

"The man of God."

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"That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3: 17.

The sentence which we have just penned occurs in Paul's second Epistle to his beloved son Timothy — an epistle marked, as we know, by intense individuality. All thoughtful students of scripture have noticed the striking contrast between the two Epistles of Paul to Timothy. In the first, the church is presented in its order, and Timothy is instructed as to how he is to behave himself therein. In the second, on the contrary, the church is presented in its ruin. The house of God has become the great house, in the which there are vessels to dishonour as well as vessels to honour; and where, moreover, errors and evils abound — heretical teachers and false professors, on every hand.

Here, then, it is, in this epistle of individuality, that the expression, "The man of God" is used with such obvious force and meaning. It is in times of general ruin, failure, declension, and confusion that the faithfulness, devotedness, and decision of the individual man of God are specially called for. And it is a signal mercy for such an one to know that, spite of the hopeless failure of the church, as a responsible witness for Christ, on this earth, it is the privilege of the individual to tread as lofty a path, to taste as deep communion, and to enjoy as rich blessings, as ever were, or could be known, in the church's brightest and palmiest days.

This is a most encouraging and consolatory fact — a fact established by many infallible proofs, and set forth in the very passage from which our heading is taken; and which we shall here quote, at length, for the reader — a passage of singular weight and power.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly *furnished unto all good: works.*"* 2 Timothy 3: 17.

{*The reader should be informed that the word which is rendered "perfect," in the above passage, occurs but this once in the entire New Testament. It is (*artios*) and signifies ready, complete well fitted as an instrument with all its strings, a machine with all its parts, a body with all its limbs, joints, muscles, and sinews. The usual word for "perfect" is (*telios*) which signifies the reaching of the moral end, in any particular thing.}

Here we have "the man of God," in the midst of all the ruin and confusion, the heresies and moral pravitities of the last days, standing forth in his own distinct individuality, "perfect and throughly furnished unto all good works." And, may we not ask, what more could be said in the church's brightest days? It we go back to the day of Pentecost itself, with all its display of power and glory, have we anything higher or better, or more solid than that which is set forth in the words "perfect and throughly furnished unto all good works?"

And is it not a signal mercy for anyone who desires to stand for God, in a dark and evil day, to be told that, spite of all the darkness, all the evil, all the error and confusion, he possesses that which can make a child wise unto salvation, and make a man perfect and throughly furnished unto all good works? Assuredly it is; and we have to praise our God for it, with full and overflowing hearts. To have

access, in days like these, to the eternal fountain of inspiration, where the child and the man can meet and drink and be satisfied — that fountain so clear that you cannot see its depth, and so deep that you cannot reach the bottom — that peerless, priceless volume which meets the child at his mother's knee, and makes him wise unto salvation; and meets the man in the most advanced stage of his practical career and makes him perfect and fully furnished for exigency of every hour. However, we shall have occasion, ere we close this paper, to look, more particularly, at "the man of God," and to consider what is the special force and meaning of this term. That there is very much more involved in it than is ordinarily understood, we are most fully persuaded.

There are three aspects in which man is presented in scripture; in the first place, we have man in nature, secondly, a man in Christ; and, thirdly, we have, the man of God. It might perhaps be thought that the second and third are synonymous; but we shall find a very material difference between them. True, I must be a man in Christ before I can be a man of God; but they are, by no means, interchangeable terms.

Let us then, in the first place, contemplate

MAN IN NATURE.

This is a very comprehensive phrase indeed. Under this title, we shall find every possible shade of character, temperament, and disposition. Man, on the platform of nature, graduates between two extremes. You may view him at the very highest point of cultivation, or at the very lowest point of degradation. You may see him surrounded with all the advantages, the refinements and the so-called dignities of civilised life; or you may find him sunk in all the shameless and barbarous customs of savage existence. You may view him in the almost numberless grades, ranks, classes, and castes into which the human family has distributed itself.

Then again, in the self-same class or caste you will find the most vivid contrasts, in the way of character, temper, and disposition. There, for example, is a man of such an atrocious temper that he is the very horror of every one who knows him. He is the plague of his family circle, and a perfect nuisance to society. He can only be compared to a porcupine with all his quills perpetually up; and if you meet him once you will never wish to meet him again. There, on the other hand, is a man of the sweetest disposition and most amiable temper. He is just as attractive as the other is repulsive. He is a tender, loving, faithful husband; a kind, affectionate, considerate father; a thoughtful liberal master; a kindly, genial neighbour; a generous friend, beloved by all, and justly so; the more you know him the more you must like him, and if you meet him once you are sure to wish to meet him again.

Further, you may meet on the platform of nature, a man who is false and deceitful, to the very heart's core, He delights in lying, cheating, and deception. Even where there is no object to be gained or interest to be served, he would rather tell a lie than the truth. He is mean and contemptible in all his thoughts, words, and ways; a man to whom all who know him would like to give as wide a berth as possible. And, on the other hand, you may meet a man of high principle, frank, honourable, generous, and upright; one who would scorn to tell a lie, or do a mean action, whose reputation is unblemished — his character unexceptionable. His word would be taken for any amount; he is one with whom all who know him would be glad to have dealings; an almost perfect natural character; a man of whom it might be said, he lacks but one thing.

