



The Bonar
Anthology
HORATIUS BONAR

The
BONAR ANTHOLOGY

by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

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Evangelistic Tracts

Truth about Faith

I shall not attempt a definition of faith. This only let me say in a few words, that the faith which goes no farther than the intellect can neither save nor sanctify. It is no faith at all. It is unbelief. No faith is saving but that which links us to the Person of a living Saviour. Whatever falls short of this is not faith in Christ. Hence, while salvation is described sometimes in Scripture as a “coming to the knowledge of the truth;” it is more commonly represented as a “coming to Christ Himself.” “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life”; “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 5:40; 6:37).

But whatever view of faith we take, one thing is obvious, that it is from first to last “the gift of God” (Rom 6:23). Make it as simple as you please, still it is the result of the Holy Spirit’s direct, immediate, all-quickening power. (Never attempt, I beseech you, my dear friend, to make faith simple, with the view of getting rid of the Spirit to produce it.)

This, I believe, is one of the wretched devices of Satan in the present evil day. By all means correct every mistake in regard to faith by which hindrances are thrown in the sinner’s way, or darkness thrown around the soul. Show him that it is with the object of faith, even with Christ and His cross, that he has to do, not with his own actings of faith; that it is not the virtue of merit that is in his faith that saves him, but the virtue and merit that are in Christ Jesus alone. Tell him to look outward not inward for his peace. Beat him off from his self-righteous efforts to get up a peculiar kind of faith or peculiar acts of faith in order to obtain something in himself—something short of Christ, to rest upon. Simplify, explain, and illustrate faith to such a one; but never imagine that thereby you are to make the Spirit’s help less than absolutely necessary.

This, I believe, is the aim of the propagators of the new theology. Their object in simplifying faith is to bring it within the reach of the un-renewed man, so that by performing this very simple act he may become a renewed man. In other words, their object is to make man the beginner of his own salvation. He takes the first step, and God does the rest! He believes, and then God comes in and saves him!

This is nothing short of a flat and bold denial of the Spirit's work altogether. If at any time more than another the sinner needs the Spirit's power, it is at the beginning. And he who denies the need of the Spirit at the beginning cannot believe in it at the after stages—nay, cannot believe in the need of the Spirit's work at all. The mightiest and most insuperable difficulty lies at the beginning. If the sinner can get over that without the Spirit, he will easily get over the rest. If he does not need the Spirit to enable him to believe, he will not need Him to enable him to love. If when a true object is presented to me, I can believe without the Spirit; then when a lovable object is presented I can love without the Spirit. In short, what is there in the whole Christian life, which I cannot do of myself, if I can begin this career without help from God? The denial of the Spirit's direct agency in faith and conversion is the denial of His whole work in the soul—both of the saint and the sinner! ❧

Available in print as a tract from Chapel Library.

Christ Died for the Ungodly

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”—Genesis 6:5

The divine testimony concerning man is that he is a sinner! God bears witness *against* him, not *for* him; and testifies that “there is none righteous, no, not one”; that there is “none that doeth good”; none “that understandeth”; none that even seeks after God, and, still more, none that loves Him (Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3:10-12). God speaks of man kindly but severely; as one yearning over a lost child, yet as one who will make no terms with sin, and will “by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7).

He declares man to be a lost one, a stray one, a rebel, a “hater of God” (Rom 1:30); not a sinner occasionally, but a sinner always; not a sinner in part, with many good things about him, but wholly a sinner, with no compensating goodness; evil in heart as well as life; “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1); an evil doer, and therefore under condemnation; an enemy of God, and therefore under wrath; a breaker of the righteous Law, and therefore under “the curse of the law” (Gal 3:10). The sinner not merely brings forth sin, but he carries it about with him, as his second self; he is a body or mass of sin (Rom 6:6), a “body of death” (Rom 7:24), subject not to the Law of God, but to “the law of sin” (Rom 7:23).

There is another and yet worse charge against him. He does not believe on the name of the Son of God, nor love the Christ of God. This is his sin of sins. That his heart is not

right with God is the first charge against him. That his heart is not right with the Son of God is the second. And it is this second that is the crowning, crushing sin, carrying with it more terrible damnation than all other sins together.

“He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Joh 3:18). “He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son” (1Jo 5:10). “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). And hence it is that the first sin that the Holy Spirit brings home to a man is unbelief; “when he [the Holy Spirit] is come he will reprove the world of sin because they believe not on me” (Joh 16:8-9).

Man need not try to say a good word for himself, or to plead “not guilty,” unless he can shew that he loves, and has always loved, God with his whole heart and soul. If he can truly say this, he is all right, he is not a sinner, and does not need pardon. He will find his way to the kingdom without the cross and without a Saviour.

But, if he cannot say this, his mouth is “stopped” and he is “guilty before God” (Rom 3:19). However favourably a good outward life may dispose him and others to look upon his case just now, the verdict will go against him hereafter. This is man’s day, when man’s judgments prevail; but God’s day is coming, when the case shall be tried upon its real merits. Then the Judge of all the earth shall do right (Gen 18:15), and the sinner be put to shame. This is a divine verdict, not a human one. It is God, not man, Who condemns; and “God is not a man, that He should lie” (Num 23:19). This is God’s testimony concerning man, and we know that this witness is true. It concerns us much to receive it as such and to act upon it.

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa 45:22), a “just God and a Saviour” (v. 21). “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7).

Turn your eye, the eye of faith, to the cross and see these two things—the crucifiers and the Crucified. See the crucifiers, the haters of God and of His Son. They are yourself! Read in them your own character. See the Crucified. It is God Himself, incarnate love. It is He who made you, God manifest in flesh, suffering, dying for the ungodly. Can you suspect His grace? Can you cherish evil thoughts of Him? Can you ask anything further, to awaken in you the fullest and most unreserved confidence? Will you misinterpret that agony and death, by saying either that they do not mean grace, or that the grace which they mean is not for you? Call to mind that which is written—“Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us” (1Jo 3:16). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). ❧

From God’s Way of Peace; this tract available in print from Chapel Library.

Conscience Pacified Forever

“No more conscience of sins.”—Hebrews 10:2

Mark, at the outset, it is not said ‘sin,’ but ‘sins;’ not, no more sins, but no more ‘conscience of’—not consciousness of.

One great object in sacrifice is to provide acceptable worship; such as God can accept, and by means of which He will be glorified. All His works are to praise Him; all His creatures are to worship Him. It is His prerogative and joy to be worshipped; it is His creature’s part to give this worship. Our praise goes up; His love and blessing come down.

But in order to acceptable worship, there must be an acceptable worshipper. Hence the first thing in sacrifice is to provide such a worshipper. For we do not worship in order to be accepted by God, but because we have been accepted. It is not first worship and then acceptance; but first acceptance and then worship. Acceptable worship is the worship of an accepted man.

Sacrifice then provides for acceptance; secures it. It does so by substitution and exchange. It substitutes the just for the unjust, in the bearing of that guilt the existence of which was a barrier to all acceptance. Sacrifice is no mere piece of self-denial; and the sacrifice of the cross is no mere specimen of self-surrender which we are to imitate, and, in imitating, commend ourselves to God. It is substitution, suretyship, exchange; the innocent taking the place of the guilty, that the guilty may take the place of the innocent. It is this transference that produces the accepted worshipper; for worship, such as God delights in, can only come from one who has found favour in the sight of God; and the favour which a sinner finds in the sight of God, comes from his being identified with one who is already in favour, even the only-begotten Son.

But this is only one side of the great truth contained in sacrifice—the side that looks Godward; for every truth has a twofold aspect, a divine and human side. We have seen the bearing of sacrifice as to God; let us mark its bearing on man, which is the great object of the epistle to the Hebrews.

It is with the conscience that it has to do. Not with the heart, or the understanding, or the imagination; but with the conscience. An evil conscience is the great barrier to acceptable worship. And what is an evil conscience? Not simply that which testifies against us that we have sinned—in that sense there are no consciences but evil ones on earth—but one with the pressure of guilt still upon it; with no sense of pardon, no knowledge of the removal of sin; with the persuasion that there is still something between the soul and God, some variance or estrangement; something which makes God

frown upon him, which makes him afraid to look up to God, which makes it not safe in him to approach God because of sin; sin unremoved; unpardoned guilt.

Sacrifice, then, bears directly upon the conscience, by showing God's way of removing guilt. The knowledge of the one sacrifice, the belief of God's testimony regarding it, operates immediately on the conscience; because it is written, 'Through this Man is preached the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.' This immediate forgiveness and acceptance, as the consequence of our belief of the divine record regarding the finished sacrifice, places us at once in the position of accepted men on the one hand, and of men delivered from an evil conscience on the other; brought back, in so far as the conscience is concerned, to the position of the unsinning and the unfallen.

There are two things special in sacrifice, blood and fire: the blood, the substitution of life for life; the fire, the righteous displeasure of God consuming the victim and exhausting the penalty, satisfying righteousness, vindicating holiness, so as to set the guilty free. In the fire conscience recognises the wrath due for sin—the 'condemnation;' in the blood it sees that wrath exhausted and extinguished—the 'no condemnation.' It needs to see both; both together; else its idea of each will be imperfect. Not the blood without the wrath (that would have no meaning); nor the wrath without the blood (that would only terrify). It is this double sight that relieves the conscience from the pressure of guilt and the dread of meeting God. Until this great sight is seen the sinner is not in a state for worship; for dread and darkness and uncertainty as to the gracious mind of God, are hinderers, nay, destroyers of all true worship; as well as of all true and happy service.

One great object of sacrifice, then, is to purge the conscience; to give us a 'good conscience' and a 'true heart;' to remove the dread of God, arising from the thought of His being our enemy, and of our sin being unpardoned. Revealed to us in the cross, we learn to trust Him; interpreted as His character and purposes are by the death of His Son, we are attracted to it; we 'draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith,' having 'no more conscience of sins.' Instead of flying from God, we fly to Him, and rest in Him for evermore.

O blood of Christ, what a refuge art thou for a troubled conscience and a wounded spirit! O love of God, what a resting-place art thou for the sad and weary! ❧

Available in print as a tract from Chapel Library.

How Shall I Go To God?

It is with our *sins* that we go to God, for we have nothing else to go with that we can call our own. This is one of the lessons that we are so slow to learn; yet without learning this we cannot take one right step in that which we call a religious life.

To look up some *good thing* in our past life, or to get some good thing now if we find that our past does not contain any such thing, is our first thought when we begin to inquire after God, that we may get the great question settled between Him and us, as to the forgiveness of our sins.

“In his favor is life”; and to be without this favor is to be unhappy here, and to be shut out from joy hereafter. There is no life worthy of the name of life save that which flows from His assured friendship. Without that friendship, our life here is a burden and a weariness; but with that friendship we fear no evil, and all sorrow is turned into joy.

“How shall I be happy?” was the question of a weary soul who had tried a hundred different ways of happiness, and had always failed.

“Secure the favor of God,” was the prompt answer, by one who had himself tasted that the “Lord is gracious.”

“Is there no other way of being happy?”

“None, none,” was the quick and decided reply. “Man has been trying other ways for six thousand years, and has utterly failed, and are *you* likely to succeed?”

“No, not likely; and I don’t want to go on trying. But this favor of God seems such a shadowy thing, and God Himself so far off, that I know not which way to turn.”

“God’s favor is no shadow; it is real beyond all other realities; and He Himself is the nearest of all near beings, as accessible as He is gracious.”

“That favor of which you speak has always seemed to me a sort of *mist*, of which I can make nothing.”

“Say rather it is *sunshine* which a mist is hiding from you.”

“Yes, yes, I believe you; but how shall I get through the mist into the sunshine beyond? It seems so difficult and to require such a length of time!”

“*You* make that distant and difficult which God has made simple and near and easy.”

“Are there no difficulties, do you mean to say?”

“In one sense, a thousand; in another, none.”

“How is that?”

“Did the Son of God put difficulties in the sinner’s way when He said to the multitude, ‘Come unto me, and I will give you rest?’”

“Certainly not; He meant them to go at once to Him, as He stood there, and as they stood there, and He would give them rest.”

“Had *you* then been upon the spot, what difficulties should you have found?”

“None, certainly; to speak of difficulty when I was standing by the side of the Son of God would have been folly, or worse.”

“Did the Son of God suggest difficulty to the sinner when He sat on Jacob’s well, by the side of the Samaritan? Was not all difficulty anticipated or put away by these wondrous words of Christ, ‘thou wouldst have asked, and I would have given?’”

“Yes, no doubt; the asking and the giving was all. The whole transaction is finished on the spot. Time and space, distance and difficulty, have nothing to do with the matter; the giving was to follow the asking as a matter of course. So far all is plain. But I would ask: Is there no barrier here?”

“None whatever, if the Son of God really came to save the lost; if He came for those who were only partly lost, or who could partly save themselves, the barrier is infinite. This I admit; nay, insist upon.”

“Is the being lost, then, no barrier to our being saved?”

“Foolish question, which may be met by a foolish answer. Is your being thirsty a hindrance to your getting water or is being poor a hindrance to your obtaining riches as a gift from a friend?”

“True; it is my thirst that fits me for the water and my poverty that fits me for the gold.”

“Ah, yes, the Son of Man came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. If you be not wholly a sinner, there is a barrier; if you be wholly such, there is none!”

“Wholly a sinner! Is that really my character?”

“No doubt of that. If you doubt it, go and search your Bible. God’s testimony is that you are wholly a sinner, and must deal with Him as such, for the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

“Wholly a sinner, well!—but must I not get quit of some of my sins before I can expect blessing from Him?”

“No, indeed; He alone can deliver you from so much as even one sin; and you must go at once to Him with all that you have of evil, how much so ever that may be. If you be not wholly a sinner, you don’t wholly need Christ, for He is out and out a Saviour; He does not help you to save yourself, nor do you help Him to save you. He does all, or nothing. A half salvation will only do for those who are not completely lost. He ‘his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree’” (1Pe 2:24).

It was in some such way as the above that Luther found his way into the peace and liberty of Christ. The story of his deliverance is an instructive one, as showing how the stumbling-blocks of self-righteousness are removed by the full exhibition of the Gospel in its freeness, as the good news of God’s love to the unloving and unlovable; the good news of pardon to the sinner, without merit and without money; the good news of PEACE WITH GOD, solely through the propitiation of Him who hath made peace by the blood of His Cross.

One of Luther's earliest difficulties was that he must get repentance wrought within himself; and having accomplished this, he was to carry this repentance as a peace-offering or recommendation to God. If this repentance could not be presented as a positive recommendation, at least it could be urged as a plea in mitigation of punishment. "How can I dare believe in the favor of God," he said, "so long as there is in me no real conversion? I must be changed before He can receive me."

He is answered that the "conversion," or "repentance," of which he is so desirous, can never take place so long as he regards God as a stern and unloving Judge. It is the *goodness of God* that leadeth to repentance (Rom 2:4), and without the recognition of this "goodness" there can be no softening of heart. An impenitent sinner is one who is despising the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering.

Luther's aged counselor tells him plainly that he must be done with penances and mortifications, and all such self-righteous preparations for securing or purchasing the divine favor. That voice, Luther tells us touchingly, seemed to come to him from heaven: "All true repentance begins with the knowledge of the forgiving love of God."

As he listens light breaks in, and an unknown joy fills him. Nothing between him and God! Nothing between him and pardon! No preliminary goodness, or preparatory feeling! He learns the apostle's lesson, "Christ died for the *ungodly*" (Rom 5:6); God "justifieth the *ungodly*" (Rom 4:5). All the evil that is in him cannot hinder this justification; and all the goodness (if such there be) that is in him cannot assist in obtaining it. He must be received as a sinner, or not at all. The pardon that is proffered recognizes only his *guilt*; and the salvation provided in the Cross of Christ regards him simply as *lost*.

But the sense of guilt is too deep to be easily quieted. Fear comes back again, and he goes once more to his aged adviser, crying, "Oh, my sin, my sin!" as if the message of forgiveness which he had so lately received was too good news to be true, and as if sins like his could not be so easily and so simply forgiven.

"What! would you be only a pretended sinner, and therefore need only a pretended Saviour?"

So spake his venerable friend, and then added, solemnly, "Know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of great and real sinners, who are deserving of nothing but utter condemnation."

"But is not God sovereign in His electing love?" said Luther; "Perhaps I may not be one of His chosen."

"Look to the wounds of Christ," was the answer, "and learn there God's gracious mind to the children of men. In Christ we read the name of God, and learn what He is, and how He loves; the Son is the revealer of the Father; and the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins," said Luther to a friend one day, when tossing on a sick bed; "but what is that to me?"

“Ah,” said his friend, “does not that include your own sins? You believe in the forgiveness of David’s sins, and of Peter’s sins, why not of your own? The forgiveness is for you as much as for David or Peter.”

Thus Luther found rest. The Gospel, thus believed, brought liberty and peace. He knew that he was forgiven because God had said that forgiveness was the immediate and sure possession of all who believed the good news.

In the settlement of the great question between the sinner and God, there was to be no bargaining and no price of any kind. The basis of settlement was laid eighteen hundred years ago; and the mighty transaction on the Cross did all that was needed as a price. “It is finished,” is God’s message to the sons of men in their inquiry, “What shall we do to be saved?” This *completed transaction* supersedes all man’s efforts to justify himself, or to assist God in justifying him. We see Christ crucified, and God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, *not imputing unto men their trespasses*; and this non-imputation is the result solely of what was done upon the Cross, where the transference of the sinner’s guilt to the divine Surety was once and forever accomplished. It is of that transaction that the Gospel brings us the “good news,” and whosoever believeth it becomes partaker of all the benefits which that transaction secured.

“But am I not to be indebted to the Holy Spirit’s work in my soul?”

“Undoubtedly; for what hope can there be for you without the Almighty Spirit, who quickeneth the dead?”

“If so, then ought I not to wait for His impulses, and having got them, may I not present the feelings which He has wrought in me as reasons why I should be justified?”

“No, in no wise. You are not justified by the Spirit’s work, but by Christ’s alone; nor are the motions of the Spirit in you the grounds of your confidence, or the reasons for your expecting pardon from the Judge of all. The Spirit works in you, not to prepare you for being justified, or to make you fit for the favor of God, but to *bring you to the Cross*, just as you are—for the Cross is the only place where God deals in mercy with the transgressor.”

It is at the Cross that we meet God in peace and receive His favor. There we find not only the blood that washes, but the righteousness which clothes and beautifies, so that henceforth we are treated by God as if our own unrighteousness had passed away, and the righteousness of His own Son were actually ours.

This is what the apostle calls “imputed” righteousness (Rom 4:6, 8, 11, 22, 24), or righteousness so reckoned to us by God, as that we are entitled to all the blessings which that righteousness can obtain for us. Righteousness got up by ourselves, or put into us by another, we call *infused*, or *imparted*, or *inherent* righteousness; but righteousness belonging to another reckoned to us by God as if it were our own, we call *imputed righteousness*. It is of this that the apostle speaks when he says, “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27). Thus Christ *represents* us: and God deals with us as represented by Him. Righteousness within will follow necessarily and inseparably; but we

are not to wait in order to get it before going to God for the righteousness of His only begotten Son.

Imputed righteousness must come *first*. You cannot have the righteousness *within* till you have the righteousness *without*; and to make your own righteousness the price which you give to God for that of His Son, is to dishonor Christ, and to deny His Cross. The Spirit's work is not to make us holy, in order that we may be pardoned, but to show us the Cross, where the pardon is to be found by the unholy; so that having found the pardon there, we may begin the life of holiness to which we are called.

That which God presents to the sinner is an *immediate pardon*, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," but by the great work of righteousness finished for us by the Substitute. Our qualification for obtaining that righteousness is *that we are unrighteous*, just as the sick man's qualification for the physician is *that he is sick*.

Of a previous goodness, preparatory to pardon, the Gospel says nothing. Of a preliminary state of religious feeling as a necessary introduction to the grace of God, the apostles never spoke. Fears, troubles, self-questionings, bitter cries for mercy, forebodings of judgment, and resolutions of amendment, may, in point of time, have preceded the sinner's reception of the good news; but they did not constitute his fitness, nor make up his qualification. He would have been quite as welcome without them. They did not make the pardon more complete, more gracious, or more free. The sinner's *wants* were all his arguments—"God be merciful to me a sinner." He *needed* salvation, and he went to God for it, and got it just because he needed it, and because God delights in the poor and needy. He *needed* pardon, and he went to God for it, and obtained it without merit or money. "When he had NOTHING TO PAY, God frankly forgave" (see Luk 7:41-42). It was the having nothing to pay that drew out the frank forgiveness.

Ah, this is *grace*. "This is *love*, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1Jo 4:10)! He loved us, even when we were dead in sins. He loved us, not because we were rich in goodness, but because He was "rich in mercy"; not because we were worthy of His favor, but because He delighted in loving-kindness. His welcome to us comes from His own graciousness, not from our loveliness. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). Christ invites the weary! It is this weariness that fits you for Him, and Him for you. Here is the *weariness*, there is the *resting-place!* They are side by side. Do you say, "That resting-place is not for me?" What! Is it not for the weary? Do you say, "But I cannot make use of it?" What! Do you mean to say, "I am so weary that I cannot sit down?" If you had said, "I am so weary that I cannot stand, nor walk, nor climb," one could understand you. But to say, "I am so weary that I cannot sit down," is simple folly, or something worse, for you are making a merit and a work of your sitting down; you seem to think that to sit down is to do some great thing which will require a long and prodigious effort.

Let us listen then to the gracious words of the Lord: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (Joh 4:10). Thou wouldest have asked, and He

would have given! That is all. How real, how true, how free; yet how simple! Or let us listen to the voice of the servant in the person of Luther. “Oh, my dear brother, learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing a new song; to despair of previous work, and to cry to Him, Lord Jesus, Thou art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken on Thee what was mine, and given to me what is Thine. What I was, Thou becamest, that I might be what I was not. Christ dwells only with sinners. Meditate often on this love of Christ, and you will taste its sweetness.” Yes; pardon, peace, life, are all of them *gifts*, divine gifts, brought down from heaven by the Son of God, presented personally to each needy sinner by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are not to be *bought*, but *received*; as men receive the sunshine, complete and sure and free. They are not to be earned or deserved by exertions or sufferings, or prayers or tears; but *accepted* at once as the purchase of the labors and sufferings of the great Substitute. They are not to be waited for, but *taken* on the spot without hesitation or distrust, as men take the loving gift of a generous friend. They are not to be claimed on the ground of *fitness* or *goodness*, but of *need* and *unworthiness*, of poverty and emptiness. ❧

From The Everlasting Righteousness; available as a paperback. This message and eight other tracts available as a booklet from Chapel Library entitled How Shall I Go to God.

What Is My Hope?

“I *hoped* by this time to have been at the top,” said an old man, who had set out one pleasant autumn morning to climb the hill behind his dwelling. But he had mistaken the way, and was further from the top than when he set out. He returned weary and disappointed. Like those of whom Job speaks, “They were confounded, *because they had hoped*” (Job 6:20).

“I *hoped* by this time to have been happy,” said a young man, as he sat at the helm of his splendid yacht, and steered her along in the sunshine. But with all his gold, and the pleasure which gold buys, he was duller and sadder than he was ten years before, when he set out to “enjoy life.” He had mistaken the way, and his soul was emptier than ever. He sighed and looked round upon the blue waves in vain; they could not help him. “He was confounded *because he had hoped*.” He had mistaken the way. Year after year had passed, and he had been going farther and farther from happiness. God was not in all his thoughts.

“I *hoped* by this time to have had peace with God,” said a man of sixty, one Sabbath morning as he walked to the house of God. But he seemed as one who was farther off than ever from peace; and the thought of advancing years, without any settlement for

eternity, made him sad. He had mistaken the way. He had labored, and prayed, and fasted, and done many good works; he had done all but the one thing—he had not taken Christ. He had not counted all things but loss for Christ; he had not rested his soul on the one resting-place. His life had been a life of doing, but not of believing; of doubting, not of trusting; and “he was confounded *because he had hoped.*” He might have had Christ many years ago, but he preferred his own plan, and continued his laborious efforts to recommend himself to God by his devotions and doings. The peace he had been working for had not come; and the peace for which the Son of God had wrought, and which He had finished for the sinner, he had not accepted.

It is one thing to hope, and it is another thing to hope well and truly. To hope aright is to hope according to what God has revealed concerning our future.

Much has been written of “the pleasures of hope”; and much that is true and beautiful has been said of these “pleasures”; for they are many, and man clings to them even in the days of darkness and despair. It is not a wrong thing to hope. God has put hope in every human breast; and the Book of God dwells much upon it, and upon “the things hoped for.” It is “good that a man should hope,” said the prophet (Lam 3:26). “Hope on, hope ever,” are the expressive words of a motto which has cheered many. Hope is “the anchor of the soul,” and is frequently, in pictures, and devices, and emblems, thus set forth—an anchor firmly fixed on the solid shore, and holding fast a vessel beaten by wind and wave.

But, in order to be the anchor of the soul, hope must be something surer and better than what man usually calls by that name. For man’s hopes are often but his own wishes and fancies; and even when they go beyond these, and occupy themselves with what is really true and lawful, they are not to be trusted, and they endure but for a season. They disappoint, but do not fill. They cheat and mock him who trusts them. They abide not, but depart, leaving behind them only a void and aching heart.

They fall to pieces of themselves, even when no hand touches them, and no storm crushes them. They are not to be trusted for a day. “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher...all is vanity” (Ecc 1:2).

One August evening, just before sunset, we saw a rainbow suddenly appear. It seemed to rise out of the dark clouds that hung in the sky, and drew our eyes by its completeness; for nothing seemed wanting either in color or in position, to its perfection. But if it was one of the brightest, it was also one of the briefest we had ever seen. It had scarcely taken its place on the cloud when it disappeared. That fair bow was like man’s hope, as brief as it was bright, as disappointing as it was promising. It melted off the sky, though no hand touched it, and no tempest shook it, leaving nothing behind but the cheerless cloud, which it had for a few moments brightened. “What is man?” it said. What are man’s hopes, and joys, and plans? They rise and fall; they come and go; they shine, and then return into darkness. “The things that are seen are temporal” (2Co 4:18),

We remember one peculiar day in the desert of Sinai—a day not exactly of rain, but of showers, with clear sunshine between. Over some high black rocks to the left of us

thin mists hung, or rather rapidly passed across the brown precipices. On these, rainbow after rainbow formed itself in beautiful succession; six or seven of these suddenly shining out, and then disappearing, one after another—the brightest yet frailest things we had ever seen; so like what is real and abiding, yet so unreal and perishable. How like they were to the dreams and hopes of man, disappointing and cheating human hearts with unsubstantial beauty! To such dreams and hopes the poor heart clings, not in youth merely, but to old age; and by means of these vain brightnesses is drawn away from Him who is brighter than all earthly brightnesses—the “brightness of Jehovah’s glory and the express image of His person”; whose glory changes not; who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

O man, when wilt thou be wise, and fix thine eye only on that which endureth forever; on that which will fill thy heart and gladden thy soul to all eternity?

There was an old Scottish family, to whom belonged large estates, and who had lived together for many years in unbroken completeness. One evening they gathered all together, with relatives and friends—father, mother, sisters, cousins, with the heir of the estate as the centre of the happy circle. That evening was among the last of the completeness. Within a few years all was changed, and each member of that circle, that had sat in gladness round the family hearth, was gathered into the family vault. The estate passed into other hands, and the old trees waved over other heads. The hopes that shone in each face that evening were speedily crushed, and the frailty of earth’s fairest faces and fondest affections was sadly shown. We never look upon that old family mansion without calling to mind some text that tells of the vanity of human expectations. In a dying world like this, we need a sure and undying hope.

It is written, “Thou destroyest the hope of man.” Yes, even so. Not only does man’s hope fall to pieces of itself, but God destroys it before its time. It springs up in a night, and withers in a night, because God smites it. Man cannot be trusted here with the endurance of any earthly things. They become idols, and must be broken; for “the idols he will utterly abolish” (Isa 2:18). Our cherished hopes of a bright future here—of a long life, of health, of comfort, of money, of prosperity—must be checked, else we should make earth our home and our heaven, forgetting the glory to be revealed, and the pleasures that are at God’s right hand forever. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent” (Rev 3:19).

But God quenches no hope without presenting a brighter one—one that will last forever; for He does not mock the creature that he has made, nor wither up his fairest flowers without a reason, and that reason fraught both with wisdom and with love. He cares for us. He yearns over us. He would fain make us happy. He loves us too well to cheat us with dreams.

Man’s hope must be destroyed, that *God’s* hope may be built upon its ruins. The human is swept away only that the divine may come in its stead. The temporal is in mercy wrested from our grasp, that the eternal may be our portion and inheritance.

There is, then, that which God calls “the BETTER hope”—a hope full of immortality; a hope which God Himself gives, and of which no man can rob us. It is divine and everlasting. It brings with it the peace which passeth all understanding; and it contains in it the joy unspeakable and full of glory. No disappointment in it, and no mockery! It is sure and glorious, like Him from whom it comes to us. It is connected with a crown, with an inheritance, with a kingdom, with a glory which fadeth not away, with an eternity of joy such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.

The hope which God sets before us is no doubtful thing, but sure and glorious. It rests upon His Gospel, in believing which we become men of hope.

For nothing save a believed Gospel can give us aught of hope—at least of that which God calls by that name. A believed Gospel brings us peace; and, with the peace, it brings us hope. The peace is sure and steadfast; so also is the hope it brings.

This Gospel is the good news concerning Him who died and was buried and rose again. The thirty-three years between His cradle and His Cross embrace the whole compass of the good news. The story of His birth, and life, and death, contains all we need to know for peace. Into the soul of him who receives that divine story this peace enters, and, there it makes its abode—peace in believing, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. “To him that worketh not, but believeth” (Rom 4:5), this peace belongs; and he who has the peace has the hope—a hope that maketh not ashamed.

Blessed union of peace and hope! We cannot have the hope without the peace, and we cannot have the peace without the hope (Rom 5:1-2). The belief of the good news makes us partakers of both.

Herein is love! For thus we see God providing not only for our present, but for our future, setting before our eyes a crown and kingdom, and meanwhile giving us peace with Himself here on earth until that kingdom come. Herein is love! For thus we see God in His pity drying up our earthly wells, and at the same time opening for us the wells of salvation—“the fountain of the water of life.”

Lift up thine eyes, O man, and look unto that future which lies before you! What is it to be? Dark or bright? Your life is but a vapor. Will you not make sure of the life everlasting? It is within your reach. It is pressed upon your acceptance by Him who came to give hope to the hopeless, life to the dead, peace to the troubled, rest to the weary. That which He did in dying on the Cross is that which you have to rest upon for eternity. It is a sure resting-place. You need no other. He that believeth entereth into REST!

Yes; and he that believeth enters into a new life, and begins a holy walk—a life and a walk corresponding to the faith which realizes both the grace of the Cross and the glory of the kingdom. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2Co 5:17); and that same Holy Spirit who drew him to the Cross, is given him that he may follow Christ, and be holy as He was holy.

From The Everlasting Righteousness; available as a paperback. This message and eight other tracts available as a booklet from Chapel Library entitled How Shall I Go to God.

Salvation

Jesus Only

“To him that worketh not, but believeth.”—Romans 4:5

There seem to be many in our day who are seeking God. Yet they appear to be but feeling after Him, in order to find Him, as if He were either a distant or an unknown God. They forget that He is *“not far from every one of us”* (Act 17:27), for *“in him we live, and move, and have our being”* (v. 28).

That He is not far; that He has come down; that He has come near: this is the *“beginning of the gospel”* (Mar 1:1). It sets aside the vain thoughts of those who think that they must bring Him near by their prayers and devout performances. He has shewn Himself to us that we may know Him, and in knowing Him, find the life of our souls.

Some have tried to give directions to sinners *“how to get converted,”* multiplying words without wisdom, leading the sinner away from the Cross by setting him upon *doing*, not upon *believing*. Our business is not to give any such directions, but, as the apostles did, to preach Christ crucified, a present Saviour, and a present salvation. Then it is that sinners are converted, as the Lord Himself said, *“I, if I be lifted up...will draw all men unto me”* (Joh 12:32).

1. No Satisfaction in Self

You say, *“I am not satisfied with the motives that have led me to seek Christ; they are selfish.”* That is very likely. The feelings of a newly awakened sinner are not disinterested, neither can they be so.

You have gone in quest of salvation from a sense of danger, or fear of the wrath to come, or a desire to obtain the inheritance of glory. These are some of the motives by which you are actuated. How could it be otherwise? God made you with these fears and hopes, and He appeals to them in His Word. When He says, *“Turn ye, turn ye...for why will ye die?”* (Eze 33:11), He is appealing to your fears. When He sets eternal life before you, and the joys of an endless kingdom, He is appealing to your hopes. And when He presents these motives, He expects you to be moved by them. To act upon such motives, then, cannot be wrong. Indeed, not to act upon them would be to harden yourself

against God's most solemn appeals. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2Co 5:11), says Paul. It cannot be wrong to be influenced by this terror. "The remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev 11:13). This surely was not wrong. The whole Bible is full of such motives, addressed to our hopes and fears.

When was it otherwise? Among the millions who have found life in Christ, who began in any other way, or started with a purely disinterested motive? Was it not thus that the jailor at Philippi began when the earthquake shook his soul and called up before his conscience the everlasting woe? Was it not a sense of danger and a dread of wrath that made him ask, "What must I do to be saved?" (Act 16:30). And did the apostle rebuke him for this? Did he refuse to answer his anxious question because his motive was so selfish? No. He answered at once, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (v. 31).

There is nothing wrong in these motives. When my body is pained, it is not wrong to wish for relief. When overtaken by sickness, it is not wrong to send for a physician. You may call this selfishness, but it is a right and lawful selfishness, which He Who made us what we are and Who gave us our instincts, expects us to act upon; and in acting on which we may count upon His blessing, not His rebuke. It is not wrong to dread hell, to desire heaven, to flee from torments, to long for blessedness, to shun condemnation, and to desire pardon. It is not wrong to love God for what He has done for us. Not to do so would be the very baseness of ingratitude. To love God purely for what He is, is by some spoken of as that highest kind of love, into which enters no element of self. It is not so. For in that case, you are actuated by the pleasure of loving; and this pleasure of loving an infinitely lovable and glorious Being of necessity introduces self. Besides, to say that we are to love God solely for what He is, and not for what He has done, is to make ingratitude an essential element of pure love. David's love shewed itself in not forgetting God's benefits (Psa 103:2). But this so-called "pure love" soars beyond David's, and finds it a duty to be unthankful, lest perchance some selfish element mingles itself with its superhuman, superangelic purity. Let not Satan then ensnare you with such foolish thoughts, the tendency of which is to quench every serious desire under the pretext of its not being disinterested¹ and perfect.

You think that were you seeking salvation from a regard to the glory of God, you would be satisfied. But what does that mean, but that at the very first, even before you have come to Christ, you are to be actuated by the highest of all motives? He who has learned to seek God's glory is one who has already come to Christ; and he who has learned to do this entirely is no sinner at all, and therefore, does not need Christ. To seek God's glory is a high attainment of faith; yet you want to be conscious of possessing it before you have got faith; nay, in order to your getting it! Is it possible that you can be deluding yourself with the idea that if you could only secure this qualification, you

¹ **disinterested** – not influenced or dictated by private advantage.

might confidently expect God to give you faith? This would be substituting your own zeal for His glory in the room of the Cross of Christ.

Do not keep back from Christ under the idea that you must come to Him in a disinterested frame, and from an unselfish motive. If you were right in this thing, who could be saved? You are to come as you are, with all your bad motives, whatever these may be. Take all your bad motives, add them to the number of your sins, and bring them to the altar where the great Sacrifice is lying. Go to the Mercy Seat. Tell the High Priest there, not what you desire to be, not what you ought to be, but what you are. Tell Him the honest truth as to your condition at this moment. Confess the impurity of your motives, all the evil that you feel or that you don't feel, your hard-heartedness, your blindness, your unteachableness. Confess everything without reserve. He wants you to come to Him exactly as you are, and not to cherish the vain thought that by a little waiting or working or praying, you can make yourself fit, or persuade Him to make you fit. "How reasonable," writes one, "that we should just do that one small act which God requires of us—go and tell Him the truth. I used to go and say, Lord, I am a sinner, do have mercy on me; but as I did not feel all this, I began to see that I was taking a lie in my hand, trying to persuade the Almighty that I felt things which I did not feel. These prayers and confessions brought me no comfort, no answer; so at last I changed my tone, and began to tell the truth: Lord, I do not feel myself a sinner; I do not feel that I need mercy. Now, all was right; the sweetest reception, the most loving encouragements, the most refreshing answers this confession of the truth brought down from heaven. I did not get anything by declaring myself a sinner, for I felt it not; but I obtained everything by confessing that I did not see myself one."

"But I am not satisfied with my faith," you say. No, truly. Nor are you ever likely to be so. At least I should hope not. If you wait for this before you have peace, you will wait till life is done. It would appear that you want to believe in your own faith in order to obtain rest to your soul. The Bible does not say, "Being satisfied about our faith, we have peace with God," but "Being *justified* by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom 5:1); and between these two things there is a great difference.

Satisfaction with Jesus and His work, not satisfaction with your own faith, is what God expects of you. "I am satisfied with Christ," you say. Are you? Then you are a believing man; and what more do you wish? Is not satisfaction with Christ enough for you or for any sinner? And is not this the truest kind of faith? To be satisfied with Christ is faith in Christ. To be satisfied with His blood is faith in His blood. Do not bewilder yourself, nor allow others to bewilder you. Be assured that the very essence of faith is being satisfied with Christ and His sin-bearing work. Ask no more questions about faith, but go on your way rejoicing, as one to whom Christ is all.

Remember the Baptist's words, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Joh 3:30). Self, in every form, must decrease, and Christ must increase. To become satisfied with your faith would look as if you were dissatisfied with Christ. The beginning, the middle, and end of your course must be dissatisfaction with self and satisfaction with Christ. Be

content to be satisfied with faith's glorious Object, and let faith itself be forgotten. Faith, however perfect, has nothing to give you. It points you to Jesus. It bids you look away from itself to Him. It says, "Christ is all" (Col 3:11). It bids you look to Him Who says, "Look unto me" (Isa 45:22); Who says, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:17-18).

If you were required to believe in your own faith, to ascertain its quality, and to know that you are born again, before you were warranted to trust in Jesus, or to have peace, you would certainly need to be satisfied with your own faith. But you are not required to make good any personal claim, save that you are a sinner. Not that you feel yourself to be one (that would open up an endless metaphysical inquiry into your own feelings), but simply that you are one. This you know upon God's authority, and learn from His Word; and on this you act, whether you feel your sinfulness or not. The Gospel needs no ascertaining of anything about ourselves, save what is written in the Bible, and what is common to all Adam's children—that we need a Saviour. It is upon this need that faith acts; it is this need that faith presents at the Throne of Grace. The question, then, is not am I satisfied with my faith? But, am I a needy sinner, and am I satisfied that in Christ there is all I need?

You say, "I am not satisfied with my love." What! Did you expect to be so? Is it your love to Christ, or His love to you, that is to bring you peace? God's free-love to sinners, as such, is our resting-place. There are two kinds of love in God—His love of compassion to the unbelieving sinner, and His love of delight and complacency to His believing children. A father's love to a prodigal² child is quite as sincere as his love to his obedient, loving child at home, though it be of a different kind. God cannot love you *as a believer* till you are such. But He loves you as a poor sinner. And it is this love of His to the unloving and unlovable that affords the sinner his first resting-place. This free love of God attracts and satisfies him. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1Jo 4:10). "We love him, because he first loved us" (1Jo 4:19). "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (Joh 3:16).

"I am not satisfied with my repentance," you say. It is well. What would you have thought of yourself had you been so? What pride and self-righteousness would it indicate were you saying, "I am satisfied with my repentance; it is of the proper quality and amount"? If satisfied with it, what would you do with it? Would you ground your peace upon it? Would you pacify your conscience with it? Would you go with it, instead of the blood, to a holy God? If not, what do you mean by the desire to be satisfied with repentance before having peace with God?

In short, you are not satisfied with any of your religious feelings, and it is well that you are not so; for, if you were, you must have a very high idea of yourself, and a very low idea of what both Law and Gospel expect of you. You are, no doubt, right in not being satisfied with the state of your feelings, but what has this to do with the great duty of

² **prodigal** – exceedingly or recklessly wasteful.

immediately believing on the Son of God? If the Gospel is nothing to you till you have got your feelings all set right, it is no Gospel for the sinner at all. But this is its special fitness and glory, that it takes you up at the very point where you are at this moment, and brings you glad tidings in spite of your feelings being altogether wrong.

2. Satisfaction in Christ Alone

All these difficulties of yours have their root in the self-esteem of our natures, which makes us refuse to be counted altogether sinners, and which shrinks from going to God, save with some personal recommendation to make acceptance likely. Utter want of goodness is what we are slow to acknowledge. Give up these attempts to be satisfied with yourself in anything great or small, faith, feeling, or action. The Holy Spirit's work in convincing you of sin is to make you dissatisfied with yourself; and will you pursue a course which can only grieve Him away? God can never be satisfied with you on account of any goodness about you; and why should you attempt to be satisfied with anything which will not satisfy Him?

There is but one thing with which He is entirely satisfied—the Person and work of His only-begotten Son. It is with Him that He wants you to be satisfied, not with yourself. How much better would it be to take God's way at once, and be satisfied with Christ? Then would pardon and peace be given without delay. Then would the favour of God rest upon you. For God has declared that whoever is satisfied with Christ shall find favour with Him. His desire is that you should come to be at one with Him in this great thing. He asks nothing of you save this. But with nothing else than this will He be content, nor will He receive you on any other footing, save that of one who has come to be satisfied with Christ, and with what Christ has done.

Surely all this is simple enough. Does it not exactly meet your case? Satisfaction with yourself, even could you get it, would do nothing for you. Satisfaction with Christ would do everything, for Christ is all. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat 3:17). Be pleased with Him in Whom the Father is pleased, and all is well.

I suspect that some of those difficulties of yours arise from the secret idea that the Gospel is just a sort of *modified law*, by keeping which you are to be saved. You know that the old Law is far above your reach, and that it condemns, but cannot save you. But you think, perhaps, that Christ came to make the Law easier, to lower its demands, to make it (as some say) an evangelical law, with milder terms, suited to the sinner's weakness. That this is blasphemy a moment's thought will shew you. For it means that the former Law was too strict; that is, it was not "holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). It denies also Christ's words, that He came not "to destroy, but to fulfil" the law (Mat 5:17) God has but one Law, and it is perfect; its substance is love to God and man. A milder law must mean an imperfect one, a law that makes God's one Law unnecessary, a law that gives countenance to sin. Will obedience to an imperfect law save a breaker of the perfect Law? But faith does not make void the Law; it establishes it (Rom 3:31).

It is by a perfect Law that we are saved; else it would be an unholy salvation. It is by a perfect Law, fulfilled in every jot and tittle that we are saved; else it would be an unrighteous salvation. The Son of God has kept the Law for us; He has magnified it and made it honourable; and thus we have a holy and righteous salvation. Though above Law in Himself, He was made “under the law” (Gal 4:4) for us; and by the vicarious Law-keeping of His spotless life, as well as by endurance unto death of that Law’s awful penalties, we are redeemed from the curse of the Law.

“Christ is the end [the fulfilling and exhausting] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4). For Christ is not a helper, but a Saviour. He has not come to enable us to save ourselves by keeping a mitigated law, but to keep the unmitigated Law in our room, that the Law might have no claim for penalty upon any sinner who will only consent to be indebted to the Law-keeping and Law-magnifying life and death of the divine Surety.

Other difficulties spring from confounding the work of the Spirit *in us* with that of Christ *for us*. These must be kept distinct, for the intermingling of them subverts both. Beware of overlooking either, or keeping them at a distance from each other. Though distinct, they go hand in hand, inseparably linked together, yet each having its own place and office. Your medicine and your physician are not the same, yet they go together. Christ is your Medicine; the Spirit is your Physician. Do not take the two works as if they were one compound work, nor build your peace upon some mystic gospel made up of a mixture of the two. Realize both, the outward and the inward, the objective and the subjective: Christ for us, the Holy Spirit in us.

As at the first, so to the last, must this distinctiveness be observed, lest, having found peace in believing, you lose it by not holding the beginning of your confidence steadfast to the end. “When I begin to doubt,” writes one, “I quiet my doubts by going back to the place where I got them first quieted. I go and get peace again where I got it at the beginning. I do not sit down gloomily to muse over my own faith or unbelief, but over the finished work of Immanuel. I don’t try to reckon up my experiences, to prove that I once was a believer, but I believe again as I did before. I don’t examine the evidence of the Spirit’s work in me, but I think of the sure evidences which I have of Christ’s work for me in His death, and burial, and resurrection. This is the restoration of my peace. I had begun to look at other objects; I am now recalled from my wanderings to look at Jesus only.” True faith is what may be called colourless, like air or water. It is but the medium through which the soul sees Christ; and the soul as little rests on it and contemplates it as the eye can see the air. When men, then, are bent on holding it, as it were, in their hands, curiously inspecting, analyzing, and so aiming at it, they are obliged to colour and thicken it, that it may be seen and touched. That is, they substitute for it something or other, a feeling, notion, sentiment, conviction, an act of reason, which they may hang over and dote upon. They rather aim at experiences within them, than at Him Who is without them. Now, men who are acted on by news, good and bad, or sights beautiful or fearful, admire, rejoice, weep, or are pained, but are moved spontaneously, not with a

direct consciousness of their emotion. So is it with faith and other Christian graces. Bystanders see our minds, but our minds, if healthy, see but the objects which possess them.

Some of your difficulties seem to arise from mixing up the natural and supernatural. Now the marvellous thing in conversion is that while all is supernatural (being the work of the Holy Ghost), all is also natural. You are, perhaps, expecting some miraculous descent of heavenly power and brightness into your soul, something apart from divine truth, and from the working of man's powers of mind. You have been expecting faith to descend like an angel from heaven into your soul, and hope to be lighted up, like a new star in your firmament. It is not so.

The Spirit's work is beyond nature, but it is not against nature. He displaces no faculty; He disturbs no mental process. He does violence to no part of our moral framework. He creates no new organ of thought or feeling. His office is to "set all to rights" within you, so that you never feel so calm, so true, so real, so perfectly natural, so much yourself—as when He has taken possession of you in every part, and filled your whole man with His heavenly joy. Never do you feel so perfectly free—less constrained and less mechanical—in all your faculties, as when He has brought "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2Co 10:5). The heavenly life imparted is liberty and peace; it is the removal of bondage, and darkness, and pain. So far from being a mechanical constraint, it is the removal of the iron chain with which guilt had bound us. It acts like an army of liberation to a downtrodden country, like the warm breath of spring to the frost-fettered tree. For the entrance of true life, or living truth, into man's soul must be liberty, not bondage. "The truth shall make you free" (Joh 8:32).

Other difficulties arise out of confused ideas as to the proper *order* of truth. Mislaid truth is sometimes more injurious than actual error. In our statements of doctrine, we are to have regard to God's order of things, as well as to the things themselves. If you would solve the simplest question in arithmetic, the figures must not only be the proper ones, but they must be placed in proper order. So it is with the doctrines of the Word of God. Some seem to fling them about in ill-assorted couples, or confused bundles, as if it mattered little to the hearer or reader what order was preserved, provided only certain truths were distinctly announced. Much trouble to the anxious person has arisen from this reckless confusion.

A gospel in which election is placed first is not the Gospel of the apostles; though certainly a gospel in which election is denied is still less the apostolic Gospel. The true Gospel is neither that Christ died for the elect, nor that He died for the whole world; for the excellency of the Gospel does not lie in its announcement of the numbers to be saved, but in its proclamation of the great propitiation itself.

Some who are supposed to be holding fast "the form of sound words" (2Ti 1:13) present us with a mere dislocation of the Gospel; the different truths being so jumbled that while they may be all there, they produce no result. They so neutralize each other as to prevent the sinner extracting from them the good news which, when rightly put togeth-

er, they most assuredly contain. If the verses of the Epistle to the Romans were transposed or jumbled together, would it be the Epistle to the Romans, though every word were there? So if in teaching the Gospel, we do not begin at the beginning—if, for instance, we tell the sinner what he has to do, before we tell him what God has done; if we tell him to examine his own heart before we tell him to study the Cross of Christ—we take out the whole gladness from the glad tidings, and preach “another gospel” (Gal 1:6).

3. Not Law, but Gospel

Do we not often, too, study the Bible as if it were a book of law, and not the revelation of grace? We draw a cloud over it, and read it as a volume written by a hard master. A harsh tone is thus imparted to its words, and the *legal* element obscures the *evangelical*. We are slow to read it as a revelation of the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the book of grace, specially written for us by the Spirit of grace. The Law no doubt is in it, yet the Bible is not Law, but Gospel. As Mount Sinai rears its head, an isolated mass of hard red granite, amid a thousand desert mountains of softer and less stern material, so does the Law stand in the Bible—a necessary part of it—but not the characteristic of it; “added because of transgressions, till the seed should come” (Gal 3:19). Yet have not our suspicious hearts darkened this Book of light? Do we not often read it as the proclamation of a command *to do*, instead of a declaration of what the love of God has done?

In going to God at first, are you to take for granted His willingness or His unwillingness to bless? Most seem to do the latter. They even defend themselves by saying that if they knew they were converted, they would take His willingness for granted, but not being sure of this they dare not do so! As if the Gospel were not the revelation of His willingness to receive sinners as such!

How strange! We believe in Satan’s willingness to tempt and to injure, but not in God’s willingness to deliver and to save! We yield to our great enemy when he seduces into sin, and leads away from Christ and heaven; but we will not yield to our truest Friend when He draws us with the bands of love! We will not give God credit for speaking truly when He speaks in tender mercy, and utters over the sinner the yearnings of His unfathomable pity. We listen as if His Words were hollow; as if He did not mean what He says; as if His messages of grace, instead of being the most thoroughly sincere that ever fell on human ears, were mere words spoken as a matter of course.

There is nothing in the whole Bible to repel the sinner, and yet the sinner will not come! There is everything to draw and to win; yet the sinner stands aloof! Christ receives sinners; yet the sinner turns away! He yearns over them, weeps over them, as over Jerusalem; yet the sinner is unmoved! The heavenly compassion is unavailing; the infinite long-suffering does not touch the stony heart, and the divine tears are thrown away. The Son of God stretches out His hands all the day long, but the outstretched hands are disregarded. All, all seems in vain to arrest the heedless, and to win back the wanderer.

Oh! The amount of divine love that has been expended upon this sad world, that has been brought to bear upon the needy sons of men! We sometimes almost doubt whether it be true or possible that God should lavish such love on such a world. But the Cross is the precious memorial of the love, and that saying stands unchangeable: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (Joh 3:16). Sometimes, too, we say, what is the use of throwing away such love? Is not the earnestness of God disproportioned to the littleness of its object—man? It would be so were this life all; were there no eternity, no heaven, no hell, no endless gladness, and no everlasting woe. But with such a destiny as man’s—with an eternity like that which is in store for him—can any amount of earnestness be too great? Can love or pity exceed their bounds? Can the joy or grief over a sinner saved or lost be exaggerated?

He Whose infinite mind knows what heaven is, knows what its loss must be to an immortal being. Can He be too much in earnest about its gain? He Whose all-reaching foresight knows what hell is, in all its never-ending anguish, sees far off and fathoms the horrors of the lost soul, its weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth for ever and for ever; its horrible sense of condemnation and unmitigated woe—its cutting remorse, its too-late repentance, its hopeless sighs, its bitter memories of earth’s sunny hours, with all the thousand sadnesses that go to make up the sum total of a lost eternity! Can He then pity too much? Can He yearn too tenderly over souls that are madly bent on flinging themselves into a doom like this? Can He use words too strong or too affectionate, in warning them against such a darkness and such a devil, and such a hell; in beseeching them to make sure of such a heaven as His?

In the minds of some, the idea prevails that sin quenches pity for the sinner in the heart of God. It is not so. That it shall do so hereafter, and that God will cease to pity the lost, is an awful truth. The lost soul’s eternity will be an unpitied eternity of woe. But, meanwhile, God’s hatred of the sin is not hatred of the sinner. Nay, the greatness of his sin seems rather to deepen than to lessen the divine compassion. At least we may say that the increasing misery which increasing sin entails calls into new intensity the paternal pity of “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num 16:22). It grieves Him at His heart (Gen 6:6). The further the prodigal goes into the far country, the more do the yearnings of the Father’s heart go out after him, in unfeigned compassion for the wretched wanderer, in his famine, and nakedness, and degradation, and hopeless grief.

No, sin does not quench the pitying love of God. The kindest words ever spoken to Israel were in the very height of their apostasy. The most gracious invitation ever uttered by the Lord was to Capernaum, and Bethsaida, and Chorazin, “Come unto me” (Mat 11:28). The most loving message ever sent to a Church was that to Laodicea, the worst of all the seven, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock” (Rev 3:20). It was Jerusalem, in her extremity of guilt and unbelief that drew forth the tears of the Son of God. No, sin does not extinguish the love of God to the sinner. Many waters cannot quench it, nor can the floods drown it. From first to last, God pursues the sinner as he flies from Him; pursues him not in hatred but in love; pursues him not to destroy, but to save.

God is not a man that He should lie. He means what He says when He speaks in pity, as truly as when He speaks in wrath. His words are not, like man's, random expressions or utterances of vague sentiment or highly wrought representations of feelings. His words are all true and real. You cannot exaggerate the genuine feeling which they contain; and to understand them as figures is not only to convert them into unrealities, but to treat them as falsehoods. Let sinners take God's words *as they are*: the genuine expressions of the mind of that infinitely truthful Being, Who uses nothing but the words of "truth and soberness" (Act 26:25).

He is sovereign; but that sovereignty is not at war with grace, nor does it lead to insincerity of speech, as some seem to think. Whether we can reconcile the sovereignty with the pity, it does not matter. Let us believe them both, because both are revealed. Nor let us resort to an explanation of the words of pity which would imply that they were not sincerely spoken, and that if a sinner took them too literally and too simply, he would be sorely disappointed, finding them at last delusive exaggerations, if not empty air.

When Christ was on earth, He received and blessed and healed every one who came to Him. Divine sovereignty did not hamper divine love, nor did love interfere with sovereignty. Each had its own place. There was no conflict between them. Christ spoke truly when He said, "No man can come unto me, except the Father...draw him" (Joh 6:44); and He spoke as truly when He said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (v. 37).

Let us learn to treat God as not merely the holiest, but the most truthful of all beings. Let the heedless sinner hear His truthful warnings, and tremble, for they shall all be fulfilled. Let the anxious sinner listen to His truthful words of grace and be at peace. We need to be told this. For there is in the minds of many a feeling of sad suspicion as to the sincerity of the divine utterances, and a tendency to evade their honest meaning, and this even among those who do not seem at all aware of such distrust. Let us do justice to the truthfulness of God.

"God is love" (1Jo 4:16). Yes, *God is love*. Can such a God be suspected of insincerity in the declarations of His long-suffering, in His words of yearning compassion toward the most rebellious and impenitent of men? That there is such a thing as righteousness; that there is such a place as hell; that there are such beings as lost angels and lost men, we know to be awful certainties. But however terrible, and however true, these things may be, they cannot cast the slightest doubt upon the sincerity of the great oath which God has sworn before heaven and earth, that He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Eze 33:11), nor in the least blunt the solemn edge of His gracious entreaty, "*Turn ye, turn ye...for why will ye die?*" ❧

From God's Way of Peace, available as a paperback; this message also available as a booklet; both from Chapel Library.

Instead of Me?

Many years ago, I was walking with a friend along the pleasant banks of a Scottish river, in one of the early months of summer, when the trees had just begun to show their fresh verdure and to offer us a shade from the sun. A man in rags came up to us begging. We supplied his wants somewhat, and entered into talk with him. He could not write nor read. He knew nothing of his Bible, and seemed not to care about knowing it.

“You need to be saved, do you not?” “Oh yes; I suppose I do,” he said. “But do you know the way of being saved?” we asked. “I dare say I do,” was the reply. “How, then, do you expect this?” “I have not been a very bad man; and am doing as many good works as I can.” “But are your good works good enough to take you to heaven?” we asked. “I think so; and I am doing my best.” “Do you not know any good works better than your own?” “I know about the good works of the saints; but how am I to get them?” he asked. “Do you know of no good works better than those of the saints?” “I don’t think there can be any better,” he said. “Are not the works of the Lord Jesus Christ better than the works of the saints?” “Of course they are; but of what use are they to me?” “They may be of great use to us, if we believe what God has told us about them.” “How is that?” “If God is willing to take these works of Christ instead of yours, would not that do?” “Yes, that it would. But will He?” “Yes,” we replied, “He will. For this is just what He has told us; He is willing to take all that Christ has done and suffered instead of what you could do or suffer; and to give you what Christ has deserved instead of what you have deserved.”

“Is that really the case? Is God willing to put Christ instead of me?” “Yes, He certainly is,” we said. “But have I no good works to do myself?” “Plenty,” we responded, “but not to buy pardon with them. You are to take what Christ did as the price to be paid for your pardon; and then, having thus got a free pardon, you will work for Him who pardons you, out of love for His love to you.”

“But how can I get this?” he asked. “By believing the Gospel, or good news, which tells you about the Lord Jesus Christ: how He lived; how He died; how He was buried; how He rose again—all for sinful men; as the Bible says, ‘Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things’ (Act 13:38-39).”

The beggar stood and wondered. The thought that another’s works would do instead of his own, and that he might get all that this other’s works deserved, seemed to strike him. We never met again. But the Word seemed to tell upon him; he seemed to take it with him as something which he had never heard before—something which seemed almost too good news to be true.

I have more than once spoken of this since, in illustrating the Gospel, and it seemed to tell. The man’s wonder that another’s works should do instead of his own was in itself an insight into the effects produced by the Gospel of Christ. “Christ for us,” is the mes-

sage which we bring; Christ bearing “our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24); Christ doing what we should have done, bearing what we should have borne; Christ nailed to our cross, dying our death, paying our debt—all this to bring us to God, and to make everlasting life ours; this is the sure word of the Gospel, which whosoever believeth is saved, and shall never come into condemnation.

There are few who do not know what that word “substitute” means when used concerning common things; but it is well that we should see how the right knowledge of this word is the key to the right understanding of the Gospel. “Christ for us,” or Christ our Substitute, is the Gospel or glad tidings of great joy which apostles preached, and which we can tell, even in these latter days, to the sons of men as their true hope. The good news which we bring is not of what we are commanded to do in order that God may be reconciled to us, but of what the Son of God has done instead of us. He took our place here, on earth, that we might obtain His place in heaven. As the Perfect One, in life and in death, as the Doer and the Sufferer, He is presented to us that we may get the complete benefit of that perfection so soon as we receive His Gospel. All our imperfection, however great, is lost in the completeness of His perfection, so that God sees us not as we are, but as He is. All that we are, and have done, and have been, is lost sight of in what He is, and has done, and has been. “He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21).

It is this sin-bearing completeness of the Son of God, as the Substitute, that the sinner rests upon. It is on this that we take our stand in our dealings with God. We need a sin-bearer; and God has given us One who is altogether perfect and Divine. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5). “He, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24).

We once dealt with a young man as to this. He sat, with his Bible before him, pondering the way of life, and asking, What must I do to be saved? He was in darkness, and saw no light. He was a sinner—how was he to be saved? He was guilty—how was he to be forgiven?

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done” (Ti 3:5). “No, certainly; but how then?” was his question. “By Christ doing the whole.” “But is this possible?” he asked, “Can I be saved by another doing the whole for me?”

“It is not only possible, but it is certain. This is the way; the only way. It is God’s one way of saving the sinner.” “And have I nothing to do?” he asked. “Nothing in order to be saved,” we replied. “But tell me how this is to be.”

“Let us come back to the truth about the Substitute. You know what that is?” “I do. But how does this bear upon my case?” “Christ offers Himself to you as your Substitute; to do what you should have done, to suffer what you should have suffered, to pay what you should have paid.”

“Do you mean that Christ has actually paid my debt, and that this is what I am to believe in order to be saved?” “No. Your debt is not paid till you believe: then it is paid—

paid once for all, once and forever; but not till then.” “How, then, is the work of Christ, as the Substitute, good news to me?”

“There is enough of money lodged in the bank to pay all your debts twice over; and you have only to apply for it. Hand in your check, and you will get the money at once.” “I see; I see,” he said, “It is ‘believing’ that brings me into actual possession of all the fruits of the sin-bearing work upon the Cross.”

“Yes; just so. Or, let me put it in another way. Christ died for our sins. He is the Substitute. He is presented to you as such. Are you willing to take Him as such, that He may pay all your debts and forgive all your sins?” “Yes. But let me see this more fully; for it seems too simple.”

“Well; put it thus: God has provided a Substitute for the guilty, who, eighteen hundred years ago, suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust. The Father presents that complete Substitute to you, and asks your consent to the exchange. The Son presents Himself to you, offering to be your Substitute. The Holy Spirit presents Him to you as a Substitute. Do you consent? The Father is willing, the Son is willing, the Spirit is willing. Are you willing? Do you give your consent?” “Is that it?” said he. “It is. Your consenting to take Christ as your Substitute is faith.” “Is that it?” said he again. And the light broke upon him. “Christ our Substitute was the dawning of the day.”

Thus it is that the sinner’s chain is broken and he is set free to serve God. First liberty, then service; the service of men set free from condemnation and from bondage. It is in accepting the divine Substitute that the sinner is set free to serve the living God. The liberty flowing from forgiveness, thus received, is the true beginning of a holy life.

If, then, I am to live a holy life, I must begin with the Substitute. I must deal with Him for pardon and deliverance. Thus being by Him “delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness...all the days of our life” (Luk 1:74-75).

If I am to serve God, and if I am to possess anything of “true religion,” I must begin with the Substitute. For religion begins with pardon; and without pardon religion is a poor and irksome profession. “There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared” (Psa 130:4). This is the divine watchword. Not first the fear of God, and then forgiveness; but first forgiveness, and then the fear of God. ❧

From The Everlasting Righteousness; available as a paperback. This message and eight other tracts available as a booklet from Chapel Library entitled How Shall I Go to God.

Behold the Man

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”—1 Peter 2:24

1. Sin is upon thee!

MY SOUL, there is sin upon thee. Nay, it is not only upon thee, but in thee and about thee. It is a part of thyself. It does not merely grow upon thee, as the moss grows upon the rock, nor rest upon thee as the dust rests upon the summer flower, nor float above thee as the smoke floats above yon city. It is in thee. It is in thy inmost part. It fills thee as the water fills yon well. It soaks into thee as the rain into the soil. It oozes out of thee as the water from the fountain. It has gone through and through thee as the salt pervades the ocean in all its depth, or as the mud and filth of earth go through and stain yon river, making it, as it rolls along, a mass of discolored deformity. There is no part of thee clean or holy. What good thing canst thou do, or speak, or think, or feel? The things which are right and good in their own nature, such as alms-deeds and self-denying labors, become evil when done by thee. Thy hand defileth all that it toucheth. thy very prayers are so full of sin that they would be sufficient to condemn thee.

2. Sin is dreadfully real!

MY SOUL, keep in mind that sin is a real thing. Few in this sad world think so, even when they write or speak the word. It is but an idea to them—a dim image—the shadow of a cloud passing lightly over a sunny earth; no more. Yet it is real—terribly real—having about it nothing of the shadow save its darkness. If sin be not real, why is sorrow so real? Why are disease and pain so real? If sin be not real, why so many weeping eyes, so many heavy spirits, so many broken hearts? If sin be not real, why is death so real, why is the churchyard so full, and why do so many mourners go about the streets? If sin is not real, what becomes of the Law, what is the meaning of the cross, and what is the use of a Judgment Day? If sin be not real, then why does God hate it; and why is heaven only for the holy and hell only for the unholy? Or why is there such an endless heaven and such an eternal hell?

3. Sin is a sore evil!

MY SOUL, sin is no jest, no trifle, no mere slight disease, which a little time, or a little prayer, or a little repentance can cure, making it as though it had never been. It is a sore evil. The God who knows what it is has said, “The soul that sinneth it shall *die*” (Exe 18:20). Sin and death are linked together, like night and darkness; like root and stem; like fountain head and stream. They cannot be torn asunder. The misery of this world, during these six thousand years of its heavy history, tells how sore an evil sin is, and how little disposed God is to trifle with it. The cross of Christ, to which sin was nailed, tells

the same. Hereafter, the everlasting burnings will make the same report. Sin is a sore evil, and the lost sinner's eternity will show how sore it is.

4. Sin brings God's wrath!

MY SOUL, thou dardest not trifle with sin; nor call anything slight that has the faintest hue of sin upon it. The smallest sin brings wrath upon its doer. What could seem more venial³ than plucking and eating fruit from a tree in one's own garden? It is the more venial sin of all the sins which Scripture relates. Yet what anger from God did that venial sin draw down? How God hated it! For that one sin, which we should have said was not deadly, but very slight, God cast our first parents out of Paradise. And, my soul, must not thy smallest sin, whether of thought or word or deed, deserve that same wrath that thrust Adam out of the happy garden? That one sin of Eve, brought pain and disease and sorrow and death into the world, filling all earth to this day with evils, too many, and too sore, and too terrible, to be told.

And, my soul, wilt thou make excuses for thyself, and palliate⁴ thy vain thoughts or words by speaking of any sin as small? If the smallest sin drove Adam out of Paradise and poured such curses over the earth, why wilt thou deceive thy conscience and blind thine eyes by trying to make sin appear less than it really is, or less than God has shown it to be? Have any of thy sins been less than Eve's? If not, then the smallest of thy sins will cast thee out of God's presence as truly as the greatest. Of what use then can it be to speak of small and great sins, when God has showed thee that the smallest deserves His curse?

5. Love the Lord with all thy strength!

MY SOUL, the great God that made thee has said to thee, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength." If then thou dost not love Him perfectly every moment of thy life, thou sinnest. Not to love Him with thy whole heart is sin. However amiable and kind and gentle thou mayest be to others, yet all this will not lessen, nay it will increase, the sin of not loving God with thy whole strength. What then can thy good works profit thee, if at the time when thou art doing them, thou art not loving the Lord with thy whole heart? What goodness can there be in thy prayers, thy repentances, thy tears, thy fasts, when all the time that thou art praying and repenting and weeping and fasting, thou art not loving the Lord with all thy strength? What shouldst thou think of one of thy servants, who, when charged with disobedience to thee, should answer that he was kind to his fellow servants, or should try to make thee forgive him and think well of him by speaking good words to thee, and doing thee fair outward service, when he was, all the time, not loving thee nor reverencing thee as a servant ought?

O my soul, think of the sin of not loving thy God perfectly, and do not think of palliating it, nor of trying to make up for it by doings and penances, which are themselves so poor and imperfect, that they need pardon as truly as any of thy worst sins. Reason thus

³ **venial** – easily excused or forgiven; pardonable.

⁴ **palliate** – to make less severe or intense, to mitigate.

with thyself, my soul, “Can one sin get pardon for another sin? Can one evil make up for another? Can our poor prayers, in which so much is unholy, compensate for our want of love? Or can our feeble love to our fellow men, in which so much is selfish, atone for our want of love to God? Can one debt pay for another? Can today’s obedience blot out yesterday’s rebellion? Can the gay flowers upon the tomb empty the grave beneath of its corruption? Can the calm of today’s ocean undo the havoc of last night’s storm?” Reason thus with thyself, O my soul, and learn the folly of thinking by any doings or feelings of thine own to make up for past want of love to the infinitely lovable, and blessed God.

6. God cannot alter His Law!

MY SOUL, remember that God cannot alter His Law; and least of all will He alter it, because thou hast broken it. Do not soothe thyself asleep by thinking that God will make His Law less strict for Adam’s fallen children than for Adam himself. That would be to say that the Law was too strict, and therefore not right and just. Now we know that the Law is holy, just, and good (Rom 7:12). It does not need to be changed; nay it cannot be changed in a single jot; for a change would make it not holy, and not just, and not good. The Law must always be what it is, just as God must be always what He is. It cannot change in itself, and it cannot change in the punishments which it threatens. It is unalterable and inexorable.⁵ Its ear is deaf to the cry of the sinner.

7. Thou must keep the whole Law!

MY SOUL, if thou thinkest to save thyself by keeping the Law, then remember that the whole Law must be kept in every part and at all times, without ceasing or failing. Thou must so keep the whole Law as to cease from sin, in deed, and thought, and word. Thou must cease to be a sinner before thou canst be saved. Thy love must be perfect love, and thy life must be a perfect life, else the Law can do nothing for thee. Thy thoughts must be perfectly holy, thy doings must be perfectly holy, thy feelings must be perfectly holy, thy words must be perfectly holy; for if not, the Law can be of no use to thee; it must condemn thee. For the Maker of the Law has said, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). If thou art guilty in one point, thou art guilty of all (Jam 2:10). If thou sinnest one sin, thou must be lost. If thou thinkest one bad thought, or speakest one idle word, or takest one wrong step, thou art undone. The Law cannot help thee. It can only pronounce an eternal curse upon thee. Be wise then, O my soul, and do not think to be saved by the Law. It will prove an enemy, not a friend. It will desert thee in the great day of reckoning, and hand thee over to the Judge.

8. Good deeds do not outweigh the bad!!

MY SOUL, perhaps thou thinkest that thy good deeds are very good, and that thy bad deeds are not so very bad, but that thy good deeds may make up for them. Thou thinkest that thy bad deeds are like the rough brown soil, and that thy good deeds are like the

⁵ **inexorable** – not capable of being persuaded by entreaty; unyielding.

grass and flowers which spring up and cover its uncomeliness. But if thy bad deeds are still there, of what use is it to cover them? God can see through all the flowers and verdure of thy good deeds, and mark the evil that is beneath. No, my soul, thy bad deeds are like the ocean, and thy good deeds, if thou hast any, are like the little fresh stream that flows into it. Can that little stream make these salt waters sweet, or turn the ocean into a fresh, calm, clear lake? No! All the rivers of earth have been flowing into it for thousands of years and it is as salt as ever. So all thy good deeds though carried on for a thousand years, would be of no use to get a pardon for thee, or to turn away God's anger against sin, or to make thee an heir of His holy kingdom, a citizen of His holy city.

9. Good deeds are not enough to save thee!

MY SOUL, dost thou think it would not be fair in God to pay no respect to thy good deeds? Dost thou say, it would not be right in God to lay such stress upon my evil deeds, and to lay no stress upon my good ones? Is it thus that thou arguest with thy Maker, and disputest with the great Lawgiver of heaven and earth? Art thou a better judge of what is good and what is evil than He? Is it not right in Him to hate all sin, even the smallest? Is it not right in Him to tell thee that a good deed cannot get pardon for a bad one? Is it not right in Him to tell thee that there is so much of evil in thy best doings that He cannot accept them, or call them really good—far less make them to stand as payment for what is bad?

10. Heaven cannot be purchased with thy tears!

MY SOUL, dost thou think that God sells heaven? Does He sell pardon? Does He sell Paradise? Does He sell eternal life? If so, what are the terms and conditions of sale? What is the price? Above all, what is the lowest price at which He will sell it? Thou must make sure to ascertain that; for depend upon it, according to the usual rate of purchases, such a thing as pardon, and such a place as heaven, are far beyond thy means. Thou hast not money enough, nor merit enough to buy such things as these. Were God to offer to sell thee the faintest star that sparkles in yon blue heaven, couldst thou buy it? If not, how canst thou think to buy heaven itself, with its ten thousand times ten thousand stars? What thinkest thou, would be the lowest price at which thou couldst buy a star? Would a little gold and silver do it? Would a few tears and sighs do it? Would a few prayers and groans do it? If not, wilt thou presume to offer these to thy God as the purchase-money of His glorious heaven? Go to thy fellow men with thy tears and prayers, and ask them to sell thee an acre of solid land for them: Will they take thy money? Will they be satisfied with such a price? And wilt thou offer to thy God what thou knowest would be rejected by thy fellow men as the price of a poor piece of earth's dark soil? O pride, beyond all prides, to think that God would sell heaven? O presumption, beyond all presumptions, to suppose that thou canst buy such a heaven as His, for a few sighs, and tears, and prayers!

11. Heaven cannot be purchased with all thou hast!

MY SOUL, has God anywhere offered to sell thee heaven at a price? Has He set it up for sale? Where has He told that He will take a price for it? For if He has not offered it for

sale, is it not strange that a sinner should think of offering to buy it? Is it like God to set up His blessings for sale? Does He sell the rain and sunshine? Hast thou to buy from Him the water of the brook or the air of heaven, or the dew of morning? No, my soul, man sells, but God gives. He takes no money for His blessings, even from sinners. He gives freely and largely. He does not wait for a price. He makes His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the unthankful and the unworthy. And if He will not sell His sunshine, will He sell His love? If He will not sell the water of earth's streams, will He sell the living water that springs up into everlasting life? If one drop of dew be too costly for us to buy from Him, is His heaven so cheap and His paradise so poor, that we can buy them at His hands?

12. Christ came to keep the Law.

MY SOUL, did the Son of God take flesh and become a man, in order to destroy the Law or to fulfill it? Did He come to lower its demands? Did He come to make it less strict, so that the sinner might keep it and be saved by keeping it? No; He came not to destroy but to fulfill it (Mat 5:17). Yea, He has told thee that sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than one jot or tittle of that holy Law shall fail. He came not to lower it or weaken it or alter it; but to fulfill it in every part. He came to keep that Law, and by keeping it Himself, to show how holy and just and good it is. He came to keep it, and by keeping it to honor it, and by honoring it Himself to show it ought to be honored, and to tell us that it cannot be changed. If the Law had asked more of man than was right, then Christ, who was a man, would not have kept it. But Christ by His keeping it, showed what a good and true, and blessed, and perfect Law it was, for a man, for a son of Adam.

13. Why Christ came to keep the Law

MY SOUL, think with thyself why did the Son of God come down to keep the Law? Why was He who was above the Law made under the Law (Gal 4:4)? Why did the Maker of the Law so strictly keep the Law? To show that it must be kept. If it could have been relaxed it would have been so in His case. If its requirements could have been abated at all, they would have been abated in Him. But even to Him they remained the same. The Law was inexorable, even when He who had to do with it was the only begotten of the Father. The King's Son must keep the Law to the full, if He once come under it! For the Law makes no difference. The Law is both blind and deaf. It is blind, for it does not see who it is that it speaks to; but treats all alike. It is deaf, for it hears no excuses, but delivers the same awful demands of perfect obedience to every one with whom it has to do. Christ's keeping the Law, in every jot and tittle, shows that it is altogether unchangeable. It did not relax in the case of God's holy Son; be sure then that it will not relax to thee a sinner.

14. God's Law stands.

MY SOUL, that report which is brought to thee in the gospel is not about the Law being changed and lowered to meet thy case as a feeble sinner, but about the Law being obeyed and fulfilled. It would not be good news for thee that Law had been lowered so as

to suit thee; for then thy salvation would not be sure, inasmuch as it would not be righteous (Rom 2:5ff). The sure salvation must be a righteous salvation; and a righteous salvation cannot come from a dishonored Law. To patch up a salvation out of a lowered, that is to say, a half-kept Law, would satisfy neither man nor God. The only salvation that will last or stand firm is a salvation built upon a fulfilled, a fully kept, an unchanged and honored Law.

My soul, turn away from the false prophet that would tell thee that the Law's claims have been modified. Say at once, that cannot be; and if it were, it would be no good news, for it would seem to say that the Law had been broken, and justice set aside in order to save thee; nay, it would seem to say that God Himself had become unholy; and if a holy God be terrible to a sinner, how much more an unholy God! Infinite righteousness is dreadful; but infinite unrighteousness is terrific beyond conception.

15. Christ has fulfilled the Law!

MY SOUL, the true report which God has caused to be spread abroad throughout the world, is that His own Son, in our flesh, has fulfilled the Law! He was made under the Law, not that He might modify it, but that He might fulfill it. This is the good news that God has sent to thee: Jesus, My Son has kept the Law. This fulfilling of the Law by the only begotten of the Father lies at the very root of our everlasting life (Joh 3:16). Meditate then, my soul, on Jesus as the fulfiller of the Law. He has magnified it and made it honorable by His divine obedience to it; for never before had it got divine obedience; never before had it been so perfectly, so gloriously obeyed. And so Christ is the end of the Law, for *righteousness* to the sinner (Rom 10:4).

16. Christ has born the Law's penalty for sin!

Nor, MY SOUL, has thy Savior only obeyed the Law. He has suffered it too. The chastisement which it inflicts upon the transgressor was laid on Him. It smote Him with the smiting with which it smites the guilty. He became answerable to that Law for all its claims against the sinner. He took its curse upon Him, for it is written "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). He took the wrath of the Lawgiver upon Him, for He says, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me" (Psa 88:7). He took its pains upon Him, for we read that Christ "has suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1Pe 3:18). He took our sin upon Him, for it is written, that He Who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Yes, my soul, He hath borne our griefs, He hath carried our sorrows. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree (see Isa 53; 2Co 5:21; 1Pe 3:24.)

17. Christ bore the penalty for His people!

Look, MY SOUL, at yon cross. What seest thou? A dying man. But who is that dying man! It is the Prince of life. It is He Who has life in Himself. Why then does He die? He dies because thou shouldest have died. He dies to prevent thee from dying; nay, to give thee life. His death is the sinner's life; and without that death there could have been no

life to the dead in sin. For the Law needed to be satisfied with a true life. That life must be either ours or another's in our stead. If the life of that other satisfies the Law, then thou dost not need to die. And, my soul, that true life which has been given to the Law, and with which the Law has dealt, as with the life of the guilty, has sufficed instead of thine. For it is to the very fountain of life that Law has gone to get its satisfaction. The life of the Prince of life has been given and accepted instead of thine (Act 3:15).

