

Short Papers — Section 10 of 10.

C. H. Mackintosh.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

The New Testament teaches in many places that the Christian is dead to the world; not merely to certain gross things in the world, but to the world in all its aspects. What then has a dead man to do with the world's politics? As Christians, we are sent into this world even as Jesus was sent into it. What had He to do with the world's politics? He paid tribute; so should we. He obeyed the powers that be; we should do the same. He suffered under this world's powers, and we may be called to the same.

We are instructed to pray for the powers and we are to do so quite irrespective of the nature or character of the power. In fact, when the apostle penned that principle, the imperial scepter was wielded by one of the worst men who ever lived. The Christian is taught to be subject to the powers that be; he is *never* taught to wield that power, but the very reverse. "Our citizenship is in *heaven*." We are only pilgrims and strangers in the world. The cross of our Lord has broken every link between us and this world. The resurrection has introduced us into a new world altogether. In the death of Christ we cleared the shores of the old world. In His resurrection we have landed on the shores of the new. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Therefore, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3). Oh! to know the formative, sanctifying power of this precious line of truth!

You are right in your judgment as to Genesis 9: 6. It stands unrepealed. The law did not touch it; the gospel does not touch it. It abides in all its solemn force as an enactment of the government of God. If we in our wisdom or tenderness attempt to touch it, we simply make ourselves out to be wiser and more tender than God. *We must not confound the grace of the gospel with God's government of the world.* Christianity does not interfere with the arrangements of divine providence. It teaches Christians to act in grace toward all, but to apply the principles of the gospel to the government of this world would throw everything into confusion. Further, dear friend, what have we as Christians to do with sending petitions or remonstrances to the government? Nothing whatever. We have to pray for the government and to obey it; or to suffer if it calls upon us to disobey God.

But to interfere with the enactments of government is practically to deny our heavenly citizenship. And to attempt to hinder the course of justice is to fly in the face of God's own direct command, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Where has this command been repealed? Nowhere. Hence let Christians beware how they attempt to tamper with it, under the influence of natural feeling or sentimentality. We dare not add, *of Christian principle*, because true Christian principle will ever lead us to bow to the authority of the Word of God, though we cannot exactly understand it or reconcile it with our own feelings.

We consider 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18 a conclusive answer to your question. If that scripture does not govern a man's conscience, reasoning is worse than useless.

"Our citizenship is in heaven." "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." What has a dead man to do with politics? The Christian is one who has died in Christ — died to sin, died to the law, died to the world. Hence he has, in God's view of him, no more to do with these things than a man lying dead on the floor. He is alive in Christ — alive to God, alive to all that is spiritual, heavenly,

divine. He is in the new creation. His morals, his religion, his politics are all in the new creation — all heavenly, all divine. He is done with the world in spirit and principle. He is in it, to walk as a pilgrim and stranger. He is *in* it to live as a Christian, as a spiritual, heavenly man. He is not *of* it to walk as a worldly, carnal, natural man. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” May we live in the power of these things.

FALSE POSITIONS AND UNEQUAL YOKES

It was certainly very wrong of you to take a false oath and still more wrong of those who compelled you to take it for their gain. We do not believe it to be “the unpardonable sin,” but you are bound to confess the sin and get out of a false position. Do not trifle with conscience, else you may get into a state which can only be compared to hell upon earth. No human power should have induced you to tell a lie, much less to swear one!

We feel deeply for you. You are evidently in a false and very trying position, but it is one thing to see this and another thing to know how to get out of it. *It is clearly wrong for a Christian to be yoked with an unbeliever for any object.* The fact of your having entered into this partnership in ignorance may account for your entrance, but it cannot justify your continuance therein. You have only to bow down before your Lord and confess your failure and look to Him to deliver you out of your false position. Beware how you act. Do nothing rashly. You must seek to act honorably toward your partner and toward all to whom you owe anything. God honors the bent of the heart and conscience in a right direction, and we must not do wrong things in seeking to get out of a position.

We need to know more of the circumstances of your case before attempting to give you any opinion. As you have put the matter, you seem to be in a false position. The sooner you get out of it the better. But then care must be taken to do things in a right way. It is certain that no worldly advantage should induce you to remain in a position which robs you of communion with God and His people. So far as you have informed us, it would seem to be distinctly an instance of the “unequal yoke.” May the Lord give you grace to do the right thing in a right way.

We believe there are two evils involved in such membership as you name. In the first place, you are unequally yoked together with unbelievers, which you are expressly told not to be (2 Cor. 6: 14). In the second place, you surrender your individual responsibility and become merged in an organization for whose every act you are morally responsible.

There is nothing in Scripture to hinder your being a *servant* of such a company as you name. To be a *partner* would be an “unequal yoke” which 2 Corinthians 6: 14 expressly forbids.

We most assuredly judge it to be contrary to God's will for a Christian son to enter into partnership with an unconverted father, or vice versa. It is an unequal yoke in spite of the natural relationship. A son may serve under a father, but a deed of partnership involves an unequal yoke.

MILITARY SERVICE

Our Lord Jesus Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Can we trace His footsteps into a field of battle? We are called to walk even as He walked. Is it walking like Him to go to war? True, we fail in many things, but if we are asked if it be right for a Christian to go to war, we can only answer the question by a reference to Christ. How did He act? What did He teach? Did He ever take the sword? Did He come to destroy men's lives? Did He not say, “He that taketh the sword shall

perish by the sword?" And again, "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." How do such words agree with going to war? But some will say, "What would become of us if all were to adopt such principles?" We reply, If all were to adopt those heavenly principles, there would be no more war and hence we should not need to fight. But it is not our business to reason as to the results of obedience; we have only to obey the Word of our blessed Master and walk in His steps. If we do so, we shall most assuredly not be found going to war.

Persons sometimes quote our Lord's words, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one," as giving sanction for going to war, but anyone can see that they have nothing to do with the question. They refer to the altered condition of things on which the disciples would have to enter when the Lord would be taken. While He was with them, they had lacked nothing, but now they would have to face in His absence the full brunt of the world's opposition. In short, the words have an entirely spiritual application. Again, much use is sought to be made of the fact that the centurion in Acts 10 was not told to resign his commission. It is not the way of the Spirit of God to put people under a yoke. He does not say to the newly converted soul, "You must give up this or that." The grace of God meets a man where he is, with a full salvation. *Then* it teaches him how to walk by presenting the words and ways of Christ in all their sanctifying and formative power.

Again it is said, "Does not the apostle in 1 Corinthians 7 tell us to abide in the calling wherein we are called?" Yes; with this powerfully qualifying clause, "*Abide with God.*" This makes a great difference. Suppose a hangman is converted, could he abide in his calling? It will be said that this is an extreme case. Granted, but it is a case in point inasmuch as it proves the fallacy of the reasoning on 1 Corinthians 7. It proves there are callings in which one could not possibly "abide with God." So, as to your question, dear friend, we have simply to inquire, "Is it abiding with God or walking in the footsteps of Christ to go to war?" If it be, let Christians do so; if not, what then?

You have only one question to ask yourself, namely, "Is the profession of arms one which a disciple of Christ can properly follow?" If not, your path is plain. You surely cannot think of placing your son in a position which he must abandon to follow a rejected Christ. No doubt, there are many of the Lord's beloved people in the army, but the question is not, Can I be saved and yet be in the army? Thousands have gone to heaven who have lived and died in that profession. But the real question for every loyal heart is, Can I follow the footsteps of my Lord while I remain in a position in which, at any moment, I may be called to take the life of my fellow and send a soul into eternity unprepared? This, dear friend, must be your one question. I cannot place my son, be he converted or unconverted, where I could not be myself. As for the discipline of the army being good for the purpose of bracing up the character, we must confess we have not much faith in it. The mess-room is not the place to which we should like to send a youth for discipline or training of any sort.

THE FUTURE STATE

The idea of departed spirits being in an unconscious state is as absurd as it is unscriptural. Has Paul been unconscious for nearly 2000 years? If there were any truth in this notion, could he have said, "To die is gain?" Would it be gain to be unconscious? Would it be "far better" than to enjoy Christ here and serve Him in the gospel and in the Assembly? When the Lord said to the dying thief, "Today, shalt thou be with Me in paradise," did He mean that he was to be unconscious? Why then say "with Me in paradise?" If he was to be unconscious, what difference would it make where he was to be? When the blessed apostle says, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord," does he mean a state of unconsciousness? Had Stephen nothing but a state of unconsciousness before him when he said, "Lord

Jesus, receive my spirit?" It is most deplorable to find professed Christians holding such a miserable theory. Excuse our strong language. It is hard to speak in measured terms of such a baseless absurdity as a ransomed spirit asleep in the presence of Christ! May the Lord deliver His people from all vain and foolish notions!

Luke 23: 43; Acts 7: 59; 2 Corinthians 5: 8 and Philippians 1: 23 clearly prove that the moment the spirit of a saint leaves the body it is with Christ in Paradise. The "leading man" to whom you asked for information must be deplorably ignorant of the New Testament. Your letter shows that your mind has been sadly darkened by the cloud of skepticism which seems to be overshadowing thousands.