Finally, as you pass to and fro on nature's platform, you may meet the atheist who affects to deny the existence of God; the infidel who denies God's revelation; the sceptic and — the rationalist who disbelieves everything. And, on the other hand, you will meet the superstitious devotee who spends his time in prayers and fasting, ordinances, and ceremonies; and who feels sure he is earning a place in

heaven by a wearisome round of religious observances that actually unfit him for the proper functions and responsibilities of domestic and social life. You may meet men of every imaginable shade of religious opinion, high church, low church, broad church, and no church; men who, without a spark of divine life in their souls, are contending for the powerless forms of a traditionally religion.

Now, there is one grand and awfully solemn fact common to all these various classes, castes, grades, shades, and conditions of men who Occupy the platform of nature, and that is there is not so much as a single link between them and heaven — there is no link with the Man who sits at the right hand of God — no link with the new creation. They are without Christ and without hope. They are unconverted. They have not rotten eternal life. As regards God, and Christ, and eternal life, and heaven, they all — however they may differ, morally, socially, and religiously — stand on one common ground; they are far from God — they are out of Christ — they are in their sins — they are in the flesh — they are of the world — they are on their way to hell

This being the case, it follows as a necessary and terrible consequence, that, underneath the platform of nature, and right in front of all who stand thereon, there are the flames of an everlasting hell. There is really no getting over this, if we are to listen to the voice of holy scripture. False teachers may deny it. Infidels may pretend to smile contemptuously at the idea; but scripture is plain — as plain as plainness itself. It speaks in manifold places, of a fire that NEVER shall be quenched, and of a worm that shall never die.

It is the very height of folly for anyone to seek to set aside the plain testimony of the word of God on this most solemn and weighty subject. Better far to let that testimony fall, with all its weight and authority, upon the heart and conscience — infinitely better to flee from the wrath to come than to attempt to deny that it is coming, and that, when it does come, it will abide for ever — yes, for ever, and for ever, and for ever! Tremendous thought! — overwhelming consideration! May it speak, with living power, to the soul of the unconverted reader, leading him to cry out, in all sincerity, “What is to be done?”

Yes, here is the question, “What must I do to be saved?” The divine answer is wrapped up in the following words which dropped from the lips of two of Christ's very highest and most gifted ambassadors. “Repent and be converted,” said Peter to the Jew. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house,” said Paul to the Gentile. And again, the latter of these two blessed messengers, in summing up his own ministry, thus defines the whole matter, “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How simple! But how real! How deep! How thoroughly practical! It is not a nominal, national head belief. It is not saying, in mere flippant profession, “I believe.” Ah! no; it is something far deeper and more serious than this. It is much to be feared that a large amount of the professed faith of this our day is deplorably superficial. There are vast numbers of those who throng our preaching rooms and lecture halls who are, after all, but wayside and stony ground hearers. The plough has never passed over them. The fallow ground has never been broken up. The arrow of conviction has never pierced them through and through. They have never been smashed to pieces — turned inside out — thoroughly revolutionised. The preaching of the gospel to all such is just like scattering precious seed on the hard asphalt, the pavement, or the beaten highway. It never penetrates. It does not enter into the depths of the soul; the conscience is not reached; the heart is not affected. The seed lies on the surface and is carried away by the first passing breeze.

Nor is this all. It is also much to be feared that many of the preachers of the present day, in their efforts to make the gospel simple, lose sight of the eternal necessity of repentance, and the essential

necessity of the action of the Holy Ghost, without which so-called faith is a mere human exercise and passes away like the vapours of the morning, leaving the soul still in the region of nature, satisfied with itself, daubed with the untempered mortar of a merely human gospel that cries peace, peace, where there is no peace, but the most imminent danger.

All this is very serious, and should lead the soul into profound exercise. We want the reader to give it his grave and immediate consideration. We would put this pointed question to him, which we entreat him to answer, now, "*Have you got eternal life?*" Say, dear friend, *have you?* "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." Grand reality! If you have not got this, you have nothing. You are still on that platform of nature of which we have spoken so much. Yes, you are still there, no matter though you were the very fairest specimen to be found there — amiable, polished, affable, frank, generous, truthful, upright, honourable, attractive, beloved, learned, cultivated, and even pious after a merely human fashion. You may be all this, and yet not have a single pulsation of eternal life in your soul.

