor Him with your life; and above all to honor Him by implicit obedience to all of His commands, and to give sincere love to all of His children. Put forth the effort to travel through the world like a child of God and heir to glory. Let men be able to trace a family likeness between you and your Heavenly Father. Live a heavenly life. Seek things that are above. Do not seem to be building your nest below. Behave like a man who seeks a city that is not visible, whose citizenship is in heaven, and who would be content with many hardships till he gets home.

Labor to feel like a son of God in every circumstance in which you are placed. Never forget you are on your Father's ground so long as you are here on earth. Never forget that a Father's hand sends to you all your mercies and crosses. Cast every care on Him. Be happy and cheerful in Him. Indeed, why would you ever be sad if you are the King's son? Why should men ever doubt,

when they look at you, whether it is a pleasant thing to be one of God's children?

Labor to behave towards others like a son of God. Be blameless and harmless in your day and generation. Be a "peacemaker." (Matthew 5:9) Seek for your children sonship to God, above everything else: seek for them an inheritance in heaven, whatever else you do for them. No man leaves his children so well provided for as he who leaves them sons and heirs of God.

Persevere in your Christian calling, if you are a son of God, and press forward more and more. Be careful to lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily entangles you. Keep your eyes fixed steadily on Jesus. Remain in Him. Remember that apart from Jesus you can do nothing and with Jesus you can do everything. (John 15:5; Philippians 4:13) Watch and pray every day. Be steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. Settle it in your heart that never will a cup of cold water, given because you are a disciple of Jesus, ever lose its reward, and that every year you are coming closer to your home in heaven.

"For in just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay." (Hebrews 10:37)

Then the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Romans 8:19, 21) Then will the world acknowledge that God's children were the truly wise. Then will the sons of God finally come of age, and no longer be waiting for their inheritance, but actual possessors of it. Then will they hear with exceeding joy those comforting words, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared

for you since the creation of the world." (Matthew 25:34) Surely that day will make amends for everything!

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Holiness

Holiness

J. C. Ryle

He who wishes to attain right views about Christian holiness, must begin by examining the vast and solemn subject of sin. He must dig down very low if he would build high. A mistake here is most mischievous. Wrong views about holiness are generally traceable to wrong views about human corruption.

Grant that mankind has sprung from one pair, and that this pair fell as Genesis three tells us, and the state of human nature everywhere is easily accounted for. Deny it, as many do, and you are at once involved in inexplicable difficulties. In a word, the conformity and universality of human corruption supply one of the most unanswerable instances of the enormous difficulties of infidelity.

Holiness touches the deepest parts of Christian personality. It touches the emotions and causes the believer to hate what God hates and to love what God loves. Holiness influences one to eschew the evil and cleave to that which is good. It was holiness that led the Apostle Paul to say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man... In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18-22). Holiness inspired the Psalmist to write, "I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:128). Holiness effects the will so that it refuses to allow sin to have dominion (Rom. 6:9-14), and that, instead, every thought might be brought into captivity to

the obedience of Christ. Holiness so effects the will that it makes the Christian a rebel to sin and a willing captive to Christ.

Holiness influences the mind so that the mind is purged from pride and arrogance and imbibes the lowliness and meekness of Christ. Holiness leads the believer to mind not high things but to condescend to men of low estate (Rom. 12:16).

One Blood

"One Blood"--Acts 17:26

This is a very short and simple text, and even a child knows the meaning of its words. But simple as it is, it supplies food for much thought and it forms part of a speech delivered by a great man on a great occasion.

The speaker is the Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul. The hearers are the cultivated men of Athens, and specially the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The place is Mars' Hill at Athens, in full view of religious buildings and statues, of which even the shattered remains are a marvel of art at this day. Never perhaps were such a place, such a man, and such an audience brought together! It was a strange scene. And how did St. Paul use the occasion? What did this Jewish stranger, this member of a despised nation, this little man, whose "bodily presence was weak," and very unlike the ideal figure in one of Raphael's cartoons, coming from an obscure corner of Asia, what does he say to these intellectual Greeks?