We have referred previously to the question of "everlasting punishment." We believe it so connects itself with the truth of the immortality of the soul and the infinite nature of Christ's atonement, that you cannot touch it without disturbing the entire arch of divine Revelation. The word "everlasting" occurs about seventy times in the New Testament and is applied to the life of the believer, to the Spirit of God, to the inheritance of the saints and to the punishment of the wicked. On what authority, therefore, can the word be said to mean eternal in one case and not eternal in another? All this reasoning is the fruit of positive infidelity, from which may God, in His mercy, deliver the children of His people! We believe that "hell-fire" is an awful and an eternal reality, nor should we be shaken in our belief by the absurd reasonings of ten thousand "leading men." "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Dear friend, ask God to guide you by His Word and Spirit, and place no confidence whatever in "leading men."

The last clause of John 3: 36 is as simple as it is solemn. It tells us plainly that the wrath of God abides on all who refuse to believe on the Son. We have been much struck with the power of this entire verse as meeting and completely demolishing two fatal errors of the day, namely, *universal restoration* and *annihilation*. "Shall not see life." Here the universalist gets his divine answer. "The wrath of God abideth on him." Here the annihilationist gets his. If the unbeliever shall not see life, it is evident he cannot be restored. And if the wrath of God abideth on him, it is evident he cannot be annihilated. What living power, what overwhelming force in Holy Scripture!

You are absolutely right, dear friend, not to reason on the solemn subject of eternal punishment, but simply take Scripture as it stands. As to the statement that the word "everlasting" does not mean "forever" in the Greek, there are about 70 passages in the Greek Testament in which the word "*aionios*" occurs. It is applied to the "life" which believers possess, to the "habitations" into which they are to be received, to God, to the Spirit, to the kingdom of our Lord, and to the punishment of the wicked in hell. Now on what principle can anyone mark off seven or eight of these passages and say that in them the word does not mean forever, but in the remaining 62 passages it does?

Is it not most evident that if we deny the eternity of punishment we must deny the eternity of life, the eternity of God, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? It is a serious thing to tamper with the truth of God or to mar the integrity of Holy Scripture. Truth is like a magnificent arch: if you touch the smallest stone in that arch, you mar the integrity of the whole. We feel persuaded, dear friend, that this question has a moral bearing as well as a theological. The denial of eternal punishment indicates a wrong condition of soul altogether. The will is at work; reason has not been subjugated; the heart is not broken; there is no real subjection to the authority of the Word. It is more "I think" than "Thus saith the Lord." All this is most serious and should lead us into deep exercise of soul and earnest prayer.

SELF-OCCUPATION AS OPPOSED TO THE TRUE GROUND OF PEACE AND

HOLINESS

You may be thoroughly assured of this, dear friend, that you will never get peace by looking at your repentance or your anything. If such a thing could be, it would simply be satisfaction with yourself and this could never be right. Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross. God preaches peace by Jesus Christ. It is not by repentance, though we surely believe in the necessity of repentance! But what would you say, dear friend, to a person if he were to tell you that he had found peace because his repentance was of the right kind — because he hated sin as God hated it? You would say to him that his peace was a false one. Thanks be to God, the believer's peace rests on no such rotten foundation. The apostle does not say, "Having repented enough, we have peace with God." No, but "Being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God."

The believer's peace rests on a divine foundation. It is based on the glorious truth that God is not only satisfied as to the entire question of our sins, but He is actually glorified in respect to it. He has reaped a richer harvest in the matter of the putting away of our sins than ever He could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation. Nothing has ever glorified God like the death of Christ. The hearty belief of this must give peace to the soul. It is not the work done *in* us, whether repentance or anything else, that gives peace, but the work accomplished *for* us. It is not the work of the Spirit in, precious and essential as it is, that gives peace, but the work of Christ for us. This is a grand and most necessary truth for all anxious inquirers. It is well and right enough to judge ourselves, our state, our ways — to be humbled because of our shallow repentance, our coldness and indifference — but we shall never get peace by self-judgment. If we have not found peace before we sit down to the work of self-judgment, we shall find it very dismal work indeed.

It seems to us, dear friend, that you are too much occupied with the thoughts of men. One preacher tells you this; another preacher tells you that; and your own heart tells you something else. Would it not be well to listen to what *God* says? This is what faith does and thus finds settled tranquility. The believer's peace can no more be disturbed than Christ can be disturbed from His seat on the throne of God. This seems strong, but it is true, and being true its strength is part of its moral glory. Let us entreat you to take up the lovely attitude of the soul in Psalm 85, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (not what this or that man will speak) "for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints; but let them not turn again to folly." May the blessed Spirit lead you into the enjoyment of that peace which Christ has made by the blood of His cross, which God preaches in the gospel of His grace by Jesus Christ and which faith finds in the simple testimony of Holy Scripture!

You have our fullest sympathy. We have met many of God's dear children in precisely your condition. Indeed they have, in stating their exercises, used your very words. "This," you will say, "is poor comfort for me." And yet it may not be so. We know a very dear saint of God who was under exercise for years and the only thing that gave him the smallest comfort was Psalm 88. Why? Because there was not a single bit of comfort in it. Yet it was written by a saint of God. Therefore she might be a saint, though she was thoroughly miserable. We write not thus, dear friend, to lead you to be content in your present dark and unhappy condition. Far from it. We beseech you to look off from your feelings, your experiences, your evidences and your faith itself, and rest in Christ and His finished work. God is satisfied with Christ on your behalf. Is He not enough to satisfy you? Do you want to add something of your own to Christ? This is really the question. May God bless you!

We give you one sentence of Holy Scripture as an answer to your letter — Hebrews 12: 2, "Looking off unto Jesus." If you could only lose sight of that troublesome, good-for-nothing, guilty,

hell-deserving “I” and rest in Christ and His full salvation, you would be able to write a very different sort of letter. Your letter reminds us of Romans 7 by the predominance of “I.” You must look simply to Christ. He has settled the entire question. You will never get anything except misery by looking at yourself and reasoning upon what you find there. People are always sure to be full of doubts when they are occupied with “I.” It must be so, for how could “I” ever furnish a ground of peace? You may rest assured, dear friend, that until you learn to look outside of yourself and rest simply upon Christ, you will never know what solid peace really is.

We consider your mistake to be self-occupation. You are looking for evidences of your conversion as a ground of peace. This will never do. The true ground of peace is, not that you were converted six years ago, but that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures; that He was buried and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scripture.” We do not think you have ever really laid hold of the true ground of peace in the presence of God. This is not to be found in yourself or in anything that you can do or think or feel or experience or pass through. It is wholly and exclusively in Christ. He has made peace by the blood of His cross. He is our peace. It is by Him God preaches peace, and being justified by faith we have peace with God. It is when your faith lays hold on God as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead that your peace will flow as a river.

Even though you could be sure you were converted six years ago, though you could see your name written in the book of life, that would not be the proper basis of your peace in the presence of God, but simply that Christ died for you and that God raised Him from the dead. Ponder this. You will never get any comfort by looking in at yourself or back at your past history. We could not think of building upon the most remarkable conversion that ever took place in this world. Even supposing you had all the feelings of which man is capable and all the feelings which attend upon true spiritual conversion, this would not be the proper ground for your soul to build upon: you must build upon Christ alone. You must commit your precious soul, absolutely, to the truth of God; you must believe what He tells you about Christ and not be looking for evidences in yourself. “Being justified by faith [not merely being sure of our conversion], we have peace with God.”

It is not that we question your conversion. It is not that we do not believe in the reality and necessity of conversion and in the proper feelings attendant thereon. We most fully believe in all these things. But we do not believe in such things as the ground of a sinner's peace. If you ask us what gives us true settled peace, we reply, “Believing in Jesus.” “Believing in Him that justifieth the ungodly.” “Believing in Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” Read Romans 3 and 4. This takes us clean out of ourselves, and this is just what you want.

Why have you fallen away? Why have you gone back? Why have you been drawn into worse sins since your conversion than ever you committed before? *Because you have never really laid hold of Christ as your true ground of peace, as the One who is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* If He were a covering for your eyes and an object for your heart; if you were occupied with Him and not with yourself, you would have victory over your lusts, passions, tempers and tendencies; over habits, influences and circumstances. In short, to be occupied with Christ by the Holy Spirit is not only the true foundation of peace, but also the secret of strength and victory, and of all real progress in holiness.

Here is precisely where so many go astray. They are occupied with themselves — their conversion and its evidences, their experiences, what they have passed through, and the like. They take comfort from their likings and dislikings, from their loving what they once hated and hating what they

once loved; all of which, though real enough in themselves, are not the ground of peace, the secret of liberty or the source of true spiritual power. These latter you must seek in Christ alone. The moment you take your eye off Him, you lose peace and power. "Looking off unto Jesus" must be the motto from the starting-post right onward to the goal. May God's Spirit make all this most real and precious to your soul!

You are entirely too much occupied with your own state and feelings. Seek to be more simple, to rest like a child in your Father's love and anchor your soul upon His faithful Word. It is of no possible use to "try" to be this or that. The more you dwell in calm sweet confidence on the love of Christ — the more you think of Him and feed upon His Word — the more you will grow into His likeness. "We all beholding are changed." May the Lord keep you, beloved, and make you very sound in His own precious truth! To His own loving pastoral hand we commend you.

PAUL AND THE TWELVE

There is a material difference between Paul's ministry and that of the twelve. To Paul was committed that precious mystery of the one body, composed of Jew and Gentile, united to the glorified Head in heaven by the Holy Spirit sent down to earth. "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the administration of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3: 1-9). Compare also Romans 16: 25-26 and Galatians 1: 11-2: 10.

The careful study of the above passages will open to you the nature and object of Paul's ministry, and the distinction between it and the ministry of the twelve. It formed no part of the latter to unfold the doctrine of the Church. They were called to preach the gospel. Starting from Jerusalem they were to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. They were to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. But as to the special place, portion and prospect of the Church, we must take ourselves to the writings of the Holy Spirit by the pen of the Apostle Paul.