This may sound harsh, stern, and severe. But it is true; and you will find out its truth sooner or later. We want you to find it out *now*. We want you to see that you are a thorough bankrupt, in the fullest sense of that word. A deed of bankruptcy has been filed against you in the high court of heaven. Here are its terms, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Have you ever pondered these words? Have you ever seen their application to yourself. So long as you are unrepentant, unconverted, unbelieving, you cannot do a single thing to please God — not one. "In the flesh" and "on the platform of nature" mean one and the same thing; and so long as you are there and thus, you cannot please God. "You must be born again" — renewed in the very deepest springs of your being, unrenewed nature is wholly unable to see and unfit to enter the kingdom of God. You must be born of water and of the Spirit — that is by the living word of God, and of the Holy Ghost. There is no other way by which to enter the kingdom. It is not by self-improvement but by new birth, we reach the blessed kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and "the flesh profiteth nothing," for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

How distinct is all this! How pointed! How full! How personal! How earnestly we desire that the unawakened or undecided reader should, just now, take it home to himself, as though he were the only individual upon the face of the earth. It will not do to generalise — to rest satisfied with saying, "We are all sinners." No; it is an intensely individual matter. "You must be born again." If you again ask, "How?" hear the divine response from the lips of the Master Himself, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Here is the sovereign remedy, for every poor broken-hearted, conscience-smitten, hopelessly ruined, hell deserving sinner — for every one who owns himself lost — who confesses his sins, and judges himself — for every weary, heavy laden, sin-burdened soul — here is God's own blessed promise. Jesus died, that you might live. He was condemned, that you might be justified. He drank the cup of wrath, that you might drink the cup of salvation. Behold Him hanging on yonder cross for thee. See what He did for thee. Believe that He satisfied, on your behalf, all the claims — the infinite and everlasting claims of the throne of God. See all your sins laid on Him — your guilt imputed to Him — your entire condition represented and disposed of by Him. See His atoning death answering perfectly for all that was or ever could be brought against you. See Him rising from the dead, having accomplished all. See Him ascending into the heavens, bearing in His divine Person the marks of His finished atonement. See Him seated on the throne of God, in the very highest place of power. See Him crowned with glory and honour. Believe in Him there, and you will receive the gift of eternal life — the

seal of the Holy Ghost — the earnest of the inheritance. You will pass off the platform of nature — you will be “A man in Christ.”

PART 2.

To all whose eyes have been opened to see their true condition, by nature — who have been brought under the convicting power of the Holy Ghost — who know aught of the real meaning of a broken heart and a contrite spirit — to all such it must be of the deepest possible interest to know the divine secret of rest and peace. If it be true — and it is true, because God says it — that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” — then how is any one to get out of the flesh? How can he pass off the platform of nature? How can he reach the blessed position of those to whom the Holy Ghost declares, “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit?”

These are momentous questions, surely. For, be it thoroughly known and ever remembered, that no improvement of our old nature is of any value whatsoever, as to our standing before God. It may be all very well, so far as this life is concerned, for a man to improve himself, by every means within his reach, to cultivate his mind, furnish his memory, elevate his moral tone, advance his social position. All this is quite true, so true as not to need a moment's argument.

But, admitting, in the fullest manner, the truth of all this, it leaves wholly untouched the solemn and sweeping statement of the inspired apostle that “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” There must be a new standing altogether, and this new standing cannot be reached by any change in the old nature — by any doings — any sayings — any feelings — ordinances of religion, prayers, alms or sacraments. Do what you will with nature and it is nature still. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh;” and do what you will with flesh you cannot make it spirit. There must be a new life — a life flowing from the new man, the last Adam, who has become, in resurrection, the Head of a new race.

How is this most precious life to be had? Hear the memorable answer — hear it, anxious reader hear it and live. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement; but is passed from death unto life.” John 5: 24.

Here we have a total change of standing — a passing from death to life — from a position in which there is not so much as a single link with heaven — with the new creation — with the risen Man in glory, into a position in which there is not a single link with the first man — with the old creation — and this present evil world. And all this is through believing on the Son of God — not saying we believe, but really, truly, heartily, believing on the Son of God — not by a head belief, a nominal, notional, intellectual faith — but by believing with the heart.

Thus only does any one become A MAN IN CHRIST.

Every true believer is a man in Christ. Whether it be the convert of yesterday or the hoary-headed saint of fifty or sixty years' standing as a Christian, each stands in precisely the same blessed position — he is in Christ. There can be no difference here. The practical state may differ immensely; but the positive standing is one and the same. As on the platform of nature, you may meet with every imaginable shade, grade, class, and condition, though all having one common standing; so on the new, the divine, the heavenly platform, you may meet with every possible variety of practical condition: the greatest possible difference in intelligence, experience, and spiritual power, while all possessing the same standing before God, all being in Christ. There can be no degrees as to standing, whatever there may be as to state. The convert of yesterday, and the hoary headed father in Christ are both alike as to standing. Each is a man in Christ, and there can be no advance upon this. We sometimes hear of “The

higher Christian life;" but, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a higher or a lower Christian life, inasmuch as Christ is the life of every believer. It may be that those who use the term mean a right thing. They probably refer to the higher stages of the Christian life — greater nearness to God — greater likeness to Christ — greater power in the Spirit — more devotedness — more separation from the world — more entire consecration of heart to Christ. But all these things belong to the question of our state, not to our standing. This latter is absolute, settled, unchangeable. It is in Christ, nothing less, nothing more, nothing different. If we are not in Christ, we are in our sins; but if we are in Christ, we cannot possibly be higher, as to standing.