He tells them boldly the unity of the true God. There is only one God, the maker of heaven and earth,—and not many deities, as his hearers seemed to think,—a God who needed no temples made with hands, and was not to be represented by images made of wood or metal or stone. Standing in front of the stately Parthenon and the splendid statue of Minerva, he sets before his refined hearers the ignorance with which they worshipped, the folly of idolatry, the coming judgment of all mankind, the

certainty of a resurrection, and the absolute need of repentance. And not least, he tells the proud men of Athens that they must not flatter themselves that they were superior beings, as they vainly supposed, made of finer clay, and needing less than other races of men. No! he declares that "God has made of one blood all nations." There is no difference. The nature, the needs, the obligation to God of all human beings on the globe are one and the same.

I shall stick to that expression "one blood," and confine myself entirely to it. I see in it three great points,—1, a point of fact; 2, a point of doctrine; 3, a point of duty. Let me try to unfold them.

I. In the first place comes the point of fact. We are all made "of one blood." Then the Bible account of the origin of man is true. The Book of Genesis is right. The whole family of mankind, with all its thousand millions, has descended from one pair—from Adam and Eve.

This is a humbling fact, no doubt; but it is true. Kings and their subjects, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, prince and pauper, the educated Englishman and the untutored negro, the fashionable lady at the West End of London and the North American squaw,—all, all might trace their pedigree, if they could trace it through sixty centuries, to one man and one woman. No doubt in the vast period of six thousand years immense varieties of races have gradually been developed. Hot climates and cold climates have affected the colour and physical peculiarities of nations. Civilization and culture have produced their effect on the habits, demeanor, and mental attainment of the inhabitants of different parts of the globe. Some of Adam's children in the lapse of time

have been greatly degraded, and some have been raised and improved. But the great fact remains the same. The story written by Moses is true. All the dwellers in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America originally sprung from Adam and Eve. We were all "made of one blood."

Now why do I dwell on all this? I do it because I wish to impress on the minds of my readers the plenary inspiration and divine authority of the Book of Genesis. I want you to hold fast the old teaching about the origin of man, and to refuse steadily to let it go.

I need hardly remind you that you live in a day of abounding skepticism and unbelief. Clever writers and lecturers are continually pouring contempt on the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially on the Book of Genesis. The contents of that venerable document, we are frequently told, are not to be read as real historical facts, but as fictions and fables. We are not to suppose that Adam and Eve were the only man and woman originally created, and that all mankind sprung from one pair. We are rather to believe that different races of human beings have been called into existence in different parts of the globe, at different times, without any relationship to one another. In short, we are coolly informed that the narratives in the first half of Genesis are only pleasing oriental romances, and are not realities at all! Now, when you hear such talk as this, I charge you not to be moved or shaken for a moment. Stand fast in the old paths of the faith, and especially about the origin of man. There is abundant evidence that Moses is right, and those who impugn his veracity and credibility are wrong. We are all descended from one fallen father. We are all "of one blood."

It would be easy to show, if the limits of this paper permitted, that the oldest traditions of nations all over the globe confirm the account given by Moses in the most striking manner. Geikie, in his *Hours with the Bible*, has briefly shown that the story of the first pair, the serpent, the fall, the flood, and the ark, are found cropping up in one form or another in almost every part of the habitable world. But the strongest proof of our common origin is to be found in the painful uniformity of man's moral nature, whatever be the colour of his skin. Go where you will on the globe, and observe what men and women are everywhere. Go to the heart of Africa or China, or to the remotest island of the Pacific Ocean, and mark the result of your investigations. I boldly assert that everywhere, and in every climate, you will find the moral nature of the human race exactly the same. Everywhere you will find men and women are naturally wicked, corrupt, selfish, proud, lazy, deceitful, godless,—servants of lusts and passions. And I contend that nothing can reasonably account for this but the first three chapters of Genesis. We are what we are morally, because we have sprung from one parent, and partake of his nature. We are all descendants of one fallen Adam, and in Adam we all died. Moses is right. We are all of "one blood."

