

"God for us."

C. H. Mackintosh.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Rom. 8: 31.

How much is wrapped up in these few words, "God for us" They form one of those marvellous chains of three links so frequently found in scripture. We have "God" linked on to "us" by that precious little word "for." This secures everything, for time and eternity. There is not a single thing within the entire range of a creature's necessities that is not included in the brief but comprehensive sentence which forms the heading of this paper. If God be for us, then it follows, of necessity — blessed necessity — that neither our sins, nor our iniquities, nor our guilt, nor our ruined nature, nor Satan, nor the world, nor any other creature can possibly stand in the way of our present peace and our everlasting felicity and glory. God can dispose of all — has disposed of them, in such a way as to illustrate His own glory, and magnify His holy Name, throughout the wide universe, for ever and ever. All praise and adoration be to the Eternal Trinity!

It may, however, be that the reader feels disposed, at the very outset, to inquire how he is to know his place amongst the "us," of our precious thesis. This truly, is a most momentous question. Our eternal weal or woe hangs upon the answer. How, then, are we to know that God is for us? In reply to this most weighty question, we shall seek, by God's grace, to furnish the reader with five substantial proofs that God is for us, in all our need, our guilt, our misery, and our danger — for us, spite of all that we are, and all that we have done — for us, although there is no reason whatever, so far as we are concerned, why He should be for us, but every reason why He should be against us.

The first grand proof which we shall adduce is

THE GIFT OF HIS SON.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16.

Now, we are glad, for various reasons, to commence our series of proofs with these memorable words. In the first place, they meet a difficulty which may suggest itself to the mind of an anxious reader — a difficulty based upon the fact that the sentence culled from Romans 8: 31 evidently applies, primarily, to believers and only to such, as does the entire epistle and every one of the epistles.

But, blessed be God, no such difficulty can be started in reference to the all-embracing, and encouraging words of Him who spake as never man spake. When we have from the lips of our blessed Lord Himself, the eternal Son of God, such words as these, "God so loved *the world*," we have no ground whatever for questioning their application to each and all who come under the comprehensive word "world." Before anyone can prove that the free love of God does not apply to him, he must first prove that he does not form a part of the world, but that he belongs to some other sphere of being. If indeed, our Lord had said, "God so loved a certain portion of the world," call it what you please, then verily it would be absolutely necessary to prove that we belong to that particular portion or class, ere we could attempt to apply His words to ourselves. If He had said that God so loved the predestinated, the elect, or the called, then we must seek to know our place amongst the number of such, before we can take home to ourselves the precious assurance of the love of God, as proved by the gift of His Son.

But our Lord uses no such qualifying clause. He is addressing one who, from his earliest days,

had been trained and accustomed to take a very limited view indeed of the favour and goodness of God. Nicodemus had been taught to consider that the rich tide of Jehovah's goodness, loving kindness, and tender mercy could only flow within the narrow enclosure of the Jewish system and the Jewish nation. The thought of its rolling forth to the wide wide world had never, we may safely assert, penetrated the mind of one trained amid the contracting influences of the legal system. Hence, therefore, it must have sounded passing strange in his ear, to hear "a teacher come from God" giving utterance to the great fact that God loved not merely the Jewish nation, nor yet some special portion of the human race, but "the world." No doubt, such a statement would add not a little to the amazement felt by this master in Israel at being told that he himself, with all his religious advantages, needed to be born again in order to see or enter the kingdom of God.

Do we then deny or call in question the grand truth of predestination, election, or effectual calling? God forbid We hold these things as amongst the fundamental principle of true Christianity. We believe in the eternal counsels and purposes of our God — His unsearchable decrees — His electing love — His sovereign mercy.

But do any or all of these things interfere, in the smallest degree, with the gracious activities of the divine nature, or the outgoings of God's love towards a lost world? In no wise. God is love. That is His blessed nature, and this nature must express itself toward all. The mistake lies in supposing that because God has His purposes, His counsels, His decrees — because He is sovereign in His grace and mercy — because He has chosen from all eternity a people for His own praise and glory — because the names of the redeemed, all the redeemed, were written down in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world — that therefore God cannot be said to love all mankind — to love the world — and, moreover that the glad tidings of God's full and free salvation ought not to be proclaimed in the ears of every creature under heaven.

The simple fact is that the two lines, though so perfectly distinct, are laid down with equal clearness, in the word of God; neither interferes, in the smallest degree, with the other, but both together go to make up the beautiful harmony of divine truth and to set forth the glorious unity of the divine nature.