If the reader will turn with us, for a few moments, to 1 Corinthians 15: 45-48, he will find some powerful teaching on this great foundation truth. The apostle speaks here of two men, "the first and the second." And let it be carefully noted that the second Man is, by no means, federally connected with the first, but stands in contrast with him — a new, independent, divine, heavenly source of life in Himself. The first man has been entirely set aside, as a ruined, guilty, outcast creature. We speak of Adam federally — as the head of a race Personally, Adam was saved by grace; but if we look at him from a federal standpoint, we see him a hopeless wreck.

The first man is an irremediable ruin. This is proved by the fact of a second Man, for truly we may say of the men as of the covenants, "If the first had been found faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." But the very fact of a second Man being introduced demonstrates the hopeless ruin of the first. Why a second, if aught could be made of the first? If our old Adam nature was, in any wise, capable of being improved, there was no need of something new. But "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Romans 8, Galatians 6.

There is immense moral power in all this line of teaching. It sets forth Christianity in vivid and striking contrast with every form of religiousness under the sun. Take Judaism or any other that ever was known or that now exists in this world, and what do you find it to be? Is it not invariably something designed for the testing, trying, improvement, or advancement of the first man? Unquestionably.

But what is Christianity? It is something entirely new — heavenly — spiritual — divine. It is based upon the cross of Christ, in the which the first man came to his end — where sin was put away — judgement borne — the old man crucified and put out of God's sight for ever, so far as all believers are concerned. The cross closes, for faith, the history of the first man. "I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle. And again, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

Are these mere figures of speech, or do they set forth, in the mighty words of the Holy Ghost, the grand fact of the entire setting aside of our old nature, as a thing utterly worthless and condemned? The latter, most assuredly, blessed be God. Christianity starts, as it were, from the open grave of the second Man, to pursue its bright career onward to eternal glory. It is, emphatically, a new creation in which there is not so much as a single shred of the old thing — for "all things are of God." And if "all things" are of God, there can be nothing of man.

What rest! What comfort! What strength! What moral elevation! What sweet relief for the poor burdened soul that has been vainly seeking, for years perhaps, to find peace in self-improvement! What deliverance from the wretched thralldom of legality, in all its phases, to find out the precious secret that my guilty, ruined, bankrupt self — the very thing that I have been trying, by every means in my power, to improve, has been completely and for ever set aside — that God is not looking for any amendment in it — that He has condemned it and put it to death in the cross of His Son! What an answer is here to the

monk, the ascetic, and the ritualist! Oh! that it were understood in all its emancipating powers This heavenly, this divine, this spiritual Christianity. Surely were it only known in its living power and reality, it would deliver the soul from the thousand and one forms of corrupt religion whereby the arch-enemy and deceiver is ruining the souls of untold millions. We may truly say that Satan's masterpiece — his most successful effort against the truth of the Gospel, against the Christianity of the New Testament — is seen in the fact of his leading unconverted people to take and apply to themselves ordinances of the Christian religion, and to profess many of its doctrines. In this way he blinds their eyes to their own true condition, as utterly ruined, guilty, and undone; and strikes a deadly blow at the pure Gospel of Christ. The best piece that was ever put upon the "old garment" of man's ruined nature is the profession of Christianity; and, the better the piece, the worse the rent. See Mark 2: 21.

Let us bend an attentive ear to the following weighty words of the greatest teacher and best exponent of true Christianity the world ever saw. "For I through law am dead to law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Mark this, "I — not I — but Christ." The old "I" — "crucified." The new "I" — Christ. "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2: 19, 20.

{*The reader will distinguish between the expression "in the flesh" as used in Galatians 2: 20, and in Romans 8: 8, 9. In the former, it simply refers to our condition as in the body. In the latter, it sets forth the principle or ground of our standing. The believer is in the body, as to the fact of his condition; but he is not in the flesh as to the principle of his standing. But very often the expression "in the flesh," is synonymous with being "in the body." We need to ponder more deeply the words of scripture.}

This, and nothing else, is Christianity. It is not "the old man" — the first Adam — nature, becoming religious, even though the religion be the profession of the doctrines, and the adopting of the ordinances of Christianity. No; it is the death, the crucifixion, the burial of the old man — the old I — the old nature, and becoming a new man in Christ. Every true believer is a new man in Christ. He has passed clean out of the old creation — standing — the old estate of sin and death, guilt and condemnation; and he has passed into a new creation-standing — into a new estate of life and righteousness in a risen and glorified Christ — the Head of the new creation — the last Adam.