18. Christ is sinless!

Look again, MY SOUL, at yonder cross. Who is that dying sufferer? Is He not guilty? No, He is the only one on earth that is not guilty. He is the *Just One* (Act 3:14). That bleeding head is the head of the Just One. That much-marred face is the face of the Just One. These torn hands are the hands of the Just One. These pierced feet are the feet of the Just One. It is from the lips of the Just One that there comes forth the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Mar 15:34). Yes, my soul, it is the Just One that hangs on that cross, because He has taken the place of the unjust. He has been made sin for us, though He knew no sin. Jehovah has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He took all our sins and carried them up to that cross, that there He might bear the whole wrath which was due to them. He had become answerable for the sinner; and for that reason was He led to the place of shame, where the sinner should have been, that He might suffer all that the sinner should have suffered. Behold then the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (Joh 1:29)!

19. "It is finished!"

But look again, MY SOUL, at that cross; and, as thou lookest, hear the loud cry, "It is finished" (Joh 19:30). The great work is done! The sacrifice has been offered up. The blood has been shed; the ransom has been paid. He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. There is no more needed to be done for the putting away of sin. All the doing and the suffering that was needed, or that ever can be needed, was done and suffered, then and there, upon yon cross. Henceforth, it is not doing or suffering that is required of the sinner for pardon, but taking the benefit of what another has done and suffered. Christ has done enough, and He who knows this has peace with God. If then, my soul, thou hast not this peace, it must be because thou thinkest that Christ has not done enough, but has left something for thee to do, in order to complete the peace which He began. Meditate then, again and again, upon that sufficiency of the divine Sin-bearer's work upon the cross; bring before thee all the Father's testimonies to that sufficiency, and see if thou canst hinder peace from springing up within thy soul. Is it possible, my soul, that thou canst read aright the inscription on that cross, and understand the meaning of the last cry uttered on it, and yet not have peace with God?

20. Christ has made peace with His children!

MY SOUL, dost thou not know that Christ has made peace through the blood of His cross? The blood is the pacifying thing, for it tells us of the ransom found, of the debt

paid, of God propitiated. Nothing save blood can expiate,⁶ or reconcile, or bring nigh. It has secured all these, so that they are no longer doubtful. It has done that which, when once understood, makes the conscience feel that there is no longer any necessity either for God keeping aloof from us or for us keeping aloof from God. That which the blood has done, enables God and the sinner to meet in peace. Everything needful for the sinner's obtaining peace was done when the blood was shed upon the cross. And thy peace, O my soul, is the simple result of thy recognizing the efficacy of the shed blood. To receive God's testimony to its meaning and its value, is to find peace with Him. The bloodshedding was the peace-making; and Jesus is the Peacemaker, not simply because He took our flesh, but because He shed His blood. My soul, learn how it is that He is the Peacemaker; learn the infinite pacification which the bloodshedding implies, and thou canst not say, There is not peace for me.

21. Christ bore God's wrath!

MY SOUL, why did the Son of God cry out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not the sharpness of the pain, but the weight of the dreadful curse. The martyrs died in joy, singing praises. Jesus dies in sorrow, crying out in His agony. Ah, surely then, it was not as our example that He died. It was not to show us how to endure death's pangs, or to pass through the dark valley. Had it been so, He would have died praising, as did the joyful martyrs. But He dies in anguish because the wrath of God that should have come on us, was coming down on Him. That sad cry of woe from the lips of one who never complained before, shows that He was then atoning for sin. That cry proclaimed *atonement*. It showed that the fire was coming down upon the altar to consume the Lamb, on whom our sins were laid.

22. Christ is the Substitute.

Yes, MY SOUL, it is as the *Substitute* that the Son of God dies upon that cross. He is giving HIMSELF for the sinner. Jehovah is making His soul an offering for sin. The Father is not sparing Him, that He might spare thee. He is delivering Him up that He might not deliver thee. In life He did what we ought to have done, but did not. In death He suffers what we should have suffered, but could not, except by being lost forever! In life and in death He is the substitute. From the manger to the tomb He stood in our stead; meeting every claim against us that Law could present, and so shutting the mouth of Law forever, leaving it not one tittle to bring against us, nor one word to utter in our condemnation. On the cross He finished the sin-bearing work, leaving no part of it for us to do, making it so complete that nothing is needed for the worst transgressor upon earth, but just to enter into the enjoyment of what the great substitute has done. See, my soul, how completely He has done His work, and in seeing this, let every doubt vanish. For to see the perfection of His sin-bearing work, is to see that every thing which has caused, or which can cause, a fear or a doubt to thee, has been taken out of the way.

⁶ **expiate** – to atone for; to extinguish the guilt of a crime.

23. *Christ's one sacrifice pays all.*

MY SOUL, this great sacrifice of the Son of God stands alone. It is not one star in a sky where there sparkle a thousand others. It is a star which shines alone. It is not one flower amid a thousand. It is the rose of Sharon which grows alone in the Paradise of God. Yes, my soul, the Son of God stands infinitely supreme and alone in His perfection of excellence. His sacrifice too, stands equally alone in its perfection. It cannot be imitated. To do so is to mock it. It cannot be repeated. To attempt this is to deny that the sacrifice upon the cross was complete. It is one offering, and it can be but once offered. It has been once offered; and it has done its work. Wouldst thou think of offering it again? The debt has been paid in heaven's own gold, and who shall think of repeating the payment in earth's poor coin? The great High Priest has offered the wondrous sacrifice, and who will step into His place and attempt to offer it again? To this agree the words of the Spirit of Truth, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb 9:28);⁷ and again by one offering He hath perfected forever His consecrated ones. *One offering*, O my soul—think of that. One offering—no more! No second sacrifice, no new oblation; the first is enough. If it is not enough, then the cross is of no value, and Christ hath died in vain.

24. *Christ purged our sins.*

MY SOUL, that one offering purged our sins; as the Spirit of Truth testifies, saying "Christ by himself purged our sins" (Heb 1:3). It is by this one offering that our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God. Our works, before this offering touches the conscience, are dead works. They have no life in them. They are like dead carcasses hanging round us, weighing us down, and hindering all liberty of serving. But the moment that this offering comes into contact with the conscience, then our works like ourselves become alive from the dead. We can give to God nothing but dead works till our consciences are touched with the blood; and, my soul, thou knowest that the living God can accept nothing but living works. A conscience not at ease—not certain as to how it stands with God—but doubtful of His favor and burdened with a sense of unpardoned sin, can do nothing for God. It dreads, distrusts, suspects, stands aloof, but cannot come into His presence—cannot serve or love. An evil conscience is like an evil spirit dwelling in the soul, and till it be perfectly cast out, there can be no religion, no filial confidence, no happy doing of the will of God. The one offering is God's remedy for all this. The sight of it expels the unclean spirit and gives us a good conscience instead of a troubled one. In looking to that one offering, we find our burden of guilt quietly unloosing itself, and leaving us unburdened. For in that perfect offering—that one oblation upon the cross—we find all the questionings of conscience fully answered, and that which made us so afraid to draw near and hold intercourse with God completely and forever removed.

⁷ The Latin Vulgate gives the translation of these words very forcibly, *Christus semel oblatus est ad multorum exhaurienda peccata*, that is to exhaust the sins of many. His offering was the exhaustion of the penalty.

25. The way to God is made clear.

MY SOUL, does it not seem to thee that Christ has done enough? Art thou entirely satisfied with what He has done? Dost thou see that no more blood needs to be shed, no other sacrifice offered up, but that every thing has been done by God to remove hindrances, to make thy way safe, and to give thee boldness in returning to thy god? Then, draw near! Yes; draw near. Do so with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Is not the way prepared and consecrated with blood? Then walk along it boldly. Is not the veil rent in twain? Then go in without a fear or doubt. Is not the mercy-seat open to thee so that thou mayest make use of it as a seat of mercy or throne of grace? Then go up to it at once, not with hesitation or uncertainty, but with decision, and alacrity,⁸ and assured confidence; yes, come boldly to the throne of grace, that thou mayest obtain mercy, and find grace to help in thy time of need. Is not Jesus Himself, thy kinsman High Priest, thy compassionate, sympathizing Redeemer, seated on that seat of mercy? Then make thy case known to Him who is bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, not supposing it possible that He can refuse thee. Is He not truly loving, and has He not said that He will in no wise cast out any coming one? Then do not grieve Him by thy want of confidence; do not treat Him unkindly or ungenerously by approaching Him with less than the full assurance of faith—guilty and unworthy as thou mayest be, and utterly devoid of any good feeling to recommend thee to His love.

26. Christ is our perfect High Priest.

MY SOUL, is not this great High Priest just such an one as suits thee? Is He not in all respects the very Priest that thou canst go to in order that He may communicate between thee and God? Canst thou find a better? Canst thou get one more suitable or more tenderhearted? Could any earthly priest be half so loving? Were the Apostles more loving than their Master? Was the mother of the Lord more loving than the Lord Himself? When our High Priest was on earth, did not men go straight to Him with their diseases or wants or sins? They spoke to Him face to face, without any priest coming between; and He in like manner spoke to them with His own voice, and looked upon them with His own eyes, without any priest to introduce them to Him. He spake to the poor sinful woman of Sychar and she to Him face to face, when sitting side by side with each other.

Even so, my soul, thou needest no mediator but Jesus Himself, no priest but Jesus Himself. Go straight to Him. He only has the ear of the Father. Pass by all others. Speak to Him. Lay thy case before Him; for thou knowest that if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1Jo 2:1), and that, as there is but one God, so there is but one Father between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Let this one Mediator suffice. He is God as well as man, and therefore can hear thy cries and prayers, which no mere man or woman, however holy, can, if they are in heaven and thou on earth. Take this blessed one, this loving one, as thy advocate, thy intercessor thy priestly counselor. Thou wilt need no other. He will suffice.

⁸ **alacrity** – cheerful willingness and speediness.

27. God is pleased with Christ's sacrifice.

MY SOUL, God's thoughts center upon His own Son. It was not only once that He declared how well-pleased He is in Him; He is always saying to us the same thing: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat 3:17). These thoughts of God about His Son are the real fountain of a sinner's hope and joy. For, in thinking of His Son, He thinks of the ways in which He may glorify Him and show to all that He is the man whom He delights to honor. The great honor, which He is now putting upon His Son, is the honor that comes from saving such as thou! So that thou canst plead thus in happy confidence with the God to whom thou goest, "honor Thy Son by blessing me—glorify His name by doing for me exceeding abundantly above all I ask or think." Is not a plea like this, quite in harmony with His thoughts about His Son? Nay, is it not thus that these thoughts get vent to themselves? He finds an outlet to His love for His Son in showering blessings upon us. My soul, let thy thoughts rest where the thoughts of God are resting, and that will satisfy thee and cast out all fear. Think how real and true is the Father's love to the Son; look up to His well-pleased countenance, and then ask if it be possible that that countenance can frown on those who are at one with Him in their thoughts concerning the Son of His love.

28. The cross shows us God's grace.

MY SOUL, is not the cross the interpretation of God's character as the God of all grace? Has God not there unfolded Himself in a way which makes the sinner feel that this is just the very God for him to go to? What interpretation can be put upon God's great transaction on the cross, save that of love and grace? If it does not mean that, what does it mean? Yes, my soul, there is but one construction which can be put upon the wonders of the cross. "God is love" (1Jo 4:16). The cross has no meaning if this be not its inscription. Read that inscription with fully open eye. Take the interpretation which God has thus given of His character. Do not let any interpretation of your own mar this. Look again and again at the cross, and let this visible interpretation there given of His own character and doings be that which thou respondest to. Accept God's interpretation of His own character; for in doing so, thy fears are laid to rest, and thou enterest into peace with Him through the great propitiation, which, while it proclaims the grace of God, provides a righteous channel through which it may flow to thee.

29. No more need be done.

MY SOUL, is not the ground of thy acceptance with God complete? Has Christ left any thing for thee to do in order to be justified? Much has He given thee to do, after thou art justified, for thy whole life is to be a life of labor for Him. But has He not done every thing Himself, upon the cross, which was needful to justify thee and bring thee into favor with God? He does not say to thee "do this and thou shalt be justified." He says "believe what I have done and thou art from that moment justified." For is it not written, "He that believeth is justified from all things?" And did the Apostle say to the brethren of

the Roman Church, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” Rom 4:5)?

It is the belief of God’s testimony to the completed work of His Son that brings thee salvation at once. It is the knowledge of what Christ did upon the cross for the putting away of sin, that brings peace to the guilty conscience. To know what He has done as the sin-bearer, is to have peace with God. Nor can there be any other way of getting peace, or obtaining pardon, or of being reconciled to God, but this one way! Thou hast nothing to bring in thy hand, but thy sins; and God takes thee as thou art, and forgives thee on the spot without money and without price.

30. It is Christ’s goodness that saves, not our own.

MY SOUL, in justifying thee, God has no respect to thy goodness. All that He has respect to is the goodness of His own Son. All men, whether laden with few or with many sins, stand precisely on the same level in this respect. All sins, great or small, open or secret, before or after baptism, are treated exactly in the same way. There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

My soul, in coming to God thou dost not ask God to have respect to thy goodness or to the goodness of any saint or angel, but only to the goodness of Him in whom He is well pleased. Thou sayest, “Look not on me, but on thy beloved Son; think of what He has done and deserved, and for the sake of His doings and deservings, receive and bless me.” For thou seest that Christ Jesus on the cross has done enough to secure the divine good pleasure for the guiltiest sinner upon earth; and thou restest on the wondrous truth as all thou needest to make thee safe and blessed. If that does not satisfy thee, what will do it? If that which has satisfied God does not relieve thy conscience, and lift off thy burdens, and bring about sure and perfect reconciliation between God and thee, to what quarter canst thou look for help, or to which of the saints canst thou turn?

31. Christ gives assurance.

MY SOUL, the Son of God died, not only to justify thee but to make thee sure of being justified. If the knowledge of His atoning work can do any thing for thee, it can do this. It can give thee present assurance of God’s favor and present assurance of the pardon of thy sins. to know Christ Jesus as the peacemaker is to have peace with God. To know the sufficiency of His work, and blood, and righteousness, is to have all thy guilty fears laid to rest and thy conscience purged from dead works to serve the living God. Being thus freely forgiven, and knowing that thou art so, how canst thou hold back from serving Him with thy whole strength? They, who are uncertain about His favor may linger and hesitate, but how canst thou? They over whom condemnation still hangs, like a cloud of threatening thunder, may be paralyzed for duty and unfitted for holy work, but surely thou from whom condemnation has been taken away forever, must be nerved with new strength, and invigorated with fresh fervor, and lift up with a boundless gladness, to run in the way of His commandments. They who are not sure whether their chains are broken, may fold their hands in idleness, or perhaps go recklessly on in sin; but thou who

hast been so freely forgiven and so infinitely loved, canst not but be in eager haste to serve thy forgiving God and to seek to be holy as He is holy. Terror compels the slave to work, but love constrains the son; and whether is the work of the slave or of the son, the truer or more acceptable to God? Nay, is the slave's forced labor any service at all? It is only the service of love that can be accepted, and when there is no assured pardon, love cannot be found. If thou wouldst be a holy, obedient, laborious, self-denying servant of thy God, thou must learn to realize more and more the sureness of thy acceptance, and the largeness of the love wherewith thy God hath loved thee, in providing for thee such a portion and making thee the heir of such a heaven!

To know that thy God loveth thee, and that He hath freely forgiven all thy sins, is surely the strongest of all motives for serving Him with faithful constancy and zeal. To have the scourge hung over thee, to be kept in doubt as to whether thou wert or couldst be pardoned, to be told that thou canst not be assured of God's favor here—these things may frighten thee into something like service or duty; but then thy religion will be merely outward, not inward and loving; for fear or suspense cannot win the heart. Nay, thy religion will be the mere routine of terrified obedience—the obedience of the lips and limbs, not the loving filial, devoted happy outgoing of the liberated and forgiven soul! To be assured, from His own simple testimony, that whosoever believeth is justified from all things, is the root of all glad service, the beginning of a holy life. Before forgiveness and peace with God, there may be much of what man calls holiness and zeal; but there cannot be any thing of that which God will call by that name or accept as pleasing in His sight; for His desire is to be served not by slaves but by freemen, not by aliens but by sons, not by the unpardoned and the gloomy (can such as these stand in the presence of the King?) but by the forgiven, and the glad, and the blest.

32. Christ arose!

MY SOUL, the Son of God not only died, but rose again from the dead. And this is the good news which, like a sweet song of joy and love, should sound hour after hour in thy ears. He is not here, He is risen! His tomb is empty. Death has not been able to hold Him; He has broken the bonds of the grave. It is with a risen Christ that thou hast to do. It is to a risen Christ that the angel points thee. It is to a risen Christ that the Father points thee. It is on a risen Christ that thou art to rest thy faith and love.

Does not His rising show thee how much the Father delights in Him, how truly He is the Beloved Son in whom He is well pleased? Does not His rising show thee that the Father has owned His work and accepted His sacrifice as complete, not needing to be offered up again, nor added to by another sacrifice? Does not His rising show thee that He has paid the debt, that He has purchased pardon, that He has conquered Satan, that He has got dominion over death? Does not His rising show thee that He needs to shed no more blood, to make no second atonement, to enter upon no second work as our suffering Surety? Does not His rising show thee that He is the one Mediator, the one Propitiator, the one Substitute, the one High Priest? For who else can thus die and rise again as Jesus died and rose? Dost thou then, my soul, know Him as the *Risen One*? Hast thou

looked into His empty grave and learned from it the way of life and pardon through Him who is the Resurrection and the Life? For to know Him as “the risen One,” is to know Him as the resurrection and the life; and to know Him as the resurrection and the life, is to be assured of life to thyself—life present and life to come.

33. Christ ascended!

MY SOUL, the Son of God ascendeth on high not less truly than He rose from the dead. Look upwards and see this ascended One! He ascends for thee! The Father has placed Him on His throne because He is the One whom He delights to honor. And how does He honor Him? By making Him the Savior of such as thou. The special honor which the ascended Son of God is now getting is the honor of saving the lost. Fear not then to draw near, as if it would dishonor Christ to lose such a sinner. It is the very thing that honors Him. Do not think it presumption to come in full assurance of faith, as if it were too much for thee to be sure of a kind reception. It is by receiving sinners that He is getting glory; it is by giving them a kind reception that He is carrying on that work which He finished on earth.

34. How this applies to you

Is it possible, then, that from such a gracious Savior thou canst come away unblest? He ever liveth to intercede! Put, then, thy case into His hands, and see how successfully He will carry it through, as the Advocate with the Father. He is a loving intercessor; nor can any be half so loving as He. He needs no one to stir up His love. He is a skillful and mighty advocate, needing no help. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb 7:25).

With such a Savior to deal with, art thou not ashamed of thy doubting? Dost not thou see that thy lack of assurance is thy sin? And dost not see that the way in which thou most truly honorest this risen and ascended Lord, is by giving Him thy entire confidence—the childlike confidence of one who has so learned the fullness of His grace, that thou canst not allow a suspicious thought to pass through thy breast? And is not this blessed confidence the true root of a holy as well as of a joyful life? Having this confidence towards God through Jesus Christ His Son, thou art set free from all His enemies and thine; thy chains are broken, and thy bondage exchanged for liberty; thou canst not but give to Him, in return for His love, the glad love of thy heart and the willing service of thy life.

He makes thee sure of His love—let thy daily walk show how thou returnest love for love, and that there is no labor so great but that thou wilt gladly endure it for Him, and no sacrifice so costly but that thou wilt, with a full heart, render it to him, who loved thee with such a love, as for thy sake to bear the sharpness of the cross, that thou mightest be made a partaker of the glory to revealed.

Available in print as a booklet from Chapel Library.

God's Way of Peace

Chapter 1: God's Testimony Concerning Man

God knows us. He knows what we are; He knows also what He meant us to be. Upon the difference between these two states, He founds His testimony concerning us.

He is too loving to say anything needlessly severe; too true to say anything untrue. Nor can He have any motive to misrepresent us; for He loves to tell of the good, not of the evil, that may be found in any of the works of His hands. He declared them good, "very good," at first (Gen 1:31); and if He does not do so now, it is not because He would not, but because He cannot; for "all flesh has corrupted its way upon the earth" (Gen 6:12).

The divine testimony concerning man is that he is a *sinner*. God bears witness *against* him, not *for* him. [God] testifies that "there is none righteous, no, not one"; that there is "none that doeth good"; none "that understandeth"; none that even seeks after God, and still more, none that loves Him (Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3:10-12). God speaks of man kindly, but severely; as one yearning over a lost child, yet as one who will make no terms with sin, and will "by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:7). He declares man to be a lost one, a stray one, a rebel, a "*hater of God*" (Rom 1:30)—not a sinner occasionally, but a sinner always; not a sinner in part, with many good things about him; but wholly a sinner, with no compensating goodness; evil in heart as well as life, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1); an evil doer and therefore under condemnation; an enemy of God and therefore under wrath (Jam 4:4); a breaker of the righteous Law and therefore under "the curse of the law" (Gal 3:10).

Man has fallen! Not this man nor that man, but the whole race! In Adam all have sinned; in Adam all have died. It is not that a few leaves have faded or been shaken down, but the tree has become corrupt, root and branch. The "flesh," or "old man"—that is, each man as he is born into the world, a son of man, a fragment of humanity, a unit in Adam's fallen body—is "corrupt" (Gen 6:12). The sinner not merely brings forth sin, but he carries it about with him as his second self; he is a "body" or mass of sin (Rom 6:6), a "body of death" (Rom 7:24), subject not to the Law of God but to "the law of sin" (Rom 7:23). The Jew, educated under the most perfect of laws and in the most favourable circumstances, was the best type of humanity, of civilized, polished, educated humanity; the best specimen of Adam's sons—yet God's testimony concerning him is that he is "under sin," that he has gone astray, and that he has "come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:9, 23).

Does not love God with all his heart

The outer life of a man is not the man, just as the paint on a piece of timber is not the timber, and as the green moss upon the hard rock is not the rock itself. The picture

of a man is not the man; it is but a skillful arrangement of colours that look like the man. So it is the bearing of the soul toward God that is the true state of the man. The man that loves God with all his heart is in a right state; the man that does not love Him thus is in a wrong one—he is a sinner, because his heart is not right with God. He may think his life a good one, and others may think the same; but God counts him guilty, worthy of death and hell. The outward good cannot make up for the inward evil. The good deeds done to his fellow-men cannot be set off against his bad thoughts of God. And he must be full of these bad thoughts, so long as he does not love this infinitely lovable and infinitely glorious Being with all his strength.

God's testimony then concerning man is that he does not love God with all his heart; indeed, that he does not love Him at all. Not to love our neighbour is sin; not to love a parent is greater sin; but not to love God is greater sin still (Mar 12:33).

Man need not try to say a good word for himself or to plead "not guilty," unless he can shew that he loves, and has always loved, God with his whole heart and soul (Deu 6:5). If he can truly say this, he is all right; he is not a sinner and does not need pardon. He will find his way to the kingdom without the cross and without a Saviour! But if he cannot say this, his "mouth" is "stopped," and he is "guilty before God" (Rom 3:19). However favourably a good outward life may dispose him and others to look upon his case just now, the verdict will go against him hereafter. This is man's day, when man's judgments prevail; but God's day is coming, when the case shall be tried upon its real merits. Then the Judge of all the earth shall do right (Gen 18:25), and the sinner be put to shame.

Does not believe on the name of the Son of God

There is another and yet worse charge against him. He does not believe on the name of the Son of God, nor love the Christ of God. This is his sin of sins. That his heart is not right with God is the first charge against him. That his heart is not right with the Son of God is the second. And it is this second that is the crowning, crushing sin, carrying with it more terrible damnation than all other sins together. "He that believeth not is condemned already, *because he hath not believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Joh 3:18). "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; *because he believeth not* the record that God gave of his Son" (1Jo 5:10). "He that *believeth not* shall be damned" (Mar 16:16). And hence it is that the first sin that the Holy Spirit brings home to a man is *unbelief*; "when he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin...*because they believe not* on me" (Joh 16:8-9).

Such is God's condemnation of man. Of this the whole Bible is full. That great love of God, which His Word reveals, is based on this condemnation. It is love to the condemned! God's testimony to His own grace has no meaning, save as resting on, or taking for granted His testimony to man's guilt and ruin. Nor is it against man as merely being morally diseased or sadly unfortunate that He testifies, but as guilty of death, under wrath, sentenced to the eternal curse—for that crime of crimes: a heart not right with God and not true to His incarnate Son.

This is a divine verdict, not a human one. It is God, not man, who condemns, and “God is not a man, that he should lie” (Num 23:19). This is God’s testimony concerning man, and we know that this witness is true. It concerns us much to receive it as such, and act upon it!

Chapter 2: Man’s Own Character No Ground for Peace

If God testifies *against* us, who can testify *for* us? If God’s opinion of man’s sinfulness, His judgment of man’s guilt, and His declaration of sin’s evil, be so very decided, there can be no hope of acquittal for us on the ground of personal character or goodness, either of heart or life. That which God sees in us furnishes only matter for condemnation, not for pardon.

It is vain to struggle or murmur against God’s judgment. He is the Judge of all the earth; and He is right as well as sovereign in His judgment. He must be obeyed; His Law is inexorable; it cannot be broken without making the breaker of it (even in one jot or tittle) worthy of death.

When the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the soul, it sees this. Conviction of sin is just the sinner seeing himself as he is, and as God has all along seen him. Then every fond idea of self-goodness, either in whole or in part, vanishes away. The things in him that once seemed good appear so bad, and the bad things so very bad, that every self-prop falls from beneath him, and all hope of being saved, in consequence of something in his own character, is then taken away. He sees that he cannot save himself, nor help God to save him. He is *lost*, and he is *helpless*. Doings, feelings, strivings, prayings, givings, abstainings, and the like, are found to be no relief from a sense of guilt, and, therefore, no resting place for a troubled heart. If sin were but a disease or a misfortune, these apparent good things might relieve him, as being favourable symptoms of returning health; but when sin is guilt even more than disease; and when the sinner is not merely sick, but condemned by the righteous Judge, then none of these goodnesses, whether inner or outer, can reach his case—for they cannot assure him of a complete and righteous pardon, and, therefore, cannot pacify his roused and wounded conscience. He sees God’s unchangeable hatred of sin, and the coming revelation of His wrath against the sinner; and he cannot but tremble.

The question, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?” is not one which can be decided by an appeal to personal character or goodness of life, or prayers, or performances of religion. The way of approach is not for us to settle. God has settled it, and it only remains for us to avail ourselves of it. He has fixed it on grounds altogether irrespective of our character; or rather on grounds which take for granted simply that we are sinners, and that therefore the element of goodness in us, as a title, or warrant, or recommendation, is altogether inadmissible, either in whole or in part.

Man is bankrupt, totally so; his credit in the market is gone. If, then, he is to carry on his trade, he cannot do it in his own name. He must have a better name than that, a

name of note and weight, for his security. For the transactions of the heavenly market, there is but one name given under heaven, the Name of names!

To say, as some do at the outset of their anxiety, "I will set myself to pray, and after I have prayed a sufficient length of time, and with tolerable earnestness, I may approach and count upon acceptance," is not only to build upon the quality and quantity of our prayers, but it is to overlook the real question before the sinner, "How am I to approach God *in order to pray*?" All prayers are approaches to God, and the sinner's anxious question is, "How may I approach God?" God's explicit testimony to man is, "You are unfit to approach me"; and it is a denial of the testimony to say, "I will pray myself out of this unfitness into fitness; I will work myself into a right state of mind and character for drawing near to God."

Were you from this moment to cease from sin, and do nothing but good all the rest of your life, it would be of no avail. Were you to begin praying now, and do nothing else but pray all your days, it would not do. Your own character cannot be your way of approach, nor your ground of confidence toward God. No amount of praying, working, or feeling, can satisfy the righteous Law, or pacify a guilty conscience, or quench the flaming sword that guards the access into the presence of the infinitely Holy One.

That which makes it safe for you to draw near to God, and right for God to receive you, must be something altogether away from and *independent of yourself*; for yourself, and everything pertaining to yourself, God has already condemned; and no condemned thing can give you any warrant for going to Him or hoping for acceptance. Your liberty of entrance must come from something that He has accepted, not from something which He has condemned.

I knew an awakened soul who, in the bitterness of his spirit, thus set himself to work and pray in order to get peace. He doubled the amount of his devotions, saying to himself, "Surely God will give me peace." But the peace did not come. He set up family worship, saying, "Surely God will give me peace." Again the peace did not come. At last he thought of having a prayer-meeting in his house as a certain remedy; he fixed the night, called his neighbours, and prepared himself for conducting the meeting by writing a prayer and learning it by heart. As he finished the operation of learning it, preparatory to the meeting, he threw it down on the table saying, "Surely *that* will do; God will give me peace now." In that moment a still small voice seemed to speak in his ear, saying, "No, that will *not* do; but Christ will do." Straightaway the scales fell from his eyes, and the burden from his shoulders. Peace poured in like a river. "Christ will do" was his watchword ever after!

Very clear is God's testimony against man, and man's doings, in this great matter of approach and acceptance. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," says Paul in one place (Ti 3:5); "to him that worketh not," says he in a second (Rom 4:5); "not justified by the works of the law," says he in a third (Gal 2:16).

The sinner's peace with God is not to come from his own *character*. No grounds of peace or elements of reconciliation can be extracted from himself, either directly or indi-

rectly. His one qualification for peace is that he needs it. It is not what he *has* of good, but what he *lacks* of good, that draws him to God; it is the consciousness of this lack that bids him look elsewhere, for something both to invite and embolden him to approach. It is our sickness, not our health, that fits us for the physician, and casts us upon his skill.

No guilty conscience can be pacified with anything short of that which will make pardon a present, sure, and righteous thing. Can our best doings, our best feelings, our best prayers, our best sacrifices, bring this about? No! Having accumulated these to the utmost, the sinner feels that pardon is just as far off and uncertain as before; and that all his earnestness cannot persuade God to admit him to favour, or bribe his own conscience into true quiet even for an hour.

In all false religion, the worshipper rests his hope of divine favour upon something in his own character, life, or religious duties. The Pharisee did this when he came into the temple, thanking God that he was “not as other men” (Luk 18:11). So do those in our day who expect to get peace by doing, feeling, and praying more than others, or than they themselves have done in time past; and who refuse to take the peace of the free gospel—till they have amassed such an amount of doing and feeling as will ease their consciences, and make them conclude that it would not be fair in God to reject the application of men so earnest and devoted as they.

The Galatians did this also when they insisted on adding the Law of Moses to the gospel of Christ, as the ground of confidence toward God. Thus do many act among ourselves. They will not take confidence from God’s character or Christ’s work, but [will do so] from their own character and work—though in reference to all this it is written, “The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them” (Jer 2:37). They object to a present confidence, for that assumes that a sinner’s resting-place is wholly outside himself; ready-made, as it were, by God. They would have this confidence to be a very gradual thing, in order that they may gain time, and, by a little diligence in religious observances, so add to their stock of duties, prayers, experiences, devotions, that they may, with some “humble hope,” as they call it, claim acceptance from God. By this course of devout living they think they have made themselves more acceptable to God than they were before they began this religious process, and much more entitled to expect the divine favour than those who have not so qualified themselves.

In all this, the attempted resting-place is self, that self which God has condemned. They would not rest upon un-praying, or un-working, or un-devout self; but they think it right and safe to rest upon praying, working, and devout self—and they call this humility! The happy confidence of the simple believer who takes God’s Word at once, and rests on it, they call presumption or fanaticism; their own miserable uncertainty, extracted from the doings of self, they speak of as a humble hope!

The *sinner’s own character*, in any form and under any process of improvement, cannot furnish reasons for trusting God. However amended, it cannot speak peace to his conscience, nor afford him any warrant for reckoning on God’s favour; nor can it help to

heal the breach between him and God. For God can accept nothing but perfection in such a case, and the sinner has nothing but imperfection to present. Imperfect duties and devotions cannot persuade God to forgive.

Besides, be it remembered that the person of the worshipper must be accepted before his services can be acceptable; so that nothing can be of any use to the sinner, save that which provides for personal acceptance completely, and at the outset. The sinner must go to God as he is, or not at all. To try to pray himself into something better than a condemned sinner, in order to win God's favour, is to make prayer an instrument of self-righteousness; so that, instead of its being the act of an accepted man, it is the price of acceptance, the money that we pay to God for favouring us, and the bribe with which we persuade conscience no longer to trouble us with its terrors.

No knowledge of self, nor consciousness of improvement of self, can soothe the alarms of an awakened conscience, or be any ground for expecting the friendship of God. To take comfort from our good doings, or good feelings, or good intentions, or good prayers, or good experiences, is to delude ourselves, and to say "peace" when there is no peace (Jer 6:14). No man can find rest from his own character, however good; or from his own acts, however religious. Even were he perfect, what enjoyment could there be in thinking about his own perfection? What profit, then, or what peace, can there be in thinking about his own *im*-perfection?

Even were there many good things about him, they could not speak peace; for the good things which might speak peace could not make up for the evil things which speak trouble—and what a poor, self-made peace would that be which arose from his thinking as much good and as little evil of himself as possible! And what a temptation, besides, would this furnish to extenuate the evil and exaggerate the good about ourselves; in other words, to deceive our own hearts. Self-deception must always, more or less, be the result of such estimates of our own experiences. Laid open, as we are, in such a case, to all manner of self-blinding influences, it is impossible that we can be impartial judges, as in the case of those who are freely and at once forgiven.

One man might say, "My sins are not very great or many; surely I may have peace." Another might say, "I have made up for my sins by my good deeds; I may have peace." Another might say, "I have a very deep sense of sin; I may have peace." Another might say, "I have repented of my sin; I may have peace." Another might say, "I pray much; I work much; I love much; I give much—I may have peace." What temptation in all this to take the most favourable view of self and its doings! But, after all, it would be vain. There could be no real peace; for the foundation would be sand, not rock. The peace and confidence that come from summing up the good points of our character, or thinking of our good feelings and doings, or setting a certain valuation upon our faith, love, and repentance, must be made up of pride. Its basis is self-righteousness, or at least self-approbation.⁹

⁹ **approbation** – warm approval; liking; praise.

It does not mend the matter to say that we look at these good feelings in us as the Spirit's work, not our own. In one aspect this takes away boasting, but in another it does not. It still makes our peace to turn upon what is in ourselves, and not on what is in God. In fact, it makes use of the Holy Spirit for purposes of self-righteousness. It says that the Spirit works the change in us, in order that He may thereby furnish us with a ground of peace within ourselves.

No doubt the Spirit's work in us must be accompanied with peace, but not because He has given us something in ourselves from which to draw our peace. It is that kind of peace which arises unconsciously from the restoration of spiritual health, but not that which Scripture calls "peace with God." It does not arise from *thinking about* the change wrought in us, but unconsciously and involuntarily from the change itself. If a broken limb be made whole, we get relief straight away; not by thinking about the healed member, but simply in the bodily ease and comfort that the cure has given. So there is a peace arising out of the change of nature and character wrought by the Spirit, but this is not reconciliation with God. This is not the peace that the knowledge of forgiveness brings. It accompanies it and flows from it, but the two kinds of peace are quite distinct from each other. Nor does even the peace that attends the restoration of spiritual health come at second-hand from thinking about our change; but directly from the change itself. That change is the soul's new health, and this health is in itself a continual gladness.

It remains true, then, that in ourselves we have no resting-place. It is the quality of the work *without*, not the quality of that *within*, which satisfies us. "No confidence in the flesh" must be our motto, as it is the foundation of God's gospel (Phi 3:3).

Chapter 3: God's Character Our Resting Place

We have seen that a sinner's peace cannot come from himself, nor from the knowledge of himself, nor from thinking about his own acts and feelings, nor from believing in his own faith, nor from the consciousness of any amendment of his old self.

Whence, then, is it to come? How does he get it?

Knowing God

It can only come from God; and it is in *knowing God* that he gets it. God has written a Volume for the purpose of making Himself known; and it is in this revelation of His character that the sinner is to find the rest that he is seeking. God Himself is the fountain-head of our peace; His revealed truth is the channel through which this peace finds its way to us; and His Holy Spirit is the great Interpreter of that truth to us. "Acquaint now thyself with him [God], and be at peace" (Job 22:21). Yes; acquaintanceship with God is peace!

Had God told us that He was not gracious, that He took no interest in our welfare, and that He had no intention of pardoning us, we could have had no peace and no hope. In that case our knowing God would only make us miserable. Our situation would be

like that of the devils, who “believe, and tremble” (Jam 2:19); and the more that we knew of such a God, we should tremble the more. For how fearful a thing must it be to have the great God that made us, the great Father of spirits, against us, not for us!

Strange to say, this is the very state of disquietude in which we find many who yet profess to believe in a God “merciful and gracious” (Exo 34:6)! With the Bible in their hands, and the cross before their eyes, they wander on in a state of darkness and fear, just such as would have arisen had God revealed Himself in hatred, not in love. They seem to believe the very opposite of what the Bible teaches us concerning God; and to attach a meaning to the cross the reverse of what the gospel affirms it really bears. Had God been all frowns, and the Bible all terrors, and Christ all sternness, these men could not have been in a more troubled and uncertain state than that in which they are.

How is this? Have they not misunderstood the Bible? Have they not mistaken the character of God, looking on Him as an “austere man” and a “hard master”? Are they not labouring to supplement the grace of God by something on their part, as if they believed that this grace was not sufficient to meet their case, until they had attracted it to themselves by some earnest performances, or gloomy experiences, or alarming convictions, or spiritual exercises, of their own?

God has declared Himself to be gracious. “God is love.” He has embodied this grace in the person and work of His beloved Son. He has told us that this grace is for the ungodly, the unholy, the rebellious, the dead in sin. The more, then, that we know of this God and of His grace, the more will His peace fill us. Nor will the greatness of our sins and the hardness of our hearts, or the changeableness of our feelings, discourage or disquiet, however much they may humble us and make us dissatisfied with ourselves.

Let us study the character of God:

- holy, yet loving—the love not interfering with the holiness, nor the holiness with the love;
- absolutely sovereign, yet infinitely gracious—the sovereignty not limiting the grace, nor grace relaxing the sovereignty;
- drawing the unwilling, yet not hindering the willing, if any such there be;
- quickening whom He will, yet having no pleasure in the death of the wicked;
- compelling some to come in, yet freely inviting all!

Let us look at Him in the face of Jesus Christ, for He is the express image of His person, and he that has seen Him has seen the Father. The knowledge of that gracious character, as interpreted by the cross of Christ, is the true remedy for our disquietudes.

Insufficient acquaintanceship with God lies at the root of our fears and gloom. I know that flesh and blood cannot reveal God to you, and that the Holy Spirit alone can enable you to know either the Father or the Son. But I would not have you for a moment suppose that the Spirit is reluctant to do His work in you; nor would I encourage you in the awful thought that you are willing, while He is unwilling; or that the sovereignty of God is a hindrance to the sinner and a restraint of the Spirit. The whole Bible takes for

granted that all this is absolutely impossible. Never can the great truths of divine sovereignty and the Spirit's work land us, as some seem to think they may do, in such a conflict between a willing sinner and an unwilling God.

The whole Bible is so written by the Spirit, and the gospel was so preached by the apostles, as never to raise the question of God's willingness, nor to lead to the remotest suspicion of His readiness to furnish the sinner with all needed aid. Hence the great truths of God's eternal election and Christ's redemption of His Church, as we read them in the Bible, are helps and encouragements to the soul. But, interpreted as they are by many, they seem barrier-walls, not ladders for scaling the great barrier-walls of man's unwillingness; and anxious souls become land-locked in metaphysical questions and self-righteous perplexities, out of which there can be no way of extrication, save that of taking God at His word.

In the Bible God has revealed Himself. In Christ He has done so most expressively. He has done so, that there might be no mistake as to His character on the part of man.

Christ's person is a revelation of God. Christ's work is a revelation of God. Christ's words are a revelation of God. He is in the Father and the Father in Him. His words and works are the words and works of the Father. In the manger He shewed us God. In the synagogue of Nazareth He shewed us God. At Jacob's well He shewed us God. At the tomb of Lazarus He shewed us God. On Olivet, as He wept over Jerusalem, He shewed us God. On the cross He shewed us God. In the tomb He shewed us God. In His resurrection He shewed us God. If we say with Philip, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us"; He answers, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Joh 14:8-9). This God Whom Christ reveals as the God of righteous grace and gracious righteousness, is the God with Whom we have to do (Heb 4:13).

To know His character, as thus interpreted to us by Jesus and His cross, is to have peace. It is into this knowledge of the Father that the Holy Spirit leads the soul whom He is conducting, by His almighty power, from darkness to light—for everything that we know of God we owe to this divine Teacher, this Interpreter. But never let the sinner imagine that he is more willing to learn than the Spirit is to teach. Never let him say to himself, "I would know God, but I cannot of myself, and the Spirit will not teach me."

It is not enough for us to say to a dispirited person, "It is your unbelief that is keeping you wretched; only believe, and all is well." This is true, but it is only *general* truth, which in many cases is of no use, because it does not shew him how it applies to him. On this point he is often at fault, thinking that faith is some great work to be done, which he is to labour at with all his might, praying all the while to God to help him in doing this great work—and that unbelief is some evil principle requiring to be uprooted before the gospel will be of any use to him.

Unbelief

But what is the real meaning of this faith and this unbelief?

In all unbelief there are these two things—a good opinion of one's self and a bad opinion of God. So long as these two things exist, it is impossible for an inquirer to find rest. His good opinion of himself makes him think it quite possible to win God's favour by his own religious performances; and his bad opinion of God makes him unwilling and afraid to put his case wholly into His hands. The object of the Holy Spirit's work, in convincing of sin, is to alter the sinner's opinion of himself, and so to reduce his estimate of his own character that he shall think of himself as God does—and so cease to suppose it possible that he can be justified by any excellency of his own. Having altered the sinner's good opinion of himself, the Spirit then alters his evil opinion of God, so as to make him see that the God with Whom he has to do is really the God of all grace (1Pe 5:10).

But the inquirer denies that he has a good opinion of himself, and owns himself a sinner. Now, a man may *say* this, but really to *know* it is something more than saying. Besides, he may be willing to take the name of sinner to himself, in common with his fellowmen, and yet not at all own himself such a sinner as God says he is: such a sinner as needs a whole Saviour to himself; such a sinner as needs the cross, blood, and righteousness of the Son of God. He may not have quite such a bad opinion of himself as to make him aware that he can expect nothing from God on the score of personal goodness, amendment of life, devout observance of duty, or superiority to others. It takes a great deal to destroy a man's good opinion of himself; and even after he has lost his good opinion of his works, he retains his good opinion of his heart; and even after he has lost that, he holds fast his good opinion of his religious duties, by means of which he hopes to make up for evil works and a bad heart. He hopes to be able so to act, feel, and pray as to lead God to entertain a good opinion of him and receive him into favour.

All such efforts spring from thinking well of himself in some measure; and also from his thinking evil of God, as if He would not receive him as he is. If he knew himself as God does, he would no more resort to such efforts than he would think of walking up an Alpine precipice. How difficult it is to make a man think of himself as God does! What but the almightiness of the divine Spirit can accomplish this?

But the inquirer says that he has not a bad opinion of God. Has he, however, such an opinion of Him as the Bible gives, or the cross reveals? Has he such an opinion of Him as makes him feel quite safe in putting his soul into His gracious hands, and trusting Him with its eternal keeping? If not, where is his good opinion of God? Surely the knowledge of God, which the cross supplies, ought to set all doubt aside, and make distrust appear in the most odious of aspects, as a wretched misrepresentation of God's character and a slander upon His gracious name.

Unbelief is thus the belief of a lie and the rejection of the truth. It obliterates from the cross the gracious name of God, and inscribes another name, that of an unknown god, in which there is no peace for the sinner, no rest for the weary.

Accept, then, the character of God as given in the gospel. Read aright His blessed name as it is written upon the cross. Take the simple interpretation given of His mind toward the ungodly, as you have it, at length, in the glad tidings of peace. Is not that enough? If that which God has made known of Himself be not enough to allay your fears, nothing else will. The Holy Spirit will not give you peace, irrespective of your views of God's character. That would be countenancing the worship of a false god, instead of the true God revealed in the Bible. It is in connection with the truth concerning the true God, "the God of all grace," that the Spirit gives peace. It is the love of *the true God* that He sheds abroad in the heart.

The object of the Spirit's work is to make us acquainted with the true Jehovah, that in Him we may rest—not to produce in us certain feelings, the consciousness of which will make us think better of ourselves and give us confidence toward God. That which He shews us of ourselves is only evil; that which He shews us of God is only good. He does not enable us to feel or to believe in order that we may be comforted by our feeling or our faith. Even when working in us most powerfully, He turns our eye away from His own work in us to fix it on God and His love in Christ Jesus our Lord. The substance of the gospel is the name of the great Jehovah, unfolded in and by Jesus Christ, the *character* of Him in Whom we "live and move and have our being," as the "just God" and the "Saviour" (Isa 45:21), the Justifier of the ungodly (Rom 5:6).

Turn your eye to the cross and see these two things—the crucifiers and the Crucified. See the crucifiers, the haters of God and of His Son; they are *yourself*. Read in them your own character, and cease to think of making that a ground of peace. See the Crucified; it is God Himself, incarnate love. It is He who made you, God manifest in flesh, suffering, dying for the ungodly. Can you suspect His grace? Can you cherish evil thoughts of Him? Can you ask anything further to awaken in you the fullest and most unreserved confidence? Will you misinterpret that agony and death by saying either that they do not mean grace, or that the grace which they mean is not for you? Call to mind that which is written: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" (1Jo 3:16). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation¹⁰ for our sins" (1Jo 4:10).

Chapter 4: Righteous Grace

We have spoken of God's character as "the God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10). We have seen that it is in "tasting that the Lord is gracious" that the sinner has peace (1Pe 2:3).

But let us keep in mind that this grace is the grace of a *righteous* God; it is the grace of one Who is Judge as well as Father. Unless we see this we shall mistake the gospel, and fail in appreciating both the pardon we are seeking and the great sacrifice through

¹⁰ **propitiation** – "Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To *propitiate* is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the Biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice." (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

which it comes to us. No vague forgiveness, arising out of mere paternal love or good-natured indifference to sin, will do. We need to know what kind of pardon it is; and whether it proceeds from the full recognition of our absolute guiltiness by Him Who is to “judge the world in righteousness” (Act 17:31). The right kind of pardon comes not from love alone, but from law; not from good-nature, but from righteousness; not from indifference to sin, but from holiness.

The inquirer who is only half in earnest overlooks this. His feelings are moved, but his conscience is not roused. Hence he is content with very vague ideas of God’s mere compassion for the sinner’s unhappiness. To him human guilt seems but human misfortune, and God’s acquittal of the sinner little more than the overlooking of his sin. He does not trouble himself with asking how the forgiveness comes, or what is the real nature of the love which he professes to have received. He is easily soothed to sleep, because he has never been fully awake. He is, at the best, a stony-ground hearer, soon losing the poor measure of joy that he may have gotten (Mar 4:16-17)—becoming a formalist, or perhaps a trifler with sin, or, it may be, a religious sentimentalist.

But he whose conscience has been pierced is not so easily satisfied. He sees that the God whose favour he is seeking is holy as well as loving, and that He has to do with righteousness as well as grace. Hence the first inquiry that he makes is as to the righteousness of the pardon that the grace of God holds out. He must be satisfied on this point, and see that the grace is righteous grace, before he can enjoy it at all. The more alive that he is to his own unrighteousness, the more does he feel the need of ascertaining the righteousness of the grace that we make known to him.

It does not satisfy him to say that, since it comes from a righteous God, it must be righteous grace. His conscience wants to see the righteousness of the way by which it comes. Without this it cannot be pacified or “purged”; and the man is not made “perfect as pertaining to the conscience” (Heb 9:9-14), but must always have an uneasy feeling that all is not right—that his sins may one day rise up against him.

That which soothes the heart will not always pacify the conscience. The sight of the grace will do the former, but only the sight of the righteousness of the grace will do the latter. Till the latter is done, there cannot be real peace.

Here the work of Christ comes in; and the cross of the Sin-bearer answers the question that conscience had raised: “Is it *righteous* grace?” It is this great work of propitiation that exhibits God as “the just God, and the Saviour” (Isa 45:21), not only righteous in spite of His justifying the ungodly, but righteous *in* doing so. It shews salvation as an act of righteousness; indeed, one of the highest acts of righteousness that a righteous God can do. It shews pardon not only as the deed of a righteous God, but as *the* thing that declares how righteous He is, and how He hates and condemns the very sin that He is pardoning.

Hear the Word of the Lord concerning this “finished” work.

- “Christ died for our sins” (1Co 15:3).
- “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5).

- “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:28).
- “He gave himself for us” (Ti 2:14).
- He “was delivered for our offences” (Rom 4:25).
- He “gave himself for our sins” (Gal 1:4).
- “Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6).
- “He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb 9:26).
- “Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh” (1Pe 4:1).
- “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18).
- “His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24).

These expressions speak of something more than love. Love is in each of them, the deep, true, real love of God; but also justice and holiness, the inflexible and inexorable adherence to Law. They have no meaning apart from *law*; law as the foundation, pillar, and keystone of the universe.

But their connection with law is also their connection with love. For, as it was Law, in its unchangeable perfection, that created the necessity for the Surety’s¹¹ death, so it was this necessity that drew out the Surety’s love, and gave also glorious proof of the love of Him who made Him to be sin for us (2Co 5:21). For if a man were to die for another when there was no necessity for his doing so, we should hardly call his death a proof of love. At best, such would be foolish love, or at least a fond and idle way of shewing it. But to die for one, when there is really need of dying, is the true test of genuine love. To die for a friend when nothing less will save him, this is the proof of love! When either he or we *must* die, and when he, to save us from dying, dies himself—this is love. There was need of a death if we were to be saved from dying; righteousness made the necessity. And, to meet this terrible necessity, the Son of God took flesh and died! He died because it was written, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4). Love led Him down to the cradle; love led Him up to the cross! He died as the sinner’s Substitute. He died to make it a righteous thing in God to cancel the sinner’s guilt, and annul the penalty of his everlasting death.

Had it not been for this dying, grace and guilt could not have looked each other in the face; God and the sinner could not have come near; righteousness would have forbidden reconciliation—and righteousness, we know, is as divine and real a thing as love. Without this expiation,¹² it would not have been right for God to receive the sinner, nor safe for the sinner to come.

But now, mercy and truth have met together (Psa 85:10); now grace is righteousness, and righteousness is grace. This *satisfies the sinner’s conscience* by shewing him right-

¹¹ **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another; as our Surety, Christ guaranteed a full legal satisfaction for our sin and our deliverance upon His payment of our debt upon Calvary’s cross.

¹² **expiation** – “Expiation has reference to the *guilt* of sin. To expiate is to remove or cover the guilt of sin.” (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

eous love for the unrighteous and unlovable. It tells him, too, that the reconciliation brought about in this way shall never be disturbed, either in this life or that which is to come. It is righteous reconciliation, and will stand every test, as well as last throughout eternity. The peace of conscience, thus secured, will be trial-proof, sickness-proof, deathbed-proof, judgment-proof. Realizing this, the chief of sinners can say, “Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom 8:34).

What peace for the stricken conscience is there in the truth that Christ died for the *ungodly* and that it is of the *ungodly* that the righteous God is the Justifier! The righteous grace, thus coming to us through the sin-bearing work of the Word “made flesh” (Joh 1:14), tells the soul, at once and forever, that there can be no condemnation for any sinner upon earth who will only consent to be indebted to this free love of God, which, like a fountain of living water, is bursting out freely from the foot of the cross.

Just, yet the Justifier of the ungodly! What glad tidings are here! Here is grace—God’s free love to the sinner—divine bounty and goodwill, altogether irrespective of human worth or merit. For this is the scriptural meaning of that often misunderstood word “grace.”

This righteous free-love has its origin in the bosom of the Father, where the only-begotten Son has His dwelling (Joh 1:18). It is not produced by anything outside of God Himself. It was man’s evil, not his good, that called it forth. It is not the like drawing to the like, but to the unlike; it is light attracted by darkness, and life by death. It does not wait for our seeking, it comes *unmasked* as well as *undeserved*. It is not our faith that creates it or calls it up; our faith realizes it as already existing in its divine and manifold fullness. Whether we believe it or not, this righteous grace exists, and exists for us. Unbelief refuses it; but faith takes it, rejoices in it, and lives upon it.

Yes, faith takes this righteous grace of God, and with it a righteous pardon, a righteous salvation, and a righteous heirship¹³ of the everlasting glory.

From God’s Way of Peace. Available in print as a paperback from Chapel Library.

¹³ **heirship** – status of being an heir, one who will inherit a promised estate of another.

Doctrine

The Blood of the Cross

*“The precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.”
—1 Peter 1:19*

Preface

That blood has been shed upon the earth, and that this blood was no other than the “blood of God” (Act 20:28), all admit who own the Bible. But admitting this, the question arises, how far is each one of us implicated in this blood shedding? Does not God take for granted that we are guilty? Nay further, that this guilt is the heaviest that can weigh a sinner down?

If so, then is it not a question for the saint, how far have I understood and confessed my participation in this guilt incurred by my long rejection of the slain One? How far have I learned to prize that blood, which, though once my accuser, is now my advocate? How far am I now seeing and rejoicing in the complete substitution of life for life—the divine life for the human—which that bloodshedding implies?

Is it not also a serious question for the ungodly, is this blood shedding really and legally chargeable against me? Is God serious in saying that He means to reckon with me for this? Is this blood at this present hour resting over me as a cloud of wrath ready to burst upon my head as soon as my day of grace runs out? Is it on account of my treatment of this blood that I am to be dealt with at the seat of judgment? Is my eternity really to hinge on this?

If so, what course can I pursue? Can I, like Pilate, take water and wash my hands saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just man?” (Mat 27:24). No: that is hopeless. My long rejection of it must involve at least something of the guilt; how much remains yet to be seen. If I cannot clear myself, and if I cannot extenuate my crime, then I must either brave the trial and the sentence, or make haste to enter my protest against the deed as the only course now remaining for me.

In such a matter there is room neither for delay nor uncertainty. Let the matter at once be inquired into, and put beyond the reach of doubt. Is it possible that anyone can

rest with less than a certainty of forgiveness so long as a charge is hanging over him? Either he does not understand its meaning, or he is resolved to set it at naught.

No certainty can be greater than that I am guilty of the crime. Can I rest satisfied with anything but an equal certainty that this crime has been canceled? To be sure of guilt, and not to be sure of pardon, is a fearful condition indeed. To know that there is a Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and yet not to know with equal certainty that all the blessings flowing from His blood have become mine, must be misery beyond endurance. Uncertainty in such a case is the very mockery of my grief.

Was the Gospel meant to bring us no certainty here? Is our believing it designed to give us no assured peace? Is this assured peace a plant not of this clime? Must we wait for it till we reach the land of peace? Is it not our portion here, and is it not by having this that we are enabled to face and battle with the darkest storms of life?¹⁴

Did the sight of that blood assure us at once of our guilt, and shall not the sight of it now assure us equally of our forgiveness? Did it formerly speak certain terror, and shall it not now speak certain peace? Or do we say, but I am not sure whether I am really receiving it—this is my difficulty. Be it so. Did you find the same difficult in knowing whether you were rejecting it? Was it so easy to discover the rejection, and is it so hard to discover the reception? You knew when you put it from you, and do you not know when you would take it to you? Is there not something unnatural, something strange in this?

If you are not sure whether you have received or rejected the blood of propitiation, then in so far as your *peace* is concerned, it is all one as if you knew that you had rejected it. For uncertainty can bring no peace to the troubled spirit. It can heal no wounds; it can kindle no hope. It leaves the soul in sorrowful darkness, just as if the true light had not arisen, or had withdrawn itself from view; just as if the peace-bringing blood had never been shed, or had been hidden from your eyes. Uncertainty! Who that realizes an accusing law, and a sin-hating God, can remain uncertain without also remaining most thoroughly and absolutely miserable?¹⁵

God has provided for this certainty, and taken out of the way all that might mar it, or generate the reverse. He has not only shed the blood of His dear Son, but so presents it to us *as sinners*, as to leave us no alternative, but either to deny His testimony concerning it, or to be at peace with Him in simply receiving it as that through which peace has been made by His Son upon the cross. Shall we then cleave to this uncertainty as if it contained some mysterious blessing? Or shall we remain contented with it, even for an hour, seeing we cannot but feel that it is no blessing, but a blighting *curse*?

¹⁴ You may see life in death, heaven in the deepest hell, glory in shame, when thou seest all thy sins done away in the blood of Jesus—*Shepherd's Sound Believer*.

¹⁵ It is no right faith but when we are bold with quiet minds to show ourselves in the presence of God. Which boldness comes from assured confidence in the goodwill of God. It is assuredness that maketh the conscience quiet and cheerful before God—*Calvin's Institutes (1559)*.

The amount of *uncertainty* in the present day is great. Thousands who name the name of Christ are not ashamed to own it. Few seem to have firm and abiding peace. Few walk in the blessed consciousness of being forgiven, and saved, and reconciled. No wonder that we should be so feeble and sickly; no wonder that we should have so small success in laboring for God. Conscious of personal friendship between Him and us, what is there that we will not do or dare? What is there that He will not do for us and by us?

Is this a time for uncertainty when judgments are darkening over us, and God has arisen to smite the nations for their sins? Nothing now will keep us calm but certainty. Such a storm will need a sure anchor. A man may cheat his soul into tranquility when days are prosperous and skies are blue. He may say, "I hope it will go well with me at last," and sit down contented with his meager hope. But when heaven and earth are shaken, he cannot but tremble. His peace gives way at the first ruffle of the tempest. He had no certainty to lean upon, and his false security was broken in an hour.

So it must be with everyone in these days of evil, that is resting satisfied with less than a certainty—a certainty reared upon the one foundation. And how many hearts are secretly throbbing now, when they hear afar off the sound of advancing terror. They are confessing to themselves now that their rest was unreal, and their hope a fancy. They are filled with fear, and "grope for the wall as the blind." They feel that they have hitherto taken hold of an uncertainty, and flattered themselves with the idea that a man might very well be a Christian, and yet know it not. But now they are moved. They feel that this is "a covering narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it." They had tried to make themselves believe that they were Christians of long standing, and now they find themselves no further on than ten or twenty years ago, when first they awoke from their sleep of death.

It is well, however, that the discovery be made, however late. It matters not how roughly the speaker is awakened, if only he be roused in time to flee from encompassing danger. It is not yet too late. The cross is still standing on the earth. The crucified One is still upon the mercy seat. If the favor of God has hitherto been a dark uncertainty, it may yet be made sure. The way of reconciliation through the blood is as open as ever.

Reader! Rest not till you have got matters *thoroughly settled* between God and our soul. This settlement must be on solid and immovable grounds. But these grounds God is presenting to you in the blood of His only begotten Son. Consider them well. They are your all for eternity! You need not fear risking your soul upon them. Oh! Well for you, if you were but settled there. There would follow a lifetime of peace in this world, and eternity of glory in the world to come.

1. The Accusation

"Ye wish to bring this Man's blood upon us," were the words of indignant scorn with which the High Priest resented the accusations which the apostles, in their preaching,

brought against their nation, and specially against its rulers (Act 5:28). They were the words of well-feigned contempt, but they were words of fear.

“Ye wish to bring this Man’s blood upon us,” was the utmost extent of an answer attempted by the High Priest to these accusations—as if he would thus insinuate that they were as false as they were absurd and impossible. “This Man’s blood! What have *we* to do with it; what mean you by charging us with the guilt of it?”

The High Priest had not mistaken the meaning of the apostles, nor misconstrued the drift of their charge. He was altogether correct in his statement. The apostles did intend to “bring this Man’s blood upon them.” There was no need of calling witnesses to prove that they both said so, and meant so. They denied it not. They were not ashamed of having made the declaration, nor afraid to repeat it. They made no secret of it. They reiterated it in every sermon; they dwelt and insisted upon it continually. It formed part of their message everywhere. “Ye are the crucifiers of the Lord of glory; your hands are stained with the blood of God’s own Son.” This might be said to be the commencement or preamble of each sermon, each address (Act 2:23; 3:15).

Bitterly was this felt by those against whom it was directed. The arrow went deep and rankled sore in the wound. The anger of the priests arose. They denied the charge. They treated it as a slander upon their good name, and reviled the apostles as calumniators. The charge of blood they resented and repelled.

This does seem strange. For, but a short time before, they had come forward voluntarily to take upon them the guilt and the consequences of this bloodshedding. How eagerly they shouted, “His blood be upon us and on our children!” *Then* they made light of this blood. They valued it at thirty pieces of silver. They rushed forward to shed it, as if they could not rest till they had poured it out like water upon the earth. But *now* they shrink from the imputation, and are stirred up to anger when it is cast upon them. Nay, so much do they resent it, that they seek to imprison or put to death those who make it.

Why this sudden change of feeling? Why this sensitiveness to the charge of blood-guiltiness? It cannot be from dread of the men who bring it forward. They are few in number, and have no power to injure. The charge which they make is accompanied with no threat; nor does it bring with it any temporal evil or danger. It can issue in nothing disastrous or fatal, so far as man and time and the laws are concerned. Why then this nervous irritability under the charge brought against them by these unoffending men—these fishermen of Galilee?

Conscience had made them cowards. Its murmurs were irrepressible and unwearied. It tormented them before the time. Their attempts to smother and silence it only turned its course and sent it *inward*, to work the disease into the whole frame, thereby producing that singular revulsion of feeling which has been noticed, and occasioning that wrathful sensitiveness which they so often exhibited under the preaching of the apostles. Bold enough before the deed was done, now they are full of continued alarms, as if haunted by a specter, or beset with weapons which they feared might every moment pierce them, and avenge the blood which they had shed.

Conscience said,

1. His blood *is* upon you; and you know it. You shed it, and you cannot deny the deed. You thirsted for the shedding of it. You gloried in the deed.

2. It was innocent blood, and you knew it. It was the blood of one who had never wronged you, who had done evil to none, but good to all; against whom no charge of sin had been proved.

3. It was blood shed by means of treachery and falsehood. You had to buy and bribe the traitor. You suborned witnesses, whose testimony you knew to be false. Everything connected with that trial casts dishonor upon those who did the deed, or procured it to be done.

4. It was perhaps, after all, the blood of God's own Son! He claimed this title. Many admitted it. There were signs of its being authentic. What then if it be really true?

Could there be a crime like this?

Such might be the workings of their spirits, the secret suggestions of consciences not at rest, but ever and anon starting from the slumber into which they had been in some measure lulled. No wonder that the men were cut to the heart, and roused up to fiercest anger by the preaching of the apostles. The serpent had twined itself around them. It might at times be torpid or asleep. But every fresh mention of the blood, or of the name of Him whom they had slain, awoke it, and sent its sting into their vitals. Hence they hated the mention of that blood and that name. Vengeance was in their hearts and on their lips against everyone who might venture upon an illusion so hateful. In words they repelled the charge as slanderous, but the inner man confessed it. Addressing the apostles they might use the language of denial,

Thou canst not say, I did it.

But the fear, the anger, the remorse which awoke within them, betrayed the consciousness of guilt in a way which could not be mistaken. If they were not the actual murderers, they were at least accomplices in the deed of murder; and as such they were self-convicted and self-condemned.

True children of Cain! Both in their crime, and in their evasive denial of it! When Jehovah charged the first murderer with his brother's blood, how insolent, yet how evasive the answer—"Am I my brother's keeper?" As if he had said, "Do you mean to charge me with Abel's blood? What do I know about it or its shedder?" So with these Jewish rulers. They commit the crime, and then they challenge the proof of their guilt. Their hands are still stained with the crimson, yet they can say, "Do you mean to bring this Man's blood upon us?"

True children of Cain! For where was there rest now for them? Fugitives and vagabonds they now must be, at least in spirit; carrying within them a hidden wound which they try in vain to cover; disturbed with horrors which they cannot allay; trembling at the sound of the shaken leaf or the rustling breeze.

True children of Cain! They go out from the presence of the Lord, and seek to drown their terrors in worldly undertakings, in dreams of vanity, or in the lusts of pleasure. The worm that never dies has begun to gnaw them! Yet they will not look on Him whom they have pierced. They turn away in anger when He is set before them!

The blood they had shed would heal them; for it speaketh better things than that of Abel; but they will not be healed. The blood that alarmed would also have laid all their alarms to rest. But they turn away from it. It accused them, no doubt; yet it brought forgiveness with it for the very crime which it laid to their charge. It spoke to them as to murderers—sinners for whose crime and conduct there could be no excuse. But it also said, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—even “the chief” (1Ti 1:13-16).

They might be “blasphemers, persecutors, and injurious”; but “the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant.” Nay, and of some of them at least it might be said, “They did obtain mercy, that in them the chief, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them, who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”¹⁶

2. Israel Guilty

But how far was this accusation true of *all* Israel? It is evident that the apostles spoke indiscriminately and universally, not merely singling out certain individuals—the active doers of the deed, the more direct participators of the crime. They manifestly charged the whole nation with the guilt. Speaking to those whom they designate, “Ye men of Israel”—“all the house of Israel,” they accuse them of having “taken and by wicked hands having crucified and slain” this “Man approved of God.” “Let all of the house of Israel know that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Act 2:22-23, 26); and again, “Ye killed the prince of life” (Act 3:15).

Moreover, in several other passages this is spoken of by God as the peculiar guilt of the nation—that guilt which is now weighing them down with its curse—that guilt which shall, above all others, awake to remembrance when they see their returning King. “They shall look on me whom they have pierced” (Zec 12:10); and again, “Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him” (Rev 1:7). This then is the great national crime—the crime that is pursuing them through all the earth. For this blood God reckons all Israel responsible. It is not merely Caiaphas, or Herod, or Pilate; it is not merely the individuals who scourged and buffeted, and mocked, and nailed Him to the tree: it is “all Israel” that is accounted guilty. They are all counted guilty of *rejecting*

¹⁶ The reader may perhaps call to mind here the conversion of Colonel Gardiner (1688-1745). He seemed in a moment to get a sight of the crucified one; his soul was overwhelmed; he walked up and down his chamber in intensest agony of heart, thinking himself the vilest sinner under the sun, as having all his life been crucifying Christ by his sin. “He immediately gave judgment against himself as most justly worthy of eternal damnation, settling it with himself that God’s justice necessarily required that such an enormous sinner should be made an example of everlasting vengeance”—See his *Life by Doddridge* (1747).

Him; as it is written, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not"; so they are all counted guilty of crucifying Him. And accordingly the curse and the desolation have come down upon all.

But how is this? How are they all guilty? Why has the stroke of vengeance come upon the whole nation?

Because the same spirit was in all. They "consented to His death," like Saul in the case of Stephen, and "kept the raiment of them that slew Him." They acquiesced in the deed, if they did not perpetrate it. They stood by and hindered it not. They did not protest against the deed, nor give any sort of testimony in condemnation of the doers. Therefore, they are held as acquiescing, nay, as participating in the sin.

It is thus in human law. If we belong to a corporation or society which resolves by a majority of its members to do an unlawful deed, we are held liable for all the consequences and penalties attaching to that deed, unless we enter our individual protest. Till we do this, we are held responsible for the act, whatever it may be. Most naturally and most righteously is it so. Law and equity have always united to maintain this.

It was thus that God dealt with Israel, and is to this day dealing with them still. It was thus that the apostles made good their fearful accusations wherever they went. They sought to "bring this Man's blood" upon the heads of all whom they addressed. Upon this they took their stand. With this sharp-edged weapon they assailed the consciences of the men of Israel. And what a weapon both for weight and sharpness! Irresistible in the hands of the Holy Spirit for convincing of sin. Wherever they preached Christ, they proclaimed men guilty of the blood of Christ. They maintained that though, perhaps, not the actual murderers, yet they were truly, legally, righteously guilty; personally responsible for the infinite crime.

And the *conscience* of Israel pleaded guilty to the charge! They could neither deny nor extenuate it. They did not fully admit the guilt; but the way in which they met the charge showed how the inner man was responding to its truth. They were enraged; but their very anger was the outburst of a smitten conscience. They might turn the accusation into matter of scorn; but their scorning was the expression of hidden fear.

Hence their hatred of the apostles. They looked upon them as men in possession of a secret, the promulgation of which was intolerable. Could they but silence these bold proclaimers, they might have rest; for then the *witnesses* of the deed would be hushed, and the *evidence* destroyed. But so long as these witnesses remained—going round the inhabitants of the land with their story, and producing the personal evidence of its truth—they could not but be troubled. The crime was *felt* to be a real one; and the mention of it by such witnesses was like the stinging of an adder. Hence also the fearful agonies of conviction into which those were cast whose hearts the Spirit touched. They felt that all was true. They were murderers: murderers of the Lord of glory. Their hands were full of blood. No wonder that they were "pricked in their hearts," and cried out, "What shall we do?" It was crime enough to cover a world with confusion of face; making its knees to smite against each other, and its lips to grow pale with shame and fear.

The messenger said, "Thou art the man." Conscience said, "I am, I am! What shall I do? His blood is upon me: how shall I escape the curse which such a deed must certainly draw down! What a doom must now be mine!" It was thus that the Holy Spirit "convinced them of SIN." He did not take up the whole catalog of their transgressions, and present it in all its black array to their consciences. He took up just one sin, but that was the sin of blood; and that blood was none other than the blood of God's own Son. This was the arrow which He selected from His quiver; the sharpest and deadliest of all. It "pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; it was a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." There were ten thousand other shafts ready fitted to the string against these sinners; but none so resistless, so terrible as this.

God has for eighteen hundred years been specially laying the sin of bloodshedding at the door of Israel. He has proclaimed them guilty, by the ruin wherewith He has smitten them so fearfully. It has been no common ruin, proving thereby that it was no common crime. Denial of it has availed them nought. God has, by His righteous acts, declared that He reckons them guilty. If not guilty, why these long ages of calamity? If not guilty, why the shame, the scattering, the banishment that have been theirs since their cup was filled?

Conscience was whispering its forebodings when these apostles stood before the nation and declared it guilty. The whole dark future they could not foresee; but that they had sinned, and that they had shed blood which God required at their hand, they seemed unconsciously to admit, even when trying to evade or to scorn the accusations of the apostles.

Thus God spake, and Israel trembled. Thus the messengers of Jehovah made the charge, and Israel grew pale at the mention of it. Passing by every other sin, the accuser fastened upon this as the most crushing, as well as the most unanswerable of all.

Thus God found a way into Israel's conscience; and thus it is (as we shall see) that He finds a way into the sinner's conscience still. He forces home this as His main charge, the charge which sinks deepest and rankles sorest—"guilty of the body and blood of the Lord!"¹⁷

3. The World Guilty

We next ask, how far is the general world involved in this special guilt? Is it, like Israel, "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?"

¹⁷ How did the Spirit convince those three thousand, those patterns of God's converting grace? Did not the Lord begin with them for one principal sin, their murder and contempt of Christ, by imbruing their hands in His blood? There is no question but now they remembered other sinful practices, but this was the *imprimis* which is ever accompanied with many other *items*, in God's bill of reckoning—*Shepherd's Sound Believer*, p. 8.

The world must come in for its share of guilt. The Gentile as well as the Jew, must be reckoned a partaker in the deed of blood. Even if the world could clear itself of the crime of murder, it cannot clear itself from the guilt of “consenting to His death.” And is this “consent” not equivalent to blood-guiltiness? Must the hand be red with blood ere the charge can be made good? Is not the acquiescence of the heart enough?

Yes. Israel was but part of the general race—foremost indeed in guilt, but still followed close behind by the Gentile multitudes. The Jew forms the inner circle of those who crowded the hall of Pilate, and cried, “Crucify, crucify Him”—the inner circle of the multitude who stood around the cross exulting and deriding. The Gentile forms the outer circle. But the crowd is the same. Each circle of it, outer as well as inner, is animated with the same murderous enmity to the Son of God. Each individual in the mass breathes the same spirit, if he does not make Jerusalem ring with the same words. In truth it was the world that did the deed. It was *man* that crucified the Lord of glory. It was *man* that rejected the true light which came into the world. It was *man* that loved the darkness rather than the light. It was man that said, “This is the heir, come let us kill Him.”¹⁸

But how is this? Just as in the case of Israel, all are included in the responsibility, for all have acquiesced in the deed. All are held guilty of the deed done beneath these skies, and upon this soil where they dwell, unless they come forth and protest against it. God holds each hearer of the Gospel guilty of the blood of Christ, *until he disown the act*; protesting against it, and owning this crucified one as his Saviour and Lord. I am not now speaking of those who never heard of a Saviour’s name or death. I am not urging their guilt. I speak of those before whom a crucified Saviour has been set. In making known to them His death, is not God just *asking their opinion of it*, and putting it to them, whether they will own or disown the deed? Is He not saying to each of them, “What think ye of this death, this blood?” He presses this point home upon each hearer of the Gospel. If they give no heed to the message, but turn away in indifference—or if they reject the message and despise the Saviour of whose death it speaks, then are they counted guilty of the blood of Him whom Israel slew. For thus they are “consenting to His death.” And every moment that a sinner thus remains in unbelief, turning away from the Gospel he is chargeable with blood-guiltiness. The crime, the curse, the doom of the murderer hangs over his head.

It was thus that Whitefield used to appeal to the consciences of the crowds that hung upon him; and it was thus that his appeals were responded to. In Tanner’s account of his own conversion, we have a striking example of this. He was a ship carpenter, working at Plymouth, who, along with five others as ungodly as himself, resolved to go to hear Whitefield, in order “to knock him off the place where he stood.” The first sermon overawed him and drew him back to hear a second, which went to his heart. It was upon “Christ’s mercy to Jerusalem sinners,” from Luke 24:47. “From these words,” says Tan-

¹⁸ Then was the world brought to a voluntary confession of the sin of murdering Jesus Christ—*Owen on the Death of Christ*, referring to Acts 2:37.

ner, “God the Spirit led him to show the atrocious sin of crucifying the Lord of glory; second, He noticed the instruments who perpetrated this dreadful deed, which were the Jews and Roman soldiers. Then came the never-to-be-forgotten moment as it concerned me. I stood at his left hand. He was not at this time looking towards me, but had just been observing, ‘I suppose,’ said he, ‘you are reflecting on the cruelty of those inhuman butchers who imbrued their hands in innocent blood.’ When, on a sudden, turning himself towards me as if designed (and I do believe the Lord designed it for me), he looked me full in the face, and cried out, *Sinner! Thou art the man that crucified the Son of God!* Then, and never before, I felt the Word of God quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. I knew not whether to stand or fall. My sins seemed all to stare me in the face. I was at once convicted. My heart bursting, mine eyes gushing forth floods of tears. I dreaded the instant wrath of God, and expected that it would instantly fall upon me.”¹⁹

The first part, then, of our message to each careless sinner that may read these pages, is, “You are a crucifier of the Lord of glory.” His blood is upon you; and it is the blood of the Son of God. It is this that God is requiring at your hand. From the first moment that you heard of that blood you have been held as consenting to its shedding. God made it known to you, that you might disown the deed. This you have not done. You have felt and acted *precisely as if that deed had been entirely right and just*. It has awakened no abhorrence, no amazement on your part; it has called forth no condemnation. From all that you have said, or felt, or done, one might conclude that it had met with your unmingled approval. And that approval God holds you as giving, by your continuing in unbelief. He reckons you guilty of the blood of His only begotten Son.

Do you sit under this fearful charge which God Himself makes against you, even here, as an earnest of what will be brought against you in the day of dark reckoning when you stand before the throne? Think what it implies. It means that you are a second Cain, though guiltier far than he. Better blood than that of Abel’s is crying out against you. Your hands are red with blood. And it is not the blood of the guilty, shed righteously, but it is the blood of the holy and the just—the blood of Him “who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth”—who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”—who though He was rich, for your sake became poor, that you by His poverty might be made rich. This is the blood that is laid at your door. It is innocent and it is divine. Such is your crime and such its infinite aggravation.

Do you shrink from the charge? Do you plead “not guilty?” Then what means your long rejection—your deliberate unbelief? These are the proofs of the accusation. They bear full and fatal witness against you. No evidence can be more conclusive than that which they furnish against you.

Do you say, “I do not reject, I do not disbelieve?” If so, then you have *received* Him. Is it so? Have you received the Son of God? Then what has this reception of Him done for

¹⁹ Tanner’s *Life*, pp. 11-12.

you? If it be such a reception as God can recognize, then are you already a son of God, for it is written, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (Joh 1:12). Is it so; and are you in truth a son? If not, then where is your reception? Are you not guilty of rejection still? If you have received Him, then with Him you have received forgiveness, and with forgiveness peace, and with peace everlasting life. Is it so? Are you at this moment in possession of these? No. Then are you not still guilty of this very rejection? And if so, then are you no less truly guilty of the blood of the rejected One.

Do you grow indignant, as if your good name were slandered? Are you exclaiming, "What! Do you mean to bring this Man's blood upon us?" Yes, I do. For God has done so. He charges it to your account. He lays it at your door just as Abel's blood was laid at the door of Cain. Upon you must that blood lie till you clear yourself of it, by ceasing from your acquiescence, and coming forth to protest against the deed, and thus washing your hands clean of the stain.

Do you say, "But how am I to enter my protest against it?" Simply by believing on the name of the crucified, owning Him as your Saviour, and receiving Him as your all. This is the only way in which you can now protest against the deed, and come out from under the curse with which that deed has burdened you. And this is the way which God has appointed for the sinner's entering his protest, and being delivered from the doom of the blood-guilty. He has given you time to protest. Many long years has He afforded you. Of these you have not yet availed yourself, and thus have added unspeakably to the infinite crime. Yet still does He extend that space. It is not yet too late. He is willing, even up to this hour, to receive your protest; and in receiving it, to receive *you* also; not only acquitting you from the charge of blood, but treating you as righteous;²⁰ not only delivering you from the eternal curse which that blood was drawing over you, but turning that curse into a rich and endless blessing.