RECONCILIATION

The testimony of Scripture is as distinct as possible. It never speaks of God being reconciled to us. "If, when we were enemies, *we were reconciled to God* by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5: 10). It does not say that God was reconciled to us. The death of Christ was essential to the reconciliation, but man was the enemy of God and needed to be reconciled. So we read in Colossians 1: 21, "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." The ground of this is stated in the previous verse to be "the blood of His cross." So also in 2 Corinthians 5: 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." It does not say "reconciling Himself to the world."

Thus to any who bow to Scripture, the truth is as clear as a sunbeam. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” “It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him.” It is of the utmost importance to maintain the true aspect of God's nature and character in the presentation of the gospel. To say that “Christ died to reconcile the Father to us” is to falsify the divine character as seen in the mission and death of His Son. God was not man's enemy but his friend. True, sin had to be condemned; God's truth, holiness and majesty had to be vindicated. All this was done in a divine way in the cross where we see both God's hatred of sin and His love to the sinner.

Atonement is the necessary basis of reconciliation, but it is very important to see that it is God who reconciles us to Himself. This He does, blessed be His name, at no less a cost than “the death of His Son.” Such was His love to man, His kindness, His goodness, His deep compassion, that when there was no other way possible, sin being in question, in which man, the guilty enemy and rebel could be reconciled to Him, He gave His Son from His bosom and bruised Him on Calvary's cursed tree. Eternal and universal praise to His name!

RIGHTEOUSNESS

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

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

ATONEMENT

The testimony of Holy Scripture is clear, explicit and abundant as to the grand cardinal truth that atonement is by the shedding of blood. The coats of skin which the Lord God made for Adam and Eve were procured from dead victims. The “more excellent sacrifice” of Abel consisted of blood and fat. So also in the history of Noah in Genesis 8 and in the history of Abraham in Genesis 15. Israel was screened from judgment in Egypt by the blood of the paschal lamb, as we read, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12). The whole book of Leviticus is one great stream tending to swell the tide of evidence on this vital question. The burnt offering, peace offering, sin offering and trespass offering were all based on blood-shedding. See also that famous passage in Leviticus 17. “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” (v. 11).

Time fails us to bring forward the thousandth part of the Scripture proofs on this subject. We shall merely give two most pointed passages from the New Testament and then leave you to follow out the chain of evidence for yourself. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9: 22). "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1: 5, 9 with Acts 20: 28). These passages speak for themselves. We desire to bow in reverent submission to the authority of Holy Scripture. We do not want to reason or argue. "Thus saith the Lord" is amply sufficient for us.

Your question as to John 1: 29 and 1 John 2: 2 is a very important one. It will help you much to distinguish between Christ as the *propitiation* for the whole world and as the *substitute* for His people. The two goats in Leviticus 16 typify Him in these two aspects of His work. The Lord's lot fell upon one. This was Christ the propitiation. The people's lot fell upon the other. This was Christ the substitute. John 1: 29 refers to the former. "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." See also Hebrews 9: 26. Christ did a work on the cross in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be obliterated from the whole creation. The full result of this work will not be seen until the new heavens and the new earth shall shine forth as the eternal abode of righteousness. It is in virtue of Christ's propitiatory work that God has been dealing in mercy and goodness with the world and with man from the Fall down to the present moment. He has sent His sunshine and His rain upon the earth. He has filled men's hearts with food and gladness. He has been dealing in patience and longsuffering with the human family. And it is in virtue of the same propitiatory sacrifice that the evangelist goes forth with a world-wide gospel for the ears of every creature under heaven.

The evangelist cannot go and tell every creature that Christ died as his substitute, but he can tell him that He died as a propitiation; and when, through grace, the soul believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he can learn the further calming truth that He died as a substitute and bore all his sins in His own body on the tree. See Hebrews 9: 28, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" — all His people. In verse 26 we read, "He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Christ is never said to have borne the sins of the world. It is utterly false doctrine; it is universalism. He bore the sins of His people, and He has done a work in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be abolished throughout the wide universe of God.

These distinctions, dear friend, are of the utmost importance. Scripture maintains them. Theology confounds them, and confounds souls as a result.

1 Peter 2: 24 refers to the whole of Christ's sacrificial work. It is a quotation from Isaiah 53. The Septuagint version renders the word "stripe" by a singular noun. The atoning work of Christ is set forth in various ways throughout Scripture — "Death," "Blood shedding," "Stripes," "Cross," etc. There is always a distinct object in the use of any particular term. Accept, beloved friend, our warmest thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter. May God bless you most abundantly!

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN AND THE HEART OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL

Matthew 20: 16 sets forth the grand principle of divine sovereignty. "The last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called but few chosen." God has a right to do what He will with His own. Will anyone dare to question this? If so, it is plain he has never felt his true place as utterly lost. The only resource for a lost sinner is God's sovereign grace. There is no man who can stand before God on the ground of his own righteousness. All are guilty; hence the only resource is in divine mercy, but this

mercy must be sovereign. To deny God's right to be sovereign is to deny His existence.

Does this touch for a moment the truth of man's responsibility? By no means. Both are true, and it is utterly impossible that two truths can ever clash. To attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility is worthless labor. They are reconciled already, being both set forth with equal clearness in the divine Word. It is wonderful how simple everything becomes when we fling aside the dogmas of one-sided theology and come like a child to Holy Scripture. Would that all the Lord's people would do this!

There is a lovely passage at the close of the book of Revelation. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22: 17). This is but one of a large number of passages which give us the other side of the subject.

The writer of the article to which you call our attention, rejects utterly the notion of man's free will. He believes that man is completely powerless; and not only so, but in a state of positive enmity against God so that, if left to himself, he never would come to Christ. All who come to the supper are compelled to come, else they never would be there. Moreover he most fully believes in the sovereignty of God and that the names of all who are saved were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world.

But then, on the other side (for we must take both sides), let us ponder such words as these: "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; *who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.* For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; *who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*" (1 Tim. 2: 1-6).

And again, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Peter 3: 9).

Now, if it be said that, in the above Scriptures, the words "any" and "all" refer to the elect, we reply that this is an unwarrantable liberty to take with the Word of God. If the inspired writer had meant "any of the elect" or "all of the elect," he would most assuredly have said so. But he says nothing of the kind. *It is not according to the desire of the heart of God that any should perish.*

But man is a responsible being, although your letter is totally silent on this very important question. In short, you seem to lose sight altogether of two weighty truths: first, the largeness of the heart of God — the fullness and freeness of His grace, the wide aspect of His salvation, that His righteousness is unto all, that the gospel is to be preached to every creature, that God commands all men everywhere to repent (Mark 16: 15; Acts 17: 30; Romans 3: 22).

And, secondly, man's responsibility. Is the sinner responsible or is he not? If he is not responsible, then what mean such words as "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels; in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power!" And again, "For this cause God shall

send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 1: 6-9; 2 Thess. 2: 11-12).

Are men responsible to believe the gospel? Yes, truly, inasmuch as they shall be punished with everlasting destruction for rejecting it. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? People find difficulty in reconciling man's powerlessness with his responsibility. It is not one's business to reconcile things that are revealed in Holy Scripture. It is ours to believe. They are reconciled inasmuch as they are distinctly taught in the Word of God. It is remarkable that we do not see the same difficulty in reference to the things of this life. Suppose a man owes you a thousand dollars but he has by unprincipled extravagance, rendered himself wholly unable to pay you. He is quite powerless. Is he responsible? And are you not perfectly justified, according to worldly principles, in taking legal proceedings against him? How much more will God be justified in His judgment of all those who reject the glad tidings of a full and free salvation sent to them on the ground of the atoning death of His only begotten Son!

We cannot at all agree with you in your remark that, “It appears a yes and no gospel” to call upon men to believe. Our blessed Master called upon men to “repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1: 15). And when asked by the men of His time, “What shall we do that we might work the works of God?” His reply was, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6: 28-29). Again, He challenges the Jews with this pointed question, “If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?” (John 8: 46). Then, when we turn to the Acts of the Apostles we find Peter calling upon the Jews to repent and be converted. We find Paul telling the Philippian jailer to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” He tells the Athenians that “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” We read in 2 Thessalonians that our Lord Jesus Christ will take vengeance on those who obey not the gospel, and further that “God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth.”

Now, it seems to us a very serious thing, in the face of all these passages, to call it “a yes and no gospel” to press upon men their responsibility to believe. But the fact is, dear friend, your difficulty is occasioned by the influence of a one-sided theology — a system which we can only compare to a bird with one wing or a boat with one oar. When we turn to the sacred page of God's Word, we find the truth, not one side of truth, but the whole truth in all its bearings. We find, lying side by side, the truth of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Are we called to reconcile them? No, they are reconciled already because they are both set forth in the Word. We are to believe and obey.

It is a fatal mistake for men to frame systems of divinity. You can no more systematize the truth of God than you can systematize God Himself. Let us abandon, therefore, all systems of theology and schools of divinity and take the truth. There is not a single theological system under the sun that contains the truth. All may contain some truth, not one contains all. And very often you find that whatever little truth the system contains is misplaced and turned the wrong way, to the serious damage of truth as a whole and the stumbling and injury of souls. Every day we live we are more and more struck with the vast difference between the dogmas of divinity and the heart of the Christ of God.