Such is the position and unalterable standing of the very feeblest believer in Christ. There is absolutely no other standing for any Christian. I must either be in the first man or in the second. There is no third man, for the second Man is the last Adam. There is no middle ground. I am either in Christ, or I am in my sins. But if I am in Christ, I am as He is before God. 'As he is so are we, in this world.' He does not say, "As he was" but "as he is." That is, the Christian is viewed by God as one with Christ, in every respect — His Deity, of course, excepted, as being incommunicable. That blessed One stood in the believer's stead — bore his sins, died his death, paid his penalty, represented him, in every respect; took all his guilt, all his liabilities, all that pertained to him as a man in nature, stood as his substitute, in all the verity and reality of that word, and having divinely met his case, and borne his judgement, He rose from the dead, and is now the Head, the Representative, and the only true definition of the believer before God.

To this most glorious and enfranchising truth, holy scripture bears the amplest testimony. The passage which we have just quoted from Galatians is a most vivid, powerful, and condensed statement of it. And if the reader will turn to Romans 6. he will find further evidence. We shall quote some of the weighty sentences.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Far be the thought.

How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also of resurrection. Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6: 1-11.

Reader, mark, especially, these words in the foregoing quotation — "We that are dead" — "We are buried with him" — "Like as Christ was raised even so we also" — "Our old man is crucified with him" — "Dead with Christ" — "Dead indeed unto sin." Do we really understand such utterances? Have we entered into their real force and meaning? Do we, in very deed, perceive their application to ourselves. These are searching questions for the heart; but they are needful. The real doctrine of Romans 6 is but little apprehended. There are thousands who profess to believe in the atoning virtue of the death of Christ, but who do not see aught therein beyond the forgiveness of their sins. They do not see the crucifixion, death, and burial of the old man — the destruction of the body of sin — the condemnation of sin — the entire setting aside of the old system of things belonging to their first Adam condition — in a word their perfect identification with a dead and risen Christ. Hence it is that we press this grand and all-important line of truth upon the attention of the reader. It lies at the very base of all true Christianity, and forms an integral part of the truth of the Gospel.

Let us hearken to further evidence on the point. Hear what the apostle saith to the Colossians: "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men, [such as] touch not, taste not, handle not" — thus it is that human ordinances speak to us, telling us not to touch this, not to taste that, not to handle the other, as if there could possibly be any divine principle involved in such things — "which all are to perish with the using;" and which, "have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. *For ye are dead*, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Here, again, let us inquire how far we enter into the true force, meaning, and application of such words as these — "*Why as though living in the world*," &c.? Are we living in the world or living in heaven — which? The true Christian is one who has died out of this present evil world. He has no more to do with it than Christ. "Like as Christ even so we." He is dead to the law — dead to sin: alive in Christ — alive to God — alive in the new creation. He belongs to heaven. He is enrolled as a citizen of heaven. His religion, his politics, his morals are all heavenly. He is a heavenly man walking on the earth, and fulfilling all the duties which belong to the varied relationships in which the hand of God has placed him, and in which the word of God most fully recognises him, and amply guides him, such as husband, father, master, child, servant, and such like. The Christian is not a monk, an ascetic, or a hermit. He is, we repeat, a heavenly, spiritual man, in the world, but not *of* it. He is like a foreigner so far as his residence here is concerned. He is in the body, as to the fact of his condition; but not in the flesh as to the principle of his standing. He is *a man in Christ*.

Ere closing this article, we should like to call the reader's attention to 2 Corinthians 12. In it he

will find, at once, the *positive standing* and the *possible state* of the believer. The standing is fixed and unalterable as set forth in that one comprehensive sentence — "A man in Christ." The state may graduate between the two extremes presented in the opening and closing verses of this chapter. A Christian may be in the third heaven, amid the seraphic visions of that blessed and holy place; or he may, if not watchful, sink down into all the gross and evil things named in verses 20, 21.

It may be asked, "Is it possible that a true child of God could ever be found in such a low moral condition?" Alas! alas! reader, it is indeed possible. There is no depth of sin and folly into which a Christian is not capable of plunging, if not kept by the grace of God. Even the blessed apostle himself, when he came down from the third heaven, needed "a thorn in the flesh" to keep him from being "exalted above measure." We might suppose that a man who had been up in that bright and blessed region could never again feel the stirrings of pride. But the plain fact is that even the third heavens cannot cure the flesh. It is utterly incorrigible, and must be judged and kept under, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, else it will cut out plenty of sorrowful work for us.

Still, nothing can touch the believer's standing. He is in Christ, for ever — justified, accepted, perfect in Him, and never can be anything else. And, moreover, he must ever judge his state by his standing, never his standing by his state. To attempt to reach the standing by my state is *legalism*, to refuse to judge my state by the standing is *antinomianism*. Both — though so diverse one from the other — are alike false — alike opposed to the truth of God — alike offensive to the Holy Ghost — alike removed from the divine idea of "A Man in Christ."

PART 3.

Having considered the deeply interesting questions of "a man in nature" and "a man in Christ," it remains for us, now, to dwell for a little, in the third and last place, on the thoroughly practical subject suggested by the title of this paper, namely, THE MAN OF GOD.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that every Christian is a man of God. Even in Paul's day — in the days of Timothy, there were many who bore the Christian name who were very far indeed from acquitting themselves as men of God, that is, as those who were really God's men, in the midst of the failure and error which, even then, had begun to creep in.