Do you scoff and say, like the murderer in the olden time,
A little water clears us of the deed;

²⁰ At the risk of its being thought out of place, I shall ask the reader's attention to the following illustration of the truth embodied in the above sentence. It is from Reichard's *Initia Doctrinae Christianae*, which contains an exposition of the Lutheran doctrine of justification. I need not give the original. "Justification is that divine act by which man, the sinner, is absolved from all the guilt and punishment of his sins by reason of the satisfaction of Christ; and is so reckoned and treated of God, as if he had not only committed no sin, but as if all his life he had lived most holily. At the same time, we must remember that this divine blessing is not of a physical, but of a moral kind, and refers wholly to *imputation*; since the substitutionary satisfaction of Jesus Christ is reckoned by God as entirely ours. For this divine proceeding is like a forensic transaction, in which there are judges, accusers, and accused, advocates, laws, witnesses, and in the end an acquittal from the charge.... It consists of two parts; the one, by which, on account of Christ's merit, our guilt is totally removed; the other, by which Christ's obedience is held as ours. For seeing the divine law demands, not only that we should commit no sin, but that we should do all manner of good (neither of which is in our power), it is plain that the satisfaction of Christ avails us in a twofold manner; partly as He bore in our room the guilt and punishment of our sins, and partly as He obeyed the divine law most perfectly for us."

How easy is it then!

Bear then the guilt and brave the Judge. Refuse to answer His demand for a reckoning on this score. And see how it will fare with you. Ah! The hour is coming, when the guilt of that blood will be fully seen; but seen too late. It might have been washed away here; it cannot be washed away yonder. It will spread itself over your eternity in the horrors of undying remorse and shame—horrors which only blood-guiltiness can awaken—horrors which no fallen angel can experience—horrors which none can taste save men who have first shed this blood and then rejected it.²¹

4. God's Controversy with the World

One of God's chief controversies with this world is respecting this blood. He has many other such controversies, but this is one of the chief. For here His estimate and man's are at utter variance with each other, in respect both of the value and efficacy of this blood, no less than regarding the guilt of shedding it.

On many points they differ in their estimates. As to the value of the soul, of earth, of time, of eternity, they differ. But here they differ most of all: and on this difference the sinner's eternity hinges. For it is according to what he thinks of this blood that he is saved or lost. This is the turning point of his salvation. He may count it strange or hard that his everlasting welfare should be thus determined. Yet God declares that it must be so. He will not consent to treat that blood so lightly as the sinner. Nor will He consent to deal favorably with the sinner that slights or scorns that blood. Here He is inexorable. For the honor of His own Son is involved in it; and that honor must be maintained inviolable.

And why should it be thought an incredible thing that it should be so? Grant but that this blood is what it is, the blood of God's beloved Son, and it is not difficult to see why He should, on such a point, be so awfully inflexible. Nay, shall we not say, how can it be otherwise? And wonder only how He can bear so much as one single slight offered to blood so precious in His eyes.

It was the blood of one whom He loved with an immeasurable love; and who was worthy of all that love, even to the uttermost. It was the blood of Him who was the brightness of Jehovah's glory, and the express image of His person. How, then, was it possible that He could overlook any affront to the blood of one so exalted and so loved? How could He allow the foot of man to trample on it with scorn, or the eye of man to glance past it with indifference? He could not. He must first cease to own Him as His Son, or to claim for Him the homage of creation, as heir and Lord of all. Besides, had He

²¹ Does the reader here call to mind the well-known lines:

*Will all the mighty ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green, one red.*

not given up this Son for the ungodly? Had He not bruised Him and put Him to grief? Had He not allowed that blood to be shed for man? And if so, then how could He fail to resent anything like ingratitude on the part of those for whom He had delivered up His Son? Specially how could He fail to be displeased with any contempt or indifference shown by them to that blood which, for their sakes, had been so freely poured out? Nothing but love to us could have led Him to such a sacrifice. He spared not His Son, just that He might spare us. He allowed His life to be taken that ours might be restored. And having provided a ransom so precious at such a cost, what need we reckon on but that He should be jealous as to the reception which this love of His was to have among men, and jealous of the treatment which that blood was to meet with at the hands of sinners?

We may wonder indeed that a man should look on that blood with indifference, as if it were a common thing. But we need not wonder that Jehovah should regard that indifference as one of the blackest and most hateful of all transgressions. Whatever man's indifference to it may be, that cannot alter God's estimate of the blood. It must remain the same. And, so long as it does so, He must hold controversy with the world upon this point. Men may think it a small one. He does not, cannot think so. They may imagine that it is of little consequence what their opinion of the blood may be, or whether they have any opinion on it at all. He cannot lower His estimate and price; He cannot abandon the controversy till the sinner has come up to His estimate, and learned to be at one with Him respecting the blood of His only begotten Son.

If God and we, then, are at variance, how is this variance to cease? Is it by His adopting our judgment, or by our adopting His? It cannot be the former. That were blasphemy even to imagine. It must be the latter. If God and we are to be at one, it must be by our thinking as He thinks, and feeling as He feels in this matter. We must take His estimate of the blood of His Son, else the variance cannot cease. It must be prolonged forever.

What think you, then, of the blood of Christ? Is that which is so precious in God's eyes as precious in yours? Has the controversy between Him and you upon this point been solidly adjusted? And are you at one with Him in His estimate of the blood of His dear Son? If so, it is well. For this is faith; and it is by this faith that you are saved. It was unbelief that led you to form so low an estimate of that blood, and it is faith which has led you to throw aside your own estimate, and adopt that of God. Thus it is that we believe. The Holy Spirit shows us the real nature of that blood we have been slighting. He shows us whose blood it is—what wonders it is intended to effect—what power it has to cleanse—what efficacy to give peace. He tells us what God has written concerning this blood. He tells us God's opinion of its value. And making known these things to us He leads us to immediate peace. The new estimate which He enables us to form of this at once infuses peace. If that estimate which God had given of it be true, then all that is needful for our peace has been accomplished. That infinitely precious blood sheds peace and sunshine into our souls. We see that blood as God sees it, and our consciences are unburdened—our souls are set at rest.

It is not in the nature of things that we could have peace till we have altered our estimate of that blood, even though no vengeance hung over us for despising it, still our not valuing it would effectually shut out our peace. For in proportion as we see its value, in that proportion do we see how completely it has availed to make our peace, to magnify the law, to atone for sin, to open a fountain for all uncleanness. Nothing but infinitely precious blood could do such things. This blood has done them all. We see this and the burden falls off. We see this, and our consciences are troubled no more. The blood of His cross has finished our peace. And that finished peace is all we need to banish every fear.

Poor world! In what is thy controversy with God respecting this blood to the end? In life or death to thee? If in life, then thou hast much yet to *unlearn*, as well as much to *learn*. Thou hast to unlearn thine own judgment, and to learn God's. In so doing there is yet life for thee. If in death, then what a death it will be! It will be God's vengeance for slighted blood.

Poor world! Dost thou think that there is no controversy between thee and God on this point? Then what means thy indifference? God is not *indifferent* in this matter. And if thou art indifferent, is there no controversy? Will God allow thee to be indifferent to that on which His whole heart is set? You know how indifference often provokes more than open hatred; so that, even although there might be no hatred, this indifference is enough to "provoke the eyes of His glory."

The day of controversy with God will soon be done. He will not always allow man to war this warfare. Judgment lingereth not, and damnation slumbereth not. The day for the final settlement of all such controversies is at hand. The kindling fire will close them—the sentence of the Judge will settle them.

Do you not know in what way, and on whose side this great controversy shall be settled? Shall it be settled in your way, or in God's; on His side, or yours?

5. What God Thinks of This Blood

He counts it as infinitely precious—more precious than all corruptible things such as gold and silver. Its *value* can only be measured by the greatness of Him from whom it flowed. Its *efficacy*, too, is boundless in His eyes. He deemed it available for the worst of cases—for the very extremity of guilt and pollution. He sees in it also the blood of the "Lamb without blemish and without spot." No tinge of sin does He behold in it. The lamb which Israel was commanded to bring was to be a "he-lamb of the first year, without blemish, for a burnt-offering" (Num 6:14). And in this type God made known what that Lamb was to be, by whose bloodshedding, in the fullness of time, sin was to be put away. Even the eye of Jehovah could discover no spot in that Lamb or in its blood. The blood that cleanseth must itself be clean; and such was this.

From the time that man sinned, God began to declare His mind respecting this blood, and to show the value which He set upon it. Not only did He begin to make known to sinners that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin; but

He began to declare His estimate of that blood, that man might learn that it was no common blood. From the day of man's sinning till the time of a Saviour's coming there was a continual testimony kept up by God respecting it. Both by deed and word, by promise, by prophecy, and by type, this witness-bearing was maintained from age to age. Blood without blemish—blood of infinite price—this was the substance of the testimony. And in that testimony was wrapt up the whole Gospel—glad tidings of great joy to man.

On the foreseen efficacy and availableness of that blood He began and carried on the work of reconciliation before the Reconciler had come. On the credit of it He began to save sinners four thousand years before it had been shed (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:15). For it was the *value* of it, irrespective of the time when it should be actually shed, that made it a righteous thing in God to bless the sinner, so long before its shedding. The *time* of the shedding was of less moment in the eyes of Him with whom one day is as a thousand years; but the *value* of it was absolutely essential, if there was to be such a thing as substitution, or sin-bearing, or cleansing. That value He never allowed man to lose sight of for a day (Heb 9:19-22).

During all these four thousand years, He was continually speaking of that blood, pointing to it, calling every eye to gaze upon it, proclaiming His estimate of it in manifold ways. Everything spoken or done under the former dispensation had reference to it, or was brought into connection with it. Each altar that was reared, from Abel's down to that of Israel's in the wilderness, was a divine witness to its efficacy. Each part of the tabernacle—its curtains, its posts, its floor, its laver, its tables, its vessels, its ark, its priests—all were made to bear witness to this, either by the actual sprinkling of the blood upon them, or by the crimson-hue of their carefully wrought and divinely appointed texture.

Though it was not possible that the blood of bulls or of goats could take away sin, or could have any value in the sight of God, yet even that blood was looked upon as sacred and holy, because prefiguring the blood of the better sacrifice. So excellent was the substance that it seemed to lend excellence to the shadow; so glorious was the antitype that it cast brightness upon the perishable type, and imparted to it a beauty, a value, and a reality, such as we attach to the picture or the statue of a beloved friend. So efficacious was this blood of the Lamb of God, that it made available the blood of the sacrificial Lamb for the worshippers of Israel, as to all outward privileges in the service of God. The want of blood shut the door of the tabernacle against them, and kept them without. Without that blood they were treated as outcasts, as men with whom Jehovah refused to deal, and to whom the privilege of even coming into His courts was denied. With that blood they might enter in; for that blood was their title to admittance—their only but their sufficient warrant for taking their place among the worshippers of Jehovah. Nay more, the very altar on which that typical blood was shed and sprinkled was counted holy. "It shall be an altar most holy," are the words of God to Moses (Exo 29:37). Such was the all-pervading virtue of the "better blood," which remained to be shed in the ages yet

to come. And then, as if to add something still more to this, it is said, "Whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy." We read of "the very shadow of Peter passing by," being looked to for healing; and in the case of the blood of Christ, it is as if its very shadow, cast backward over Jewish rites, availed to consecrate them, diffusing an unseen influence over all the services of the sanctuary, and affixing a mysterious value to its ordinances, by reason of its own unutterable efficacy and excellence.

In the case of the typical blood this value was what we may call fictitious. It was not a value inherent in the thing itself, but pertaining to it solely by reason of its connection with that which was to come. But this fictitious value of the type illustrates most vividly the real value of the Antitype. If God did so much for Israel, because of the ceremonial blood which yet derived all its efficacy from the other, what will He not do for those who avail themselves of that other which imparted the efficacy? If a sinner of old might come into the courts of the Lord as an accepted worshipper, simply because presenting to God the blood of bulls and goats, may not a sinner now come into the real, the immediate presence of Jehovah, with still greater certainty of acceptance, simply making mention of that divine blood which has flowed from the Lamb of God—the Word made flesh—who made His soul an offering for sin, and gave His life a ransom for the sins of many (Isa 53:10; Mat 20:28)?

The law having but "the shadow of good things to come," could "never with these sacrifices, which were offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect," that is, perfect as pertaining to the conscience—perfect in so far as the entire removal of guilt from the burdened conscience was concerned. Had it been able to do so, then "the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:1-2). But what the law could not do with its rivers of ritual blood, that the one sacrifice of Christ has done, at once and forever. And they who will but consent to employ it in their transactions with God will find that it can accomplish for them those things which the apostle declares could not be accomplished by all the offerings of the sons of Levi. It can "make the comers thereunto perfect"; it can so purge the worshippers, that they "shall have no more conscience of sins." Let us but employ this blood as Israel employed the other, and we shall find how thoroughly efficacious it is to purge the guilty conscience, to give peace to the troubled soul, and to bring us into the presence of God with boldness and with joy (Heb 4:16; 9:14).

An Israelite, when his conscience was burdened with sin, had just to go to his fold and take thence a lamb, and bring it to the altar; and though that could not do everything for his conscience, yet it could do much. But our Lamb is already slain and offered—nay, accepted too. We have but to avail ourselves of it—to employ it—nothing more. It is at all times available—at all times ready for our use. And we use it, when, simply believing what God has told us of its efficacy and of His delight in it, we go to Him in the full assurance of faith, with no other plea, either within us or without us, but the blood alone.

6. Ways in Which God Proclaims Its Value

It is the price which He has given for the flock—the Church. A ransom of no common value was needed, and He counts this blood so precious as to be sufficient for this. It was a great company that was to be ransomed—a multitude that no man can number (Rev 7:9); and of each of these saved ones the sins were as the sea sand, or the leaves of the forest. They were “lawful captives” (Isa 49:24)—their chains heavy, their dungeon impregnable, their oppressors mighty. It was a vast ransom that was needed; but that ransom was found. The blood was deemed enough. Righteousness could ask no more. God was satisfied with the price.

So precious does God esteem it, that He deems it sufficient to pay all legal demands in full: nay, to magnify the law, so that it becomes as righteous a thing in God to acquit as to condemn the sinner. The curse of the law is no longer inevitable and necessary. God is at liberty to remove it, and in its place to dispense the blessing. What must be the value of that blood which can thus transmute the curse into a blessing—the righteous curse into the righteous blessing!

So precious does God esteem it, that on account of it He throws open the way into the holiest, as it is written, “Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19). It is the blood that has prevailed to open up this way, to unbar the gate, to rend the veil. And thus that way which would otherwise have been death to the sinner to attempt to tread, becomes the way of life—the “living way”; nay, the only way of life—the only secure way for him to walk upon—the only secure spot in a fallen world on which he can plant his foot. And now it is safe for the sinner to enter in, and it is honorable for God to admit him. The sanctuary is not defiled by his entrance, for the blood is there to prevent this. He does not need to be alarmed, or shrink back, for that blood which opens the way gives him also liberty and boldness in coming, removing that terror of a guilty conscience which would keep him back, and enabling him to come “with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22).

So precious does God esteem it, that on account of it alone, without one particle of addition from any other quarter, He can forgive, save, justify, accept even the chief of sinners. It is through means of this blood that He keeps their consciences clean and unburdened, so that, though their sense of *sin* deepens and augments, their sense of *guilt* no longer oppresses them as before. By keeping their eye fixed upon this precious blood, He keeps their souls in perfect peace, for He shows them how that blood proclaims wrath to have been already exhausted upon another, and condemnation to have passed away. And thus it is that He carries them on from day to day—that He may present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy in the day of the appearing of His Son (Jude 24; Heb 13:20-21).

So precious does He esteem it, that because of it He can come in and make His abode with the soul—dwelling in it as His chosen temple. It is the sprinkling of the blood upon the soul (which takes place so soon as we take God’s Word for its efficacy) that makes it

fit for being the tabernacle of the Holy One. It is the sight of this blood that makes the sinner feel safe and happy in such near contact with God; for otherwise how could He feel at home with such a guest—the unholy with the Holy?

So precious does He esteem it, that He makes it the answer to the various doubts and perplexing sophistries with which self and Satan would entangle the soul, either when coming to God, or after it has come. Do the sins of past years lie heavy on it? He says, Behold the blood! Does a sense of personal unworthiness darken it? He says again, Behold the blood; and in it, that which fully makes up in My eyes for all such unworthiness! Do iniquities prevail—rushing in like a flood through every avenue of the soul? He says again, Behold the blood; it “cleanseth from all sin” (Eph 1:7; 1Jo 1:7). No amount of defilement can dilute the efficacy of that blood, or make it less free to the polluted soul.

So precious does He esteem it, that on account of its rejection He will condemn the world. Contempt for it is reckoned a sin so great, that the world’s doom will hang on this. “Counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing,” or treating it as if it were such, will be the cause of that “sorer punishment” of which the apostle speaks so awfully, as overhanging the unbelieving soul (Heb 10:29). Even now, this is his condemnation, his sin of sins. He is a despiser of the blood. For this the “wrath of God abideth upon him,” even here. He may not feel its weight; but still it is there.

And this is God’s answer to all our self-righteous pleas in vindication of our own worthiness or goodness. “Ye have shed the blood of My Son.” This is enough. We may fancy that we are of good repute with men, possessing much that is lovable and excellent about us; but this is God’s reply to such ideas of self, and such pleadings in behalf of self. “Ye crucified Him whom I sent into the world.” Nor are you ashamed of the deed. You do not disown it. Nay, you act as if you deemed that there was nothing amiss about you in this respect. Can you then justify yourselves? Are not your hands full of blood, which, if it do not justify, will inevitably condemn you; which, if it do not raise you to heaven, will sink you to the lowest hell?

It is not in one way, but in many that God has made known to us His sense of the value of this blood—so that there might be no possibility of a mistake on our part—so that if we had eyes we could not but see, if we had ears we could not but hear. It is not one proclamation, but a thousand that He has made of it. For, each of the different points which we have been referring to is a new proclamation.

It would be well that we fully understood this, for then should we see how far behind we are in our appreciation of this blood. Who is there amongst us that possesses aught like an adequate knowledge or estimate of this infinitely precious blood? We use *words* expressive of its value; but beyond the *words* we seem to be profoundly dark. Most men imagine that they know its value sufficiently already, and that what they need is not a higher estimate of the blood, but a deeper impression wrought in them by the estimate which they now possess. But is it so? Is this the whole evil? Is this its root? No. Whatever they may now suppose that they have, let them know this, that it is just in their estimate of the blood that they are deficient. Unwilling as they may be to credit this, yet it is true.

The seat of the disease is here. The root of bitterness is here. And it is a much deeper root than they are willing to own.

Instead then of taking for granted, that their estimate of the blood is correct and suitable, and that all they need is to work themselves into a better frame, they ought to look far deeper, and ask, Have I at this moment any right or real estimate of this blood at all? If I had, could I be thus disquieted and shaken with doubt? Are not these doubts the unambiguous evidence that I am at fault in my *estimate*?

If so, then, let the remedy be applied to the real seat of the disease. Let us turn our eye to the blood, and to the various ways in which God has proclaimed its immeasurable value. Let us look narrowly into each one of these, and read in them the true value attached to it by Him who gave it to be shed. I know no better way of removing doubts, and that not for a season, but of displacing them forever, than bringing fully and deliberately before us those different facts in which God has so brightly embodied His proclamation of its value. Let us never cease to gaze upon them. And when the spirit droops, or Satan whispers doubt, let us gaze at them again; returning continually to those same points, which, as the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, will broaden and brighten upon our gaze, till we understand, in some adequate measure, the infinite excellency of this divine blood, one sight of which is enough to allay the storm of the most guilt-stricken conscience that ever trembled under a broken law.

7. The Careless Sinner's Thoughts Concerning It

Perhaps there is nothing connected with Christ and His work, which the careless sinner slights so much as the blood. In his eyes it has no value and no attraction. He dislikes all reference to it in connection with salvation. Thus he tramples it under foot.

He thinks less of it, lays less stress upon it, ascribes to it less of sacredness and of value than a Jew, or even a heathen, ascribed to the blood of their victims. Its very name is repulsive, as if the mention of it suggested only what was unpleasant and unnatural. To owe salvation to this blood alone, seems not only unreasonable, but hateful. Words such as these, "by His stripes we are healed," have no relish, and no meaning to him. They who make reference to the blood, are perhaps accused of want of refinement and delicacy, or despised as enthusiasts and mystics. Thus, "the blood of the Lamb" is trifled with, or despised, or scoffed at in the wantonness of unbelief.

It was so when Christ was on earth. From his cradle to His cross this contempt was exhibited. Herod sought to shed His blood in infancy. The people of Nazareth, "where He had been brought up," laid hands upon Him that they might slay Him. Frequently, throughout His ministry, His life was aimed at, as if it would have been a light thing to shed His blood. And when betrayed at last, thirty pieces of silver was the "goodly price" at which His blood was valued! It was all that man would give for it! Then in their eagerness to shed it, they urged Pilate to put Him to death, crying "Crucify Him, crucify Him," preferring Barabbas to Jesus, setting a higher price on the blood of the robber

than on that of the Son of God. And as if to show their utter disregard for it—as if in mockery of it—they volunteered to bear the curse which that blood might bring down on its shedders—“His blood be upon us and on our children” (Mat 27:25). Then, lastly, on the cross it was poured out like water. The thorns, the scourge, the nails, the spear, were man’s instruments for draining that blood, that, flowing down upon the ground, it might be trodden under foot, and treated as the vilest thing on earth. So vile did they reckon it, that, though bent on shedding it, they would not allow this to be done within Jerusalem. It must be shed “without the city,” as if it would have been pollution to the temple of God, and the dwellings of Israel, to have allowed it to be shed within the consecrated walls of Jerusalem. They treated it as the blood of one who was not only unworthy to *live*, but unworthy even to *die* within the city (Heb 13:11-12; Lev 16:27; Num 19:1-10).

Such were man’s thoughts respecting the blood, in the days when Christ was here. Such was his estimate of its value, such his idea of its sacredness.

And in this, do we not see not only indifference, but contempt—not only contempt, but mockery—not only mockery, but HATRED? In this treatment of the blood of Christ, do we not discover the natural heart of man speaking out, or rather acting out its ENMITY?

It is still the same. There has been no relenting on man’s part: no softening of the carnal heart. His estimate of the blood has not risen higher since these days. His indifference and his enmity are unremoved. And sometimes we find the former of these, and sometimes the latter, in exercise. When the subject is not pressed home upon his conscience so as to confront him, it is indifference that we find. When that blood is presented to him, and he is told of its power either to cleanse or to condemn, and of his own interest in it, so that it must either be *for* or *against* him forever, then his displeasure awakes: the hidden enmity of his soul comes up, and he manifests a feeling of hatred, such as would have placed him, perhaps, among the foremost ranks of the crucifiers.²²

Even should he remain calm and candid, he will not admit the preciousness of the blood, or the claims which it has upon him. Claims! He rejects the thought. He thinks it does well if he admits that it is the blood of a holy man shed without cause. But as to the *claims* of blood shed eighteen hundred years ago, this seems monstrous. He does not see how blood shed so many centuries ago can affect his present or his future condition, either for condemnation or salvation. He deems it unreasonable in us to ply him with such an idea, and thinks it would be unjust in God to deal with him in such a way and on such terms as these.

Even should he be disposed to listen with more than candor—with something like commencing anxiety and teachableness, he still stumbles at this stumbling stone. He does not see how this blood *alone*, without one good thing in himself, can justify. For-

²² Unbelief in its essence, is nothing else than mockery of the Lord—Frederick Arndt, *Sermon on “Christ between the two thieves.”*

getting that it is *what God sees in the blood* that gives it all its justifying and cleansing power, he refuses to receive the truth concerning forgiveness of sin solely through the blood of the cross. He does not understand how the sight of that blood alone should give peace to the troubled spirit, and allay its rising storms. It seems incredible that in simply believing God's testimony concerning that blood, our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God.

Such is man's sense of the value of this blood! How different from God's! And is it conceivable that God can allow such a difference of opinion to exist between Him and the sinner, on a matter in which His own honor, and the honor of His Son are concerned, and yet treat this difference as trivial? Is it possible that God would give that blood to be shed for sinners, and yet allow them to treat it as they please, either rejecting it or despising it as each one may think fit?

Careless sinner! Trifle not with that blood. It is too precious to be sported with or slighted. And woe be to him who, either by indifference, or denial, or derision, shows that he has dared to form an estimate of it different from that of God.

8. The Thoughts of the Awakened Sinner Concerning It

His sleep has been broken. The voice of God has spoken to his inner ear, and the Spirit has laid hold upon him in power. He is no longer at ease as heretofore. His iniquities have risen up before his face, and his soul is wounded within him.

Forgiveness now seems of all things the most desirable, and most absolutely necessary. To be without it, even for another hour, seems terrible. The pressure of God's wrath is felt to be intolerable. "My punishment is greater than I can bear," is the utterance of his overburdened spirit.

One who had thus passed through this dark defile thus describes his feelings. "I continued dull and thoughtful, nor could sights and songs divert my trouble. Though the sun shone beautifully, and the day was pleasant, it brought no comfort to me. I came to my house heavy and disconsolate, and would have prayed, but could not. My grief was too great, and increased night and day exceedingly...When I was walking in the fields or roads, everything appeared so strange and wild, that I often resolved not to look up, and wished to fly to some solitary place, where I might dwell in a cave lying on the leaves of trees, and feeding on the natural fruits of the earth. Whosoever I met, I envied their happiness. Whatever I heard grieved me, and whatever I said or did so troubled me, that I repented that I stirred or broke silence. If I laughed at anything, my heart smote me immediately...Often such a confusion of thought came over me in bed, that I was forced to rise and walk about the chamber. My sorrows were so multiplied, that I was even buried in affliction. Then was I weary of life, and often prayed that God would hide me in the grave; or at least suffer me to be mad, that I might not be sensible of my many misfortunes. The night was more burdensome than the day. I started at everything that stirred in the dark, fancying that I should see apparitions in the corners of the room, behind

me, or in my way, and being continually afraid of meeting the devil. The more I was assured of a divine Ruler, by His repeated scourges, and the want of Him in my heart, the more Satan pressed me to believe myself quite forsaken; and when I looked up toward heaven, I said, 'Ah, I have no part there; the gate of that holy city is closed to every sinner, and no impure thing can enter therein.' Alas! What shall I do in the day of judgment! How shall I meet the Lord, when He shall come in flaming fire. Such clouds covered me that I stood still and fixed my heavy eyes on the trees, walls, and ground, amazed above measure, and often crying with a bitter cry, 'What must I do to be saved?' No temporal blessing could satisfy my craving soul, or make me wish to stay behind on the earth a day. The shining of the sun, the beauty of the spring, the voice of singing, the melody of birds, the shade of trees, or the murmur of waters, afforded me no pleasure. No. All was strange, and dark, and gloomy, and desolate. All was vanity and vexation of spirit. All the earth seemed full of darkness; nor could meat, drink, or raiment give me any comfort. I wanted only to know if I had any part in the Lord Jesus."²³

When thus aroused, the sinner begins to bethink himself, and to ask, Is there any way of escape? He is told of the blood of Christ. But then he remembers that this is the very blood he has betrayed, and trodden on so long. He sees it to be precious blood. He sees it to be the blood of the Holy One. He is confounded. How can his contempt for it be forgiven?

Still he sees that it is through this blood alone that salvation can come to him—that this is the only channel through which God can dispense forgiveness. But then perhaps its infinite purity and holiness alarm him. "What has an unholy soul to do with blood so spotless"; blood of which he was one of the shedders. He would almost shrink from it, as Cain from the blood of Abel. Had it been less pure, he thinks it would have suited better one so impure as he.

But as the Holy Spirit opens his eyes, and lets in the light, he sees that it is just its purity that makes it so suitable; and that had it been less pure, it would not have done for him. Had one stain been found upon it, there could have been no hope for the guilty. And thus fixing his eye upon it, and seeing it in these two aspects, its purity and its preciousness, he is satisfied. His conscience is pacified. He feels what it is to have "peace through the blood of the cross." For to see that blood, and to know what God thinks of it, is health and peace and consolation to the soul.

It is not my looking to the blood in conjunction with my looking to my own act of seeing that brings this peace. It is my simple and direct looking to the blood. It is in looking that I am blest; not in thinking about my looking. To look to the blood is to be cleansed; to look away from the blood, or to self, or to the world, or to sin, is to arrest the cleansing process and to neutralize the healing power. The more I see of the matchless value of that blood, and understand the substitution of life for life, which that blood proclaims, and to which it is ever pointing, the more will my peace be like a river.

²³ *Life of Rev. John Cennick.*

Look at yon Israelite approaching the altar! His conscience is burdened. Guilt has cast its shadow over his soul. But he comes to the altar. He sees the blood that is sprinkled upon it, and streaming down its sides, and he is comforted. The burden rolls off. Peace takes possession of his soul. For, that which he saw in the blood dispelled his fears by showing him the wrath of God against his sin passing off to the substitute and exhausting itself on it. It is the sight of the blood alone that relieves his laden conscience. He does not first look at the blood and then at himself before he can take comfort. He does not imagine that he must couple together the sight of the blood and the reflection upon his own act of seeing before he can be unburdened. He does not thrust away the blessed light that is streaming in from that peace-speaking altar, till he has satisfied himself that he is looking aright. He does not say, Am I standing in the right position—have I approached with becoming reverence—have I fixed my eye properly upon the altar—am I exercising my visual organs aright—is my seeing of the right and genuine kind? No. He is so engrossed with the altar that he has no time nor heart to think about himself. He says in the gladness of his soul, “Yonder is the altar, and that is the lamb, and there is the blood streaming down; I am satisfied; this is all I need; the sight which my eyes now behold gives the full answer to all my doubts, and rebukes my saddening fears.”

Or take the Israelite in his dwelling, when the destroying angel, with the sword of God, went abroad, smiting the firstborn of Egypt. What preserved the Israelites? The blood. That was a defense which was impregnable. From it even the missioned angel must turn away. The blood stood sentinel at the gates of each Israelitish dwelling, and its inmates were secure.

What should we have thought of any son of Israel reasoning himself out of his privilege by doubting the efficacy of the blood? What should have thought of such an one standing trembling within his house, as if he could not reckon on safety? The lamb has been killed; but he is afraid it has not been killed aright! The blood has been sprinkled; but he is afraid that it has not been sprinkled aright! Both lintel and posts are streaming with it; but he fears his motives are not right, and his feelings are not what they ought to have been! Thus he stands troubled and trembling, not knowing but that the angel may break through and smite him. Should we not accuse such an one of sad and sinful unbelief? Should we not say, The lamb has been slain, the blood has been sprinkled, the posts are all red with it—is not this enough to quiet your fear? What would you have more? Would you slay another lamb to make up the deficiency? Has not God told you that *one* is enough? If the blood be ineffectual wipe it off and run the risk. Do you say, “But I do not *see* the blood, it is on the outside and therefore invisible to me”? Well, but God sees it, and that is enough. The angel sees it, and that turns him away. Is it not written, “When I SEE the blood, I will pass over you” (Exo 12:13)?

So with the anxious spirit. We bring it good news. The Lamb has been slain, the Lamb of God, as it is written, “It pleased the LORD to bruise Him” (Isaiah 53:10). His blood has been shed, and sprinkled, and accepted; and that shed blood is for the remis-

sion of sin, and for reconciling us to God. That blood is intended to set us in the place of the innocent; to bring us nigh to God just as if we had never separated; to be our recommendation to God, so that coming with it as our plea, we may expect to be treated by God as HE is treated whose blood we thus recognize and rest on.²⁴

Oh! What a message of peace should these words convey to the weary soul—“when I see the blood.” *Our* seeing may be imperfect and dim, but it is not on *our seeing* that we are called to rest. It is *God’s seeing* that is our security; and the knowledge of this is the expulsion of fear and doubt, the entrance of peace and joy.

Thus an old divine speaks: “What other religions seek, the Christian religion only finds, even a solid foundation for true peace and settlement of conscience. While the Jew seeks it in vain in the law, the Mahometan in his external observances, the Papist in his merits, the believer only finds in the blood of this great sacrifice. This, and nothing less than this, can pacify a distressed conscience, laboring under the weight of its own guilt. Conscience demands no less to satisfy it than God demands to satisfy Him. The grand inquest of conscience is, ‘*Is God satisfied?* If He be satisfied, I am satisfied.’”²⁵

If then we are content to take this blood as our plea and recommendation, we may go to Him with all confidence and glad anticipation. As sinners whose only introduction to Him is the blood, He is most willing to receive us. To come with anything else than the blood as our introduction is most certainly to secure for ourselves rejection; but to come with it alone is to ensure that blessed welcome which the blood has never yet failed to obtain for the vilest sinner that ever went to God with it as his only plea.

The words which once gave peace to a convicted soul²⁶ were these: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.” The good news which these words contain are for you as well as for him. He found in them something whereon both to live and to die—something which lifted off the burden of his guilt and became the spring of a godly and devoted life. And why should you turn away from the free love which that blood proclaims?²⁷

²⁴ It is thus that a deep thinker of the present age addresses himself to such as you, “Do you rejoice when the atonement made by the priest has removed the evil stain from your name, restored you to your privileges as a son of Abraham, and replaced you in the respect of your brethren? There is an atonement which takes away a deeper, worse stain, an eating cankerspot in the very heart of your personal being! This, to as many as receive it, gives the privilege to become sons of God (John 1:12); this will admit to the society of angels, and insure to you the rights of brotherhood with spirits made perfect! (Hebrews 12:22-23). There is a sacrifice, a sin-offering, and a High Priest, who is indeed a mediator, who in not type or shadow but in very truth, and in His own right stands in the place of man to God, and of God to man”—Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*.

²⁵ Flavel, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 149.

²⁶ Colonel Gardiner.

²⁷ But, alas! 1. Some object, and say, that their very faith, which must carry the rest of their filth to the fountain of Christ’s blood, is defiled. How, then, can they expect to be made clean? *Answer*: The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficiently able to wash all our filth away; and the filth of faith, as well of other actions. Therefore, when faith, as a hand, is carrying the filth of the soul away to Christ to be washed in His blood, let the foul hand go with the foul handful; give to Christ faith and all to wash. 2. But what shall I

9. The Thoughts of the Saint Concerning It

After many a struggle, and after many a refusal to admit into his soul the peace that comes from the knowledge of this blood, the sinner's eyes have been fully opened by the Holy Spirit to see its efficacy and suitableness. To one who had no consciousness of guilt burdening him—no distraction of soul nor misgivings of conscience as to his standing in the sight of God, the blood must appear as unnatural as unnecessary; but to one whose conscience is awake, whose indifference about sin is gone, who has known what it is to groan by reason of the "body of death"—the blood is the very thing that he feels his need of, to pacify the conscience and to bring him to God as one from whom, in believing, the wrath due to his iniquities has passed away forever (Col 1:20-22).

He has seen sin in the light in which God sees it; but he has also seen the blood in that same light also. He has looked at the blood from the point at which God looks at it, and his soul has rested from its conflicts and its fears. Hitherto he had looked at it from a position of his own, and through a medium of his own coloring, but the Holy Spirit has removed him from that false position into the true one, and has brought him out from the false coloring with which he was surrounded into that transparent atmosphere in which all things are seen as they are.

The estimate which in other days he had formed of the blood is now seen not only as inadequate, but false. It was that false estimate that so long stood between him and peace, and it is the remains of that false estimate still cleaving to him that at times rise up to darken or trouble his spirit. But that estimate is no longer his. He has been taught another by the Spirit of truth. This new estimate is that of God. It is founded upon the price which the Father puts upon the blood of the beloved Son.

In believing, the sinner relinquishes his own estimate and adopts that of God. In doing so he finds peace.

The blood is his peace. How?

1. *Because he sees it to be divine.* It is the blood of God (Act 20:28). Creature-blood could avail nothing. It could not reach high enough; it could not go low enough for his

do, when, notwithstanding of all this, my conscience shall still accuse me of uncleanness, and cry out against me as filthy and abominable? *Answer:* Take it away also to the blood of Jesus, that there it may be purged (Heb 9:14); and here alone will we "get our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb 10:22). The conscience must be steeped, so to speak, in the blood of Jesus, and so it shall be clean. And taking our filthy hearts to this cleansing fountain to be washed, we will get them delivered and sprinkled from an evil conscience, that it shall no more have ground of accusation against us. When we have to say, that we have put our filthy souls in the hand of the great cleanser, Jesus Christ, and brought all our pollutions to His blood, what can conscience say to us? The Lord, it is true, may suffer our conscience still to bark upon us, and cast up our filthiness to us, that we may be more humbled, and be put to lie more constantly at the fountain; yet when we have fled to Christ, and taken our filthiness to the open and appointed fountain, we can answer the accusations of conscience in law, and have peace—Brown, *Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, pp. 178-179.

want and guilt. The blood is the life;²⁸ and no life save that which is divine—no life save that of the Prince of life could answer for his. There must be some sort of equivalent; and that equivalent God alone could furnish. And He has furnished it by sending His own Son, and so substituting a *divine life* instead of a *human life*, a *divine death* as the payment in full of that *eternal death* which was the sinning creature's portion. The sight of this divine bloodshedding—this infinite payment—is peace to his soul.

2. *Because he sees it to be so precious.* It is not only divinely perfect but divinely precious. No limit can be set upon its value. The question which a troubled spirit puts is, *Is this blood, this life, valuable enough to stand instead of mine?* If it be so, and if God be willing to accept the substitution, I am satisfied. The answer is, That blood is valuable enough to answer for yours, and God is willing to accept the exchange. Nay, it was He who first proposed it; it is He who is pressing this exchange upon your notice and entreating you to receive it, that so there may be nothing left for you to pay. In believing, we consent to take God's payment, which we learn to be so infinite in value; and, in taking it, we are set free from the whole duration which was our portion, till that payment should be wholly made. And this is peace!

3. *Because he sees it to be so suitable.* It provides for the very things he needs. It meets every part of his varied case, leaving nothing unprovided for which could burden, or alarm, or disquiet him. Every question that a guilty conscience can put, it fully answers. It is not a mere general remedy which we must contrive to make suit our case as well we can. It is a special remedy which adapts itself to every individual case, just as if provided for it alone. No fear can arise, for which it does not furnish an antidote. No doubt can agitate the soul, which it is not fitted to soothe and lay to rest. No question can be asked, to which it does not most promptly reply. And this is peace!

4. *Because he sees it to be so spotless.* It is "the blood of the Lamb without blemish and without spot." This attracts his eye. There are many things attractive about the blood, but this is one of the most attractive. There is not one stain upon it. It is infinitely pure. Had there been one stain upon it, his peace would have been imperfect. But its purity is so manifest and so divine, that he feels the absolute security of the foundation on which his peace is built. It is the blood of a sacrifice in which even the eye of Jehovah could detect no flaw.

5. *Because he sees it to be so unchangeable.* It loses none of its efficacy by time or repetition. It is the same in this age as when it was shed at first. It is the same today as when first we applied to it for healing and for cleansing. Nothing can rob it of its potency. It has cleansed millions; it can cleanse millions more; it has washed out stains, in number past calculation, in dye most thoroughly crimson. Yet it is unpolluted. It has taken on no stain. It is still as able to pacify the conscience and to release the soul from guilt. All along it has spoken "better things than that of Abel"; and to this day it still speaks the same. As the atmosphere that girds our earth remains untainted in spite of

²⁸ The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11).

the millions that breathe it—as fit to nourish life, and to transmit the sunbeam as at the first—so this blood of God’s own Son abides unstained by the myriad of sins that it has purged away—as fit as ever to cleanse, to heal, to gladden, and to transmit the sunshine of Jehovah’s reconciliation into any eye that will but open to let it enter.

Of all this he sees that there is abundant *evidence*, evidence which completely satisfies him, and makes him feel that in trusting in that blood, he is trusting to one of the *surest things in the universe*. He hears the voice of God, from the beginning proclaiming its power and its purity. He sees the finger of God pointing forward to the one sacrifice in which no flaw could be found. He listens to the testimony of “the law and the prophets” on this point, and finds how entire is their concurrence. He sees Satan doing his utmost to discover some imperfection in his victim, but finding “nothing in Him” (Joh 14:30). He hears the voice even of him that betrayed it, saying, “It is innocent blood” (Mat 27:4); and that of the Roman centurion, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous man” (Luk 23:47). He sees too in the *resurrection* of the crucified One, one of the most decisive of all the testimonies. It was “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” “that He was brought again from the dead by the Father” (Heb 13:20). The sin that was laid upon Him had slain Him and borne Him down to the grave; but in so doing, it had shed that blood that taketh sin away; so that it was not possible He could be holden in the chains of death. The blood had satisfied, and having been accepted as payment in full, He was raised forthwith out of that very tomb into which He had gone down under the weight of our guilt. The blood was thus proved to be sufficient to atone for that guilt which was laid upon Him—and in this blessed proof the believing soul rests. He hears too the songs which are sung in heaven respecting this blood; and sees the delight there felt in Jesus as “the Lamb that was slain” (Rev 5:9, 12). And that in which the saints above rejoice, is surely what he may safely rejoice in here. *They* cannot be mistaken in their estimate of the blood. They cannot err in their praises of the blood. They must know what they are doing, when delighting in the Lamb that was slain.

What more then can he need as evidence of the preciousness, the efficacy, the spotlessness, the sufficiency of this blood, to which he has come, and on which he is resting? It has been proved in every way and found sufficient. It was enough for the saints in other days, it is enough for them now. It is enough for the saints above, it may well be enough for the saints below.

But what are the effects which the saint experiences, as resulting from this blood? They are such as the following:

1. *Through it he has the remission of sin*. He remembers how it is written, “In him we have redemption through his blood, *the forgiveness of sins*, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). He remembers also how Jesus Himself said, “This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many, for the remission of sins” (Mat 26:28). Keeping his eye fixed upon the blood, he realizes every moment the forgiveness which it proclaims, and

the blessedness of which that forgiveness is the source. And if at any time a doubt disquiet him, he looks anew to the blood and is reassured.²⁹

2. *Through it he is brought nigh and kept nigh to God.* For thus it is written, “Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off, *are made nigh* by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). In coming nigh at first, he came with that blood as his only introduction: and, in continuing nigh, he feels the necessity of always realizing the efficacy of the blood. It was this that enabled him to draw near “with a true heart and in full assurance of faith,” and it is this that keeps him in the same posture still. It is this that makes him feel safe in the presence of the Holy One, safe in dealing with Him about his sins, safe in dwelling always in the secret place of the Most High.

3. *Through it he is put in possession of eternal life.* The blood is his security, as well as the ground of his claim. “The blood is the life,” and the life of another having been taken instead of his, death is no longer his portion, but life—“whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life” (Joh 6:54). In recognizing the efficacy of the blood, and in consenting to take his stand before God upon it alone, he *drinks* it, and in drinking it he receives the earnest of the everlasting life of which in believing he has become the heir.

4. *Through it his conscience is purged.* “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:13-14; 1Jo 1:7). Though a sinner, he is entitled to plead “not guilty” by reason of his connection with this blood. To do anything else would be to deny the full efficacy of the blood. Though in himself guilty, his conscience is as completely set at rest from the accusing terrors of remorse, as if he had never transgressed the law. He finds that “the blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth* him from all sin”; not “hath cleansed” but “cleanseth”—

²⁹ It was thus that a minister of the last century wrote to a friend on a deathbed, “Your being kept in the faith of the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and preserved from falling in the last trial, must be entirely owing to grace helping in that very time of need, even the free grace that is in Christ Jesus sufficient for you, and showing itself perfect in your weakness. This needs no merit nor effort of yours, to make it effectual; you are not weak enough to be helped by it, if you think to assist it in the least, either by the least doing, or remotest willing to do, yet it must both show your utter weakness and infirmities, and show itself sufficient to make you strong in weakness. The boundless merit of the blood of God needs not the least grain of weight from you added to it, to make it outweigh the demerit of all your heinous sins, with all their aggravations, or to make it sufficient to keep you from being found wanting when weighed in God’s balance. It scorns the least offer of assistance from the sinner to make him perfectly just in the sight of God. And if you believe it to be the blood of the Son of God that is exhibited to you in the divine testimony, you cannot suspect that you lack anything to make you inherit eternal life. If you have but dark views of the reconciled face of God, this must be because you see as through a glass darkly the merit of the reconciling blood, but when you once have ceased to walk by faith, being present with the Lord, and seeing Him as He is, alive from the dead by His own blood, the brightest light of the Father’s face that shines on Him will fill your soul.”

is always doing it, hour after hour. The stream is ever flowing over him and ever carrying off the iniquity, that is oozing out at every pore.

5. *Through it he is set apart for God.* By it he has been bought, and by it he has been separated from a present evil world. Hence he can join in that song, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God” (Rev 1:5-6). By this blood he has been ransomed, and this of itself sets him apart. But the mark of the blood is upon him. He has become a consecrated vessel—a vessel of the sanctuary—no longer for the use of self or of the world, but for the use of God alone. As one on whom the blood has been sprinkled, he feels that he dare not be another’s; he must be Christ’s alone. He dare not turn the sanctuary of Jehovah into the temple of idols, the dwelling of the Holy Ghost into the abode of devils.

6. *Through it all holiness comes.* The blood has opened the channel, and holiness flows in. He dares not use this blood for unholy purposes. He dares not say, “I am sprinkled with the blood, therefore I may make light of sin, I may live as I please.” No: he says I am sprinkled with this blood, therefore I must be holy. They who know it not may live on in sin; but I who know it, dare not. Others who reject it may reason in such a way; but I cannot. The blood is too precious, too holy, to be used for any but holy purposes. If he were attempting to use it for any other, it would immediately change its voice and bear witness against him.

7. *Through it he overcomes.* “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 12:11). It is the sight of this blood that nerves him for the conflict, and gives him the assurance of victory. He, whose blood it is, was the conqueror, and in His name we move forward to battle, certain of being more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The blood with which we are sprinkled gives us both strength and courage. With it we are invincible—nay, victorious.

8. *Through it his garments are purified.* Of the blessed above it is written, “They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). It is this that so thoroughly purifies our raiment, making it, for beauty and for glory, to resemble that of our great High Priest Himself. Not one stain of earth is permitted to defile it. And thus clothed, we are not only made fit for having fellowship with God, but for standing “before His throne,” for “serving Him day and night in His temple.” The brightness of angelic raiment cannot equal ours, for it is divine. We can take our place amid angels, yet never blush. We can compare our robes with theirs, yet feel no shame. So perfect, so resplendent have they been made by this blood of the Lamb.

9. *Through it all blessing flows.* The “good things to come” spoken of by the apostle (Heb 10:1), are all connected with this blood. It is the blood that makes it befitting in God to bestow these blessings, and which emboldens the sinner to draw near in order to receive them. All that is excellent and glorious is connected with this blood. This is the river that bears to him all blessings on its crimson stream, pouring in without ceasing everything that God has to confer. “Of what use is this fountain to believers? (asks an old

writer). Many and great; all their graces flow from it; all their duties are to be washed in it; all their comforts are maintained by it.”³⁰

Thus it is that the saint rejoices in this blood. It was the knowledge of it that first shed peace into his soul, and it is the same knowledge that maintains, throughout life, that peace which then began. It was in being led by the Holy Spirit to the knowledge of this blood that he became a saint, and it is in continuing to know it that he becomes a saint. His only answer to the whispers of conscience, is “the blood that was shed.” His great protection against the fiery darts of the wicked one, is “the blood that was shed.” His preparation for the duties of each day is a fresh application of the blood, in which he bathes his conscience anew each morning as he rises.³¹

It speaks to him “Better things than that of Abel”—far better things indeed.

1. *It speaks of a brother’s love, not of a brother’s hatred.* It has no voice for him but that of love; love strong as death, nay, stronger. Its language is, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” It has a voice which says, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am He that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”

2. *It speaks of peace returned, not of peace fled away.* Abel’s blood seemed to say that peace had left the earth, and in its place all discord and revenge and fierce variance had come. But this better blood tells us that peace has again found an abode on earth, that the broken links between man and man are to be reknit, and that the sunshine of genial harmony between heaven and earth is displacing the dark discord that threatened to reign forever. It speaks of reconciliation between God and the sinner—reconciliation upon surest grounds—the reconciliation of a covenant “ordered in all things and sure.”

3. *It speaks of grace, not of wrath.* In Abel’s case it was all wrath; the blood cried for vengeance out of the ground; this blood breathes no vengeance, no wrath. All in it is grace—grace to sinners—grace to the murderers—grace to the uttermost. Free love to the unlovable and the unloving is the very essence of the message which it brings.

4. *It speaks of forgiveness, not condemnation.* It calls up no thunders. It wields no lightnings to execute the sentence of righteousness against the ungodly. “Forgive,” is its only utterance. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Its burden is, “I

³⁰ Romaine’s Works, p. 127.

³¹ Let this be our daily work and exercise, for we are daily contracting new filth. Yesterday’s cleansing will not save us from new filth today; nor will our running to the fountain today, serve to take away new spots tomorrow; new spots call for new washing, so that this must be our very life and exercise, to be daily and continually running to the fountain with our souls, and giving Christ, the great purger, much to do.

We must not think to be perfectly washed, so long as we are here; for we will be contracting new filth daily, our feet will be to wash (John 13:10). We will not be without spot or wrinkle, till we come home to that place, wherein entereth nothing that defileth—*Brown, Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, p. 167.

will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

5. *It speaks of the blessing, not of the curse.* “Bless, and curse not,” is the commission with which it is entrusted in its embassy to man. It has borne the curse; it has absorbed it; it has transmuted it into a blessing—a blessing which it is pouring freely out on all who will but receive it. Its message is, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18).

6. *It speaks of life, not of death.* Cain’s blood-guiltiness seemed to seal up man’s ruin, and shut him up to helpless death. There seemed nothing in reserve but death. Even a brother’s heart could meditate death against a brother, and a brother’s hand inflict it. But in this better blood all is life—life everlasting—life that has come to us through death—the death of the substitute. It is this blood which says, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (Joh 11:25-26).

7. *It speaks not to alarm but to soothe the conscience.* Abel’s blood must have been echoing in the ears of Cain all his days. He might go out from the gate of Eden, the presence of the Lord, but he could not get beyond the sound of that voice. It would keep his conscience ever open, ever bleeding, ever tortured. But this better blood speaks peace. It purges the conscience and lays its alarms to rest. It heals, it restores, it gladdens. To be sprinkled with it is what the conscience desires. To hear its voice is what the conscience feels to be necessary for comfort and rest. Its still small voice can in a moment calm the tumults of the most torn and troubled breast.

8. *It speaks not of man the fugitive and vagabond, but of man restored to Eden.* It was the blood of his brother that chased Cain from the gate of paradise. It would not allow him to dwell even within sight of it, though outside the sacred fence. But this better blood brings back the sinner to the gate of Paradise again—nay, brings him in, or at least gives him the pledge that he shall one day re-enter these blessed gates, and dwell within these blessed bowers. It transforms him from a fugitive and a vagabond, such as he is by nature, into a fellow citizen with the saints and an heir of the incorruptible inheritance, the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.³²

³² The following quaint old stanza may help to illustrate some of the preceding remarks:

*Abel was silent; but his blood was strong;
Each drop of guiltless blood commands a tongue,
A tongue that cries—’tis not a tongue implores
For gentle audience, ’tis a tongue that roars
For hideous vengeance; ’tis a tongue that’s bold
And full of courage, and that cannot hold.
Oh! What a noise my blessed Saviour’s blood
Makes now in heaven! How strong it cries! How loud!
But not for vengeance. From His side has sprung
A world of drops; from every drop a tongue.*

Realizing these things, the saint moves on his joyful course. The blood is ALL to him. It is his peace; it is his medicine; it is his daily comforter. And resting in it he rejoices in hope of the glory to be revealed. Contrasting the blood of Abel with that of Christ, and comparing the blood of the sacrifices with that of the Lamb of God, he daily gets new insight into its wondrous excellencies, and is made to feel its full and perfect sufficiency. He needs no more to keep his soul in perfect peace, even when conscious of no common unworthiness and pollution. He needs no more to heal all his wounds, to cleanse away all his defilement, to strengthen him for every toil, and to enable him to conquer in every battle with the enemy.

And in proportion as he learns to enter more fully into the thoughts of God concerning the blood, in that proportion does his peace deepen and his joy overflow.

All its suitableness and manifold riches are not disclosed in a single day. He is ever making new discoveries in this illimitable field: ever digging into new veins in this unfathomable mine. His song on earth is, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood...to him be glory and dominion for ever” (Rev 1:5-6). His song in heaven will be the same, only louder and fuller, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9-10).

10. The Thoughts of the Lost Soul Concerning It

In Judas we have an instance of a lost soul—a soul just departing to the everlasting prison house. Of him we read, “Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.” And his testimony respecting the blood is given in the following confession, falling from his dying lips, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Mat 27:3-4).

But a few hours before, he had betrayed it—he had sold it for thirty pieces of silver. But now remorse has fastened itself upon him; his conscience, which had slept, is now awaking; his guilt, like a poisoned garment, covers him around, and darts in its tortures at every pore.

One object occupies his whole vision, so that he can see no other; it is the blood he had betrayed. High above all the sins of a sinful life this towers in awful preeminence. It is his sin of sins; the sin which sets aside every other, as if in comparison with this they did not deserve the name. One scene haunts him, like a specter from beneath, hanging upon his steps and whispering terror into his soul—the bargain for blood—the innocent blood! He cannot shake it off. It clings closer and gathers darker around him.

He is just about to go “to his own place”; and he leaves behind him his testimony to the innocence of the blood. He tells us with dying lips that it is “innocent blood.” As he

*O sinner, hear of Jesus' blood the cry,
God wills to save thee—wherefore wilt thou die!*—Frances Quarles (1644).

is about to plunge into hell, he turns round to his companions in guilt, and says, "It is innocent blood."

It is its *innocence* that makes it so awful, even to think upon. It is its *innocence* that strikes into his vitals as with a scorpion's sting. Had there been one stain upon it, his agony might not have been so hopeless, so horrible. There might have been some relief, some hope, some ray of light. But it is innocent blood! Its innocence! Oh, it is this that torments him before the time. It is this that sends him howling along like some raging demoniac, seeking refuge among the tombs—seeking refuge in hell, as if hell might be some relief, because removed from the place where the innocent blood had been sold, and was crying to heaven against its seller. Oh! He would do anything now rather than look upon that innocent blood. He would flee to any place of darkness, where it might be hidden from his eyes!

Then, as if to double all his agony, when he casts down the price of blood at the feet of the murderers, all the reply he meets with is the cutting bitterness of cold remorseless malignity, "What is that to us? see thou to that." Ah! Poor wretched soul, thou art lost indeed: and this is all the sympathy with which thy companions greet thee—a foretaste of the sympathy with which devils below shall salute thee when thou goest down to their abode of woe!

We see then, that it is specially the *innocence* of the blood that shall be of all others, the cutting, stinging thought of a lost soul. The blood he has slighted and trampled on was not only so precious, but so innocent! It is this that shall make hell so intolerable. The blood he has betrayed was without blemish and without spot; yet he has treated it as if it were polluted and vile! He has treated it as if it were the felon's blood—the blood of one whose crimes demanded its shedding. Its innocence stares him in the face. Its innocence is gall and wormwood in his cup, the sting of the worm that never dies. Oh! Could he but discover one stain on it, it would help to cool his burning tongue; it would help to unloose his adamant chain, to quench the fire that is consuming his bones. But all in vain. It is *innocent* blood; and shall be so forever. Its *innocence* shall be the consummation of his agony. It might have exalted him to heaven; but now it is sinking him eternally to the lowest hell.

Headless sinner! Such may shortly be thy doom! Thou despisest the blood, or at least thou slightest it. Perhaps thou art one of those who betray it, time after time, at a communion table. How awful thy condition! The wrath of God abideth on thee *even now*; and thou shalt shortly be in hell, if grace prevent not. There thou shalt be with Judas, hearing his bitter cries, and joining thine to his. Thou hast followed his footsteps here as a betrayer and despiser of the blood, and ere long thou must reap the recompense which he is reaping.

Thou shalt meet him and his fellows; and oh, what a meeting! "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming" (Isa 14:9). They will recognize and salute thee. "Ha! Art thou too become like unto us; thou art brought down to the grave; thou art fallen from heaven; thou art cast out as an abominable branch, going down to the

stones of the pit as a carcass trodden under foot. Art thou too become like one of us—thou that hast named the name of the Redeemer, thou that hast heard the good news of His life-bringing death; thou that hast kept company with His disciples as if thou wert altogether one of them?” And as thou criest out in thine agony, cursing them as thy tempters, thou receivest no reply but the sneer of heartless mockery, “What is that to us? see thou to that” (Mat 27:4).

Thus shalt thou be eternally shut in. Whether thou wilt or not, thou must have thy companionship with Judas, with the lost, with the devil and his angels. Thou canst not escape. Thou canst not rise. The innocent blood presses thee down—a heavier millstone than that which shall sink Babylon in the mighty waters. And as thou plungest downward in that wild abyss of smoke, and fire, and vapor, ascending up forever and ever, this shall be the cry of thy tormented spirit, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.”

Must it be so? Art thou resolved to perish, and to crush thy immortal spirit beneath the weight of this innocent blood? Must mercy be slighted, life rejected, and forgiveness flung away as dross? Must Satan be served, the world worshipped, self indulged, and God set clean aside as a being better far forgotten and disowned? Must hell be chosen, when the gate of the Kingdom stands wide before thee, and the kindest welcome proffered that ever friend gave to friend, or parent to child?

Must it be so? Is thy mind made up to brave the worst? Is thy life here to be one of reckless unbelief and folly? Wilt thou have no compassion upon thyself, but go on courting the evil, as if it were the better lot?

Heedless soul! Stand still for one moment in thy foolishness. Listen! A voice comes wildly up as from the regions beneath. It is the voice of wailing, and its burden is, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” It is the voice of Judas! His wailing is not done. It was the first awful note of it which earth heard ere he plunged beneath. But the prolongation was reserved for other ears than man’s, other realms than these of this still sweet and sunny earth. It is the faint far-off echo of that cry, that is now ascending. Man! Dost thou not hear it? But a little while, and thou shalt join it, to swell its tone of infinite and eternal sadness, if thou madly mockest all warning, and persistest in thy unbelief.

Do not so. Thou hast gone near enough to the gates of hell; yet go not in. Turn back. It is not yet too late. Even *thou* mayest be saved. The gate of light stands as widely open as the gate of darkness. The way of life, the narrow way, is as free to thee as is the way of death.

There is still forgiveness. And the glad tidings of it are as glad as ever. No sin of thine has altered that gladness or made the tidings a forbidden joy to thee. We can tell you as truly as ever that “these things are written that *thou* mightest believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing *thou* mightest have life through his name” (Joh 20:31).

“The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” Remember it is ALL sin—even yours. It can wash, it can pardon, it can justify even thee. It can wash, it can pardon, it can justify

even thee. Take it now, for cleansing and salvation. It will purge thy conscience; it will reconcile thee to God; it will fill thy soul with peace. And are these blessings so common and so cheap, that thou canst afford to slight or to postpone them?

The great day of reckoning for the blood draws nigh. He whose blood was shed is coming to take vengeance on its shedders. It will be a sore reckoning for millions. And who shall then attempt to scorn the accusation as if it were idle or untrue? “Blood-guiltiness” shall then be brought in as the verdict against this world—and in that awful verdict your name shall be found.

11. The Good News Concerning This Blood

It is the blood whose shedding has provided a propitiation for sin, and whosoever will consent to take this as his propitiation becomes a partaker of the blessings which it contains. It was the High Priest’s laying of his hand upon the goat (Lev 16:21) that established the connection between it and the people, so that Israel’s sins passed over to the substitute; and so it is our believing that connects us with the divine Substitute, and brings to us all the benefits of the divine bloodshedding.

It is our unbelief that intercepts the communication; it is faith that establishes it. Faith may seem a slight thing to some; and they may wonder how salvation can flow from believing. Hence they try to magnify it, to adore it, to add to it, in order that it may appear some great thing, something worthy of having salvation as its reward. In so doing they are actually transforming faith into a work, and introducing salvation by works under the name of faith. They show that they understand neither the nature nor the office of faith. It saves, simply by handing us over to the Saviour. It saves, not on account of the good works which flow from it; not on account of the love which it kindles; not on account of the repentance which it produces; but solely because it connects us with the Saving One. Its saving efficacy does not lie in connection with righteousness and holiness, but entirely in its connection with the Righteous and Holy One.³³

Thus it is that unbelief ruins, because it cuts off all communication with the source of life; and thus faith blesses because it establishes that communication.

See these electric wires that are shooting their mysterious threads throughout our land, communicating between city and city, between man and man, however distant; dead, yet extinct with life; silent, yet vocal with hidden sound; carrying, as with a lightning burst, the tidings of good or evil from shore to shore. Separate their terminating points by one hair’s breadth from the index, or interpose some nonconducting substance—in a moment intercourse is broken. No tidings come and go. The stoppage is as entire as if you had cut every wire in pieces, and cast these pieces to the winds. But refas-

³³ When thou art told that we are justified by faith think not that this takes place because faith is a virtue in us by which we secure the approbation of God, or because faith is the parent stock of other virtues; but be assured of this, whenever thou hearest the word faith, that what is offered is something out of ourselves—*Melancthon (1497-1560)*.

ten the severed points, or link them to the index with some conducting material, and instantaneously the intercourse is renewed. Joy and sorrow flow again along the line. Men's thoughts, men's feelings, men's deeds, rumors of war or assurances of peace, news of victory or defeat, the sound of falling thrones, the shouts of frantic nations—all hurrying on after each other to convey to ten thousand throbbing hearts the evil or the good which they contain!

That nonconductor is *unbelief*. It interposes between the soul and all heavenly blessing, all divine intercourse. It may seem a thing too slight to effect so great a result; yet it does so inevitably. It shuts off the communication with the source of all glad tidings. It isolates man, and forbids the approach of blessing.

That conductor is *faith*. In itself it is nothing, but in its connection everything. It restores in a moment the broken communication; and this, not from any virtue in itself, but simply as the conducting link between the soul and the fountain of all blessing above.

The blood of the cross is that which has "made peace" (Col 1:20); and to share this peace God freely calls us. This blood of the cross is that by which we are justified (Rom 5:9); and to this justification we are invited. This blood of the cross is that by which we are brought nigh to God (Eph 2:13); and to this blessed nearness we are invited. This blood of the cross is that by which "we have redemption" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14), even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace; and this redemption, this forgiveness, is freely set before us. It is by this blood that we have liberty of entrance into the holiest (Heb 10:19); and God's voice to each sinner is to "enter in." It is by this blood that we are cleansed and washed (1Jo 1:7; Rev 1:5) and this fountain is free, free as any of earth's flowing streams, free as the mighty ocean itself, in which all may wash and be clean.

These are good news concerning the blood—news which should make every sinner feel that it is just what he stands in need of. Nothing less than this; yet nothing more.

And these good news of the blood are no less good news of Him whose blood is shed. For it is by this bloodshedding that He is the Saviour. Without this, He could not have been a Redeemer; but, with it, He is altogether such a Redeemer as suits the sinner's case. In Him there is salvation—salvation without a price—salvation for the most totally and thoroughly lost that this fallen earth contains. Go and receive it.

Do you ask, How am I to find salvation, and how am I to go to that God, on the blood of whose Son I have trampled so long? I answer, Go to Him in your proper and present character—that of sinner. Go with no lie upon your lips, professing to be what you are not, or to feel what you do not. Tell Him honestly what you are, and what you feel, and what you do not feel. "Take with you words"; but let them be honest words, not the words of hypocrisy and deceit. Tell Him that your sin is piercing you; or tell Him that you have no sense of sin, no repentance, no relish for divine things, no right knowledge of your own worthlessness and guilt. Present yourself before Him just as you are, and not as you wish to be, or think you ought to be, or suppose He desires you to be. Re-

count your necessities; make mention of the multitude of His mercies; point to the work of the blessed Son; remind Him how entirely righteous it would be for Him to receive and bless you. Appear before Him, taking for granted just that you are what you are, a sinner; and that Christ is what He is, a Saviour; deal honestly with God, and be assured that it is most thoroughly impossible that you can miss your errand. “Seek the LORD while He may be found”; and you will see that He is found of you. “Call upon Him while He is near”; and you will find how near He is.³⁴

But tarry not, for the day is fast closing, and the thick gloom of evening is at hand. The last “woes” are preparing, and the gates of the kingdom shall ere long be shut. The acceptable year of the Lord is running out, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Trifle not with your brief remaining span or inch of hasty time.

This earth shall soon shake beneath the footsteps of its coming Judge. Its hills and rocks must soon echo with the sound of the final trumpet. And therefore it concerns men, without delay, to be securing the shelter ere the storm be up. When once the wrath of the Lamb is kindled, who shall escape save those who are sprinkled with His blood? It

³⁴ The reason why we so often find the awakened sinner so slow in apprehending the simple Gospel of the grace of God, is that he cannot understand its freeness or fullness. He confounds it with thoughts about *righteousness*, and, therefore, is set upon searching for a *reason* for it. He wants to find a something in himself which, in some way, may distinguish him from *other* sinners, and thus make him, as he thinks, a fit object of this grace, and when he cannot find this in his *works*, he would fain search for it in his *feelings*. He wants to find a certain state of mind and feeling in himself before he can think himself *entitled* to lay hold upon the blessing which the Gospel of the grace of God presents. But this is absurd; since to “him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Now such grace as is here found is the most difficult thing for a man to perceive and apprehend; and this just because of the darkness which is in him, and of its exceeding fullness. It is the outflowing of the gracious mind of God. It is according to the infinite greatness of God’s own mind; and, therefore, the manner in which it meets and deals with the sinner, is of necessary quite contrary to all the thoughts and ideas of man’s heart. It is only quite *natural*, of course, that man should seek to measure the character of God’s dealing by his own; and although in doing this, he cannot but allow it to be far more perfect and excellent than his, inasmuch as he knows God is above himself, yet still he makes his own carnal apprehension of what favor is, the basis of his judgment about God, and, therefore, his judgment about it of necessity goes wrong. God’s gracious way of meeting the sinner is the outflowing of His own mind; and, therefore, far above the highest range of man’s thoughts. He meets the sinner just in his own position as a sinner. Like Saul, he may be “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious”; but God, without requiring any exercises of mind, any courses of humiliation for sin, or any predisposing qualification of any sort, meets him just as he is—A SINNER, with all the free abounding blessing of the Gospel of His grace. Be assured you will never find in yourself any title to believe: the grace which I perceive in Jesus, and not the sorrow I may have felt for my sin, is my ground for believing and resting upon Him I believe, not because I have passed through any previous state of feeling about my sin, but because I can perceive something of the fullness of the love and grace of God in Christ. Oh, that men should bound the riches of God’s free grace by their own poor thoughts of that scanty favor which is practiced among men! Your case, poor sinner, is really a desperate one. It may, or it may not, appear so to you, but it is so before God. Nothing can meet it but free grace; and this in all its characteristic fullness is to be found in Jesus. His own words are—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out”—*Anonymous*.

is an eternal doom that is preparing for the ungodly, and the time that remaineth is short, in which the sinner may escape. He has no moments to fling away, for that which he flings away may be his last.

Fool! When wilt thou be wise? Thou art wise for time, and not for eternity. Dost thou not see these thunderclouds? Dost thou not hear the wild tumult of earth, the cry of nations, the shock of falling empires, the crumbling sound throughout the earth that speaks of universal dissolution and ruin? What are these things? The work of chance? A passing earthquake? The burst of frenzy for an hour? No. They are signs of gathering wrath. It is God coming down to smite the guilty earth—that earth upon whose surface you are treading.

Are you ready for His arrival? Are all matters of variance between you and Him adjusted? And has your reconciliation been sealed by the blood of the Lamb? If not, how shall you meet His eye? How shall you abide His awful scrutiny? That scrutiny will comprise much. Nay, it will omit nothing; its minuteness and exactness will overwhelm you. But the most solemn part of it will be that touching the blood of the Son of God, and the good news respecting it which have been so long proclaimed to you. These good news have found no entrance, and the messenger who brought them has been denied all access day by day. Instead of prizing this blood and making use of it for your cleansing, you have slighted it; and in slighting it, you have slighted Him whose blood it is—Him through whose death there is life for you. And shall not the Lord visit you for such deliberate rejection of His grace; shall not His soul be avenged for such neglect of His “great salvation?” ❧

Available in print as a booklet from Chapel Library.

The Blood of the Covenant

“The blood of the Lamb.”—Revelation 12:11

“Behold the blood of the covenant.”—Exodus 24:8

All through Scripture we find traces of the blood. “Thou shalt bruise his heel” was the first reference to it. The *bruised heel* of the woman’s seed was to be the foundation stone of our deliverance. It was to be deliverance by blood. The bruised heel was to tread upon the serpent’s head. In connection with this announcement as to the bruised heel, sacrifice was ordained; and thus *the truth* began to be developed. That truth was—

“Victory for the sinner through the blood of One Who was to be slain.” “Overcoming by *the blood* of the Lamb” is the meaning of the first promise.

“The blood is the life” (Deu 12:23). Not that blood and life are actually the same thing: the one is material, the other immaterial. But the blood is the life made visible—the liquid link between body and soul, which, once broken, brings death. The blood poured out is *the life* drained away from the body—the departure of the soul from its material dwelling. Thus the blood and the life are identified. God identifies them; law identifies them. Blood *shed* is the symbol or visible exhibition of death.

Death was the penalty of man’s guilt. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. If, then, another life is to be taken for our life, and another death is to stand for ours, the true expression of this is the drawing the blood from the victim, and putting that blood on us. This is the symbolic declaration of the great substitution, the great transference: one life for another, one death for another. Death, with all its consequences, lies on the transgressor till another death comes (in the symbolic form of blood), and washes it away. When the sinner receives God’s testimony to the blood, then the transference is at once completed,—death passes away.

Let us see the different aspects in which the blood is presented to us in Scripture; the manifold blessings with which it is connected; the various points at which we come into contact with it.

1. It Contains the Good News.

“And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”—Hebrews 12:24

It “speaketh better things than that of Abel.” It speaks of grace, not of wrath; of mercy, not of vengeance; of peace returning, not of peace departing. As seen on the altar, it tells the good news of *life given for life*; as seen upon the mercy-seat, it says, “Let us come *boldly* to the throne of grace.” Glad tidings of great joy to the sinfullest are contained in the blood,—the precious blood of Christ. It offers to the sinner a reversal of the sentence of death, by presenting him with the death of another in his stead.

2. It is the Purchase-money for the Church.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”—Acts 20:28

As God’s eternal purpose deals both with the church as a whole, and with each chosen soul, so does the blood. It is the price or ransom of the whole Church; it is the price and ransom of each soul that is saved. Of the Church it is true, she is “bought with a price”; of each saint it is true, he is “bought with a price.” The “blood of the covenant” is the payment demanded by the Father, and paid by the Son. Not without blood can the purpose of the Father be carried out. It is the legal payment of the price or penalty, be-

cause it was the death which the Church should have died, but which her Surety took upon Him.

3. *It is the Atonement.*

“And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.”—Exodus 30:10

“Aaron shall *make an atonement* upon the horns of the altar with *the blood* of the sin-offering of *atonements*.” “The life of the flesh is in the *blood*, and I have given it to you upon the altar to *make an atonement* for your souls; for it is *the blood* that maketh an *atonement* for the soul” (Lev 17:11). The Old Testament word “atone” means “to cover”; and the blood is that which “covers” sin, so that it becomes hidden and undiscernible by God Himself;—as if the only thing through which the eye of God could not penetrate was the altar-blood. To him whose sin is thus “covered” by the blood, God is propitious. The blood propitiates; and the blood, received by the sinner (in the belief of God’s testimony to it), propitiates God toward the sinner himself personally. Only the blood can cover. Not mountains, nor seas, nor the thick forests of earth; only blood,—the blood of the one Sacrifice. In this is *atonement*; and, as the result of atonement, personal *reconciliation* with God. Looking at the paschal blood, God says, “Pass over, slay not”; looking at the sacrificial blood, God says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 4:12).

4. *It is the Redemption.*

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”—Ephesians 1:7

Redemption is not the same as the atonement or the purchase-money already noticed. It is the carrying out of that for which the price was paid and the atonement made. The paying down the money is one thing; the redeeming the person so paid for, so ransomed, is something more. It is nearly synonymous with salvation, only it expresses the way by which the salvation has been obtained,—by ransom or purchase. Hence the expression, “the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph 1:14). Redemption by blood is our gospel,—the redemption-money presented fully by the redeeming One to the “lawful captive,” to the imprisoned and exiled sinner. He who believeth enters into possession of all that it purchases.

(Col 1:14; 1Pe 1:18-19; Rev 5:9).

5. *It is the bringing nigh.*

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”—Ephesians 2:13

The far off are made nigh by the blood. It is the blood that removes the distance; that brings God nigh to us, and us nigh to God. It annihilates all distance and all variance. The blood brings about the meeting between us and God. Incarnation is not the bringing

nigh, nor the thing which brings us nigh; it is merely the first step in a process, which, had it not ended in the blood-shedding, had been all in vain. It is the blood that emboldens us to draw nigh to God, and justifies God in drawing nigh to us. "Let us draw near" is the voice of the blood, speaking both from the altar and the mercy-seat. And how? "With a true heart and in the full assurance of faith." And the blood provides for both of these.

6. It Contains the Cleansing.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John 1:7

This is spoken of also as "purging" (Heb 9:14,22), and as "washing" (Rev 1:5); and it is to this that Zechariah refers when he speaks of the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness (13:1); and David, when he prays, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow" (Psa 51:7). It is specially to the *guilt* that these passages refer,—the judicial or legal defilement or condemnation, as the consequence of sin committed; so that, when that defilement or condemnation was removed by the application of the blood of the Substitute, the man became clean in the sight of God and of His law. He was purged in conscience and in heart; in body, soul, and spirit. After this, the inward purification began, and was carried on in connection with the blood, through the power of the Spirit. We preach the purging and cleansing blood. It has lost none of its efficacy. The Lamb slain is the same as ever; and the High Priest is the same as ever; and the blood is the same as ever,—and as able to purge and purify.

7. It Contains the Peace.

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."—Colossians 1:20

"Peace through the blood of his cross," for "he is our peace" (Eph 2:14); and because of the blood God "is pacified towards us for all that we have done" (Eze 16:63). It is the blood that has made the peace, for it removes that which produced the variance and dispeace. The blood pacifies. It removes that which drew on us the wrath of God, quenching that wrath; it removes that which made us dread God and flee from Him, like Adam. Peace through the blood is our message! To the guiltiest rebel upon earth it comes!

8. It Contains the Pardon.

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."—Hebrews 9:22

"Without shedding of blood is no remission." By the shedding of blood, then, there is remission of sins. The many blood-sheddings have ceased (Heb 10:18); and the one blood-shedding, which, in its value, and efficacy, and suitableness, is everlasting and infinite, remains. Taking it as the payment of the penalty substituted by God for our non-payment of it, we are forgiven. He who receives the divine testimony to the blood is, in

so doing, forgiven. That blood, by covering his sins, brings pardon; and this pardon is presented to the sinner, and becomes the property of every one who is willing to take it thus freely from God.

9. It Contains Justification.

“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”—Romans 5:9

“Justified by His blood.” We get justification by His grace and by His righteousness. Here it is said to be by His blood. Justification seems here opposed to “condemnation,”—the sweeping away of everything that brought us under condemnation. This the blood accomplishes, meeting every accusation, answering every plea, setting aside everything that is laid to our charge. Looking to the blood, we can say, “Who is he that condemneth?” The blood sets us right in conscience and in law with God. It justifies the ungodly.

10. It contains that which makes white.

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”—Revelation 7:14

“They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Not only the man, but his garments are made white. This is more than cleansing. It is the word used regarding Christ’s transfiguration garments (Mat 17:2); the angel-ropes (Mat 28:3); the heavenly clothing (Rev 4:4); the judgment throne (Rev 20:11). Whiter than snow or wool, white as the garments of Christ,—nay, as the “head and hair” of Christ (Rev 1:14). This is the result of the application of the blood to those who were “blacker than the coal,” redder than crimson. What potency, what virtue, what excellency does this blood contain! How it beautifies and glorifies!

11. It Contains the Sanctifying.

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”—Hebrews 13:12

“That he might sanctify the people with his own blood.” This is consecrating them as His kings and priests, setting them apart for service, making them “saints,” holy ones. The blood of the great Sin-offering (without the gate) “sanctifies.” As soon as the blood touches us,—by our believing,—we are set apart, we become the royal priesthood, holy to the Lord.

12. It Contains the Power to Conquer.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”—Revelation 12:11

“They overcame by [on account of] the blood of the Lamb.” No victory without the blood! No power to fight; no motive in fighting; no hope of overcoming. The blood takes

the strength from the enemy. The blood supplies us with all we need. We look to it, and out of weakness we are made strong. We look to it, and we are cheered as well as nerved for conflict with the enemy.

13. It Contains Our Right of Entrance into the Holiest.

*“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”—
Hebrews 10:19*

He entered “by his own blood” (Heb 9:12). He gives us this blood as our right of entrance too. The way is opened; the veil is rent; the entrance is sprinkled and consecrated by His blood. Let us draw near! The blood removes all cause of dread, all possibility of rejection, nay, gives the certainty of reception. Let us go in! We are sure of a welcome. It gives *boldness* as well as right of entrance. It says, “Draw near *boldly*.”

14. It Contains the Seal of the Covenant.

“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”—Luke 22:20

“This cup is the new testament in my blood.” The blood seals the covenant; and the cup is the symbol of that seal. It is “the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20); the “covenant of peace” (Isa 54:10); “the new covenant” (Jer 31:31); the covenant which is absolute and unconditional; which not only gives to each sinner who believes a present standing before God, of favor and love, but which secures his eternal future beyond the possibility of a second fall. The blood of the covenant makes us safe for ever. O blood-stained covenant, ordered in all things and sure, what a foundation art thou for our faith to rest upon, and for our hope to rejoice in! Yes, and the ages to come are all contained within thine ample compass.

15. It Contains Drink for the Soul.

“My blood is drink indeed.”—John 6:55

It quenches the thirst of the soul,—the thirst or parching produced by an evil conscience and a sense of wrath, which dries up the frame like a potsherd (Psa 22:15). It removes the wrath and the sense of wrath, by showing us that wrath transferred to the Substitute. It relieves the conscience when first we come into contact with it; and it keeps it relieved from day to day, as we drink it by faith. It is “drink indeed.” It calms, it revives, it refreshes, it soothes; it is like cold water to the thirsty lips under a scorching sun. Nothing but the blood can allay this thirst; nothing else can be drink for the soul, for the intellect, the conscience, the heart.