The rendering of 1 Timothy 2: 4 in our excellent Authorized Version is absolutely correct. Your difficulty arises from your not seeing the immense difference between theology and the heart of God. Theology consists of the conclusions of men's minds drawn from the facts of Scripture; and you may constantly find souls harassed and perplexed by the dogmas of conflicting schools of theology, instead of resting in child-like simplicity upon the plain statements of the Word of God.

In point of fact, what is called the high school of doctrine is right in what it holds and wrong in what it rejects. The low school of doctrine also is right in what it holds and wrong in what it rejects. The former holds predestination, election, divine sovereignty and the eternal security of all true believers, and herein it is right. But it denies the full offer of salvation to all men and human responsibility, and herein it is wrong. The low school of doctrine holds the freeness and fullness of salvation and the moral responsibility of the sinner, and herein it is right. But it denies the sovereignty of divine grace and the security of the believer, and herein it is wrong. You will bear in mind, dear friend, that when we use the terms “high school” and “low school,” we do not at all mean to give offense; far from it; we merely speak of things as they are.

For ourselves we desire to be taught exclusively by Scripture and not by any school of divinity. We are sure that God never meant to puzzle, to repulse or to discourage poor souls. God is love, His grace has brought salvation unto all. “He willeth not the death of a sinner.” “He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” “He will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Such is His gracious aspect toward all. Hence if any perish, it is not in pursuance of the will of God. But there is another side to this great question. Man is responsible. What mean those touching words of the weeping Savior, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, *but ye would not!*” And again, “*Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.*”

Do you not see, dear friend, that Scripture as distinctly teaches divine sovereignty as it teaches human responsibility, and the permanency of salvation as distinctly as its freeness? Are we called upon to reconcile these things? No; they are reconciled by God Himself inasmuch as they are taught in His holy Word. We have only to bow our heads in believing and adoring reverence. It is a great matter to make one's escape from the labyrinths of systematic divinity and yield ourselves to the formative power of the whole truth of God.

We shall add that Scripture clearly teaches the doctrine of election, but diligently excludes the repulsive doctrine of reprobation. It teaches that all who reach heaven will have to thank God for it, and all who find their place in hell will have to thank themselves. 2 Corinthians 5: 14 and many other passages of Scripture teach in the most distinct manner that Christ died for all. This aspect of the death of Christ, as also of the righteousness of God, is *unto all*, but when we came to the practical application, it is “*upon all them that believe.*” All who hear are responsible to believe, for the message is sent into all the world and to every creature. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

But what stumbles and perplexes so many people is that they are occupied with the dogmas of theology instead of the love of God, the atonement of Christ and the record of the Holy Spirit. The moment you take any doctrine of Scripture, whether it be election, predestination, final perseverance, or any other doctrine whatsoever, and detach it from the Person of Christ and the living and eternal reality of what God is, you instantly turn it into a stumbling-block. You may set it down as an absolute truth, dear friend, that our gracious God would never have people to be puzzled about their souls' salvation. Theology often puzzles people, but God never does. As to quibblers, it would be far more honest of them to declare plainly that they do not want to have anything to say to God, than to be seeking to find flimsy objections against His Word.

You must distinguish between Genesis 25: 23 and Malachi 1: 2-3. The former was uttered before the children were born; the latter, hundreds of years afterwards, when the conduct and character of each were fully manifested. It is important to mark this difference. And not only so, but we must seek to

understand the object of the Holy Spirit in His use of the above Scriptures in Romans 9. The apostle is establishing the absolute sovereignty of divine mercy: God's right to do as He wills. He proves to Israel that to argue against divine sovereignty is to surrender all their privileges. For how did they get in? Was it by birth? No; for on that ground Ishmael and Esau had the precedence. Was it by works? No; for they made the golden calf. How then? Simply by God's sovereign mercy. Well then, if God is sovereign He can have mercy upon whom He will; and blessed be His Name, that opens the door for us poor Gentiles.

Like many others, you confound two distinct passages of Holy Scripture. "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated" was not said before the children were born, but hundreds of years after, when the real character and practical ways of each had been fully manifested. All that was said before the children were born was that "the elder shall serve the younger." It is more than a sad mistake to represent God as hating a man before he was born. In Amos 1: 11 we read "For three transgressions of Edom [Esau] and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever." Have we not here ample grounds for the divine hatred? If you will carefully compare Genesis 25: 23 with Malachi 1: 2-3, you will see your mistake and you will better understand the apostle's use of both passages in his magnificent argument in Romans 9 — an argument so little understood by theologians.

You are fully warranted by the Word of God to entreat any sinner to come to Jesus at once. It is very evident that your mind is perplexed by the misapplication of Scripture. If you will only submit to the authority of the Word and not labor to reconcile things according to your own thoughts or the creeds of men, you will find that human responsibility is as distinctly taught in Scripture as human impotency. We must bow down with unquestioning submission to the teachings of divine inspiration.

We could not think of confining Matthew 11: 28-30 in the way you suggest. We believe it refers to every weary, heavy laden, laboring sinner, Jew or Gentile. All such are made welcome to the "rest" which Jesus gives to those who come to Him.

We do not consider that John 9: 31 has anything to do with the matter to which you refer. The Holy Spirit records what the blind man said to the Pharisees, but we believe that God is ever ready to hear the cry of any poor needy soul that looks to Him through Jesus. We are more and more convinced of the vast differences between the cold dogmas of theology and the loving heart of a Savior-God. There is a rigid, repulsive manner of using the letter of certain texts of Scripture, with which we have no sympathy. We believe it to be contrary to the spirit of the gospel and the mind of Christ. "God is love." Precious words! True, He has His counsels and purposes, but the activity of His nature is love and therefore all are welcome to come. He is a Savior-God and "there is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Go on, therefore, beloved, to press upon your fellow-sinners, with all possible earnestness, their solemn responsibility to flee now from the wrath to come and lay hold upon eternal life.

You must remember there are two sides to every question. Hence, while it is blessedly true that salvation is free to all and the righteousness of God is to him who works not, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly (see Rom. 4: 5 and Titus 2: 11), yet is the sinner most solemnly responsible to flee from the wrath to come and strive to enter by the narrow gate — the open door. To make use of the freeness of God's grace and of the gift of righteousness to set aside man's responsibility and the need of intense earnestness in the matter of the soul's salvation, is a fatal mistake. Hence the exceeding value of

the passage to which you call our attention (Luke 13: 24) In it we have the Lord's reply to a curious enquirer whom He would make anxious. He, as was His habit, answers the man, not his question.

2 Thessalonians 1: 8-9 contains a distinct and clear answer to your question, "What will become of those who reject the gospel?" We most assuredly believe there will be no further offer of mercy to those who deliberately reject the gospel now preached — no mercy for baptized Christendom, the vine of the earth. "The everlasting gospel" shall go forth previous to the opening of the millennial kingdom, and a testimony will be given to those nations who have not heard the gospel, but all this leaves untouched the solemn fact that unmitigated warrior judgment shall overtake that terrible thing called Christendom — that dark and awful mass of baptized profession, the most dreadful moral blot in the universe of God. There is nothing for the false professing Church except the deep and dark delusion which God, in His judicial dealing, shall send upon all who obey not the truth. And after that comes the deeper and darker doom of the Lake of Fire.

Dear friend, should not the thought of this make us more solemn, more earnest, more real in our dealing with our fellow men? Ought we not be more alive to the awful condition and destiny of those who die in their sins? Are we doing all we might to rescue our fellows from impending danger? Is it right to fold our arms and say, with chilling indifference, "God will save the elect, we can do nothing?" We believe it to be simply absolute heartless cruelty to souls.

BAPTISM

Scripture gives us the simple fact that believers ought to be baptized. It says nothing as to whether it should be in public or in private. It does not tell us that it should be "In a place accessible to the public." It is left entirely open. Who witnessed the baptism of the eunuch? Where was Paul baptized? or Lydia? or the jailer? Where in the New Testament are we taught to contemplate the public, either in baptism or the Lord's supper? No doubt "the unlearned or unbeliever" may come into the place where Christians are assembled, but testimony to the world is not the object when Christians come together for communion or worship. Matthew 10: 32 does not refer specially to the act of baptism. Our whole life should be a testimony for Christ. The Christian himself is "the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men."

We believe that Matthew 28: 19 furnishes the proper formula for Christian baptism. We are not aware of any subsequent revelation on the subject. "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Here we have the full revelation of the Godhead, the true foundation of Christian doctrine. We see no reason for departing from the form of words prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Is not His commandment more binding upon us than the example of any or all of His servants?

It is much to be desired that Christians see eye to eye on every subject, but this can hardly be expected, and most assuredly we should not allow our happy fellowship with the members of Christ's body to be hindered in the smallest degree by difference of judgment on the question of baptism. So long as a man is true to Christ — His name, His cause, His truth, His glory — I can love him with all my heart, though I may deem him mistaken as to his view of baptism. May the Lord bind us all more closely to Himself and to one another by the precious ministry of the Holy Spirit!

I am glad you have called my attention to my little book, "*Thou and Thy House.*" I am aware of the use which has been made of it in a recent tract on the subject of "Baptism." With the theory of that tract I have no sympathy whatever; still less with its monstrous statements. I believe the course of some of our friends in urging on this question of baptism will, unless God in His mercy interpose, lead to

most disastrous results. I complain not of any who conscientiously hold this or that view on the subject, but I do complain of those who, instead of preaching and teaching Jesus Christ, are disturbing the minds of God's people by pressing infant baptism upon them. For my own part — seeing the question has been forced upon me — I can only say I have for 32 years been asking in vain for a single line of Scripture for baptizing any except believers or those who professed to believe. Reasonings I have had — inferences, conclusions and deductions — but of direct Scripture authority not one tittle. There is not a word about baptism from beginning to end of my book, “Thou and Thy House.”