Now, it is with the activities of the divine nature and the outgoings of divine love that the preacher of the gospel has specially to do. He is not to be cramped, crippled, or confined in his blessed work, by any reference to God's secret decrees or purposes, though fully aware of the existence of such. His mission is to the world — the wide wide world. His theme is salvation — a salvation as full as the heart of God, as permanent as the throne of God — as free as the air — free to all without any exception, limitation, or condition whatsoever. The basis of his work is the atoning death of Christ which has removed all barriers out of the way, and opened up the floodgates in order that the mighty tide of divine love may roll forth, in all its fullness, richness and blessedness, to a lost and guilty world.

And here, we may add, lies the ground of man's responsibility in reference to the gospel of God. If, indeed, it be true that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son — if "the righteousness of God is unto all" — if it be God's gracious will that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" — if He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance — then verily is every man who hears this glorious gospel laid under the most solemn responsibility to believe it and be saved. No one can honestly and truthfully turn round and say, "I longed to be saved, but could not, because I was not one of the elect. I longed to flee from the wrath to come but was prevented by the insuperable barrier of the divine decree which irresistibly consigned me to an everlasting hell."

There is not, within the covers of the volume of God, in the entire range of His dealings with His creatures, in the aspect of His character, or in the enactments of His moral government, the very faintest shadow of a foundation for such an objection. Every man is left without excuse. God can say to all who have rejected His gospel, "I would, but ye would not." There is absolutely no such thing as reprobation in the word of God, meaning, the consignment on God's part, of any number of His creatures to everlasting damnation. Everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25.) Men *will* rush into it. "Vessels of wrath" are fitted, not by God, but by themselves, "to destruction." (Rom. 9.) Everyone who gets to heaven will have to thank God for it. Everyone who finds himself in hell will have to thank himself for it.

Furthermore, we have ever to remember that the sinner has nothing to do with God's unpublished decrees. What does he — what can he — know about such? Nothing whatever. But he has to do with God's published love — His proffered mercy — His free salvation — His glorious gospel. We may fearlessly assert that so long as these glowing and glorious words shine in the record of God, "*Whosoever will* let him take of the water of life *freely*," it is impossible for any son or daughter of Adam to say, "I longed to be saved, but could not. I thirsted for the living water, but could not reach it. The well was deep and I had nothing to draw with." Ah, no, such language will never be used, such an objection will never be urged by anyone in all the ranks of the lost. When men pass into eternity they will see with awful clearness what they now affect to think is so obscure and perplexing, namely, the perfect compatibility of God's electing sovereign grace and the free offer of salvation to all — the fullest harmony between divine sovereignty and human responsibility,

We fondly trust the reader sees these things, even now. It is of the very last possible importance to maintain the balance of truth in the soul — to allow the beams of divine revelation to act, with full power, on the heart and conscience, unimpeded by the murky atmosphere of mere human theology. There is imminent danger in taking up a certain number of abstract truths and forming them into a system. We want the adjusting power of all truth. The growth and practical sanctification of the soul are promoted, not by some truth, but by the truth, in all its fullness, as embodied in the person of Christ, and set forth by the eternal Spirit in the holy scriptures. We must get rid completely of all our own preconceived notions — all merely theological views and opinions — and come like a little child, to the feet of Jesus to be taught by His Spirit, from out His holy word. Thus only shall we find rest from conflicting dogmas. Thus shall all the heavy clouds and mists of human opinion be rolled away and our enfranchised souls shall bask in the clear sunlight of a full divine revelation.

We shall now proceed with our proofs.

The second fact which we shall adduce to prove that God is for us will be found in

THE DEATH OF HIS SON.

And, for our present purpose, it is only necessary for us to take up one feature in the atoning death of Christ, but that one feature is a cardinal one. We refer to the marvellous fact set forth by the Holy Ghost in the prophet Isaiah, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. He hath put him to grief" Isaiah 53.

Our blessed Lord might have come into this world of sin and sorrow. He might have become a man. He might have been baptised in the Jordan — anointed by the Holy Ghost — tempted of Satan in the wilderness. He might have gone about doing good. He might have lived and laboured, wept and prayed, and, at the close, gone back to heaven again, thus leaving us involved in deeper gloom than ever. He might, like the priest or the Levite, in the parable, have come and looked upon us in our wounds and misery, passed by on the other side and returned alone to the place from whence He came.