After all, if doubt remains in any man's mind, and he cannot quite believe the narratives of Genesis, I ask him to remember what a deadly blow his unbelief strikes at the authority of the New Testament. It is easy work to point out difficulties in the first book of the Bible; but it is not so easy to explain away the repeated endorsement which Genesis receives from Christ and the apostles. There is no getting over the broad fact that creation, the

serpent, the fall, Cain and Abel, Enoch, Noah, the flood, the ark, Abraham, Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, are all mentioned in the New Testament as historical things or historical persons. What shall we say to this fact? Were Christ and the apostles deceived and ignorant? The idea is absurd. Did they accommodate themselves to the popular views of their hearers, in order to procure favour with them, knowing all the time that the things and persons they spoke of were fictitious and not historical at all? The very idea is wicked and profane. We are shut up to one conclusion, and I see no alternative. If you give up the Old Testament, you must give up the New also. There is no standing ground between disbelief of the supernatural narratives of Genesis and disbelief of the gospel. If you cannot believe Moses, you ought not to trust Christ and the apostles, who certainly did believe him. Are you really wiser than Jesus or St. Paul? Do you know better than they do? Cast such notions behind your back. Stand firm on the old foundation, and be not carried away by modern theories. And as a great corner-stone place beneath your feet the fact of our text, the common origin of all mankind. "We are all made of one blood."

II. From the point of fact in our text I now pass on to the point of doctrine. Are we all of "one blood"? Then we all need one and the same remedy for the great family disease of our souls. The disease I speak of is sin. We inherit it from our parents, and it is a part of our nature. We are born with it, whether gentle or simple, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, as children of fallen Adam, with his blood in our veins. It is a disease which grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength, and

unless cured before we die, will be the death of our souls.

Now, what is the only remedy for this terrible spiritual disease? What will cleanse us from the guilt of sin? What will bring health and peace to our poor dead hearts, and enable us to walk with God while we live, and dwell with God when we die? To these questions I give a short but unhesitating reply. For the one universal soul-disease of all Adam's children, there is only one remedy. That remedy is "the precious blood of Christ." To the blood of Adam we owe the beginning of our deadly spiritual ailment. To the blood of Christ alone must we all look for a cure.

When I speak of the "blood of Christ," my readers must distinctly understand that I do not mean the literal material blood which flowed from His hands and feet and side as He hung on the cross. That blood, I doubt not, stained the fingers of the soldiers who nailed our Lord to the tree; but there is not the slightest proof that it did any good to their souls. If that blood were really in the communion cup at the Lord's Supper, as some profanely tell us, and we touched it with our lips, such mere corporeal touch would avail us nothing. Oh no! When I speak of the "blood" of Christ as the cure for the deadly ailment which we all inherit from the blood of Adam, I mean the life-blood which Christ shed, and the redemption which Christ obtained for sinners when He died for them on Calvary,—the salvation which He procured for us by His vicarious sacrifice,—the deliverance from the guilt and power and consequences of sin, which He purchased when He suffered as our substitute. This and this only is what I mean when I speak of "Christ's blood" as the one medicine needed by

all Adam's children. The thing that we all need to save us from eternal death is not merely Christ's incarnation and life, but Christ's death. The atoning "blood" which Christ shed when He died, is the grand secret of salvation. It is the blood of the second Adam suffering in our stead, which alone can give life or health and peace to all who have the first Adam's blood in their veins.

I can find no words to express my deep sense of the importance of maintaining in our Church the true doctrine of the blood of Christ. One plague of our age is the widespread dislike to what men are pleased to call dogmatic theology. In the place of it, the idol of the day is a kind of jelly-fish Christianity—a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or sinew,—without any distinct teaching about the atonement or the work of the Spirit, or justification, or the way of peace with God,—a vague, foggy, misty Christianity, of which the only watchwords seem to be, "You must be earnest, and real, and true, and brave, and zealous, and liberal, and kind. You must condemn no man's doctrinal views. You must consider everybody is right, and nobody is wrong." And this creedless kind of religion, we are actually told, is to give us peace of conscience! And not to be satisfied with it in a sorrowful dying world, is a proof that you are very narrow-minded! Satisfied, indeed! Such a religion might possibly do for unfallen angels. But to tell sinful, dying men and women, with the blood of our father Adam in their veins, to be satisfied with it, is an insult to common sense, and a mockery of our distress. We need something far better than this. We need the blood of Christ.