It is the perception of this fact that renders the Second Epistle to Timothy so profoundly interesting. In it we have what we may call ample provision for the man of God, in the day in which he is called to live — a dark, evil, and perilous day, most surely, in which all who — will live godly must keep the eye steadily fixed on Christ Himself — His Name — His Person — His word, if they would make any headway against the tide.

It is hardly possible to read Second Timothy without being struck with its intensely individual character. The very opening address is strikingly characteristic. "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."

What glowing words are these! How affecting to hearken thus to one man of God pouring the deep and tender feelings of his great, large, loving heart into the heart of another man of God! The dear apostle was beginning to feel the chilling influence that was fast creeping over the professing church. He was tasting the bitterness of disappointed hopes. He found himself deserted by many who had once professed to be his friends and associates in that glorious work to which he had consecrated all the energies of his great soul. Many were becoming "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, and of his prisoner." It was not that they altogether ceased to be Christians, or abandoned the Christian profession;

but they turned their backs upon Paul, and left him alone in the day of trial.

Now, it is under such circumstances that the heart turns, with peculiar tenderness, to individual faithfulness and affection. If one is surrounded, on all hands, by true hearted confessors — by a great cloud of witnesses: — a large army of good soldiers of Jesus Christ — if the tide of devotedness is flowing around one and bearing him on its bosom, he is not so dependent upon individual sympathy and fellowship.

But, on the other hand, when the general condition of things is low — when the majority prove faithless — when old associates are dropping off, it is then that personal grace and true affection are specially valued. The dark background of general declension throws individual devotedness into beautiful relief.

Thus it is in this exquisite Epistle which now lies open before us. It does the heart good to hearken to the breathings of the aged prisoner of Jesus Christ who can speak of serving God from his forefathers with a pure conscience, and of unceasing remembrance of his beloved son and true yoke fellow.

It is specially interesting to notice that, both in reference to his own history and that of his beloved friend, Paul goes back to facts of very early date — facts in their own individual path — facts prior to their meeting one another, and prior to what we may call their church associations — important and interesting as these things most surely are in their place. Paul had served God, from his forefathers, with pure conscience, before he had known a fellow Christian. This he could continue to do though deserted by all his Christian companions. So also, in the case of his faithful friend, he says, "I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice: and I am persuaded that in thee also."

This is very touching and very beautiful. We cannot but be struck with such references to the previous history of those beloved men of God. The "pure conscience" of the one, and "the unfeigned faith" of the other, indicate two grand moral qualities which all must possess if they would prove true men of God in a dark and evil day. The former has its immediate reference, in all things, to the one living and true God; the latter draws all its springs from Him. That leads us to walk *before* God; this enables us to walk *with* Him. Both together are indispensable in forming the character of the true man of God.

It is utterly impossible to over-estimate the importance of keeping a pure conscience before God, in all our ways. It is positively invaluable. It leads us to refer everything to God. It keeps us from being tossed hither and thither by every wave and current of human opinion. It imparts stability and consistency to the entire course and character. We are all in imminent danger of falling under human influence — of shaping our way according to the thoughts of our fellow man — of adopting his cue, and mounting his hobby.

All this is destructive of the character of the man of God. If you take your tone from your fellow; if you suffer yourself to be formed in a merely human mould; if your faith stands in the wisdom of man; if your object is to please men, then instead of being a man of God, you will become a member of a party or clique. You will lose that lovely freshness and originality so essential to the individual servant of Christ, and become marked by the peculiar and dominant features of a sect.

Let us carefully guard against this. It has ruined many a valuable servant. Many who might have proved really useful workmen in the vineyard, have failed completely through not maintaining the integrity of their individual character and path. They began with God. They started on their course in

the exercise of a pure conscience, and in the pursuit of that path which a divine hand had marked out for them. There was a bloom, a freshness, and a verdure about them, most refreshing to all who came in contact with them. They were taught of God. They drew near to the eternal fountain of holy scripture and drank for themselves. Perhaps they did not know much; but what they did know was real because they received it from God, and it turned to good account for "there is much food in the tillage of the poor."

But, instead of going on with God, they allowed themselves to get under human influence; they got truth second-hand, and became the vendors of other men's thoughts; instead of drinking at the fountain head, they drank at the streams of human opinion; they lost originality, simplicity, freshness, and power, and became the merest copyists, if not miserable caricatures. Instead of giving forth those "rivers of living water" which flow from the true believer in Jesus, they dropped into the barren technicalities and cut and dry common-places of mere systematised religion.

Beloved Christian reader, all this must be sedulously guarded against. We must watch against it, pray against it, believe against it, and live against it. Let us seek to serve God, with a pure conscience. Let us live in His own immediate presence, in the light of His blessed countenance, in the holy intimacy of personal communion with Him, through the power of the Holy Ghost. This, we may rest assured, is the true secret of power for the man of God, at all times, and under all circumstances. We must walk with God, in the deep and cherished sense of our own personal responsibility to Him. This is what we understand by a pure conscience."