And what if He had? what, reader, but the flames of an everlasting hell, for thee and me? For, be it well remembered, that all the living labours of the Son of God — His amazing ministry — His days of toil and His nights of prayer — His tears, His sighs, His groans — the whole of His life-work, from the manger up to, but short of, the cross, could not have blotted out one speck of guilt from a human conscience. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." No doubt, the eternal Son had to become a man that He might die; but incarnation could not cancel guilt. Indeed, the life of Christ, as a man on this earth, only proved the human race more guilty still. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin." The light that shone in His blessed ways only revealed the moral darkness of man — of Israel — of the world. Hence, therefore, had He merely come and lived and laboured here for three-and-thirty years, and gone back to heaven, our guilt and moral darkness would have been fully proved but no atonement made. "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."

This is a grand foundation-truth of Christianity, and must be constantly affirmed, and tenaciously held. There is immense moral power in it. If it be true that all the life-labours of the Son of God — His tears, His prayers, His groans — His sighs — if all these things put together could not cancel one single speck of guilt; then, indeed, may we not lawfully inquire what possible value can there be in our works — our tears — our prayers — our religious services — our ordinances, sacraments and ceremonies — the whole range of religious activity and moral reform? Can such things avail to cancel our sins and give us a righteousness before God? The thought is perfectly monstrous. If any or all of these things could avail, then why the sacrificial, atoning death of Christ? Why that ineffable and inestimable sacrifice, if aught else would have done?

But, it will perhaps be said that, although none of these things could avail without the death of Christ, yet they must be added to it. For what? To make that peerless death — that precious blood — that priceless sacrifice of full avail? Is that it? Shall the rubbish of human doings, human righteousness, be flung into the scale to make the sacrifice of Christ of full avail in the Judgement of God? The bare thought is positive and absolute blasphemy.

But are there not to be good works? Yes, verily; but what are they? Are they the pious doings, the religious efforts, the moral activities of unregenerate, unconverted, unbelieving nature? Nay. What then? What are the Christian's good works? They are *life work's*, not dead works. They are the precious fruits of life possessed — the life of Christ in the true believer. There is not anything beneath the canopy of heaven which God can accept as a good work save the fruit of the grace of Christ in the believer. The very feeblest expression of the life of Christ, in the daily history of a Christian, is fragrant and precious to God. But the most splendid and gigantic labours of an unbeliever are, in God's account, but "dead works."

All this, however, is a digression from our main line, to which we must now return.

We have said that, for our present purpose, we shall merely refer to one special point in the death of Christ, and that is the fact that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him. Herein lies the striking and soul-subduing proof that God is for us. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." He not merely *gave* Him but *bruised Him*, and that for us. That spotless, holy, perfect One — the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth — the One who ever did the things which pleased His Father — whose whole life from the manger to the tree was one continued sweet odour ascending to the throne and to the heart of God — whose every movement, every word, every look, every thought was well pleasing to God — whose one grand object, from first to last, was to glorify God and finish His work — this blessed One was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God — was nailed to the cursed tree, and there endured the righteous wrath of a sin hating God; and all this because God was for

us — even *us*.

What marvellous and matchless grace is here! The Just One bruised for the unjust — the sinless, spotless, holy Jesus, bruised by the hand of Infinite Justice in order that guilty rebels might be saved; and not only saved but brought into the position and relationship of sons — sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty — heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

This surely is grace — rich, free, sovereign grace — grace abounding to the very chief of sinners — grace reigning, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ. Who would not trust this grace? Who can look at the cross, and doubt that God is for the sinner — for any sinner — for him — for the reader of these lines? Who would not confide in that love that shines in the cross? Who can look at the cross and not see that God willeth not the death of any sinner? Why did He not allow us to perish in our guilt — to descend into that everlasting hell which we so richly deserved because of our sins? Why give His Only-begotten Son? Why bruise Him on that shameful cross? Why hide His face from the only perfect Man that ever lived — that Man His own Eternal Son? Why all this, reader? Surely it was because God is for us, spite of all our guilt and sinful rebellion. Yes, blessed be His Name, He is for the poor self-destroyed, hell-deserving sinner, be he who or what he may; and each one whose eye scans these lines is now entreated to come and confide in the love that gave Jesus from the bosom and bruised Him on the cross.

Oh! beloved reader, do come, just now. Delay not! Waver not! Reason not! Listen not to Satan! Listen not to the suggestions and imaginings of your own heart; but listen to that word which assures you that God is for you, and to that love which shines forth in the gift and the death of His Son.