16. It Contains Life.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”—John 6:53

“Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no *life* in you.” The blood not only removes death (judicial and spiritual), but it gives and pre-

serves life (judicial and spiritual). It quickens. Israel was forbidden to taste the literal blood, and would have been punished with death had they done so; we are commanded to drink the spiritual or symbolical blood, with the promise and assurance that it contains *life* for us. Without it we have no life. We are not only to be sprinkled with it outwardly, but we are to receive it inwardly,—to drink it. As with the *water*, so with the *blood*. They are for inward as well as for outward application. We drink them and live; and we are washed with them and made clean.

17. It Contains Protection.

“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”—Exodus 12:13

The blood of the paschal Lamb was Israel’s protection. No sword could reach the man on the door of whose dwelling God saw the sprinkled blood. So the blood of Christ our Passover protects. In believing God’s testimony to the blood, it becomes sprinkled upon us; and from that moment we are safe. The blood is our security. God sees it, even in the dark night when we cannot see it, and bids the sword pass by (Heb 11:28).

18. It Contains Separation from the World.

“For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.”—Hebrews 13:11

As the Sin-offering, Jesus suffered without the gate; thereby not only fulfilling His sacrificial work, and completing the sacrificial symbol or type, but leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. “Let us go forth,” is the voice that comes to us from the blood. Come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; for the blood of the sin-offering is upon us, and Jesus is before us. Let us go forth not only from Babylon and Egypt, but from Jerusalem,—Jerusalem, which had become the type of the false Church, the mere religious professor,—which, while naming His name, rejects Him and His cross, nay, crucifies Him afresh. Let us keep ourselves unspotted not only from the world as such, but from a worldly Church,—worldly professors, who, instead of bearing Christ’s reproach, bring reproach upon Him.

19. It Contains Resurrection.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant”—Hebrews 13:20

By the blood of the everlasting covenant Christ was raised. Our sins had slain Him, shed His blood, and brought Him down to the grave. But that shed blood was the removal of the sins that had weighed Him down. God saw in that blood the finished substitution. He accepted it, and gave effect to that completed work of propitiation by raising the Substitute. As the great Shepherd, He gave His life for the sheep; His life was accepted instead of theirs; His death made their dying no longer necessary,—nay, unjust. The blood was the payment of that which had brought death on Him and us; and therefore

He was raised. With Him we rise,—by the efficacy of the same blood. That blood, which is the symbol of death, is the seal of resurrection.

20. It Contains Condemnation.

“Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that... Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.”—Matthew 27:4, 25

It thus contains the condemnation of Judas, of Jerusalem and Israel,—of all rejecters of Christ. The same blood that spoke of pardon speaks of condemnation. Under the weight of *rejected blood* the unbelieving sinner perishes. This is the condemnation which the Church in these last days is preparing for itself,—(1) slighting the blood; (2) rejecting it; (3) trampling on the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Under this aggravated guilt the world shall go down to wrath; for it is guilty of the deepest dye,—the deliberate refusal of and contempt for all that God has provided for the sinner. If an Israelite had torn down the tabernacle, overthrown altar and laver, slain the priest, cast forth the blood and water, defiled the mercy-seat, he would be but a type of him who sets at nought the Son of God and slights His blood. This is the millstone which the world is fastening to its own neck, which shall sink it in the abyss for ever.

Yet still the value and the virtue of the blood remain. It has lost none of its efficacy. It can still cleanse, and redeem, and purify. It can still pacify the conscience and reconcile to God. Not even its most deliberate rejecters need despair, or fear that it may not avail for them. It cannot lose its power. Up to the very last it availeth. Of its divine value the chief of sinners may avail himself without fear or distrust. In crediting the Holy Spirit's testimony to its undiminished and unchangeable sufficiency, the guiltiest upon earth will draw out all its fullness to himself; the whole value of the blood passeth over to him that believeth, as soon as he has believed. Not upon feeling, but upon believing, does the obtaining of its benefits depend. As soon as we receive the divine testimony, all that the blood has secured for sinners passes over to us as our righteous and everlasting possession. The preciousness of the blood is transferred to us; the preciousness of Him Whose blood it is becomes ours, and we are accepted in the Beloved. “Jehovah our righteousness” is our joy and our song.

Appendix

The resurrection of Christ must no doubt be kept in view. We preach a risen Christ; and in His resurrection we see God's acceptance of His substitution, and the assurance of our justification by that work which resurrection *sealed*, as having been *finished by the death* of the Substitute. But still what follows the cross and the death is not *part* of the sacrificial work, but the *result* of it. It may be well to note the different effects, relating to the believer, which God connects with the death of His Son.

(1.) *Death unto sin* (1Pe 2:24). He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we might be “dead to sins.”

(2.) *Life unto righteousness* (1Pe 2:24). Our new life unto righteousness is thus traced to the sin-bearing work upon the tree. The apostle links this life with *the cross*.

(3.) *Healing* (1Pe 2:24). “By whose stripes ye were healed.” From the cross flow the medicine and the health, as the cure did from the brazen serpent.

(4.) *Reconciliation* (Rom 5:10). “Reconciled to God by the *death* of his son.” In the 9th verse we are said to be *justified* by His *blood* (not by His resurrection); in the 10th we are said to be *reconciled* by His *death*.

(5.) *Destruction of Satan* (Heb 2:14). Through *death*, He destroyed him who has the power of death. The *cross* is the destruction of the devil.

(6.) *Deliverance of the troubled* (Heb 2:15). “To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” This is a very remarkable passage, as showing the power of the cross, not only in abolishing death and him who had the power of death, but in so bringing life and immortality to light that troubled souls in bondage by fear of death are set free. This deliverance is *confirmed* to us by His resurrection, but it is His death that *secures* it.

(7.) *Redemption of transgressions* (Heb 9:15). As Mediator of the New Covenant, He dies, and by this death there is the “redemption of the transgressions under the law.”

(8.) *The promise of eternal inheritance* (Heb 9:15). This death has reference to them that are “called.” To them, through the death of the Mediator, the promise comes, and through the same death the inheritance comes.

(9.) *Eternal life with Him* (1Th 5:10). “Who *died* for us, that...we should *live*...with him.” His death and our resurrection-life are thus linked together.

These are some of the many passages relating to the death of the Substitute. From these we learn the value and the power of that death as securing pardon, righteousness, and acceptance. Justification in and by a *crucified Christ* is the clear testimony of Scripture. The blessings flowing out of resurrection, and ascension, and intercession are not for a moment to be lost sight of; but in so far as representation, or substitution, or acceptance is concerned, we have to do directly with the blood and the cross. The sweet savor of the *sacrifice* is that which envelopes us so as to make us acceptable and well-pleasing to God. Of that sacrifice (as in the case of Noah) God smells the sweet savor; and because of *that* He deals with us as righteous, honors us as precious, and blesses us as sons. The divine preciousness of that sacrifice as satisfying justice, honoring God, magnifying the law, suffices to procure for us, by its *imputed value*, what did not belong to us, and what nothing else could have given. That which satisfies righteousness is that which constitutes us righteous. It was the *death*, not the *resurrection* of Christ, that both declared and satisfied the righteousness of God, that proclaimed both the condemnation and the acquittal of the sinner. Yet there are some in our day calling themselves

Christians to whom the cross is a stumbling-block, who tell us that the cross was not the place of atonement, who reject imputation as an unreality or a falsehood, and who profess to go to God on the footing of an infused resurrection-righteousness. Thus have men ceased to glory in the cross—nay, have made it of none effect. They have little sympathy with him who said, “I have determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and *him crucified*” (1Co 2:2). ❧

Sin Put Away by Christ

“But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”—Hebrews 9:26

This verse states the end for which the Savior of the world appeared. It was “to put away sin.” This end He has accomplished. It is no longer a mere purpose, something future, but already finished. He has done that which He came into the world to do. He *hath* put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. That sacrifice was offered and accepted eighteen hundred years ago. And by that sacrifice sin was put away. If sin was not put away then, it certainly has not been put away since, nor can ever be. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; there is no other putting away of it. The offering up of that sacrifice, and the putting away of sin, are things now past. And both of these were finished together upon the Cross. We have therefore glad tidings to proclaim to every sinner; glad tidings for thee, whosoever thou art, who readest these lines. Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself!

But in what sense has He put away sin? Not in the sense of putting it out of existence. He has not put it away so that it has ceased to be. It still exists, as you know, and perhaps lament. It exists in your heart, and exists in your life. It mingles in every thought of the one, and in every act of the other. To such an extent does it exist, that in God’s pure all-seeing eye, there seems to be nothing in either but sin. The whole is nothing but one vast mass of sin. In this sense, sin is *not* put away from any in the world that now is—so far from it that it overspreads the whole race of man, as widely as the waters of Noah’s deluge overspread the earth. To that eye which takes in the whole of it at one glance, and sees the guilt of each man minutely and fully, so hateful a sight does this guilty world present, that the wonder is, that God does not put sin away by the destruction of every being on whom it appears. So awful a doom could only be stayed, even for a moment, by that sacrifice of Himself, which Christ has offered up. This sacrifice is the only barrier between a guilty world and the wrath of an angry God. It is the only thing

that prevents the vengeance of eternal fire being poured out for the instant destruction of this sinful earth.

Neither has Christ put away sin in such a sense that it cannot and will not be punished. Notwithstanding what He has done, it may be punished, and it is punished in the case of thousands and tens of thousands in the world of woe. Christ's death has not blotted hell out of being. It has not quenched the everlasting burnings, so as to make it an impossible thing that any sinner should ever feel them. He has done everything that is necessary to keep you, or any, even the guiltiest sinner upon earth, from going to hell. But hell still exists, and the work of Christ has not made it impossible that you should fall into it. And notwithstanding that work, the penalty of sin—of all your sin—may yet be inflicted on your soul there, even as at this very moment it is inflicted upon countless myriad of souls, once within the reach of mercy. Just read these two plain passages (and there are thousands of such): Ephesians 5:3-6; Colossians 3:5-6; and beware of flattering yourselves that because Christ hath put away sin, you shall not be punished. On the contrary, while that precious fact proclaims that forgiveness is free to all—free to you just now, and as you are; nothing in the universe proclaims so loudly that escape from punishment is impossible, and condemnation inevitable, if you refuse what has thus been so generously provided. Even Christ Himself, Who was God clothed with our nature, behooved³⁵ to die, because standing in the room of the guilty. And while this fact proclaims to us that none need to die for their own sins, since this Mighty One has died for sin already, it also declares that none can possibly escape from death on whom any sin shall at last be found. For if it was punished when found upon the Son of God, though not His own, is there any being, even the highest in creation, that can escape, if even so much as one sin be found in him?

Christ then hath not put away sin, so that it does not exist or cannot be punished. But He hath already put away sin, in such a sense that it no more stands as an obstacle in the way of your going to God. He has so put it away that you may go to God just now and as you are, with all your filth and sin, even as a child goes to the bosom of its own father. He has so put it away, that you may go to Him with everything you fear, to spread it out before Him, with everything you want, to obtain it from Him. He has so put it away, that you may go to him now with all boldness, nothing doubting. That which gives you access at all, gives you access with boldness, and assures you of a welcome. That which gives you any hope at all, gives you every hope, nay, takes away all ground for unbelief or fear. Where is there room for doubt, or suspicion, or want of assured confidence, if Christ has really done all that this passage (Heb 9:26) declares He has? Once your sin was such a barrier that there was no access to God, the Fountain of life, for a guilty creature like you. It made a gulf between you and that blessed fountain, which, but for the work of Christ, none could ever have crossed. It barred His throne—it shut His presence against you. It made you, for anything you could do, an eternal exile from that presence which is the paradise of the soul, and where there are rivers of pleasure forever.

³⁵ **behooved** – was necessary for.

And but for the work of Christ putting away your sin, this exclusion must have continued forever.

But blessed be His precious name, He hath now put away sin, so that there is no more exclusion of you, or any poor sinner upon earth. The sentence of banishment is repealed. The throne of God now stands open to you. There is not an obstacle, not a single stone or straw in your way to it. It is open and free to all. God is now calling His banished ones home. He is inviting you to Himself just now—inviting you once more to share in all the fullness that is in Himself. And on this invitation, and because the Lamb of God has put away sin, you may go to Him at this moment as freely and confidingly as if you had never sinned at all. You may go to Him with as confident a heart as any of the unfallen angels round His throne. Nay, more so, for they approach on the ground of a creature's innocence—you are invited near on the righteousness of Him, Who is God over all. And coming on this ground you may freely ask for everything, in the full assurance that all shall be given till you happen to ask for something better and dearer to God, than what He has given you already unasked—His own Son. Poor wanderers! Why not on such a ground return to such a home? Why stand afar off in poverty, rags, and wretchedness, when through the sacrifice of his own Son, the way to your Father's house, your Father's arms, the fullness of your Father's love, is entirely open (Luk 15)?

Christ hath also put away sin, insofar as it was an obstacle in the way of God's love flowing forth most freely towards us, towards any sinner upon earth, towards the poor guilty sinner who may now be reading these lines. In consequence of the sacrifice of Himself, none of our past or present sins are any reason why that love should not fix on you, and enrich you with all its boundless treasures. Notwithstanding them all, God can, honorably to Himself, and safely in respect to His government, make you its blessed object, and pour out upon you its immeasurable, inexhaustible riches. And what He can do He is most willing to do. You have the assurance of this in the numberless invitations by which He is inviting you to come to Himself for everything (Isa 55:1; Mat 11:28; Rev 22:17). For each one of these is as much addressed to you personally and specially, as if it had been inscribed with your own name, or sent to you expressly down from heaven. And all of them not only imply that He is ready, but even longing to bless you with the free forgiveness, the overflowing love of a father's heart. These are just the calls of His love to you, now that all obstacles are taken out of the way of its freest and most unlimited exercise. They are the voice of love sounding upon earth in the ears of every poor wanderer, a welcome to all the treasures of a father's grace, a welcome to the place of a son in a father's heart.

And of this blessed fact you have likewise the assurance in the past doings of that same love. What has it already done to take every obstacle away that once withstood your enjoying it? What has it already given? It has given His own Son. This is the measure, the manifestation of the Father's love! Think of it. Try and take its dimensions. That gift proves it infinite. And dare you not trust an infinite love—that love being also free? Dare you not cast yourself without reserve or fear upon a love that is perfectly free and per-

fectly infinite? And now that it is as free to flow out upon you, as the very light or air of heaven, can you not leave yourself at its disposal? Can you not expect everything great and blessed at its hands? If there is nothing in the way of that free and infinite love, why may not you enjoy it, as much as any guilty sinner that has ever gone before you?

And from that love which has already given the Son, and thus made a free course for every other, may you not hope to receive even “all things”? If it gave even the Son, when every obstacle stood in the way, what will it not give now that every obstacle has been taken out of the way by the propitiation for sin which that Son has made? Before that sacrifice was offered, it might be said to be pent up and confined in the Father’s bosom, waiting till the hindrance should be removed. Now it is no longer pent up. It has a righteous opening out of which it may issue forth, and a righteous channel along which to pour itself. Now it is streaming over on every side. It is flowing on in full tide towards sinners. It is seeking to flow into each of you. And it would enter if you would not close your hearts against it. It would come in and fill your soul with its blessed peace, just as the light pours in when the eye is opened upon the sun. As there is no more obstacle in the way of the poor prodigal’s return to his father, so is there no more any obstacle in the way of the Father’s most gracious welcome to the poor prodigal. The one is free to return, the other to receive; the one may come without fear, the other may welcome without dishonor. Christ has made way for both at once, and by the same act—the sacrifice of Himself. Now that the way is open, and a Father’s arm stretched wide to welcome thee, poor prodigal, wilt thou not return?

In a word, Christ hath put away sin, so that now it is no more a necessary and unavoidable cause of punishment to those who have personally committed it. But for His sacrifice, it would and must have been so in every case whatever. The honor of God’s character, and the safety of His holy moral government, would have made this indispensable. But the one is now so entirely vindicated, and the other so inviolably protected by the great sacrifice of the Cross, that no necessity now compels the moral Governor of the universe to punish sin in the person of those who commit it. In consequence of that one great event, and on the ground of it, God can now most honorably dispense forgiveness and eternal life to every guilty rebel upon earth, and that most freely—without any restriction or term whatever—even without money and without price. That great sacrifice did more to vindicate His character and uphold the rectitude of His government, than the eternal death of all would have done. Insofar as these are concerned, that one event, once for all, has therefore rendered this unnecessary; and God is accordingly, in consideration of that alone, with which He is entirely and forever satisfied, now offering to pass from the sentence of death in the case of every sinner whatever, who is wishing it at his hands. And should any necessity henceforth arise for executing that sentence of eternal death, it must be created by the sinner himself—by his obstinate refusal to accept deliverance, so generously procured, so freely offered—put thus freely and entirely at his own disposal.

Poor soul! Just look to the sacrifice of the Cross, and tell me after this why you should die? That was the sacrifice of Himself, God in your flesh! Think of Him Who was the Lawgiver, rising up from His throne, and in the nature of a creature rendering obedience to its utmost demands. Was not this doing higher homage to the majesty of God's holy law, than could have been done by the entire and eternal obedience of all mere creatures? After this, what can be needed to assert its dignity, and maintain its honor? Think of Him Who was God over all, the source of all life and being, and, therefore, by infinite degrees better than all—think of Him in our flesh, dying in the room of the guilty! It is in consequence of this, and this alone, that God is now proclaiming free forgiveness to all. He can give you pardon and eternal life, free as He gives you the light of His sun; and in consequence of the sacrifice of Himself, no stain is thereby cast on His character, no danger accrues to His holy government. This is the righteous and honorable way in which the holy Governor of the universe is now offering life to all of our fallen race. Go, poor sinner, take it at His hand. Go to Him and be pardoned. Go to Him and be freely loved. Go to Him and live forever. All has been done that is necessary for this. All you need now waits your mere acceptance. Sin, the only obstacle, has, in the sense just stated, been taken away. All sacrifice has now ceased. Why? Because that has been offered which answers all. Look to that sacrifice, and to that alone—and if the Spirit sheds His light upon it, it will also satisfy you. It will satisfy your conscience, and take from it the conviction that sin must also be punished in you. That is your life, your light, your peace, your joy, your all. That and that alone will fill you with a sense of forgiveness—will assure you of everything, by assuring you that God is pacified, that God is your friend.

There is no room for any soul to deprive himself of all this comfort by saying—“But is it my sin? No doubt He hath put away some sin, but can I be sure it is mine?” There is no room for such a question, if the sense above stated be given to the words. In that sense, it is all sin that is put away. Mark the very language, “to put away sin”—sin in general—not some person's merely, but sin. Think of the sense above given to the words, and ask yourselves if it be not the burden of the whole Gospel, the sum and substance of the good news proclaimed therein to every sinner without exception; that insofar as it was a necessary cause of eternal death to the guilty, or as any barrier in the way of coming to God, and of God's full tide of love coming to him, sin hath been put away from every poor soul, still in this world and on this side of hell. Besides, if this were not true of all, how could it be true of any? Where could even the Apostle Paul, or any of the apostles or primitive Christians, obtain the assurance of their sins being put away, if it was not in the simple declaration respecting Christ's infinitely precious offering? They had no revelation of this blessed fact, special and peculiar to themselves. If they found it at all, they found it just in such an universal declaration as that before us. If they found it there, why may not you—why may not any? Their names are no more there than yours. And if that sacrifice has done all that was needful for the putting away of your sins, how can you think of having them put away by something done in or by yourself? In that case, yours would be put away, not by the sacrifice of Himself, but by something

in you? If by that sacrifice, the thing is done eighteen hundred years ago; if not then, should it ever be done, it must be owing, not to Christ's sacrifice, but to something else, which is future and yet to be done.

Oh! That men but knew the completeness, perfection, infinite efficacy of this one sacrifice, and the absolute freeness with which, on the ground of it, and of it alone, all the blessings of salvation are offered to every sinner without exception. The knowledge of this would ease their hearts at once, would assure them at once of everything—of safety, of free forgiveness, yea, even of life everlasting. This grand atonement is the ground of all assurance. Look to the subsequent context, and say if it be not so (Heb10:19-22). What is the blessed doctrine of this context? Is it not that Christ hath done by the one offering of Himself, once for all, what all the offerings under the law could not do, and which their very repetition proved they could not do? All offering has ceased, just because there is remission now free to all (Heb 10:18). And what is the result of the whole in respect to us? Why just that we may come with consciences entirely disburdened, by this one offering, of all dread and apprehension, even in the full assurance of faith, that in His Son, God is now well pleased. In this blessed and childlike assurance we may now go to God as our Father for everything we need or wish for, in this world and in the world to come?

Oh, yes, this sacrifice is the ground of all assurance. It is the mere sight of this sacrifice in all its glorious sufficiency, that heals our whole spiritual case—that sets us right at once with God, and makes us safe for eternity. It is not the sight of this sacrifice and something else—something of our own added thereto, our own faith in it for instance, that assures the soul before God, and forms the ground of everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Our faith is just our seeing that this sacrifice is complete and perfect by itself alone, neither needing nor admitting the addition of anything else whatever, as a ground of confidence, a ground of childlike approach to God. For this, it is the sacrifice alone that needs to be seen, and not our faith along with it. It is because we think that the latter must be seen along with the former, and because we are always going in quest of the latter as the more important of the two, that our souls see no light, or the mere twilight, the mingling of light and darkness. In seeking the latter, we lose sight of the former, and therefore of all our light and comfort, for it is the former which is the source of all.

Oh, that you would look to the sacrifice alone, and by itself. Nothing else but that sacrifice seen in all its solitary naked glory, is necessary to make a heaven within your hearts even now, and make you sure of heaven hereafter. I want nothing as my ground of confidence before God, as the means of assuring me of everything, nothing between me and hell—but the simple sacrifice of Christ. Let me see just that sacrifice, and I see the everlasting proof that there is a love in the heart of God, which is absolutely infinite, and which is now free to me and to every human being whatever. Can more be needed? Can more be desired? Can more be obtained? This is all. "None but Christ; none but Christ."

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”—John 1:29.

*From The Kelso Tracts; available with three others from Chapel Library in a booklet entitled
“The Sin Bearer.”*

God’s Unspeakable Gift

The Sinner’s Pledge and Plea for Every Blessing

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”—Romans 8:32

The apostle here first states a fact; and then he tells us what that fact warrants us to expect from God. He reminds us of what God has done, and then infers from this what God will do. “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all”; therefore there is nothing that He will deny us; “how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Now God had every reason to spare His Son, and none to induce Him to deliver Him up. For, first, He was the object of the Father’s infinite and unutterable love. “The Father loveth the Son” (Joh 3:35). “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17). And whom does an earthly father spare most, but his best beloved child (Mal 3:17)? Whom is he most unwilling to deliver up to pain or infamy, but the son of his affections? And is not this unwillingness in proportion to the love he bears him? The more that he delights in him, the more does he desire to spare him. If such then be the feeling in the narrow frozen selfish soul of man, what must it be in the infinite bosom of the infinite God? Which of all the beings in the universe would He have most wished to spare; which of them all would He be most reluctant to deliver up? The Son of His love! That Son in Whom His “soul delighted” (Isa 42:1)—that Son Whom He loved infinitely more than all the angels of heaven.

Second, He was infinitely worthy of all that infinite love. He was worthy of the love of all creatures, worthy of the love of all angels, worthy of the love of God! Of no other being can it be said that it is worthy of the love of God, far less that it is infinitely worthy of it. Yet so it was with the Son; for in Him there was infinite glory, infinite excellence, infinite beauty, infinite perfection. In Him there was an infinitely worthy object for the whole infinite love of the eternal Father.

Third, He loved the Father with an infinite love; and what more painful or bitter to a father than to part with a child that loves him tenderly, and clings to him fondly, and cannot bear the thought of separation? Here was another reason why the Father might have spared the Son.

Fourth, we had no claim upon God for such a gift as this. In truth we had no claim upon Him for any gift at all. Even unfallen creatures cannot properly be said to have a claim upon God for His blessings, for what He gives to them even, He bestows of His free bounty. Much less then can fallen beings have any claims upon Him. Even for His commonest mercies we have none. Even for a morsel of food or a drop of cold water we have none—no claim at all! Our only claim is for wrath, for punishment, for hell! This is our only claim, as sinners; what possible claim then could we have for the gift of His own Son! Yet it was for those who had no claim upon Him for anything but an eternal hell, that He delivered up His Son! Had it been for angels who had never sinned, it would not have been so marvelous (Heb 2:16). But for us—for sinners, for enemies, for those who hated Him—how passing wonderful! We might conceive some reasons why He should give Him for angels, but what reason can be imagined why He should part with Him for us! The richest gift for the unworthiest of all! And then not only undeserved by us; but unsought, undesired, uncared for; nay, hated and spurned (Rom 5:6-8; Eph 2:2-5)!

Truly, the Father had every conceivable reason to spare His Son, and none that we could have imagined for delivering Him up. Yet all this did not move Him to withhold the gift. “He spared him not.”

And why does the apostle use the word “spare” in speaking of His gift? To show us it was an infinite sacrifice that He was consenting to make—to teach us that it was no light, no trivial thing; the occasion of emotion in the Father’s bosom—to imply that (to speak after the manner of men) it cost Him an infinite struggle to part with such a Son! As if He would say that, had it been possible, He would far rather have spared Him; far rather have allowed the cup to pass from Him, or never put that cup into His hands at all. And to bring out this idea more strongly, the apostle adds, “delivered him up,” that is, He delivered Him up as the judge does the criminal; handed Him over as a victim to His relentless foes. He took Him out of His bosom, where He had dwelt from eternity, and gave Him over to the disposal of cruel enemies. How amazing! He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all! He freely consented to the mighty, the Infinite sacrifice (Isa 53:10)!

And why was it that these weighty reasons availed nothing to stay His purpose? Why was it that the Father spared not His Son? That Son Himself answers the question, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). This was the one reason which prevailed against all those manifold and infinitely weighty reasons for sparing the Son. Though He was infinitely beloved of the Father—though He was infinitely worthy of all the Father’s love—though He infinitely loved Him in return, and had done nothing to deserve anything but love—though we had no claim upon God for such a gift; yet God so

loved the world that He gave His Son! He spared not Him that He might spare us. He delivered up Him that He might not deliver up us. He parted with Him that He might not part with us. He gave Him up to the curse, that He might obtain for us the blessing. He poured on Him the vials of His infinite wrath, that He might pour out on us the full measure of His infinite love.

Yes, it was for us that He delivered Him up! It was that He might take our place and bear our sins, that the Father sent the Son! And we know that the Son of God has come and stood in our place. “He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...” (1Pe 2:24). He has finished transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24). He was made flesh and dwelt among us. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. He took not merely our nature, becoming bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, but our place, our room, our state, our legal responsibilities. He is not simply a savior; but a savior as being a sacrifice, a substitute, a surety. Hence in the salvation of a soul, there is a complete exchange between the sinner and the Savior.

He takes all that belongs to us as sinners, and gives us in exchange all that belongs to Himself as the Father’s holy and well-beloved Son. He takes from us all our sin, all our guilt, all our unworthiness, and gives us in exchange all his infinite righteousness, and innocence, and worthiness in the Father’s eyes. He transfers to us what belongs to Himself. Thus “God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption...” (1Co 1:30); and thus we are “made...accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

It was for this very end that the Father spared Him not. It was to bring about this transference, this complete exchange, that He delivered Him up for us all. He placed Him in our room, that He might place us in His. He treated Him as we deserved to be treated, in order that He might treat us as He deserved to be treated. He dealt with Him as a sinner, in order that He might deal with us as righteous—perfectly, yea infinitely righteous. He inflicted on Him all that should have been inflicted on us, in order that He might bestow upon us all that should be bestowed on Him. “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). “He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21).

And this exchange is free to all! It is infinitely glorious, yet it is entirely free—free to every man as a sinner, just as He is, just as He stands! It is without money and without price. It takes nothing for granted, but that we need it. It requireth neither price nor preparation, nor prerequisite on our part. It is absolutely and altogether free. And herein are the glad tidings of great joy comprised. God addresses each of us, and asks us to consent to this exchange. This is all. He does not ask us to pay for it, or to endeavor to deserve it, or to qualify ourselves for receiving it; but just that we should consent to it—that we should “submit ourselves to the righteousness of God.” All He asks is to allow Him to

clothe us with the righteousness of His Son: to take away our filthy raiment and clothe us with the fine linen, clean and white!

Reader! Are not these “good tidings of great joy”? Could anything be more fitted to gladden the heart of a sinner who knows that ere long he must stand before God in judgment, and has nothing about him but unrighteousness and desert of hell? And these tidings are as true as they are glad. If then you are not comforted or gladdened by them, it must be because you receive them not—because you will not consent to this blessed exchange. It is not because your sins are too many or too great to be forgiven; it is not because your heart is too hard to be softened, or your nature too corrupt to be renewed—it is just because you put away from you the message of peace, and are too proud to consent to be freely forgiven. I would “have gathered” you, says Christ, weeping over Jerusalem, but “ye would not” (Mat 23:37). And so it is still. “I would; but ye would not,” is the perdition of those who neglect the great salvation.

Reader! The most high God, the God of heaven and earth, this day renews His entreaties to you. He proposes to you the exchange of which I speak. He comes to you and says, “Wilt thou consent to have my Son for thy substitute? Wilt thou consent to part with all that is thine own, and take in exchange all that is His? Will thou part with thine own fancied claims, and take as a substitute for these the claims of Jesus? In approaching me in prayer, wilt thou take His claims instead of thine own (Psa 84:9)? In looking forward to the judgment seat, wilt thou take His claims instead of thine own? In all thy transactions with me wilt thou consent to be treated upon the ground of His merits and not thine own? Art thou willing, that in dealing with thee I should remember what He has done, and not what thou hast done, or can do? I am willing that this should be the footing on which we are henceforward to stand, and that this should be the manner of our dealings together; art thou willing? If thou art willing, then all is well. Henceforth we meet on holy ground; henceforth I deal with thee as I deal with Christ; I count thee righteous as He is righteous, and I treat thee, love thee, listen to thee, delight over thee as such. But if thou wilt not consent to this exchange; if thou clingest to thine own claims either in part or in whole; if thou wilt not be wholly represented by Christ, and looked upon by Me in Him, and not in thyself; then thou must reap as thou art sowing; thou must be judged according to thine own standard, and take thy stand at the judgment seat in thine own name and not in His, and be dealt with to the uttermost according to thine own deservings, and receive the eternal wrath to which alone thou hast any claim” (Heb 2:1-3; 10:28-29; 12:25).

Reader! Is not a proposal like this a most gracious and blessed one for you, as a child of wrath? Could any exchange be fairer or more profitable? Why do you hesitate, as if you stood in doubt as to its fairness? Why delay, as if you thought it unnecessary? Ah! If such a proposal were made in heaven to the unfallen spirits above, would not the highest archangel round the throne rejoice to embrace it? Is there an angel there that would not welcome such an exchange? They are sinless and righteous, no doubt, and live under God’s perpetual smile; yet their righteousness is but that of a creature at the best. How

gladly then would they put off their own created righteousness, that they might be clothed with the uncreated righteousness of God! How eagerly would they part with their own creature beauty, however glorious and dazzling, that they might shine in the infinite uncreated beauty of God's eternal Son? And shall a sinner be loath to part with his polluted raiment, his vile unrighteousness, that he may receive in return such an infinitely perfect righteousness, such an infinitely glorious garment, as that on which the Father gazes with delight unutterable?

But is the exchange really so free? It is. And is it free to me as I am? Yes, just as thou art. All things are ready, come then to the feast. "But my sins, my sins, so aggravated, so innumerable; are these no hindrance?" None. If thy sins were not great, thou wouldst not need such a righteousness; and the greater thy sins are, the greater thy need for parting with them without delay. "But my hardness of heart, my want of love, my imperfect convictions of sin, my dreadful insensibility, are these not reasons for doubting, and must I not get these in some measure removed before I can venture to welcome the proposed exchange?" What! Must you have a soft heart, a holy nature, and deep repentance before coming to the Savior (Act 5:31-32)? Is the Holy Spirit to give you these in order that you may have some right or warrant to go to Him? Are you not desiring these in order that you may go to Him as something better than a wretched, hard-hearted, wrath-deserving sinner? Are you not wishing for some claims of your own to add to those of Christ, or to be your own plea in asking God to confer Christ's claims upon you? If you are utterly destitute of such feelings as you desire, then all you can say is, just that you are utterly destitute of any claim of your own at all. And is not that the point to which God wishes you to come? Is not that the very state of soul which makes the claims of Jesus appear infinitely desirable (Rev 7:16-17)?

Reader! Listen to God's loving proposals and entreaties. Oh! Defer not to make so glorious an exchange. It is freely set before you. If you have it not, it is because you reject it. It is not because God would not consent, but because you would not. God says, "Whosoever will" (Rev 22:17); and could any proposal be more freely, more graciously made; or could any proposal be more exactly suitable to you? "Whosoever will," is enough to answer all your objections, and to remove all your fears!

Such, reader, is the fact which the apostle states; now, let us observe how he reasons from it. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Such is the inference which the apostle draws from the simple fact to which he had alluded! And can any reasoning be more forcible or conclusive? He that has already given the greater gift, will He deny the less? He that has already given us the whole ocean, will He refuse us a single drop? He that has given us unfathomable mines of gold, will He deny us a single particle? He that has given us the full sun in the firmament, will He deny us a solitary beam? Will the God that has already parted with His richest and most precious gifts, refuse us His lesser ones? Will He Who has given His own Son, deny us anything? Is such a thing possible? Is it conceivable? Would it not be the greatest of all imaginable contradictions? The simple fact

then, that God has given His Son, is of itself, and by itself, perfectly sufficient to warrant our absolute and unlimited confidence in God; so that it seems a thing impossible and incredible, that a sinner understanding and believing that simple fact, could have anything less than the apostle's confidence.

1. The infinitely weighty reasons mentioned at the beginning, why God must have been expected to spare His Son, do not exist in this latter case. These reasons stood in the way of God's giving His Son; but they do not stand in the way of His giving us anything else. Now, if He gave His Son, His unspeakable gift, when there were so many reasons against it, will He withhold His lesser gifts, when there are none of these reasons at all in the way? Impossible. "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

2. It cost Him much to part with His Son; it costs Him nothing to give every other blessing. He grudges not, but delights to bestow them. He is weary of withholding, but never weary of giving. Now, if He freely parted with what cost Him such an infinite sacrifice, will He refuse us what costs Him nothing but the delight of giving? He delights to give us His Holy Spirit. He delights to quicken us, to renew us, to sanctify us, to fulfill in us all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power. It costs Him nothing to do all that. Will He then refuse us His Spirit? Will He refuse to make us holy? Will He need many arguments to persuade Him to do so? Impossible! For He has already given His Son! And "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

3. He gave His Son unasked and undesired by us. We did not ask Him to give His Son. Nay, we cared nothing about such a gift. We cared nothing about God or His favor at all. He might justly have said, "They do not want to be saved. Why should I save them? They do not want eternal life; they do not want pardon, or reconciliation, or deliverance from sin. Why should I be at such a cost to obtain these blessings for them? Why should I part with My well-beloved Son for the sake of sinners who hate Me and My gifts, who have never asked, never desired any such blessings; nay, who hate and scorn them?" God might well have said so; but His thoughts were not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways; and therefore, though we desired nothing of Him, He gave His Son, His unspeakable gift! And having given us such a gift unsought, undesired, will He deny us anything when we apply for it? In this light, how brightly does that glorious promise beam which came from the lips of the Son Himself. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find!" (Luk 11:9-13). And was it not in this very way that He taught us to reason, when He said to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (Joh 4:10; Rom 5:10).

4. When He gave His Son, there was no intercessor to plead for us; no name that could have been used to prevail with Him to do so; yet He spared not His Son! What, then, will He not give us, now that we can go to Him and plead the beloved name of the beloved Son? What is there that He can refuse, when we have that Son for an intercessor at His right hand above?

5. When He gave His Son for us, He saw nothing in us but sin; yet, He did not refuse His unspeakable gift. Is it possible, then, that we can be denied anything when we appear before Him in the righteousness of His Son? If our unrighteousness did not prevent Him delivering up His Son, what is there that we may not expect when He looks upon us as altogether righteous in Him?

6. The fact of our being sinners did not hinder Him from freely giving His own Son; it is possible, then, that the fact of our being sinners now will lead him to refuse His other blessings? Our sinfulness was no barrier in the one case, can it be so in the other? If our guilt was a sufficient reason for refusing us any gift, then surely it should have hindered Him from giving us His richest and most glorious gift; but if it was for us, when we were ungodly, that Christ was given—if it was when we were enemies and rebels that the Father delivered up His Son for us—if all our ungodliness, and enmity, and rebellion, did not keep back “the unspeakable gift,” is it conceivable that any or all of these together can keep back His lesser gifts?

God’s gift of His Son is thus the pledge, the sure and infinite pledge of every other gift; a pledge so sure and so infinite as to make it the greatest of all impossibilities that He should bestow the one and deny the other; a pledge thrown down freely to sinners, and which therefore, everyone who hears of it may take up and go at once with it to God just as He is, in the assured confidence, that He Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, will with Him also freely give us all things. This simple fact, that God has not spared His own Son, is of itself sufficient to assure us of everything. What more do we need to call forth the most unbounded confidence towards God? What greater or surer pledge could God give us; and if this is not enough, of itself, to awaken the sinner’s confidence, what is there in heaven or earth that can do it? Is there not in that simple, but infinitely glorious fact, a foundation laid, broad enough, and deep enough, to sustain the full confidence of the chief of sinners? Can anything be added to it so as to make it more secure or suitable for the guiltiest of the human race to build upon? (1Co 3:11; 1Ti 1:15). Can anything in us, or done by us, or felt by us, or wrought in us, make it more sufficient or suitable?

If, then, we can hear of it, and yet feel no confidence or assurance, is it not plain that we do not fully understand its meaning, or appreciate its glorious sufficiency? There must be some mistake in our minds about the matter, if we can admit the fact here stated, and yet not draw the apostle’s conclusion. That fact, of itself, is sufficient to dispel every doubt and banish every fear. That God, Who spared not His Son, is surely a being Whose thoughts are not as our thoughts and Whose ways are not as our ways, and to Whom, therefore, however guilty, however worthless, we may come “boldly,” nothing doubting. Nay, to come with less than boldness must be sin, for it is just telling Him that His gift of His Son is not sufficient to give you confidence, without some addition, which you hope in due time He will confer on you, or which you may work out for yourself (Phi 3:3-4).

But you will say, it was an inspired apostle that reasoned in this way, and his example is not exactly suited to your case. This might do for him, but you do not think it is enough for you. But, let me ask, does he speak here as an apostle, or simply as a sinner? Does he say, I am an apostle, therefore God will deny me nothing? No. Though he was the chief among the apostles, he reasons as the chief of sinners—as one who knew nothing in himself, nothing in the whole world to give him confidence, but just the fact that God spared not His own Son. He reasons from a fact which is as open to you as it was to him. He rested his confidence on a truth which is the same to you or any sinner, as it was to him. Why not then draw the same conclusion, and with the triumphant confidence he did?

But you will say, This way of reasoning may be right for advanced Christians, but it does not suit my case, who cannot venture to call myself a Christian yet, who am nothing but a sinner. Well, but was it as a saint or as a sinner that Paul reasoned thus? Did he say, because I am an advanced saint, therefore God will freely give me all things? No; he did not rest his confidence on the fact of his being a saint, but simply on the fact that God did not spare his Son! Go thou and do likewise.

But you will say, Oh!, if I were but conscious of the Holy Spirit's work in me, I would have no hesitation in reasoning thus; but till then it would be presumption in me to do so. Now I know, that it is the Holy Spirit that alone can teach and enlighten you, and that, if He do not show you the things of Christ, my showing will be vain. But remember that the Spirit works, not by giving something new in yourself as a ground of confidence, but by showing you the fullness and excellence of the Father's gift, as an infinitely sufficient ground of confidence for the chief of sinners. The Holy Spirit does not show you something good in yourself to rest on or take peace from, but He leads your eye to the divine resting-place for weary souls. And remember Paul did not say, "He who has given me His Holy Spirit will not refuse me anything"; but "he who spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" It was the Father's gift of Christ, and not His gift of the Holy Spirit that the apostle built upon; and why should not you go, and, just as you are, do the same?

But you will say, Oh! I have no evidences of grace, no deep convictions of sin, no true repentance, nothing but a hard heart, a blind understanding, a seared conscience, a stupid and insensible soul. Well, but was it because he had got all these evidences that you desire, that the apostle exclaimed so boldly, "How shall he not freely give us all things"? No, he did not get his confidence from these, but from the simple fact, that God spared not His own Son. Go then with all your hardness, and deadness, and coldness; go just as you are, and take refuge in the same cleft of the rock in which the apostle found shelter for himself. It is as free to you as to him; it is as free to you this moment, as it ever will or can be.

But you will say, It may be so, but the state of my soul is so bad, my heart so hard and insensible. I am altogether so carnal, sold under sin, that I often despond, and think it impossible that even God can do such a mighty work in me, or effect such a glorious

change. Ah! And is it thus you reason, with regard either to the power or the willingness of that God Who has already given His own Son? Has He given His Son, and do you think, after that, it is too much to hope that He will change your heart? Is the renewing of a single soul a greater work or wonder than the gift of His Son? Give up such dishonoring doubts. Is anything too hard for the God that has parted with Christ? Is anything too much for the love of Him Who spared not His Son? Has He given His Son, and will He refuse His Holy Spirit? Has He given His Son, and will He refuse to renew you in the spirit of your mind?

Oh! Think of this! Ponder the apostle's glorious and resistless argument. Remember that the fact of your being lost, worthless, ungodly, hard-hearted, an enemy, a rebel, did not hinder Him from giving His Son. And if they did not hinder that, will they hinder anything? Nay, so far from these being reasons against God's sending Christ, they were the very reasons that led Him to send Him to save us. How perverse then, how unkind, to suppose that He will take advantage of your guilt or enmity now, to turn you away from the mercy-seat, and put your confidence to shame! Can any amount or any kind of unworthiness in you, make it less true that God spared not His own Son? So long, then, as that simple fact remains the same, you are not merely warranted, but bound to come to God with confidence, whatever may be the extent of your guilt, or the depravity of your heart.

Two things then are plain from the apostle's words, first, that we cannot ask too confidently; and, secondly, that we cannot ask too much.

First, We cannot ask too confidently, for our boldness comes from our knowledge of a fact, of whose certainty there can be no doubt. That fact properly understood, is enough to assure us of everything. This simple fact, if it be sufficient to assure you of anything, is sufficient to assure you of everything. Nothing less than this could have given you the shadow of a hope, and nothing more than this is needed to give you the most perfect confidence. To have less than this full confidence, is just to say, that God has given us the greater gift, but grudges us the lesser. To have less is to dishonor God, and to slight His gift. It is just saying, that this pledge is not enough for you: that the love implied in this gift is not sufficient for you to rest on, without some inward pledge for which you are waiting! Less than this confidence, then, must be presumption on your part; it must be self-righteousness and pride. This is the only way in which your doubts and suspicions can be accounted for. For are you not reversing the apostle's argument, and saying, that though God has not spared His Son, but delivered Him up, yet you are not sure whether He will, notwithstanding this, give you anything?

Secondly, We cannot ask too much. It is not possible to expect too much from One Who has already freely bestowed such a glorious gift. The whole universe is nothing in comparison with this. Nay, all spiritual blessings are as nothing when compared with this infinite gift; so that it is not possible for us to desire too much, or to ask too much so long as we know that the God of Whom we are asking, is He Who spared not His own Son. Is anything too hard for Him? Is anything too much for Him? Is anything, there-

fore, too great or too glorious for you to ask and to expect at His hands? The conclusion, then, to which we are brought in regard to this whole matter, is just that in which the apostle in another place sums up his argument, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:19-22).

Here, then, is the sinner’s hope, the sinner’s welcome, and the sinner’s peace! Come, sinner, come! Come, wanderer, come! There is room enough for you in the heart of Him Who spared not His own Son. It is an infinite heart, a heart whose dimensions are altogether boundless, and can take in millions such as you! It is to the embrace of the everlasting arms that we invite you to hasten, and their infinite circle is wide enough to compass myriads such as you! The bosom on which we ask you to recline, is that bosom of love out of which the eternal Son came forth, as the Father’s gift to man, and could there be any pillow softer or safer on which to lay your weary head? Return then, thou banished one—thou “captive exile” (Isa 51:14), to thy Father’s house! Come, lost one, come! Come now; come just as you are; come without price or preparation. For Father, Son, and Spirit unite in proclaiming, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37).

*From The Kelso Tracts; available with three others from Chapel Library in a booklet entitled
“The Sin Bearer.”*

The Chosen One

“Mine elect [Chosen One], in whom my soul delighteth.”—Isaiah 42:1

“My servant whom I have chosen.”—Isaiah 43:10

“The Christ, the chosen of God.”—Luke 23:35

It is Jesus Who is the *Chosen One*. He is, by preeminence, the object of the Father’s choice. Above all other beings in heaven and on earth, and in a way infinitely distinct from every one of them, He is the eternally chosen of the Father—the chosen of Him Whose divine wisdom knew well the value of that which it was choosing, and, therefore, could not choose amiss.

He alone was chosen for what was good in Him. God may have reasons for choosing objects, apart from what He finds in themselves; but in the case of the only begotten Son, it was the matchless excellence and glory found in Him that made Him the object of the Father's everlasting choice. It was thus that He was "set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, being...daily his delight" (Pro 8:23, 30). Other objects might be chosen for something good in them, and God, in looking upon these objects of His choice, might pronounce them "very good" (Gen 1:31). But still even these had only something that was good in them, Jesus had all. They were destitute of many things in which God delighted, Jesus was wanting in none. He had everything that the Father's heart could desire. Every unsinning creature is good according to its kind, and may to that extent be the object of choice. But every creature is lacking—lacking in many things, and, therefore, cannot be the object of full and satisfied choice to Him Who can be completely satisfied with nothing but what is absolutely perfect, not only without a sin, but without an imperfection or flaw. This perfection was found in Jesus alone; and because of this He was the Father's Chosen One. Jehovah's whole soul was satisfied in Him (Isa 42:1); and it must have been boundless excellence on which the Father's soul could thus entirely rest.

The saints are doubtless the objects of the Father's choice. Hence they are said to be "called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28; 2Ti 1:9). They are said to be "chosen...before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4). They are said to be "from the beginning chosen...to salvation" (2Th 2:13). But still they are not chosen as Jesus was. It cannot be that they should be the objects of Jehovah's choice as Jesus was. In their case, it is an object altogether unworthy that is fixed upon; in His case it is the opposite. In their case, it is not the good that is found or foreknown in them that causes them to be chosen; in Him it was.³⁶

He could not *but* be chosen, for in Him there centered all created and all uncreated excellence. His claims to be the Chosen One are without a rival; for all was perfection in Him; divine perfection, without a defect, or blemish, or stain. He was the chief among ten thousand, as much in the Father's eyes as He is in the eyes of His saints. In this, as in all other things, He has had from eternity the preeminence; a preeminence which shall remain undisputed and unrivaled throughout all the eternity that is to come. Blessed preeminence for us, for He is our Head! None can ever claim to be the Father's Chosen

³⁶ There are some who deny this choosing. They are so zealous for man's free will that they will not admit of free will in God. All the choosing they will allow God to exercise is the choosing of those whom He foreknows will turn to Him—that is, choosing those who first chose Him. They quote in defense 1 Peter 1:2, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"; and they ask, is this not choosing according to foreknowledge? Yes, beyond all doubt it is. But of what is it the *foreknowledge*? Is it of the evil or the good? Certainly of the *evil*; for what else was there to foreknow? God, foreknowing all the circumstances of the case, the evil of the whole race of Adam, that there was nothing but evil about any, no desire even to turn or believe, nothing but absolute corruption, enmity, helplessness, and death—God foreseeing all this, chose some out of this mass of wickedness. And thus they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God."

One, as He can do. Angels may stand exalted in power and unfallen excellence, but they come immeasurably short of His matchless claims. The Church, the Bride, shall be presented “without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing”; she shall be placed beside Him on His throne; but still His claims remain undivided and unapproached. In regard to these there can be no rivalry, no equality, no, not the most distant conceivable approach by any other. Oh, what an infinite and ineffable perfection of “glory and of beauty” must be in Him to render Him thus above all other beings, the supreme object of Jehovah’s satisfaction—the Father’s Chosen One! (Song 5:9-16; Psa 45:2-7; Isa 28:16; 49:1-7; Mat 12:18; 1Pe 2:4).

Doubtless, the Church is the eternally chosen of the Father—given by Him to Christ before all ages. This is her glory and her joy. This is her dignity above all other creatures; and well would it be for her if she would keep in mind this her peculiar preeminence, and live like Jehovah’s “called, chosen, faithful” one (Joh 17:2, 6, 11, 24; Rev 17:14). But still she is not and cannot be the chosen one as Jesus is. He has everything about Him to render Him altogether worthy of this honor; she has nothing but what makes her utterly unworthy of it. It is not for what is good in her, either known or foreknown, that she is chosen, for what is there in her but evil? What has she to boast of as her heritage but sin? What has she to tell of in reference to herself but sin—sin all over, sin within and without, the whole head sick, the whole heart faint; a body of death, corruption, pollution, and loathsome deformity. Her birth and her nativity is of the land of Canaan; her father was an Amorite, her mother an Hittite; in the day that she was born she was cast out into the open field, to the loathing of her person, “polluted in her blood” (Eze 16:1-6). What claim had she? Yet she was chosen! Notwithstanding all her unworthiness, she was chosen! Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God—how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! Oh, the exceeding riches of His grace! For it is through grace alone that she is chosen. Had it not been for this there could have been no hope for her. It was according to the eternal purpose of grace that she was chosen. It is grace that has made her to differ from the world in which she still abides. It is through grace that she is thus “known of God” (Gal 4:9), and “apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:12). It was by “the grace of God that Christ tasted death” for her (Heb 2:9). It is through grace that she believes (Act 18:27). It is through grace that she is saved, and has “good hope” (2Th 2:16); for it is the God of grace Who hath called her to His kingdom and glory (1Pe 5:1), and it is to the praise of the glory of His grace that she is predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph 1:5-6).

Yet, though it is of grace, it is as sure and real as if it had been all of merit. She is as certainly and as unchangeably the object of the Father’s choice as Jesus is. No two beings could be chosen for more opposite reasons, yet still the certainty of the choice remains the same. Blessed thought! We are as sure of the Father’s love as Jesus is. “As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you...I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in

them” (Joh 15:9; 17:26). In His case, this love, this choice, cannot be altered, neither can it be in ours. Both are sure and unchangeable. Both are from eternity to eternity. “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2).

But how is it possible that the Father’s choice can fix upon objects so entirely different from each other? How can the same Being choose the holy and the unholy, fixing upon both in the same eternal purpose, and embracing both in the same paternal arms? How is it that He can choose one object which possesses all excellence, and at the same time fix upon another which possesses none? To this we can give but a poor imperfect answer. We know not aright how all this can be: and we may well stand amazed to think that so it really is! What shall we say, but “even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” The mind of God is beyond all measurement or comprehension of ours. The heart of God is a depth too deep for us to fathom. Its streams of love flow down freely to us, and we drink and are refreshed. But its hidden springs of affection and choice are altogether inaccessible to us. The how and the why we cannot reason out or comprehend. We shall know something of those secrets of love hereafter, but here we only see through a glass darkly. Yet the fact itself is plainly revealed. God has set His heart at once upon the most worthy and the most unworthy beings in the universe, embracing both extremities in His mysterious choice. Of this we are assured; and it is a thought as blessed as it is true. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10).

But how is God righteous in so doing? Is there not something here like inconsistency? Does it not seem as if He were indifferent to the character of the objects chosen, caring little whether they were holy or unholy, since He thus fixes upon the best and the worst at the same time? By no means. His choosing Christ shows that He is not indifferent to the objects chosen. In choosing Him He shows how He prizes perfection, and how He delights in it. Having given this proof of His infinite love of goodness and holiness, no one can mistake His doings in reference to others. Whatever may be His reason, it cannot be indifference to sin or a want of regard to righteousness. He has put this matter beyond a doubt, by making The Righteous One the object of His supreme and everlasting choice. And having done this, who shall charge Him with inconsistency in choosing whom He will? Is He not at liberty to fix upon the most unholy without being charged with indifference to sin?

Having found an object infinitely worthy of His choice, and set His heart on Him, may He not make His choice of others depend upon reasons best known to Himself, without the imputation of unrighteousness? Were He indeed to choose them, and allow them to remain unholy, this charge would be well-founded. But though He finds them unholy, He does not leave them so. He chooses them that they may be holy (Eph 1:4; Col 1:22; 3:12; 2Ti 1:9). In their sanctification He displays His love of holiness. His object is that they may be delivered from their sinfulness, and conformed to the image of His Chosen One. And thus it is seen that it is still holiness that He is seeking, and on which

He has set His heart. In all things He manifests that His is a holy choice, even though fixed upon the unholy. What a motive for us to seek holiness! It is to this that we are called. It is this that is enjoined upon us, “be ye holy, for I am holy” (1Pe 1:16).

The choice is said to be in Christ Jesus. Let us mark this expression, in Christ Jesus. The saints are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Had He not been chosen, they would never have been so. It is because He is chosen that they are chosen in Him from eternity. It is the Father’s choice of the worthiest that enables Him to choose the unworthiest. It is this that makes it a righteous thing for Him to do so. In Him they are chosen, as if forming part of Himself, so that they are, if we may say so, lost in Him—so identified with Him that they appear as one with Him. They seem never to be known of the Father, nor to know themselves, save in connection with Him. If they go back to eternity, they see themselves in connection with Him. If they look at their history here, they see their connection with Him—dying, buried, rising, ascending, with Him. If they gaze forward into eternity, then also they see themselves still in connection with Him. One with Him in the Father’s purpose; one with Him in His death and resurrection; one with Him in His kingdom hereafter, when He comes again in His glory to make all things new.

This is our security and joy. Jesus is the Father’s Chosen One! Let us rejoice and be glad in this. The Father has found an object worthy of His choice. This is the foundation on which we build, a foundation broad enough for us to build upon here, and to rest upon forever. Let us sing the new song, “Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev 5:12). This Chosen of the Father is our Chosen too! Chosen in Him from eternity, we have been brought to choose Him, by that Holy Spirit Who quickeneth the dead and changes enmity into love. Whom have we in heaven but Him? “His love is better than wine” (Song 1:2). “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is our beloved among the sons” (Song 2:3). We have ravished His heart, and He hath ravished ours (Song 4:9). “His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven...his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars” (Song 5:11, 15). And weary with His long absence from us, and unable any longer to brook delay, we take up the Church’s longing supplication, “Make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices” (Song 8:14).

It is because there is such a Chosen One that there is hope for the undeserving and ungodly. Sinners! There is hope for you. The Father hath found a Chosen One, in Whom His soul delighteth, and because of this He is willing to take you in, and make you partakers of His love. Because this Chosen One has deserved everything, therefore it is a righteous thing in God to give eternal life to you who have deserved nothing. Because this Chosen One has glorified the Father, therefore His love can flow freely out to you, even though the chief of sinners. Did you but see Christ as the Father’s Chosen One, you would see what full provision this makes for your forgiveness and peace. Had there been no Chosen One in Whom the Father’s soul could rest, there would have been no hope of

rest for you. Had there been no Chosen One there could have been no accepted sacrifice, no precious blood, no magnified law, no justifying righteousness—no hope at all for any sinner. But now there is hope, certain hope, for such as you, even though the guiltiest on this side of hell, because there is such a Chosen One as Jesus, the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. The more you realize of the infinite excellence of Jesus, the more you will understand the true foundation of a sinner's peace. The more you see in Jesus what the Father sees in Him, the more will you comprehend the glad tidings of great joy concerning Him, and learn to rejoice and sing "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isa 9:6). Oh, come and share this joy. You are welcome. Tarry not a moment, lest the open door be closed forever. Strange that the Chosen of the Father should not be your chosen too! Strange that the Chosen of God should be the rejected of men! Yet so it is! Oh, sinner, is it always so to be? Are you to stumble upon this stumbling-stone laid in Zion, till you stumble into hell? ❧

"Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which believe he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed."—1 Peter 2:6-8

"Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."—Matthew 21:44

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The Throne of Grace

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Hebrew 4:16

Jesus the Son of God is our Great High Priest. He has offered His one sacrifice, whereby He hath forever perfected them that are sanctified (Heb 10:14). His offering has been accepted, and He Himself acknowledged of the Father. He has passed within the veil; He has gone into the heavens as our forerunner, to appear in the presence of God for us; He has taken His seat upon the *Throne of Grace*, the Mercy Seat above! This "High Priest of our profession" (Heb 3:1) is altogether such an one as we need. Both His office and His character make Him most suitable for sinners. In His office there is pardon and cleans-

ing proclaimed to us; and in His character there shine forth the irresistible attractions of grace and love. He is an High Priest of good things to come (Heb 9:11). He is a “merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17). He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way (Heb 5:2). Such is the High Priest of Whom the Apostle speaks.

Seeing, therefore, we have such a friend above, such a condescending, compassionate, tender-hearted brother, now at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, let us no longer stand afar off, but, laying aside our guilt and fear, let us boldly approach the throne of grace, whereon this gracious one is seated, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The throne is erected, the High Priest is there; the way is open; the veil is rent; every necessary provision has been made; nothing is wanting for the sinner’s assurance; access to God is free; everything invites us. Then let us approach, let us go up to the mercy seat, with reverential feelings, yet with calm and trustful hearts (Joh 4:10). Jesus is there, why stand aloof? Jesus is there, why fear and doubt? Jesus is there, why be afraid to lay our whole case before Him? Does He not say, “Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid” (Mar 6:50)?

Looking then within the veil, we see a throne, and behold, it is a throne of grace! And for whom is it reared? For sinners. And how are they to come? Boldly. And what gives sinners such boldness? The throne itself. And what do they obtain by coming? They obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

1. The Throne of Grace

The throne is a throne of grace. Elsewhere it is called a “mercy seat.” And it is placed in the holy of holies, the immediate presence of God, to show us that His mercy and His holiness flow from the same deep fountain, and that in order to get grace we must come as near God as to obtain holiness (Exo 19:4-6). Many speak as if grace were dispensed by God only at a distance from His holy presence, but here we are taught that its dwelling is the secret of His tabernacle, the innermost shrine of His temple, the very holiest chamber of His secret presence. It is into these we must enter if we would have grace; and these are all thrown open to us through the precious blood that is sprinkled upon the threshold (Eph 2:13). It is called *a throne* because it is the seat of rightful authority, the place where government is administered, so that whatever is done here is done by the authority of the King, and in a righteous way, according to the strictest laws of the kingdom.

But why is it called *a throne of grace*? First, because it is founded upon grace. It is upon the free, everlasting love of the Father that this throne is built. Every stone in its foundation is free love. And it is in the infinite depths of the Father's bosom that these foundations are laid. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (Joh 3:16). Second, because every part of it throughout is grace. Not only the foundation, but every stone in the entire fabric is of grace. It is cemented together by grace. The corner-

stone is grace. The headstone is grace. Every ornament wherewith it is adorned is grace. Its covering is grace. Nothing is to be seen in it, or about it, or upon it, but grace. Third, it is erected for purposes of grace. Here grace is dispensed, nothing but grace, yet all in a righteous way. Nothing but grace proceeds from this throne. Everything connected with it and coming from it is grace-grace unmixed and pure. Not partly grace and partly something else, but grace altogether and exclusively. It is not called a throne of righteousness, nor a throne of judgment, nor a throne of merit; but in distinction from all these it is called a throne of grace. It is founded on grace. It is composed of grace. It is adorned with grace. It is erected for purposes of grace. He Who sits thereon is gracious. Its laws are grace. Its transactions are grace. It has nothing to do with merit, or claim, or worthiness, but with the opposites of all these. It is grace to the uttermost, grace without mixture, grace which knows no bounds. It is grace without terms and conditions and qualifications; grace which takes simply for granted man's total worthlessness, helplessness, and sin (Mat 9:11-12; Rom 3:24; Gal 3:22; 1Ti 1:12-16).

2. For Whom Is This Throne of Grace Erected?

For whom is this throne of grace erected? For those who need grace, whose case can be met by nothing but free love. It is for sinners, for the lost, the helpless, the worthless, the undone. It is for those who have no merit, no price, no recommendation, who are utterly destitute of every qualification, who cannot point to one good thing about them, whose "whole head is sick, and whose whole heart is faint" (Isa 1:5). It is for those who would not be allowed to approach any other throne; who would not be listened to for a moment anywhere else. They would be driven from a throne of merit, or righteousness, or judgment; but they are welcome to a throne of grace. It is the very place for them. It is expressly provided for such as they. Had they any merit they might go to a throne of merit. Had they any righteousness, they might go to a throne of righteousness. Had they any hope of urging a successful plea in self-defense, they might go to a throne of judgment. But seeing they are utterly destitute of all these, whither can they betake themselves but to a throne which welcomes those who are rejected everywhere else, and which asks no claim but that of wretchedness, and want, and sin? This throne is intended not for those who have anything, but for those who are in want of everything. And it is just their having nothing that makes them welcome here. To whom does the physician come? Not to the whole, but to the sick. For whom is the hospital reared? For the diseased it is their *disease* that constitutes their claim for admittance there. The worse their disease, the more suitable are they for it, and the more welcome should it be to them. It is their need of healing that makes them fit objects for it. So it is our need of grace that makes us fit objects for a throne of grace.

But further, all else are excluded from this throne but they who need grace. Not only is it intended for them, and suited to their case, but all, save they, are positively shut out from it. It is just the very place for a sinner, but for none else. Its gates are closed against all those who come with any other plea than their *wants*. Hence, so many are sent empty

away. They acknowledge a throne of grace, profess to come to it, and to come to it earnestly, but they do not come *empty*, they do not come destitute. They try to establish some claim even when professing to have none. They are not content to be mere receivers, mere debtors to grace. They want to come with a price. They are too proud to come without it. Hence, they try to turn everything into a price. They turn their earnestness, or their convictions, or their terrors, or even their very act of coming, into a *price*, and hope, that because of these, they may be accepted. No wonder that they return as empty as they come; for they came as those who *had something*, not as those who were destitute of everything. They came to it not purely as a throne of grace, or at least a throne of grace to *them*. They came to it as partly a throne of merit, which must be approached only by those who have some qualification to bring. Perhaps they admit that it is purely a throne of grace, and must be approached only as such; but then they think that *they*, individually, dare not *expect* to receive anything until conscious of some inward feeling, as a token from God that *they* are accepted. In other words, they profess to believe that all things are ready, only they are waiting for some *personal invitation* to the feast. Now, what is this but saying that the throne of grace is not open to sinners *as such*, but to those to whom God gives some additional token of welcome; and that no sinner ought to go with boldness to the throne, until he is in some mysterious way assured, not only that the throne is erected for sinners, but in a special manner *for Himself*. We might as well deny that it is a throne of grace, and that we are sinners. For if it be such a throne of grace, and if it be erected simply for those who *need* grace, then it must be as free to each one reading these lines as to any saint that ever approached it; and each one who really knows this, will come without hesitation or suspicion. Though conscious of ten thousand wants, and ten thousand sins, yet here is the place where *he* is welcome, just *because* he has all these wants, and is loaded with all these sins.

3. How Are We to Come to This Throne?

How are we to come to this throne? The apostle answers, we are to come “boldly”—not doubtingly, hesitatingly, uncertainly, but “boldly.” We are to come confidently, “in the full assurance of faith,” certain of obtaining an answer, not thinking it possible that we can be refused; not counting it presumptuous to come so boldly, but knowing that it is only when coming thus boldly that we come in true humility, and that all doubting springs from pride and self-righteousness. In another part of this epistle we read, “Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith” (10:22): and again, “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all such as diligently seek him” (11:6). We are not only *warranted* to come boldly, but we are *commanded* to do so. It is our *sin* if we come doubtingly. It is as much God’s command to come *boldly* as it is to come at all. No one doubts that God invites and enjoins all sinners to come to this throne; no one, then, can doubt that He commands them to come *boldly*. If we are warranted to come at all, we are warranted to come boldly. It is our sin to refuse to come, it is equally our sin not to come boldly. God, in providing this throne *of* grace,

calls on us to come to it as boldly as the innocent go to a throne *of* righteousness, or the worthy to a throne *of* merit. Nothing less than such a throne could have entitled us to come to God at all, and nothing more is needed to warrant us to come with entire boldness and confidence, even from the first moment that we draw near to that throne. A sinner coming for the first time is no more warranted to come doubtingly, than is a saint just stepping into glory. Both have the same throne to go to; both equally need it: both ought to come with the same boldness, for both come simply as sinners. All the graces of the saint cannot give him boldness, and all the want of these in the sinner ought not to prevent it. Are we satisfied that it is really a throne of grace? Then let us come boldly: let us draw near in the full assurance *of* faith. It is the simple boldness that glorifies God. It is this that He expects and delights in. It is to give this that He has prepared such a throne. And it is this that honors that throne which He has erected. Why, then, should any sinner come with less than boldness to such a throne as this?

4. What Gives This Boldness?

What gives this boldness? It is the simple fact that it is a throne *of* grace we are coming to, that emboldens and assures us. So long as we do not understand the real nature of that throne, or come to it with a price or claim in our hand; so long as we conceive it to be partly a throne *of* merit requiring some qualification on our part, so long it is impossible that we can come with boldness. But when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see that it is entirely a throne of grace, then this sight alone and by itself, dissipates our fears and draws us in happy confidence to a throne so suitable and so glorious. Nothing more is needed to remove every fear than this simple fact. It was our not seeing this that first raised suspicions in our hearts, and made us come trembling and uncertain; and it is our seeing this, and this alone, that allays these suspicions and inspires us with the confidence of a child coming to a father's knee. Whenever we try to draw our boldness from any other source, immediately our souls are overclouded and our hands hang down. It is a throne of grace, and what more can we say? What more does a guilty soul need to know, in order to assure him, not only that he is welcome, but that it would be most dishonoring to God and to His throne to come with less than the assured expectation of being heard.

Our fears may whisper, "You are unworthy." True, but it is a throne of grace, a throne just for the unworthy and none else. Why, then, should our worthiness make us doubt? Still we may say, but alas, we have no good about us, no evidences of grace, no deep convictions of sin, no repentance, no right feelings, no faith, no love, no humility. True, but it is a throne of grace, and why therefore should the want of all these make you hesitate to come boldly? The want of these would have disqualified you from going to any other throne. You might well have doubted, had it been a throne of merit or of righteousness; but seeing it is a throne of grace, all grace, nothing but grace, how is it possible for even you to doubt? To make these things reasons for not coming boldly would just be to deny that it is a throne of grace at all. *It is the grace that is in the*

throne, and not the grace that is in us, that gives us boldness. Nor is it partly the one and partly the other, it is the former alone that can really do so. It is not what we see or feel in ourselves; it is simply what we see in the throne that imparts confidence. Every other source of confidence is fluctuating and uncertain. This alone is steadfast. It changes not; neither can it ever lose its power. Nothing will suit a sinner's case but something *without* him and independent of him, something which abides the same amid all his manifold changes and uncertain frames. And here is the very thing he needs—a throne of grace, and that grace the grace of Him Who is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8).

He that is not satisfied with this simple fact shows either that he does not understand its meaning, or that he is too proud to be entirely a debtor to the free love of God. He who is not content with this, as of itself sufficient to dispel all his doubts, must just go on doubting; for how is it possible that the sight of anything else can give him confidence when a throne of grace has failed to do so? And if at length the Holy Spirit graciously remove his fears, it will not be by turning his eyes to any objects within, but by showing him more fully the free grace of the throne, and the assurance which that of itself gives him that he is welcome, though the chief of sinners.

Are you then coming to this throne without boldness? Does not this show you that you have much to learn as to the nature of that throne you are coming to? If you understood this, is it possible that such uncertainty could remain? You say, But though I have not this confidence, I am earnest and importunate. Well, but you might be so, even though there were no throne at all to go to. It is *confidence* more than *earnestness* that a throne of grace calls forth. At the throne of judgment men will be earnest enough, but there will be no boldness then. Earnestness without confidence shows that you do not know that it is a throne of grace at which you are pleading. Your earnestness shows that you are *anxious* enough to secure the blessings sought; but it does not show that you know the way of obtaining them. It rather shows that you are upon a plan of your own for buying them with your own fervent prayers. Your earnestness does not honor the throne nor Him Who sits thereon. Nay, it dishonors Him, for it takes for granted that He is a hard and austere Man whom you cannot implicitly trust, and from whom you can obtain nothing but by dint of earnest importunity and effort. It is your *confidence*, your expectation, your trust, that honor both the throne and the God Who erected it for sinners such as you. The sooner, therefore, you trust, and the more implicit is your confidence, the more are you giving glory to God.

Our expectation of receiving should be a confident one, just because it is not founded upon anything in our character or doings, but upon something altogether independent of us, which is not affected by our fluctuations in the least, and abides ever the same. Yet, strange to say, there are many who think it unsafe to have this boldness till some foundation has been laid for it in the improved condition of their own souls. What! Is it unsafe to build upon the rock alone? Is the fabric insecure unless sand be mingled with the foundation rock? Is the garment not wide enough to wrap us unless eked out by tat-

ters of our own? Are we to doubt so long as we have merely the throne to embolden us, but to cease our doubts so soon as we discover some good thing in ourselves?

But may we not be Christians without having this boldness? I am not careful to answer a question like this. This, however, I may say, that matters have come to a sad pass indeed when a man's only comfort is that he may be a Christian and yet not know it, that he may be a believer and yet have no confidence, that he may be a child of God and yet not be sure whether God be his Father or not.

Do you say then, Tell me what I am to do? Ah, are you bent upon *doing* something, thereby proving that you are not satisfied with what has been already done by another. You want me to put you upon doing something in order to get this boldness; whereas I want to put you off doing anything in order to get this, and simply to take it from what another has done. But you say, Tell me how I am to trust? Ah, do I need to tell the child how to trust its parent, or throw itself upon the bosom of its mother? Is it not enough that it knows its parent's heart? And is it not enough that you know the heart of God and see the throne of grace He has erected? What a display of self-righteousness is the struggle to believe! What a manifest proof that all unbelief is the belief of a lie—a lie which it costs such a desperate struggle to part with!

Such then is the nature and meaning of that voice which speaks to you from the Throne of Grace, that it leaves you no other alternative but either to doubt God's word and deny His truth, or else to enter upon immediate peace and assured reconciliation.

5. What Do We Obtain by Coming?

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”—Hebrews 4:16

What do we obtain by coming? Every blessing that we stand in need of and that to the full. Here is the fountain of all blessing, from pardon of sin up to the fullest amount of holiness and joy. These the apostle sums up under two heads “mercy and grace.” He says, “Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain *mercy* and find *grace* to help in time of need.” These two words comprehend everything. First, there is mercy, then, there is grace.

Mercy

First, *that we may obtain mercy*. Mercy is tender love to the miserable and guilty, showing itself in forgiving and blessing them. It is the feeling called forth by the sinner's lost estate, and therefore regards him simply as a sinner, a lost one. Now this forgiving love is just what the sinner needs at first. It is the first thing that he cries for when awakened to a sense of sin. It is also the first thing which God bestows, and until He has given this He can give nothing else. Such is exactly the view of it presented here by the apostle. It lies *uppermost* on the throne of grace, placed so as to draw our attention at

once. It is the first object that attracts our eye and invites our hand. Hence the words of the passage literally are “that we may *take* mercy”—take it as a thing held out to us—take it as a thing pressed most fervently and freely upon our notice and acceptance. It is mercy that the sinner needs, for he is guilty, condemned, under the law, under the curse, under wrath; and it is mercy that is first extended to him that he may be delivered from guilt and condemnation, sheltered from the curse and wrath which were his due, and brought out from being under the law to be under grace.

Sinner! There is mercy for thee! it lies upon the mercy seat inviting thee to take it. It is mercy to the vilest, mercy to the uttermost, mercy which embraces every sinner on this side of hell! And it is mercy *now*, mercy to thee as thou standest in thy sin, mercy in which there is no delay, no uncertainty! Take it and be forgiven. Take it and enter into peace with God!

Help in time of need

Second, *that we may find grace to help in time of need*, or more literally, “grace for all needful help.” Having obtained mercy, it is grace that is next presented to us; that is, not merely the free love of God, but that full measure of infinite blessing which that free love bestows. Hence it is written of Christ, “of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). Hence also in the apostolic salutations “grace” is the whole sum and burden of all their prayers in behalf of their brethren. Hence also it was said to Paul in his hour of trial “my grace is sufficient for thee” (2Co 12:9), and hence Paul exhorted Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1). So here it seems to be used as comprising all fullness and variety of blessing, “the manifold grace of God” (1Pe 4:10).

We enter into the Holy of Holies, we go up to the mercy seat. Its *covering* is mercy. We remove the covering and wrap it round our guilty wrath-deserving souls. Then are we safe, for the covering which wraps us is divine. Not a drop or ray of wrath can penetrate it. But having obtained this, we begin to discover that we need much more than this. This is enough to shield us from wrath; but we need to have our emptiness filled, our hunger satisfied, and our thirst quenched. We need to be delivered from a body of death; we need to be made holy, and strengthened in the inner-man. How are we to obtain these? We look around, and behold the mercy seat itself contains the fountain of all these needed blessings. Beneath the covering which we had removed, we discern this precious fountain; and now we are put in possession of everything we require. We take our stand at the side of this well of water, and drink without ceasing from its exhaustless stores. We have found supply for every want, free provision for every various state of our souls. It is just with us as with some poor bankrupt, whose debts some friend has undertaken to cancel. He gets his past debts paid, but what is he to live upon? His compassionate friend steps forward, and tells him that he is welcome to draw upon Him at any time, and to any amount he pleases. Such is the manner in which we first obtain mercy, and then have the fountain of grace opened to us, that out of it we may draw continually and without limit or condition.

In this infinite fountain of the manifold grace of God, there is every needful provision for a saint during all his pilgrimage. There is something here for all times and seasons, for all states and circumstances, for all times and trials. We are unholy; iniquities prevail against us; the flesh lusteth against the spirit. But here is grace to enable us to be holy. We walk too much with the world, too little with God; our walk at the best is uneven, distant, changeful. Here is grace to enable us to walk with God, like Enoch; to have our conversation in Heaven, even when dwelling on the earth. Our souls cleave unto the dust; the things of earth engross and depress us. Here is grace to enable us to set our affections on things above, to live as those who are already seated with Christ in heavenly places, and from these look down upon the earth (Eph 2:6). We have daily infirmities, both of body and spirit, to struggle with. Here is grace to enable us to be strong in the midst of weakness, yea, to glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on us (2Co 12:9). We have a race to run. Here is grace to enable us to run it well, to run it with patience. We have enemies to war with, not only flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. Here is grace to make us more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Rom 8:37). Here, in short, is grace for everything, for every want, for every time—grace wherewith to live, grace wherewith to die. Why then should we be poor so long as God is rich? Why should we be weak so long as He is mighty? Why should we be empty so long as He is full? Why should any necessity or trial ever be too great for us, seeing we have Him to undertake for us, and seeing we have grace like this to help us in time of need? Why should we ever either fear or doubt, seeing we have a fountain of free love like this to draw from continually? Oh folly, passing all other folly! Oh wickedness incredible and inexcusable, for the child of faith to give way to perplexity and fear! “Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (Joh 15:4).

6. Conclusion

Such is the Throne of Grace! Such its freeness to every sinner. Such the boldness with which he ought to come: *such* the sure ground of confidence in coming: such the blessing to be obtained. Come then, sinner, come! The throne invites you, and says COME! The High Priest that is seated on it, invites you, and says COME! God the Father, Who erected that throne for such as you, says COME! The Word says, COME! Ministers say, COME! This tract says, COME! Each passing hour says, COME. Each trial that afflicts you says, COME! Every voice above you and around you, says COME. COME boldly to this throne of grace.

Remember that this throne will not remain forever. It has its set time. After that, it must be removed, and in its room the throne of judgment will be set up. And oh! How different the one from the other! The one is all grace together. The other has no grace at all. All about it and proceeding from it, is righteousness, judgment, condemnation! Hear the description of it: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them; and I saw

the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev 20:11-12). How soon the throne of grace will be taken down, and this awful throne set up, you know not. It may be soon. Time cannot always last. Christ will not always tarry. He will come. Then time shall be no longer. Then grace shall be at an end. Then the acceptable year of the Lord shall close, and the day of vengeance begin (Isa 61:2). Then you shall hear no longer the gracious invitation of the Savior, “Come unto me.” All that you shall hear will be the sentence of the Judge, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41).

Stand no longer without. Tarry no longer by the way. Enter into the sanctuary. Come within the veil, for behold it is rent. Go up to the mercy seat. Go as thou art. Go boldly, even though the chief of sinners. Remember it is a throne of grace thou art going to; therefore let no amount of sin in you, lead you to despond, or to draw near uncertainly. Go up to it. All that thou needest is there. Take the full measure of everlasting blessings. Fear not. Shrink not. It is just for such as thee. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

*From The Kelso Tracts; available with three others from Chapel Library in a booklet entitled
“The Throne of Grace.”*

Righteous Reconciliation

“He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 Corinthians 5:21

“Be reconciled to God,” was the apostle’s message wherever he came. To Jew and Gentile, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, to all alike he proclaimed it. As though God did beseech them by him, he prayed them in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God. This is God’s message still to an alienated world. He is still as gracious and as sincere in His proposals of peace and friendship. He still stretches out His hand all day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying people (Isa 65:2; Rom 10:21). He asks us and entreats us to become His friends, telling us how willing He is to forget all our past enmity, and to remember our iniquities no more. Be THOU reconciled to Me, is God’s own special entreaty to every sinner.