THE COMING OF CHRIST

It must ever be the desire of the heart that loves Jesus to see Him as He is and be with Him and like Him forever. Hence, the proper cry of an affectionate heart is, “Come, Lord Jesus.” But it is our privilege to have fellowship with Him in His longsuffering toward this poor world. “The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.” Blessed be His name, “He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3). We do not think there is any difficulty in reconciling the two things. A loving wife may mourn the absence of her husband and earnestly long for his return, but he is away preaching the gospel and she may have such full fellowship with him in his work as to be quite willing that he should prolong his absence if only a single soul should thereby be brought to Jesus.

As to your difficulty about the expression “falling away” in 2 Thessalonians 2, it arises, we judge, from your not seeing the distinction between the Lord's coming to receive His people and His coming to judge the world — between His coming as the Bridegroom and His coming as the Judge. “The day of the Lord” refers to the latter, and before that day comes, there will be a great apostasy or falling away and “the man of sin will be revealed.” It is most needful to understand this distinction. The proper hope of the believer is the coming of the Lord, which may become reality at any moment, but when the Church has gone to be with her Lord, the man of sin shall be revealed, “whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.” This is far too weighty and extensive a subject to be handled in a short letter, but you might study prayerfully 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-10 compared with 2 Thessalonians 2: 12.

In 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-2 the apostle is correcting a mistake into which the Thessalonian saints had fallen. They had been led to think that “the day of the Lord” had actually begun. In the first epistle, he had taught them to look for the Lord's coming and their gathering unto Him in the air, to be forever with Him. Further, he had taught them that “the day” was not to overtake them as a thief. Then, in the second epistle, the apostle exhorts them “by” or *on the ground of* Christ's coming, not to be agitated as to “the day.” The former was their proper hope; the latter could not take place until after the manifestation of “the man of sin” which was then and still is future. Your difficulty arises from not distinguishing between “the coming” of Christ for His saints and “the day” of His manifestation in judgment upon the world. We are exhorted by the former not to be troubled about the latter. The two things are as distinct as possible. The one is the bright and blissful consummation of the Church's hope; the other, the death knell of all this world's glory. The distinction is very important.

We do not think that Matthew 16: 27 and 1 Thessalonians 4: 16 refer to the same thing. Matthew refers to the public manifestation, Thessalonians to the coming of Christ for His saints, according to John 14: 3. The proper hope of the Church is her Lord's coming to receive her to Himself. She is called to wait for Himself, not for rewards. There will be rewards, but these belong to the manifestation of the kingdom and are neither our proper hope nor the true motive for service. The love of Christ is our true motive spring — Himself our hope.

As to the expression, “These my brethren,” it refers to the messengers who shall go forth to the nations previous to the setting up of the kingdom. They will be from among the Jews. The entire scene refers to the judgment of the living nations. There is no such thing in Scripture as a general simultaneous judgment. There will be the judgment of “the quick” [the living] before the Millennium and the judgment of “the dead” after the Millennium, and the warrior judgment executed upon “the beast.”

We judge that Philippians 4: 5 refers to the Lord's coming. “Let your moderation [yieldingness] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.” If our hearts are set upon the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, we shall not be standing up for our rights or grasping after the perishing things of this world. He may come tonight. Then we shall leave all these things behind forever. It is interesting to notice the two expressions in this passage. Our *moderation* is to be known unto men; our *requests* are to be made known unto God. Men are to see that we are perfectly content with our portion and prospect. We should never go to men with our wants. God is sufficient. Man is sure to disappoint us. God *never* fails a trusting heart, blessed be His holy name.

The judgment in Revelation 19 is what we may call the “warrior judgment.” Most surely it is after the Church has left this scene. This is obvious from the fact that the saints come forth with the Rider on the white horse.

We believe the midnight cry has gone forth. We recognize the result of that cry in the large measure of attention which has been given since about the 1830's to the glorious truth of the Lord's coming. For centuries, not a sound was heard about the Bridegroom's return. “My Lord delayeth His coming” was the plain language of the professing Church. Christendom was asleep. But, through the mercy of God, the cry has gone forth — that soul-stirring cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.” Are we ready? Have we got the oil in our vessels — the true grace of God's Spirit in our hearts? Solemn enquiry! Those who are “ready” shall go in with the Bridegroom. The rest shall be shut out into outer darkness — the awful region of weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth; that place where hope can never come, where not one single ray of light can ever shine in upon the gloom of eternity.

Oh! may God's Spirit stir up all our hearts and make us thoroughly in earnest! May we be seen with girded loins and burning lights as men who are really waiting for their Lord! May we seek to sound a warning note in the ears of our fellow men as we pass along from day to day. Lord, make us serious!

THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY

You must ever remember that Scripture cannot contradict itself. Hence, when you read in John 10 such words as “My sheep shall never perish,” your heart should rest in the full assurance of the eternal security of the very feeblest of Christ's blood-bought sheep. Many other scriptures establish the same precious truth. So 2 Peter 2: 20-22 cannot possibly clash with John 10 and similar passages. But what does it teach? Simply that when *professors* of religion return to their old habits, they are in a worse condition than if they had never made a profession at all. It is obvious that true Christians are not in question here. A “dog and a sow” cannot be looked upon as “sheep,” however they may profess “the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” We desire to render hearty thanks to God for what you say as to the blessing and help received through our writings. To Him be all the praise!

As to John 15: 2, the real secret of the difficulty felt by so many in this scripture is that they seek

to make it a question of life and security, whereas it is simply a question of fruitbearing. If we do not abide in the vine we shall prove fruitless branches, and all such branches the gardener removes from the place of fruitbearing. The question of salvation is not touched.

You are perfectly right, because most thoroughly sustained by the Word of God, in saying to any soul, "Only believe God's testimony about His Son and you are eternally saved." This is an absolutely scriptural statement. The passages of Scripture in which you find difficulty (Rom. 14: 15 and 1 Cor. 8: 11) do not refer to the question of salvation or eternal life at all. It is not in the power of anyone to destroy eternal life, but if I interfere with the action of a brother's conscience — if I cause him to do what he feels to be wrong — then, so far as in me lies, I destroy him and cause him to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. In both the above passages, it is a question of personal responsibility and the integrity of conscience before God. This is most solemn. No man can touch the foundation on which a saved soul is built, but it is a most serious thing to wound any weak conscience. Let us therefore beware.

DISPENSATIONAL MATTERS

It was perfectly consistent for the disciples, previous to the day of Pentecost, to pray for the Holy Spirit since He was not given till that memorable day and could not be given until Jesus was glorified. Compare John 7: 39; John 16: 7 and Acts 19: 1-6. We believe the form of prayer given to the disciples was suited to the transition state in which they were until the coming of the Comforter. From that time it holds good that, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Where would be the force of this if the Church of God were confined to one definite form of prayer?

It is well for Christians to most attentively consider the vast difference between God's people — their standing, their calling, their hope — before and after the death and resurrection of Christ and the consequent descent of the Holy Spirit. This is very little seen or thought of; hence the low spiritual conditions, the darkness and doubt, the legality and distance, the cloudiness and mistiness so painfully observable among many of God's beloved people. How rarely do you find souls enjoying accomplished redemption and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! There is everywhere a strong tendency to take merely Jewish ground. People are under law as to the state of their conscience. Little is known of the conscious possession of eternal life, sonship and the sealing of the Spirit. It is deemed presumption for anyone to have the full assurance of salvation. And yet, by a strange inconsistency, persons who speak thus deem it possible for some who have made great attainments in holiness and the divine life, to have assurance. This is presumption because it bases assurance upon something in us, even though 'that something be by the Holy Spirit, whereas Scripture bases our assurance and peace, not on anything in us, but upon accomplished redemption by Christ. This makes a grand and all-important difference.

The difficulty of your friend arises from not seeing that the Church as such is not before the apostle's mind in Galatians or Romans. He is speaking of believers and the ground on which they are individually justified before God. They are justified by faith, as Abraham was. Hence they are *morally* the children of Abraham. And though Abraham did not and could not belong to a body which had no existence except in the purpose of God until the Head ascended into the heavens, still most assuredly all the Old Testament saints will share in the heavenly glory. Many are perplexed as to this point because they make it a question of comparing individuals one with another. If it be a question of personal worthiness, holiness or devotedness, Abraham might stand above the most holy and devoted among us. But it is simply a question of God's dispensation arrangements, and if any be disposed to

find fault with these, we are not going to argue with them. Some today have a way of turning the subject into ridicule which savors far more of wit than of spirituality or acquaintance with the Word of God. But we trust that we will never surrender the truth of God to escape the shafts of human ridicule.

The Church is on earth. It seems strange to have to affirm so obvious a truth. True, it is in ruins, but still earth is its sphere inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is on earth and He is the One who unites the members to the Head and to one another. Now, while it is true that the visible unity of the Church is gone, yet we are responsible to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” and in order to do this we are to yield our souls to the action of the whole truth of God, whether that truth be found in 1 Corinthians or in 2 Timothy.

