

Short Papers — Section 8 of 10.

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“THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM”

2 Samuel 23.

“And David longed and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!” Such was the breathing of David's heart, a desire which met with a speedy and hearty response from three members of that devoted and heroic band which flocked around him in the cave of Adullam. “And the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David.” There was no command issued. No one in particular was singled out and commissioned to go. There was the simple utterance of the desire, and this it was which afforded the opportunity for genuine affection and true devotedness. Had there been a specific command given to anyone, it would merely have afforded an occasion for ready obedience, but the utterance of a desire developed that ardent attachment to the person of David which is so lovely to behold.

And mark the actings of David in this most touching scene: “Nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink of it.” It was a sacrifice too costly for any except Jehovah Himself. Hence David would not permit the sweet odor of it to be interrupted in its ascent to the throne of God.

How little did those three mighty men imagine that their act of loving devotedness would be recorded on the eternal page of inspiration, there to be read by millions. They never thought of this. Their hearts were set on David and they counted not their lives dear unto them so that they might gratify him or refresh his spirit. Had they acted to get a name or place for themselves, it would have robbed their act of all its charm and consigned it to its merited contempt and oblivion. But no; they loved David. This was the spring of their activity. They proved that he was more precious to their hearts than life itself. They forgot all in the one absorbing object of serving David, and the odor of their sacrifice ascended to the throne of God while the record of their deed shines on the page of inspiration and shall continue to shine so long as that page endures.

Oh! how we long for something like this in reference to the true David in this the day of His rejection. We do greatly covet a more intense and self-sacrificing devotedness as the fruit of the constraining love of Christ. It is not a question of working for rewards, for a crown or for a place, though we fully believe in the doctrine of rewards. No! the very moment we make rewards our object, we are below the mark. We believe that service rendered with the eye upon the reward would be defective. But then we believe also that every jot or tittle of true service will be rewarded in the day of Christ's glory and that each servant will get his place in the record *and his place in the kingdom* according to the measure of His personal devotedness down here. This we hold to be a great practical truth and we press it as such upon the attention of the Christian reader. We must confess we long to see the standard of devotedness greatly raised among us and this can only be effected by having our hearts more entirely consecrated to Christ and His Name. O Lord, revive Thy work!

DAVID'S LAST WORDS

(2 Samuel 23)

There is something deeply touching and most consolatory in the last words of “The sweet Psalmist of Israel.” It is good and profitable to listen to the “last words” of any saint of God or servant of Christ. It is well to hearken to the mellow words of the white-haired and experienced, to those who have reached the final stage of life's rough journey. We all know that, upon our first starting on our course, there is a degree of romance about us. We cherish large expectations from men and things. We fondly imagine that all is gold that glitters and we foolishly hope that all the promises and pretensions of the scene around will be fully realized. But alas! as we get on, we discover our mistake. Stern reality cures us of much of our youthful romance and the blasts of the desert heat carry away much of the bloom of our young days. The young believer is apt to confide in everyone who makes a profession; and this simple confidence is lovely. Would that it always met with a more worthy response. But it does not. One meets with much, even in an ordinary Christian career, to chill, to wither, to contract and repulse. Hence the weight and value of “last words,” especially when we get them, not merely as the fruit of matured judgment, but as in David's case, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

“Now these be the last words of David, David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.”

Here, David sets up the divine standard of character for one called to rule over men. “He must be just”; and upon the basis of justice is erected a superstructure of cloudless light, richest blessing and abundant fruitfulness. All this will only be realized when the Son of David, now hidden in the heavens, shall ascend the throne of his Father and stretch forth His scepter over a restored creation.

Not only does David set up the divine standard; he compares himself with it, and it is in this comparison we have the great moral and practical truth which I desire to fasten on my reader's heart. “Although,” says David, “my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.”

The only way to get a right view of ourselves is by looking at Christ. This is what David does in these last words. He weighs himself in a perfect balance and declares himself light. He measures himself with a perfect rule and confesses himself entirely defective. He gazes upon the perfect model and exclaims, “I am not like that.” He looks back over the past and sees his failings and faults. He turns over page after page of life's sad story and his eye, enlightened by beams of light from the sanctuary, sees the blots and the blemishes. But, blessed be God, he can fall back upon “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure,” and in that well ordered covenant, finds “all his salvation and all his desire.”

There is uncommon beauty and power in the connection between the “although” and the “yet” in the above passage. The former leaves a wide margin in which to insert the words of a convicted and chastened heart, the latter opens the floodgates to let in the full tide of divine mercy and loving kindness. “Although” puts man in the dust as a failing one; “yet” introduces God in all the fullness of His pardoning love. The former is the language of a soul that has learned itself; the latter is the breathing of a heart that had learned something about God.