These proposals of peace are not mere well-sounding words. There is nothing indistinct or uncertain about them. They rest upon a sure foundation; a foundation deep and broad, laid by God Himself, such as to assure us that the reconciliation proposed is as righteous as it is real. It is founded upon righteousness. In it there is no compromise of justice. The law is not annulled, but magnified and made honorable. The grounds of quarrel and alienation have been removed, and a solid foundation for agreement laid; so that it is not merely a gracious, but a righteous thing in God to be reconciled to sinners, to love, to pardon, to save, to bless them. Hence there is no possibility of this agreement giving way. The controversy between the sinner and God, once settled, is settled forever. And these are the grounds of this settlement, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him."

Thus we learn that God becomes reconciled to us, not by His passing by sin with indifference as if it were a trifle, but by His laying it on another, condemning it in another, punishing it in another, and so removing it clean away from between us and Him, never again to be the ground of quarrel, or the occasion of separation between us. Thus there is not merely grace for us, but *righteous* grace, grace that condemns the sin, yet justifies the sinner, grace that pardons the transgressor, and yet magnifies the law he has transgressed. Thus God, Who before was righteously our enemy, can now be as righteously our friend. That righteousness which was against us, is now upon our side. It is *a righteous* peace, a righteous reconciliation, a righteous settlement of the controversy between us and God, which is now proclaimed to us through the finished work of the Divine Substitute, the mighty sin-bearer, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

1. The Author Is God the Father.

Observe the author of the reconciliation: it is God the Father. He hath made Him to be sin for us. It is in the infinite bosom of the Father that it had its origin. It is from His eternal love that it flowed forth. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1Jo 4:10). The proposals of reconciliation came from Him, not from us. He thought on us ere ever we thought on Him. He sought our friendship when we thought not of seeking His. He formed the purpose, devised the plan, prepared the way, accomplished the end! And all at an infinite cost! It was He Who saw us in our blood, and said to us "Live" (Eze 16:6)! It was He Who in the fullness of a love which is absolutely without measure, said, "I will reconcile them to Myself; I will remove the ground of separation; I will level the mountain-barrier; I will suffer nothing to stand in the way of this My purpose of love; I will love them freely; I will receive them graciously."

2. The Instrument Is the Son

The instrument of effecting the reconciliation: the Son of the Father—his *holy* Son, Who knew no sin; in Whom there was no spot, no stain, no shadow of iniquity. He was

“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” infinitely pure, and immeasurably removed from sin. He was “acquainted with grief,” but not with sin. He was holy from eternity as the everlasting Son of the Father. He was holy as Immanuel, God with us—holy in His conception, holy in His birth, holy in His life, holy in His death—altogether holy, tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15). No language of man can express His infinite holiness, His irreconcilable opposition to all iniquity, whether as God or as man. In Him dwelt all the infinite holiness of the Godhead, and all the perfect holiness of the unfallen creature. It was His infinite holiness that fitted Him for being the instrument of reconciliation. By none but an infinitely holy Being could sin be borne and put away. It was utterly impossible that any less holy being could accomplish this. And it was thus that God set up the highest possible standard of holiness in the very person of Him Who was bearing sin, that sin and holiness might be more strongly contrasted with each other, the hatefulness of the one exposed to view, and the beauty of the other set forth in its aspect of most lovable perfection. It was thus, too, that God declared His love of holiness and His hatred of sin, by means of that very instrument through which He was reconciling the sinner to Himself.

3. The Manner

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 Corinthians 5:21

The manner of accomplishing this: He made the sinless one to be sin for us. It was thus that He laid the foundation of our peace. He did this, not by passing by sin or treating it with indifference, but by placing another in our room to bear its penalty, and that other His own holy well-beloved Son. “He made him to be sin for us.”

He was made sin

First, *He was made sin*. This cannot mean that He was in any sense or degree sinful, for He knew no sin. Yet it means more than merely that He was made a sin-offering. This would not be giving the word its natural meaning, it would weaken the expression, it would destroy the contrast between His being made sin, and our being made righteousness. Doubtless He was a sin-offering, a trespass-offering, a burnt-offering. He was all offerings in one, the sum and antitype of all. Yet this does not exhaust the meaning. The meaning evidently is, that God dealt with Him as if He were really a sinner, such as we are. He treated Him as if all iniquity was centered in Him. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was clothed with our guilt. He bore the burden of our iniquities. He was dealt with as if under the curse; He was made a curse for us. He received upon His head the vials of the Father’s wrath. He drank the cup of trembling which is the sinner’s portion. In all respects the Father dealt with Him as guilty of our transgressions. “He made him to be sin.”

He was made sin for us

Second, *He was made sin for us*. He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18). He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was treated as a sinner, because He stood as our Sin-bearer, our scapegoat, our substitute, our surety. Our guilt, our curse, our chastisement, were all transferred from us to Him. Our debts and responsibilities were all devolved on Him. He met the law in all its claims, and satisfied them for us. He came under obedience to the law in all its duties, and fulfilled it for us. It was in our room and as our representative that He acted, obeyed, suffered, and died. He bore our sins that we might not bear them; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed (Isa 53). All this *has been* done. It is finished. The Sin-bearer has accomplished the work which the Father gave Him to do.

4. The Consequences

The blessed consequences of this: that we might be made, or, simply and literally, that we might *be*, the righteousness of God in Him. By Christ's bearing wrath for us we are delivered from wrath, and receive forgiveness. But this is not all. Through Him we are accepted before God. Through Him we are made righteous; nay, divinely righteous, obtaining "the righteousness of God in him." By this exchange between the sinner and the Savior we get all that is His, and He takes all that is ours. We not merely get a righteousness, but God's own righteousness, a righteousness divinely perfect, divinely fair, divinely precious, divinely glorious. God saw in Christ all our guilt, and He sees in us all His righteousness. He saw in Him all our unworthiness: He sees in us all His worthiness. He entirely beholds us in this light.

He ceases to see in us anything else than Christ's perfection; and hence we are spoken of as actually *being the righteousness of God in Him* would have been much to have given us what Adam had before he fell. It would have been more to have bestowed on us an angel's righteousness. It would have been more still to have clothed us with an archangel's beauty and glory; but He has gone beyond all this, infinitely beyond it all! He has bestowed on us Divine glory and beauty; nothing less than the righteousness of His own eternal Son! He looks on us *in Him*, blesses us *in Him*, loves us *in Him*, and will hereafter glorify and reward us *in Him*. We are "complete in him" (Col 2:10). It is not said we *shall be*, but we *are* complete! Complete in His completeness, righteous in His righteousness, comely in His comeliness, perfect in His perfection. "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee" (Song 4:7). It is our connection with Him through believing that gives us this completeness in the Father's eyes. To the end of our earthly course we are incomplete in ourselves; yet from the moment we believed we became complete *in Him*. Paul refers to the same high standing when he speaks of being "found in him" (Php 3:9), and explains this as meaning "not having his own righteousness," but "the righteousness of God." Being "found in him," then, is being regarded by God according to what is in Him, and not according to what is in us. Here self-righteousness stumbles,

and suggests a thousand doubts and perplexities. It says, were I more holy, more penitent, more earnest, more prayerful, had I more evidences of the Spirit's work in me, I could be satisfied. Now, what is this but seeking to be found, not in Him, but in your own holiness, or penitence, or prayers, or graces? What is it but saying, God cannot look upon me as righteous in Christ, except I have something of my own in addition, to recommend me to His favor? If God is to treat us in any measure according to what we are in respect of holiness, or grace, or love, then He must cease to look upon us in the face of His anointed Son. We must either be *wholly* found in Christ, or not at all. We must either be dealt with wholly according to what He is, or *wholly* according to what we are. There must be no mingling of the two, no adding of the Spirit's work to complete the work of Christ as our righteousness before God.

All this simply in consequence of our connection with Jesus! All this righteousness, this acceptance, this completeness, simply as belonging to Him? But what forms this connection between the sinner and the Savior? How is the exchange accomplished? What is the link that binds us to this righteousness, as our sins were bound to Him, so that we get all its benefits? We answer, it is written, "Christ is the end of the *law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (Rom 10:4). Again it is written, "To him *that worketh not, but believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5). Again it is written, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb 3:14). It is our believing, then, that forms the connection between us and Christ, not our working, or our feeling, or our deserving. When the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us, He does not so work in us as to give us something in ourselves to rest on, something to prepare us for receiving the righteousness of Christ. He opens our eyes and shows us the glory of the Savior, so that thereby we are wholly led away from ourselves to Him. That which He shows us in Jesus is what we rest on, not that which He works in us; so that as soon as He shows us Jesus, straightway we are irresistibly drawn to Him. We see how altogether suitable He is, how excellent is the way of being saved through Him, how complete the provision made for our acceptance with the Father.

And, believing, we have life through His name. His mantle is thrown over us, and His beauty covers all our deformity. We become the righteousness of God in Him. Thus, in point of acceptance with God, there is no difference between one believer and another, or between the same believer at the beginning and at the end of his career, just as in respect of *condemnation*, there is no difference between one sinner and another. So, soon as we believe we are entirely justified, and stand "accepted in the Beloved." The question is not, how far on are you in the life of faith, but are you believing at all? Is Jesus everything to you for pardon and acceptance? All turns on the one point of owning Him to be everything—saying Amen to the Father's testimony regarding Him. Then "He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30).

Such are the grounds on which God's message of reconciliation is founded. Without these, to have spoken of restoration to God's favor, would have been saying, Peace, peace,

when there was no peace. But with these we can say, Peace, peace, to the sinner when there is peace (Jer 6:14). Grace can flow freely forth now, because righteousness has had its due. On this footing it is, that God is now sending abroad His proposals of friendship to us. He stretches out His hand to all sinners, entreating them to be at peace, and telling them that there is nothing now to prevent a lasting friendship being established between Him and them. God's gracious heart is now pouring itself down upon this guilty world of ours in a full stream of love, through this righteous channel. It is this that enables God to meet the sinner just as he is and just where he stands.

5. "Be Reconciled to God"

And it is because of this righteous provision for peace between the world and God, that we go forth to tell men of God's gracious mind regarding them, and His proposals of friendship to them. It is because of this that we are enabled to go up to every man, and say personally to him, "Be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20).

First, *be reconciled to God, for see how He hates sin*. Before He could pardon it, He must lay it on His own Son, and when laid on Him it must be punished in Him. He must bear the infinite wrath of God against iniquity. How infinitely He must hate sin; how certainly and swiftly He will avenge it! In clinging to sin you are clinging to that abominable thing which He hates, and on which His terrible vengeance is about to descend.

Second, *be reconciled to God, for see how earnestly He seeks to be reconciled*. What infinite pains He has taken to secure this! At what a cost He accomplished it! If He had not been in earnest about this, would He have parted with His own Son? Would He have bruised Him and put Him to grief and shame? Would He have emptied the vials of His wrath on Him? Would He have refused to let the cup of agony pass from His holy lips? How much He must have been bent on reconciliation, when He could consent to all this, rather than that we should remain unreconciled! How sincere and true must His entreaties of reconciliation be!

Third, *be reconciled to God, for see what a righteous reconciliation this is*. Its foundations are laid on righteousness, and therefore they are immovable. You cannot say, we are not sure whether it is a real reconciliation, or whether it will prove lasting. It is righteous, and therefore it is real, and sure, and lasting. What can ever occur to break up a friendship founded upon righteousness? What can ever renew the breach which has thus been healed, or sever the golden link by which the soul is inseparably bound to God?

Fourth, *be reconciled, for see the blessed effects of this*. It puts you in possession of such mighty blessings. It accomplishes such a glorious exchange between Christ and your soul. It clothes you with raiment so divine. It provides for you such a righteousness, so spotless, so precious, so divinely perfect—better than Adam's, more excellent than that of angels—the very righteousness of God! What a dignity, what a glory is the portion of believers! Not merely to be restored to what we lost in Adam, but to a glory far

brighter, an inheritance far richer, a crown far more resplendent! To be exalted above angels, and placed upon the very throne of God's eternal Son: "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (Isa 54:17).

Fifth, *be reconciled, for learn the awful consequences of remaining unreconciled*. If unreconciled, then are you still enemies, unrighteous, condemned, children of wrath, bearing your own sins and sinking under its weight to the lowest hell. No removal of the curse for you! No bearing of the wrath for you! No deliverance from the second death! Great is the inheritance of the saints in light, so great shall be your inheritance of darkness. Souls saved by grace are made heirs of an infinite glory and blessedness; so you who reject this grace must be heirs of infinite shame and woe. Ransomed souls in heaven are raised far above angels; so you who remain unreconciled must go down to a place in hell far lower than the devils. Yours must be the place in hell—lower than Sodom and Gomorrah, lower than Tyre and Sidon, lower even than Chorazin and Bethsaida—for you have rejected the great salvation in a way such as no devil ever could do, and such as none of these guilty cities ever did. Oh dreadful doom of unreconciled sinners! The lowest place in hell; the very "blackness of darkness," in a region where all is night (Jude 1:13)!

Be reconciled then, for now is the accepted time and the day of salvation. "This is the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luk 4:19; Isa 61:2). The day of vengeance is at hand (Isa 13:6). "Agree with thine adversary quickly, ere the day of reckoning arrive" (Mat 5:25). *Be reconciled*, for time is short, days and years are flying swiftly on, eternity is at hand. You may soon be beyond the region where it is possible for a sinner to be reconciled. Hope will soon be exchanged for despair. The possibility of being saved will soon pass into the utter and awful certainty that you are lost, forever lost! *Be reconciled*, for days of darkness are near. The last days are already coming into view, if indeed we have not already entered on them. The time of fearful tribulation is approaching, and what unreconciled soul will be able to abide it? Who but a child of light will be able to make his way onward in those days of utter darkness. "Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jer 13:16). *Be reconciled* to God, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh! This world's history is rapidly nearing its close. It will not be long till the bridegroom come and the door be shut! It will not be long till the Judge descend and summon you to His bar. Jesus has long delayed His coming, out of long-suffering love to a rebellious world, but He will not always delay it. He will come at length. How soon I know not. It may be very soon. There is nothing that man knows of between us and His coming. It may be at the very door! His chariot may be already on its way. Oh, then be reconciled to God! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when once his wrath is kindled but a little." ❧

From The Kelso Tracts; available with three others from Chapel Library in a booklet entitled "The Throne of Grace."

Believe and Live

“If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”—John 8:46

In these simple words, our Lord appeals to the truth of what He was saying as the ground upon which He expected to be believed. By this He shows us that the truth of a thing is the real ground of faith. Our reason for believing a thing is, that we think it to be *true*, and our reason for not believing a thing is, that we do *not* think it true. If we see it to be really true, we cannot help believing it; and if what is thus seen to be true be also good, we cannot help being made glad by it (Pro 12:25; Act 13:48).

Faith, then, is the receiving as true what God declares to be so, and unbelief is not receiving as true what He declares to be so. Saving faith is the believing that as true which God has made known for our salvation. Christ and His work are the things which God has revealed for salvation, and therefore saving faith is believing that to be true which God has told us regarding Christ and His work (Joh 20:31).

In order, then, to faith in God’s word, the only question that arises is, “Is this word perfectly true?” In order to faith in Christ, the question is, “Is all that God has told us about Christ perfectly true?” (Joh 5:31-32; 3Jo 12). Is Christ really altogether worthy of our trust? If we are satisfied of this, then straightway we *believe*; nay, we cannot but believe. If we do not believe, it must just be because we are not satisfied that what is told us is really true, or that Christ is so worthy of our confidence as God represents Him to be. For if we see it to be just as God says it is, then we believe, and believing we have peace with God—our minds are set at rest.

1. Depending on Feelings

But here many will say, “Oh, we believe all that God has told us about Christ, but we don’t *feel* it; it has no effect upon us.” Now I ask, are you sure that you are believing *the very thing* that God has declared regarding Christ, or only something else which seems very like it? Are you not saying, “All this is true, no doubt; but it is not true to *me* till I experience some change within which will warrant me in believing that it is true to me.” If this be what you are saying, then it is plain that you are *not* believing the testimony of God concerning Christ, but some other thing. God’s testimony is something which is true, whether you believe it or not, whether you are conscious of any change or not. If, then, you are saying that however true the facts of Christ’s death and resurrection may be, yet these things are nothing to you personally until you are conscious of some inward change, then you are not believing the truth of God. You are denying God’s testimony; you are believing only a part of it, and thereby, in reality, denying it all. You are making God a liar (1Jo 5:10). And, lastly, you are putting aside the very instrument by

which the Holy Spirit works the change you so much desire—I mean the truth regarding Christ and His work, which God has declared to you, that, by believing it, you may be renewed and sanctified (1Pe 1:22-23). Remember, God never says, here is a testimony which is true to you as soon as you have been regenerated. No; that would be no testimony at all; that would be no gospel at all. He says, here is a testimony which is true to you, whether you receive or reject it: here is a testimony, by believing which you are to be renewed and sanctified (2Th 2:12-13).

I know that the Holy Spirit must work in you in order to your believing, as well as after you have believed. But I am speaking at present merely of the thing that is done; not of the agent, Who works unseen, like the wind that bloweth as it listeth.

You say, that though the testimony is most true, and though it is “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,” yet it does not exactly suit you, for you are one of those who *cannot feel*. In answer to this, I say that it is most suitable for you, for *it provides for your want of feeling*. It does so, for it tells you of One Who can give you all the feeling you want—of Him Who is “exalted a Prince and a Savior to *give* repentance” (Act 5:31)—of Him Who has the Holy Spirit to dispense that Spirit by Whom alone your insensibility can be removed. It does so, for it sets before you the very truth most fitted to make you feel. God says to you, Believe what I have made known to you concerning My Son. You reply, I do not *feel*. Well, but *believe*, in order that you may feel. You never can feel until you believe. It is the *truth* regarding Jesus and His finished work that produces feeling in the soul. You want faith, you say. How then do you think to obtain it? Not by some prodigious exertion of mind to grasp the truth; for faith is the simple and natural impression which *truth, as truth*, makes upon the mind. You think, then, perhaps, that you must just *wait* till this new principle starts up within you, and then you will be able to exercise faith on Christ. When this is done, then you suppose your faith will bring you life. Now, herein you err; for it is not faith that causes life; it is the *truth* which does this; it is the truth which produces both faith and life. It is not your own *act* of believing that is the means of life; it is the thing which you believe, that is, the gospel. The truth is the instrument, though the Holy Spirit is the agent. You must therefore look out from yourself for the *truth*, not inwardly upon yourself for faith, or for some *conscious* movement of the Spirit upon you, in order to be enabled to believe. Hear, then, what the gospel says to you, and thus you will get faith, and hope, and life, and peace, and everything you need (Isa 55:3).

2. Depending on “Inward Changes”

God says to you and to every sinner, Believe My word, and you shall have everything. You say, No; give me first some inward change of heart as a personal pledge that this word is true to me, and then I will believe it. God says, What? Is not My word *true*? Can any inward pledge make it more so? Is it not insulting Me to ask for anything more than My simple declaration? To wait for feeling before you will believe, is both to question My veracity and to reverse My order of procedure. Reader, mark this! God says *believe*, and

then you *will feel*. You say, I must feel before I can believe. Do you say, How can I believe if I do not feel? Rather say, How can I feel if I do not believe?³⁷ Oh, that I could persuade you and every weary sinner at once to throw yourselves upon the simple truth and testimony of God, in spite of all your want of feeling. Oh, that I could bring you at once to say, “Well, it is all true, most certainly and entirely true! (Joh 19:35; 21:24). The whole work is done. It is finished (Joh 17:4; 19:30; Heb 10:10,12,14). The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:5-6; 1Pe 2:24). It is true I am not actually forgiven until I believe; but provision, full provision, has been made for my forgiveness, for my peace, for my salvation. If I believe this, then I receive them all. And is it not all true? What then, can keep me from believing it? I do not feel, indeed, as I ought to do; but shall I add to the guilt of not feeling, the guilt of not believing too? Whether I feel it or not, the thing is *true*; and it is the truth of the thing, not my feeling it, that is the ground of forgiveness; and then the only way of feeling it is to believe it, for how can I feel a thing which I do not first believe?”

3. Seeing God’s Testimony as True

It is upon this point that God’s controversy with the sinner turns. And this he will not give up. The sinner must be brought to see that the very *first* thing he is to do is to receive God’s testimony concerning His Son as true, and receiving it as true, to go to God in confidence as to a father. This one point God disputes with the sinner; and to bring him to this point, He allows him to go on groping in darkness, sometimes for years. This may seem a small point to many, but it is not so. They may wonder why a sinner should be kept so long in darkness for this sole reason, and why so much importance should be attached to it. God’s honor is involved in it. The veracity of His word and character is involved in it. The truth and freeness of the gospel are involved in it. There is as much self-righteousness, and as great a denial of the gospel in waiting for so much feeling, as in wanting for so many good deeds. Peace gotten in such a way would be at the expense of God’s truthfulness, and by a denial of the sufficiency and perfection of the Savior’s work. If you put away from you the grace of God because you have no feeling, no love, no holiness, or because your faith is so defective, then it is plain that you are wanting to make a savior of these, and “to be found” in them, not in Christ.

Poor sinner, who hast so long sought peace in vain, think of this! This is God’s controversy with you. He asks you to believe, and you *will* not. You so far assent to the testimony, but you deny its bearing upon yourself. This is direct unbelief. This is making God a liar. And hence He disputes the point with you. You must believe His whole testimony, else you can no more get peace and pardon from it than devils can. *They*, of course, believe that what has been said concerning Christ is true. But this brings neither

³⁷ “Faith must first go before, and then feeling will follow.... Though you do not feel as you would, yet doubt not, but hope beyond all hope, as Abraham did; for always, as I said, faith goeth before *feeling*” – *Becon, one of the Reformers.*

pardon nor peace to them. Why? Because they know that this testimony has no bearing upon their lost estate, and wears no kindly aspect to them. *You* must see that you, as a sinner, have an interest in that testimony (Luk 2:10-11; Joh 3:14-18). It has a most blessed bearing upon you. The devils believe the work of Christ and remain unblest, for they know they are *excluded* from it. You believe it, and are blest, because you know that you are not excluded from, but invited to share its benefits. Poor sinner! There is absolutely nothing between you and peace! It is at your very door (Rom. 10:8-9). Yet there is but one way to it; and that way is just the very way which you are so obstinately refusing to enter—believing the record that God has given you of His Son, that in Him you have eternal life. You are seeking the way to the kingdom. God says, there is the gate; it is open, open to you, to you *as you are*—enter in (Joh 10:9; Heb 10:19,22). You hasten forward, but forgetting or mistaking the directions, you miss the gate; and not finding ready entrance, you try to force your way over the walls! Alas! They are walls which reach to heaven, and cannot be climbed! Return, return, retrace your footsteps, seek the open gate, and enter in! Believe and live!

Oh! If it be all true that Jesus was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification; if it be true that His work is finished and our redemption completed, that by that work He removed the obstruction that stood between us and God, and rent the veil which excluded us from “the holy of holies;” if it be true that, in His infinitely precious and all-sufficient work, there is full provision to be found for the forgiveness of every guilty sinner upon earth, then why should any soul remain in darkness? (Joh 8:12, 12:46). Is the gospel not to *all*? Are the glad tidings not to every sinner? What says our Lord in His commission to the apostles?

“Preach the gospel to every creature” (Mar 16:15), that is, say to every creature it is for him. Do not say they are not glad tidings to me until I am renewed. That is evident absurdity. If they be glad tidings at all, they are so whether you are changed or not, whether you believe them or not. If they be not glad tidings to you, they are not so to any. Nay, if they be not glad tidings to you, then, of course, you are bound not to believe them at all; and in that case you will be under no guilt and no condemnation for not believing them. And besides, if the gospel does not extend to you, neither does the law; for you can find your own name as little in the one as in the other. And it would be as reasonable to say that the law does not condemn you, because you don’t feel yourself to be a sinner, as to say that the gospel does not bring you forgiveness, because you do not feel yourself a renewed soul. If you will deny the gospel, deny the law too. If you will exclude yourself from the justifying power of the one, you may with as much reason exclude yourself from the condemning power of the other (Rom 5:15-21). Think on this and receive the gospel! Believe and live!

4. Unbelief

But you still say, I believe that the tidings in themselves are glad, and that they ought to fill me with gladness; but still they *do not*, and how is this? Again, I say, it is

because you do not believe them, or at least that part of them which connects you with Christ, which bears upon yourself. But you say, I do believe them! Do you? Then you are a pardoned sinner, a saved soul; for Scripture says, “He that believeth...hath everlasting life” (Joh 3:36). Nay, you reply, I have not yet reached that point. I do not yet believe the gospel so as to be saved by it. Then you really do not believe it, or at least you do not believe it to be so true that you can trust your soul upon it! You cannot trust your soul upon it till you get something more, which you call feeling, to make it sufficient to bear the whole weight of your immortality! Does not that show you that you do not believe? For then you would feel yourself perfectly safe in God’s hands, far safer in His hands than your own; and feeling *that*, you would commit your soul to His without one fear (Psa 31:5).

Now, what is it that makes a sinner feel that he is perfectly safe in committing his soul into God’s hands? It is the knowledge that God has, by His Son, accomplished a work so perfect, so glorious, so all-sufficient, that it is no longer necessary that the sinner should die; nay, that it is now *righteous* in God to forgive and bless the sinner; and that God welcomes every guilty sinner back to Him just as if he had never sinned (Luk 15:7,10,12-24). Now that this work is done, why does not every sinner that hears it come and commit his soul to God? Just because he does not feel satisfied that the work is sufficient. He is, unconsciously perhaps, allowing some secret doubts of this kind to lurk in his mind. God declares, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17, 17:15). But he is not yet at one with God on this point. The moment that he comes to be at one with God in respect to the work of Christ, that moment he casts himself into his Father’s arms, and is at peace! Oh, then, believe and live; believe and be at peace.

5. The Love of God

And this brings us to another view of the gospel, that is, the aspect in which it presents God’s character to us, that of love—compassionate, unutterable love. In God’s character, love is an essential part, for “God is love.” But, then, how shall God show His love to sinners and yet be just? The work of Christ declares this. It discloses to us the depth of God’s love to man, even when he became a sinner. It shows us that having secured all the ends of holiness and justice by the death of His Son in the room of the sinner, He is now at full liberty to let that love flow out to sinners. The blood of Christ proclaims to us how much God *is in earnest* in His hatred of sin on the one hand, and in His love to the sinner upon the other. Christ’s work is the expression of God’s love to sinners. It declares the infinite extent of that unutterable love. It has removed every ground of suspicion and distrust. It gives every sinner perfect ground of confidence in Him. An unfallen being cannot *distrust* God. The fall introduced an element of distrust. It was impossible that we could trust God, or feel ourselves safe in His hands, so long as we saw that He was under the necessity of punishing us. So long as we saw that He could neither be righteous nor holy unless He condemned us, so long we could not feel anything but dread of Him, and would see that our only security lay in fleeing from His

presence. All this insecurity and distrust have been wholly removed by the death of Christ. God is no longer under the necessity of punishing the sinner. He is now at liberty to give full vent to His love. Nay, it is now a righteous and holy thing in Him to forgive the sinner (Rom 3:26; 1Jo 1:9). He is more glorified now in forgiving than in punishing the sinner. In His *character*, as revealed and ascertained to us in the work of Christ, there is full ground of confidence for every sinner. All may find refuge here. Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace (Job 22:21). To know God is to be at peace; and all our disquietude arises from our not knowing Him. “They that know thy name will put their trust in thee” (Psa 9:10); that is, there is something in God’s name or character which cannot be known without producing confidence.

Here, then, there is full and sufficient ground of trust for sinners, a ground of confidence altogether independent of anything good in them. It is easy to see how God’s nature is fitted to give confidence to all *unfallen* beings. But here the question is, Is there enough in that character to warrant the confidence of those in whom there is absolutely *no good*? The gospel answers, Yes! It was for this very end that the Father sent His Son—to reveal His character to sinners; and it was for this that Jesus died and rose again, that a way might be opened up for sinners to avail themselves of that character. To all, then, this character is proclaimed as a ground of confidence, in virtue of which every sinner in the world may return to God in the perfect assurance of a gracious and most fatherly welcome. Anxious sinner! Think on this. “Hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa 55:3)!

6. How Shall I Come?

But it is perhaps asked here, Am I to come just as I am? Is this ground of confidence open to me as I am? Yes, just as you are. And am I at liberty to exercise confidence towards God in the first moment of my return; or am I not to wait for some more feeling, or conviction, or preparation? Must I not go and pray that I may be enabled to return; and use the means for helping this forward? Here you ask, Am I at liberty to trust at first; is my *first* act to be an act of confidence? To that I answer, Most certainly. The very thing which God wants you to do, and without which everything else is but an empty sacrifice, is to come and trust in Him (Psa 32:10, 34:8; Pro 30:5); and if you are not at liberty to do so at first, you never can be so; for the grounds of our confidence never alter, and you have just as much ground of confidence in God’s character at this moment as you ever can have. You think it presumption to put perfect confidence in God at once, and at first. It is not so. There is no presumption in doing that which God asks you to do, and in which He delights (Joh 4:10; Rom 10:11-13; 1Ti 4:10). Not to do so is far greater presumption; nay, it is worse, it is making God a liar.

And mark this, you must either trust or distrust God; and will you dare say it is your duty to *distrust* God when you come to Him? You shrink from such profanity. Then shrink from the awful guilt of not trusting God the first moment of your coming near to Him (Eph 1:13, 3:12; Heb 10:22, 11:6). Again you say, “I must wait and prepare myself,

use the means, and pray that I may be enabled to return.” Nay, you must not wait; you must arise and go to your Father; and as for preparation, the only preparation I know of is just believing the record which He has given you of His Son. As to *means*, the simple truth regarding Jesus and His work is the only effectual means which Scripture sets before you. As to praying that you may be enabled to trust, etc., I ask, How can you pray to one in whom you have no confidence? You must trust before you can pray (Psa 7:1; 1Ch 5:20). If, then, you have at this moment sufficient reason for trusting God, what should hinder you doing so? What prevents your first act of return from being an act of confidence? The truth is, you are not yet fully persuaded that God’s character is really such as to afford ground of confidence. You want to get evidence of some change in yourself, and then you will believe this—that is to say, you want to go to God on some better footing than that of a sinner; and then you will be able to trust Him, and then you expect Him to recognize your newly-acquired claim. Such presumption! Such perversion of the gospel! To make your own character, and not God’s, your ground of confidence! Will God accept this at your hands?

Remember that the very first act of a sinner’s return to God is that by which, believing all that God has declared about His love in Christ, and His willingness to welcome every sinner who will return, he puts his trust in Him and says, “Abba, Father!” (Rom 8:15). Here is no mystery and no mistake. God says, Return! (Isa 44:22; Jer 31:12,21), and that one word is sufficient for you, for it shows you the posture in which God is standing towards you, and that His feelings towards you are those of unutterable compassion and benignity. What more could you have to give you confidence in God! With such evidence of His character, *how can you help* trusting Him; or how could any amount of *feeling* in you give you greater ground of confidence than you will at this moment possess? Whether you will believe it or not, you have already most ample ground of confidence towards God, ground which remains the same whatever the state of your feelings may be. All you have to do is to avail yourself of this, by going to Him in confidence as one who no longer doubts what He has told you about Himself and His Son. *Believing that testimony*, go to Him as your Father; speak to Him as your Father; ask of Him what you will and it shall be done unto you. When, then, at any time, you lose your peace or hope, it is because you are forgetting the ground of your confidence, and letting go your hold of the testimony. And when you are seeking your way back to peace and confidence, do not begin to search for evidences of your own good estate, or pore over your past acts of faith, or attempt to work yourself up into great fervor of feeling; but go simply back to the sure testimony of God regarding the finished work of His Son, and say, “Is not all this still true, still the same? Then I need not fear nor be troubled. Why art thou cast down, Oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? (Psa 42:5,11), still trust in God: return into thy rest, Oh my soul.”

7. Your Will

Do not say, I cannot believe. Christ says, *Ye will not* (Joh 5:40). It is your unwillingness that keeps you from believing. Do not say, I am seeking Christ, but cannot find Him. This is not true. It is Christ Who is seeking you, and not you who are seeking Christ. Cease to flee from Him. Allow Him to save you.³⁸ Do not mock Him by trying to save yourselves; or by trying to *help* Him to save you; or by trying to persuade Him to *help you* to save yourselves. It is thus that you thrust salvation from you. And so determined are you not to be saved in God's way, that till the Almighty Spirit make you willing, you will not give up these attempts to be your own savior: you will not consent to let Christ save you wholly. Do not say, I have done all I can, and am waiting for the Spirit. It is not true. He is waiting for you. He would come in and dwell in you if you would only give over resisting Him. Do not excuse yourselves and throw the blame on God, by referring to our Lord's words, "No man *can* come to me except the Father draw him" (Joh 6:44); for the meaning of that is plain, as showing the manner in which our unwillingness is overcome. We must be drawn, for we struggle and resist. And would you say that persons must go on in profligacy, because Scripture has said "they *cannot* cease from sin" (2Pe 2:14). Do not say, I am sure I am willing; remember, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It is your unwillingness that keeps you from believing. If you can believe man's word, surely you can believe God's word, for it is the same act of mind in the one case as in the other: nay, you ought surely far more readily to believe God's word than man's word, for you have far better ground for believing the former to be true than the latter. When believing anything, you simply ask, Is it true? Or, in believing any person, you simply ask, is he worthy of credit? If satisfied that the person is worthy of credit, and the thing true, you at once believe it. If you know the thing to be true, whether it be spoken by God or man, how can you help believing it? Do you ask, What then keeps one from believing? I answer, many things, but chiefly these: hatred of truth, unwillingness, love of sin, pride, love of approbation (Joh 5:44), dishonesty (Mat 13:19, compared with Luke 8:15). These are some of the hindrances. But will you dare excuse yourselves by pleading these?

But then, if faith be so simple a thing, is it not incredible that we should get forgiveness, and life, and peace, and all the blessings of the kingdom, upon the putting forth of so simple an act? Now, does not this show that you want to make a merit of your faith, to couple so many things with it as to make it somewhat deserving of such blessings? And if you couple your *feelings* to your faith, in order to give it weight, why may not another man couple his *works*? It is just because it is so simple, and allows no merit at all to man, that such mighty consequences hang upon it. It is evident that in making such an objection, you are supposing faith to have some merit, and that you are laying such stress upon the change wrought in you by the Spirit, as actually to make it part of

³⁸ *Editor:* Here Bonar is not alluding to Arminian theology, where God is powerless to save a soul until he "opens the door of his heart and allows Christ to come in!" Rather, Bonar is balancing the sovereignty of God in salvation with the sinner's responsibility to seek after God and submit himself to Him.

the price of your redemption, and turning it into a self-righteous plea for acceptance with God. Or at least you are making your consciousness of the Spirit's work your warrant for believing and your ground of confidence. Now the Spirit's work must not be confounded with the work of Christ; and yet, according to your ideas, it seems as if it were the Spirit's work, and not Christ's, that contained the gospel! Oh, then, throw yourself upon the simple truth that Jesus died and rose again. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance" (1Ti 1:15); that is, it is all true, and it is the very thing for you. Believe and live!

8. Being Sure

Do not say, I am not sure whether I believe or not, whether I love or not. If you say thus, the probability is that you neither believe nor love. And if you are content to remain in that state; if you say, as many do, a man cannot make sure of these things—then you may be *quite sure* that you have neither part nor lot in the matter. What! Can you not be sure whether you believe a thing or not? Does the prisoner not know whether he has believed the tidings of his respite and deliverance? What! Can you not be sure whether you love God or not? Is it so hard a thing for us to know whether or not we love an object? Are earthly loves accompanied with these uncertainties? Does the friend not know what friend he loves, and who it is that loves him in return. Does the natural eye not feel the difference when midnight is exchanged for the brightness of the rising sun (Joh 9:25; Col 1:13)? Ah! When thus you try to magnify the difficulties of making sure of salvation, is it not because you love the darkness rather than the light? How can you have one moment's peace so long as you are in doubt whether God be your Father or not? How can you live, how can you eat, how can you sleep, so long as you are not sure whether or not you are His child? How long will you go on praying that God may become your Father, instead of at once believing His testimony and going to Him in confidence as your Father? It will not do. There can be no life in religion, no liberty in God's service, no repose of spirit, till "Abba, Father" is the joyful utterance of the lip, the natural and spontaneous breathing of the heart (Rom 8:14-15; Gal 4:5-7)!

We say not these things to cause anyone to despair. Oh, no! But for the very opposite end. It is to bring every doubting, troubled spirit, at once to peace, by showing him where that peace is to be found. Weary sinners! Here are glad tidings for you! There is but a step between you and life! This very moment you may enter into peace! This very moment you may come and say, Abba, Father! All things are ready and *you* are welcome! Your Father seeks you: He has no pleasure in your death: He is in real earnest when He asks you to turn and live. His interest in your welfare is sincere and deep. Oh, then, return and be at rest! *Believe* what He has told you about the finished work of His Son, and arise and go to Him; enter again your forgotten home, take your place at the table, and rejoice with them that rejoice over you—"This our brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luk 15:32).

Ho, ye that are afar off—wandering in misery through the waste howling wilderness—return, return! The storm is rising, the last fatal storm—and where will you find shelter? Here is the refuge from the storm and the covert from the tempest—in the finished and accepted work of Immanuel (Isa 25:4, 26:20, 32:2; Mat 23:37). Place yourselves beneath this precious covert! Here is the paternal wing stretched out—oh, flee, flee to its shadow, that you may be sheltered there! Oh, ere that wing be folded up, and all who have taken refuge beneath its ample stretch, be gathered up along with it—ere the covert be withdrawn and you left unsheltered amid the approaching storm—ere grace be gone and wrath begun—oh, flee, flee to the everlasting shelter of the all-protecting wing! “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust” (Psa 91:4).

From The Kelso Tracts; available with three others from Chapel Library in a booklet entitled “The Throne of Grace.”

The Well of Living Water

*“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”—
Isaiah 55:1*

1. The Invitation

It is God Who is speaking to us in these gracious words. It is He Who says, “Ho!” and thus calls the attention of heedless men to His message of love. It is God Himself, even our own God, Who is thus calling on the children of men to come to the waters. He sees men everywhere turned away from Him, wandering in search of other objects, their ear closed against every voice, but that of the world, and He summons their attention. He invites them to stop and listen to His message. Ho, every heedless sinner; ho, every thirsty soul, there are tidings for thee! *Come to the waters!*

Is this invitation, then, to all sinners without exception? Or is it only a certain class that is addressed? Are all invited just as sinners? Is everyone at once to take the message as spoken to himself? Or is it only those who are quaked and prepared in some way that are addressed?

It is evident that the term “thirsty,” is here used not to single out a peculiar class of sinners, but simply to describe the natural unhappy state of every unconverted soul. The thirst spoken of is not the thirsting after *righteousness*, but simply the sense of misery,

and the desire to be happy which is in every fallen child of Adam, before he ever begins to thirst after righteousness at all. This is plain from the second verse, where those who are invited are described as “spending money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not” (Isa 55:2). That is to say, they are poor worldlings, throwing away their all upon vanity; toiling for what cannot feed their souls, nor yield them any return. Their way of spending their money and their labor is one which will do nothing for their souls. It brings them no ease. It does not fill the dreary void of the heart, that is left by the absence of God. It leaves them emptier, thirstier, hungrier, than before. These are the men that are invited. They are the same that Jesus invites when He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28), in which words He speaks of the burden which every man is bearing who remains away from God, just as the prophet declares the thirst that every man is enduring who has forsaken the fountain of living waters.

The words are therefore addressed to *all!* COME YE TO THE WATERS. To every sorrowful soul that says, “Who will show me any good?” to every weary sinner that would fain be happy, but knows not how; to every worldly sinner that is drinking from the world’s broken cisterns—to all such, it is said, “I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” He makes no exception. He says nothing that would exclude any. He invites *ALL*; and He invites them *just as they are*.

2. There Are Waters!

Here then is God’s solemn declaration, that *there are waters*. It is no uncertain, no doubtful thing. There is such a thing as perfect blessedness for the soul. Most men seem to think, that as they have long gone from one thing to another, seeking happiness, and have always failed, they must just be contented to remain unhappy and make the best of a bad bargain. They have had their trials, but they are not worse off than others. They do not say that they have got their heart’s desire, but merely that they have got all a man is likely to get, and have therefore no right to complain. This is the best the poor soul can hope for, in that world to which he clings so fondly!

But *there are waters!* There are none in the world; it is a wilderness. But they are to be found in God. God says He has waters for us. He has that which will satisfy the soul, which will give us perfect peace, something that will make us supremely, infinitely blessed, so that we shall never thirst again. And He not only provides these, but He presses us to come to them. He would not have us remain another hour without them. It is the poor and the miserable that He invites; and He repeats the message, “Come ye,” to show how earnestly He is pressing us to come.

And lest we should imagine that we are to buy or to earn these blessings ourselves, He tells us they are altogether free. They have been bought for us already. They are ours for the taking; it is not needful that we should have something of our own to buy them with. Our getting them does not depend upon our *having* anything, but takes for grant-

ed our wanting³⁹ everything. Our plea with God is not what we have, but what we *need*. Nor does the word “buy” here used, contradict this. It is employed to show us that though we have nothing, we are to come with the same confidence as if we had the full purchase-money to give! Though we could buy them all ourselves, we could not be more certain of obtaining these blessings! “Buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” Every kind of enjoyment, every kind of refreshment is to be found here. And all free, all within your reach. It matters not how poor you be, how sinful, how helpless, how undeserving—the waters are free, free to the vilest, free to you!

Come with all your poverty, with all your guilt, with all your misery, and take the free waters of this “pure river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.” Drink and be blessed! Drink, yea, drink abundantly! Why spend money for that which will not satisfy your soul? God expostulates with you, in regard to this. He asks you, is it wise to act thus? Is it reasonable? Is it not madness in the extreme? Why then persist in it? Why not come at once, and drink freely of the water of life? It is this water which would quench your thirst forever!

Hear how God addresses you, and how again He says, “Hearken unto me; incline your ear, hear and your soul shall live.” Thus we are taught that the source of all our misery is our not hearkening to God. We have hearkened to ourselves, to our friends, to the world, to the devil, but we have refused to listen to God. This has been our misery. Now the cure is just the opposite. We must *listen to God*. How simple, how blessed! The entrance of His words giveth light and peace. In hearkening to Him we shall find life to our souls. Hear and your souls shall live. Listen and live. No more! Oh, sinner, could life be had on easier terms than this? Could salvation be brought nearer, or made freer than this? Could the gate of heaven be thrown more widely open, or a more gracious, more certain welcome be presented to you?

3. Coming with Money

There is in us a constant tendency to come to God with money and with price, to do something to distinguish ourselves from others, and to get out of the common state of mankind; and in this spirit men read the words of the Holy Ghost, and instead of encouraging words, they make them discouraging. Thus, when it is said, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” people say, “Yes, but I must come; if I do not come I will not get the rest.” Now the intention of God is to fix your attention on *the Person* to Whom you are to come, “Come unto me,” but in a self-righteous state we fix our thoughts on the “come;” and we suppose this must be the money, this must be the price, and get at once into difficulties as to the way we should come. God wants us to think only about the “me;” but we in our self-righteousness think only about the “come.” Thus we entangle ourselves in the thickets of unbelief, and draw darkness over our souls.

³⁹ **wanting** – lacking.

The Holy Ghost has used a variety of expressions, in order to prevent this error, and yet men will fall into it. For example, it is said in one place, *Come*; in another place it is said, *Look*; in another, *Believe*; in another, *Hear*, all to prevent your fixing on the act of your own mind, and to fix your attention on the object, which is Jesus Christ. Had it been any other subject than that of salvation, people would have committed no mistake about it. If I had said, "Hear! I have good news for you"; you would never have asked, How am I to hear? If I had said, "Look, and you will be rejoiced at what you see"; you would never have asked, how you were to look? If I had said, "Believe and you will find it much to your advantage"; you would merely consider whether what I said was true, without thinking of the act of believing. It is not our own *act* of believing, but the *object* believed, that is to bring us hope and peace. If we seek to draw our hope from knowing that we have believed, we are as far from the spirit of the gospel as the man who rests his hopes upon his alms-deeds. When we make our own faith the source of comfort, we are drawing from a broken cistern. It is impossible to obtain peace, or strength, or holiness, from knowing that we believe a fact, however true and important that fact may be. The fact believed may be a comfort to us; but our knowing that we believe it cannot be so.

When seeking peace for the soul, the question is not "Have we believed?" but "Has God, in very deed, made His Son a propitiation for sin?" Why is it that when such expressions are used in religion, they turn people's attention away from the thing spoken of to *themselves*? Just because men would turn the act of believing, looking, etc. (which is a bare receiving of what God says), into the money and the price by which to purchase what God gives. The variety of expressions used—*Come, Hear, Look, Believe*—is employed in order that we might not turn our attention away from what God says, and be taken up with thinking about some particular way of receiving it. "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa 55:3). "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1Jo 5:11). Thus the news which God sends you is, just like every other piece of news, to put you in the attitude of a listener and not of a doer, in the attitude of a *receiver* and not of a *worker* at all.

4. Giving of Life

The thing which God is here said to give, is *life*, not mere safety, and security from wrath, not mere deliverance from hell. What, then, is this eternal life which God gives you? God's gift is His *own* life; not the life of mere enjoyment, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field have that life, but the life which God Himself had before worlds were. In other words, the purpose of God is not simply to make you happy, but to make you happy with God's own happiness—not simply to give you joy, but to give you the joy of the Lord—not simply to make you drink of the rivers of pleasure, but to make you drink out of the rivers of God's own pleasures, and out of the fountains of God's own happiness, that your joy should be the very same as his, springing from the very same source, and produced by the very same cause. God's best gifts are no portion for man. He Him-

self is the soul's only portion; he that does not know God as the light, the life, the blessedness of his soul, knows not God, and is without a portion at all! Life eternal does not consist in knowing that there is a God, and that there is a Savior, but in knowing God, and knowing the Savior, as the child knows his father, and as the friend knows his friend. Till we see Him and feel Him in His perpetually pervading presence of infinite holiness, and love, and beauty, and wisdom, we cannot be said to know that God for Whom we were created. This presence of His is our real home and our real joy, and until we become sensible of it, we are without a home, and without a joy, and without a portion in the universe! We are friendless and desolate!

God Himself is the soul's inheritance. The Lord's portion is His people, and the people's portion is the Lord. God Himself, I say, is our inheritance. My enjoyment is to be in God, so that it continues as long as I continue and God exists, although the whole of creation were swept away. How, then, is God to be thus enjoyed? A person is to be thus an heir of God, by having *God's own character* in him. You may enjoy God's gifts, without enjoying His mind; but you cannot enjoy God Himself, without having His mind. If there is a person who has the power, and also the inclination to bestow much kindness upon me, I may feel an interest in that person and like his kindness, but if that person is to be enjoyed himself, apart from his gifts, it must be something in his character, something in his mind, something in him that would exist although his gifts should cease, from which my enjoyment is to spring. Now I cannot rejoice in God's holiness unless I am holy; I cannot rejoice in God's love unless I love; I cannot rejoice in God's righteousness unless I am righteous, nor in His truth unless I am true. Therefore it is, that in being renewed, we are said to be made partakers of the Divine nature, and are called to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus.

When God, therefore, speaks of waters, He means something in drinking of which you will be partakers of a Divine nature, something in drinking of which you will share in God's own blessedness. Where are these waters? How is man to be partaker of a Divine nature? How am I to feel as God feels? How am I, who by nature hate my God, and hate my neighbor, to love as God loves, to be holy as God is holy? Where is the provision for all this? It is in the sure mercies of David, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."

Do you see then the difference between God's giving you *a* happiness, and God giving you *His own* happiness, and that this last is what God gives you in Christ? Are you giving God glory for this unspeakable gift? And can you bear witness that it is eternal life to know Christ? Can you, individually, say of what you have heard, "I know it is God's plan, because I am under its operation; it is taking effect in me; I find all things pertaining to life and godliness in Christ Jesus; I am made a sharer in a Divine nature"? If not, you are still without God and without hope in the world. You are not of that family of which Jesus Christ is the elder brother; you have not in you the mind of Christ. You may be earnest, you may be serious, you may be pains-taking, but you are not yet a Christian; God's plan has not yet begun to be accomplished in you.

5. Refusing to Believe

I beseech you see if this be the case. If so, and if God's purpose is not accomplished in you, why is it so? What is your excuse? There can be no real excuse, for there can be no reason but one. You are making God a liar. You are refusing to believe the record which He hath given you of His Son. There is no excuse but this horrid one, that when God is giving you in Christ all things pertaining to life and godliness, you do not believe that all these things are so entirely free to you; and your reason for making God a liar, for refusing to believe the freeness of His gift to you, is the pride of your heart.

The pride of the heart, in respect of pardon, is, that a man would have it said that he himself had bought it. Though you should, in doing what you can in the way of purchase, say it is little, and talk of its unworthiness, and call this humility, your *attempt to purchase* sufficiently shows your pride; and all your professions of humility will not screen you from the charge which God has against you, for not rejoicing in what He has provided for you in Christ, for refusing to glorify Him in giving thanks for His unspeakable gift. There are waters for you, free to you at this moment, open to you as you are! God invites and welcomes you to the fountain; yet you will not come—or when you think of coming, you insist upon bringing a price in your hand. This is your pride, your presumption. Oh, let it not be your ruin!

6. Conclusion

I have now declared to you the gospel of the grace of God; and I beseech you that you refuse not the word spoken, for that word shall judge you at the last day; and take heed that you are not found at that day on the left hand of the throne, from being too proud to receive salvation *freely*, to take the water of life *without money and without price*. This is the awful condemnation.

Oh! Then, wilt thou not come to the waters and take them freely? And if thou sayest that thou canst not because thine evil heart of unbelief will not allow thee, wilt thou not cry to Him Who made thy heart, and Who can make it new, and ask Him to lead thee to these living streams? And surely He will lead thee. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (Joh 4:10). The woman of Samaria had told our Lord that He ought not to have thought of asking anything of her on account of the disputes between His nation and hers. Such is the love of man to man! The Jew refuses water to the Samaritan, and the Samaritan to the Jew! But such is not the love of God! His is a free and boundless love, which gives liberally to all. If she had known the fullness of that love, how willing to give and how much it had already given unasked, she could not have allowed one suspicion to enter her mind. If she had known that He Who spoke to her was Himself the great gift of God to a lost world, and the dispenser of all other gifts, she would have asked, and He would have given her living water!

He speaks of *His giving* as the natural consequence of her asking! He speaks of the giving as necessarily following the asking, of the former as inseparable from the latter. How touching the declaration, how precious the promise! Sinner as she was, He told her that she had but to ask, and she was *sure* of receiving! Sinner as she was, she sought and she obtained, she asked and He gave! Ask, then, and you *shall receive*; and when you receive, oh!, then, all is well: the darkness is past, and the true light has risen! “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things” (Rom 8:32). ❧

*Ho ye thirsty!, parched and fainting,
Here are waters, turn and see!
To the thirstiest, poorest, vilest
Without money all is free
Thirsty sinner!
Drink and stay not, 'tis for thee.*

*Ho ye weary!, toiling, burdened,
With a world of woes opprest;
Come!—it is thy Lord invites thee,
Lay thy head upon my breast.
Weary sinner!
Come to Jesus, come and rest.*

*Ho ye wounded!, bruised, broken,
Come, and health divine receive;
Look to him Who heals the wounded,
He alone can healing give.
Wounded sinner!
Look to Jesus, look and live.*

*From The Kelso Tracts; available with three others from Chapel Library in a booklet entitled
“The Throne of Grace.”*

The Faithful Minister of the New Covenant

“My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.”—Malachi 2:5-6

The state of the Jewish priesthood, at the time this prophet wrote, was profligate⁴⁰ in the extreme. As men, they were ungodly and licentious;⁴¹ as priests, they were unfaithful; and as teachers, they kept not “the law of truth,” but “departed out of the way” (Mal 2:8). Through them the office became a scandal and a byword.⁴² The sanctuary was defiled and the name of God blasphemed. Very fearful are the charges which the prophets were commanded to prefer against them, in the name of the Lord. From the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the days of Malachi, they had been receiving warning and rebuke, threatening and chastisement; yet, at the end of these two centuries, they were found even worse than at the beginning. Jeremiah had described them as “the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep” of God’s pasture (Jer 23:1). Ezekiel had represented them as [the shepherds who] “feed themselves” (Eze 34:2). “Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool...but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither...bound up that which was broken,...neither...brought again that which was driven away...neither...sought that which was lost” (Eze 34:3-4). Malachi also, many generations after, presents to us the picture of the priesthood in his day, unrelieved in aught from its former gloom. Though called priests of the Most High God, ministering at His altar, wearing the consecrated garments of their office, and bearing the holy vessels of the sanctuary, they yet despised the name of Jehovah: they offered polluted bread upon His altar—they brought the torn, the lame, and the sick for sacrifice. They said of His service, “Behold, what a weariness is it!” (Mal 1:13). They committed abomination, corrupting the covenant of Levi, and profaning “the holiness of the LORD” (Mal 2:11). It was thus that the last prophet of Israel was commissioned to proclaim the sins of an apostate and ungodly priesthood. It was thus that he

⁴⁰ **profligate** – given over to evil and immorality.

⁴¹ **licentious** – unrestrained by law or morality.

⁴² **byword** – object of notoriety or scorn.

was sent forth, bearing to them the awful burden which his prophecy contains—denouncing against them the righteous displeasure of that God whose compassionate forbearance and patient love they had tried so long.

But yet, at the very time that Jehovah was thus warning them of coming doom, and threatening them with the inflictions of His hot displeasure, He addresses to them words of most marvelous long-suffering and tender compassion; the words of One still lingering with fond forbearance over His desolate heritage, His bleating flock—unwilling to deliver up to vengeance that once honored, once faithful priesthood, who had borne His name for many generations, and been anointed with His holy oil! Ere removing from their office the unworthy representatives of Aaron, and Eleazar, and Phinehas, He reminds them tenderly, in the passage before us, of the gracious nature of that covenant which they were despising—a covenant of life and peace established with the fathers of the consecrated tribe that served the altar. He reminds them of the reverence and godly fear which had marked their fathers, and because of which the covenant of life and peace had been committed to their hands. He reminds them of the character, the speech, the walk, and deportment⁴³ which had signaled their fathers; and He makes mention of the glorious success which had followed their labors as teachers of the people. Thus He recalls them to the holy associations of a better age—the still unforgotten blessings of a purer, happier priesthood. No rebuke could be severer than that here administered, by the contrast thus drawn between the prevailing corruption of the time and the purity of earlier days. Yet no admonition or exhortation could be more gently and more affectionately conveyed than this. It speaks as tenderly to the heart as it does loudly to the conscience.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the description here given of the character of the early Jewish priesthood—the house of Levi, ere they had left their first love, and corrupted the covenant of their father. “My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.” Most precious words! Simply, yet strikingly, descriptive of the character, the walk, the speech, the successful labors of a faithful priest, and not less so of a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus. How forcibly do these verses recall the similar commendations bestowed by the Chief Shepherd upon some of the angels of the churches of Asia! “I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and...hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted” (Rev 2:2-3). Thus we are taught, that it is the same Great Shepherd under Whom we hold office as in the case of Israel: the same Master Whom we serve, the same errand on which we are employed, the same end which is set before us: *the conversion of souls*—the turning of sinners from the error of their ways. There is also the same holiness of life and conversation, the same peaceful walking in the light of God’s reconciled countenance, the same

⁴³ **deportment** – the way in which one moves or carries oneself.

heavenly-mindedness and calm superiority to the world, the same simple, disinterested, devoted warmth, the same patient laborious zeal, the same tender compassion for souls—and the same desire to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. But let us consider the prophet's words more minutely, and in exact order.

1. The Nature of the Trust Committed

We have the nature of the trust committed of old to the Levitical priesthood, and now to the ministers of Christ. “My covenant was with him of life and peace.” That covenant—the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure—by which God designed to convey life and peace to His people, was entrusted to the care and guardianship of the priesthood. It was deposited in their hands for the benefit of Israel. They were not merely to enjoy its provisions of grace themselves, but to make them known to the people, that they might become partakers of its unsearchable riches. Brief, but full, is the sum here given us of its blessings: “life and peace”—eternal life and peace with God. Their daily sacrifices and ceremonies pointed to these, and their daily instructions opened up the glad tidings of great joy, which these rites both foreshadowed and contained. Such was the office of the sons of Levi under the Law, and such is still the office of Christ's ministers under the Gospel. Jehovah's covenant of life and peace is still with us; nay, more truly and really with us now than it was of old with the legal priesthood. For now the darkness is past, the shadows have fled, and the true light has risen. Now the mere figures of the truth have vanished away, and the truth itself has come! He Who is our life and peace has, in the fullness of time, been revealed. Our covenant, then, is especially that of life and peace. Our office, our embassy, our message, are of life and peace. Ours is the silver trumpet that proclaims the dawn of jubilee. Ours is the olive branch that speaks of abated waters and indignation overpast. Ours is the ministry of reconciliation that tells of “glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men” (Luk 2:14).

It is through Jesus, then, that we are commanded to proclaim life and peace. It is through the blood of the Lamb that these blessings flow. It is Jesus, the life of the world that we preach to men; Jesus the light of life; Jesus the fountain of life; Jesus the bread of life and the water of life; Jesus the resurrection and the life; Jesus the way, and the truth, and the life—Jesus the living and the life-giving One! It is through Him alone, through His finished work and perfected righteousness, that we proclaim lasting life to sinners; testifying, according to His own words, that “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (Joh 11:25); and that “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hath sent” (Joh 17:3). It is thus that we are to preach the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

It is Jesus also, as the world's peace, that we preach to sinners. “He is our peace” (Eph 2:14), says the apostle; He has made peace through the blood of His Cross. He is the blessed Peacemaker between man and God. His incarnation speaks of peace; for He is

thus revealed as Immanuel, God with us, so making peace. His life speaks peace: and in every action was this embodied, as well as in every word declared. His death was the mighty declaration of peace, for by this He made reconciliation for iniquity. His blood, shed for many for the remission of sins, ratified the covenant of peace. His legacy was peace—"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (Joh 14:27). His resurrection was the seal of peace. His Gospel which is now entrusted to our hands, is the Gospel of peace—"peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1).

There can be no peace in the soul till there is peace with God. And there can be no peace with God till sin is completely forgiven, and God's anger against us, on account of sin, wholly turned away. None but a justified soul can have peace. Peace without forgiveness is a lie. Distance from God is the source of our disquietude.⁴⁴ And alienation from God is the deadly wound that must be healed ere the soul have one moment's real peace. There is, no doubt, such a thing as worldly peace: the peace of prosperous days; the peace of pleasure; the peace of fancy; the peace of carnal security; the peace of self-righteousness; the peace of a seared conscience; the peace of reckless hardihood, that banishes God from the thoughts, and cares not whether the Holy One be his friend or not. But these are all mere names of fiction—names given by a deluded world that never felt the glad reality of the peace which passeth all understanding. There can be no peace till we know whether God be our friend or our enemy—whether heaven or hell be our eternal home. There can be no peace save that which flows from a sense of the forgiving love of a reconciled God. This is peace; this is life; this is blessedness: all else is hollow, a shadow, a dream—a lie!

Possessing this life and peace in our own souls, we go forth to preach them to others. Having entered personally into this everlasting covenant, we proclaim its riches abroad. Having tasted the blessedness of being wholly forgiven, we rejoice to proclaim it around. Being ourselves reconciled through the blood of the covenant, we beseech men to be reconciled too. Having felt the preciousness of Christ ourselves, we testify what we have seen and known of Him, that we may commend Him to others. For it is not merely the fact of being formally entrusted with this errand, this covenant, that animates our zeal to make it known; it is especially the consciousness of possessing the treasure ourselves. It is this that gives liberty of heart and utterance. It is this that gives us boldness and fidelity. And, on the other hand, it is the want of this consciousness that straitens our soul—that damps our energy and fills us with the fear of man. When we speak of eternal life to our people, we speak as those who have already found it for ourselves. When we speak of peace and forgiveness, we speak in the fullness of hearts that are already partakers of these. When we go after the lost and wandering, we do it as those who have already returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. When we speak of joy to the sorrowful and rest to the troubled, we do it as those who have found rest for their own souls, and have learned to sink all their own sorrows in the fathomless ocean of their Father's love. Thus resting on this covenant of life and peace which is entrusted to us, we go forth

⁴⁴ **disquietude** –uneasiness; anxiety.

to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. A dispensation⁴⁵ of the Gospel is committed to us. Necessity is laid upon us. Yea, woe is unto us, if we preach not the gospel.

2. Trust Committed for Faithfulness

This covenant was entrusted to Levi, because he had been found faithful. This life and peace were placed in his hands, because he had been found approved of God. “I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.” The circumstances in which this solemn trust was made over to his guardianship, are related in the twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers. Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, had manifested his zeal for God, by his promptitude in avenging the dishonor done to His name in the matter of Israel’s transgression with the daughters of Moab. On which occasion we read, “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them...Wherefore say, *Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace*: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (vv. 10-13). To this, also, allusion⁴⁶ is manifestly made, in Moses’ blessing upon the tribes. “Of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one...who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him...they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy law” (Deu 33:8-10). Being found zealous for the name and honor of Jehovah, for the purity of His worship, for the integrity of His Law—he was singled out from the tribes, and the covenant of life and peace entrusted to his care. In like manner, the apostle, speaking of those to whom the Gospel was to be committed, says to Timothy, “The things that thou hast heard of me...the same commit thou to *faithful* men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2Ti 2:2). And further, in another place, he says, “It is required in stewards, that that a man be found *faithful*” (1Co 4:2).

It is then, because we have been judged faithful and zealous for God, that we have been placed in the office of the ministry. And, accordingly, this is one of the very solemn questions which our Church requires to be put, ere the hands of the Presbytery⁴⁷ are laid upon us—“Are not zeal for the glory of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls, your great motives, and chief inducements, to enter into the function of the holy ministry?” What, then, are the prerequisites of character which warrant the Church in committing to our hands the ministry of the Word and the charge of souls? Our text sums them all up in one—*holy fear of God*. But, oh! How much does this imply? What piety, what reverence, what love, what devotedness, what sensitiveness to the honor of God, what jealousy for His name, what zeal for His glory! It is not eloquence, it is not

⁴⁵ **dispensation** – stewardship.

⁴⁶ **allusion** – implied or indirect reference.

⁴⁷ **Presbytery** – ruling body of a Presbyterian denomination.

learning, it is not wisdom, or genius, or high estate, that are required. No; it is holy fear and love. It is that we really know the God we speak of—the Savior Whom we preach. It is that we have really “passed from death unto life” (Joh 5:24) ourselves. It is that we have the love of God in our hearts, and the fear of God before our eyes.

Will God commit the ministry of the Gospel to *unconverted* men? Will God commission and accredit, as the messengers of life and peace, men who have never tasted these themselves? Will God entrust the vessels of the sanctuary to the guardianship of uncleaned, unholy hands? Is it nothing to Him, whether it be Nadab and Abihu, or Eleazar and Ithamar? Is it nothing to Him, whether the blood of the consecrated sacrifice be upon their ear, their hands, or their feet? Is it nothing to Him, whether the holy anointing oil be sprinkled on their heads? Is it nothing to Him, whether they are clothed with the heaven-appointed raiment, “for glory and for beauty” (Exo 28:2), whether the Urim and the Thummim glitter on their jeweled breast, and whether on their foreheads be engraven in characters of gold, the inscription of the sanctuary, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” (Exo 28:36)? “Lovest thou me?” (Joh 21:17) is still the Savior’s question to those whom He appoints shepherds of the flock, which He hath purchased with His own blood; and still He expects the same decided answer, “Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee” (same verse), ere He grants the solemn commission, “Feed my lambs...feed my sheep” (Joh 21:15-17).

3. The Manner of Faithfulness

We have the manner in which the faithful priesthood fulfilled their character and discharged their office. “The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity.” The utterance of his mouth was truth; no deceit or wickedness was found in his lips; his life was like Enoch’s—a close and continual walk with God. He kept by the side of the God of truth, maintaining peaceful, holy fellowship with Him. He leaned upon His arm; he was guided by His eye; he learned the Law at His lips. What a picture of the bold fidelity, the godly simplicity of ministerial *character*; and of the heavenly walk, the holy calm, of ministerial *life!* Such is the character and such the life of a minister of the Lord Jesus; and for all this, his sufficiency is of God. For holiness of life, he looks to the power of the indwelling Spirit; for wisdom, he rests on the promise, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (1Jo 2:20). It is to the Master’s image that the servant is to be conformed. His character is our model; His life our rule. He hath left “us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1Pe 2:21-22). Our light is to shine before men, as His shone while here. We are not only His servants, but we are His representatives on earth. We are set to reflect His character to the world, that men may know Him through us, and glorify His name. How responsible is our position! How much it concerns us as Christians, how much more as ministers, to represent Him truly, to reflect Him faithfully, both to His own people and to a world that knows Him

and esteems Him not! We, as ministers of His Word, are especially to be epistles of Christ, “known and read of all men” (2Co 3:2).

In this description of the prophet, there is a twofold exhibition of the faithful minister; first, in his character; and, second, in his life; and in each of these, again there is a twofold division. His character is first described positively, then negatively. His life is set forth as being first a walk of peace, and then of equity.

First. *His character*. “The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips.” He approved himself a faithful and a true witness for his God, holding fast the truth, and departing from evil. Walking in the footsteps of this ancient pattern, we are called upon to declare to the flocks, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers, the whole counsel of God: keeping back nothing that is profitable, being zealous for the truth, and not teaching nor tolerating any manner or degree of error. We are to “preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord” (2Co 4:5), His infinitely glorious person, His infinitely perfect and precious work. In Him are summed up all truth, all wisdom, all knowledge. Out of Him, and apart from Him, there is neither truth, nor wisdom, nor knowledge for the soul of man. In Him all perfection dwells. In Him all excellencies, divine and human, visible and invisible, shine forth with matchless luster. In Him all beauty centers. In Him all life has its source—from Him all glory radiates. To Him all power is committed, in earth and heaven; round Him all government revolves. He is the sum of all that we preach. He is *truth* itself; and in testifying of Him, we fulfill our office as witnesses for the truth. It is this that makes our ministry such a solemn thing. It is this that makes even minute accuracy in our preaching so momentous, and even a shade of error so perilous. To err in our representations of common truths is reckoned, and within certain limits, may with all safety be reckoned, a matter of but trivial moment.⁴⁸ Not so in preaching Christ. No truth is unimportant which relates to Him; no error can be without its serious consequences of evil which misrepresents Him. In preaching Christ, it is no common crime to speak at random, or to speak without regard being duly had to careful exactness of argument and opinion. To err here is to dishonor Christ, and to injure souls. We must preach Him *wholly*; we must preach Him *fully*; we must preach Him *truly*. We must not merely beware of denying Him, but we must beware of setting Him forth imperfectly, or even with cold exactness, as if unwilling to commend His worth by any expression of our esteem or love. We must not merely refrain from marring His beauty, but even from hiding or defacing the very hem of His garment. It can be no slight evil in the Father’s eyes to diminish aught of the glory of Him in Whom his “soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1): Who is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Heb 1:3). It must be a crime needing both repentance and forgiveness, in the eyes of the God of truth, to set forth amiss the character or work of Him Who is truth itself—incarnate *truth*; and Who is for this very end revealed, that He might be the full and perfect manifestation of truth to angels and men. It can be no trivial injury done to souls, when we testify amiss of Him Who is “the way, the truth, and

⁴⁸ **moment** – importance or consequence.

the life” (Joh 14:5); the “door” (Joh 10:7), the access, “the new and living way” (Heb 10:20) to the Father’s house; of Him Who is the sinner’s hope, the sinner’s surety and substitute, the sinner’s peace—the sinner’s high priest and advocate above. Oh! How infinitely momentous, that in all that pertaineth to Christ, and His work for sinners, the law of truth should be in our lips, and iniquity not found in our mouth.

Second. *His life*. “He walked with me in peace and equity.” His daily life corresponded fully with his ministerial character. His life was like godly Enoch’s—a continual walk with God. Holiness was in his lips, and holiness was in his life. His words were *of* God, and his walk *with* God. How fair the picture of the faithful, the upright, the wise, the consistent, the godly priest! What a model for the life of a minister of Christ! First of all, he walks with God “*in peace*.” He walks in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. He has found peace with God, through the blood of the Cross, and therefore walks with God as a forgiven child with a reconciled father. He has found rest for his soul in Christ, and rejoices in the conscious liberty of his divine adoption. He walks with God in peace! He dwells in the light of His countenance—he delights in His smiles. “Perfect love casteth out fear” (1Jo 4:18). He rejoices in his *felt* reconciliation, *felt* nearness, *felt* relationship. He leans upon His arm, and “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15) is the unbidden, the joyful utterance of lip and heart. He walks with God in peace! God is the life, the light, the portion of his soul. He has found the favor of God, and in that favor is life. Nothing now seems burdensome but the body of sin; his yoke is broken, his fetters cast away. How peaceful, how even, how sweet, is the tenor of his life! Without this peace, this conscious reconciliation, all labor for God is a burden—all service, bondage. Without this, all ministerial work is irksome; all care in teaching or in tending the flock, is weariness and vexation of spirit. Oh! If ever any man upon earth should walk closely and peacefully with God, it is the minister of the Gospel; if ever any man should dread distance and dispeace between his soul and God, it is *he*. If anyone needs to have his conscience daily sprinkled with the blood of atonement, to have his conscience purged “from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:14), it is *he*—it is *he*.

His life, however, is not merely a peaceful, but it is a *holy* walk with God. “He walked with me in peace and equity.” How consistent, how circumspect should we be in word and deed, who are invested with such an office as this. “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD” (Isa 52:11). How careful should we be that we give none occasion to the weak to stumble, or to the enemy to blaspheme. What, though we preach the Gospel, if we do not *live* it! What, though the Word of God be in our lips on Sabbath, if the world be in our speech, and in our lives throughout the week, and, if instead of the fellowship of the saints, we prefer the world’s communionship! What, though we warn, or rebuke, or exhort, if our careless, foolish, worldly walk and conversation⁴⁹ give the lie to our official testimony! How awful to undo throughout the week, either by our negligence or sinfulness, or conformity to the world, all that we were professing to do on the Sabbath! How necessary that we should be holy, spiritual, heavenly-minded—a continual rebuke

⁴⁹ **conversation** – manner of conduct; behavior; lifestyle.

to the ungodly, a continual pattern to the flock! How strange to let our light shine before men, when professionally called to do so; but to hide it under a bushel on every other occasion. And further, how responsible we are for being holy! We have not merely the promised gift of the Holy Spirit as Christians, but we have the special promise of this gift as ministers, that we may be fully anointed and fitted for our work. With such a full gift of the Holy One; with such a necessity laid upon us to be examples to the flock, and with such a pattern as the Chief Shepherd Himself: oh, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Let us be men of faith; men of prayer; men of love; men of patience, and meekness, and gentleness and heavenly-minded zeal—men of singleness of aim and simplicity of heart. Wherever we are, in whatever circumstances, in whatever company, let us never forget nor allow others to forget that we are ministers of the Lord Jesus. Let us be the pastor always, less than the pastor, never! Let us manifest to all men the light and luster of a holy life—the sweet serenity of a peaceful walk with God. Let us follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus. Oh! Let us beware lest it be said of us, “They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song 1:6).

4. The Success of Faithfulness

We have the success of a faithful minister, “he did turn many from iniquity.” This is the great end of our ministerial work—the conversion of souls. And it is this that makes it such a solemn, such a perilous undertaking, as one of the fathers describes it—“A burden which even angels’ shoulders might shrink from.” Nevertheless, having entered upon it, we are sacredly bound to give ourselves wholly to it, and to make full proof of our ministry.

Our errand is the same as our Master’s, to seek and to save the lost. Our mind and feeling must be the same as His—compassion for souls. Our great desire and aim must be the conversion of sinners. Less than this we dare not seek. With less than this we cannot be content. To be admired, to be applauded, to be followed, is nothing, so long as our ministry is unfruitful and our labors unsuccessful. Such were the apostle’s feelings, when he went about warning and entreating sinners night and day “with tears” (Act 20:31); and when he said, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal 4:19). These surely ought to be the feelings and desires of everyone who has given himself to the ministry of the Gospel, and bound himself by solemn vows to watch for souls. If we are really in earnest, nothing will satisfy us but success. If we have truly “the desire of saving souls,” which we solemnly vowed at ordination, we can never be at rest unless we see some fruit of our labor. How sad, how criminal must be our condition, if we can go in and out among our people, and yet feel no anxiety about their souls, no concern whether many, or few, or none, are turned from their iniquity? If souls are committed to us, and if souls are to be required of us, how can we be indifferent about their state? To those who treat the doctrines of regeneration and conversion as the dreams of fanaticism, indifference may seem a virtue; but to those who

believe them to be solemn realities, it must appear a crime of fearful magnitude. Remissness in duty may be lightly spoken of, and lightly thought of now; unfaithfulness in *preaching*, or negligence in *visiting*, may press lightly upon the conscience now; but, oh, how different in the day of recompense, when the blood of souls shall be required at the watchman's hands! Then, how overwhelming the anguish of the hireling shepherd that fed himself and not the flock! How agonizing the remorse that shall seize upon his guilty conscience, and wring from him the cry of the traitor Judas, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Mat 27:4)? And how bitter the response from the companions of his despair, the spirits that kept not their first estate, his seducers upon earth—"What is that to us? see thou to that" (same verse). The sad estate of unconverted men may not now disturb the easy quiet of his life. But oh, how dismal shall be the cry of lost souls resounding throughout eternity in the ears of the unfaithful shepherd; the cry of souls that were lost through his neglect, that perished because he never watched for them, never warned them, never prayed for them, never sought their conversion and salvation!

But, let us observe the connection here declared to subsist between faithfulness and success in the work of the ministry; between a godly life, and the "turning away many from iniquity." The end for which we first took office as we declared at ordination was the *saving of souls*. The end for which we still live and labor is the same. The means to this end are a holy life and a faithful fulfillment of our ministry. The connection between these two things is close and sure. We are entitled to calculate upon it. We are called upon to pray and labor with the confident expectation of it being realized. And where it is not, to examine ourselves with all diligence lest the cause of the failure be found in ourselves: in our want of faith, our want of love, our want of prayer, our want of zeal and warmth—our want of spirituality and holiness of life, for it is by these that the Holy Spirit is grieved away. Success is attainable; success is desirable; success is promised by God; and nothing on earth can be bitterer to the soul of a faithful minister than the want of it. To walk with God, and to be faithful to our trust is declared to be the certain way of attaining it. Oh, how much depends on the holiness of our life, the consistency of our character, the heavenliness of our walk and conversation. Our position is such that we cannot remain neutral. Our life cannot be one of harmless obscurity. We must either repel or attract—save or ruin souls! How loud then the call, how strong the motive, to spirituality of soul and circumspectness of life! How solemn the warning against worldly-mindedness and vanity, against levity and frivolity, against negligence, and sloth, and cold formality!

Of all men, a minister of Christ is especially called to walk with God. Everything depends on this—his own peace and joy; his own future reward at the coming of the Lord. But especially does our text point to this as the true and sure way of securing the blessing. This is the grand secret of ministerial success. One who walks with God reflects the light of His countenance upon a benighted⁵⁰ world; and the closer he walks the more of

⁵⁰ **benighted** – existing in a state of moral darkness.

this light does he reflect. One who walks with God carries in his very air and countenance a sweet serenity and holy joy that diffuses tranquility around. One who walks with God receives and imparts life whithersoever he goes; as it is written, “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Joh 7:38). He is not merely the world’s light, but the world’s fountain—dispensing the water of life on every side, and making the barren wastes to blossom as the rose. He waters the world’s wilderness as he moves along his peaceful course. His life is blest; his example is blest; his intercourse is blest; his words are blest; his ministry is blest! Souls are saved, sinners are converted, and many are turned from their iniquity!

God has of late been teaching us this. He has of late been visiting many parishes of our land with showers of blessing, and refreshing them with the outpouring of His Spirit. Our own eyes have seen, our own ears have heard that of which our fathers spake in other days. In this we are called upon greatly to rejoice, and for it to render praise to God. How often have we prayed that God would pour out His Spirit; yea, do we not make it matter of public prayer each Sabbath day that He would do so? And shall we be astonished when He answers us? Shall we be slow of heart to believe it? Shall we be reluctant to acknowledge the gift? When we see many turned from iniquity shall we presume to call that excitement or fanaticism, which, taking it even at the lowest count, bears at least the appearance of a Divine work, and may be hereafter displayed to the eye of the most incredulous, as in very deed a work of God?

For the acknowledgment of what God has thus been doing in reviving His work, with reference to the difficulties in which we are at present involved; and with a desire to carry forward and extend the work of revival, the last General Assembly of our Church has sent forth an earnest recommendation to all her ministers to hold congregational prayer meetings, to implore the Divine blessing upon our Church that her present difficulties may be removed, and “that by the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, the means of grace may be still more eminently blest than in the year that is past.” Following out this recommendation, and stirring up ourselves and our people to fervent prayer and believing intercession, let us go forward to our ministerial and pastoral labors; not merely contented to discharge these with professional exactness, and to fulfill our allotted round of necessary duty, but watching for souls as they that must give an account—desiring success, laboring for success, expecting success. Let us give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word. Let us walk closely with God, maintaining peaceful and unbroken fellowship with Him as our own, our reconciled Father, and counting it our meat and drink to do His will, and to advance His glory! And as our success is sure, so is our eternal reward—the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge will give us at that day, and not to us only, but to all that love His appearing. He that winneth souls is wise: wiser and greater far than the learned and mighty of this world, and surer of what they are vainly striving after, the riches of an incorruptible inheritance, the glory of an immortal name, for “they that be wise shall shine as the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever” (Dan 12:3). ☞

This Discourse was preached before the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, at their meeting in Kelso, Scotland, on October 27, 1840. Available in print as a booklet from Chapel Library.

The Everlasting Righteousness

Chapter 1: How Shall Man Be Just with God?

How may I, a sinner, draw near to Him in Whom there is no sin, and look upon His face in peace? This is the great question that, at some time or other, every one of us has asked. This is one of the awful⁵¹ problems that man in all ages has been attempting to solve. There is no evading it: he must face it.