We have to recognize and mourn over the ruin, and confess our own share in that ruin, but we must not lower the divine standard or surrender a single tittle of divine revelation. It is our holy privilege to walk in the light of the very highest truths, notwithstanding the broken state of the professing body. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18: 20). These words set forth the real ground of the Assembly. They were uttered before the Church was set up and they will hold good to the end of time. “Scripture cannot be broken.” “Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven.”

Thanks be to our ever gracious God, He has not left us to walk according to our own vague and desultory thoughts or the commandments and doctrines of men. He has poured the heavenly light of His own Word upon our path, and that gives a certainty, a stability and a wonderful peace.

The Holy Spirit has given us the three grand distinguishing titles — “The Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God.” Sadly, that which calls itself the Church of God has become a corrupt thing, a vast mass of baptized profession. But clearly that which is called Christendom is no longer viewed as being on Jewish *or* Gentile ground, nor will it be judged as such, but according to the profession which it takes up. Hence the appalling solemnity of Christendom's position. We believe it to be the most terrible moral blot in the wide universe of God, the master-piece of Satan and the destroyer of souls. Oh! the awfulness of Christendom's condition; the awfulness of its doom! No human language can set it forth. May all who truly belong to the Church of God be enabled to yield a calm, clear, decided and consistent testimony against the spirit and principles and ways of that terrible thing called Christendom.

The “other sheep” of John 10 are those who are called from among the Gentiles to form, with those of the Jewish fold, the “one flock” under the one blessed Shepherd. In Ephesians 4 we have the further truth of the “one body” composed of Jew and Gentile and united by the Holy Spirit to the living Head in heaven and to one another on the earth.

In John 20 Mary illustrates the present relation of the Church with Christ. We do not know Him after the flesh. We are linked with Him, not as the Messiah on earth, but as a heavenly Christ. Thomas represents the Jew who must see to believe. Matthew 28 presents our Lord in His Jewish relations, and we find the women holding Him by the feet. This teaches us in the most blessed manner that He will yet resume His links with Israel according to the promises made to the fathers. We must remember that the Church forms no part of the ways of God with Israel and the earth.

The terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are not always synonymous, though sometimes they are. Take Romans 14: 17, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” We can easily see that “kingdom of heaven” would not do here. This latter is a great dispensational term, applying to the time during which the King

is rejected and the kingdom, in consequence, in *mystery* instead of in manifestation. The term “kingdom of God” is sometimes applied in the same way (Mark 4: 30; Luke 8: 10). Also, it has a *moral and personal application* which distinguishes it from the phrase, “kingdom of heaven,” which is unique to Matthew. Accept our warmest thanks for your most kind and interesting letter. Its tone and spirit are pleasing and refreshing in a day like the present. May God bless you very abundantly!

No passage could more distinctly teach the two resurrections than the very one which your friend has quoted in opposition, namely, John 5: 25-29. There is “the resurrection of life” and “the resurrection of judgment.” It may be that your friend bases his objection on the fact that the word “hour” is used, but this has no force whatever since in verse 25, the same word is applied to that period during which the Son of God is quickening dead souls — a period which has already extended nearly 2000 years. Now if the word “hour” be applied to a period of nearly 2000 years, what difficulty can there be in applying it to a period half that length? We consider that Revelation 7: 1-8 refers to the saved remnant of Israel, the nucleus of the restored nation.

Ezekiel 37 refers to the future restoration and blessing of Israel. The closing chapters of Ezekiel shall, most surely, have their accomplishment in the nation's history. The temple will be rebuilt and the worship restored. The sacrifices, instead of being typical, will be commemorative. Thanks for your devotional lines. We greatly enjoyed their tone and spirit.

We take those charming passages in Isaiah in their full force and beauty, as setting forth the wonderful blessedness of that time when our beloved Lord shall reign from pole to pole and from river to the ends of the earth. How the heart longs for that time as we toil along through this sin-stricken world where all is so contrary to the Spirit and mind of Christ.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

The apostle John, by the Holy Spirit, teaches us that “He that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” The person you describe has not the Son of God. Anyone who denies that Jesus is God, has not the Son of God. He is a blasphemer. As for his saying that “God was in Him more than in anyone else on earth,” it is a blinding delusion and deceit of the enemy. If Jesus was not God, it is the merest absurdity to speak of His being a good man or the best man who ever lived, or of God being in Him. For any other than God to speak as Jesus did, would be blasphemy.

We must either confess the essential deity of the Man Christ Jesus or deny Him altogether. There is not the breadth of a hair of middle ground. But, blessed be God, Scripture is plain and emphatic. It claims for our adorable Savior not merely divinity but essential deity. This is demonstrated in a very singular and forcible manner by the fact that in Romans 1, where the apostle is speaking of the testimony of creation, he says, “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, His eternal power and Godhead.” In Colossians 2: 9, in speaking of the Person of Christ, he says, “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” In the original Greek of these two passages we have a different word for “Godhead.” In Romans 1: 20 the word is *divinity*. In Colossians 2: 9 it is *deity*. The heathen should have learned that there was something superhuman, something divine in creation, but the Holy Spirit is not satisfied to claim divinity for the Person of Christ but absolute deity. This is magnificently striking.

We cannot understand you, dear friend, when you speak of a blasphemer of Christ as “a good living person, keeping God's commandments.” What! “A good living man,” yet denying the Godhead of Jesus! “Keeping God's commandments,” yet blaspheming the Son of His love! Be not offended, dear

friend, by our plain language. We must speak plainly. We utterly loathe and abhor the false liberality of the present day, a liberality which can lavish its compliments upon men, but deny the Christ of God. We hold it to be utterly impossible for anyone who lives and dies in the denial of Christ to be saved. Such an one has no Savior unless there is some other way of being saved than by Christ. May God open the eyes of your friend to see his guilt and danger — notwithstanding his “good living” and “keeping God's commandments” — and to flee by faith to the refuge provided for the lost in the precious atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! We regret having to write in such a way concerning one who “is very near and dear to you,” but we should either write as we have done or leave your letter wholly unnoticed. Our Lord Christ is more to us than all the friends in the world.

In Galatians 5: 9 the apostle in speaking of bad doctrine, uses the very same form of words as in 1 Corinthians 5: 6, which he applies to bad conduct. But the bad doctrine in question affected the very foundation of Christianity. So also in 2 John 10, the apostle calls upon the elect lady to shut her door against anyone who brought not the true doctrine of Christ. If a man denies Christ we cannot own him or salute him or wish him God speed. To do so would make us partakers of his evil deeds. What is the difference between a teacher of fundamental error and one who knowingly receives him or wishes him God speed? Does the law distinguish between a traitor and one who knowingly conceals the traitor? Could you have fellowship with a man who denies the Person or the work of Christ?

It is very striking to notice how much more alive people are to bad morals than bad doctrine. A person living in scandal is justly rejected, but a man may deny the deity or the eternal Sonship of Christ and be received and honored in the highest circles of so-called Christian society. A man who picks his neighbor's pocket is justly sent to prison, but a man may blaspheme the Son of God and yet be looked upon as a respectable Christian! How is this? *Because man thinks more of himself and his respectability than he does of Christ!*

But who would think for a moment of placing fundamental truth on a level with such a question as baptism or the interpretation of a text? To do so would be the very height of folly. If a man holds the truth as to Christ and is seeking to live according to it, we can give him the right hand of fellowship, although we may not agree with him as to baptism or many *minor* points. Difference of judgment on minor questions is a proof of human weakness, but if that difference be allowed to rise into undue prominence, it is a proof of Satan's power. When Christ is our absorbing and commanding object, all minor differences soon find their level.

JUDGMENT

Scripture distinctly teaches that the believer will never come into judgment at all. 2 Corinthians 5: 10 declares that all shall be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, believers and unbelievers alike, although not, of course, at the same time. But how will believers be manifested? *In all the perfectness of Christ Himself!* Are they to be judged? Assuredly not. Their judgment is past forever. It was executed at the cross. If there was a single atom of sin or guilt left unatoned for in the death of Christ, a single question left unsettled, a single thing that has still to be judged, then, most assuredly, we shall be eternally damned. But no, dear friend, it is all settled — blessedly, divinely, eternally settled. All who believe on the Son of God have passed from death unto life and shall not come into judgment (John 5: 24). It is as impossible that a believer can come into judgment, as that Christ Himself can. The members can no more be judged than the Head.

No doubt our works shall be tested. “The day shall declare it.” Those works shall be tried by fire,

and all the wood, hay and stubble will be burned up. Further, when we stand in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ, we shall look back with an enlightened gaze over the whole of our career and see as we never saw before, our mistakes, our follies, our sins, our infirmities, our mixed motives. But we shall see also, as we never saw before, the fullness of the grace of God and the effectiveness of the blood of Christ.

With regard to Matthew 12: 36-37 it teaches us that “men will have to give account for every idle word.” So also in Hebrews 9: 27, we read, “It is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.” But the believer is taken completely off the ground of judgment since Christ was judged in his stead. Hence, instead of looking for judgment, the believer is looking for the Savior. Is all this precious grace intended to make us lax and careless? May we speak idle words because we are not to be judged? Far away be the horrible thought! No, dear friend, it is just because we believe that Jesus was judged in our stead and that we shall *never* come into judgment, that therefore we judge ourselves day by day and refuse to justify in ourselves a single sinful thought. “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” It is our holy privilege to reckon ourselves “dead to sin.” We have passed through death and judgment in the Person of our Substitute, so “we have boldness in the day of judgment because as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4: 17). Here lies the grand secret of our peace — the secret of our deliverance from the power of sin — the secret of all holy living. May the Spirit of God expound and apply it in power to your heart. Then you will cease to be perplexed.