What saith the Scripture about

"that blood"? Let me try to put my readers in remembrance. Do we want to be clean and guiltless now in the sight of God? It is written that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;"—that "it justifies;"—that "it makes us nigh to God;"—that "through it there is redemption, even the forgiveness of sin;"—that it "purges the conscience;"—that "it makes peace between God and man;"—that it gives "boldness to enter into the holiest." Yes! it is expressly written of the saints in glory, that "they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and that they had "overcome their souls' enemies by the blood of the Lamb" (1 John i. 7; Col. i. 20; Heb. x. 19; Eph. i. 7; Heb. ix. 4; Eph. ii. 13; Rom. v. 9; Rev. vii. 14; xii. 11).

Why, in the name of common sense, if the Bible is our guide to heaven, why are we to refuse the teaching of the Bible about Christ's blood, and turn to other remedies for the great common soul-disease of mankind?—If, besides this, the sacrifices of the Old Testament did not point to the sacrifice of Christ's death on the cross, they were useless, unmeaning forms, and the outer courts of tabernacle and temple were little better than shambles. But if, as I firmly believe, they were meant to lead the minds of Jews to the better sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, they afford unanswerable confirmation of the position which I maintain this day. That position is, that the one "blood of Christ" is the spiritual medicine for all who have the "one blood of Adam" in their veins.

Does any reader of this paper want to do good in the world? I hope that many do. He is a poor style of Christian who does not wish to leave the world better

when he leaves it, than it was when he entered it. Take the advice I give you this day. Beware of being content with half-measures and inadequate remedies for the great spiritual disease of mankind. You will only labour in vain if you do not show men the blood of the Lamb. Like the fabled Sisyphus, however much you strive, you will find the stone ever rolling back upon you. Education, teetotalism, cleaner dwellings, popular concerts, blue ribbon leagues, white cross armies, penny readings, museums,—all, all are very well in their way; but they only touch the surface of man's disease: they do not go to the root. They cast out the devil for a little season; but they do not fill his place, and prevent him coming back again. Nothing will do that but the story of the cross applied to the conscience by the Holy Ghost, and received and accepted by faith. Yes! it is the blood of Christ,—not His example only, or His beautiful moral teaching,—but His vicarious sacrifice that meets the want of the soul. No wonder that St. Peter calls it "precious." Precious it has been found by the heathen abroad, and by the peer and the peasant at home. Precious it was found on a death-bed by the mighty theologian Bengel, by the unwearied labourer John Wesley, by the late Archbishop Longley, and Bishop Hamilton in our own days. May it ever be precious in our eyes! If we want to do good, we must make much of the blood of Christ. There is only one fountain that can cleanse any one's sin. That fountain is the blood of the Lamb.

III. The third and last point which arises out of our text is a point of duty. Are we all of "one blood"? Then we ought to live as if we were. We ought to behave as members of one great family. We ought to "love as

brethren." We ought to put away from us anger, wrath, malice, quarrelling, as especially hateful in the sight of God. We ought to cultivate kindness and charity to wards all men. The dark-skinned African negro, the dirtiest dweller in some vile slum of London, has a claim upon our attention. He is a relative and a brother, whether we like to believe it or not. Like ourselves, he is a descendant of Adam and Eve, and inherits a fallen nature and a never-dying soul.

Now what are we Christians doing to prove that we believe and realize all this? What are we doing for our brethren? I trust we do not forget that it was wicked Cain who asked that awful question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

What are we doing for the heathen abroad? That is a grave question, and one which I have no time to consider fully this day. I only remark that we do far less than we ought to do. The nation whose proud boast it is that her flag is to be seen in every port on the globe, gives less to the cause of Foreign Missions than the cost of a single first-class ironclad man-of-war.

But what are we doing for the masses at home? That is a far graver question, and one which imperiously demands a reply. The heathen are out of sight and out of mind. The English masses are hard by our own doors, and their condition is a problem which politicians and philanthropists are anxiously trying to solve, and which cannot be evaded. What are we doing to lessen the growing sense of inequality between rich and poor, and to fill up the yawning gulf of discontent? Socialism, and communism, and confiscation of property are looming large in the distance, and occupying much attention in

the press. Atheism and secularism are spreading fast in some quarters, and specially in overgrown and neglected parishes. Now, what is the path of duty?