That man's answers to this question should have been altogether wide of the mark is only what might have been expected; for he does not really understand the import of the question that he, with much earnestness perhaps, is putting, nor discern the malignant character of that evil that he yet feels to be a barrier between him and God.

That man's many elaborate solutions of the problem which has perplexed the race since evil entered, should have been unsatisfactory, is not wonderful,⁵² seeing his ideas of human guilt are so superficial; his thoughts of himself so high; his views of God so low.

But that, when God has interposed as an interpreter to answer the question and to solve the problem, man should be so slow to accept the divine solution as given in the Word of God, betrays an amount of unteachableness and self-will that is difficult to comprehend. The preference that man has always shown for his own theories upon this point is unaccountable, save upon the supposition that he has but a poor discernment of the evil forces with which he professes to battle; a faint knowledge of the spiritual havoc that has been wrought in himself; a very vague perception of what Law and righteousness are; a sorrowful ignorance of that divine Being with Whom, as Lawgiver and Judge, he knows that he has to do; and a low appreciation of eternal holiness and truth.

Man has always treated sin as a misfortune, not a crime; as disease, not guilt; as a case for the physician, not for the judge. Herein lies the essential faultiness of all mere human religions or theologies. They fail to acknowledge the judicial aspect of the question as that on which the real answer must hinge, and to recognize the guilt or criminality of the evil-doer as that which must first be dealt with before any real answer, or approximation to an answer, can be given.

⁵¹ **awful** – that strikes with awe; that fills with profound reverence.

⁵² **wonderful** – surprising; strange; astonishing.

God is a Father; but He is no less a Judge. Shall the Judge give way to the Father, or the Father give way to the Judge? God loves the sinner; but He hates the sin. Shall He sink His love to the sinner in His hatred of the sin, or His hatred of the sin in His love to the sinner? God has sworn that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner (Eze 33:11); yet He has also sworn that the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Eze 18:4). Which of the two oaths shall be kept? Shall the one give way to the other? Can both be kept inviolate? Can a contradiction, apparently so direct, be reconciled? Which is the more unchangeable and irreversible, the vow of pity or the oath of justice?

Law and love must be *reconciled*, else the great question as to a sinner's intercourse with the Holy One must remain unanswered. The one cannot give way to the other. Both must stand, else the pillars of the universe will be shaken.

The reconciliation man has often tried, for he has always had a glimpse of the difficulty. But he has failed, for his endeavours have always been in the direction of making Law succumb to love.

The reconciliation God has accomplished, and in the accomplishment, both Law and love have triumphed. The one has not given way to the other. Each has kept its ground; nay, each has come from the conflict honoured and glorified. Never has there been love like this love of God—so large, so lofty, so intense, so self-sacrificing. Never has Law been so pure, so broad, so glorious, so inexorable.⁵³

There has been no *compromise*. Law and love have both had their full scope. Not one jot or tittle⁵⁴ has been surrendered by either. They have been satisfied to the full; the one in all its severity, the other in all its tenderness. Love has never been more truly love, and Law has never been more truly Law, than in this conjunction of the two. It has been reconciliation without compromise. God's honour has been maintained, yet man's interests have not been sacrificed. God has done it all, and He has done it effectually⁵⁵ and irreversibly.

Man could not have done it, even though he could have devised it. But truly he could do neither. God only could have devised and done it. He has done it by removing the whole case into His own courts of Law, that it might be settled there on a righteous basis. Man could not have gone into court with the case, save in the certainty that he would lose it. God comes into court, bringing man and man's whole case along with Him, that upon righteous principles, and in a legal way, the case may be settled, at once in favour of man and in favour of God. It is this *judicial* settlement of the case that is God's one and final answer to man's long unanswered question, "How should man be just with God?" (Job 9:2). "Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God?" (Mic 6:6).

⁵³ **inexorable** – unmovable; unchangeable.

⁵⁴ **jot or tittle** – smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and the smallest stroke used to make Hebrew letters (Mat 5:18).

⁵⁵ **effectually** – having produced the desired effect; with legal force.

God provides the *basis* of the reconciliation; a basis that demonstrates that there is no compromise between Law and love, but the full expression of both; a basis that establishes both the authority and the paternity of Jehovah, as Lawgiver and Father; a basis that reveals in infinite awfulness the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the spotless purity of the statute, the unbending character of God's governmental ordinances, and that yet secures, in and by Law, the righteous overflow of His boundless love to the lost sons of Adam.

This basis of reconciliation between Law and love, God has Himself not only provided, but brought into His own courts of Law, proposing to the sinner that all the questions between Himself and the sinner should be settled on this basis—so equitable, so friendly, so secure—and settled in judicial form, by a legal process in which verdict is given in favour of the accused, and he is clean absolved—“justified from all things” (Act 13:39).

The consent of parties to the acceptance of this basis is required in court. The Law consents; the Lawgiver consents; Father, Son, and Spirit consent; and *man*, the chief party interested, is asked for his consent. If he consents, the whole matter is settled. The verdict is issued in his favour; and henceforth he can triumph and say, “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom 8:33-34).

Sin is too great an evil for man to meddle with. His attempts to remove it do but increase it, and his endeavours to approach God in spite of it aggravate his guilt. Only God can deal with sin, either as a disease or a crime; as a dishonour to Himself, or as a hinderer of man's approach to Himself. He deals with it not in some arbitrary or summary way, by a mere exercise of will or power, but by bringing it for adjudication⁵⁶ into His own courts of Law. As Judge, seated on His tribunal, He settles the case, and settles it in favour of the sinner—of any sinner on the earth that will consent to the basis that He proposes. Into this court each one may freely come, on the footing of a sinner needing the adjustment of the great question between him and God. That adjustment is no matter of uncertainty or difficulty; it will at once be granted to each applicant. And the guilty man with his case, however bad, thus legally settled, retires from court with his burden removed and his fears dispelled, assured that he can never again be summoned to answer for his guilt. It is righteousness that has reconciled God to him and him to God.

As sin is too great an evil for any but God to deal with, so is righteousness too high for man to reach; too high for any but God to bring down and place at our disposal. God *has* brought down, and brought nigh, the righteousness. Thus the guilt that we have contracted is met by the righteousness that God has provided; and the *exclusion* from the divine fellowship that the guilt produced, is more than reversed by the new *introduction* that the righteousness places at our disposal.

May I then draw near to God and not die? May I draw near, and live? May I come to Him Who hateth sin, and yet find that the sin which He hateth is no barrier to my com-

⁵⁶ **adjudication** – the act of trying and determining judicially.

ing, no reason for my being shut out from His presence as an unclean thing? May I renew my lost fellowship with Him Who made me, and made me for Himself? May I worship in His holy place, with safety to myself, and without dishonour to Him?

These are the questions with which God has dealt, and dealt with so as to ensure a blessed answer to them all—an answer that will satisfy our own troubled consciences as well as the holy Law of God. His answer is *final*, and it is *effectual*. He will give no other; nor will He deal with these questions in any other way than He has done. He has introduced them into His courts of Law, that there they may be finally adjusted; and out of these courts into which God has taken them who can withdraw them? Or what end would be served by such a withdrawal on our part? Would it make the settlement more easy, more pleasant, more sure? It would not. It would augment the uncertainty, and make the perplexity absolutely hopeless!

Yet the tendency of modern thought and modern theology is to refuse the *judicial* settlement of these questions, and to withdraw them from the courts into which God has introduced them. An extrajudicial adjustment is attempted—man declining to admit such a guilt as would bring him within the grasp of Law, and refusing to acknowledge sin to be of such a nature as to require a criminal process in solemn court; yet admitting the necessity or desirableness of the removal of the sore evil under which humanity is felt to be labouring, and under which, if unremoved, it must ere long dissolve.

The history of six thousand years of evil has been lost on man. He refuses to read its awful lesson regarding sin, and God's displeasure against the sinner which that history records. The flood of evil that has issued forth from one single sin he has forgotten. The death, the darkness, the sorrow, the sickness, the tears, the weariness, the madness, the confusion, the bloodshed, the furious hatred between man and man, making earth a suburb of hell—all this is overlooked or misread. And man repels the thought that sin is crime, which God hates with an infinite hate, and which He, in His righteousness, must condemn and avenge.

If sin is such a surface thing, a trifle, as men deem it, what is the significance of this long sad story? Do earth's ten thousand graveyards, where human love lies buried, tell no darker tale? Do the millions upon millions of broken hearts and heavy eyes say that sin is but a trifle? Does the moaning of the hospital or the carnage of the battlefield, the blood-stained sword, and the death-dealing artillery, proclaim that sin is a mere casualty, and the human heart the seat of goodness after all? Does the earthquake, the volcano, the hurricane, the tempest, speak nothing of sin's desperate evil? Does man's aching head, empty heart, burdened spirit, shaded brow, weary brain, and tottering limbs not utter, in a voice articulate beyond mistake, that sin is *guilt*, that that guilt must be punished, punished by the Judge of all—not as a mere "violation of natural laws," but as a breach of the eternal Law, which admits of no reversal: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze 18:4)? For without Law, sin is nothing. "The strength of sin is the law" (1Co 15:56), and he who makes light of sin must defend moral confusion and injustice. He

who refuses to recognise sin as *guilt*, must dissolve the Law of the universe, or ascribe imbecility and injustice to the Judge of all.

The world has grown old in sin, and has now more than ever begun to trifle with it, either as a necessity that cannot be cured, or a partial aberration from good order that will rectify itself ere long. It is this tampering with evil, this refusal to see sin as God sees it, as the Law declares it, and as the story of our race has revealed it, that has in all ages been the root of error and of wide departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. Admit the evil of sin, with all its eternal consequences, and you are shut up to a divine way of dealing with it. Deny the evil of sin, and the future results of that evil, and you may deny the whole revelation of God, set aside the cross, and abrogate⁵⁷ the Law.

“By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom 3:20). Therefore the connection between sin and Law must be maintained, both in condemnation and in pardon. God’s interposition in behalf of man must be a confirmation, not a relaxation, of the Law; for Law cannot change, even as God cannot change or deny Himself.

Favour to the sinner must also be favour to the Law. Favour to the sinner that would simply establish Law, or leave its sanctities untouched, would be much; but favour to him that would deepen its foundations, and render it more venerable, more awful than before, is unspeakably higher and surer. Even so has it been. Law has not suffered at the hands of love, nor love been cramped and frozen by Law. Both have had full scope, fuller scope than if man had never fallen.

I know that love is not Law, and that Law is not love. In Law, properly, no love inheres. It is like the balance that knows not whether it be gold or iron that is laid upon it. Yet in that combination of the judicial and the paternal, which God’s way of salvation exhibits, Law has become the source and vehicle of love, and love Law’s upholder and honourer; so that even in this sense and aspect “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10).⁵⁸

The Law that was against the sinner has come to be upon the sinner’s side. It is now ready to take his part in the great controversy between him and God, provided he will conduct his case on the new principles that God has introduced for the settlement of all variances between Himself and the sinner; or rather, provided he will put that case into the hands of the divine Advocate, Who alone knows how to conduct it aright, and to bring it to a successful issue—Who is both “propitiation”⁵⁹ and “Advocate”—the “propitiation for our sins,” the “advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1Jo 2:1-2).

⁵⁷ **abrogate** – to repeal; to annul by an authoritative act.

⁵⁸ “Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power; both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all, with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.” R. Hooker (1554-1600), *Eccl Pol.* B. 1 sec 16.

⁵⁹ **propitiation** – an appeasement; a sacrifice that turns away wrath.

Chapter 2: God's Recognition of Substitution

Substitution in human law

The mere bringing the question into the Courts of Law would have availed nothing, had there not been provision made for so ordering their processes and judgments that the sinner might be righteously *acquitted*; that God might be “just and the justifier” (Rom 3:26), “a just God and a Saviour” (Isa 45:21); that Law might be brought to be upon the sinner's side; his absolver, and not his condemner.

This provision has been made by means of *substitution*, or transference of the penalty from him who had incurred it to One Who had not.

In human courts, no such provision can be allowed, save in regard to the payment of debt. In that case there is no difficulty as to the exchange of person and of property. If the creditor receives his money from a third party, he is satisfied, and the law is satisfied, though the debtor himself has not paid one farthing.⁶⁰ To a certain extent this is substitution; so that the idea of such a thing is not unknown in common life, and the principle of it not unacknowledged by human law.

But beyond this the law of man does not go. Substitution in any wider aspect is something about which man has never attempted to legislate. Stripe for stripe is *human* law; “with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5) is *superhuman*, the result of a legislation as gracious as it is divine.

Substitution is not for man to deal with: its principle he but imperfectly understands; its details he cannot reach. They are far too intricate, too far-reaching, and too mysterious for him to grasp, or, having grasped, to found any system of legislation upon them. In this, even though willing, he must ever be helpless.

But God has affirmed *substitution* as the principle on which He means to deal with fallen man; and the arrangements of His holy tribunal, His righteous governmental processes, are such as to bring this effectually and continually into play. It is through substitution that His righteous government displays its perfection in all its transactions with the sinner.

God has introduced the principle of substitution into His courts. There He sits as Judge, just and justifying, acting on the principle of transference or representation; maintaining Law, and yet manifesting grace: declaring that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23)—that “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (vs. 20)—yet presenting a divine Surety,⁶¹ as “a *propitiation* through faith in his blood, to declare his *righteousness* for the remission of sins that are past” (vs. 25).

⁶⁰ **farthing** – a coin formerly used in Great Britain worth one-fourth of a penny.

⁶¹ **Surety** – one who accepts liability for another's debts.

Substitution in the Old Testament

Salvation by substitution was embodied in the first promise regarding the woman's Seed and His bruised heel. Victory over our great enemy, by His subjecting Himself to the bruising of that enemy, is then and there proclaimed. The clothing of our first parents with that which had passed through death, in preference to the fig-leaves that had not so done, showed the element of substitution as that on which God had begun to act in His treatment of fallen man. Abel's sacrifice revealed the same truth, especially as contrasted with Cain's. For that which made Abel's acceptable, and himself accepted, was the death of the victim as substituted for his own; and that which rendered Cain's hateful, and himself rejected, was the absence of that death and blood. The slain firstling was accepted by God as, symbolically, Abel's substitute, laid on the altar till He should come, the "woman's seed," "made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:4-5).

From the beginning God recognized this principle in His dealings with man: the Just dying for the unjust, the blessed One becoming a curse that the cursed might be blessed. In all subsequent sacrifices it was the same. Noah's burnt-offering was like Abel's, and Abraham's resembled Noah's. Transference of guilt from one who could not bear the penalty without being eternally lost, to One Who could bear it, and yet come forth from under it, free and glorious—this was the deep truth into which God educated the patriarchs as that which lay at the foundation of His procedure with the sinner. The consumption of Abraham's sacrifice by the divine fire told him that the divine displeasure that should have rested on him forever had fallen upon a substitute and been exhausted, so that there remained no more wrath, no darkness, "no condemnation" for him (Rom 8:1); nothing but deliverance and favour and everlasting blessedness.

Arrangement of the tabernacle

But it was the arrangements of the tabernacle that brought out most fully this great principle of God's actings to the children of Adam.

In the passover-blood, the idea was chiefly that of *protection* from peril. The lamb stood sentinel at the door of each family; the blood was their "shield and buckler" (Psa 91:4). There might be trembling hearts within, wondering perhaps how a little blood could be so efficacious, and make their dwelling so impregnable; disquieted, too, because they could not see the blood, but were obliged to be content with knowing that God saw it (Exo 12:13). Yet no amount of fearfulness could alter the potency of that sprinkled blood, and no weakness of faith could make that God-given shield less efficacious against "the enemy and the avenger" (Psa 8:2). The blood—the symbol of substitution—was on the lintel, and that was enough. They did not see it nor feel it, but they *knew that it was there*, and that sufficed. God saw it, and that was better than their seeing it. They were safe, and they knew that they were so. They could feast upon the lamb in peace, and eat their bitter herbs with thankful joy. They could sing by anticipation the Church's song, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

But still it was not in Egypt, but in the wilderness; not in their paschal⁶² chamber, but in the sanctuary of their God that they were to learn the full and varied truth of pardon, cleansing, acceptance, and blessing through a substitute.

The old burnt-offering of the patriarchs, on the footing of which these fathers had in ages past drawn near to God, was split into many parts; and in the details of these we see the fullness and variety of the substitution.

The various sacrifices are well connected with the altar; and even that which was burnt “without the camp” was connected with the altar (Exo 29:14). It was no doubt carried forth without the camp, and burnt with fire (Lev 16:27); but “the blood was brought into the tabernacle of the congregation, to reconcile withal in the holy place” (Lev 6:30). “The blood of the bullock” was brought in to make atonement in the holy place. Their connection with the altar is sufficient of itself to show the truth of substitution contained in them, for the altar was the place of transference. But in each of them we find something that expresses this more directly and fully.

In the *burnt-offering* we see the perfection of the Substitute presented in the room⁶³ of our imperfection, in not loving God with our whole heart.

In the *meat-offering* we have the perfection of the Substitute as that on which, when laid upon the altar, God feeds, and on which He invites us to feed.

In the *peace-offering* we find the perfection of the Substitute laid on the same altar as an atonement, reconciling us to God; removing the distance and the enmity, and providing food for us out of that which had passed through death; for “he is our peace” (Eph 2:14).

In the *sin-offering* we see the perfection of the Substitute, Whose blood is sprinkled on the altar, and Whose body is burnt without, as securing pardon for unconscious sins—sins of ignorance.

In the *trespass-offering* there is the same perfection of the Substitute, in His atoning character, procuring forgiveness for conscious and willful sin.

In the *drink-offering* we have the perfection of the Substitute poured out on the altar, as that by which God is refreshed, and by which we are also refreshed. His “blood is drink indeed” (Joh 6:55).

In the *incense* we have the “sweet savour” (Lev 6:15) of the Substitute going up to God in our behalf; the cloud of fragrance from His life and death with which God is well pleased, enveloping us and making us fragrant with a fragrance not our own; absorbing all in us that is displeasing or hateful, and replacing it with a sweetness altogether perfect and divine.

In the *fire* we see the holy wrath of the Judge consuming the Victim slain in the sinner’s room. In the *ashes* we have the proof that the wrath had spent itself, that the pen-

⁶² **paschal** – passover.

⁶³ **in the room** – instead of; in place of.

alty was paid, that the work was done. "It is finished" was the voice of the ashes on the altar (Joh 19:30).

In all this we see such things as the following: 1) God's displeasure against sin; 2) that displeasure exhausted in a righteous way; 3) the Substitute presented and accepted; 4) the Substitute slain and consumed; 5) the transference of the wrath from the sinner to his Representative; 6) God resting in His love over the sinner, and viewing him in the perfection of his Substitute; 7) the sinner reconciled, accepted, complete, enjoying God's favour, and feeding at His table on that on which God had fed; on that which had come from the altar, and had passed through the fire.

Substitution applied to us

Thus God's acceptance of this principle, in His preparation of acceptable worshippers for His sanctuary, shows the fitness and value of it, as well as the divine intention that it should be available for the sinner in his drawing near to God. In this way, it is that God makes the sinner "perfect as pertaining to the conscience" (Heb 9:9), gives him "no more conscience of sins" (Heb 10:2), and "purges his conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14). For that which satisfies the holiness of God cannot but satisfy the conscience of the sinner. God, pointing to the altar, says, "That is enough for Me"; the sinner responds, and says, "It is enough for me."

As in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, we have this principle of substitution applied to the sanctuary, so in that to the Romans we find it applied to the Courts of Law. In the former we see God making the sinner *perfect* as a worshipper; in the latter, *righteous* as a servant and a son. In the one it is priestly completeness; in the latter it is judicial righteousness. But in both, the principle on which God acts is the same. And as He acts on it in receiving us, so does He invite us to act in coming to Him.

It is this truth that the gospel embodies; and it is this truth that we preach, when, as ambassadors for Christ, we pray men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. God's free love to the sinner is the first part of our message; and God's righteous way of making that free love available for the sinner is the second. What God is, and what Christ has done, make up one gospel. The belief of that gospel is eternal life. "All that believe are justified from all things" (Act 13:39).

With a weak faith and a fearful heart many a sinner stands before the altar. But it is not the strength of his faith, but the perfection of the Sacrifice that saves; and no feebleness of faith, no dimness of eye, no trembling of hand, can change the efficacy of our Burnt-offering. The vigour of our faith can add nothing to it, nor can the poverty of it take anything from it. Faith, in all its degrees, still reads the inscription, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jo 1:7); and if at times the eye is so dim that it cannot read these words, through blinding tears or bewildering mist, faith rests itself on the certain knowledge of the fact that the inscription is still there, or at least that the blood itself (of which these words remind us) remains, in all its power and suitability, upon the altar unchanged and uneffaced. God says that the believing man is

justified; who are we, then, that we should say, “We believe, but we do not know whether we are justified”? What God has joined together, let not man put asunder!

The right way of believing

The question as to the right way of believing is that which puzzles many, and engrosses all their anxiety, to the exclusion of the far greater questions as to the Person and work of Him Who is the object of their believing. Thus their thoughts run in a self-righteous direction, and are occupied, not with what Christ *has done*, but with what they have yet *to do*, to get themselves connected with His work.

What should we have said to the Israelite, who, on bringing his lamb to the tabernacle, should puzzle himself with questions as to the right mode of laying his hands on the head of the victim, and who should refuse to take any comfort from the sacrifice, because he was not sure whether he had laid them aright—on the proper place, in the right direction, with adequate pressure, or in the best attitude? Should we not have told him that his own actings concerning the lamb were not the lamb, and yet that he was speaking as if they were? Should we not have told him that the lamb was everything, his touch nothing, as to virtue or merit or recommendation? Should we not have told him to be of good cheer; not because he had laid his hands on the victim in the most approved fashion, but because they *had touched* that victim, however lightly and imperfectly, and thereby said, “Let this lamb stand for me, answer for me, die for me”? The touching had no virtue in itself, and therefore the excellency of the act was no question to come up at all: it simply intimated the man’s desire that this sacrifice should be taken instead of himself, as God’s appointed way of pardon. It was simply the indication of his consent to God’s way of saving him by the substitution of another. The point for him to settle was not, “Was my touch right or wrong, light or heavy?” but, “Was it the touch of the right lamb”—the lamb appointed by God for the taking away of sin?

The quality or quantity of faith is not the main question for the sinner. That which he needs to know is that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. This knowledge is life everlasting!

Chapter 3: The Completeness of the Substitution

In Person and in work, in life and in death, Christ is the sinner’s Substitute. His vicariousness⁶⁴ is co-extensive⁶⁵ with the sins and wants of those whom He represents, and covers all the different periods as well as the varied circumstances of their lives.

He entered our world as the Substitute. “There was no room for them in the inn” (Luk 2:7)—the inn of Bethlehem, the city of David, His own city. “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he become poor” (2Co 8:9). In poverty and banishment His life began. He was not to be allowed either to be born or die save as an outcast man. “Without the

⁶⁴ **vicariousness** – acting in place of someone else; substitution.

⁶⁵ **co-extensive** – having the same extent in time or space.

gate” (Heb 13:12) was His position, as He entered and as He left our earth. Man would not give even a roof to shelter or a cradle to receive the helpless babe. It was as the Substitute that He was the outcast from the first moment of His birth. His vicarious life began in the manger. For what can this poverty mean, this rejection by man, this outcast condition, but that His sin-bearing had begun?⁶⁶

The name, too, that met Him as He came into our world intimated the same truth: “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). His name proclaimed His mission and His work to be salvation; “Jehovah the Saviour” (Jesus) is that by which the infant is called. As the Saviour, He comes forth from the womb; as the Saviour, He lies in the manger; and if He is the Saviour, He is the Substitute. The name *Jesus* was not given to Him merely in reference to the cross, but to His whole life below. Therefore did Mary say, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my *Saviour*” (Luk 1:46-47). Therefore also did the angel say to the shepherds, “Unto you is born this day, in the city of David a *Saviour*, which is Christ the Lord” (Luk 2:11).

Scarcely is He born when His blood is shed. Circumcision deals with Him as one guilty, and needing the sign of cleansing.⁶⁷ He knew no sin, yet He is circumcised. He was not born in sin, nor shapen in iniquity, but was “the holy thing” (Luk 1:35). Yet He is circumcised as other children of Abraham, for “he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16). Why was He circumcised if not as the Substitute? The rite proclaimed His vicarious birth, as truly as did the cross His vicarious death. He Who knew no sin was made sin for us, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). This was the beginning of that obedience in virtue of which righteousness comes to us; as it is written, “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). For He Himself testified concerning His baptism, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Mat 3:15); and what was true of His baptism was no less true of His circumcision. The pain and the blood and the bruising of His tender body, connected with that symbol of shame, are inexplicable save on the supposition that even in infancy He was the vicarious One, not indeed bearing sin in the full sense and manner in which He bore it on the cross (for

⁶⁶ The Heidelberg Catechism (used in the Scotch Church, along with Calvin’s, till superseded by the Westminster) asks, “What profit takest thou by Christ’s holy conception and nativity?” and answers, “That He is our Mediator, and doth cover my sins with His innocency and perfect holiness, in which I was conceived, that they may not come into the sight of God.”

⁶⁷ “These ceremonial observances were so many confessions of sin. Christ, then, Who was made sin for us, conformed to these.” Ames (1576-1633), *Medulla Theologica*, B. 1. Ch. 21. “Hereby [by circumcision] He was represented to the world not only as a subject, but also as a sinner. For though He was pure and holy, yet this ordinance passing upon Him seemed to imply as if corruption had indeed been in Him, which must be cut off by mortification...Thus was He represented as a sinner to the world, though most holy and pure in Himself.” Flavel, *Fountain of Life*, Sermon 19. “He was circumcised, and kept the law, to deliver us from the condemnation of it...Therefore we must seek our righteousness, not in the law, but in Christ, Who hath fulfilled the same, and given us freely His fulfilling.” Latimer (1487-1555), on Matthew 2:1-2.

without *death*, sin-bearing could not have been consummated), but still bearing it in measure, according to the condition of His years. Even then He was “the Lamb of God” (Joh 1:29).

His banishment into Egypt is referred to once and again by the old divines as part of that life of humiliation by which He was bearing our sins. As the banished One, He bore our banishment that we might return to God. He passed through earth as an outcast, because He was standing in the outcast’s place—“hurried up and down,” says an old writer, “and driven out of His own land as a vagabond” (Flavel, 1627-1691). In each part of His sin-bearing life there is something to meet our case. By the first Adam we were made exiles from God and paradise; by the last Adam we are brought back from our wanderings, restored to the divine favour, and replaced in the paradise of God.

His baptism is the same in import with His circumcision. He needed not the symbol of death and cleansing; for He was wholly pure, not liable to death on His own account. Why, then, should this sign of washing the unclean be applied to Him, if He was not then standing in the room of the unclean? What had water to do with the spotless One? What had the figure of “the putting away of the filth of the flesh”—and of “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1Pe 3:21)—to do with Him Who had no filth of the flesh to put away, and on Whose conscience not the very shadow of dispeace⁶⁸ had ever rested? But He was the Substitute; and into all the parts and circumstances of our life He enters, fulfilling all righteousness in the name of those whom He had come to save. The water was poured upon Him as standing in our room and fulfilling our obligations.⁶⁹

In the Psalms we find Him giving utterance to His feelings while bearing sins that were not His own, but which were felt by Him as if they were His own. Again and again He confesses sin.

But what had the Holy One to do with confession, or with strong crying and tears? What connection had He with the horrible pit and the miry clay, with the overwhelming floods and waves, with the deep waters, and the dust and darkness, and the lowest pit? Why shrank He from the assembly of the wicked that enclosed Him, from the “bulls [which] have compassed me: the strong bulls of Bashan [which] have beset me round,”

⁶⁸ **dispeace** – dissention; strife; turmoil.

⁶⁹ The old hymns have not lost sight of those truths. As specimens, I give the following:

*“Stillat excisos pueri per artus Efficax noxas abolere sanguis;
Obligat morti pretiosa totum Stilla cruorem.”*

Again:

*“Vix natus, ecce lacteum Profundit Infans sanguinem,
Libamen est hoc funeris Amoris hoc pr—ludium.”*

And again:

*“Dixit; et Patris veneratus iram Sustinet vulnus silicis cruent—
Et jugum legis subit ipse, servis Ut juga demat.”*

Little as these hymns contain of the finished work of the substitution, occasionally the great truth breaks out in connection with the different events in the Lord’s history.

from “the power of the dog,” from “the sword,” from “the lion’s mouth,” from “the horns of the unicorns” (Psa 22:12, 20-21)? Why, during those days of His flesh, was He subjected to all this? And why were the powers of earth and hell let loose against Him? Because He was the Substitute, Who had taken our place and assumed our responsibilities and undertaken to do battle with our enemies. In these Psalms we find the Seed of the woman at war with the seed of the serpent, and undergoing the varied anguish of the bruised heel.

He speaks not merely of the anguish of the cross when the full flood of wrath descended on Him, but of His lifetime’s daily griefs: “I am afflicted and ready to die *from my youth up*: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted” (Psa 88:15). “My soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave” (vs. 3). He said in the Psalms, just as afterwards He cried out, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38). “Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction...Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off...Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness” (Psa 88:9, 16, 18). Thus was He “despised and rejected of men” (that is, *the* despised and rejected of men), “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). And of the meaning of all this we can have no doubt, when we remember that He was always the sinless One bearing our sins, carrying them *up to the cross* as well as bearing them *upon the cross* (1Pe 2:24, *ἀνήνεγκεν*). Also it is written of Him, “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa 53:4); and yet again, it is written expressly with reference to His daily life, He “healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses” (Mat 8:16-17).⁷⁰ Vicariousness, or substitution, attached itself to each part of His life as truly as to His death.⁷¹ Our burden He assumed when He entered the manger, and laid it aside only at the cross. The utterance, “It is finished” (Joh 19:30), pointed back to a whole life’s sin-bearing work.

The confessions of our sins that we find in the Psalms (where, as “in a bottle,” God has deposited the tears of the Son of man, Psa 56:8) are the distinctest proofs of His work as the Substitute. Let one example suffice: “O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me” (Psa 38:1-4).

These confessions must be either those of the sinner or the Sin-bearer. They suit the former; and they show what views of sin we should entertain, and what our confessions

⁷⁰ The evangelist here translates directly from the Hebrew, and differs from the Septuagint.

⁷¹ The Heidelberg Catechism asks, “What believest thou when thou sayest, *He suffered?*” and the answer is, “That He, all the time of His life which He led on earth, but especially at the end thereof, sustained the wrath of God, both in body and soul, against the sin of mankind, that He might by His passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice, deliver our body and soul from everlasting damnation, and purchase unto us the favour of God, righteousness, and everlasting life.”

should be. But they suit the latter no less. And as they occur in those Psalms that are quoted in the New Testament as specially referring to Christ, we must take them as the confessions of the Sin-bearer, and meant to tell us what *He* thought of sin when it was laid upon Him simply as a substitute for others. The view thus given us of the completeness of the substitution is as striking as it is satisfying. We see here our Noah building His wondrous ark for the salvation of His household. We see its beginning, middle, and end. We see its different parts, external and internal: each plank as it is laid, each nail as it is driven in. Its form is perfect; its structure in all details is complete; its strength and stability are altogether divine. Yet with what labour and amid what mockings is this ark constructed! Amid what strong crying and tears, what blood and agony, is it completed! Thus, however, we are assured of its perfection and security. Through the deep waters of this evil world it floats in peace. No storm can overset it, no billow break it, nor so much as loosen one of its planks. They who have fled to it as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, are everlastingly safe.

When the Lord said, "Now is my soul troubled" (Joh 12:27); and when again He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," He spoke as the Sin-bearer. For what construction can we possibly put upon that trouble and sorrow, but that they were for us?⁷² Men, false to the great truth of a sin-bearing Christ, may say that, in the utterance of this anguish, He was merely giving us an example of patient endurance and self-sacrifice. But they who own the doctrine of Christ suffering "for sin, the just for the unjust," will listen to these bitter cries as to the very voice of the Substitute, and learn from them the completeness of that work of satisfaction—for the accomplishment of which He took our flesh, and lived our life, and died our death upon the tree.

But the completeness of the substitution comes out more fully at the cross. There the whole burden pressed upon Him, and the wrath of God took hold of Him, and the sword of Jehovah smote Him. He poured out His soul unto death, and He was cut off out of the land of the living.

Then the work was done. "It is finished." The blood of the Burnt-offering was shed. The propitiation was made, the transgression finished, and the everlasting righteousness brought in.

⁷² The old catechetical exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism brings out this fully: "The Godhead hath so strengthened the human nature, and upheld it, that it could bear the weight of the wrath of God against sin. It hath also given such dignity to the short sufferings of the human nature, that it hath satisfied for the eternal punishment which we had deserved...What suffered He in His soul? Very heavy and terrible torments, anxieties, pains, sorrows, distresses, arising from the sense of God's wrath...When and how long hath Christ suffered? The whole time of His life which He led on earth, but especially at the end thereof. The evangelical histories testify of banishments, Satan's temptations, poverty, disgrace, infirmities, hunger, thirst, fear, perils of life; especially in the garden of Gethsemane, in the judgment hall, on Golgotha...He not only suffered for sin, but He felt God against Him in that suffering as an angry judge...Hath He also purchased righteousness for us? Yes, so that the Father freely giveth and bestoweth the same on us, and reckoneth it unto us; so that the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, we may stand in God's judgment."

All that follows is the fruit or result of the work *finished on the cross*. The grave is the awful pledge or testimony to His death as a true and real death,⁷³ but it forms no part of the substitution or expiation.⁷⁴ Ere our Surety reached the tomb, atonement⁷⁵ had been completed. The resurrection is the blessed announcement of the Father that the work had been accepted and the Surety set free; but it was no part either of the atonement or the righteousness. The ascension and the appearing in the presence of God for us with His own blood are the carrying out of the atonement made upon Calvary; but they are no part of the expiation by means of which sin is forgiven and we are justified. All was finished, once and forever, when the Surety said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luk 23:46).

There are some who would separate propitiation from the cross, who maintain that the three days’ entombment was part of the sin-bearing. But the cry from the cross, “It is finished,” silences all such theories. The altar is the only place of expiation, and it is *death* that is the wages of sin. Burial was but the visible proof of the reality of the death. The Surety’s death once given instead of ours, the work is done. The fire consumed the sacrifice; and the ashes that remain are not the prolongation of that sacrifice, but the palpable proof that the fire has exhausted itself, that wrath is spent, and that nothing can now be added to or taken from the perfection of that sacrifice, through which pardon and righteousness are henceforth to flow to the condemned and the ungodly.

“Justified by his *blood*” is the apostolic declaration; and as a result of this, “saved from wrath through him” (Rom 5:9). Here we rest, sitting down beneath the shadow of the cross to receive the benefit of that justifying, saving, protecting sacrifice.

It is at and by the *cross* that God justifies the ungodly. “By His *stripes* we are healed” (Isa 53:5); and the symbol of the brazen serpent visibly declares this truth. It was the serpent when uplifted that healed the deadly bite, not the serpent after it was taken down and deposited in the tabernacle. As from that serpent—the figure of Him Who was “made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13)—so from the *cross* health and life flow in. Not resurrection, but crucifixion, is the finishing of transgression and the making of an end of sin.

“Reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son” (Rom 5:10) is another of the many testimonies to the value and efficacy of the cross. Reconciliation is not connected with resurrection. The “peace was made by the *blood of his cross*” (Col 1:20). The fruits and results of the peace-offering may be many and various, but they are not the basis of reconciliation. That basis is the sacrificial blood-shedding. What can be more explicit than these three passages, which announce justification by the blood, reconciliation by the death, and peace by “the blood of his cross”?

⁷³ “To what end was He buried? That thereby He might make manifest that He was dead indeed” (Heidelberg Catechism).

⁷⁴ **expiation** – the act of making atonement.

⁷⁵ **atonement** – reconciliation with God achieved by removing or covering the guilt of sin.

In the cross we see the Priest and priesthood; in the resurrection, the King and royal power. To the Priest belong the absolution⁷⁶ and the cleansing and the justifying; to the King, the impartation of blessing to the absolved, the cleansed, and the justified.

To the cross, therefore, do we look and cleave, knowing that out of its death cometh life to us, and out of its condemnation pardon and righteousness. With Christ were we crucified; and in this crucifixion we have “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7).

Three times over in one chapter (Lev 1:9, 13, 17), we read these words, it is “a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.” The apostle, referring to these words, says, “Christ...hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph 5:2). This sweet savour came from the brazen altar, or altar of burnt-offering. It was the sweet odour of that sacrifice that ascended to God, and that encompassed the worshipper, so that he was covered all over with this sacrificial fragrance, presenting him *perfect* before God and making his own conscience feel that he was accepted as such and treated as such. Thus, by that burnt-offering there is proclaimed to us justification in a crucified Christ. The manifold blessings flowing from resurrection and ascension are not to be overlooked; but nowhere does Scripture teach *justification* by these. The one passage sometimes quoted to prove this, Romans 4:25, declares the opposite, for the words truly translated run thus: “He was delivered *because we* had sinned, and raised again *because of our justification*.” It was because the justifying work was *finished* that resurrection was possible. Had it not been so, He must have remained under the power of the grave. But the cross had completed the justification of His Church. He was raised from the dead. Death could no longer have dominion over Him. The work was finished, the debt paid, and the Surety went free. He rose, not in order to justify us, but because we were justified. In raising Him from the dead, God the Father cleared Him from the imputed guilt that had nailed Him to the cross and borne Him down to the tomb. “He was justified in the Spirit” (1Ti 3:16). His resurrection was not His justification, but the declaration that He was “justified”; so that resurrection, in which we are one with Him, does not justify us, but proclaims that we are justified—justified by His blood and death.⁷⁷

In so far, then, as substitution is concerned, we have to do with the cross alone. It was, indeed, the place of death; but on that very account it was also to us a place of life and the pledge of resurrection.

⁷⁶ **absolution** – forgiveness; pardon; release.

⁷⁷ “What other benefits receive we by the sacrifice and death of Christ? That by virtue of His death our old man is crucified, slain, and buried together with Him, that henceforth evil lusts and desires may not reign in us, but we may offer ourselves unto Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving...How doth the resurrection of Christ profit us? First, by His resurrection He vanquished death, that He might make us partakers of that righteousness which He had purchased for us; secondly, we are stirred up by His power to a new life” (Heidelberg Catechism).

The words of the apostle are very explicit on this point: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom 6:6). Here we have three things connected directly with the cross: (1) the death of the old man, (2) the destruction of the body of sin, (3) deliverance from the life-bondage of sin. Then he adds, "For he that is dead is freed from sin" (vs. 7). The word "freed" is literally "justified" (*δεδικαίωται*, has been judicially released, legally set free, having paid the full penalty), teaching us that death is the exhaustion of the penalty and the justification of the sinner; so that justification in a crucified Christ is the teaching of the Spirit here. The words of another apostle are no less clear: "Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh...he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (1Pe 4:1). Here Christ on the cross is set before us, suffering, the Just for the unjust; and having thus suffered, He has exhausted the penalty that He was bearing; and having exhausted it, His connection with sin has ceased. He is now in the state described elsewhere, "without sin" (Heb 9:28). The word "ceased" means more properly "has rest."

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The life of our Surety was one of sorrow and unrest, for our penalty lay upon Him; but when this penalty was paid by His death, He "rested." The labour and the burden were gone, and as One Who knew what entering into rest was (Heb 4:10), He could say to us, "I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). He carried His life-long burden to the cross, and there laid it down, resting from His labours. Or rather, it was there that the Law severed the connection between Him and the burden, loosing it from His shoulders, that it might be buried in His grave. From that same cross springs the sinner's rest, the sinner's disburdening, the sinner's absolution and justification.

Not for a moment are we to lose sight of the blessings flowing from the resurrection, or to overlook and undervalue the new position into which we are brought by it. The "power of the resurrection" (Phi 3:10) must be fully recognized and acted on for its own results. We are crucified with Christ. With Him we died, were buried, and rose again. "Risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). He "hath quickened us together with Christ...And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:5-6). Such are the terms in which the apostle describes the benefits of Christ's resurrection, and in which he reveals to us the oneness with Him Who died and rose. But nowhere does he separate our justification from the cross. Nowhere does he speak of Christ meeting our legal responsibilities by His resurrection. Nowhere does he ascribe to His resurrection that preciousness in whose excellency we stand complete. Acceptance and completeness in our standing before God are attributed to the cross and blood and death of the Divine Substitute.

Poor as my faith in this Substitute may be, it places me at once in the position of one to whom "God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom 4:6). God is willing to re-

⁷⁸ See Kypke (1724-1779), *Observ. in N.T.* He quotes some striking passages in classical Greek to illustrate this. See also Bengel (1735-1793) and Winer.

ceive me on the footing of His perfection; and if I am willing to be thus received, in the perfection of Another with Whom God is well pleased, the whole transaction is completed. *I am justified by His blood.* “As he is” (1Jo 4:17) so am I even in this world—even now, with all my imperfections and evils.

To be entitled to use Another’s name, when my own name is worthless; to be allowed to wear Another’s raiment, because my own is torn and filthy; to appear before God in Another’s person, the Person of the Beloved Son—this is the summit of all blessing. The Sin-bearer and I have exchanged names, robes, and persons! I am now represented by Him, my own personality having disappeared. He now appears in the presence of God for me (Heb 9:24). All that makes Him precious and dear to the Father has been transferred to me. His excellency and glory are seen as if they were mine; and I receive the love, and the fellowship, and the glory, as if I had earned them all. So entirely one am I with the Sin-bearer that God treats me not merely as if I had not done the evil that I have done, but as if I had done all the good that I have not done but that my Substitute has done. In one sense I am still the poor sinner, once under wrath; in another I am altogether righteous, and shall be so forever, because of the Perfect One in Whose perfection I appear before God. Nor is this a false pretense or a hollow fiction that carries no results or blessings with it. It is an exchange that has been provided by the Judge and sanctioned by Law; an exchange of which any sinner upon earth may avail himself and be blest.

Chapter 4: The Declaration of the Completeness

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a prophetic vision of the cross. The book of Leviticus had given Israel in detail the standing symbols that were all to be transformed into spiritual substances or verities in Christ crucified. And this chapter of the prophet gives a summary of these truths, in Levitical language, connecting them all with the Seed of the woman, and His bruising upon the tree.

For more than three thousand years the *bruised heel* had been held up before the eye of the world, and specially of Israel (in their sacrifices), as their deliverance and hope. But now the interpretation is given in more explicit language. Its meaning—as expressing (in the varied details of this chapter) the transference of the sinner’s guilt to the Surety, as setting forth also the mysterious Person of the Man of sorrows, and, under all this, revealing the deep free love of God to man—is here proclaimed with a clearness and fullness such as had not hitherto been vouchsafed⁷⁹ either to the patriarchs or to Israel. Nowhere is the work of Messiah the Sin-bearer more explicitly revealed. The just One suffering for the unjust is the theme of this prophetic burden.

Abruptly the prophet breaks forth in his description of Messiah, Seed of the woman, son of Adam, son of Abraham, son of David: “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground” (Isa 53:2). The soil and the air of earth are alike

⁷⁹ **vouchsafed** – graciously, condescendingly given or granted.

uncongenial to this shoot from the stem of Jesse. Its affinities are all with a purer climate than ours.

He rises up in the midst of us, but not to be appreciated and honoured, not to be admired or loved. “He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (vs. 2). The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not (Joh 1:5). “He is [the] despised and rejected [one] of men” (vs. 3); that is, of all men the most despised and rejected: for He came to His own, and His own received Him not (Joh 1:11). Here is the beginning of His vicarious life—a life of reproach among the sons of men. “A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (vs. 3). Whence all this life-long sadness? When angels visit earth, are they thus sorrowful? Does the air of earth infect them with its troubles? Do they weep, and groan, and bleed? Are they assailed with the blasphemies of earth? If not, why is it thus? Why is the holy Son of God, from His childhood, subjected to this contempt and bowed down beneath this burden? Why is the cup of gall and wormwood set beside His cradle? And why, day by day, in youth and manhood, has He to drink the bitter draught? Angels see the sights and hear the sounds of earth as they attend us in their ministries or execute the errands of their King, yet they are not saddened; nor, when they return to their dwellings of light do they require the tears to be wiped from their eye, or the sweat from their brow. How can we account for the difference between Messiah and the angels, save the fact that His sin-bearing character made Him accessible to and penetrable by grief in a way such as no angel could be?

The difficulty of such a case was obvious; and accordingly the prophet meets it in the next verse. It is *our* griefs that He was bearing; it was *our* sorrows that He was carrying. These were the things that made Him the Man of sorrows. They that saw Him could not understand the mystery. They said, “God has smitten him for his sins, and afflicted him for some hidden transgression that we know not.” But, no, “He was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him; and with his stripes *we* are healed” (vs.5). The wounding, the bruising, the chastening, and the scourging had their beginnings before He reached the cross; but it was there that they were all completed by the obedience “unto death” (Phi 2:8).

“The LORD [Jehovah] hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6); or, hath made to rush or strike upon Him the punishment of us all.

*“It was exacted, and He became answerable, And (therefore) He opened not His mouth. As a lamb to the slaughter He is led; And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, So He opened not His mouth. From prison and from judgment He is taken, And His generation (manner of life) who declareth?”*⁸⁰

These are the scenes before the cross, while He was on His way to it. He was dumb before His judges, because He had made Himself legally responsible for our debt or guilt.

⁸⁰ Isaiah 53:7-8 here, and the following verses, 9-12, appear to be the author’s own translation/adaptation of these Scriptures, and have accordingly been unedited.

Nor was there anyone to come forward and declare His innocence. He was carrying, too, our sins to the cross. After this we have the cross itself:

“He was cut off out of the land of the living; For the transgressions of my people He was stricken.”

The sin-bearing of the cross is fully brought out here. There He hung as the Substitute, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1Pe 3:18).

“And there was appointed Him a grave with the wicked, But with the rich man was He in death.”

There was assigned to Him a place with the wicked not only on the cross, but in His burial. He was condemned not only to die an ignominious⁸¹ death, but to have a like sepulchre. From this latter, however, He was delivered by the rich man of Arimathea, who unexpectedly came forward and begged the body, which would otherwise have been consigned to a malefactor’s grave. He was “with the rich in His death”; that is, when He died, or after His death, when He was taken down from the cross.

“Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief.”

Jehovah was well pleased with His bruising—nay, took pleasure in bruising Him. Never was Messiah more the “beloved Son” (Mat 17:5) than when suffering on the cross; yet Jehovah was “well pleased” to put Him to grief. Though the *consciousness* of communion was interrupted for a time, when He cried, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46), yet there was no breaking of the bond. There was *wrath* coming down on Him as the *Surety*, but *love* resting on Him as the *Son*. Both were together. He knew the love, even while He felt the wrath; nay, it was the knowledge of the love that made Him cry out in amazement and anguish, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

“Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.”

Or, more exactly, “a trespass-offering,” a sacrifice for willful, conscious sin. Of this trespass-offering it is written, “The priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD: and it shall be forgiven him for anything of all that he hath done in trespassing therein” (Lev 6:7). The various offerings of the tabernacle and the altar all centre in and cluster round the cross. It is *the soul* that is here said to be the trespass-offering; implying that when the soul was parted from the body, when Christ commended His spirit to His Father, then the trespass-offering was completed. Atonement was made, once for all. Before the body of the Surety had reached the tomb, the great work was done. The lying in the grave was the visible and palpable sign or pledge of the work having been *already finished*. And resurrection was the Father’s seal from above set to the excellency of that completed sacrifice, and to the perfection of Him by Whom it had been accomplished on the cross.

“Upon the labour of His soul He shall look, He shall be satisfied.”

⁸¹ **ignominious** – shameful; despicable.

Christ, in the days of His flesh, often used language like this regarding His *soul*: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38); “Now is my soul troubled” (Joh 12:27); “The Son of man came...to give his soul a ransom for many” (Mat 20:28); “The good shepherd giveth his soul for the sheep” (Joh 10:11); “I lay down my soul for the sheep” (Joh 10:15). Thus the life, the soul, the blood are connected together; and with that which was accomplished by them in life and in death He is satisfied. Whether it is Himself that is satisfied, or the Father, matters not. The truth taught is the same.

“By His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; For He shall bear their iniquities.”

It is the Father that here speaks. He calls Messiah, “My righteous Servant” (vs. 11), and proclaims that by giving the knowledge of Himself He shall justify many. The knowledge of Christ is that which secures our justification—the knowledge of Christ as the *Sin-bearer*: for it is added, as the justifying thing in this knowledge, “He shall bear their iniquities,” thus again linking justification with the cross and the finished work there.

The last verse is very remarkable, as bringing out fully the Father’s reasons for glorifying His Son—reasons connected entirely with the cross and the sin-bearing there:

“Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He hath poured out His soul unto death. And He was numbered with the transgressors; And He bare the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.”

So that the resurrection, with all the subsequent glory and honour conferred on Him, is the recompense and result of His justifying work on the cross. On that tree of death and shame the work was *finished*. There He poured out His soul; there He was numbered with the transgressors; there He bare the sin of many; there He made intercession for the transgressors, when He cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luk 23:34).⁸²

“It is finished” were His words as He died. The justifying work is done! If anything else besides this finished work is to justify, then Christ has died in vain.

“It is finished,” He said, and gave up the ghost. “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”; and to the Father that spirit went. The Father received it, and, in receiving it, bore testimony to the completeness of the work. The Roman soldiers, perceiving “that he was dead already” (Joh 19:33), may be said to have testified to the completion of the work of pouring out His soul unto death. The taking down from the cross was another testimony. Joseph and Nicodemus were like the Levites carrying away the ashes from the altar. The burial was another testimony. The resurrection began the divine and visible testimony to this same thing. The ascension, and “sitting” at the Father’s right hand, were the attestations from above—the heavenly responses to the voice from the cross,

⁸² In these words, “they know not what they do,” He is speaking as the *Sin-offering*, which was specially for sins of ignorance.

“It is finished.” All after this was the *result* of that finished work. The presentation of His blood was not to complete the sacrifice, but to carry out what was already done. The sprinkling of the blood—at whatever time that may have been done—was the application of the sacrifice, not the sacrifice itself.

“It is finished!” He Who makes this announcement on the cross is the Son of God. It is He Who but the day before had said in the prospect of this consummation, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Joh 17:4). He knows what He says when He utters it, and He is “the faithful and true witness” (Rev 3:14). His words are true, and they are full of meaning.

He makes this announcement before the Father, as if calling on Him to confirm it. He makes it before heaven and earth, before men and angels, before Jew and Gentile. He makes it to us. Listen, O sons of men! The work that saves is perfected. The work that justifies is done.

The completeness thus announced is a great and momentous one. It is one in which all the ends of the earth have an interest. Had aught been left unfinished, then what hope for man or for man’s earth? But it is begun, carried on, consummated; and no flaw is found in it; no part is left out; not a jot or tittle has failed. It is absolutely perfect.

This perfection or consummation proclaims to us such things as these: the completion of the Father’s purpose, the completion of atonement, the completion of the justifying work, the completeness of the sin-bearing and Law-fulfilling, the completeness of the righteousness, the completeness of the covenant and the covenant seal. All is done, and done by Him Who is Son of man and Son of God—perfectly and for ever done, nothing to be added to it or taken from it, by man, by Satan, or by God. The burial of the Substitute does not add to its completeness. Resurrection forms no part of that justifying work. It was all concluded on the cross.

It is so finished that a sinner may at once use it for pardon, for rest, for acceptance, for justification. Standing beside this altar where the great Burnt-offering was laid and consumed to ashes, the sinner feels that he is put in possession of all blessing. That which the altar has secured passes over to him simply in virtue of his taking his place at the altar, and thus identifying himself with the Victim. There the divine displeasure against sin has spent itself. There righteousness has been obtained for the unrighteous. There the sweet savour of rest is continually ascending from God. There the full flood of divine love is ever flowing out. There God meets the sinner in His fullest grace, without hindrance or restraint. There the peace that has been made through blood-shedding is found by the sinner. There reconciliation is proclaimed, and the voice that proclaims it from that altar reaches to the ends of the earth. There the ambassadors of peace take their stand to discharge their embassy, pleading with the sons of men far off and near, saying, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20).

The resurrection was the great visible seal set to this completeness. It was the Father’s response to the cry from the cross, “It is finished.” As at baptism He spoke from

the excellent glory and said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17), so did He speak, though not with audible voice, at the resurrection, bearing testimony thereby not only to the excellency of the Person, but to the completeness of the work of His only-begotten Son. The resurrection added nothing to the propitiation of the cross; it proclaimed it already perfect, incapable of addition or greater completeness.

The ascension added to this testimony, and especially the sitting at God’s right hand. “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb 10:12). “When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:3). The standing posture of the ancient priests showed that their work was an unfinished one. The *sitting down* of our High Priest intimated to all heaven that the work was done and the “eternal redemption” obtained (Heb 9:12). And what was thus intimated in heaven has been proclaimed on earth by those whom God sent forth in [the] power of the Holy Ghost, to tell to men the things that eye had not seen nor ear heard (1Co 2:9). That “sitting down” contained in itself the gospel. The first note of that gospel was sounded at Bethlehem from the manger where the young child lay. The last note came from the Throne above, when the Son of God returned in triumph from His mission of grace to earth, and took His seat upon the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Between these two extremities, the manger and the throne, how much is contained for us! All the love of God is there. The exceeding riches of divine grace are there. The fullness of that power and wisdom and righteousness, which have come forth, not to destroy, but to save, is there. These are the two boundary walls of that wondrous storehouse out of which we are to be filled throughout the eternal ages.

Of what is contained in this treasure-house we know something here, in some small measure; but the vast contents are beyond all measurement and all conception. The eternal unfolding of these to us will be perpetual gladness. Apart from the excellency of the inheritance, the beauty of the city, and the glory of the kingdom—which will make us say, Truly “the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places” (Psa 16:6)—there will be, in our ever-widening knowledge of “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8), light and replenishment and satisfaction, which, even were all external brightness swept away, would be enough for the soul throughout all the ages to come.

The present glory of Christ is the reward of His humiliation here. Because He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name (Phi 2:8-9). He wears the crown of glory because He wore the crown of thorns. He drank of the brook by the way; therefore he has lifted up the head (Psa 110:7).

But this is not all. That glory to which He is now exalted is the standing testimony before all heaven that His work was finished on the cross. “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” He said; and then He added, “Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (Joh 17:4-5).

The proofs of the completeness of the sacrificial work upon the cross are very full and satisfying. They assure us that the work was really finished, and, as such, available for the most sinful of men. We shall find it good to dwell upon the thought of this completeness, for the pacifying of the conscience, for the satisfying of the soul, for the removal of all doubt and unbelief, and for the production and increase of faith and confidence.

There are *degrees of rest* for the soul, and it is in proportion as we comprehend the perfection of the work on Calvary that our rest will increase. There are *depths of peace* that we have not yet sounded, for it is “peace...which passeth all understanding” (Phi 4:7); and into these depths the Holy Spirit leads us, not in some miraculous way, or by some mere exertion of power, but by revealing to us more and more of that work, in the first knowledge of which our peace began.

We are never done with the cross nor ever shall be. Its wonders will be always new and always fraught with joy. The “Lamb as it had been slain” (Rev 5:6) will be the theme of our praise above. Why should such a name be given to Him in such a book as the Revelation, which in one sense carries us far past the cross, were it not that we shall always realize our connection with its one salvation; always be looking to it even in the midst of glory; and always learning from it some new lesson regarding the work of Him “in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7)? What will they who here speak of themselves as being so advanced as to be done with the cross, say to being brought face to face with the Lamb that was slain, in the age of absolute perfection, the age of the heavenly glory?

Thou fool! Dost thou not know that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ endureth forever, and that thou shalt eternally glory in it, if thou are saved by it at all?

Thou fool! Wilt thou not join in the song below, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev 1:5)? Wilt thou not join in the song above, “Thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” (Rev 5:9)? And dost thou not remember that it is from the “Lamb as it had been slain” that “the seven spirits of God are sent forth into all the earth” (Rev 5:6)?⁸³

It is *the Lamb* who stands in the midst of the elders (Rev 5:6), and before whom they fall down. “Worthy is the Lamb” is the theme of celestial song. It is the Lamb that opens the seals (6:1). It is before the Lamb that the great multitude stand clothed in white (7:9). It is the blood of the Lamb that washes the raiment white (7:14). It is by the blood of the Lamb that the victory is won (12:11). The book of life belongs to the Lamb slain (13:8). It was a Lamb that stood on the glorious Mount Zion (14:1). It is the Lamb that the redeemed multitude are seen following (14:4); and that multitude is the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb (14:4). It is the song of the Lamb that is sung in heaven (15:3). It is the Lamb that wars and overcomes (17:14). It is the marriage of the Lamb

⁸³ Thirty times does the word *Lamb*, as Christ’s heavenly name, occur in the Apocalypse, bringing perpetually before the redeemed in glory the cross and the blood, as if to prevent the possibility of our losing sight of Christ crucified.

that is celebrated, and it is to the marriage-supper of the Lamb that we are called (19:7, 9). The church is the Lamb's wife (21:9). On the foundations of the heavenly city are written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (21:14). Of this city the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (21:23). Of that city the Lamb is the light (21:23). The book of life of the Lamb, and the throne of the Lamb (21:27; 22:1, 3), sum up this wondrous list of honours and dignities belonging to the Lord Jesus as the crucified Son of God.

Thus the glory of heaven revolves round the cross; and every object on which the eye lights in the celestial city will remind us of the cross and carry us back to Golgotha. Never shall we get beyond it, or turn our backs on it, or cease to draw from it the divine virtue that it contains.

The tree, be it palm, or cedar, or olive, can never be independent of its roots, however stately its growth, however plentiful its fruit. The building, be it palace or temple, can never be separated from its foundation, however spacious or ornate its structure may be. So never shall the redeemed be independent of the cross or cease to draw from its fullness.

In what ways our looking to the cross hereafter will benefit us, what the shadow of that tree will do for us in the eternal kingdom, I know not, nor do I venture to say. But it would seem as if the cross and the glory were so inseparably bound together that there cannot be the enjoyment of the one without the remembrance of the other. The completeness of the sacrificial work on Calvary will be matter for eternal contemplation and rejoicing, long after every sin has been, by its cleansing efficacy, washed out of our being forever.

Shall we ever exhaust the fullness of the cross? Is it a mere stepping-stone to something beyond itself? Shall we ever cease to glory in it as the apostle gloried, not only because of past, but because of present and eternal blessing? The forgiveness of sin is one thing, but is that all? The crucifixion of the world is another, but is that all? Is the cross to be a relic—useless though venerable, like the serpent of brass laid up in the tabernacle, to be destroyed perhaps at some future time and called Nehushtan (2Ki 18:4)? Or is it not rather like the tree of life that bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields its fruit every month by the banks of the celestial river? Its influence here on earth is transforming. But even after the transformation has been completed, and the whole Church perfected, shall there not be a rising higher and higher, a taking on of greater and yet greater comeliness, a passing from glory to glory—and all in connection with the cross, and through the never-ending vision of its wonders?

Of the new Jerusalem it is said, "The *Lamb* is the light [or lamp] thereof" (Rev 21:23). The Lamb is only another name for *Christ crucified*, so that thus it is the cross that is the lamp of the holy city; and with its light, the gates of pearl, the jasper wall, the golden streets, the brilliant foundations, and the crystal river, are all lighted up. The glow of the cross is everywhere, penetrating every part, and reflected from every gem,

and by its peculiar radiance transporting the dwellers of the city back to Golgotha, as the fountainhead of all this splendour.

It is light from Calvary that fills the heaven of heavens. Yet it is no dim religious light, for the glory of God is to lighten it. Its light is “like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal.” “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light” (Rev 21:11; 22:5). Yes, we shall never be done with the cross and the blood; though, where all are clean and perfect in every sense, these will not be used for purging the conscience or justifying the ungodly.

It is the symbol both of a dying and of a risen Christ that we find in the Revelation. The “Lamb as it had been slain” indicates both. But the prominence is given to the former. It is the slain Lamb that has the power and authority to open the seals; implying that it was in His sin-bearing or sacrificial character that He exercised this right, and that it was His finished work on which this right rested, and by which it was acquired. It is as the Lamb that He is possessed with all wisdom and strength—“the seven horns and the seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 5:6), the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of omniscience and omnipotence.

The Lamb is one of His special and eternal titles, the name by which He is best known in heaven. As such, we obey and honour and worship Him, never being allowed to lose sight of the cross amid all the glories of the kingdom. As such we follow Him, and shall follow Him eternally, as it is written, “These are they that follow *the Lamb* whithersoever he goeth” (Rev 14:4).

From The Everlasting Righteousness; available in print as a paperback from Chapel Library.

Sanctification

True Revivals and the Men God Uses

The world is still sleeping its sleep of death. It has been a slumber of many generations, sometimes deeper [and] sometimes lighter, yet still a slumber like that of the tomb—as if destined to continue till the last trumpet sound, and then there shall be no more sleep.

Yet God has not left it to sleep on unwarned. He has spoken in a voice that might reach the dullest ears and quicken the coldest heart. Ten thousand times has He thus spoken and still He speaks. But the world refuses to hear. Its myriads slumber on, as if this sleep of death were the very blessedness of its being.

Yet, in one sense, the world's sleep has never been universal. Never has there been an age when it could be said there is not one awake. The multitude has always slept, but there has always been a little flock awake. Even in the world's deepest midnight there have been always children of the light and of the day. In the midst of a slumbering world some have been in every age awake. God's voice had reached them, and His mighty power had raised them, and they walked the earth—awake among sleepers, the living among the dead.

The world has written at large the history of its sleeping multitudes; it becomes the Church of Christ to record the simpler, briefer annals of its awakened ones. Doubtless, their record is on high, written more imperishably than the world can ever accomplish for its sons, yet still it is well for earth to have a record of those “of whom the world was not worthy” (Heb 11:38).

Their story is as full of interest as it is of importance. The waking up of each soul would be matter enough for a history—its various shakings and startings up, ere it was fully aroused: the word or the stroke that effected the work, the time, the way in which it became awake for eternity and for God, as well as its new course of light after it awoke. All these are fraught with an interest to which nothing of time or earth can ever once be compared.

And then, when the voice of God awakes not one, but thousands, it may be in a day—when whole villages and districts seem as if arising and putting on new life—how intensely, how unutterably interesting! At such a crisis it seems as if the world itself were actually beginning to awake, as if the shock that had broken the slumbers of so many were about to shake the whole world together. Yet alas! The tokens of life soon vanish. The half-awakened sleepers sink back into deeper slumber, and the startled world lies down in still more sad and desperate security.

The history of the Church is full of these awakenings, some on a larger and some on a smaller scale. Indeed, such narratives form the true history of the Church, if we are to take our ideas of this from the inspired Church history given us in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Many a wondrous scene has been witnessed from the day of Pentecost downwards to our own day. What better deserves the attention and the study of the believer than the record of these outpourings of the Spirit? Besides the interest that cleaves to them, there is much to be learned from them by the Church. To see how God has been working, and to observe the means and instruments by which He has carried on His work, cannot fail to be profitable and quickening. It makes us sensible of our own short-comings, and it points out the way by which the blessing may be secured.

Let us look for a little [while] at the instruments and their success. Let us note their character and contemplate their success. They were men of like passions as we are, yet how marvelously blest in their labours! Whence, then, came their vast success? What manner of men were they? What weapons did they employ?

1. What Characterized These Men?

a. They were in earnest about the great work of the ministry on which they had entered.

They felt their infinite responsibility as stewards of the mysteries of God, and shepherds appointed by the Chief Shepherd to gather in and watch over souls. They lived, labored, and preached like men on whose lips the immortality of thousands hung. Everything they did and spoke bore the stamp of earnestness, and proclaimed to all with whom they came into contact that the matters about which they had been sent to speak were of infinite moment⁸⁴—admitting of no indifference, no postponement, even for a day.

Yet their fervour was not that of excitement; it was the steadfast but tranquil purpose of men who felt the urgency and weight of the cause entrusted to them, and who knew that necessity was laid upon them. Yea, woe was unto them if they preached not the gospel (1Co 9:16). They felt that, as ministers of the gospel, they dared not act otherwise—they dared not throw less than their whole soul into the conflict. They dared not take

⁸⁴ **moment** – importance; consequence.

their ease or fold their arms; they dared not be indifferent to the issue when professing to lead on the hosts of the living God against the armies of the prince of darkness.

b. They were bent upon success.

It was with a good hope of success that they first undertook the awful⁸⁵ office of the ministry, and to despair of this would have been shameful distrust of Him Who had sent them forth, while to be indifferent to it would have been to prove themselves nothing short of traitors to Him and to His cause. As warriors, they set their hearts on victory, and fought with the believing anticipation of triumph, under the guidance of such a Captain as their Head. As shepherds, they could not sit idle on the mountainside in the sunshine, or the breeze, or the tempest—heedless of their straying, perishing, bleating flock. They watched, gathered, guarded, and fed the sheep committed to their care.

c. They were men of faith.

They ploughed and sowed in hope. They might sometimes go forth weeping, bearing precious seed; yet these were the tears of sorrow and compassion, not of despair. They knew that in due season they would reap if they fainted not, that their labour in the Lord would not be in vain, and that ere long they would return bringing their sheaves with them. They had confidence in the God Whose they were and Whom they served, knowing that He would not send them on this warfare on their own charges. They had confidence in the Saviour Whose commission they bore, and on Whose errands they were gone forth. They had confidence in the promises of glorious success with which He had armed and comforted them. They had confidence in the Holy Spirit's almighty power and grace, as the glorifier of Christ, the testifier of His work, and the quickener of dead souls. They had confidence in the Word, the Gospel, the message of reconciliation that they proclaimed, knowing that it could not return void to Him Who sent it forth (Isa 55:11). Thus they went forth in faith and confidence, anticipating victory, defying enemies, despising obstacles, and counting not their lives dear unto them that they might finish their course with joy (cp. Act 20:24) and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus.

d. They were men of labour.

They were required to bear the burden and heat of the day. It might be truly said of them that "they scorned delights and lived laborious days" (John Milton, 1608-1674). Their lives are the annals of incessant, unwearied toil of body and soul. Time, strength, substance, health, all they were and possessed, they freely offered to the Lord—keeping back nothing, grudging nothing; joyfully, thankfully, surrendering all to Him Who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood, regretting only this: that they had so little, so very little to give up for Him Who for their sakes had freely given Himself!

They knew by experience something of what the apostle testifies concerning himself to the Corinthian church. They knew what it was to be "in weariness and painfulness, in

⁸⁵ **awful** – that which fills with awe.

watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (2Co 11:27). They had no time for levity, sloth, pleasure, or idle companionship. They rose before dawn to commence their labours, and the shades of evening found them, though wearied and fainting, still toiling on. They laboured for eternity, and as men who knew that time was short and the day of recompense at hand.

e. They were men of patience.

They were not discouraged, though they had to labour long without seeing all the fruit they desired. They continued still to sow. Day after day they pursued what, to the eye of the world, appeared a thankless and fruitless round of toil. They were not soon weary in well-doing, remembering the example of the husbandman in regard to his perishable harvest: “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain” (Jam 5:7).

Many a good plan has been rendered abortive by impatience. Many a day of toil has been thrown away by impatience. Many a rash step has been taken, and hasty changes adopted, in consequence of impatience. Attempts have been made to force on a revival by men who were impatient at the slow progress of the work in their hand; and seldom have these ended in anything but calamitous failure, or at best a momentary excitement, which scorched and sterilized a soil from which a little more patient toil would have reaped an abundant harvest. There may be and there always ought to be the calmest patience in conjunction with the most intense longing for success. “He that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa 28:16).

A friend and brother in the Lord some years ago was called to till a portion of the Master’s vineyard in our own land. He laboured and prayed and sought fruit with all his soul; yet at that time he saw but little. He was called away to another sphere of labour. After some years he heard that a work of God had taken place in his former field under another faithful brother and fellow-worker in Christ. On visiting the spot he was amazed and delighted to find that many of those who had been converted were the very individuals whom he had several years before visited, warned, and prayed for. “One soweth, and another reapeth” (Joh 4:37).

f. They were men of boldness and determination.

Adversaries might contend and oppose, timid friends might hesitate, but *they* pressed forward, in nothing terrified by difficulty or opposition. Timidity shuts many a door of usefulness, and loses many a precious opportunity; it wins no friends, while it strengthens every enemy. Nothing is lost by boldness, nor gained by fear. It seems often as if there were a premium upon mere boldness and vigour, apart from other things. Even natural courage and resolution will accomplish much, how much more courage created and upheld by faith and prayer. In regard, for instance, to the dense masses of ungodliness and profligacy⁸⁶ in our large towns, what will ever be effected if we timidly

⁸⁶ **profligacy** – immorality and shamelessness.

shrink back, or slothfully fold our hands, because the array is so terrific and the apparent probabilities of success so slender? Let us be prepared to give battle, though it should be one against ten thousand, and who shall calculate the issues?⁸⁷

There is needed not merely natural courage in order to face natural danger or difficulty. There is, in our own day, a still greater need of moral boldness, in order to neutralize the fear of man, the dread of public opinion—that god of our idolatry in this last age, which boasts of superior enlightenment, and which would bring everything to the test of reason, or decide it by the votes of the majority. We need strength from above to be faithful in these days of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy—to set our faces like flint, alike against the censure and applause of the multitude, and to dare to be singular for righteousness' sake, and to fight, single-handed, the battles of the faith. The sneer, the scoff, the contemptuous smile of superiority, the cold support, the cordial opposition, the timid friendship, the bold hostility, in private and public, from lips of companions, or neighbours, or fellow-citizens—often under pretext of reverence for religion—these are fitted to daunt the mind of common nerve. And to meet these, nothing less than divine grace is needed. Never, perhaps, in any age has wickedness assumed a bolder front and attitude; and never, therefore, was Christian courage more required than now.

Men of the world, and mere professors, can tolerate or perhaps commend the customary routine of ministerial duty. But to step beyond that, to break the regularity of well-beaten forms, to preach and labour in season and out of season, in churches, barns, school-houses, streets, or highways, to deal faithfully and closely with men's consciences wherever they may happen to be brought into contact with them—to be always the minister, always the watchman, always the Christian, always the lover of souls—this is to turn the world upside down, to offend against every rule of good breeding, and to tear up the landmarks of civilized society. Ministers and Christians require more than ever to be “strong and of good courage” (Jos 10:25), to be “steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58). This has ever been one of the great secrets of success. Those that honour God, God has never failed to honour and bless.

g. They were men of prayer.

It is true that they laboured much, visited much, studied much—but they also prayed much. In this they abounded. They were much alone with God, replenishing their own souls out of the living fountain, that out of them might flow to their people rivers of living water. In our day there is doubtless among many a grievous mistake upon this point. Some who are really seeking to feed the flock and to save souls, are led to exhaust their energies upon external duties and labours, overlooking the absolute necessity of enriching, ripening, filling, elevating their own souls by prayer and fasting. On this account there is much time wasted and labour thrown away. A single word coming fresh from lips that have been kindled into heavenly warmth by near fellowship with God, will avail more than a thousand others.

⁸⁷ **issues** – what comes out from a particular effort; results.

Did Christ's faithful ministers act more on this principle, they would soon learn what an increased fruitfulness and power are thereby imparted to all their labours. Were more of each returning Saturday spent in fellowship with God, in solemn intercession for the people, in humiliation for sin, and supplication for the outpouring of the Spirit, our Sabbaths would be far more blest. Our sermons would be far more successful. Our faces would shine as did the face of Moses. A more solemn awe and reverence would be over all our assemblies, and there would be fewer complaints of labouring in vain, or spending strength for nought. What might be lost in elaborate composition, or critical exactness of style or argument, would be far more than compensated for by the "double portion of thy Spirit" (2Ki 2:9) we might then expect to receive.

h. They were men whose doctrines were of the most decided kind, both as respects Law and gospel.

There is a breadth and power about their preaching, a glow and energy about their words and thoughts, that makes us feel that they were men of might. Their trumpet gave no feeble nor uncertain sound, either to saint or sinner, either to the church or the world. They lifted up their voices and spared not. There was no flinching, no flattering, or prophesying of smooth things.

Their preaching seems to have been of the most masculine and fearless kind, falling on the audience with tremendous power. It was not vehement; it was not fierce; it was not noisy—it was far too solemn to be such. It was massive, weighty, cutting, piercing, sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12). The weapons wielded by them were well tempered, well furbished, sharp, and keen. Nor were they wielded by a feeble or unpracticed arm. These warriors did not fight with the scabbard instead of the blade. Nor did they smite with the flat instead of the edge of the sword. Nor did they spare any effort, either of strength or skill, which might carry home the thrust of the stroke to the very vitals. Hence so many fell wounded under them, such as in the case of the celebrated Thomas Shepard of Cambridge (1604-1645), regarding whom it is said that, "he scarce ever preached a sermon but some or other of his congregation were struck with great distress, and cried out in agony, 'What shall I do to be saved?'"

Or take the following account of the effects produced by a sermon of Jonathan Edwards⁸⁸ at Enfield in July 1741:

While the people in the neighbouring towns were in great distress for their souls, the inhabitants of that town were very secure, loose, and vain. A lecture had been appointed at Enfield; and the neighbouring people the night before were so affected at the thoughtlessness of the inhabitants, and in such fears that God would, in His righteous judgement, pass them by, while the divine showers were falling all around them, as to be prostrate before Him a considerable part of it, supplicating mercy for their souls. When the appointed time for the lecture came, a number of the neighbouring ministers attended, and some from a distance.

⁸⁸ **Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758) – American Congregational preacher; regarded as America's greatest evangelical theologian and well-known for his preaching in the Great Awakening along with George Whitefield. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.

When they went into the meeting-house, the appearance of the assembly was thoughtless and vain. The people hardly conducted themselves with common decency.

Jonathan Edwards preached. His plain unpretending manner, both in language and delivery, and his established reputation for holiness and knowledge of the truth, forbade the suspicion that any trick of oratory would be used to mislead his hearers. He began in the clear, careful, demonstrative style of a teacher solicitous⁸⁹ for the result of his effort, and anxious that every step of his argument should be clearly and fully understood. His text was Deuteronomy 32:35, “Their foot shall slide in due time.”

As he advanced in unfolding the meaning of the text, the most careful logic brought him and his hearers to conclusions that the most tremendous imagery could but inadequately express. His most terrific descriptions of the doom and danger of the impenitent only enabled them to apprehend more clearly the truths that he had compelled them to believe.

The effect was as might have been expected. Trumbull informs us that,

Before the assembly was ended, the assembly appeared deeply impressed and bowed with an awful conviction of their sin and danger. There was such a breathing of distress and weeping that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people and desire silence, that he might be heard. This was the beginning of the same great and prevailing concern in that place, with which the colony in general was visited.

i. They were men of solemn deportment and deep spirituality of soul.

Their lives and their lips accorded with each other. Their daily walk furnished the best attestation and illustration of the truth they preached. They were always ministers of Christ, wherever they were to be found or seen. No frivolity, no flippancy, no gaiety, no worldly conviviality⁹⁰ or companionships, neutralised their public preaching or marred the work they were seeking to accomplish. The world could not point to them as being but slightly dissimilar from itself, or as men who, though faithful in the pulpit, forgot throughout the week their character, their office, their errand. Luther⁹¹ once remarked, regarding a beloved and much admired friend, “he lives what we preach.” So it was with these much-honoured men, whose names are in the Book of Life.

2. The Doing of the Lord!

a. Gilbert Tennent

We quote the following account of Gilbert Tennent’s⁹² life and doctrine from the pen of Thomas Prince (1687-1758). It will illustrate some remarks under the former head.

⁸⁹ **solicitous** – showing care, attention, or concern.

⁹⁰ **conviviality** – fondness of festive activity.

⁹¹ **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German Roman Catholic monk, theologian, university professor, and church reformer whose ideas inspired the Protestant Reformation and changed the course of Western civilization.

⁹² **Gilbert Tennent** (1703-1764) – pastor and evangelist, born in County Armagh, Ireland; one of the leaders of the Great Awakening in Colonial America, along with Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. He was son and brother of three other Presbyterian clergymen. His father, William Ten-

From the terrible and deep convictions he had passed through in his own soul, he seemed to have such a lively view of the Divine Majesty, the spirituality, purity, extensiveness, and strictness of His Law—with His glorious holiness and displeasure at sin, His justice, truth, and power in punishing the damned—that the very terrors of God seemed to rise in his mind afresh when he displayed and brandished them in the eyes of unreconciled sinners. And though some could not bear the representation and avoided his preaching, yet the arrows of conviction by his ministry seemed so deeply to pierce the hearts of others, and even some of the most stubborn sinners, as to make them fall down at the feet of Christ, and yield a lowly submission to Him.

Such were the convictions wrought in many hundreds in this town by Mr. Tennent's searching ministry, and such was the case of those many scores of several other congregations as well as mine who came to me and others for direction under them. And indeed, by all their converse, I found it was not so much the terror as the searching nature of his ministry that was the principal means of their conviction. It was not merely nor so much his laying open the terrors of the Law and wrath of God, or damnation of hell (for this they could pretty well bear as long as they hoped these belonged not to them, or they could easily avoid them), as his laying open their many vain and secret shifts⁹³ and refuges, counterfeit resemblances of grace, delusive and damning hopes, their utter impotence, and impending danger of destruction; whereby they found all their hopes and refuges of lies to fail them, and themselves exposed to eternal ruin, unable to help themselves and in a lost condition. This searching preaching was both the suitable and principal means of their conviction.

And now was such a time as we never knew. More came to one minister in one week in deep concern about their souls, than in the whole twenty-four years of his preceding ministry.

b. George Whitefield

We add a few quotations from *George Whitefield's (1714-1770) Journals*. The reader will see how they bear upon the preceding statement regarding the Christian ministry.