We quite agree with your view of the expression, “the terror of the Lord,” and we trust your friend will be led to see the mind of God in the entire context. The believer can never come into judgment. In John 5: 24 the word is “judgment” and not “condemnation.” Every man's work shall be tested, but when the believer is manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, he will be perfectly conformed to the image of his Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 6 we are taught that the saints shall judge the world and even angels. They will be associated with Christ in that solemn work. It would be strange if the judges were to be arranged along with the judged. It is very sad to mark the confusion in people's minds in reference to a subject so plain and simple. It is, no doubt, the result of legal teaching and bad theology. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a general resurrection or general judgment. To maintain such a notion is to deny the very foundations of Christianity.

Scripture most certainly teaches that the unconverted shall stand before the judgment seat. 2 Corinthians 5: 10 takes in all, both believers and unbelievers, though not of course at the same time or on the same ground. The expression “we all” in chapter 5: 10 differs materially in the Greek from the “we all” in 2 Corinthians 3: 18. The latter refers only to believers; the former to both. Our Lord Christ will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and kingdom. In Matthew 25: 31 we have the judgment of the living nations. Revelation 20: 11 gives the judgment of the wicked dead. In the former, not one will have passed through death; in the latter, all will have done so. In neither scene have we the Church or Israel as the subjects of judgment.

THE INDIVIDUAL PATH OF FAITH:

PRACTICAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND EXHORTATION

The life of faith in its every stage and every step must be intensely individual. No one can have faith for another, and no one ought to dare to intrude upon another's path. We may and ought to encourage one another to trust God — to strengthen each other's hands in God — but for anyone to

counsel another to do this or that, unless there be distinct faith for it, is in our judgment a very grave mistake indeed. Hence, dear friend, if you are not thoroughly clear in your own soul as to whether it would be “faith or folly” to abandon your present position, we should strongly recommend you to pause. It is a serious thing to go beyond your depth, to feel the surgings of the tide of circumstances, if your feet are not on the rock. We have no fears on God's side of the question. He never fails a trusting heart. But from the style and tone of your letter, we have great fears for you.

Could you imagine Abraham asking anyone if it would be “faith or folly” for him to leave Ur of the Chaldees? Could you conceive Moses asking if it would be “faith or folly” for him to leave the court of Pharaoh? We most fully believe that your position would be a false one for us, and that to abandon it would be true wisdom, but you must see this for yourself. You must have it from God and act before Him, else it will all end in confusion and disaster. “Never go before your faith and never lag behind your conscience.” This is a most excellent principle. May we all be enabled to act upon it! The Lord bless, guide and keep you!

We conclude from what you say that your own mind is ill at ease in reference to the matter about which you ask counsel. We would therefore recommend you not to do anything with a doubtful mind. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Look to the Lord for guidance in this thing. See if you can do it to His glory, and if not, lay it aside. It must be between your own soul and the Lord. *Do nothing with a doubtful mind.* How precious to be able to bring everything, great or small, to Him!

The question you propose is one for your own conscience to weigh in the light of Scripture. It would be of no real use to you for us to say that we could not for worlds occupy such a position or stand in such a relationship as you describe, inasmuch as each one must act according to his light. We believe the servant of Christ ought to stand perfectly free from human influence. He should have to do only with His Lord, both as to his work and as to his support. But in all these things, the rule must ever be, “According to your faith.” It is none of our business to judge others; each one must stand or fall to his own Master.

If your conscience is not clear before the Lord, do not move one inch in the matter. Let not the persuasive arguments of a thousand friends induce you to do anything with a doubtful mind. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” We do not offer any opinion on the abstract question which you have laid before us, but, judging from your own statements, it is very evident that your own heart would condemn you in taking such a step. On this ground, we solemnly counsel you not to move in the matter. May we be faithful to Christ! May we give Him an undivided heart!

The Lord alone can give you wisdom and grace to act in the painful circumstances you describe. If you really wait on Him, He will teach you when to speak and when to keep silence. There is danger of speaking in haste of temper rather than in a spirit of love, when replying to the godless remarks of the unconverted. This is to be guarded against. Further, we must remember there is very often far more powerful testimony in solemn and dignified silence than in talking for talking's sake. But the Lord will guide the lowly dependent heart. He will tell you when to speak and when to be silent. Then, you may rest assured, the speaking and the silence will each be fruitful in its season.

It is always well to watch our treacherous hearts, even in right things, lest they betray us. But in the matter to which you refer, we would remind you of the exceeding goodness and tenderness of our God. He most graciously allows us to pour out our hearts to Him in the freest manner. He perfectly understands our every feeling and He knows all about our relationships and the right affections which

flow out of them. It would be unnatural not to feel unique earnestness in reference to the salvation of our relatives according to the flesh. Unquestionably, we should seek to be ruled in all things by the glory of God. But oh! let us ever abide in the sweet sense of His love and let us beware of a unhealthy analyzing of our poor thoughts and feelings. God bless you and keep you!

We fully sympathize with you in your dread of acting under mere impulse. It is always well to be sure of every step we take, to be able to give a "Thus saith the Lord" for whatever we do or whatever we refuse to do. Very much damage is done to the cause of truth and vital godliness by impulsive acting and by what we may term spasmodic devotedness. We greatly value calm, deejtoned decision for Christ — a decision produced by genuine love to His Person and profound subjection to the authority of His Word. These things are most needful in this day of man's will, man's judgment and man's reason. As to the matter which seems to exercise your heart, you must simply act before the Lord. It is entirely a question for your own conscience. Do not act on the judgment of another. If you feel free in conscience before God, it is better to continue as you have done for the sake of others. By all means, keep a good conscience, cost what it may.

We entirely agree with your remarks about the Church. The professing body is a ruin. The Body of Christ is one and indissoluble. It is our holy and happy privilege as it is our bound duty to have our feet on God's ground and our eyes on God Himself — to see and own our failure, but yet to hold fast the faithfulness of God. It needs a single eye to discern God's ground and a simple faith to occupy it, but He is always sufficient and His foundation stands sure. There is no reason why we should continue one hour in connection with what is wrong. "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." This is conclusive. *Nothing can justify our remaining in connection with what we know to be false.* May the Lord Himself greatly bless you, beloved friend, and make you a blessing!

We see no other course open before you but one of plain decision for Christ, cost what it may. You must cease to do evil before you can expect to learn to do well. Trust Christ and act boldly for Him. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." But if you are looking at circumstances, weighing consequences or conferring with flesh and blood, your eye is not single and you must be in darkness and perplexity. The Lord can very speedily provide you with a situation. Only wait on Him. Let your exclusive reference be to Him. He never fails a trusting heart. Do, dear friend, seek to prove the reality of sole dependence upon the living God. There is nothing like it. All human hopes are as a vapor that passes away. May the Lord undertake for you in His infinite goodness.

It is a most serious thing to trifle with the truth of God or to refuse the path which His Word plainly sets before us. Blessed be His name, He bears with us in our ignorance, our unbelief and varied infinities. But to sin against light is a fearfully solemn thing. "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" (Jeremiah 13).

Mark the words! "Before He cause darkness." Does God cause darkness? Yes, verily, and blindness, if people refuse His light. There is no darkness so profound, no blindness so awfully complete, as that which God sends *judicially* upon those who trifle with His Word. Look at 2 Thessalonians 2, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Here we have the future destiny of Christendom. God shall send strong delusion. He will turn their professed light into gross darkness and the shadow of death. All this is most solemn. It should make us tremble at the very thought of refusing to act up to the light which God graciously affords us.

Look at the blessed contrast to all this as given in Luke 11: “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.” What does God give light for? That it may be quashed, quenched, hindered? Assuredly not; but that it may be seen. But how can it be seen if we do not act upon it? If we, for worldly gain, personal advantage, to please ourselves or to please our friends, refuse to obey the Word of God and thus hide the light under a bushel — what then? It may issue in “gross darkness,” “the shadow of death,” “strong delusion.” How awful!

Our Lord continues, “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single” — that is, when you have but one object before you — “thy whole body also is full of light” (beautiful state!) “but when thine eye is evil, the body is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”

How striking the contrast! Instead of stumbling on the dark mountains, the obedient soul not only has light for his own path, but he is actually a light-bearer for others. The moral progress in the above passage is uncommonly fine. There is first the single eye — the one simple, firm, earnest purpose of the heart to go right on in the path of obedience, cost what it may. Then the body is full of light. What more can there be? But there is something more, for assuredly there is no redundancy in Scripture. “If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark” — no reserve, no chamber of the heart kept locked up on account of friends, self-interest, worldly ease or anything else — “the whole shall be full of light.” You become transparent and your light shines so others see it. Not that *you* think so, for a single eye never looks at self. If I make it my object to be a light-bearer, I shall get full of darkness and be a stumbling-block. When Moses came down from the mount, the skin of his face shone. Did he see it or know it? Not he. Others saw it; and thus it should be with us. “We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3).

Finally, dear friend, let us entreat you to yield yourself without reserve to the Word of your Lord. Do not permit your “friends” to stand in your way. Will your friends answer for you before the judgment-seat of Christ? Can they now fill your heart with that sweet peace which can only be found in the path of obedience? They do not deserve the name of *friends* if they stand in your way in following Christ. They are just like the swallows that flutter about us in the summertime, but on the first approach of autumn blasts they wing their way to sunnier climes. Obey, we beseech you, the Word of your Lord. Let no flimsy excuse, no worldly consideration, no thought of personal greatness weigh with you for a single moment. What will all these things be worth in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ? What will you think of them in eternity?