Oh! beloved reader, is it not a great mercy that, when we reach the close of our history and review the past — when, as regards ourselves, we have only to say, “My house is not so with God” —

we shall then fully prove the eternal stability of that grace in which we have found “all our salvation and all our desire!”

THE PRIEST'S PLACE AND PORTION

(Read Leviticus 6: 14-18)

These verses show us three things in connection with “the law of the meat offering” — the priest, his place and his portion.

1. *The priest.* All the sons of Aaron were priests. They became such by birth. They were born into this highly-privileged position. They did not reach it by effort, but simply by birth. Being sons of Aaron, they *were* priests. They might be disqualified for the discharge of the functions of their position through bodily blemish or ceremonial defilement (Lev. 21-22), but as to the position itself, it was a necessary result of their being sons of Aaron. Position is one thing; ability to discharge the functions or capacity to enjoy the privileges thereof, is quite another.

A dwarf among the sons of Aaron was deprived of many of the higher priestly dignities, but a dwarf was to “eat the bread of his God, of the most holy, and of the holy.” God would not leave the feeblest or most diminutive member of the priestly household without a holy portion. “Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish, that he profane not My sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them.” A dwarf could not attend the altar of God, but the God of the altar took care of the dwarf. The two things are divinely perfect. God's claims have been perfectly answered and the need of His priestly family perfectly met.

2. *The place.* The place where the priest was to partake of his portion teaches us a most valuable lesson of practical holiness. “With unleavened bread shall it be eaten in the holy place, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation they shall eat it.” That is to say, it is only in the power of personal holiness and in the immediate presence of God that we can really partake of our priestly portion. The *way* in which we get the place exhibits absolute grace. The *place* which we get demands personal holiness. To speak of effort in reaching the place is the fallacy of legalism. To think of unholiness in the place is the blasphemy of lawlessness. I reach the position only through grace. I occupy the position only in holiness. The pathway to the sanctuary has been thrown open by free grace, but it is to the sanctuary of God that grace has opened the pathway. These things must never be forgotten. We want to have them graven on the tablets of the conscience and hidden in the chambers of the heart.

3. *The portion.* And now as to the portion. “This is the law of the meat offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before the Lord, before the altar. And he shall take of it his handful, of the flour of the meat offering and of the oil thereof, and *all* the frankincense thereof, and shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savor, even the memorial of it unto the Lord. And the remainder thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat.” The fine flour and oil typify Christ's perfect manhood, conceived and anointed by the Holy Spirit. This is the portion of God's priests to be enjoyed in the sanctuary of the divine presence, in separation of heart unto God. It is utterly impossible that we can enjoy Christ anywhere else but in the presence of God or in any other way than personal holiness. To speak of enjoying Christ while living in worldliness, indulging in pride, gratifying our lusts, giving a loose reign to our temper and passions, is a fatal delusion. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth” (1 John 1: 6). The two things are wholly incompatible. “Fellowship with God” and “walking in darkness” are as diametrically opposed as heaven and hell.

Thus the place of all true priests — all believers, all members of the priestly household — is to be within the sacred precincts of the sanctuary in the immediate presence of God, feeding upon Christ in

the power of personal holiness. All this we are taught in “the law of the meat offering.”

Let the reader note particularly that “all the frankincense” was consumed on the altar. Why was this? Because frankincense typified the fragrance of Christ's manhood as enjoyed exclusively by God Himself. There was that in Christ as a Man down here, which only God could duly appreciate. Every thought, every look, every word, every movement, every act of “the Man Christ Jesus” emitted a fragrance which went up directly to the throne of God and refreshed the heart of Him who sat thereon. Not a single atom of Christ's perfectness or preciousness was ever lost. It might be lost on a cold, heartless world and even upon carnal and earthly-minded disciples, but it was not lost upon God. It all went up to Him according to its true value.

This is a spring of joy and comfort to the spiritual mind. When we think of how the blessed Lord Jesus was not appreciated in this world, how little even His own disciples understood or valued Him, how the rarest and most exquisite touches and traits of His perfect humanity were lost upon a rude and unbelieving world and even upon His own people, what a comfort to remember that He was perfectly understood and appreciated by the One who sat on the throne! There was an unbroken line of communication kept up between the heart of Jesus and the heart of God. The cloud of incense was continually ascending to the throne from the only perfect Man who ever trod this cursed and groaning earth.