I answer without hesitation, that we want a larger growth of brotherly love in the land. We want men and women to grasp the great principle that we are all of "one blood," and to lay themselves out to do good. We want the rich to care more for the poor, and the employer for the employed, and wealthy congregations for the working-class congregations in the great cities, and the West End of London to care more for the East and the South. And, let us remember, it is not merely temporal relief that is wanted. The Roman emperors tried to keep the proletarians and the lower classes quiet by the games of the circus and largesses of corn. And some ignorant modern Britons seem to think that money, cheap food, good dwellings, and recreation are healing medicines for the evils of our day in the lowest stratum of society. It is a complete mistake. What the masses want is more sympathy, more kindness, more brotherly love, and more treatment as if they were really of "one blood" with ourselves. Give them that, and you will fill up half the gulf of discontent.

It is a common saying in this day, that the working classes have no religion, that they are alienated from the Church of England, that they cannot be brought to church, and that it is hopeless and useless to try to do them good. I believe nothing of the kind. I believe the working classes are not one jot more opposed to religion than the upper ten thousand, and that they are just as open to good influences, and even more likely to be saved if they are approached in the right way. But what they do like is to be treated as "one blood," and what is

wanted is a great increase of sympathy and personal friendly dealing with them. I confess that I have immense faith in the power of sympathy and kindness. I believe the late Judge Talfourd hit the right nail on the head when he said, in almost his last charge to a Grand Jury at Stafford Assizes,—Gentlemen, the great want of the age is more sympathy between classes." I entirely agree with him. I think an increase of sympathy and fellow-feeling between high and low, rich and poor, employer and employed, parson and people, is one healing medicine which the age demands. Sympathy, exhibited in its perfection, was one secondary cause of the acceptance which Christ's gospel met with on its first appearance in the heathen world. Well says Lord Macaulay,—"It was before Deity taking a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust." And sympathy, I firmly believe, can do as much in the nineteenth century as it did in the first. If anything will melt down the cold isolation of classes in these latter days, and make our social body consist of solid cubes compacted together, instead of spheres only touching each other at one point, it will be a large growth of Christ-like sympathy.

Now I assert confidently that the English working man is peculiarly open to sympathy. The working man may live in a poor dwelling; and after toiling all day in a coal pit, or cotton mill, or iron foundry, or dock, or chemical works, he may often look very rough and dirty. But after

all he is flesh and blood like ourselves. Beneath his outward roughness he has a heart and a conscience, a keen sense of justice, and a jealous recollection of his rights, as a man and a Briton. He does not want to be patronised and flattered, any more than to be trampled on, scolded, or neglected; but he does like to be dealt with as a brother, in a friendly, kind, and sympathizing way. He will not be driven; he will do nothing for a cold, hard man, however clever he may be. But give him a Christian visitor to his home, who really understands that it is the heart and not the coat which makes the man, and that the guinea's worth is in the gold, and not in the stamp upon it. Give him a visitor who will not only talk about Christ, but sit down in his house, and take him by the hand in a Christ-like familiar way. Give him a visitor, and specially a clergyman, who realizes that in Christ's holy religion there is no respect of persons, that rich and poor are "made of one blood," and need one and the same atoning blood, and that there is only one Saviour, and one Fountain for sin, and one heaven, both for employers and employed. Give him a clergyman who can weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice, and feel a tender interest in the cares, and troubles, and births, and marriages, and deaths of the humblest dweller in his parish. Give the working man, I say, a clergyman of that kind, and, as a general rule, the working man will come to his church, and not be a communist or an infidel. Such a clergyman will not preach to empty benches. How little, after all, do most people seem to realize the supreme importance of brotherly love, and the absolute necessity of imitating that blessed Saviour who "went about doing good" to all, if we would prove ourselves His disciples! If ever there was a time when conduct like that of the Good