But you will tell us you are saved; you are a “Christian girl”; you have eternal life; you can never perish. Thank God for all this. But surely you do not mean to say that this is any reason why you should not obey what you know to be the Word of God. Is it not rather the very *ground* of obedience, and the love of Christ the constraining motive? What are all the friends in the world compared with Christ? Would they shed their blood to do you good? No, but they are making you miserably unhappy to please them. You would rather pain the heart of Jesus by neglecting His commandments than pain your friends by obeying Him.

May the Lord help you, dear friend, to lay aside every weight and your besetting sin, and run with patience and true purpose of heart the race that is set before you.

Few things are more solemn than to resist light. Look again at that most weighty passage in Jeremiah 13. "Give glory to the Lord your God before He cause darkness and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness" (v. 16). There is something very awful in the thought of *God* causing darkness and turning light into the shadow of death because of our not acting on the light when He graciously gave it. The contrast of all this we have seen in that lovely passage in Luke 11: 34-36. When we act on the light which God gives, we not only are full of light ourselves, but become lightbearers for others. This is very different from stumbling on dark mountains.

We do not wonder, dear friend, at the dim twilight of which you speak. The wonder is that it is not profound darkness. It would be so but for infinite grace. But we entreat you not to hesitate a moment longer. "How long halt ye? I made haste and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." Let nothing cause you to linger. "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." It is a fatal mistake to refuse to act on divinely given light under the plausible pretext of usefulness. Our usefulness consists in doing what our Lord commands. Obedience is our work. May God give you grace to be decided for Christ! May He lead you forth into that blessed sphere in which you can walk with Him, lean on Him, work for Him and find all your springs in Him! To Him we earnestly commend you

FICTION

We do not see how you could sit in the presence of God and write fiction. "Speak every man truth with his neighbor" (Eph. 4: 25). Fiction is not truth, and hence we judge that a Christian should neither speak it nor write it. True, you might be able to earn money by writing works of fiction and spend that money for the Lord, but does the Lord want money earned by writing what is not true? Are we to do evil that good may come?

It is evident, dear friend, that you have misgivings in your mind, and we do not wonder. We fully enter into your remark as to the numbers who are neglecting their Bibles for worthless and worse than worthless fiction. Indeed not only is the Bible neglected, but even works of solid information are laid aside for light and corrupting literature which is only fit to be thrown into the fire. We deeply feel the need of vigilance on the part of Christian parents, guardians and teachers to guard our young people from the demoralizing influence of much of the literature of the present day. We would feel bound to preserve our children's bodies from poisonous drugs; ought we not to preserve their minds from poisonous books?

"THE UNPARDONABLE SIN"

There are very false notions afloat as to the point to which you call our attention, and many like yourself are troubled thereby. We are continually asked about the "unpardonable sin" and the "sin against the Holy Spirit." If you read carefully Matthew 12: 24-32 you will see that our Lord speaks of "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" of which the apostate Jews were guilty. For this there was and could be no forgiveness. What could be done for those who not only rejected the Son but resisted the Holy Spirit and attributed His blessed operation to Beelzebub? They could neither be forgiven in the "age" of the law nor in that of Messiah. In short, it is wholly a question in this scripture of the apostate nation of Israel given over to hopeless perdition. We know that, just before the opening of the millennial age, there will be a repentant remnant for whom a fountain shall be opened and who shall be the nucleus of the restored nation. But this is far too wide a subject to enter upon here. We merely add

that we judge it to be a temptation of Satan to lead you to imagine that you have committed “the unpardonable sin.” You may rest assured, dear friend, that you have never been guilty of any sin which cannot be cancelled by that blood which cleanses us from *all* sin.

Many find difficulty in 1 John 5: 16. “There is a sin unto death.” This we believe to be a question of God's governmental dealings. We learn from 1 Corinthians 11 that God visits His people with sickness and even physical death because of their ways, but in neither of these passages is there any thought of “an unpardonable sin.” We do not believe that any sinner in this acceptable year, this day of salvation, is beyond the reach of the pardoning love of God and the atoning blood of Jesus. Those who reject the gospel shall be given over to “a strong delusion” (2 Thess. 2: 10-12). But that terrible moment has not yet arrived. “The day of vengeance” is held back in God's longsuffering mercy.

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION

Repentance involves the moral judgment of ourselves under the action of the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the discovery of our utter sinfulness, guilt and ruin, our hopeless bankruptcy, our undone condition. It expresses itself in these glowing words of Isaiah, “Woe is me; I am undone,” and in that touching utterance of Peter, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Repentance is an abiding necessity for the sinner, and the deeper it is the better. It is the ploughshare entering the soul and turning up the fallow ground. The ploughshare is not the seed, but the deeper the furrow, the stronger the root. We delight in a deep work of repentance in the soul. We fear there is far too little of it in what is called revival work. Men are so anxious to simplify the gospel and make salvation easy, that they fail to press upon the sinner's conscience the claims of truth and righteousness.

No doubt salvation is as free as the grace of God can make it. Moreover, it is all of God from first to last. God is its source, Christ its channel, the Holy Spirit its power of application and enjoyment. All this is blessedly true, but we must never forget that man is a responsible being, a guilty sinner commanded to repent and turn to God. It is not that repentance has any saving virtue in it. As well might we assert that the feelings of a drowning man could save him from drowning or that a man could make a fortune by a deed of bankruptcy filed against him. Salvation is wholly of grace; it is of the Lord in its every stage and every aspect. We cannot be too emphatic in the statement of all this, but at the same time we must remember that our blessed Lord and His apostles constantly urged upon men, both Jews and Gentiles, the solemn duty of repentance.

There is a vast amount of bad teaching on the subject, a great deal of legality and cloudiness whereby the blessed gospel of the grace of God is sadly obscured. The soul is led to build upon its own exercises instead of on the finished work of Christ — to be occupied with a certain process, on the depth of which depends its title to come to Jesus. In short, repentance is viewed as a sort of good work instead of the painful discovery that all our works are bad and our nature incorrigible. Still, we must be careful in guarding the truth of God. While utterly repudiating Christendom's false teaching on the important subject of repentance, we must not run into the mischievous extreme of denying its abiding and universal necessity.

Take a case. There are two men in a lifeboat; one was picked up after two hours' of terrible struggle with the waves, in the most awful mental agony through fear of death. The other was picked off the wreck a few minutes after she struck the reef and hardly had time to feel his danger. Both are in the lifeboat; both are safe, the one as safe as the other. They are saved by the lifeboat. It is not a question of their previous feelings, but simply of their being in the lifeboat.

No doubt, the former will have a deeper sense of the value of the life-boat, but that is a matter of experience and not a question of salvation. There are hardly two cases of conversation alike. Some go through exercises of soul before they come to Christ, others after. It is the Christ I reach and not the way I reach Him, that saves my soul.

We cannot lay down a rigid rule. We believe that all must, sooner or later, learn what the flesh is, and the sooner and the more thoroughly we learn it the better. We have invariably found that those who have gone through the deepest ploughings at the first, make the steadiest and most solid Christians afterwards. But we are saved by Christ and not by experience. It often occurs to us that many of our young people who have been religiously brought up and led to make a profession, are much to be felt for when called to go out into the world. They are ignorant of their own hearts, ignorant of the snares and temptations of the world, ignorant of the devices of Satan. They have never proved what the world is. They were led perhaps gradually, imperceptibly, into the divine life, but have never been sifted and tested. Hence when brought face to face with the stern realities of life, when called to grapple with the difficulties of the day, to meet the reasonings of the infidel, the fascinations of ritualism or the allurements of the world — the theatre, the ballroom, the concert, the thousand and one forms of pleasure — they are not able to withstand these things. They are not decided for Christ; their Christianity is not sufficiently pronounced; they give way and fall under the power of temptation; and then they are most miserable, often brought almost to despair. But God in His mercy brings them back after their terrible conflict and overrules all the exercise for the deepening and consolidation of His work in their souls.

But, if there be not the germ of divine life; if it be merely the effect of religious training and home influence, then sadly the poor soul plunges with terrible eagerness into the vortex of sin and rushes headlong to destruction.

How many a lovely youth has gone forth from the parent's home, virtuous and unsophisticated, ignorant of the cruel ways of the world and ignorant of his own heart. The enemy lays some trap for him; he is caught in the snare; one thing leads to another; he goes from bad to worse, until at the last, he becomes the degraded victim of lust and vice, a moral wreck over which broken-hearted parents are called to shed many a bitter tear or by which their gray hairs are brought down with sorrow to the grave.

We are most thoroughly persuaded that what is needed for the day in which our lot is cast is whole-hearted, out-and-out, undivided consecration of heart to Christ. We need a thorough breaking with the world in its every phase and that perfect rest and satisfaction of heart in God Himself which renders a man wholly independent of all this wretched world has to offer. If there be not this, we need not look for any real progress in the divine life.

JUDGING

That the application of Matthew 7: 1 to what you refer is incorrect will be evident to you if you refer to verse 15 of this chapter. How can we “beware of false prophets” if we are not to judge at all? We must not judge *motives*, but we are bound to judge conduct and doctrine. Look at 1 Corinthians 5: 12-13. What does this mean? Clearly, that Christians are called upon to judge evil conduct and put away the impenitent offender. If the Corinthians had not done so, God would have judged them. Again, look at 1 John 4: 1. What does this mean? Clearly, that Christians are called upon to judge the doctrine of any coming to them and to reject the false.