But will this tend, in the smallest degree, to lessen our sense of the value of true fellowship — of holy communion with all those who are true to Christ? By no means; indeed it is the very thing which will impart power, energy, and depth of tone to the fellowship. If every "man in Christ" were only acquitting himself thoroughly as "a man of God," what blessed fellowship there would be! what heart work! what glow, what unmistakable power! How different from the dull formalism of a merely nominal assent to certain accredited dogmas of a party, on the one hand, and from the mere *esprit de corps* of cliquism, on the other.

There are few terms in such common use and so little understood as "fellowship." In numberless cases, it merely indicates the fact of a nominal membership in some religious denomination — a fact which furnishes no guarantee whatsoever of living communion with Christ, or personal devotedness to His cause. If all who are nominally "in fellowship" were acquitting themselves thoroughly as men of God, what a very different condition of things we should be privileged to witness!

But what is fellowship? It is, in its very highest expression, having one common object with God, and taking part in the same portion; and that object — that portion is Christ — Christ known and enjoyed through the Holy Ghost. This is fellowship with God. What a privilege! What a dignity! What unspeakable blessedness! To be allowed to have a common object and a common portion with God Himself! To delight in the One in whom He delights! There can be nothing higher, nothing better, nothing more precious than this. Not even in heaven itself shall we know aught beyond this. Our own condition will, thank God, be vastly different. We shall be done with a body of sin and death, and be clothed with a body of glory. We shall be done with a sinful, sorrowful, distracting world, where all is directly opposed to God and to us, and we shall breathe the atmosphere — the pure and exhilarating atmosphere of that bright and blessed world above. But, in so far as our fellowship is concerned, it is now as it shall be then, "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" — "In the light," and by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus much as to our fellowship with God. And, as regards our fellowship one with another, it is

simply as we walk in the light, as we read, "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) We can only have fellowship one with another as we walk in the immediate presence of God. There may be a vast amount of mere intercourse without one single particle of divine fellowship. Alas! alas! a great deal of what passes for Christian fellowship is nothing more than the merest religious gossip — the vapid, worthless, soul-withering chit-chat of the religious world, than which nothing can be more miserably unprofitable. True Christian fellowship can only be enjoyed in the light. It is when we are individually walking with God, in the power of personal communion, that we really have fellowship one with another, and this fellowship consists in real heart enjoyment of Christ as our one object — our common portion. It is not heartless traffic in certain favourite doctrines which we receive to hold in common. It is not morbid sympathy with those who think, and see, and feel with us, in some favourite theory or dogma. It is something quite different from all this. It is delighting in Christ, in common with all those who are walking in the light. It is attachment to Him — to His Person — His Name — His word — His cause — His people. It is joint consecration of heart and soul to that blessed One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and brought us into the light of God's presence, there to walk with Him and with one another. This and nothing less is Christian fellowship; and where this is really understood it will lead us to pause and consider what we say when we declare, in any given case, "such an one is in fellowship."

But we must proceed with our Epistle, and there see what full provision there is for the man of God, however dark the day may be in which his lot is cast.

We have seen something of the importance — yea rather we should say, the indispensable necessity of "a pure conscience," and "unfeigned faith," in the moral equipment of God's man. These qualities lie at the very base of the entire edifice of practical godliness which must ever characterise the genuine man of God.

But there is more than this. The edifice must be erected as well as the foundation laid. The man of God has to work on amid all sorts of difficulties, trials, sorrows, disappointments, obstacles, questions, and controversies. He has his niche to fill, his path to lead, his work to do. Come what may, he must serve. The enemy may oppose; the world may frown; the church may be in ruins around him; false brethren may thwart, hinder, and desert; strife, controversy, and division may arise and darken the atmosphere; still the man of God must move on, regardless of all these things, working, serving, testifying, according to the sphere in which the hand of God has placed him, and according to the gift bestowed upon him. How is this to be done? Not only by keeping a pure conscience and the exercise of an unfeigned faith — priceless, indispensable qualities! but, further, he has to hearken to the following weighty word of exhortation — "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

The gift must be stirred up, else it may become useless if allowed to lie dormant. There is great danger of letting the gift drop into disuse through the discouraging influence of surrounding circumstances. A gift unused will soon become useless; whereas, a gift stirred up and diligently used grows and expands. It is not enough to possess a gift, we must wait upon the gift, cultivate it, and exercise it. This is the way to improve it.

And observe the special force of the expression, "Gift of God." In Ephesians 4 we read of "the gift of Christ," and there, too, we find all the gifts, from the highest to the lowest range, flowing down from Christ the risen and glorified Head of His body the church. But in 2 Timothy, we have it defined as "the gift of God." True it is — blessed be His holy name! — our Lord Christ is God over all, blessed

for ever, so that the gift of Christ is the gift of God. But we may rest assured there is never any distinction in scripture without a difference; and hence there is some good reason for the expression "gift of God. "We doubt not it is in full harmony with the nature and object of the Epistle in which it occurs. It is "the gift of God" communicated to "the man of God "to be used by him notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the professing church, and spite of all the difficulty, darkness, and discouragement of the day in which his lot is cast.