On Thursday he preached the public lecture at the Old South. He had chosen another text, but it was much impressed on his heart that he should preach from our Lord's conference with Nicodemus (Joh 3). A great number of ministers were present, and when he came to the word, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things," he says,

"The Lord enabled me to open my mouth boldly against unconverted ministers; to caution tutors to take care of their pupils; and also to advise ministers particularly to examine the experience of candidates for ordination. For I am verily persuaded the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ, and the reason why congregations have been so dead is because they have had dead men preaching to them. O that the Lord may quicken and revive them, for His own name's sake! For how can dead men beget living children? It is true, indeed, God may convert men by the devil, if He pleases, and so He may by unconverted ministers; but I believe He seldom makes use of either of them for this purpose. No, the Lord will choose vessels made meet⁹⁴ by the operation of the blessed Spirit for His sacred use. Un-speakable freedom God gave me while treating on this head. In the afternoon, I preached on

ment, emigrated to America in 1718, and was the founder of a theological school at Warminster, Pennsylvania, called the Log College.

⁹³ **shifts** – deceitful schemes or methods.

⁹⁴ **meet** – suitable.

the common⁹⁵ to about fifteen thousand people, and collected upwards of £200 for the Orphan House. Just as I had finished my sermon, a note was put up to me, wherein I was desired to pray for a person just entered upon the ministry, but under apprehension that he was unconverted. God enabled me to pray for him with my whole heart, and I hope that note will teach many others not to run before they can give an account of their conversion. If they do, they offer God strange fire (Lev 10:1-2).”

He preached on Monday at Westfield and Springfield, and on Tuesday at Suffield, to large audiences and with his usual power. A little below Springfield, when crossing a bridge, he was thrown from his horse, and “stunned for a while,” but was soon able to remount and proceed. At or near Suffield he met with a minister, “who said it was not absolutely necessary for a gospel minister to be converted,” meaning doubtless that though conversion was necessary for his salvation, it was not indispensable to his ministerial character and usefulness. This interview gave Whitefield a subject, “I insisted much in my discourse upon the change of the new birth, and also the necessity of a minister’s being converted before he could preach Christ aright. The word came with great power, and a great impression was made upon the people in all parts of the assembly. Many ministers were present. I did not spare them. Most of them thanked me for my plain dealing. But one was offended, and so would more of his stamp if I were to continue long in New England. *For unconverted ministers are the bane⁹⁶ of the Christian Church.*”

His ride to Stanford was dark and rainy. That night he was visited with a great inward trial, so that he was pained to the heart. He was somewhat dejected before he went out of his lodgings the next morning, and somewhat distressed for a text after he got into the pulpit. “But at length the Lord directed me to one, but I looked for no power or success, being very low by my last night’s trial. Notwithstanding, before I had preached half-an-hour, the blessed Spirit began to move on the hearers’ hearts in a very awful manner. Young, and especially many old people, were surprisingly affected, so that I thought they would have cried out. At dinner, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me again, and enabled me to speak with such vigour against sending unconverted persons into the ministry, that two ministers, with tears in their eyes, publicly confessed that they had laid their hands on young men without so much as asking them whether they were born again of God or not. After dinner, finding my heart much enlarged, I prayed, and with such power, that most in the room were put under concern. And one old minister was so deeply convicted that, calling Mr. Noble and me out, with great difficulty (because of his weeping), he desired our prayers; for, said he, ‘I have been a scholar and have preached the doctrines of grace⁹⁷ for a long time, but I believe I have never felt the power of them in my own soul.’ O that all unconverted ministers were brought to make the same confession.”

Such were the instruments. Such were the mighty things accomplished by them in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord. In the different awakenings, there were doubtless many things which proclaimed the frailty and imperfection of the agency through which the Holy Spirit wrought His mighty signs and wonders. There were things to remind

⁹⁵ **common** – undivided land belonging to the members of a local community, often in the center of the village and used for gatherings.

⁹⁶ **bane** – cause of distress, death, or ruin.

⁹⁷ **doctrines of grace** – the historic doctrines recovered in the Reformation that exalt God’s sovereignty and holiness.

man that the treasure was in earthen vessels. These revivals were not without their blemishes. There might be errors; there might be imprudencies; there might be excitement; there might be physical emotion. But still, notwithstanding all that may be spoken against them, the hand of God was manifestly there, awakening, deepening, extending, carrying forward the mighty movement by which the walls and bulwarks⁹⁸ of the prince of darkness were, in many of his strongholds, shaken to their deepest base. “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those who published it” (Psa 68:11), as well as of those who received and obeyed it.

Nothing was to be seen but a faithful minister of Christ, surrounded by a small band of praying ones, leading on the array against the prince of darkness! There was no pomp, no display, no artifice,⁹⁹ no carnal attraction. Yet the ranks of darkness gave way before them, and multitudes owned the power of the simple yet resistless words that fell from their earnest lips! How could the world but wonder at such vast results, so disproportioned to the apparent cause? How could they but feel, if they did not confess, that all this was the doing of the Lord?

c. *Jonathan Edwards*

As an illustration of how remarkably the work was of God and not of man, we quote without comment the following passages from *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions* by Jonathan Edwards.

It is observable how, at this remarkable day, a spirit of deep concern would seize upon persons. Some were in the house, and some walking in the highway; some in the woods, and some in the field; some in conversation, and some in retirement; some children, some adults, and some elderly persons, would sometimes of a sudden be brought under the strongest impressions, from a sense of the great realities of the other world and eternal things. But such things, as far as I can learn, were usually, if not [always], impressed upon men while they were in some way exercising their minds upon the Word of God or spiritual objects. And for the most part, it has been under the public preaching of the Word that these lasting impressions have been fastened upon them.

A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town, and among persons of all degrees and all ages. The noise among the dry bones waxed louder and louder (Eze 37:4ff). All other talk but about spiritual and eternal things, was soon thrown-by...The minds of people were wonderfully taken off from the world; it was treated among us as a thing of very little consequence. They seemed to follow their worldly business more as a part of their duty, than from any disposition they had to it...

The only thing in their view was to get the kingdom of heaven, and everyone appeared to be pressing into it. The engagedness of their hearts in this great concern could not be hid, it appeared in their very countenances. It was then a dreadful thing amongst us to lie out of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell; and what persons' minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives, and fly from the wrath to come (Luk 3:7). All would eagerly lay

⁹⁸ **bulwarks** –fortifications for defense and protection.

⁹⁹ **artifice** – trickery or craft.

hold of opportunities for their souls, and were wont¹⁰⁰ very often to meet together in private houses for religious purposes; and such meetings, when appointed, were greatly thronged.

There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those who were wont to be the vainest and loosest, and those who had been most disposed to think and speak slightly of vital and experimental¹⁰¹ religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner and increased more and more. Souls did, as it were, come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvelous light.

Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnest, intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general was, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours...Those amongst us that had formerly been converted were greatly enlivened and renewed with fresh and extraordinary incomes of the Spirit of God, though some much more than others, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Many who had before laboured under difficulties about their own state, had now their doubts removed by more satisfying experience and more clear discoveries of God's love.

3. Conclusion

When man proceeds to the accomplishment of some mighty enterprise, he puts forth prodigious¹⁰² efforts, as if by the sound of his axes and hammers he would proclaim his own fancied might, and bear down opposing obstacles. He cannot work without sweat, dust, and noise. When God would do a marvelous work, such as may amaze all heaven and earth, He commands silence all around, sends forth the still small voice, and then sets some feeble instrument to work—and straightway it is done! Man toils and pants, and after all effects but little; the Creator, in the silent majesty of power, noiseless yet resistless, achieves by a word the infinite wonders of omnipotence!¹⁰³

In order to loose the bands of winter and bring in the verdure¹⁰⁴ of the pleasant spring, He does not send forth His angels to hew in pieces the thickened ice, or to strip off from the mountain's side the gathered snows, or to plant anew over the face of the bleak earth flowers fresh from His creating hand. No! He breathes from His lips a mild warmth into the frozen air. And forthwith, in stillness but in irresistible power, the work proceeds. The ice is shivered, the snows dissolve, the rivers resume their flow, the earth awakes as out of sleep, the hills and the valleys put on their freshening verdure, the fragrance of earth takes wing and fills the air—till a new world of beauty rises in silence amid the dissolution of the old!

¹⁰⁰ **wont** – accustomed.

¹⁰¹ **experimental** – known by or derived from personal experience.

¹⁰² **prodigious** – of great size, power, extent; enormous; huge.

¹⁰³ **omnipotence** – the quality of having unlimited power and authority.

¹⁰⁴ **verdure** – greenness; freshness of vegetation.

Such is God's method of working, both in the natural and in the spiritual world—silent, simple, majestic, and resistless! Such was the Reformation! Such were the revivals in Scotland under our fathers of the Covenant! Such was the Kirk o' Shotts on that memorable Pentecost when the unstudied words of a timid trembling youth carried salvation to five hundred souls. Such was Ayr in its Pentecostal days, when from the lonely church at midnight, there went up to heaven the broken sighs of that man of prayer, John Welsh (1568-1622). And such was Northampton in later times, when Jonathan Edwards watched and prayed for its citizens, and when, from the closet of that holy man, there went forth the living power that wrought such wonders there!

And is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save, or is His ear heavy that it cannot hear (Isa 59:1)? ❧

Available in print as a booklet from Chapel Library.

Practical Religion

1. Words of Warning

“Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him.”—Isaiah 3:11

“To whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.”—2 Peter 2:17

Unconverted Sinner, thy state is sad, and thy misery is great! No tongue can tell how sad is that state—no soul can conceive how great is that misery. Thine heart may well meditate terror, for thou art still unpardoned, uncleansed, unsaved! Thy feet are just about to stumble upon the dark mountains; and woe, woe, yea, ten thousand times woe to thy poor soul, if this night it were required of thee. Poor forlorn soul! Thou hast no God, and therefore thou hast no happiness! Thou hast no Christ, and therefore thou hast no pardon, no peace! Thou art without a father, without a friend, without a hope, and without a home! This earth is truly to thee “a wilderness and a land of darkness.” Thou walkest through it a houseless, homeless wanderer; no arm to lean upon, no chosen companion of your secret thoughts and feelings; no friend to soothe your griefs or share your joys! Thou mayest have what men call a father, a brother, a home, on earth; but thou canst not call God thy father, nor Jesus thy brother, nor heaven thy home above! Thou wanderest on from day to day, a houseless, homeless outcast, seeing nothing around thee but trouble and sorrow, and nothing before thee or above thee but the blackness of darkness forever (Jud 13)!

Thou art an enemy to God (Rom 8:7)! And who has ever hardened his heart against Him and prospered? An enemy to the blessed God! An enemy to Him that made thee—to One that has never wronged thee in ought—to One that has loved thee with a love so true and tender as to give for thee His only begotten Son! Yea, thou hatest Him (Joh 15:24)! Thou treatest Him as if He were some hateful and hated fellow worm, whose company thou couldest not endure (Job 16:14). Oh, what vile ingratitude, what desperate malignity, thus to return enmity for friendship, hatred and scorn for gentleness and love! The most loveable object in all the universe is the object that thou hatest most! Oh, what madness, what enormous wickedness!

Thou art a child of wrath! And oh, what words can express, or what mind can conceive, all that is meant by this? Everything threatens wrath to thee. Thou dost not yet, indeed, gnaw thy tongue for pain, or gnash thy teeth in agony, but thou shalt shortly do so, if grace prevent not. I dare not call thee a “vessel of wrath fitted for destruction” (Rom 9:22); for who knows but thy God may yet pluck thee as a brand from the burning; but at least I know that, so long as thou remainest unconverted, thou art treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. And if to be a child of wrath be so awful a thing, even when seen afar off in this place of mercy, oh, what must be the horrors of that wrath throughout eternity! A child of wrath!—that is, all made up of wrath: whose very being is wrath! The air thou shalt breathe in shall be wrath—burning wrath! The light in which thou shalt dwell shall be scorching wrath; how different from the pleasant sunshine of earth, and the cool fresh air of morning. Wrath shall be within thee and around thee, above thee and beneath thee: wrath shall throb in every pulse and flow in every vein! And it shall be forever! Oh, that word which sums up all despair! Forever! The eternal wrath of the eternal God; the unchangeable wrath of the unchangeable God! Poor child of wrath, wilt thou not turn and flee?

Thou art a child of the devil (Mat 13:38; Act 13:10)! Satan is thy master, and thou art his willing slave. Poor miserable soul, canst thou be content with such a master and such a bondage? Remember! Thy bondage is eternal, thy chains eternal, thy prison house eternal, thy torment and thy tormentors are eternal! If thou diest out of Christ, hell must be thy habitation forever. Oh, what an abode!—amidst flames and wrath; echoing eternally with wailings of woe that might melt the very mountain rock! It is called “a lake burning with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8; Psa 11:6); that is, with the hottest, fiercest, most penetrating, most tormenting of all flames. It is called a lake. Not a river, whose waters of burning anguish might be dried up or pass away; nor a sea which ebbs and flows, and whose wide extent, or perpetual change, or windswept surface might furnish some respite, some cooling relief. No; but a lake—still, stagnant, gloomy, and unchangeable! But more than this—thy soul itself shall be its own hell. Even were there no flames without, the furnace within shall be torment beyond endurance. Thy passions, thy unsatisfied desires, thy conscience, will be thy worse tormentors, worse than all the fiends of darkness—tormentors from which thou canst not flee. All that thou mightest have gained, and all that thou hast lost forever, shall curse thee with their bitter

memory. Earth lost—friends lost—possessions lost—time lost—the soul lost—heaven lost—eternity undone! Poor sinner, why wilt thou not live? Precious immortal, why wilt thou die (Pro 1:23; Eze 33:11)?

Poor Christless soul, what a bitter lot is thine! What a doom of wrath and woe! To be tormented day and night forever, in presence of the holy angles and in presence of the Lamb! The bottomless pit encloses thee forever, and seals thy everlasting despair. Ah! The most distant and lonely hill of immortality would be welcome in comparison with this; aye, the gloomiest wilderness of earth would be Paradise when compared with this! There joy is a thing unknown. Love is a thing forgotten, or remembered only as a part of the once-familiar scenes of earth now gone forever! No peace nor hope in all the God-forsaken regions of the damned! No Savior troubles you now with His offers of life. No God wearies you with His messages of love. Life and love belong only to heaven; and thou art in hell. Thy portion is the second death. Who shall undo your prison bolt, or unbind your chain? Who shall fetch water to pour upon the unquenchable fire, or obtain even one drop to cool your burning tongue? Who shall dig the worm that never dies out of your tortured marrow? Who shall soothe your hopeless wailing or dry up your everlasting tears? No friends now; no companions now! The mirth of the world is over, and all its glory is departed. The song and the dance are over (Job 21:12-13). The revelry of midnight is hushed, and the pleasant sunshine of earth has been exchanged for the blackness of darkness forever. With all these certainties in view, Oh! what is this world to a dying creature? What are all its pleasures or its business to a being formed for immortality? Poor dying sinner! Dost thou not know that Jesus died that He might deliver you from a present evil world? Poor child of sin and dust, wilt thou not become an heir of endless glory?

Sinner as thou art, still there is hope—hope for thee; for thou art in the place of hope. This is the acceptable year of the Lord, and God willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (1Ti 2:4; 2Pe 3:9). He has no pleasure in your death. He lays His solemn command on thee that thou shouldest believe and be saved; so that the highest act of iniquity is to refuse salvation, to refuse the free gift of life! He entreats you to turn and live. He yearns over thee with a father's tender love. Yes! The love of thy God is a true and sincere love. It is no mere idea; it is reality. The words in which He has declared this to thee are not the language of mockery; they are not mere words of course. They do mean all that they seem to do: only they come infinitely short of the sincerity, the warmth, the tenderness of His paternal affection. They are but rays from the Sun of love. They are but the scattered drops from the ocean, the measureless ocean of the Father's love!

No fondest parent's melting breast Yearns like thy God's to make thee blest.

Poor sinner! If thou diest, it is not because of any want of love in God or any want of sufficiency in Christ. It is not because God would not be reconciled to thee, but because thou wouldest not be reconciled to God. His heart is toward thee; His desires are toward thee. He longs to welcome thee again to the family mansion, and to place thee again at

the family table. Your sins and iniquities have not made Him cease to care for you. His interest in your welfare is still as sincere and deep. Not that He palliates your sin, or excuses your continuance in it—no; but that He longs to deliver you from it; and so warm and tender is the interest which He takes in you, that He seeks to compass this deliverance by every means. Do not suppose that there must be something good about you before He can feel kindly towards you. His thoughts towards you have always been, and still are, thoughts of unutterable compassion. In your misery, in your blindness, in your forlorn state of sin and danger, there is something which calls forth the affectionate interest of Him who made you. Oh, despise not, deny not, distrust not love so infinite, so divine. Do not wait, do not delay. Do not say, “I must try to prepare myself for coming to God.” No! Come at once: come as you are: come this moment! As the Lord liveth, there is but one step between you and life; one step between you and peace! Take that one step! Believe what thy God hath made known regarding His well-loved Son, “that believing, ye may have life through his name” (Joh 20:31).

2. Luther’s Conversion

“He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.”—Psalm 18:16

“Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”—Isaiah 54:17

When first awakened to a sense of sin, Luther became unspeakably troubled. Once and again deep anguish took hold of his soul, and it seemed as if he would sink under it. On one occasion he had been conversing with a friend upon the things of God. No sooner had the conversation ended, than the truths of which they had been speaking struck home with awful power to the tossed soul of Luther. He left the room and sought the nearest chamber to give vent to the feelings of his bursting heart. He threw himself upon the bed and prayed aloud in agony; repeating over and over again these words of the apostle, “He hath shut them all up in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom 11:32).

Luther now began to try to make himself holy. He fasted for days together. He shut himself up alone in his cold cell. He passed many nights, sometimes for weeks, without sleep. He read, he studied, he prayed, he wept, he watched, he strove, but all in vain! He found himself as far from holiness and peace as ever! If ever anyone could have gained heaven by his own merits, Luther would have gained it. To those around him, he seemed the holiest man alive. But the light of the law showed him that within all was vile. His soul cried out for rest, but he found it not, for he was seeking it not in God’s way, but in a way of his own. He wanted to be sure that his sins were forgiven him, for he felt that until he knew this, he could not have peace. But his fear increased upon him, and he knew not what to do, nor which way to turn. He saw everything that he thought and did

to be sin, and how could he rest until he knew that all was forgiven! His friends told him to do good works and that would satisfy the justice of God. Miserable comforters!

“What good works,” said he, “can proceed out of a heart like mine; how can I, with works like these, stand before a holy Judge.”

The terrors of the fiery law compassed him about and consumed his soul. His “sore ran in the night and ceased not.” He saw nothing in God but the angry Judge. He had not yet learned the riches of His grace through Jesus Christ.

His bodily health gave way. “A wounded spirit, who can bear.” He wasted away. He became thin and pale. His eyes, which were peculiarly bright, looked wild with despair; and death seemed just at hand. In this state he was visited by an old priest. His name was Staupitz (1524). He pitied the dying monk, and all the more so when he was told the cause of his suffering, for he had himself passed through the same conflict. But he had found the peace of Christ in his soul, and was therefore well fitted to give counsel to Luther.

“It is in vain,” said Luther to him, “that I make promises to God; sin is always too strong for me.”

“Oh, my friend,” said Staupitz, “I have often made vows myself, but I never could keep them; I now make no more vows; for if God will not be merciful to me for Christ’s sake, I cannot stand before Him with all my vows and works.”

Luther made known to him all his fears. He spoke of God’s justice, God’s holiness, God’s sovereign majesty. How could he stand before such a God?

“Why,” said his aged friend, “do you distress yourself with these thoughts? Look to the wounds of Jesus, to the blood which He has shed for you; it is there that you will see the mercy of God. Cast yourself into the arms of the Savior. Trust in Him—in the righteousness of His life—in the atoning sacrifice of His death. Do not shrink away from Him. God is not against you; it is only you who are averse from God. Listen to the Son of God. He became man to assure you of the divine favor.”

Still Luther was dark. He thought he had not repented properly, and asked, “How can I dare believe in the favor of God, so long as there is in me no real conversion? I must be changed before He can receive me.”

He is told that there can be no real conversion so long as a man fears God as a stern judge. “There is,” said his friend, “no true repentance but that which begins in the love of God and righteousness. That which some fancy to be the end of repentance is only its beginning. If you wish to be really converted, do not try these penances. Love Him who has first loved you.”

Luther listens and is glad. The day breaks, new light pours in. “Yes,” said he, “it is Jesus Christ that comforts me so wonderfully by these sweet and healing words.” In order to true repentance we must love God! He had never heard this before. Taking this truth as his guide, he went to the Scriptures. He turned up all the passages which speak of repentance and conversion; and these two words which were formerly his terror, now be-

come precious and sweet. The passages which used to alarm him, now “seemed to run to me from all sides, to smile, to spring up and play around me. Formerly I tried to love God, but it was all force; and there was no word so bitter to me as that of repentance. Now there is none more pleasant. Oh, how blessed are all God’s precepts when we read them not in books only, but in the precious wounds of the Savior.”

Thus he learned that we are not forgiven because we love God, but we love God because we are forgiven. We cannot repent, we cannot love, until we have known and believed the love that God hath for us. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10).

Still Luther’s darkness at times returned. His sins again went over his soul, and hid the face of God.

“Oh, my sin! My sin! My sin!” cried he, one day to his aged friend. “What would you have?” said Staupitz. “Would you like if your sin was not real? Remember, if you have only the appearance of a sinner, you must be content with the mere appearance of a Savior. But learn this, that Jesus Christ is the Savior of those who are real and great sinners, and deserving of utter condemnation.”

“Look at the wounds of Christ,” said he, on another occasion, “and you will see there shining clearly the purpose of God towards men. We cannot understand God out of Christ.”

But Luther’s peace sometimes gave way, and his fears returned. He was taken ill and brought down to the gates of death. Terror again took hold on him. Death seemed full of gloom. It was a fearful thing to meet a holy God! An old monk visited him in his sickbed, and in him God gave him another comforter and guide. Sitting at his bedside he repeated this sentence of the Creed, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” These words, thus simply and sweetly brought to mind, were like balm to the soul of Luther. “I believe,” said he to himself, “the forgiveness of sins.” “Ah, but,” said the old man, “we are not merely to believe that there is forgiveness for David or Peter; the command of God is that we believe there is forgiveness for our own sins.” Luther’s spirit was revived. He found on this rock a sufficient resting place, and his soul rejoiced in the forgiving love of God.

Thus his weary soul found rest. He was now like a vessel that has reached its haven. No storm can reach or harm it. He was like the dove in the clefts of the rock. He was like the man who had reached the city of refuge. He found himself safe and at rest. Jehovah his righteousness was his song, and his joy. It was what he saw in Christ that gave him hope and confidence toward God, and not what he saw in himself. It was what he knew of Christ and His righteousness that took away all fear and filled his soul with peace. He believed and was forgiven. Nor did he reckon it presumption to count himself a forgiven soul. He gloried and rejoiced in this. He counted it one of the most grievous of all sins to doubt it. He saw that the gospel was intended to bring us forgiveness, and to assure us of it. He saw that whenever we really believe in the gospel, then that forgiveness is as completely and certainly ours as if we were already in heaven. This was the very life of Lu-

ther's soul. It was this that made him so bold in the cause of Christ, in all his future life. He was assured of the favor of God, and that took away all fear of men.

There was one text of Scripture which seems to have been greatly blessed to him. It was very frequently on his mind during his many struggles. It was the text which Paul quotes from Habakkuk, to prove that we are justified by faith alone: "The just shall live by faith" (Hab 2:4).

Once, he was sent to Rome on some business, and he thought that good works done at Rome were better and had more merit than those done anywhere else. He was told that if he would crawl up a very long stair, called Pilate's staircase, on his bare knees, he would acquire a great stock of merit. With great earnestness he set himself to do this miserable penance. While he was crawling up the steps, he thought he heard a voice like thunder, saying aloud to him, "The just shall live by faith." Immediately he started from his knees, and stopped in the middle of the ascent. The words went to his soul like the voice of God reproving him for his folly. Filled with shame, he instantly left the place. He saw that it was not by his works that he was to save himself at all, far less by works such as these—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us" (Ti 3:5).

At another time, he was appointed to lecture on divinity. After explaining the Psalms, he came to the Epistle to the Romans. In studying this he took great delight. He used to sit in his quiet cell for many hours with the Bible open before him, meditating on that Epistle. The seventeenth verse of the first chapter fixed his eye, and filled his whole thoughts: "The just shall live by faith." In this he saw that there was another life than that possessed by man in general, and that this life was the fruit of faith. In the midst of much darkness these simple words were "a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path" (Psa 119:105) Clearer light soon dawned upon his soul, and through him the bright beams of the gospel shot forth upon the benighted nations of Europe. The conversion of Luther was the dawning of the Reformation.

3. Sin Our Enemy and God Our Friend

"Know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God."—Jeremiah 2:19

*"Act but the infant's gentle part, Give up to love thy willing heart,
No fondest parent's melting breast Yearns like thy God's to make thee blest."—Martin Luther (1546)*

My dear reader! You have perhaps at times wished to know who were your enemies and who were your friends—whom you might trust and whom you were to shun. I have to tell you, that you have one great enemy, and that is sin—one real friend, and that is

God. Oh, reader, have you ever thought on this? Sin is your soul's enemy, and God is your soul's friend. That sin which you have delighted in is your bitterest enemy—that God whom you have forsaken is your truest, tenderest friend! You have none in heaven or on earth like God; not one who takes such a deep and sincere interest in your welfare! You have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten you. His thoughts towards you are still most tender and kind.

Perhaps you think that the very reverse of this is true. Or at least, if you do not think so, you act as if it were so. You act as if God were your greatest enemy, and sin your peculiar friend. You do not love God. You hate God. You suspect God. You turn away from God. You distrust God. You discredit all His words and professions of friendship and goodwill. You forget Him days without number. Could you do more to Him were He your bitterest enemy? On the other hand, you follow sin; you cling to sin; you delight in sin; you will part with heaven, with God, for sin; you will sell your soul for sin. Could you do more, were sin your best and truest friend? Your thoughts, your words, your feelings, your actions every day of your life, show that you really in your hearts think sin to be your real friend, and God to be your worst enemy. How fearful a state to live in! Haters of God! (Rom 1:30). Lovers of sin!

Reader, believe me—it is sin that is your real enemy! It is an evil thing and bitter to forsake God (Jer 2:19). The way of transgressors is hard!—oh, how hard! Their cup is gall and wormwood. It was sin that first drew Adam from God and drove him out of Paradise. It was sin that brought the flood of waters upon the earth. It was sin that called down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. It is sin that has filled the earth with misery and pain—with sorrow and sighing—with weeping eyes and broken hearts. It was sin that dug the grave and kindled hell, and brought man under the power of the devil. Oh, then, must not sin be the worst enemy of man? It is sin that separates us from God, and unfits us for enjoying Him. It is sin that robs our souls of peace, that spoils us of happiness, and fills us full of misery. It is sin that poisons the soul—that lets loose our fiery passions and inflames our lusts. It is sin that disturbs and defiles the conscience, making us a terror to ourselves, and pressing us down with a burden too heavy to be borne. It is sin that grieves, and vexes, and quenches the Holy Spirit. It is sin that takes away our relish for spiritual things; our power of realizing God and holding fellowship with Him. It is sin that darkens the mind and hardens the heart, till we become past feeling and hate the light. Oh, then, must not sin be our real enemy? Could we have a worse enemy than this?

Reader, believe me—it is God who is your soul's true and real friend. His thoughts towards you are most gracious and compassionate. He is the enemy of your sin, but not the enemy of your soul. You admit that He has the power of befriending you, and that all fullness of blessing is with Him; but perhaps you doubt His willingness to bestow His gifts. You suspect His heart. You will not believe that He has any friendly thoughts or wishes towards you, till you can bring a price in your hands, and prove that you are not altogether unworthy of His friendship. You think that He is the enemy of your soul, and

will remain your enemy till you have made yourself fit for becoming the object of His regard. Now, let me ask, has God deserved this at your hands? Has He deserved to be doubted, and to be suspected thus? Are all His professions of friendly concern for us insincere? Are they mere random declarations—mere words of course? No—my friend—no. God is your real, your true, your only friend. His interest in your welfare is unfeigned and true. In clinging to sin, you are cleaving to your worst enemy; in turning away from God you are forsaking your truest friend.

God did not send you to hell when first you sinned; He still keeps you out of hell, and gives you time to repent; He pities your misery and has no pleasure in your death. What greater proof of His tender mercy could He give, than in sparing you even for an hour? “Account that the long-suffering of our God is salvation” (2Pe 3:9, 15). He waits to be gracious to you; He longs for the return of all His prodigals—of all His wandering sheep. Does not this wear a most winning aspect towards you, even as you are? He sends His gospel to you—the glad tidings of great joy—He “publishes peace” to you through the blood of the cross; He makes known to you the work of His Son, in whom there is redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace—He throws open to you the “new and living way” (Heb 10:20) into His presence, a way in which there is not one stumbling-block, one hindrance—He proclaims to you the infinite fullness of Jesus, that out of that fullness you may receive, and grace for grace! What more could He do? If He be not a friend, who can be? Has anyone, either in heaven or in earth, done so much as this, or shown such goodwill to you, such an interest in your welfare? He strives in your heart by His Holy Spirit, awakening strange desires after Himself and after heaven—or filling you with terrors as you think upon eternity and the judgment to come. He knocks at the door of your heart; He knocks unceasingly, day and night, that He may persuade you to open and admit Him, that He may come in and sup with you, and you with Him? Would an enemy do this? Would any but a real friend show such long-suffering love—such tender concern for you? He longs to make you holy; to renew you in the spirit of your mind; He cannot bear your unholy ways, and He would fain have you made holy and blessed. If you would but allow Him, He would do this for you; He would give you His Holy Spirit to take old things away, and to make all things new. Would an enemy do this? He would rejoice over you if you would but turn and seek His face. It is said of the prodigal, that when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, welcoming him back to his house with joy and singing, “This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found” (Luk 15:24). Would an enemy do this? Are not these the actions, the feelings of a true and tender friend—a friend whose love has been sore tried by your neglect, and coldness, and hatred, but who yet has never ceased to care for you, never ceased to yearn over you with the bowels of tenderness and compassion.* Did not Jesus pray for His murderers, and was not that the prayer of a friend—of one who really cared for their souls? Did not Jesus weep over Jerusalem—and were not His tears those of real and tender pity? Did not Jesus say, “Ye will not come to me that ye might have life” (Joh 5:40); and did not that show that He really wanted to give them life? Oh, reader, have you any reason for

saying that God is your enemy, and desires your death? Has He ever been to you a wilderness or a land of darkness (Jer 2:31)? Have you any reason for thinking God's thoughts to you are not thoughts of tenderness—the thoughts of a real friend?

Reader, God is making proposals of friendship to you! The Most High God is asking you to become His friend! These proposals are sincere! He is really and truly seeking your friendship, and offering His own in return! Precious offer! To a worm of the dust! To a sinner, a rebel, a hater of Himself! He asks no price, no gift, no bribe! All He asks is that you would take His offer—accept His proposals, and become His friend! It matters not how far you have strayed, or how guilty you have become! It matters not how long you have slighted His proposals, and rejected His friendship, thus freely thus warmly pressed upon you. Only now take His offer! Only return! The gate is wide open to you. The welcome is sure. “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me saith the Lord” (Jer. 3:1, 4). “Wilt Thou not, from this time, cry unto me, my father, thou art the guide of my youth” (Jer 3:4)? Be thou reconciled to God!

4. The Anchor of the Soul

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”—Hebrews 6:19

“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still; then are they glad because they be quiet, so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”—Psalm 107:29-30

*“Roar on, ye waves, our souls defy Your roaring to disturb our rest;
In vain t'impair the calm ye try—The calm in a believer's breast.”*

This world is a sea of perpetual storm; yet in it there are many souls who have found “peace and safety.” All these at one time heard the fearful howling of the tempest of wrath, and were tossed with its fury—but yet they have not suffered shipwreck—they have escaped it all. They hear the tempest still, and its ground-swell often heaves them in their safe anchorage; but their security is never shaken. These are sinners who have fled to the hope set before them, “which hope they have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb 6:19). The world dislikes and despises these souls; for they were earnest in fleeing from the storm, and the careless world is sore galled by their unfeigned earnestness. They cast away all unnecessary lading, “count it but dung that they might win Christ” (Phi 3:8), and having so done, they found Christ an anchor, “sure and steadfast” (Heb 6:19). But the world is not possessed of this, and therefore hates those who declare it to be their only security in the time of storm. And while the sinner who has betaken himself to this hope proclaims the safety of the anchorage he has found, they who will not flee to it decry his confidence as presumption, pride, vainglory! The

world feels that if he be completely safe, then they are altogether wrong—if his hope be real, then they have no hope at all.

But come and examine the anchor, and the shore on which it is cast. There is a hope set before you—a hope of escape. The voice of God in the storm urges you to flee to this hope. It is spoken of fully in Hebrews 6:19-20. It is a hope which is an anchor of the soul. This anchor is itself sure and strong. It will not break nor let go its hold. The shore too on which it is cast is so solid and firm, that the anchor fixed therein will remain steadfast in spite of storm, and wind, and dashing wave.

The anchor of the soul is found in the glad tidings concerning Christ. The awakened sinner's question is, "Will the holy God pardon my sins?" He is tossed up and down till he gets this question answered. He feels as if he were the chief of sinners, and as if it were more difficult for God to pardon him than to pardon Manasseh, or Paul, or Magdalen, or any other sinner in the world. There seems to be the black gloom of wrath, the frown of severe displeasure, on the face of God. Oh, who can tell the anguish of that soul! It wishes to be at peace, yet knows not how. It looks around for rest, but knows not where to find it.

Hear then, "O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest" (Isa 54:11)! Behold it is written concerning the Lord Jesus, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves" (Psa 88:7). This is the voice of one who has been cast like Jonah into the waves; and now he is in the lowest deep. The floods compass him about, and the billows pass over him! Is this a shipwrecked sinner? No—it is Jesus allowing the tempest to dash the billows of wrath against His own person. And to this He submits in order that He may show to all, that sin deserves nothing less than such a storm of the Almighty's burning wrath. To this He submits, in order that it may be seen how the Holy One abhors to the uttermost every sin of every form—deed, word, or thought. But glad tidings now! Jesus who sank into the depths of this sea, and was buried under its mountain load, reaches the shore, and stands there declaring that whosoever believeth in Him shall not come into condemnation (Joh 5:24). Whosoever will agree that this Savior be his surety, shall not need to plunge into these waves himself, but shall be treated by God as if his sins had been already punished in that fierce storm that spent its violence on Jesus. Is this not rest to your soul? It shows you how justly and holily God may turn His anger from you; how He expresses His utmost displeasure against your sins, and yet saves you! Is not this quieting to your anxious conscience? Is it not an anchor?

Jesus is the anchor. He has been at the bottom of the depths of wrath, and His strength was tried and found perfect. Nothing can keep your souls from being tossed but this only; for nothing else resists the storm of God's wrath. Your duties are not the anchor: can they endure the fierce blast of Divine displeasure? Your feelings and frames are not the anchor: can they stand the sudden dash even of one wave from the world, far less from the Holy God? The Spirit's work in you is not your anchor; it is the cargo, or the vessel stores, which the sure anchor preserves from damage. Some mourn and say, "Ah, if I had sinned less I should have had less difficulty in finding peace." Now, are you not

forging an anchor out of your supposed goodness? If you could put so many acts of holiness in the place of those many sins, you would straightway form an anchor out of these. Others say, "Oh, if I could only see that I had faith, I should then be at rest." Now you are just trying to make your cable your anchor; for faith is the cable that connects the anchor with the soul. Instead of distressing yourself about your own faith, be occupied with observing the soundness and steadfastness of the anchor, and your soul will be no longer tossed.

The anchor must be something out of ourselves: not our duties, nor our saintship, nor our walk with God, nor our evidences of the Spirit's work within us, nor our strength of love—not any, nor all of these together! The anchor of a ship is something that lies without, and by being without secures it. That which quiets and assures the uneasy conscience and troubled soul of a sinner, is what he hears in the glad tidings. It is something said or shown to him by God. It is something that tells him, not of the feelings of his own heart, but of the heart of God. It is something that shows him the face of God, that he may read there, "God is love" (1Jo 4:8). The work of Jesus, or rather Jesus Himself, in this way becomes the sure "anchor of the soul."

The anchor is sure. That is, it can never fail nor break, for its nature is divine. It is also steadfast. It remains fixed whatever storm assails, because it is fixed "within the veil." Let us survey the shore on which it is cast. This shore is the region within the veil. This adds to our grounds of faith, and brightens the confidence of our hope. This Savior on whom our hope rests is an accepted Savior. He is within the veil. The anchor has entered into that within the veil, that is, into the holy region within. The Father examined His work and found it faultless; and as a token of His well-pleasement received Him within the veil, and placed Him at His right hand in all power and glory. Oh, how great is the consolation here! Our anchor rests, not on shifting sands, but in the bosom of the Father. It is "hid in God" (Col 3:3). Sure anchor, and firm ground on which it is sunk! What storm will drag it up from that mooring? O my soul, keep to this anchor, and neither earth nor hell shall ever move thee from thy safe station on the shore of heaven! True, the vessel is worthless—my vessel with all its freight is worthless—yet nevertheless it is safe! "He bringeth me to my desired haven, and I am glad because all is peace" (Psa 107:30).

*My anchor lies within the veil, No wind can make it drive;
It lies where Thou art landed, Lord, And where we shall arrive.*

Poor sinner, the night is near, and appearances are very gloomy on the face of sea and land. The sea and its waves are roaring. Men's hearts are beginning to fail them for fear (Luk 21:26). The whirlwind which the Son of man is to send over the earth, as the herald of His coming, seems ready to burst forth. At present there is an ominous stillness—the stillness that precedes the thunderstorm. Are you meditating to flee? Is your hope this, that the storm will blow over at last? Alas! Alas! It never will; for the Living God will never die. Is it your hope that perhaps you may be drifted on the shores of heaven, though you were not directing your sails thitherward? This, too, is vain; for this

storm is sent forth in order to drive vessels to the shoals of hell. Do you hope that you may brave it out, because you are not so heavily laden as others? Ah! But it is too true that one sin attracts the lightning, and one stroke of the thunderbolt will make way for the rushing flood. Oh, flee to the hope set before you! Flee from the wrath to come! Anchor on the sheltered shore! Rest on the Savior, who rests on the Father's bosom! Return through Christ to God; and then, returning sinner, you will be welcomed to the Father's bosom with the very welcome that met the returned Savior!

5. Do You Go to the Prayer Meeting?

“Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name.”—Malachi 3:16

“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.”—Acts 1:14

*“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”—
Hebrews 10:25*

Reader! Is there a prayer meeting in your neighborhood? If there is, do you attend it? If you do not, have you good reasons for staying away? Perhaps there is one just by your door, or at least within a few minutes' walk of your dwelling. Do you go to it? I have known people walk many miles every week to a prayer meeting. They did not grudge the distance. The way seemed short and pleasant. No wonder. They were in earnest about their souls! And if you neglect or despise such meetings, it is to be feared that you are altogether unconcerned about eternity and the kingdom to come. If you were thirsty for the water of life, you would be glad of such opportunities of drawing it out of the wells of salvation.

I ask then again, do you attend the prayer meeting? If not, what are your reasons? If they are good reasons, you need not be ashamed of them either before God or man, and they will serve you at the judgment seat of Christ. If they are not, the sooner you give them up the better. Very soon the last sermon will be done, the last Sabbath will close, the last prayer meeting will be over, the last message of salvation delivered, the last warning sounded, and the last invitation given! Then, what bitter regret and agonizing remorse! What will you think of your excuses then? Oh, you will give the wealth of worlds for another prayer meeting, another day of hope. No more making light of such precious opportunities, nor scoffing at those who prized them! The follies and vanities of earth are all over then; and invisible realities are seen to be all in all. Will the memory of your days and scenes of pleasure or sin be soothing to your soul when they have passed away like a vision of the night? Will the remembered hours of carnal levity, the idle word, the thoughtless jest, the gay smiles of companionship, the halls of gaiety, or the

haunts of sin (all of which you once preferred to the prayer meeting), will these breathe comfort to your dying soul, or bear you up when giving in your account before the Judge of all? Laughter shall then be exchanged for burning tears; nights of harmless merriment for ages of endless woe. Oh, waste not then one precious hour—one precious moment! Thy eternity may hang on it! It may soon be too late to think of prayer. Up, sleeper, up! Turn, sinner, turn! Thy days are but an handbreadth—flee! oh, flee from the wrath to come!

Let me speak to you, with all kindness, for a little, about your reasons for not attending the prayer meeting. Let us weigh them in the balances of the sanctuary; and may the Holy Spirit, in this respect, convince you of sin!

a. Do you not care for prayer meetings?

Do you not like them? Do you count them a weariness, or do you call them fanaticism? Is this your reason? If so, can your soul be in a right state with God? Can that man be a child of God who dislikes either private or social prayer? Can there be real or living religion in that soul that does not relish such meetings? Is it not strange and sad that you should relish the things of the body, the things of time—and yet turn away from the things of the soul, the things of eternity? Is it not awful that you should love the society of sinners, the friendship of the world; and yet dislike so much the companionship of saints, the fellowship of God. If you prefer worldly company or pleasure to a prayer meeting, this shows beyond all doubt that you are not a child of God, or a follower of the Lamb.

b. Have you no time to attend prayer meetings?

Is this your reason? Ah! Think for a moment, is it really true that you have no time to spare for them? Can you say so honestly before God? Will you be able to plead this with the Judge in the great day of account? Do you never attend other meetings which take up more of your time? Or do you not waste more time idly, or in foolish company, than would be spent at the meeting? What?! Have you time to eat, and to drink, and make merry, but none to pray?! Have you time for business, for company, for folly, for pleasure, for lusts, for sin, but none for prayer?! Have you time for the shop, the market, the ballroom, the card table, the public house, the political club—but none for the prayer meeting?! You can spare days and weeks for the things of time, can you not spare an hour for the things of eternity?

c. Are you ashamed to go to a prayer meeting?

Would your companions laugh at you? Is this your reason? What?! Ashamed to pray! Afraid to be laughed at! You are not ashamed to be seen in idle, foolish company, yet you are ashamed to be seen in the society of the people of God! You are not ashamed to saunter about the streets, nor to “stand in the way of sinners,” nor to “sit in the seat of the scornful” (Psa 1:1), yet you are ashamed to be seen at a meeting for prayer! Perhaps you are one of those who are not ashamed to be seen in a public house—who are not ashamed to swear, nor to get drunk—yet you are ashamed to attend a prayer meeting!

Ashamed of God's service, but not ashamed of the devil's! Ashamed to pray, but not ashamed to sin! Will God accept such an excuse at your hands in the day of reckoning? "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels" (Mar 8:38).

d. Do you think it is being too religious?

Now let me ask you what you mean by religious? Does it not mean loving and serving God? And can a man love God too much? Can he serve Him too constantly or devotedly? Was the apostle too religious when he said "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31)? Or was he too religious when he commanded us to "pray always" (Eph 6:18); to "pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:17). Was David too religious when he praised God seven times a day (Psa 119:164). Are the angels and the redeemed saints in heaven too religious, who serve Him "day and night in His temple" (Rev 7:15). With such a feeling as you have about prayer meetings, it is plain that there is far too much religion in heaven for you ever to think of going to such a place, or even to wish to be there. The man that has no relish for a prayer meeting, could have no relish for heaven. He is utterly unfit to be there. He would be wretched there. An eternity of prayer and praise would be hell to a man who is wearied with an hour of a prayer meeting on earth.

e. Are you better employed at home?

Can you honestly say so before God? If you can, I leave you to answer to God for the time thus spent at home or elsewhere. He will take a strict account of those hours. If you are one who loves to read the Bible and pray at home, I am sure you will not object to a meeting for prayer. If you are not, can you really say that you are better employed, or even half so well? Oh, no. You cannot be half so well employed as in preparing for eternity, in praying with God's people, in hearing of His dear Son, in making ready for the coming of the Lord.

Reader, are these your reasons? Then I ask you, are they sufficient? Does your conscience say they are? Or do you not see that the real reason is just your "carnal mind which is enmity against God" (Rom 8:7)? You do not love to pray, therefore you do not like the prayer meeting. You do not love God, and therefore you do not desire fellowship with Him. You do not love His saints, therefore you do not wish to join with them in prayer. You do not care about forgiveness of sin, and therefore you do not go to hear how "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7). You have no relish for the things of Christ, no sense of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and therefore you do not desire to join His people in singing the new song—Worthy is the Lamb that was Slain!

"The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer"—1 Peter 4:7

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving"—Colossians 4:2

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"—Ephesians 6:18

“Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching”—Hebrews 10:25

6. Behold He Cometh with Clouds

“Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.”—Jude 1:14

“Behold I come as a thief! Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”—Revelation 16:15

My Dear Reader, Let me speak to you a few words respecting this solemn subject—the second coming of the Lord. In doing so, I shall confine myself, as much as possible, to the words of God Himself, both because they are the fittest and the plainest —“quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12); and because I do not wish you to evade the matter, by saying that I am pressing upon you the uncertain opinions of man. “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev 2:29). Reader! “That same Jesus who was taken up into heaven shall so come in like manner as He went up into heaven” (Act 1:11). The heavens must receive Him until the times of restitution of all things (Act 3:21). Then shall He come in His own glory, and in His Father’s glory, and with all His mighty angels, to call you to account for the deeds done in the body. Are you ready for His coming? Can you abide His presence? Will you be able to stand before the Judge of all? He once came in meekness; He shall then come in majesty; He once came in shame; He shall then come in glory; He once came in weakness; He shall then come in power; He once came to save; He shall then come to judge—to give to every man according as his work shall be (Rev 22:12).

a. He comes to take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not His Gospel (2Th 1:8).

This is the day of grace; that shall be the day of vengeance; this is the time of His mercy; that shall be the time of His fierce anger. His long-suffering shall then be wearied out, and His love shall then have passed away. His eyes—those very eyes that wept over Jerusalem, shall then be a flame of fire, piercing you like lightning, and consuming you with their terrible glance. His feet—those very feet that rested in their weariness upon the well of Sychar, shall be “fine brass,” to tread you down, as in the wine press of His wrath (Rev 14:19). “The day of the Lord cometh; it is nigh at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Joe 2:1-2). Are you prepared for that day of terror and darkness? Have you fled like the dove to the clefts of the rock? (Song 2:14). Have you found shelter in the man who is the hiding place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest? (Isa 32:2).

b. He comes to raise the dead.

“Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1Co 15:23). The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1Th 4:16). That resurrection morning is the believer’s joyful hope; for then he shall see Jesus face to face; and the last relics of sin and suffering be left behind him in his tomb. But is it full of hope and joy to you? Does the thought of that morning fill your soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Or are you of those who, when that day arrives, would, a thousand times over, wish to be allowed to remain forever in the tomb, rather than be dragged up, as criminals from their cells, to hear their final doom? If so, oh, then flee now to a risen Savior! His resurrection tells you of a finished atonement—an open fountain—a rent veil—a free mercy seat—a gracious welcome from an injured but still loving Father. Flee now—tarry not; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh!

c. He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (2Th 1:10).

Reader, are you a saint? Are you one of those in whom Jesus shall be glorified in that day? Are you one of those who shall admire Him then? Ah! Do you glorify Him now? Do you admire Him now? Or do you despise and reject Him? All His saints admire Him; do you admire Him too? Angels praise Him; do you praise Him too? The Father delights in Him; do you delight in Him also? He is the Father’s beloved; is He your beloved too? Oh, “kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way when once His wrath is kindled but a little” (Psa 2:2).

d. He comes to judge the world in righteousness (Psa 96:13).

He is now the Savior; but He shall then be the Judge; He is now upon the mercy seat; He shall then be on the throne—the great white throne, before which the living and the dead, the small and great, shall stand. His judgment shall be just and wise. It shall be impartial and unchangeable. His sentences shall never be reversed or altered throughout eternity! All nations, and kindreds, and tongues shall be summoned to His bar. You shall be there. You, who are now reading these lines, and thinking perhaps but little of that awful day! How will you answer the summons? How will you give in your account? Do you not tremble? Does unforgiven sin fill you with alarm? Then look to Jesus now! (Isa 45:22). Look, and be forgiven! Look, and be saved forever!

e. He comes to make all things new (Rev 21:5).

He comes as the second Adam, to undo all that the first Adam did. He comes to repeal and remove the curse to which creation has been subjected by the fall (Rom. 8:19-23). We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2Pe 3:13). Reader! If all things are to be made new, your heart must also be made new. There must be a new creation within you, if you would possess or enjoy the new creation without you. There must be the new heart before you can sing the new song. Have you been renewed? Have old things passed away? If not, you are as

yet without any hope of, or meetness for the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away? Oh, hear the words of Jesus! “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed” (Rev 3:18). Then thou shalt walk with Him in white, and shalt eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

f. He comes to bind Satan (Rev 20:1-3).

As the woman’s promised seed He comes to bruise and crush the serpent’s head. In this His saints rejoice. But, Reader, have you a share in that rejoicing? Are Christ’s triumphs your triumphs? Are the victories of the Lamb your victories? Or, are you of the serpent’s seed, who are all in that day to share its doom? If you are now in Satan’s ranks, then your overthrow and perdition are certain. Oh, quit these ranks forever! Join the Captain of our salvation. Take up your cross and follow Him. Then the conquests of Jesus shall be your conquests; and the spoils of Jesus shall be your spoils!

g. He comes to the marriage supper (Rev 19:7-9).

He is the bridegroom. He is now “tarrying” (Mat 25:5). He will not tarry long. He will soon be here, and the cry will be raised—Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him. Reader, are you ready? Have you oil in your vessels? Are your loins girt about, and your lamps burning? Have you the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints (Rev 19:8)? Oh, be warned, lest you be a foolish virgin! Lest you should have no wedding garment! Lest, ere you seek admittance, the door be shut. Oh, remember, blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

h. He comes to “sit upon the throne of his glory” (Mat 19:28).

“He shall judge among the nations” (Isa 2:4). He shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously (Isa 24:23). He is to be the true Solomon—the Prince of Peace. All things are to be put under His feet (Heb 2:8). He is to reign in righteousness (Isa 11:4-9; 32:1; Psa 72:2). His kingdom and His scepter are a kingdom and a scepter of righteousness (Psa 45:6-7). The kingdoms of this world shall become His one glorious kingdom; and the crowns of earth be placed upon the head of Him who alone is worthy.

But into that kingdom nothing that defileth shall enter (Rev 21:27). Respecting it He Himself declared, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3). Reader! Are You Born Again? If not, then the gates of that kingdom are closed against you. You cannot enter there. Oh, “Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 4:17). The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. It is but a little, and you shall hear the last trumpet sound. It is but a little, and it shall be said to you, “Come to judgment, come away.” He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2Co 6:2).

7. Who Shall Dwell with the Devouring Fire?

“The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”—Isaiah 33:14

There is a day coming when sinners shall be afraid, and when terrors shall overtake them as a flood. They are not afraid just now; they eat and drink and make merry, as if they had no eternity to prepare for, no danger to alarm them. But it shall soon be different. What is now far off shall then be near, and sinners shall realize too late the horrors of that wrath from which they refused to flee. In the agonies of despair, when the flames are kindling round them, they will burst forth in such bitter outcries as these, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings” (Isa 33:14)? Oh, that shriek of agony! Oh, that awful outcry of surprise and despair! Careless sinner! That cry shall soon be yours; these words shall soon be the very language in which your wretched soul shall give vent to its hopeless anguish when it sees itself shut in within the flaming walls, and feels damnation sure! Oh, then, flee from the wrath to come! Make haste to escape from the devouring fire!

a. There is such a thing as devouring fire.

It may appear a shadow now, but it shall soon be reality—and oh, what a reality! It is fire, the most torturing and excruciating of elements. It is devouring fire; not merely fire that can pain or scorch, but devour, swallow up the wretched sinner in its undying flame. His abode is a prison house of fire—a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone (Rev 19:20). Hear how God Himself speaks of this, and learn that it is no mere dark imagination of cruel men to torment you before the time. “A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell” (Deu 32:22). “Upon the wicked he shall rain quick-burning coals, fire and brimstone, and a burning tempest” (Psa 11:6, margin). “Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger, the Lord shall swallow them up in his anger wrath, and the fire shall devour them” (Psa 21:9). “Behold the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the grievousness of flame; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire” (Isa 30:27, margin). Ah! Sinner, these are awful words, and they shall soon be realized in you, except you turn and flee!

b. It is everlasting fire; burnings that shall never grow less intense or die away.

They are kindled by God’s own breath (Isa 30:33); and He who kindled them alone can quench them. But this He will never do, they must burn on forever and forever. It is called “unquenchable fire,” “everlasting fire,” whose smoke goeth up forever and ever. It shall be kept alive, fanned, increased, watched over, but it shall never go out nor abate! Nor shall there be anything to make it tolerable—not a drop of cold water to cool the sinner’s scorching tongue. Long custom shall never make it less tormenting or more

easy to be borne. A vain dreamer of earth might say, "This horror will grow mild, this darkness light"; but it shall not be. There shall be nothing to mitigate it, or render it less intolerable throughout eternity. That horror shall never grow mild; that darkness shall never grow light; that fire shall never abate! Oh, what a dungeon, what a furnace! It is not called eternal solitude, though that would be awful; neither is it called eternal darkness, though that would be insupportable. It is called everlasting fire!

c. It is prepared for the ungodly.

It is said to have been at first prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat 25:41), but it is also to be the abode of all who neglect the great salvation. It is for them that forget God (Psa 9:17). It is for them who have refused to turn to the Lord, and slighted the blood of sprinkling. Shut out of heaven and shut into hell; this is their doom. They turned away from God, and now He turns away from them! They rejected love, and now wrath comes on them to the uttermost. They obeyed the devil on earth, and now they are handed over to his company and his abode in hell forever. They would not believe that God was holy, and did not care whether He was gracious; but now they are compelled to feel how holy He is, and at the same time to feel how He has forgotten to be gracious! For them grace is past. They might have had it once, but they despised it; and now it is gone. It is all wrath and indignation now (Rev 14:10).

d. They must dwell in it. They cannot flee.

Escape is hopeless, for it is the Judge of all that pronounces the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Mat 25:31). The sinner may shrink, but he cannot flee. He may struggle, but it is all in vain. The command is given; angels hasten to see it executed, and devils seize him for their prey, and drag him along to his eternal abode. As the sentence falls on his ear, "Depart, ye cursed," his spirit sinks within him, and he exclaims, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire?" As he is hurried away from the judgment seat, with the sentence ringing in his ears, he cries out, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire?" As he nears the gate and sees the flaming walls, he cries out with a yet more bitter cry, "Oh, who shall dwell with these everlasting burnings?" As the gate is opened, as he is thrust in, as it closes behind him, as he looks round upon the whole flaming circle, as he hears the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth on every side, as he takes his place among the damned, those "spirits in prison" who shall go out no more, he shrieks out the piercing exclamation, "Oh! Who shall dwell with this devouring fire; who shall dwell with these everlasting burnings?" Yet dwell he must, and that forever. No opening of the gates, no scaling of its walls, no loosing of the chain, no ray of hope, no respite, no Savior, no mercy now! His eternity is sealed. He has reached his everlasting dwelling place, where all is "lamentation, and mourning, and woe."

Sinners of every class, especially sinners in Zion, to whom these words are spoken, listen to these warning words! You are sinners in Zion, not sinners among the heathen; yet this only makes your case more awful, and your doom more inevitable. You profess to be Christians, but have never been born again. You do many things like God's peo-

ple—pray, read, hear, speak, observe ordinances, yet still one thing is lacking. You are not born again! Surely, then, it is time to search yourselves. It is time to be alarmed. The Judge is at the door. Your hypocrisy will not serve you then. You will be detected and unveiled, and all your hollow pretensions to religion laid bare. The day of His coming will be a terrible one to you. He comes with His fan in His hand, thoroughly to purge His floor, gathering the wheat into His garner, and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. He comes with His sieve to sift you, and can you stand His sifting? He comes with His touchstone to try and to detect you. He comes with His balances to weigh you, to see what is the real value of all your professions—whether after all you may be found wanting. He comes with His lighted candles to search you in every part. He comes with His flaming eye to penetrate at one glance your inmost soul, and to discover all its hidden abominations. With such a prospect before you, would it not be wise to take immediate alarm, and inquire whether all be well with your souls, lest you perish at the rebuke of Him who is a consuming fire.

Why should wrath be your portion? It was the portion of Jesus once, just that it might never be yours. The pains of hell took hold on Him (Psa 116:3), just that they might never take hold of you. He was forsaken of the Father that you might not be forsaken. In enduring the fire of that wrath for sinners, He was constrained to cry, “My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death” (Psa 22:14-15). Seeing that He has passed through all this that you might not pass through it, why should you reject such a substitute as this? The burnt offerings and sin offerings under the law, in all of which consuming fire was employed, tell us what the great sacrifice had to undergo when iniquity was laid on Him. When these offerings had been duly presented, then Israel was forgiven. In our case no question can arise as to the due offering of the sacrifice. We know that it has been duly offered once for all, and has been accepted of the Father. The one sacrifice has been offered, and now the worshippers, once purged thereby, have no more conscience of sins (Heb 10:2). Do we consent to take that sacrifice for sins? We do not need to offer it anew. It has been already offered. But are we willing that it be reckoned to us as a substitute? If not, then we must bear that wrath in our own persons—the fire which otherwise would have passed over us, will descend with devouring fierceness on our heads. We must either take refuge under the wing of the Substitute, or bear the wrath eternally ourselves. Which is the wiser, safer way for a helpless sinner?

8. The True Heart

“Let us draw near with a true heart.”—Hebrews 10:22

Man’s heart, by nature, is not true. It is neither true to himself nor to God. In some respects it may be said to be true to himself and his fellow men, when it is true to his

own interests and true to his usual character, or when it is true to the friendships and affections of earth. In the last of these respects we often hear of the heart's truth. We hear how truly hearts beat in affection for each other. We hear of friends being true to friends, so as to maintain their mutual constancy unshaken amid distance, suffering, and peril. But in all this, how seldom is it that we hear of hearts that are true to God and to Christ.

What is a true heart? It is not a perfect heart, for where is that to be found on earth? It is not a heart where sin has no place at all, and where all is holy and spiritual, for who, save the spirits of the just made perfect, have reached this stature? It is not a heart that never wavers, never saddens, never droops, never languishes, never grows cold, for that we must seek a brighter world and a more genial clime.

A true heart is one that has ceased to misunderstand and mistrust the character of God, that takes that character simply as it is revealed in grace, and rests where God would have the sinner to rest, on His forgiving love. A true heart is one that has ceased to suspect God or to look upon Him as an austere and hard master. The trueness of the heart consists in its right apprehensions of the character of God; in "knowing the Father" as He has made Himself known to sinners in Christ Jesus. To be true to God is to know Him as the gracious One, as the pardoning One, as the sin-hating, yet sinner-loving God. He who has not yet seen enough of Him in the Cross, as to dispel all his wicked doubts and guilty fears, is not yet true to God.

A false heart is one which does not know the Father. Its views of God's character are distorted and dim. It seeks, in self-righteousness, to do something or feel something which may draw towards it the favor of God, and it cannot rest or trust without finding this. It does not understand the entire freeness of the grace revealed in Jesus, and will not believe that this grace is so free and wide as to meet it, even as it is, without one particle of good about it either in feeling or in action. It suspects God, because it is not satisfied with itself. It thinks it right to cherish doubts and fears, nay, and it thinks it wrong to have confidence so long as there is so much of evil and so little of good about itself. All this is being false-hearted to God. It looks like humility, but it is pride. It looks like dissatisfaction with self, but it is just a trying to get something in self to be satisfied with. It looks like a sense of unworthiness, but it is just self-righteousness, and a refusal to be content to be so altogether unworthy, as to be indebted for entire salvation to a grace that has to do with none but the unworthy.

Some may think that though we may call this false-heartedness to God, it is at least being true to His holiness and true to His law, for it is a dread of these that produces this despondency and keeps the soul from rest. But this is not even being true to His holiness, for it is supposing that God's holiness is at variance with His grace, and that we best magnify His holiness by distrusting His grace. And is not this being false to God—false to His holiness as much as to His grace? Is it not just saying, that God has taken so little care to guard His holiness that it is necessary for the sinner to do something for this end, and that the best way to do this is just to continue doubting until evidences of

being holy can be discovered in the soul. But God has taken care of His own holiness and has not left it to us to do this. He has so fully provided for it in the gospel, that, the more we trust His grace, the more we honor His holiness, while, on the other hand, by distrusting His grace, we refuse to give to His holiness the honor that is its due.

What, then, is the cure of false-heartedness? How is a true heart to be found? I need not say that all must come from the Holy Spirit. The same mighty power that wrought in Christ, when He was raised from the dead, must be put forth towards us. But how does the Holy Spirit produce this true heart? What is that He shows us which removes our falseness of heart and makes it true? How does God set hearts right with Himself?

God does all this by showing us what He really is. He shows us how much we have mistaken His character and how little we have done justice to His love. He shows us that He is not what our false hearts have supposed Him to be. We have sadly misjudged Him, and imagined Him to be such an one as we ourselves, that will give only as He gets and loves only as He is loved in return. Now, the Holy Spirit withdraws the veil and reveals the gracious countenance of God. He shows us how much we have wronged Him, how little we have understood either the freeness or the largeness of His grace, and then it is that the suspicions of our false hearts give way; then, instead of standing afar off, we draw nigh; then, instead of cherishing fears and doubts because of our sinfulness, we lay all these aside, seeing that, since God has not made these a reason for not loving us, we should not make them a reason for doubting that love. When thus we get "acquainted with God," we are at peace. We feel that nothing more is needed, for producing perfect peace, but this acquaintanceship with God in His true character. It was our not knowing Him that filled us with trouble, and it is our knowing Him that fills us with peace. The knowledge of the Father is the sunshine of Heaven to our benighted souls. Thus our false-heartedness is removed, and we become true to God, and true to Christ. It is what we see in them that makes us true to them. When we see them as they are, trueness of heart springs up unbidden. We find the resting place sufficient, and so we rest.

But do not our sins rob us of this? Perhaps, in point of fact, they often do, but, most assuredly, they ought not. For what amount of sin in us can make God less an object to be trusted? Can any sin that we have committed make it right for us to be untrue to God, untrue to Christ? Is one sin to be the ground for our committing another? Are we to be false to Jesus because sin has been found upon us? Dare any of us say it is right to be false to Jesus, because we have been guilty of sin? Ought we not rather to say, we have certainly transgressed, but still we dare not add to the guilt of these transgressions, the still greater sin of being false to Jesus. No degree of sin in us can make Him less the sinner's Savior and the sinner's Friend. Nothing can alter His character of grace, or render less efficacious His infinitely precious blood. Should the consciousness of sin, then, make us false to Jesus? Was it the knowledge that we were not sinners that first made us true to Him? No it was not. In the full view and sense of all our guilt, we were drawn to Him, because He was altogether such an one as a sinner might lean upon. And how,

then, can the fuller discovery of our guilt make us lean upon Him less, or make us think it necessary to be untrue to Him? Has He deserved this at our hands?

The knowledge of immediate and complete forgiveness, through the belief of the gospel, is that which alone can give us true hearts. An imperfect knowledge of this keeps us untrue. A doubtful pardon, uncertainty as to our acceptance with God, cannot make us true. A gospel which brings us merely the hope of pardon, which makes reconciliation with God a future and distant privilege, cannot deliver us from the natural falseness of our hearts. But a gospel that assures us of God's gracious mind towards sinners, and tells us of sin put away by the sacrifice of God's own Son, does surely proclaim enough to disarm our dread, to allay our suspicion, and to inspire us at once with the most childlike confidence. A gospel that tells us how true Jesus has been to us is the only gospel that can make us true to Him. Anything which would awaken in us the very slightest doubt of His grace and love, tends to make us false to Him. And surely He has been true to us whatever we have been to Him. He was true to us when He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will O God" (Heb 10:9). He was true to us, when, in the fullness of time, He was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was true to us, when, during three and thirty years, He sojourned below in this world of sin, seeking the lost, and gathering those who, like sheep had gone astray. He was true to us when He went into the garden of Gethsemane and drank the bitter cup. He was true to us when He endured the cruel mocking and scourging and spitting, and when He allowed the hands of wicked men to place upon His head the crown of thorns. He was true to us when He died and when He went down into the grave, when He rose again, and when He ascended on high leading captivity captive. He is true to us now in heaven, as true as He was on earth, for He ever liveth to make intercession for us. If, then, He has been so true to us, how can we be false to Him?

Look at Jesus, believers, and that will keep you true to Him! Look at Jesus, sinners, and the sight of what He is and what He has done will make you ashamed of that false heart of yours. It will make you ashamed of your doubts, ashamed of your treachery, ashamed of your unkindness, ashamed of your unbelief, and make you fall at His feet, saying, "My Lord and my God!" Looking at yourself may make you afraid to trust, but looking at Him will make you afraid and ashamed to distrust. Looking unto Jesus is the cure for a false heart, and the only way for producing a true one.

9. Without God

"Having no hope and without God in the world."—Ephesians 2:12

"Be astonished O ye heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord; for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."—Jeremiah 2:12-13

Without God! What a fearful condition of soul! What a state of misery, of gloom, of solitude, of dark and dismal emptiness. A wilderness at midnight is nothing to this. A world without a sun is nothing to this. It is the summing up of all that is forlorn and sad in a sinner's lost estate. It can scarcely be called a picture, for it consists but of a single stroke, yet it conveys to us as full an idea of utter desolation and despair as could have been done by a thousand touches.

How awful the condition of an immortal being, of whom it can be said, that it is "without God." His presence is peace, His love is bliss, His fellowship the fullness of joy. There is no sunshine like the sunshine of His countenance, and no warmth like the warmth of His affection. What a dreary void, then, must that soul be that is "without God in the world"—without God in such a world as this? Men feel this, though they will not own it. Hence they run from one occupation to another, from scene to scene, from pleasure to pleasure, in order that, by keeping their minds incessantly engaged, they may drown the consciousness of the dread emptiness within. Hence they prefer to be burdened with cares and toils, to be annoyed with the over-pressure of business, rather than be left to the feeling of this dreary void within the soul. They are like children afraid to be alone in the dark. All without is lonely, for God is not there, and all within is still more lonely, for God is not there.

But, then, even when brought to see this, even when brought to see, or at least to suspect, that all this uneasiness arises from the absence of God, they shrink from the idea of becoming religious. They cannot bear the thought of His near presence, of His coming in to fill and possess their souls. An absent God, no doubt, they felt to be the source of their misery, but still a near, a present God they cannot bear to realize.

Why is it thus? Whence this dread of God? Whence this unwillingness to re-admit Him into their hearts? Because they are afraid of Him, and think that they can neither be safe in His hands nor happy in His presence. They feel uncomfortable at the thought of His coming so near. They willingly go through a form of religion, because its whole design and effect are to keep out God. Strange as the statement may seem, still it is true, that the religious observances of all mere professors are gone through with the express end of keeping God at a distance. By paying Him the compliment of their devotions, they think to bribe Him to keep at a distance from them and not break their repose by coming too near. This preference of forms which create a sort of fence between the soul and God, and this dislike of a religion that would bring us into personal contact with Him, plainly arise from an aversion at His holy character, and a distrust of His intentions towards us.

It is awful to think that there should be such estrangement between the soul and the God that made it, and that there should be any jealous suspicion of Him in man's breast, or any unwillingness to have Him for our friend and father. No conduct can be more unnatural than this, no ingratitude more monstrous and inexcusable. When a son hates his father, shuns his company, and leaves his house, we call his conduct unnatural and abominable. But what is this in comparison with the sinner, who has ill-treated the God

that made him? The earthly ties of blood, the closest, dearest, relationships of men are as mere threads of air when compared with the bonds which unite the creature and Creator together. Dislike of God, then, must be a thing so hateful and monstrous as to stand at the very top of human guilt, the sum of nameless crime! Surely He, whose offspring we are, in whom we live and move and have our being, is our nearest and ought to be our dearest relative of all in earth or heaven; far nearer than father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife. These, no doubt, are names of tenderness and affection. They are relationships both close and dear. Yet how weak are all of them together, to convey even an idea of the near and tender relationship that subsists between the Creator and His offspring. The love and endearment with which these beloved names are associated, are but as shadows when compared with the love, the tender, the profound, the unutterable love which ought to overflow in us towards Him who is so infinitely better, kinder, nobler, truer, tenderer, more loveable than all. If their love be so deep and warm, what must His be? If their sympathy be so sweet and pleasant that, without it, earth is a blank, and even home a desolation, what must His be? If their character be so endearing and attractive, what must His be who constituted all these relationships as emblems of the one blessed and absorbing relationship between Him and His creatures? If the things of earth, even of a fallen earth, be so very beautiful, what must He be who clothed them with all that loveliness, and who is Himself the birthplace of all beauty, the center of all perfection, and who scatters abroad all this goodness as a drop out of the infinite ocean of divine excellence and glory? How awful, then, must be the guilt, how desperate the misery of those who neither know nor love this Being of Beings, the ever-blessed, ever-glorious God and Father of all!

Without God! How awful the doom were such a sentence pronounced against any region of God's dominions. How awful when such is the state of the human soul!

Sinner! Such is your present state. Is it not truly sad? You do not yet know what it means in all its reality, but there is enough in what you do know to make you feel how fatal to your peace is the existence of that aching void within. Terror is not yet revealed. Wrath is still in reserve. The sword still slumbers in its sheath. But there is something even now eating, like a canker, into all your enjoyments, and poisoning all your pleasures; something which makes life a weariness and death a terror. You feel that all is not right, that there is a dreary blank in the midst of all that you enjoy. That secret undefinable want which you feel is the want of God's friendship. Nothing else will remove that sense of hollowness within, which casts a shade over your life. You are without God and, therefore, without peace. You cannot be happy so long as He is absent. There cannot be any true enjoyment so long as you enjoy nothing in Him, and Him in nothing.

But if such be the secret of your unhappiness, then you see where lies the secret of your peace. You see whence your joy is to flow. It must be from having the friendship of God—from having His love shed abroad in your heart. Nothing but the knowledge of that love can remove the uneasiness that preys upon you, or put you in possession of that which will fill up the dreary void within and dissipate all your gloom. "Acquaint thy-

self now with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee. If thou return to the Almighty thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles, then shalt thou lay up gold as the dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy gold, and thou shalt have plenty of silver; for thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God; thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows; thou shalt also decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee, and the light shall shine upon thy ways” (Job 22:21-28).

Perhaps you are saying, “Who will show me any good?” You are looking round for someone to point out to you the way to rest. Well, Jesus stands before you, and says to you, what He did to the blind man in the days of His flesh, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Is your answer the same as that of the blind man? “Lord, that I may receive my sight.” Like him, perhaps, you may know little of Jesus, little of what the light really is, little of what true joy consists in; but are you putting your soul into the hands of Jesus? Then shall you receive your sight and be made altogether whole. As a sinner, blind, naked, miserable and vile, draw near to Him. He refuses none. He will open your eyes. He will relieve your weariness. He will bless you with the fullness of His own free love. He will fill up the aching void within. He will give you rest. He will satisfy your weary soul. He will lead you to the Father, and, in the fullness of the Father’s love, you will learn to bury all your griefs and cares. “The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever.”

10. The Last Time

“Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time.”—1 John 2:18

“The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”—James 5:8

The Apostle John, in the first of these passages, tells us, that the last time was begun in his days. It was going on when he wrote. The Apostle Peter tells us, that the last days were to end in the coming of the Lord, as we read throughout the whole of the third chapter of his Second Epistle. We thus discover the beginning and end of the period so often spoken of in Scripture as the last days. Its beginning was in the Lord’s first coming and its end was in His second coming. The whole period between His first and second comings is called by this name.

Now, what was to be the character of these days? Was it to be good or evil? Evil, undoubtedly, to the very last. John tells us, that the special mark of these times was to be the prevalence of Antichrists. The last days were to be the times wherein Antichrist should have sway. They were not to be Christian but Antichristian in their character. There were to be “many Antichrists,” but, as they drew near their close, there was to be

One Great Power—one great adversary of God and His Christ exercising dominion. He is called Antichrist! The Antichristian tendencies began to show themselves even in the Apostles' days. They have gone on since then, showing themselves in many different forms. But as the days draw near their close, there is to be one great Antichrist, more hateful, more blasphemous, more atheistical, and more powerful and extensive in his sway than any heretofore. He is to rise up in awful strength and cruelty, in daring defiance of God and hatred of His people, till he be utterly destroyed by the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

That the whole period between the First and Second Comings of Christ is evil and not good, may be shown from many passages, both of the Old and New Testament. We select a few. Our Lord, when answering the questions of His disciples about His coming, and the signs of it (See Mat 24; Mar 13; Luk 21), makes no mention of anything but wars and wickedness, tribulation and sorrow, onward without interval or cessation, until His coming. So far were these from ceasing, as the time of His coming drew on, they were to increase and grow worse as time went on. Iniquity was to abound, and the love of many wax cold. The time before His coming was to be like that before the deluge; like Noah's days, when wickedness overflowed, or like the days of Lot, when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed.

Paul, when speaking of the last days, tells us that they were to be wholly evil. "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2Ti 3:1-5). And he adds, that so far from their growing better, they are to increase unto more ungodliness; "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." He tells us, moreover, in the second chapter of Second Thessalonians, that the "man of sin" had begun to work even in his own days, that it would go on increasing more and more, until the appearing of the Lord, and that then, but not till then, would it be overthrown—"whom the Lord shall consume by the spirit of His mouth, and destroy by the brightness of His coming." It is plain, then, that the whole period called the last days, the period between the First and Second Comings of the Lord, was to be one of Antichristian wickedness and tyranny.

Daniel also gives us a description of this period. First, under the symbol of a great image, he sets before us the history of the empires which were to exist, until the stone cut out of the mountain without hands falls on the toes of the image—that is, upon the Roman empire in its divided state, which stone must refer to the Second, and not to the First Coming of Christ, as that empire was not divided in that manner till long after the First Coming of Christ. Under the symbol of the four beasts, he gives us another picture of the times of Gentile oppression and wickedness. These times began in the prophet's days, and they are to continue till the Second Coming of Christ. This is plain from the prophet's description. First, the Babylonish empire rises up into power, and then passes away. Then the Persian empire succeeds, and passes away. Then the Macedonian empire succeeds, and passes away. Then the Roman empire follows, and is still in existence, and shall continue so, says the prophet, until the fifth or last kingdom comes—the kingdom

of Christ and His saints. "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days; and they brought Him near before Him: and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him." Thus we learn that the whole period called the times of the Gentiles, is to be one of oppression and ungodliness, and wearing out the saints of the Most High, and that this period does not end till the Second Coming of the Lord.

During all this period of the last days, the Church of Christ is to be a "little flock"—a small and despised remnant; like Noah in the days before the flood, like Lot in Sodom, like Abraham among the Canaanites, like Israel in Egypt, like the captives in Babylon, like the early Christians at Rome and Corinth. Her present state is to be one of oppression and persecution by the world. She is an injured and afflicted widow, having none to vindicate her cause on earth against the cruelty of her adversaries. Her clothing is sackcloth, and her only crown the crown of thorns. Hence all the promises of Scripture, especially of the New Testament, take for granted this afflicted state. They suppose that she is to continue in that state until her Lord and Master come. In the Bridegroom's absence the Spouse mourns and weeps. Consolation is administered, and promise upon promise is given to sustain her during the absence of her Lord. But all these consolations point forward to a time when the Bridegroom shall come, and the Church shall no longer sit desolate and sad. Till He come, however, she has no promise of deliverance from her widowhood and sorrow. Till He come, her tribulation does not end nor her triumph begin. These "exceeding great and precious promises" (2Pe 1:4) are to uphold her in the day of her sorrow, and to be as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise. Hence it is to His coming that she is looking as her blessed hope. It is for His arrival that she is waiting with such longing expectation, wearying for the times of the restitution of all things, and saying, "Make haste, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (Song 8:14).

Meanwhile, she has the Holy Spirit dwelling in her, as "the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph 1:14). She walks by faith, and not by sight, and her faith is to her the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Saved by grace, and assured of her salvation in believing, she has peace with God, and learns to glory in tribulation. Resting on the free love of God to her, in Christ Jesus her Lord, she is "always confident," knowing that when He who is her life shall appear, she shall appear with Him in glory. Having received a kingdom that cannot be moved as her promised portion, she holds fast that grace of God which she believed at first, and serves God with reverence and godly fear, looking for and hasting to the day of God, when that kingdom shall be hers in possession, as it is now hers in promise.

It is this hope that separates her from the world. It is a hope of which it knows nothing. It is so sure, so free, and so glorious, that it cannot even conceive of it aright. Hence there can be no community of feeling between the world and her. She is a stranger and a pilgrim here, and has nothing in common with the world at all. Many things mark her

out as peculiar, but her hope especially does this—this hope she holds fast, knowing that it shall not be put to shame. And as the last days draw nearer to their close, and her hope brightens and approaches, she seeks to walk more and more worthy of her calling. She comes out from the world more entirely, and fixes her eye and soul more intently upon the glory which is so soon to be revealed. The thickening darkness of the last days is to her the sign of coming dawn—the forerunner of the long-expected kingdom. As the clouds grow denser and more threatening she lifts up her head, knowing that her redemption draweth nigh.

11. The False Peace and the True

“They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”—Jeremiah 6:14

Have you peace with God? I do not ask, do you hope to have peace, or do you think you shall one day get peace, but have you, at this moment, peace with God? Perhaps you have not. Well then, is all right? Do you feel no uneasiness within you? Is there not a secret voice which says, there is something wanting still, and, until that something is supplied, I cannot be happy. The world may smile or frown, still I cannot be happy. Riches may come or go, still I cannot be happy. It may be storm or sunshine, still I cannot be happy. There is a blank within, a feeling of dissatisfaction, a consciousness that all is not right with this soul of mine. It is to this feeling that the prophet Jeremiah refers, when he speaks of “the hurt of the daughter of his people” (Jer 8:21).