Samaritan in the parable was rare, it is the time in which we live. Selfish indifference to the wants of others is a painful characteristic of the age. Search the land in which we live, from the Isle of Wight to Berwick-on-Tweed, and from the Land's End to the North Foreland, and name, if you can, a single county or town in which the givers to good works are not a small minority, and in which philanthropic and religious agencies are not kept going, only and entirely, by painful begging and constant importunity. Go where you will, the report is always the same. Hospitals, missions at home and abroad, evangelistic and educational agencies, churches, chapels, and mission halls,—all are incessantly checked and hindered by want of support. Where are the Samaritans, we may well ask, in this land of Bibles and Testaments? Where are the Christians who live as if we are "all of one blood." Where are the men who love their neighbours, and will help to provide for dying bodies and souls? Where are the people always ready and willing to give unasked, and without asking how much others have given? Millions are annually spent on deer forests, and moors, and hunting, and yachting, and racing, and gambling, and balls, and theatres, and dressing, and pictures, and furniture, and recreation. Little, comparatively, ridiculously little, is given or done for the cause of Christ. A miserable guinea subscription too often is the whole sum bestowed by some Cræsus on the bodies and souls of his fellow-men. The very first principles of giving seem lost and forgotten in many quarters. People must be bribed and tempted to contribute by bazaars, as children in badly-managed families are bribed and tempted to be good by sugar-plums! They must not be expected to give unless they get something in return! And all this goes on in a

country where people call themselves Christians, and go to church, and glory in ornate ceremonials, and histrionic rituals, and what are called "hearty services," and profess to believe the parable of the Good Samaritan. I fear there will be a sad waking up at the last day.

Where, after all, to come to the root of the matter, where is that brotherly love which used to be the distinguishing mark of the primitive Christians? Where, amidst the din of controversy and furious strife of parties, where is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the primary mark of spiritual regeneration? Where is that charity, without which we are no better than "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals"? Where is the charity which is the bond of perfectness? Where is that love by which our Lord declared all men should know His disciples, and which St. John said was the distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil? Where is it, indeed? Read in the newspapers the frightfully violent language of opposing politicians. Mark the hideous bitterness of controversial theologians, both in the press and on the platform. Observe the fiendish delight with which anonymous letter-writers endeavour to wound the feelings of opponents, and then to pour vitriol into the wound. Look at all this ghastly spectacle, which any observing eye may see any day in England. And then remember that this is the country in which men are reading the New Testament and professing to follow Christ, and to believe that they are all of "one blood." Can anything more grossly inconsistent be conceived? Can anything be imagined more offensive to God? Truly, it is astonishing that such myriads should be so keen about Christian profession and external worship, and yet

so utterly careless about the simplest elements of Christian practice. Where there is no love there is no spiritual life. Without brotherly love, although baptized and communicants, men are dead in trespasses and sins.

I shall wind up all I have to say on the point of duty by reminding my readers of the solemn words which St. Matthew records to have been spoken by our Lord in the twenty-fifth chapter of his Gospel. In the great and dreadful day of judgment, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, there are some to whom He will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me" (Matt. xxv. 41—46).

I declare I know very few passages of Scripture more solemn and heart-searching than this. It is not charged against these unhappy lost souls that they had committed murder, adultery, or theft, or that they had not been churchgoers or communicants. Oh, no! nothing of the kind. They had simply done nothing at all. They had neglected love to others. They had not tried to lessen the misery, or increase the happiness, of this sin-burdened world. They had selfishly sat still, done no good, and had no eyes to see, or hearts to feel, for their brethren, the members of Adam's great family. And so

their end is everlasting punishment! If these words cannot set some people thinking when they look at the state of the masses in some of our large towns, nothing will.

And now I shall close this paper with three words of friendly advice, which I commend to the attention of all who read it. They are words in season for the days in which we live, and I am sure they are worth remembering.

(a) First and foremost, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the whole Bible. Hold it fast, and never let it go. Let nothing tempt you to think that any part of the grand old volume is not inspired, or that any of its narratives, and especially in Genesis, are not to be believed. Once take up that ground, and you will find yourself on an inclined plane. Well will it be if you do not slip down into utter infidelity! Faith's difficulties, no doubt, are great; but the difficulties of scepticism are far greater.

(b) In the next place, I charge you never to give up the old doctrine of the blood of Christ, the complete satisfaction which that atoning blood made for sin, and the impossibility of being saved except by that blood. Let nothing tempt you to believe that it is enough to look at the example of Christ, or to receive the sacrament which Christ commanded to be received, and which many nowadays worship like an idol. When you come to your deathbed, you will want something more than an example and a sacrament. Take heed that you are found resting all your weight on Christ's substitution for you on the cross, and His atoning blood, or it will be better if you had never been born.