In pursuing what we may truly call the golden chain of evidence in proof that God is for us, we have dwelt upon the two precious facts of the gift and the death of His Son. We have travelled from the bosom to the cross, along that mysterious and marvellous path which is marked by the footprints of divine and everlasting love. We have seen the blessed One not only giving His only begotten Son from His bosom, but actually bruising Him for us — making His spotless soul an offering for sin — bringing Him down into the dust of death — making Him to be sin for us judging Him in our stead — thus affording the most unanswerable evidence of the fact that He is for us, that His heart is toward us, that He earnestly desires our salvation, seeing that He hath not withheld His Son, His only Son from us, but delivered Him up for us all.

We shall now proceed to our third proof, which is furnished by

THE RAISING OF HIS SON.

And in speaking of the glorious fact of resurrection, we must confine ourselves to the one point therein, namely, the proof which it furnishes of God's being friendly to us. A passage or two of scripture will suffice to unfold and establish this special point.

In Romans 4, the inspired apostle introduces God to our hearts as the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He is speaking of Abraham who, He tells us, “against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that" — what? That gave His Son? Nay. That bruised His Son upon the

cross? Nay. What then? "That raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" — the very same "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Anxious reader, weigh this great fact. What was it that brought the precious Saviour to the cross? What brought Him down to the dust of death? Was it not our offences? Truly so. "He was delivered for our offences." He was nailed to the cursed tree for us. He represented us on the cross. He was our Substitute, in all the full value and deep significance of that word. He took our place and was treated, in every respect, as we deserved to be treated. The hand of infinite justice dealt with our sins — all our sins, at the cross. Jesus made Himself responsible for all our offences, our iniquities, our transgressions, our liabilities, all that was or ever could be against us — He, blessed be His peerless and adorable name! — made himself answerable for all, and died in our stead, under the full weight of our sins. He died, the just for the unjust.

Where is He now? The heart bounds with ineffable joy and holy triumph at the thought of the answer. Where is the blessed One who hung on yonder cross, and lay in yonder tomb? He is at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour. Who set Him there? Who put the crown upon His blessed brow? God Himself. The One who gave Him, and the One who bruised Him is the One who raised Him, and it is in Him we are to believe if we are to be counted righteous. This is the special point before the apostle's mind. Righteousness shall be imputed to us if we believe on God as the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Mark the vital link. Seize the all-important connection. The self-same One who hung upon the cross, charged with all our offences, is now on the throne without them. How did He get there? Was it in virtue of His eternal Godhead? No: for on that ground He was always there. He was God over all blessed for ever. Was it in virtue of His eternal Sonship? Nay; for He was ever there on that ground also. [We rejoice in every opportunity for the setting forth of Christ's eternal Sonship. We hold it to be an integral and essentially necessary part of the Christian faith.]

Hence, therefore, it could, in no wise, meet our need as guilty sinners, charged with innumerable offences, to be told that the eternal Son of the Father had taken His seat at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, inasmuch as that place ever belonged to Him — yea, the very deepest and tenderest place in the bosom of the Father.

But, further, we may enquire, was it as the spotless, sinless, perfect Man that our adorable Lord took His seat on the throne? Nay; as such, He could, at any moment, between the manger and the cross, have taken His place there.

To what conclusion, then, are we absolutely shut up, in this matter? To that most precious, that tranquillising conclusion, that the self-same One who was delivered for our offences, bruised for our iniquities, judged in our stead, is now in heaven; that the One who represented us on the cross, is now on the throne; that the One who stood charged with all our guilt, is now crowned with glory and honour; that, so perfectly, so absolutely and completely, has He disposed of the entire question of our sins, that infinite justice has raised him from the dead, and placed a diadem of glory upon His sacred brow.

Reader, dost thou understand this? Dost thou see its bearing upon thyself? Dost thou believe in the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead? Dost thou see that, in so doing, He has declared Himself friendly to thee? And dost thou believe that, in raising up Jesus, He set forth His infinite satisfaction in the great work of atonement, and furnished thee with a receipt in full for all thy debts — a receipt for the "ten thousand talents."