Israel was “hurt.” She was smitten and wounded. Her sins had wounded her. God’s chastisements had wounded her. There was a breach between her and her God. The whole land lay bleeding under the fearful wound. Her false prophets tried to heal it. They prophesied smooth things. They tried to persuade her that her case was not so bad, and that God was not so angry. Thus they skinned over the wound. They healed it slightly. It looked as if it were healed, but that was all. It soon broke out again, and brought the nation to utter ruin and death.

So the sinner is “hurt.” He is wounded to death by sin. It is no slight bruise, no partial or transient sickness. No, the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot unto the head, there is no health in any part. It is a desperate and deadly wound, incurable by the skill of man. When a limb is out of joint or wrenched from the body, there is a “hurt”—there is pain most grievous and agonizing; so, when the soul is torn asunder from Him that made it, there is a still more terrible wound. The separation of the soul from God is our deadly hurt. It is this that puts the soul out of a condition for enjoying anything, just as, when a limb is dislocated, the body is unfitted for any kind of enjoyment. It is not possible that the sinner can be happy so long as this wound remains unhealed. And besides, this alienation from God is in itself misery. It is the misery of being at enmity with God. It is the misery of having His wrath abiding up-

on us. It is the misery of being severed from the fountain of all blessedness, and of having no prospect before us but that of the everlasting vengeance of Him who is a consuming fire. What a deadly wound is this! It is surely enough to make every sinner tremble when he thinks that this is the hurt under which his soul is pining away; that this is the secret source of all that present misery which he feels, and of all that future misery which is in reserve for him throughout eternity. The sting of the second death is in his vitals already. The worm that never dies is wreathing and tightening its folds around him even now. The fire that shall never be quenched is already kindled within him and sending forth its intolerable heat.

There is a slight way of healing the sinner's hurt—saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Israel's false prophets healed her hurt slightly by prophesying smooth things, and uttering "false burdens"; so there is a way in which false teachers heal the sinner's wound slightly, or in which the sinner himself heals it slightly. It is sometimes said, Your sins are not so great, and there are many excuses for you. But this is unavailing, for conscience tells that our sins are great and that all excuses are vain. Or, it is said, The state of your soul is not so bad, not so corrupt as it is represented, and you can amend when you like. This, too, is unavailing. The sinner feels that his state of soul is really bad, and that he cannot improve himself. Or, it is said, God is not so angry and His law is not so strict. But this, too, is vain. It may soothe the soul for a little, but conscience tells that God does hate sin, and that His law is "exceeding broad." Or, it is said, future punishment is not so terrible as it is supposed to be, and there will be multitudes in the same condemnation. But neither does this bring peace. Still the soul hears the voice of God asking, "Who can dwell with the devouring fire?" And it feels that no amount of companionship can make the flames of hell more tolerable. Or, it is said, Do good works, give alms, live well, and this will pacify the soul. Alas, no! Still it is felt that no good works or alms-deeds can ever make God forget that we have sinned, or blot out that penalty, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." In all these ways there may be a temporary relief, a transient ease, but that is all! There is a covering over of the wound, but nothing more. The hurt is still unhealed. The wound is still there, as deadly and as desperate as ever. And why is it so? Because all these different methods of cure still leave the root of the malady the same. They do not touch the seat of the disease. They do not replace the severed limb in its original position. They do not bring back the soul to God. They all stop short of perfect reconciliation with God. Unless this is reached, all is vain. Any method which leaves the soul still uncertain as to its relationship to God and friendship with Him, is vain. It is a slight healing of the hurt. It does not go deep enough. It does not embrace the whole disease. It says, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.

But there is a true way of healing the sinner's hurt. There is a sufficient and suitable cure provided. There is balm in Gilead and there is a Physician there. The false cure was saying Peace when there was no peace. The true cure is saying Peace when there is peace. Right peace, in a right way, is the cure of the soul. Nothing will heal it but this. Peace with God, forgiveness, reconciliation, friendship, the assurance of His love, these

are the means by which the wound is thoroughly and eternally healed. This is the removing of all distance, the bringing back the soul to its original state of blessed relationship to Him who gave it being. This is the reunion of the soul with that God in whose favor is life, and whose friendship is the sunshine of eternity.

There is ground for this assured peace. Not because we are less than the chief of sinners, but because Christ died for the chief. Not because we can make peace for ourselves, but because God has made peace for us through the blood of the cross. It is the cross of Christ that heals. "By His stripes we are healed" (Isa 55:3). From His wounds there flows a healing virtue, so that as many as touch them are made perfectly whole. His blood has opened a fountain whence the waters of life pour themselves, in healing streams, through this diseased world. Israel was healed in the wilderness, by looking to the brazen serpent. So, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

"Acquaint thyself now with God and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee" (Job 22:21). It is simply acquaintanceship with God that brings peace, and that peace draws after it every good. It is what the soul sees, in the character of that God who has given His Son, that relieves the troubled conscience. It is this that unburdens the spirit and eases the heart. It is this that makes us feel at home with God, and assures us that there is forgiveness with Him. It is this that makes us feel that He is just such a God as we can perfectly trust, just such a God as a sinner may flee to. This knowledge of what God is, and what God has done in sending His Son into the world that we might live through Him, removes our suspicion and dread. It shows us how unkind and unjust it was in us to eye Him as a hard master, whose presence could only disturb our peace. And this goes to the very root and seat of the disease. It says Peace, peace, when there is peace. This is the very health of the soul. This peace with God, through the knowledge of the blood that has been shed, acts like a new wellspring of life to the soul. It pours new joy, new energy, new strength into the whole man. It makes the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. It enlarges the heart, so as to enable us to run in the way of God's commandments. It makes the service of God, which before this was bondage, to become perfect liberty. Why, then, so many doubts? Has God not done everything to take all these utterly away? Has He not told you of His love to sinners, and of that love pouring itself freely down through the channel which righteousness has made for it? Has He not sent to you the message of love by the lips of incarnate love, His own Son manifest in flesh? Why, then, still doubt? You are hindering the healing of the hurt. Every such doubt is hindering this. For all these doubts cherish the disease and check the cure. They have their root in unbelief. They show the tendency of the soul to recur to the false methods of healing, and its unwillingness to receive the true. They are just so many attempts to mix up the false with the true, and so many grievings of that loving Spirit who is seeking to lead you at once into the free full grace of God, as the fountain of all health and joy. ❧

God's Way of Holiness

Chapter 1: The New Life

It is to a new life that God is calling us; not to some new steps in life, some new habits or ways or motives or prospects, but to *a new life*.

For the production of this new life the eternal Son of God took flesh, died, was buried, and rose again. It was not life producing life, a lower life rising into a higher, but life rooting itself in its opposite, life wrought out of death, by the death of "the Prince of life" (Act 3:15). Of the new creation, as of the old, He is the author.

For the working out of this, the Holy Spirit came down in power, entering men's souls and dwelling there, that out of the old He might bring forth the new.

That which God calls new must be so indeed. For the Bible means what it says, as being, of all books, not only the most true in thought, but the most accurate in speech. Great then and authentic must be that "new thing in the earth" (Jer 31:22) which God "creates," to which He calls us, and which He brings about by such stupendous means and at such a cost. Most hateful also must that old life of ours be to Him, when, in order to abolish it, He delivers up His Son; and most dear must we be in His sight when, in order to rescue us from the old life, and make us partakers of the new, He brings forth all the divine resources of love and power and wisdom, to meet the exigencies of a case which would otherwise have been wholly desperate.

The man from whom the old life has gone out, and into whom the new life has come, is still the same individual. The same being that was once "under the law" is now "under grace" (Rom 6:14). His features and limbs are still the same; his intellect, imagination, capacities, and responsibilities are still the same. But yet old things have passed away; all things have become new. The old man is slain; the new man lives. It is not merely the old life retouched and made more comely, defects struck out, roughnesses smoothed down, graces stuck on here and there. It is not a broken column repaired, a soiled picture cleaned, a defaced inscription filled up, an unswept temple whitewashed. It is more than all this, else God would not call it a new creation, nor would the Lord have affirmed with such awful explicitness, as He does in His conference with Nicodemus, the divine Law of exclusion from and entrance into the kingdom of God (Joh 3:3). Yet how few in our day believe that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Joh 3:6).

Hear how God speaks! He calls us “newborn babes” (1Pe 2:2), “new creatures” (Gal 6:15), a “new lump” (1Co 5:7), a “new man” (Eph 2:15), doers of a “a new commandment” (1Jo 2:8), heirs of “a new name” and a new city (Rev 2:17; 3:12), expectants of “new heavens and a new earth” (2Pe 3:13). This new being, having begun in a new birth, unfolds itself in “newness of spirit” (Rom 7:6), according to a “new covenant” (Heb 8:8), walks along a “new and living way” (Heb 10:20), and ends in the “new song” and the “new Jerusalem” (Rev 5:9; 21:2).

It is no outer thing, made up of showy moralities and benevolences, or picturesque rites and graceful routine of devotion, or sentimentalisms bright or somber, or religious utterances on fit occasions, as to the grandeur of antiquity, or sacramental grace, or the greatness of creaturehood, or the nobleness of humanity, or the universal fatherhood of God. It is something deeper, and truer, and more genial, than that which is called deep, and true, and genial in modern religious philosophy. Its affinities are with the things above; its sympathies are divine; it sides with God in everything. It has nothing, beyond a few expressions, in common with the superficialities and falsehoods which, under the name of religion, are current among multitudes who call Christ “Lord” and “Master.”

A Christian is one who has been “crucified with Christ,” who has died with Him, been buried with Him, risen with Him, ascended with Him, and is seated “in heavenly places” with Him (Rom 6:3-8; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:5-6; Col 3:1-3). As such he reckons himself dead unto sin, but alive unto God (Rom 6:11). As such he does not yield his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but he yields himself unto God, as alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God. As such he seeks “the things which are above,” and sets his affection on things above, mortifying his “members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:1-5).

This newness is comprehensive, both in its exclusion of the evil and its inclusion of the good. It is summed up by the apostle in two things: righteousness and holiness. “Put off,” says he, “the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind;...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:22-24), literally “righteousness and holiness of the truth,” that is, resting on the truth. The new man then is meant to be righteous and holy, inwardly and outwardly, before God and man, as respects Law and Gospel, and this *through the truth*. For as that which is false (“the lie” vs. 25) can only produce unrighteousness and unholiness, so the truth produces righteousness and holiness through the power of the Holy Ghost. Error injures, truth heals; error is the root of sin, truth is that of purity and perfection.

It is then to a new standing or state, a new moral character, a new life, a new joy, a new work, a new hope, that we are called. He who thinks that religion comprises anything less than this knows nothing yet as he ought to know. To that which man calls “piety,” less may suffice; but to no religion which does not in some degree embrace these, can the divine recognition be accorded.

These are weighty words of the apostle, “We are his workmanship.”¹⁰⁵ Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things pertaining to us. Chosen, called, quickened, washed, sanctified, and justified by God Himself, we are in no sense our own deliverers. The quarry out of which the marble comes is His; the marble itself is His, the digging and hewing and polishing are His; He is the sculptor and we the statue.

“We are his workmanship,” says the apostle. But this is not all. We are, he adds, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). The plan, the selection of the materials, the model, the workman, the workmanship, are all divine; and though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know that we shall be “like him,” His image reproduced in us, Himself represented by us, for we are “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us” (Col 3:10).

It is not, however, dead, cold marble that is to be wrought upon. That is simple work, requiring just a given amount of skill. But the remolding of the soul is unspeakably more difficult, and requires far more complex appliances. The influences at work in opposing—internal and external, spiritual, legal, physical—are many; and equally numerous must be the influences brought into play to meet all these, and carry out the design. The work is not mechanical, but moral and spiritual (physical in a sense, as dealing with the *nature* of things, but more truly, moral and spiritual). Omnipotence is not mere unlimited physical power, operating, as upon inanimate matter, by mere intensity of volition; but power which, with unlimited resources at its command, exhibits its greatness by regulating its forthgoings according to moral circumstances, producing its greatest results by indirect moral influences, developing itself in conformity with Law and sovereignty, and holy love on the one hand, and on the other with human guilt, and creature responsibility, and free volition. The complexities thus introduced are infinite, and the “variable quantities,” if one may so speak, are so peculiar and so innumerable, that we can find no formula to help us in the solution of the problem; we get bewildered in speculating on the processes by which omnipotence deals with moral beings, either in their sinfulness or their holiness.

Here let us also notice the duality or twofoldness of divine truth, the overlooking of which has occasioned much fruitless controversy and originated many falsehoods. Truth is, indeed, not two-sided, but *many-sided*, like a well-cut crystal. In a more general sense, however, it is truly *double*; with a heavenly and an earthly, a divine and a human side or aspect. It is at the line where these two meet that the greatest nicety of adjustment is required, and hence it is here that divergent theologies have come specially into conflict. The heavenward and the earthward aspects of truth must be carefully distinguished—the one fitting into the other, the one the counterpart of the other. God is absolute Sovereign; this is the one side. Man has volition of his own, and is not a machine

¹⁰⁵ Ephesians 2:10 “His poem,” the production of His wisdom, love, and power; that which He and only He can make, Psalm 100:3. A house should be worthy of the builder, and a poem of him from whom it comes.

or a stone; that is the other. God chooses and draws according to the good pleasure of His will; yet He hinders no man from coming or from willing. God is the giver of faith, yet “faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Hence the difficulty of believing is not from the absence of proper faculties, but from the derangement of these, and conversion is God’s restoration of these to their original nature. Faith is not a foreign gem imported into the soul, distinct from all our original powers; it is simply the man believing, in consequence of his soul being set right by the Holy Spirit, but he believes and disbelieves in the same way as before. It is not the intellect, or the mind, or the affections, that believe; it is the man, the whole man, the same whole man that formerly disbelieved. Very absurd and unphilosophical (not to say unscriptural) have been the questions raised as to the seat of faith, whether it is in the intellect, or the will, or the heart. Faith is the man believing, just as love is the man loving. In Romans 10:9, the apostle is not contrasting the heart with the mind, but with the mouth; in other words, the inner with the outer man.

God worketh in us both to will and to do, yet He commands us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It is God that sanctifies us, yet it is through “the truth” that we are sanctified (Joh 17:17). It is God that purifies (Ti 2:14), yet it is by faith that our hearts are purified (Act 15:9). It is God that fills us with joy and peace, and yet this is “in believing.” This duality is the key to the solution of many a hard controversy. The movements of man’s intellect are not superseded by God but assumed and regulated; the intellect itself is not overborne and forced, but set free to work its true work truly.¹⁰⁶ The “heavenly things” and “earthly things” are distinct, yet not separate; always to be viewed in connection with each other, yet not confused; for confusion here is mysticism, superstition, and false doctrine. “There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another” (1Co 15:40). In every Bible truth there are two elements, the divine and the human; but the divine element is one thing, the human another. The theology that embodies most truth is that which knows how to recognize both of these, without confusion, yet without isolation or antagonism, and which refuses to merge either the divine in the human or the human in the divine.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ The more thoroughly we can study the Word of God, the better; and all critical helps are to be welcomed. Genuine scholarship, consecrated to the elucidation of the Word, is an accomplishment of no common price. Everything that brings our souls into full contact with “the Word,” in its fullness and variety, so as to steep them in it, is to be greatly prized, as fitted to make us holier, more fruitful, and more spiritual men.

¹⁰⁷ We hear much of the divine and the human element in Scripture; nor is the expression amiss; yet might we not rather say that the Bible is all human and yet all divine. It is perfect according to what God meant it to be, though we may note what we call “imperfections” in it. The mountains of earth, in their ruggedness, are perfect in their way, though they have not the artificial perfection of the statue or the temple. God has chosen that His book and His world should resemble each other in that kind of perfection—a perfection which man appreciates in the landscape, but depreciates in the Bible.

Hence the necessity for confining ourselves to the Word, and the danger of introducing human metaphysics into questions connected with the spiritual change wrought on us. It is God that worketh; it is we who are wrought upon; and everything needful to be known in connection with this work is revealed in the divine record. We give this thought some prominence because of the tendency with many to magnify humanity, and to undervalue the greatness of that change which begins the Christian course and character. No elevation of natural taste, no infusion of religious or benevolent earnestness, no cultivation of the intellect, can fill up the description given us in the word of one "who fears God," and is "called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28), "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1Pe 1:3). And we urge this the more decidedly because, as is the beginning, so will be the middle and the end. A false idea or a diverging step at the outset may lead to a false religion throughout life, to an imperfect and superficial goodness, as one incorrect figure or sign in an equation falsifies both process and result. If the dislocated joint is not properly set, it will never work comfortably; and if the wound is merely skinned over, the disease may be taking its own way underneath, all the more fatally because it is supposed to have been removed.

How the Holy Spirit operates in producing the newness of which we have spoken, we know not; yet we know that He does not destroy or reverse man's faculties; He renovates them all, so that they fulfill the true ends for which they were given. As He does not make the hand the foot, nor the eye the ear, so He does not make the heart the intellect, nor the will the judgment. Each faculty remains the same in end and use as before, only purified and set properly to work. Nor does the Holy Spirit supersede the use of our faculties by His indwelling. Rather does this indwelling make these more serviceable, more energetic, each one doing his proper work and fulfilling his proper office; while the whole man, body, soul and spirit, instead of being brought under mechanical constraint, is made more truly free, never more fully himself than when filled with the Holy Spirit. For the result of the indwelling Spirit is liberty; not bondage, or the production of an artificial character.

Thus, although no violence is done to our being in regeneration, omnipotence is at work at every point. Our new being is not the result of a mechanical process, yet it is the product of divine power. God claims it as a "creation," and as His own handiwork. "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God" (2Co 5:5), where the word implies the thorough elaboration of some difficult piece of work. "It is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure" (Phi 2:13), where the expressions indicate an operation which influences our "willing" as well as our "doing," and this on account of His being "well pleased" with Christ (Mat 3:17), and with His own eternal design. "God's tillage" (or husbandry, 1Co 3:9) is His name for us when speaking as a husbandman, "God's building" (or fabric), His name when speaking as an architect. It is to the *image of His Son* that He has predestinated us to be conformed, that He might be the firstborn

among many brethren (Rom 8:29), having “chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph 1:4).

It is, then, to holiness that God is calling us (1Th 4:7); that we should have our “fruit unto holiness” (Rom 6:22), that our hearts should be stablished “unblameable in holiness” (1Th 3:13); that we should abound in “all holy conversation and godliness” (2Pe 3:11); that we should be “a holy priesthood” (1Pe 2:5); “holy in all manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15); “called with a holy calling” (2Ti 1:9); “holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph 1:4), presenting not only our souls but our bodies as (not only a living but) a holy sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1); nay, remembering that these bodies are not only “a sacrifice,” but a “temple of the Holy Ghost” (1Co 6:19).

Holiness is likeness to God, to Him Who is the Holy One of Israel, to Him Whom they laud in heaven, as “Holy, holy, holy” (Rev 4:8). It is likeness to Christ, to “that Holy thing” which was born of the virgin, to Him Who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26). It is not only disjunction from evil, and from an evil world; but it is separation unto God and His service. It is priestly separation, for priestly service. It is distinctiveness such as that which marked the tabernacle and all its vessels, separation from every common use: separation by blood, “the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20); this blood (or that which it signifies, namely, death) being interposed between us and all common things, so that we are dead to sin, but alive unto God, alive to righteousness, having died and risen in Him Whose blood has made us what we are: saints, holy ones.

This holiness or consecration extends to every part of our persons, fills up our being, spreads over our life, influences everything we are, or do, or think, or speak, or plan, small or great, outward or inward, negative or positive, our loving, our hating, our sorrowing, our rejoicing, our recreations, our business, our friendships, our relationships, our silence, our speech, our reading, our writing, our going out and our coming in—our whole man in every movement of spirit, soul, and body. In the house, the sanctuary, the chamber, the market, the shop, the desk, the highway, it must be seen that ours is a *consecrated life*.

In one aspect, sanctification is an act, a thing done at once, like justification. The moment the blood touches us—that is, as soon as we believe God’s testimony to the blood—we are “clean” (Joh 15:3), “sanctified,” set apart for God. It is in this ceremonial or priestly sense that the word is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews; for as that to the Romans takes us into the forum and deals with our legal standing, so that to the Hebrews takes us into the temple, and deals with our priestly standing. As the vessels of the sanctuary were at once separated to God and His service the moment the blood touched them, so are we. This did not imply that those vessels required no daily ablution afterwards, so neither does our consecration intimate that we need no daily sanctifying, no inward process for getting rid of sin. The initiatory consecration through the blood is one thing, and the continual sanctifying by the power of the Holy Ghost is another. The former is the first step, the introduction to the latter; nay, absolutely indispensable to

any progress in the latter; yet it does not supersede it, but makes it rather a greater necessity. To this very end we are consecrated by the blood, that we may be purified inwardly by the Holy Ghost; and he who would make the completeness of the former act a substitute for the latter process, or a reason for neglecting it, has yet to learn what consecration means, what is the import of the blood which consecrates, and for what end we were chosen in Christ and called by His grace (Eph 1:4).

The thing which man calls sin may be easily obliterated or toned down into goodness. It deserved no expulsion from Paradise, no deluge, no Sodom-fire; it is a thing which the flames of Sinai greatly exaggerate, and of which Israel's history presents an exceptional picture. It is one of the mishaps of humanity, the enormity of which has been quite misreckoned by theologians, and the history of which, in Scripture, must be read with abatements and due allowances for oriental colouring! It is not a thing for the judge, but for the physician; not a thing for condemnation, but for pity. It deserves no hell, no divine wrath, no legal sentence; it needs no atonement, no blood, no Cross, no substitution of life for life. Mere incarnation as the expression of divine love to the unfortunate, and the intimation to the universe of God's all-comprehending fatherhood, and of Adamhood's union with God will be sufficient.

But that which God calls sin is something infinitely terrible, far beyond our ideas of misfortune and disease, something to which even Sodom and Sinai gave but faint expression. It is something which the Law curses and the Judge condemns; something which needs a righteous pardon, a divine Saviour, and an almighty Spirit; something which can destroy a soul and ruin a world, which can, from one single drop, overflow earth for six thousand years, and fill hell eternally. It is that of whose hatefulness the blood and smoke and fire of the altar speak, which is "exceeding sinful" (Rom 7:13), whose wages is death, the first and second death, and of whose balefulness the everlasting darkness is the witness.

He who would know holiness must understand sin; and he who would see sin as God sees it, and think of it as God does, must look at the Cross and grave of the Son of God, and must know the meaning of Gethsemane and Golgotha.

Am I bound to think of sin as God thinks? Most certainly. Have I no liberty of thinking otherwise? None. You may do so, if you choose to venture, but the consequences are fearful, for error is sin. We are not bound to think as *man* thinks. In this respect we have entire liberty; not tradition, but free thought may be our formula here. But we are bound to think as *God* thinks, not in one thing but in everything. Woe be to him that presumes to differ from God, or reckons it a light matter to be of one mind with Him, or tries to prove that the Bible is inaccurate or unintelligible, or but half-inspired, in order to release himself from the responsibility of receiving the whole truth of God and afford him license to believe or disbelieve at pleasure, freed from the trammels of a fixed revelation.

The tendency of the present day is to underestimate sin and to misunderstand its nature. From the Cross of Christ men strike out the very elements which intimate the di-

vine opinion of its evil. Sin is admitted to be an evil, greater or less according to circumstances; a hereditary poison, which time and earnestness will work out of the constitution; an unruly but inevitable appetite, which is to be corrected gradually by moral discipline and wholesome intellectual diet, rendered medicinal by a moderate infusion of the "religious element"; a sickening pain, sometimes in the conscience, sometimes in the heart, that is to be soothed by the dreamy mysticism, which, acting like spiritual chloroform, dulls the uneasiness without touching its seat; this is all!

Why a loving God should, for so slight and curable an evil, have given over our world for six thousand years to such sorrow, pain, tears, weariness, disease and death, as have overflowed it with so terrible a deluge, is a question which such a theory of evil leaves unanswered. Yet such are the representations of sin with which we find a large amount of the literature and the religion of our day penetrated. Humanity is struggling upward, nobly self-reliant! The race is elevating itself (for the Darwinian theory has found its way into religion); and Christianity is a useful help in this process of self-regeneration! Thus does many a prophet speak peace where there is none, bent on "healing the hurt" (see Jer 8:11) by the denial of its deadliness. Of what avail this calling evil good and good evil, this putting darkness for light and light for darkness, this putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, will be in the great day of reckoning, a coming hour will show.

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not" (1Co 15:34) is God's message to us. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Pe 1:16). "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom 12:1). "Purge out...the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump" (1Co 5:7). "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2Ti 2:19). "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts...live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Ti 2:12). "Be diligent that ye may be found in him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2Pe 3:14). "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Phi 1:27). "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph 5:11). "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfill* the lusts thereof" (Rom 13:14). "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1Pe 2:11).

From sin, then, in every sense and aspect, God is calling us. As exceeding sinful, the abominable thing which He hates and will avenge, He warns us against it. He speaks to us as "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin," carrying evil about with us, nay, filled with it and steeped in it; not merely as diseased and requiring medicine, or unfortunate and requiring pity, but as guilty, under Law, under sentence, dead in trespasses and sins, with inevitable judgment before us. He neither palliates nor aggravates our case, but calmly tells us the worst; showing us what we are, before calling us to be what He has purposed to make us. From all unholiness, from all uncleanness, from all unrighteousness, from all corruption, from all crooked ways, from all disobedience, from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, He is calling us, in Christ Jesus His Son.

From God's Way of Holiness; available in print as a paperback from Chapel Library.

Chapter 2: Christ for Us, The Spirit in Us

We noticed, in our last chapter, the difference between the divine and the human sides of Bible truth; we would, in this, advert to another distinction, of no less importance, that between Christ's work *for* us and the Holy Spirit's work *in* us; between the legal or substitutionary and the moral or curative.

This is not the distinction between a divine element and a human one, but between two elements which are both equally divine, yet each of them, in its own way, bearing very directly on the sinner.

The two things are sometimes put in another form, Christ for us, and Christ in us. The meaning, however, is the same in both cases, for Christ in us (Col 1:27) is also the Holy Spirit in us, Christ having the Spirit without measure for Himself (Joh 3:34), and for us according to our need. An indwelling Christ and an indwelling Spirit are, though not the same thing, yet equivalent things. He who has the Son has the Spirit, nay, and the Father also (Joh 14:23).

Christ for us is our one resting-place. Not works, nor feelings, nor love, even though these may be the creation of the Spirit in us; not these in any sense; no, nor yet faith, whether as an act of our mind, or as the production of the Spirit, or as a substitute for righteousness; none of these can be our resting-place.

This great truth is well brought out in a correspondence among Luther (1483-1546), Melancthon (1497-1560), and Brentius (1499-1570) in the year 1531, which we translate and abridge. Brentius had been much perplexed on the subject of faith. It puzzled him. Christ justifies; faith justifies; how is this? Is faith a merit? Is it a work? Has it some justifying virtue in itself? Does it justify because it is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit? Perplexed with these questions, he wrote to Melancthon and Luther. The replies of both are extant, neither of them long, Luther's very short. They go straight to the point, and deserve to be quoted as clear statements of the truth, and as specimens of the way in which these men of might dealt with the burdened spirits of their time. "I see," writes Melancthon, "what is troubling you about faith. You stick to the fancy of Augustine, who, though right in rejecting the righteousness of human reason, imagines that we are justified by that fulfilling of the Law which the Holy Spirit works in us. So you imagine that men are justified by faith, because it is by faith that we receive the Spirit, that thereafter we may be able to be just by that fulfillment of the Law which the Spirit works. This imagination places justification in our fulfillment of the Law, in our purity or perfection, although this renewal ought to follow faith. But do you turn your eyes from that renewal, and from the Law altogether, to the promise and to Christ, and think that it is on Christ's account that we become just, that is, accepted before God, and that it is thus we obtain peace of conscience, and not on account of that renewal. For even this renewing is insufficient (for justification). We are justified by faith alone, not because it is a root, as you write, but because it apprehends Christ, on account of whom we are accepted. This renewing, although it necessarily follows, yet does not pacify the conscience. Therefore not even love, though it is the fulfilling of the Law, justifies, but

only faith; not because it is some excellence in us, but only because it takes hold of Christ. We are justified, not on account of love, not on account of the fulfilling of the Law, not on account of our renewal, although these are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but on account of Christ; and Him we take hold of by faith alone.

“Believe me, my Brentius, this controversy regarding the righteousness which is by faith is a mighty one, and little understood. You can only rightly comprehend it by turning your eyes entirely away from the Law, and from Augustine’s idea about our fulfilling the Law, and by fixing them wholly upon the free promise, so as to see that it is on account of that promise and for Christ’s sake, that we are justified, that is, accepted and obtain peace. This is the true doctrine, and that which glorifies Christ and wonderfully lifts up the conscience. I endeavoured to explain this in my *Apology*, but on account of the misrepresentations of adversaries, could not speak out so freely as I do now with you, though saying the very same thing. When could the conscience have peace and assured hope, if we are not justified till our renewal is perfected? What is this but to be justified by the Law, and not by the free promise? In that discussion I said that to ascribe our justification to love is to ascribe it to our own work, understanding by that, a work done in us by the Holy Ghost. For faith justifies, not because it is a new work of the Spirit in us, but because it apprehends Christ, on account of whom we are accepted, and not on account of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us. Turn away from Augustine’s idea, and you will easily see the reason for this; and I hope our *Apology* will somewhat help you, though I speak cautiously respecting matters so great, which are only to be understood in the conflict of the conscience. By all means preach Law and repentance to the people, but let not this true doctrine of the Gospel be overlooked.”

In the same strain writes Luther: “I am accustomed, my Brentius, for the better understanding of this point, to conceive this idea, that there is no quality in my heart at all, call it either faith or charity; but instead of these I set Christ Himself, and I say this is my righteousness. He is my quality and my formal righteousness, as they call it, so as to free myself from looking unto Law or works; nay, from looking at Christ Himself as a teacher or a giver. But I look at Him as gift and as doctrine to me, in Himself, so that in Him I have all things. He says, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life.’ He says not, ‘I give thee the way, and the truth, and the life,’ as if He were working on me from without. All these things He must be in me, abiding, living, and speaking in me, not through me or to me, that we may be ‘the righteousness of God in him’ (2Co 5:21); not in love, nor in the gifts and graces which follow.”

To these letters Brentius replies, unfolding his conflicts to his beloved Philip. “Is not faith itself a work?...Does not the Lord say, ‘This is the work of God that ye believe’?...Justification then cannot be either by works or by faith...Is it so?...Therefore justification must be on account of Christ alone, and not the excellence of our works...But how can all this be?...From childhood I had not been able to clear my thoughts on these points. Your letter and that of Luther showed me the truth...Justification comes to us neither *on account of* our love nor our faith, but solely on account of Christ; and yet it

comes *through* (by means of) faith. Faith does not justify as a work of goodness, but simply as a receiver of promised mercy...We do not merit; we only obtain justification...Faith is but the organ, the instrument, the medium; Christ alone is the satisfaction and the merit. Works are not satisfaction, nor merit, nor instrument; they are the utterance of a justification already received by faith." Thus does the disciple expound the master's letter, and then adds some thoughts of his own. He fears lest, as popery perverted love, so the Reformation might come to pervert faith, putting it in the room of Christ, as a work or merit or quality, something in itself. Having finished the letter to his "most beloved Philip," and signed it, "thy Brentius," he starts another thought and adds a post-script which is well worth translating: "Just as I was finishing my letter, I remembered an argument of yours about works, to the effect that if we are justified by love, we can never have assurance because we can never love as we ought. In like manner I argue regarding faith as a work; if justification come to us through faith as a work, or merit, or excellence, we can never be assured about it, because we can never believe as we ought."

We have given some space to these extracts, because the importance of the truth which they contain can hardly be overrated. They not only exhibit the distinction between Christ's work and the Spirit's work, but they do so with special reference to that point at which they are so often made to run into each other, to the darkening of many minds and the confusion of all Reformation theology. For how often did Luther reiterate that statement: "Faith justifies us, no, not even as a gift of the Holy Ghost, but solely on account of its reference to Christ...faith does not justify for its own sake, or because of any inherent virtue belonging to it." So long as this confusion exists, so long as men do not distinguish between Christ's work and the Spirit's work, so long as they lay any stress upon the quality or quantity of their act of faith, there can be not only no peace of conscience, but no progress in holiness, no bringing forth of good works. Of this confusion Arminianism, in its subtlest form, is the necessary offspring. For so long as men think to be justified by faith as a work, or as an act of their mind, or as a gift of the Spirit, they are seeking justification by something inherent, not by something imputed. To deny that it is inherent, because infused into them by the Spirit, is simply to cheat themselves with a play upon words, and to cheat themselves all the more effectually, because professing to honour the Spirit by ascribing to Him the infused quality or act, out of which they seek to extract their justification. In seeking justification or peace of conscience from something wrought in them by the Spirit, they are seeking these from that which is confessedly imperfect, and which God never gave for such a purpose; nay, they are rejecting the perfect righteousness of the Substitute, and so preventing the possibility of their doing any acceptable works at all. For if "the righteousness of the Law can only be fulfilled in us," as the fruit of our acceptance of the imputed righteousness of the Son of God, then there can be no righteous thing done by us till we have realized the position of men to whom the great truth of "Christ for us," "Jehovah our righteousness," has become the basis of all reconciliation with God. This form of error is the more subtle because its victims are not walking in sin, but doing all manner of outward service, and exhibiting outward goodness in many forms, regarding which we shall only say that they

are not pleasant to God, and as “they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin” (*Article 13 of the Church of England*).

Some of the soundest Christian divines have left on record their complaint as to the mistakes in this matter of faith prevailing in their day, and as to the charge of Antinomianism brought against those who, in stating justification, refuse to qualify the apostolic formula, “to him that worketh not, but believeth.” Robert Traill (1642-1716) thus wrote, now nearly two centuries ago, “If we say that faith in Jesus Christ is neither work, nor condition, nor qualification in justification, and that in its very act it is a renouncing of all things but the gift of grace, the fire is kindled; so that it is come to this, that he that will not be Antichristian must be called an Antinomian.”

How strongly does this same divine state the truth in another place. When addressing a perplexed inquirer he says, “If he say that he cannot believe on Jesus Christ...you tell him that believing on Jesus Christ is no work, but a resting on Jesus Christ.” How sharply does he rebuke those who would mix up the imputed and the infused: “They seem to be jealous lest God’s grace and Christ’s righteousness have too much room, and men’s works too little in the business of justification.” See the whole of Traill’s letter on “Justification Vindicated from the Charge of Antinomianism.” An old anonymous writer, a little later than Traill, uses this expression: “The Scriptures consider faith not as a work of ours, but set in opposition to every work, whether of body or mind: ‘To him that worketh not, but believeth’.”

That we believe through grace that faith is the gift of God does not prove faith to be a work of ours, any more than Christ’s raising of Lazarus proved resurrection to be a work of the dead man. The divine infusion of life in the one case, and the divine impartation of faith in the other, so far from showing that there must be a work in either, indicates very plainly that there could not be any such thing. The work comes *after* the believing, and as the fruit of it. “Faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), that is, the believing soul shows its faith by works of love.

Yes, faith worketh; so also does love, so also does hope. These all work, and we read of “the work of faith,” that is, work to which faith prompts us; the “labour of love,” that is, the toil to which love impels us; the “patience of hope,” that is, the patience which hope enables us to exercise (1Th 1:3). But is faith a work because it worketh? Is love a toil because it toileth? Is hope patience because it makes us patient? Israel’s looking to the brazen serpent was a ceasing from all remedies, and letting health pour itself into the body by the eye. Was the opening of the eye a work? The Gospel does not command us to *do* anything in order to obtain life, but bids us live by that which another has done; and the knowledge of its life-giving truth is not labour but rest—rest of soul—rest which is the root of all true labour; for in receiving Christ we do not work in order to rest, but we rest in order to work. In believing, we cease to work *for* pardon, in order that we may work *from* it; and what incentive to work, as well as joy in working, can be greater than an ascertained and realized forgiveness?

That there are works done *before* faith we know, but regarding them we know that they profit nothing, “for without faith it is impossible to please God.” That there are works done *after* faith we also know, and they are well pleasing to God, for they are the works of believing men. But, as to any work intermediate between these two, Scripture is silent; and against transforming faith into a work the whole theology of the Reformation protested, as either a worthless verbal quibble, or as the subtlest dregs of popery.

Truly faith comes from God. The revelation which we believe, and the power of believing that revelation, are both divine. The Holy Spirit has written the Scriptures, and sent them to us to be believed for salvation; faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. He quickens the dead soul that it may believe; and then after its believing He comes in and dwells. Hence we are said to receive the Spirit by “the hearing of faith” (Gal 3:2). He opens our hand to receive the gift, and He places the gift in our hand when thus opened by Himself. Never let us forget that while faith is the result of the Spirit’s work in us, it is as truly the receiver of Him as the indwelling Spirit, and that in proportion to our faith will be the measure of the Spirit we shall possess. This is another of the many twofold truths or processes of Scripture: the Spirit works to enable us to believe, and we in believing receive Him and all His gifts, in greater or less abundance, according to our faith.

This twofold, sometimes threefold, aspect of a truth ought not to perplex us; still less ought it to lead us to magnify one of these at the expense of the others, or to attempt a reconciliation of the three by a denial of one, and an explaining away of texts that stand in our way. Let us admit the whole, and accept the passages as they stand. Sometimes, for example, our renewal is connected with the Spirit (Ti 3:5), sometimes with Christ’s resurrection (1Pe 1:3), sometimes with the Word of truth (Eph 1:13), and sometimes with faith (Joh 1:12). Sometimes it is spoken of as God’s work (Psa 51:10), sometimes as our own (Eze 18:31; Eph 4:24), sometimes as the work of ministers (Phm 10), sometimes as the effect of the Gospel (1Co 4:15). So it is with conversion, with salvation, and with sanctification. These are all spoken of in connection with God, with Christ, with the Spirit, with the Word, with faith, with hope; and each of these aspects must be studied, not evaded.

John Calvin (1509-1564) does not hesitate to speak of regeneration and repentance being the result of faith, (*Institutes* B. III., iii 1. See the whole third book). And Latimer (c. 1487-1555) writes, “We be born again. How? Not by a mortal seed, but by an immortal. What is this immortal seed? The Word of the living God. Thus cometh our new birth.” In stating one side of the truth, these divines did not set aside the other. They taught renovation, through the truth and through faith, and they also taught renovation by the power of the Holy Ghost. They taught man’s need of the Spirit *in order to* faith, and they also proclaimed the gift of the Spirit *as the result* of faith.

But manifold as are these aspects, they all bear upon us personally, directly or indirectly affecting and carrying out our quickening, our healing, our joy, our comfort, and our holiness. There is no speculation in any of them, and it is truth, not opinion, that

they present to us. Whatever amount of unreal religion may be in us, it is not because of any defect in the Word, any cloudiness in the Gospel, any scantiness or straitness in the divine liberality, and lack in the fullness of Him in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. He has made provision for our being made like Himself, and therefore He calls us to this likeness. The standard is high, but it does not admit of being lowered. The model is divine, but so is the strength given for conformity to it. Our responsibility to be holy is great, but not greater than the means provided for its full attainment.

In Christ dwells all the fullness of Godhead bodily. He has the Holy Spirit for us, and this Spirit He gives freely and plenteously; for that which we receive is “grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph 4:7). The early saints were “filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost” (Act 13:52), and we are to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18), for it is the Holy Ghost Himself, not certain influences that are given unto us (Rom 5:5). He falls on us (Act 8:16; 11:15); He is shed forth on us (Act 2:33); He is poured out on us (Eze 39:29; Act 10:45); we are baptized with the Holy Ghost (Act 11:16). He is the earnest of our inheritance (Eph 1:14); He seals us (Eph 1:13), imprinting on us the divine image and superscription; He teaches (1Co 2:13); He reveals (1Co 2:10); He reproves (Joh 16:8); He strengthens (Eph 3:16); He makes us fruitful (Gal 5:22); He searches (1Co 2:10); He strives (Gen 6:3); He sanctifies (1Co 6:11); He leads (Rom 8:14; Psa 143:10); He instructs (Neh 9:20); He speaks (1Ti 4:1; Rev 2:7); He demonstrates (or proves) (1Co 2:4); He intercedes (Rom 8:26); He quickens (Rom 8:11); He gives utterance (Act 2:4); He creates (Psa 104:30); He comforts (Joh 14:26); He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts (Rom 5:5); He renews (Ti 3:5). He is the Spirit of holiness (Rom 1:4), the Spirit of wisdom and understanding (Isa 11:2; Eph 1:17), the Spirit of truth (Joh 14:17), the Spirit of knowledge (Isa 11:2), the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29), the Spirit of glory (1Pe 4:14), the Spirit of our God (1Co 6:11), the Spirit of the living God (2Co 3:3), the good Spirit (Neh 9:20), the Spirit of Christ (1Pe 1:11), the Spirit of adoption (Rom 8:15), the Spirit of life (Rev 11:11), and the Spirit of His Son (Gal 4:6).

Such is the Holy Spirit by Whom we are sanctified (2Th 2:13), “the eternal Spirit” by Whom “Christ offered himself without spot to God” (Heb 9:14). Such is the Holy Spirit by Whom we are “sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30), the Spirit Who makes us His habitation (Eph 2:22), Who dwelleth in us (2Ti 1:14), by Whom we are kept looking *to* and looking *for* Christ and by Whom we are made to “abound in hope” (Rom 15:13).

On the right receiving and entertaining of this heavenly Guest, much of a holy life depends. Let us bid Him welcome—not vexing, nor resisting, nor grieving, nor quenching Him, but loving Him and delighting in His love (“the love of the Spirit,” Rom 15:30), so that our life may be a living in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), a walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16), a praying in the Spirit (Jude 20). While distinguishing Christ’s work *for* us and the Spirit’s work *in* us, and so preserving our conscious pardon unbroken, yet let us not separate the two by any interval; but allowing both to do their work, let us “follow peace with all

men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14), keeping our hearts in “the fellowship of the Spirit” (Phi 2:1), and delighting ourselves in “the communion of the Holy Ghost” (2Co 13:14).

The double form of expression, bringing out the mutual or reciprocal indwelling of Christ and of the Spirit in us, is worthy of special note. Christ in us (Col 1:27) is the one side; we in Christ is the other (2Co 5:17; Gal 2:20). The Holy Spirit in us (Rom 8:9) is the one aspect; we live in the Spirit (Gal 5:25) is the other. Nay, further, this twofold expression is used of Godhead also, in these remarkable words: “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1Jo 4:15).

It would seem as if no figure, however strong and full, could adequately express the closeness of contact, the nearness of relationship, the entire oneness into which we are brought, in receiving the divine testimony to the Person and work of the Son of God. Are we not then most strongly committed to a life of holiness, as well as furnished with all the supplies needful for carrying it out? With such a fullness of strength and life at our disposal, what a responsibility is ours! “What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness”! And if to all this we add the prospects presented to us, the hope of the advent and the kingdom and the glory, we shall feel ourselves compassed on every side with the motives, materials and appliances best fitted for making us what we are meant to be, “a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1Pe 2:9),¹⁰⁸ “zealous of good works” here (Ti 2:14), and possessors of “glory and honor, and immortality” hereafter (Rom 2:7).

From God’s Way of Holiness; available in print as a paperback from Chapel Library.

Chapter 3: The Root and Soil of Holiness

Every plant must have both soil and root. Without both of these there can be no life, no growth, no fruit.

Holiness must have these. The root is “peace with God” (Rom 5:1); the soil in which that root strikes itself, and out of which it draws the vital sap, is the free love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. “Rooted...in love” (Eph 3:17) is the apostle’s description of a holy man. Holiness is not austerity or gloom; these are as alien to it as levity and flippancy. Nor is it the offspring of terror, or suspense, or uncertainty, but peace, conscious peace, and this peace must be rooted in grace; it must be the consequence of our having ascertained, upon sure evidence, the forgiving love of God. He who would lead us into holiness must “guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luk 1:79). He must show us how we, “being delivered out of the hand of our enemies,” may serve God “without fear, in holi-

¹⁰⁸ It is remarkable that these words were first used regarding Israel (Exo 19:5-6; Deu 7:6), showing us that Old Testament saints did not stand on a lower level than New Testament ones. Most of the expressions used concerning the church’s privileges are Old Testament ones, borrowed from Israel’s privileges. To the latter belonged the heavenly kingdom (Mat 5:3; 8:11), the sonship (Exo 4:22-23), the adoption, and the glory, and the promises (Rom 9:4).

ness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (vv. 74-75). He who would do this must also “give us the knowledge of salvation, by the remission of sins.” He must tell us how, through “the tender mercy of our God...the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luk 1:78-79).

In carrying out the great work of making us holy, God speaks to us, as “the God of peace” (Rom 16:20), “the very God of peace” (1Th 5:23) and as being Himself “our peace” (Eph 2:14). That which we receive from Him, as such, is not merely “peace with God,” but “the peace of God” (Phi 4:7), the thing which the Lord calls “my peace,” “my joy” (Joh 14:27; 15:11). It is in connection with the exhortation, “Be perfect,” that the apostle sets down the gracious assurance: “The God of love and peace shall be with you” (2Co 13:11). “These things I will that thou affirm constantly,” says the apostle, speaking of “the grace of God that bringeth salvation,” “the kindness and love of God our Saviour,” the “mercy of God,” justification “by his grace,” *in order that* (such is the force of the Greek) “they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” (Ti 3:8).

In this “peace with God” there is, of course, contained salvation, forgiveness, deliverance from the wrath to come. But these, though precious, are not terminating points; not ends, but beginnings; not the top but the bottom of that ladder which rests its foot upon the new sepulchre wherein never man was laid, and its top against the gate of the holy city. He, therefore, who is contenting himself with these, has not yet learned the true purport of the Gospel, nor the end which God, from eternity, had in view when preparing for us such a redemption as that which He has accomplished for the sons of men, through His only begotten Son, “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity” (Ti 2:14).

Without these, holiness is impossible, so that we may say this at least, that it is through them that holiness is made practicable, for the legal condition of the sinner, as under wrath, stood as a barrier between him and the possibility of holiness. So long as he was under condemnation, the Law prohibited the approach of everything that would make him holy. The Law bars salvation, except on the fulfillment of its claims; so it bars holiness, until the great satisfaction to its claims has been recognized by the individual, that is, until he has believed the divine testimony to the atonement of the Cross, and so been personally set free from condemnation. The Law pronounces against the idea of holiness in an unforgiven man. It protests against it as an incongruity, and as an injury to righteousness. If, then, a pardoned man’s remaining unholy seem strange, much more so a holy man’s remaining unpardoned. The sinner’s *legal* position must be set right before his *moral* position can be touched. Condition is one thing; character is another. The sinner’s standing before God, either in favour or disfavour, either under grace or under wrath, must first be dealt with ere his inner renewal can be carried on. The judicial must precede the moral.

Hence it is of pardon that the Gospel first speaks to us, for the question of pardon must first be settled before we proceed to others. The adjustment of the relationship between us and God is an indispensable preliminary, both on God's part and on ours. There must be friendship between us, ere He can bestow or we receive His indwelling Spirit; for on the one hand, the Spirit cannot make His dwelling in the unforgiven; and on the other, the unforgiven must be so occupied with the one question of forgiveness, that they are not at leisure to attend to anything till this has been finally settled in their favour. The man who knows that the wrath of God is still upon him, or, which is the same thing practically, is not sure whether it has been turned away or not, is really not in a condition to consider other questions, however important, if he has any true idea of the magnitude and terribleness of the anger of Him Who is a consuming fire.

The divine order then is first pardon, then holiness; first peace with God, and then conformity to the image of that God with Whom we have been brought to be at peace. For as likeness to God is produced by beholding His glory (2Co 3:18), and as we cannot look upon Him till we know that He has ceased to condemn us, and as we cannot trust Him till we know that He is gracious; so we cannot be transformed into His image till we have received pardon at His hands. Reconciliation is indispensable to resemblance; personal friendship must begin a holy life.

If such be the case, pardon cannot come too soon, even were the guilt of an unpardoned state not reason enough for any amount of urgency in obtaining it without delay. Nor can we too strongly insist upon the divine order above referred to: first peace, then holiness—peace as the foundation of holiness, even in the case of the chief of sinners.

Some do not object to a reputable man obtaining immediate peace, but they object to a profligate getting it at once! So it has always been; the old taunt is still on the lip of the modern Pharisee: "He is gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner," and the Simons of our day speak within themselves and say, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner" (Luk 7:39). But what then of Manasseh, and Magdalene, and Saul, and the woman of Sychar, and the jailor, and the men of Jerusalem, whose hands were red with blood? Were they not trusted with a free and immediate peace? Did not the very essence and strength of the Gospel's curative and purifying power lie in the freeness, the promptness, the certainty of the peace which it brought to these "chief of sinners"? "So you say you have found Christ, and have peace with God?" said one who claimed the name of "evangelical," to a poor profligate¹⁰⁹ who, only a few weeks before, had been drawn to the Cross. "I have indeed," said the poor man. "I *have* found Him, I *have* peace, and I know it." "Know it!" said the divine, "and have *you* the presumption to tell *me* this? I have been a respectable member of a church for thirty years, and have not got peace nor assurance yet, and you, who have been a profligate most of your life, say that you have peace with God!" "Yes, I have been as bad as a man can well be, but I have believed the Gospel, and that Gospel is good news for the like of me; and if I have no right to peace, I had better go

¹⁰⁹ **profligate** – an immoral and shameless person.

back to my sins, for if I cannot get peace as I am, I shall never get it at all.” “It’s all a delusion,” said the other. “Do you think that God would give a sinner like you peace, and not give it to me who have been doing all I can to get it for so many years?” “You are such a respectable man,” said the other, in unconscious irony, “that you can get on without peace and pardon, but a wretch like me cannot. If my peace is a delusion, it cannot be a bad one, for it makes me leave off sin, and makes me pray and read my Bible. Since I got it, I have turned over a new leaf.” “It won’t last,” said the other. “Well, but it is a good thing while it does last, and it is strange to see the like of you trying to take from me the only thing that ever did me good. It looks as if you would be glad to see me going back to my old sins. You never tried to bring me to Christ, and, now when I have come to Him, you are doing all you can to take me away. But I’ll stick to Him in spite of you.”

Some speak as if it were imperiling morality to let the sinner obtain immediate peace with God. If the peace be false, morality may be compromised by men pretending to the possession of a peace which is yet no peace. But, in that case, the evil complained of is the result of the hollowness, not the suddenness, of the peace, and can afford no ground for objecting to speedy peace, unless speedy peace is of necessity false, and unless the mere length of the process is security for the genuineness of the result. The existence of false peace is no argument against the true, and what we affirm is, that true peace can neither be too speedy nor too sure.

Others speak as if no sinner could be trusted with pardon till he has undergone a certain amount of preliminary mental suffering, more or less in duration and in intensity according to circumstances. It would be dangerous to the interests of morality to let him obtain an immediate pardon and, especially, to be sure of it, or to rejoice in it. If the man has been previously moral in life, they would not object to this; but they question the profligate’s right to present peace, and protest against the propriety of it on grounds of subtle morality. They argue for delay, to give him time to improve before he ventures to speak of pardon. They insist upon a long season of preparatory conflict, years of sad suspense and uncertainty, in order to qualify the prodigal for his father’s embrace, and to prevent the unseemly spectacle of a sinner this week rejoicing in the forgiveness of his sins, who last week was wallowing in the mire. This season of delay, during which they would prohibit the sinner from assuring himself of God’s free love, they consider the proper safeguard of a free Gospel, and the needful guarantee for the sinner’s future humility and holiness.

Is not, then, the position taken up by these men substantially that adopted by the scribes, when they murmured at the Lord’s gracious familiarity with the unworthy, saying, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them”? And is it not in great measure coincident with the opinion of popish divines respecting the danger to morality from the doctrine of immediate justification through simple faith in the justifying work of Christ?

When Bishop Gardiner (c. 1438-1555), the popish persecutor, lay dying in 1555, Day, Bishop of Chichester (1501-1556), “began to comfort him,” says Foxe (c. 1516-1587),

“with words of God’s promise, and free justification by the blood of Christ.” “What,” said the dying Romanist, “will *you* open that gap?” meaning that inlet of evil. “To me and others in my case you may speak of it, but once open this window to the people, then farewell all good.”

The apostles evidently had great confidence in the Gospel. They gave it fair play, and spoke it out in all its absolute freeness, as men who could trust it for its moral influence, as well as for its saving power, and who felt that the more speedily and certainly its good news were realized by the sinner, the more would that moral influence come into play. They did not hide it, nor trammel it, nor fence it round with conditions, as if doubtful of the policy of preaching it freely. “Be it known unto you,” they said, “men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified” (Act 13:38-39). They had no misgivings as to its bearings on morality, nor were they afraid of men believing it too soon, or getting too immediate relief from it. The idea does not seem to have entered their mind, that men could betake themselves to Christ too soon, or too confidently, or without sufficient preparation. Their object in preaching it was, not to induce men to commence a course of preparation for receiving Christ, but to receive Him at once and on the spot; not to lead them through the long avenue of a gradually amended life to the Cross of the Sin-bearer, but to bring them at once into contact with the Cross, that sin in them might be slain, the old man crucified, and a life of true morality begun. As the strongest motive to a holy life, they preached the Cross. They knew that “The Cross once seen is death to every vice,” and in the interests of holiness they stood and pleaded with men to take the proffered peace.

It is no disparagement to morality to say that good works are not the way to Christ. It is no slighting of the sacraments to say that they are not the sinner’s resting-place, so neither is it any deprecation of devotion, or repentance, or prayer, to say that they are not qualifying processes which fit the sinner for approaching the Saviour, either as making the sinner more acceptable or Christ more willing to receive. Still less is it derogating from the usefulness or the blessedness of these exercises, in their proper place and office, to say that they are often the refuges of self-righteousness, pretexts which the sinner makes use of to excuse his guilt in not at once taking salvation from the hands of Jesus. We do not undervalue love because we say a man is not justified by love, but by faith. We do not discourage prayer, because we preach that a man is not justified by prayer, but by faith. When we say that believing is not working, but a ceasing from work, we do not mean that the believing man is not to work, but that he is not to work for pardon, but to take it freely, and that he is to believe before he works, for works done before believing are not pleasing to God.

Is it the case that the sinner cannot be trusted with the Gospel? In one sense this is true. He cannot be trusted with anything. He abuses everything. He turns everything to bad account. He makes everything the minister of sin. But if he cannot be trusted with the Gospel, can he be trusted with the Law? If he cannot be trusted with grace, can he be

trusted with righteousness? He cannot be trusted with an immediate pardon; can he be trusted with a tardy one? He cannot be trusted with faith; can he be trusted with doubt? He cannot be trusted with peace; can he be trusted with gloom and trouble? He cannot be trusted with assurance; can he be trusted with suspense, and will uncertainty do for him what certainty cannot?

That which he can, after all, best be trusted with, is the Gospel. He has abused it; he may abuse it, but he is less likely to abuse it than anything else. It appeals to deeper, stronger, and more numerous motives than all other things together.¹¹⁰

Hence the apostles trusted the Gospel with the sinner, and the sinner with the Gospel, so unreservedly, and (as many in our day would say) unguardedly. "To him that worketh not, but believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom 4:5) was a bold statement. It is that of one who had great confidence in the Gospel which he preached, who had no misgivings as to its unholy tendencies, if men would but give it fair play. He himself always preached it as one who believed it to be the power of God unto holiness, no less than unto salvation.

That this is the understanding of the New Testament, the "mind of the Spirit," requires no proof. Few would in words deny it to be so; only they state the Gospel so timidly, so warily, so guardedly, with so many conditions, terms, and reservations, that by the time they have finished their statement, they have left no good news in that which they set out with announcing as "the gospel of the grace of God" (Act 20:24).

The more fully that the Gospel is preached, in the grand old apostolic way, the more likely is it to accomplish the results which it did in the apostolic days. The Gospel is the proclamation of free love; the revelation of the boundless charity of God. Nothing less than this will suit our world; nothing else is so likely to touch the heart, to go down to the lowest depths of depraved humanity, as the assurance that the sinner has been loved—loved by God, loved with a righteous love, loved with a free love that makes no bargain as to merit, or fitness, or goodness. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us!" (1Jo 4:10). As the lord of the vineyard, after sending servant upon servant to the husbandmen in vain, sent at last his "one son, his well-beloved" (Mar 12:6), so, Law having failed, God has dispatched to us the message of His love, as that which is by far the likeliest to secure His ends. With nothing less than this free love will

¹¹⁰ The teaching of some in the present day seems fitted, that of others intended, to hinder assurance. Assurance, say some, is impossible. Not impossible, say others, but very hard of attainment; not only very hard, but very long of being reached, requiring at least some thirty or forty years of prayer and good works. Very dangerous, say others, introducing presumption, and sure to end in apostasy. I confess I do not see how my being thoroughly persuaded that a holy God loves me with a holy love, and has forgiven me all my sins, has a tendency to evil (even though I may have reached that conclusion quickly.) It seems, of all truths, one of the likeliest to make me holy, to kindle love, to stimulate to good works, and to abase all pride; whereas uncertainty in this matter enfeebles me, darkens me, bewilders me, incapacitates me for service or, at the best, sets me striving to work my way into the favour of God, under the influence of a subordinate and mercenary class of motives, which can do nothing but keep me dreading and doubting all the days of my life, leaving me, perhaps, at the close, in hopeless darkness.

He trust our fallen race. He will not trust them with Law, or judgment, or terror (though these are well in their place), but He will trust them with His love! Not with a stinted or conditional love, with half pardons, or an uncertain salvation, or a tardy peace, or a doubtful invitation, or an all but impracticable amnesty—not with these does He cheat the heavy laden; not with these will He mock the weary sons of men. He wants them to be holy, as well as safe, and He knows that there is nothing in heaven or earth so likely to produce holiness, under the teaching of the Spirit of holiness, as the knowledge of His own free love. It is not Law, but “the love of Christ,” that constraineth! “The strength of sin is the law” (1Co 15:56), so the strength of holiness is deliverance from the Law (Rom 7:6). Yet are we not “without law” (1Co 9:21), neither yet “under the law” (Rom 6:14), but “under grace,” that we should “serve in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom 7:6).

Thus Calvin writes, “Consciences obey the Law, not constrained by the necessity of Law, but, being made free from the yoke of Law, they voluntarily obey the will of God. They are in perpetual terror as long as they are under the dominion of the Law, and are never disposed to obey God with delighted eagerness unless they have first received this liberty” (*Inst.* III. xix. 4). “Not to be under the Law,” says Luther “is to do good and abstain from evil, not through the compulsion of Law, but by free love and with gladness.” “If any man ask me,” says Tyndale (c. 1492-1536), “seeing faith justifies me, why I work, I answer, love compelleth me; for as long as my soul feeleth what love God hath showed me in Christ, I cannot but love God again, and His will and commandments, and of love work them; nor can they seem hard to me” (*Pref. to Exodus*). “When faith hath bathed a man’s heart in the blood of Christ, it is so mollified that it quickly dissolves into tears of godly sorrow; so that if Christ but turn and look upon him, oh, then with Peter he goes out and weeps bitterly. And this is true Gospel mourning; this is right evangelical repenting” (Edward Fisher’s *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, fl. 1640s-50s).

But so many (it is said) of those who were awakened under the preaching of this very free Gospel have gone back, that suspicions arise as to whether it may not be the ultra-freeness of the Gospel preached that has produced the evil. It is suggested that, had the Gospel been better guarded both before and behind, we should have seen fewer falls and less inconsistency. To this our answer is ready. Multitudes “went back” (Joh 6:66) from our Lord, yet no one could blame His preaching. There were many grievous corruptions in the early Church, yet we do not connect these with apostolic doctrine. Our Lord’s parable of the sower implies that, however good the seed might be, and careful the sower, there would be stony-ground hearers and thorny-ground hearers going a certain length and then turning back, so that the backslidings complained of are such as the apostles experienced, such as our Lord led us to anticipate, under the preaching of His own full Gospel.

Further than this, however, we add that, while the preaching of a guarded Gospel may lead to no backslidings, it will accomplish no awakenings; so that the question will come to be this: is it not better to have some fallings away when many are aroused, than

to have no falling away, because none have been shaken? The question as to what kind of teaching results in fewest backslidings is, no doubt, an important one; but still it is subordinate to the main one: what preaching produces, upon the whole, the most conversions, and brings most glory to God? Apostasies will occur in the best of Churches, bringing with them scandal to the name of Jesus, and suspicion of the Gospel as the cause of all the evil. But is this a new thing in the earth? Is it not one of the things that strikingly identify us with Corinth, and Sardis, and Laodicea? A minister who has never had his heart wounded with apostasy, who knows nothing of the disappointment of cherished hopes, has too good reason to suspect that there is something sadly wrong, and that the reason of there being no backslidings in his flock, is because death is reigning. Where all is silence or sleep, where the preaching does not shake and penetrate, there will be fewer fallings away; but the reason is, that there was nothing to fall away from. "Where are your converts now?" was the question put to a faithful minister who had had to mourn the fall of some who once "ran well." "Just where they were: the true still holding fast; the untrue showing themselves." It was meant as a taunt, but it was a taunt which might have been cast at apostles. It was a taunt which carried comfort with it, as reminding the faithful minister of apostolic disappointment, and so bringing him into fellowship with Paul himself, and as recalling the blessed fact that though some had fallen, more were standing.

The whole Galatian Church had lapsed into error and sin. How does the apostle cure the evil? By fencing or paring down the Gospel, and making it less free? No, but by reiterating its freeness; nay, stating it more freely than ever. How free does he represent it in the Epistle! Hence Luther chose it for comment, as the one best suiting himself.

Some ask the question: "Is it not a suspicious sign of your Gospel, that any of the hearers of it should say, 'May we continue in sin, that grace may abound?'" On the contrary, it is a safe sign of it. Had it not been very like Paul's Gospel, it would not have led to the same inquiry with which the apostle's preaching was met. The restricted, guarded, conditional gospel, which some give us, as the ultimatum of their good news, would have suggested no such thought as that which the sixth chapter of Romans was written to obviate.¹¹¹ The argument of the apostle, in such a case, becomes unmeaning and superfluous, and hence that statement which prompts some caviller¹¹² to ask the question "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" (Rom 6:15), is not at all unlikely to be the authentic Pauline Gospel, the genuine doctrine of apostolic antiquity.

From God's Way of Holiness; available in print as a paperback from Chapel Library.

¹¹¹ **obviate** – do away with by effective measures.

¹¹² **caviller** – maker of trivial or meaningless objections; quibbler.

Appendices

Biography of Horatius Bonar

Spent for the Cause of Christ!

Even at the age of 70, Horatius Bonar could still be seen taking his portable pulpit out into the streets of Edinburgh in order to preach the Gospel to sinners, and to tell them of their urgent need of faith in Jesus Christ as the only hope for their soul. Despite his fame and notoriety all across Great Britain, it was to sinners God had called him; and it was to sinners that Bonar would take the “words of life” as the Lord provided opportunity. The world and its opinions mattered not one whit to Bonar as he was driven by a heavenly desire to see sinners flee the snares and entrapments of this world for the freedom and beauty of the world to come. He was a man who toiled ceaselessly to warn men of impending judgment and one whom God used greatly in 19th century Scotland for the saving of souls.

Before his death on July 31, 1889, Rev. Horatius Bonar asked that no memoir of his life be written. Unfortunately for later generations, this request was honored by those who knew and revered him. Now little is known about the man apart from that which can be garnered from small biographical sketches and the personal recollections of friends. Despite authoring three biographies of eminent ministers in his own day, Bonar did not want the story of his life and ministry to in any way obscure the glory of Jesus Christ, the Person to whom he hoped his own life would point.

Horatius Bonar was born in Edinburgh on December 19, 1808. His parents were James Bonar, the Solicitor of Excise in Edinburgh, and Marjory Maitland, who together had eleven children. Three of these children were lost in infancy, and seven of the eight remaining were boys—three of whom entered into the ministry in their early years (John James, Horatius, and Andrew).

Horatius was ordained a minister in the Church of Scotland on November 30, 1837, and was later given charge over the North Parish Church in Kelso, a small town on the banks of the River Tweed, 43 miles southeast of Edinburgh. It was there he met Jane Lundie, daughter of the late Rev. Robert Lundie. They married in 1843 and had 9 children.

In that same year, Bonar left the Established Church, along with many other ministers, to form the Free Church of Scotland in what was known as the Great Disruption. In 1866, he accepted a call to pastor in Edinburgh at the newly erected Chalmers Memorial Church. He was one in a long line of ministers in the Bonar family. In the May 1908 edition of *The Scotsman* magazine, it was estimated that Bonar descendants (John Bonar 1671-1747) served a total of 364 years in the pulpits of Scottish churches.

Pulpit

From the pulpit, Bonar's message was simple and clear: he preached a crucified and risen Christ, in whose righteousness alone was the only hope of sinners. He was adept in the exposition of a free Gospel through the necessary sovereign workings of the Holy Spirit. His presentation always placed an emphasis on the urgent and immediate necessity of leaving one's sin and coming to Christ; and this as the only means of reconciliation between man and God. In a rare autobiographical piece, Bonar wrote of his theology:

“Righteousness without works to the sinner, simply on his acceptance of the Divine message concerning Jesus and His sufficiency—this has been the burden of our good news...It is one message, one Gospel, one cross, one sacrifice, from which nothing can be taken and to which nothing can be added. This is the...beginning and the ending of our ministry.”

Dr. Bonar's preaching was thoroughly Biblical; and in many of his sermons, you would be hard-pressed to find any instances where he deviated from the text. He added nothing superfluous or superficial. He was not blessed with commanding powers of oration, but rather was characterized as a sober and erudite preacher. It was once asked of one of his congregants if he was an eloquent man to which was replied, “No, he was not eloquent, but his doctrine was full and clear.” It was not his presence in the pulpit that captivated, for there was nothing in Bonar's exposition that aimed at merely affecting the emotions. It was in his powerful and effective presentation of the evil of sin and the approaching doom of the impenitent sinner, combined with an earnest commendation of Christ that moved his hearers.

He strove to preach a Biblical Gospel that proclaimed the glory of God in the fullness of Christ, not one ashamedly suited for the “itching ears” of his day. Commenting on the state of the church in his day, Bonar wrote, “It is not opinions that man needs, it is TRUTH. It is not theology, it is GOD. It is not ‘religion,’ it is CHRIST. It is the knowledge of the free love of God in the gift of His only-begotten Son”—and it was towards these purposes that his message was aimed.

Bonar's ministry was one that bore much fruit. W.R. Bowman, in his small biographical work, says that Bonar was the “spiritual father” of no less than twenty-seven men from the congregation at the Grange in Edinburgh, who became missionaries or ministers themselves, many of them well known.

Writings

Bonar had a modest estimate of his abilities, coupled with a seemingly boundless capacity for work. In Kelso, he authored a series of excellent Gospel presentations, known

as the “Kelso Tracts,” many of which are so clear and compelling they are still in use today.¹¹³

He edited and contributed to various magazines and periodicals, and he also wrote numerous books, tracts, and hymns. His pen was scarcely idle. Whether it was a word of comfort to the afflicted saint or sound encouragement for the mature believer, his books were written with the sole purpose of communicating the truths of Scripture to the hearts and minds of his readers. Lord Polwarth,¹¹⁴ when asked to pay tribute to the writings of Bonar, remarked,

“...when I think of Dr. Bonar...as a writer, it is like a pure, broad light shining from heaven, where all the promises of salvation to men on earth appear to pour down as the perfect divine revelation, with nothing of man’s embellishment...it is all the divine message from beginning to end. Study the poetry, study the prose, you will feel the heart of God beating through it all.”

While the subject matter often varied, it almost always led the reader back to the central message of Scripture: *the Person and work of Christ*. Jesus Christ was the sum and substance of every sermon Bonar preached and every hymn or book he wrote, with the hope that they would instruct and teach the people of God. Two of his most notable works were *God’s Way of Peace* and its companion volume *God’s Way of Holiness*. In these books, Bonar outlined the doctrines of justification and sanctification and showed the profound importance that each of these play in the life of the Christian. To err in making this distinction, and failure to live under this distinction, Bonar maintained would

“...weaken the sense of sin, blunt the edge of conscience, shift the foundation of a sinner’s peace from Christ to self, render the blood of sprinkling unnecessary, hinder personal holiness, and supersede the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul.”

Bonar believed that to conflate or confuse these foundational doctrines would certainly undermine the firmness of the ground on which we stand before God; namely, the perfect righteousness of Christ. It would supplant that sure ground of peace, that “perfect Christ,” with the delusion of a “perfect self,” or a righteousness grounded in sinful man. Ultimately, it would be the cause of fear, and doubt, and darkness—undoubtedly bringing peril to the soul.

Horatius Bonar edited *The Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* for twenty-five years, and summarized his eschatological views in a book entitled *Prophetical Landmarks*. The second advent of Christ was a doctrine that engaged much of Bonar’s efforts, as he believed it had been “the hope of the Church through many a starless night when other hopes had gone out one by one...leaving her disconsolate and helpless.” Bonar strongly held that the knowledge and hope of Christ’s return could dispel the darkness and afford a peaceful comfort to the Christian.

¹¹³ For example, *Instead of Me*, *The World Passeth Away*, *The Long Time*, *I Can’t Let Go*, and *What If It All Be True*, each available from Chapel Library.

¹¹⁴ **Lord Polwarth** – a title for a nobleman or city official in Edinburgh at the time.

Pastorate

Bonar's ministry extended well beyond the pulpit and the pen, as he was known to spend countless hours in the spiritual care of the children in his parish. He considered it one of the minister's foremost responsibilities to instruct and teach the little ones in the ways of the Gospel. A young girl recalls her experience in a Bible class conducted by her minister:

"I sometimes wonder if anyone else ever possessed the faculty that he had of drawing towards him the affection of young people, which, when you were once brought under the charm of his friendship, could never afterwards be lost or lessened. How well I remember his class for us girls! We would not for all the world have missed that hour on Wednesday afternoon. I think I see the little room...where we gathered, a bright, happy band of schoolgirls, sitting around to listen to his earnest, loving, faithful teaching. I see Dr. Bonar seated at the end of the long table with the large Bible spread out before him, the Bible hymnbook in his hand, his dear handsome face beaming, and the pleasant smile that lighted it up, as some of us gave a fuller, clearer answer than he expected to the question asked. And then the last meeting before the holidays; what a solemn hour it was, as he reminded us that never again here below should we all meet together, and spoke of the meeting-place above. All kneeling down, to be each tenderly commended to the loving care of our heavenly Father, bathed in tears, we could hardly tear ourselves away, lingering long after the usual time."

Hymns

It was this affectionate love and concern for the spiritual welfare of these little ones that led him to the writing of hymns. The children he was ministering to had difficulty in understanding the metrical Psalms used in the Presbyterian Church, so he began to write hymns for them that could be sung in their Sabbath school. He set his hymns to simplistic tunes and the children loved them. Bonar viewed his hymns as a means of both enriching the mind and stirring the affections in the worship of God. He understood the power of music and how that power could be harnessed to teach sound doctrine effectively. His hymns generally can be divided into two classes: those that convey the riches of Gospel truth¹¹⁵ and those that speak of the return of Christ and the coming heavenly glory. Dr. Handley Moule (1841-1920), the Anglican Bishop of Durham, once remarked,

"In Bonar's hymns, the massive theology of the Reformation, say rather of St. Paul and of St. John, breaks into deep and tender melody, a crystal river from the rock. The glory of the Son of God, His finished work, His never-finished working, the power of His promised Spirit upon the heart of man, to convict, to convert, to train, to sanctify; the awe of guilt and judgment, the wonder of the blood of the Lamb, the sublime freedom of justifying grace, the walk with God through duty and suffering, the victory over death, the unutterable brightness of the promise of the second coming—all live in his verse, that it may live in the worshipper's soul as he sings, making the majestic doctrines embrace us, as it were, with a power full of beauty unified with truth."

¹¹⁵ Several Bonar hymns are included in the booklet *Christ-centered Hymns*, available from Chapel Library.

Horatius Bonar wrote well over 600 hymns, and one of the great ironies of his life was that they could not be used for public worship on the Sabbath in the Free Church. Theodore Cuyler¹¹⁶ recalled,

“The first time I ever saw Dr. Horatius Bonar was in May, 1872, when I was attending the Free Church General Assembly of Scotland as a delegate from the Presbyterian Church in the United States...I was glad to be introduced to him, for I was an enthusiastic admirer of his hymns...Although Horatius had won his world-wide fame as a composer of hymns, he was, at that time, stoutly opposed to the use of anything but the old Scotch version of the Psalms in church worship. During my address to the Assembly, I said, ‘We Presbyterians in America sing the good old psalms of David.’ At this point, Dr. Bonar led in a round of applause, and then I continued, ‘We also sing the Gospel of Jesus Christ as versified by Watts, Wesley, Cowper, Toplady and your own Horatius Bonar.’ There was a burst of laughter, and then I rather mischievously added, ‘My own people have the privilege, not accorded to my brother’s congregation, of singing his magnificent hymns.’ By this time, the whole house came down in a perfect roar, and the confused blush on Bonar’s face puzzled us—whether it was on account of the compliment or on account of his own inconsistency. However, before his death, he consented to have his own congregation sing his own hymns, although it is said that two pragmatical elders rose and strode indignantly down the aisle of the church.”

The church should be thankful to God for the great hymn-writers of the past. They have bequeathed to us a rich treasury of robust hymns that stand in stark contrast to much of the lighter fare served today. Even Bonar himself was cognizant of the possible dangers associated with the use of hymns in worship, and these same dangers are certainly something of which we too should be aware. Of this problem, Bonar wrote,

“One is often inclined to ask how far some of these exulting hymns may be the utterance of excitement or sentimentalism...hymns are often the channels through which much unreality is given vent to in ‘religious life.’ Song, like music, is often deceitful, making people unwittingly believe themselves to be what they are not. The amount of superficial similarity,¹¹⁷ which has, in all ages, been introduced into and fostered in the Church by music, is incalculable. High-wrought feeling produced by it in conjunction with song has in many a case misled both the singer and the listener into a belief that their heart was beating truly and nobly towards Christ, when all the goodness was like the morning cloud and early dew.”

Controversies

The Signal, a magazine of the Free Church, publicly rebuked Bonar for his role in introducing hymns into the worship of Presbyterian churches during the latter years of his ministry. This was not the only controversy in which Bonar found himself. Amongst the many seasons of blessing that his ministry experienced, there were also periodic seasons of conflict that burdened him greatly.

¹¹⁶ **Theodore L. Cuyler** (1822-1909) – graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary (1846); respected Pastor of Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, New York.

¹¹⁷ **superficial similarity** – between man-centered worship and true Christ-centered worship.

In 1843, he was one of the many supporters of Thomas Chalmers¹¹⁸ during the Great Disruption in the Church of Scotland. The abuses of patronage in the calling of ministers caused many to break away and form the Free Church of Scotland. The cause of the separation was grounded in the demand of the laity for a voice in the process of appointing ministers, in opposition to many heritors¹¹⁹ whose selections went unimpeded. 474 ministers left to form the Free Church of Scotland, in which Bonar was to remain for more than 40 years.

However, the most notable public disputation that involved him was his defense of the crusades of the American evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, in 1873. Two years after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 ended his ministry there, Moody went to England to preach and was invited to Scotland by Bonar. Moody had many critics among the Scottish clergy. They said he had no official consecration or training for the office of preaching, no endorsement by anyone of good report, and that the hymn singing of Ira Sankey was not appropriate in Scottish churches where exclusive psalmody was the norm. Bonar defended Moody against the onslaught of criticisms, especially those from Dr. John Kennedy of Dingwall, and the two Scottish Presbyterians debated the orthodoxy of the American's preaching and his "hyper-evangelistic" methods in a series of public tracts.

Tribulations

Horatius Bonar was unable to avoid the trials and afflictions of life. He and Jane suffered profoundly when five of their children died before reaching adulthood, three in infancy. Upon the death of one of these, in a moment of deep sorrow, a broken Horatius wrote,

"Spare not the stroke; do with me as Thou wilt; Let there be naught unfinished, broken or marred; Complete Thy purpose that we may become Thy perfect image."

Years later, when his son-in-law, the Rev. G. Theophilus Dodds, was taken early in life, Bonar's daughter and her five children came back to live with him. At the time, he was able to write joyously to a friend, "God took five children from me some years ago, and He has given me another five to bring up for Him in my old age." These things could have only been said by one whose entire being was selflessly submitted to the will of God.

In his final years, Bonar's physical strength started to decline. Jane herself passed away in 1884 at the age of 63. Often he would approach the pulpit with little soundness of frame. But once there, the animation and earnestness that marked much of his life would return, and he was able to preach the Gospel that he cherished, boldly and faithfully. His health continued to fail, and with it came his own laments that his usefulness

¹¹⁸ **Thomas Chalmers** (1780-1847): Presbyterian theologian and preacher. He was educated at St. Andrews, licensed to preach in 1799, and pastored at Kilmany in Fife, and Tron Church, and St. John's in Glasgow. His publications include the *Institutes of Theology*.

¹¹⁹ **heritors** – those who owned the land under the churches; they inherited the land. These appointed the ministers in the Church of Scotland.

for the Savior could not be what it once was. He had worn himself out for the cause of Christ and had lived as he encouraged others to live:

“Go, labour on; spend, and be spent, Thy joy to do the Father’s will: It is the way the Master went...”

Through the tribulations he endured, Bonar was sustained by the sovereign hand of God working *through* his life and *in* his ministry. Horatius Bonar lived to the glory of God and the service of others, with little concern for how his own life would be remembered. It is hoped that the selections that follow will help to paint a clearer picture of one who labored tirelessly for the Lord, while at the same time, showing us the beauty and glory of the One he served.

This material selected and provided courtesy of Darrin R. Brooker. A CD of Bonar’s complete works is available online, www.horatiusbonar.com, or via email, info@horatiusbonar.com. By mail, please write to: LUX Publications; P.O. Box 5757 Stn. A; Toronto, Ontario; M5W 1P2 CANADA. Many Bonar titles are available in print and online from LUX, www.horatiusbonar.com, and from Chapel Library, www.chapellibrary.org.

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