(c) Last, but not least, I charge you never to neglect the duty of brotherly love, and practical, active, sympathetic kindness towards every one around you, whether high or low, or rich or poor. Try daily to do some good upon earth, and to leave the world a better world than it was when you were born. If you are really a child of God, strive to be like your elder brother in heaven. For Christ's sake, do not be content to have religion for yourself alone. Love, charity, kindness, and sympathy are the truest proofs that we are real members of Christ, genuine children of God, and rightful heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Of "one blood" we were all born. In "one blood" we all need to be washed. To all partakers of Adam's "one blood" we are bound, if we love life, to be charitable, sympathizing, loving, and kind. The time is short. We are going, going, and shall soon be gone to a world where there is no evil to remedy, and no scope for works of mercy. Then for Christ's sake let us all try to do some good before we die, and to lessen the sorrows of this sin-burdened world.

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Prayer

Prayer

J. C. Ryle

J. S. Ryle (1816-1900), an Anglican bishop, published a number of books of sermons and devotional literature and is perhaps best known for his expository volumes on the Gospels. He also wrote more than one hundred tracts and pamphlets on doctrinal and practical subjects which were widely circulated, both in English and foreign languages.

This brief article on prayer is a reprint of one of his tracts.

A man may reach heaven without learning, or books, or knowledge, but no man ever reached Heaven without prayer.

Prayer is the life-breath of a man's soul. Without it we may have a name to live, and be counted Christians, but we are dead in the sight of God. The feeling that we must cry to God for mercy and peace is a mark of grace, and the habit of spreading before Him our soul's wants is an evidence that we have the spirit of sonship.

Prayer is the appointed way to obtain the relief of our spiritual necessities. It opens the treasury and sets the fountain flowing. If we have not, it is because we ask not.

Prayer is the way to produce the outpouring of the Spirit upon our hearts. Jesus has promised the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He is ready to come down with all His precious gifts, renewing, sanctifying, purifying,

strengthening, cheering, encouraging, enlightening, teaching, directing, guiding into all truth. But He waits to be entreated.

And here it is that men fall short so miserably. Many fall on their knees to say a form, but there are few who pray, few who cry unto God, few who call upon the Lord, few who seek as if they want to find, few who knock as if they hunger and thirst, few who wrestle, few who strive with God earnestly for an answer. Yes, few men pray. It is just one of the things assumed as a matter of course, but seldom practiced; a thing which is everybody's business, but which hardly anybody does.. If your soul is to be saved, you must pray. If you are to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil, you must pray; it is vain to look for strength in the hour of trial if it has not been sought. You may be thrown with those who never pray, you may have to sleep in the same room with someone who never asks anything of God; still you must pray.

I know you may find great difficulties about it; difficulties about opportunities, and hours, and places. I dare not lay down too positive rules on such points as these. I leave them to your own conscience. You must be guided by circumstances. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed on a mountain; Isaac prayed in the fields; Hezekiah turned his face to the wall as he lay upon his bed; Daniel prayed by a riverside; Peter, the apostle, on the housetop. I have heard of men praying in stables and haylofts. All that I contend is this: you must know what it is to "enter into your closet." There must be stated times when you must speak with God face to face; you must every day have a time for prayer. You must pray.

Without this, all advice and counsel are useless. This is that piece of spiritual armor which Paul names last in his catalogue in Ephesians 6, but it is in truth first in value and importance. This is that meat which you must daily eat if you would travel safely through the wilderness of this life. It is only in this strength that you will go on toward the mount of God.

I have heard it said that the needle-grinders of Sheffield sometimes wore magnetic mouthpieces at their work to catch all the fine dust that flew around them, to prevent it from entering their lungs. Prayer is the mouthpiece you must wear continually, or else you will never work uninjured by the unhealthy atmosphere of this world. You must pray.

Be sure no time is so well spent as that which a man spends upon his knees. Make time for this, whatever your employment may be. Think of David, King of Israel—what does he say? “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17). Think of Daniel: he had all the business of a kingdom on his hands, yet he prayed three times a day. See there the secret of his safety in wicked Babylon. Think of Solomon: he began his reign with prayer for help and assistance, and hence his wonderful prosperity. Think of Nehemiah: he could find time to pray to the God of heaven, even when standing in the presence of his master, Artaxerxes. Think of the example these godly men have left you; go and do likewise. **YOU MUST PRAY**