Here lies the gist, marrow, and substance of this magnificent argument of Romans 4. If the man who was delivered for our offences is now in heaven, and in heaven, too, by the hand and act of God himself; then, most surely, our offences are all gone, and we stand justified from all things, as free from every charge of guilt, and every breath of condemnation, as the blessed One Himself. It cannot possibly be otherwise, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is utterly impossible for a charge to be brought against the believer in the God of resurrection, for the simplest of all reasons that the One whom He raised was the One whom He bruised for the believer's sins. Why did He raise Him? Because the sins for which He bruised Him were all put away, and put away for ever. The Lord Jesus, *having undertaken our cause, and made Himself answerable for us in every way*, could not be where He now is, if a single jot or tittle of our guilt remained. But, on the other hand, being where He now is, and being there by God's own act, it is impossible — utterly impossible — for any question to be raised as to the full and complete justification and perfect righteousness of the soul that believes in Him. Thus, the moment that any one believes in God, in the special character of the raiser of Jesus, he is counted perfectly righteous before Him. This is most marvellous, but divinely and eternally true. May the reader feel its power, sweetness, and tranquillising virtue! Yea, may the eternal Spirit give him the blessed sense of it, deep down in his heart! Then, indeed shall he have perfect peace in his soul; then, too, shall he understand how that, in raising, as well as in bruising and giving His Son, God has declared and proved Himself to be for us.

We had intended to bring under the special notice of the reader Hebrews 13: 20, but we must allow him to dwell upon that lovely passage for himself, while we proceed to exhibit our fourth proof that God is for us, which will be found in

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Here, too, we must confine ourselves to one point in that most glorious event, and that is the form in which that august witness, the eternal Spirit, descended.

Let the reader turn to the second chapter of the Acts. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them *cloven tongues*", like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with *other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, *out of every nation under heaven*. Now, when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak *in his own language*. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we *every man in our own tongue wherein we were born*? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak *in our tongues* the wonderful works of God."

Here then we mark one special fact — a fact of deepest interest — three times referred to in the foregoing quotation. It is this, the Holy Ghost came down to speak to every man "in his own dialect" — not the dialect in which he was *educated* merely, but "*in which he was born*" — the very dialect in which his mother first whispered into his infant ears, the sweet and tender accents of a mother's love. Such was the medium, such the vehicle which the divine Messenger adopted for the blessed purpose of making known to man that God was for us. He did not speak to the Hebrew in Greek, or to the Greek in Latin. He spoke to each one in the language which he understood, in the plain vernacular — the mother

tongue. If there was any peculiarity in that mother tongue, any idiom, any provincialism in the dialect of each, the blessed Spirit would make use of it for the purpose of reaching the heart with the sweet story of grace.

Contrast with this the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. There Jehovah confined Himself absolutely to one language. If persons had been gathered there "from every nation under heaven," they would not have understood a single syllable. The law — the ten words — the record of man's duty to God and to his neighbour was sedulously wrapped up in one tongue. But when "the *wonderful works of God*" were to be published — when the blessed story of love was to be told out when the heart of God towards poor guilty sinners was to be revealed, was one language enough? No, "Every nation under heaven" must hear, and hear, too, in their own very mother tongue.

Reader, is not this a telling fact? It will perhaps be said that those who heard Peter and the rest on the day of Pentecost, were Jews. Well, that in no wise robs our fact of its charm, its sweetness, and its power. Our fact is that when the eternal Spirit descended from heaven, to tell of the resurrection of Christ, to tell of accomplished redemption — to publish the glad tidings of salvation — to preach repentance and remission of sins — He did not confine Himself to one language, but spoke in every dialect under heaven!

And why? Because He desired to make man understand what He had to say to him — He desired to reach his heart with the sweet tidings of redeeming love — the soul-stirring message of full remission of sins. When the law was to be given — when Jehovah had to speak to man about his duty — when He had to address him in such terms as, "Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that," He confined Himself to one solitary language. But when He would unfold the precious secret of His love — when He would prove to man that He was for him, He, blessed for ever be His name, took care to speak in every language under heaven, so that every man might hear, in his own dialect wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God.

[The reader will note with interest a fact alluded to elsewhere, that in Genesis 11 divers tongues were given as a judgement upon man's pride. In Acts 2 divers tongues were given in grace to meet man's need. And in Revelation 7 the various tongues are all found united in one song or praise to God and to the Lamb. Such are some of the wonderful works of God. May we praise Him with all our ransomed powers! May our hearts adore Him!]