The man of God must not allow himself to be hindered in the diligent cultivation and exercise of his gift, though everything seems to look dark and forbidding, for "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." Here we have "God" again introduced to our thoughts, and that, too, in a most gracious manner, as furnishing His man with the very thing he needs to meet the special exigence of his day — "The Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Marvellous combination! Truly, an exquisite compound after the art of the apothecary! Power, love and wisdom! How perfect! Not a single ingredient too much. Not one too little. If it were merely a spirit of power, it might lead one to carry things with a high hand. Were it merely a spirit of love, it might lead one to sacrifice truth for peace' sake; or indolently to tolerate error and evil, rather than give offence. But the power is softened by the love; and the love is strengthened by the power; and, moreover, the spirit of wisdom comes in to adjust both the power and the love. In a word, it is a divinely perfect and beautiful provision for the man of God — the very thing he needs for "the last days" so perilous, so difficult, so full of all sorts of perplexing questions and apparent contradictions. If one were to be asked what he would consider most necessary for such days as these? surely he should, at once, say, "power, love, and soundness of mind." Well, blessed be God, these are the very things which He has graciously given to form the character, shape the way, and govern the conduct of the man of God, right on to the end.

But there is further provision and further exhortation for the man of God. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." In Pentecostal days, when the rich and mighty tide of divine grace was flowing in, and bearing thousands of ransomed souls upon its bosom; when all were of one heart and one mind when those outside were overawed by the extraordinary manifestations of divine power, it was rather a question of partaking of the triumphs of the gospel, than its afflictions. But in the days contemplated in 2 Timothy, all is changed. The beloved apostle is a lonely prisoner at Rome; all in Asia had forsaken him; Hymeneus and Philetus are denying the resurrection; all sorts of heresies, errors, and evils are creeping in; the landmarks are in danger of being swept away by the tide of apostasy and corruption.

In the face of all this, the man of God has to brace himself up for the occasion. He has to endure hardness; to hold fast the form of sound words; he has to keep the good thing committed to him; to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; to keep himself disentangled — however he may be engaged; he must keep himself free as a soldier; he must cling to God's sure foundation; He must purge himself from the dishonourable vessels in the great house; he must flee youthful lusts, and *follow* righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. He must avoid foolish and unlearned questions. He must turn away from formal and heartless professors. He must be thoroughly furnished for all good works, perfectly equipped through a knowledge of the holy scriptures. He must preach the word; be instant in season and out of season. He must watch in all things; endure afflictions; and do the work of an evangelist.

What a category for the man of God! Who is sufficient for these things? Where is the spiritual

power to be had for such works? It is to be had at the mercy-seat. It is to be found in earnest, patient, believing, waiting upon the living God, and in no other way. All our springs are in Him. We have only to draw upon Him. He is sufficient for the darkest day. Difficulties are nothing to Him, and they are bread for faith. Yes, beloved reader, difficulties of the most formidable nature are simply bread for faith, and the man of faith can feed upon them and grow strong thereby. Unbelief says, "There is a lion in the way;" but faith can slay the strongest lion that ever roared along the path of the Nazarite of God. It is the privilege of the true believer to rise far above all the hostile influences which surround him — no matter what they are, or from whence they spring — and, in the calmness, quietness, and brightness of the divine presence, to enjoy as high communion, and taste as rich and rare privileges as ever were known in the church's brightest and palmiest days.

Let us remember this. Every man of God will need to remember it. There is no comfort, no peace, no strength, no moral power, no true elevation to be derived from looking at the ruins. We must look up out of the ruins to the place where our Lord Christ has taken His seat, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Or rather — to speak more according to our true position — we should look down from our place in the heavens upon all the ruins of earth. To realise our place in Christ, and to be occupied in heart and soul with Him, is the true secret of power to carry ourselves as men of God. To have Christ ever before us — His work for the conscience, His Person for the heart, His word for the path, is the one grand, sovereign, divine remedy for a ruined self — a ruined world — a ruined church.

But we must close. Very gladly would we linger, in company with the reader, over the contents of this most precious 2 Timothy. Truly refreshing would it be to dwell upon all its touching allusions, its earnest appeals, its weighty exhortations. But this would demand a volume, and hence we must leave the Christian reader to study the epistle for himself, praying that the eternal Spirit who indicted it may unfold and apply it, in living power to his soul, so that he may be enabled to acquit himself as an earnest, faithful, whole-hearted man of God and servant of Christ, in the midst of a scene of hollow profession, and heartless worldly religiousness.

May the good Lord stir us all up to a more thorough consecration of ourselves, in spirit, soul, and body — all we are and all we have — to His service! We think we can really say we long for this — long for it, in the deep sense of our lack of it — long for it, more intensely, as we grow increasingly sick of the unreal condition of things within and around us.

O beloved Christian, let us earnestly, believingly, and perseveringly cry to our own ever gracious God to make us more real — more whole-hearted — more thoroughly devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.