Thus, then, in our series of proofs — our golden chain of evidence, we have travelled from the bosom of God to the cross of Christ, and from that precious cross back to the throne — we have marked the giving, the bruising, and the raising of the Son; we have seen the very heart of God told out in deep and marvellous love, and tender compassion toward guilty perishing sinners. Moreover, we have marked the descent of the eternal Spirit, from the throne of God — His mission to this world to announce to every creature under heaven the glad tidings of a full, free, and everlasting salvation, through the blood of the Lamb, and to announce these tidings not in an unknown tongue, but in the very tongue wherein each was born.

What more remains? Is there yet another link to be added to the chain? Yes; there is

THE POSSESSION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

It may perhaps be said that our fifth proof is involved in our fourth, inasmuch as the fact of my possessing a copy of the bible in my mother tongue is, in reality, the Holy Ghost speaking to me in the language in which I was born.

True; but still, so far as the reader is concerned, the fact that God has put into his hand or within

his reach the sacred volume — the inestimable boon, the holy scriptures — is an additional proof that He is for him. For why were we not left in ignorance and total darkness? Why was the divine book put into our hands? Why, each one may say, for himself and herself, was I thus favoured? Why was I not left to live and die in heathen blindness? Why was the heavenly lamp allowed to cast its precious beams on me — even me?

Ah I beloved reader, the answer is, "Because God is for thee." Yes, for thee, notwithstanding all thy many sins — for thee, spite of all thy forgetfulness, ingratitude and rebellion — for thee, although as thou very well knowest, thou canst not show a single reason why He should not be against thee. He gave His Son from His bosom, bruised Him on the cross, raised Him from the dead, sent down the Holy Ghost, put into your very hands His blessed book, all to show you that He is for you, that His heart is toward you, that He earnestly desires your salvation.

And mark, we pray thee, thou canst not say, nor wilt thou ever dare to say, "I could not understand the bible; it was beyond me; it was full of abstruse mysteries which I could not fathom; of difficulties which I could not solve; of discrepancies which I could not reconcile. And when I turned to those who professed to be Christians, I found them split up into almost innumerable sects, and divided into almost endless schools of doctrine. And, not only so, but I saw such utter hollowness, such gross inconsistency, such flagrant contradiction between profession and practice, that I was forced to abandon the whole subject of religion with a mingled feeling of perplexity, contempt, and disgust."

These objections will not stand in the judgement, nor keep thee out of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Remember this. Yes, ponder it deeply. Let not the devil, let not thine own heart deceive thee. What does Abraham say to the rich man, in Luke 16? "They have Moses and the prophets, *let them hear them.*" Why does the rich man not reply, "They cannot understand them?" He dare not.

No, reader; a child can understand the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There is not one beneath the canopy of God's heaven, who possesses a copy of the holy scriptures, who is not solemnly responsible before God for the use he makes of them. If professing Christians were split up into ten thousand times as many sects as they are; if they were ten thousand times as inconsistent as they are; if schools and doctors of divinity were ten thousand times more conflicting than they are — still the word to each possessor of the bible is, "You have Moses and the prophets, and the New Testament, hear them."

Oh! that we could persuade the unconverted, the unawakened, the unbelieving reader to think of these things, to think of them now, to ponder them, in the very hidden depths of his moral being, to give them his heart's undivided attention, ere it be too late. We contemplate, with ever-deepening horror, the condition of a lost soul in hell — of one opening his eyes, in that place of endless torment, to the tremendous fact that God is against him and against him for ever; that all hope is gone; that nothing can ever bridge the chasm that separates the region of the lost from the heaven of the redeemed; that "there is a great gulf *fixed.*"

We cannot proceed. The thought is really overpowering. The heart is crushed by the appalling contemplation. Dear, dear reader, do let us entreat of thee, ere we lay down the pen, to turn, this very hour, to a dear loving Saviour who stands with open arms and open bosom to receive all who come to Him, and who assures thee that "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Do come and trust in God's faithful word and Christ's finished work.

Here lies the precious secret of the whole matter. Look away from self, look straight to Jesus, confide simply in Him, and in what He has done for thee on the cross, and all thy sins shall be blotted

out, divine righteousness shall be thine, eternal life, sonship, an indwelling Spirit, an all-prevailing Advocate, a bright home in the heavens, a portion in Christ's eternal glory — yes, reader, if thou wilt but believe in Jesus all shall be thine — Himself the best of all.

May the Holy Ghost lead thee, this moment, to the feet of Jesus, and enable thee to cry out, in holy triumph, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" God grant it for Jesus Christ's sake.