Not a grain of the incense was lost because not a grain was entrusted even into the hands of the priests. All went up to God. Nothing was lost. The world might despise and hate, the disciples might fail to understand or appreciate; what then? Was a single ray of Christ's moral glory to go for nothing? Surely not; all was duly estimated by Him for whom it was designed and who alone could value it aright. This was true in every stage of Christ's precious life down here. And when we reach the end of that life and see the climax when one disciple sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, another cursed and swore he knew Him not, all forsook Him and fled, the world nailed Him to a cross between two thieves, God showed to the universe how much He differed from all the thoughts of men by placing the crucified One on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

Thus much as to the primary application of the incense which, unquestionably, is to Christ. We may also observe that it has a secondary application to the believer which he should seek to understand. True Christianity is the outflow of the life of Christ in the believer's practical ways and this is most precious to God, though it may be lost upon an unbelieving world and even upon a professing Church. There is not a movement of the life of Christ in the believer, not an expression of what He is, not the smallest manifestation of His grace that does not ascend directly as sweet incense to the throne of God. It may not attract the notice or elicit the applause of this world. It may not get a place in the records of men, but it goes up to God. This is enough for the faithful heart. God values all that is of Christ, nothing more, nothing else. There may be much that looks like service — much show, much noise, much that men make a great ado about — but nothing goes up to the throne, nothing is entered into the imperishable records of eternity but that which is the fruit of the life of Christ in the soul.

May God the Holy Spirit lead us into the experimental understanding of these things and bring forth in us, day by day, a brighter and fuller manifestation of Christ to the glory of God the Father!

THE BRAZEN SEA

(2 Chronicles 4)

“And Solomon made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. And under it was the

similitude of oxen which did compass it round about; ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about. Two rows of oxen were cast, when it was cast. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the North, and three looking toward the West, and three looking toward the South, and three looking toward the East; and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. And the thickness of it was an handbreadth, and the brim of it like the work of a brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; and it received and held three thousand baths *the sea was for the priests to wash in.*" (2 Chr. 4: 2-6).

In order to have a clear understanding of the doctrine taught us in this beautiful and significant figure, three things demand our attention — the material, the contents and the objects. May God the Spirit guide our thoughts and speak to our hearts as we dwell upon these things!

The material. Solomon's molten sea was made of brass, the apt symbol of divine righteousness demanding judgment upon sin (as in the brazen altar) or demanding judgment upon uncleanness (as in the brazen sea). The Lord Jesus is spoken of in Revelation 1 as having "His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace." It is thus He is seen walking among the candlesticks. He cannot tolerate evil, but must, in the exercise of judgment, trample it beneath His feet. This will explain the reason why the altar where sin was expiated and the sea where defilement was washed away, were both made of brass. Everything in Scripture has its meaning and we should seek in a spirit of prayer to ascertain what that meaning is.

It is most comforting and establishing to the heart to be assured that the sin which God freely pardons and the uncleanness which He freely removes have been both fully and forever judged and condemned in the cross. Not a single jot or tittle of guilt, not a single trace of uncleanness, has been passed over. All has been divinely judged. "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment" and "grace reigns through righteousness" (James 2: 13; Rom. 5: 21). The believer is pardoned and cleansed: his guilt and uncleanness were judged on the cross. The knowledge of this most precious truth works in a double way. It sets the heart and conscience perfectly free and also causes us to abhor sin and uncleanness with an ever growing intensity. The altar of brass told forth in silent yet impressive eloquence, its double story: guilt had been divinely condemned, dear testimony to the fact that uncleanness had been divinely judged, and on that ground, could be divinely washed away.

What deep consolation for the heart in all this! And yet it is holy consolation. I cannot gaze upon the antitype of the altar and lightly commit sin. I cannot think upon the antitype of the molten sea and indifferently contract defilement. My consolation is deep and solid because I know I am pardoned and cleansed, but my consolation is holy because I know that Jesus had to yield up His life to procure my pardon and cleansing. God has been perfectly glorified; sin and uncleanness have been perfectly condemned; I am set eternally free; but the death of Christ is the basis of all. Such is the consolatory yet holy lesson taught us in the material of the brazen altar and the molten sea. Nothing is passed over by God, yet nothing is imputed to me because Christ was judged for all.

Let us now consider *the contents* of Solomon's molten sea. "It received and held three thousand baths" of water. If at the altar I see brass in connection with blood, at the sea I find brass in connection with water. Both point to Christ. "This is He that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but water and blood" (1 John 5: 6). "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came there out *blood and water*" (John 19: 34). The blood that expiates and the water that cleanses both flow from a crucified Savior. Precious and solemn truth! Precious, because we have expiation and cleansing; solemn, because of the way in which we get them.

But the brazen sea contained water, not blood. Those who approached thereto had *already* proved

the power of the blood and therefore only needed the washing of water. Thus it was in the type and thus it is with the antitype. A priest under the law, whose hands and feet had become defiled, did not need to go back to the brazen altar, but forward to the brazen sea. He did not need to again apply the blood to constitute him a priest, but only to wash with water to enable him to discharge his priestly functions. So now, if a believer fails, if he commits sin, if he contracts defilement, he does not need to be again washed in the blood as at the first, but simply needs the cleansing action of the Word whereby the Holy Spirit applies to the soul the remembrance of what Christ has done. So the defilement is removed, the communion restored and the spiritual priest fitted afresh to discharge his priestly functions. "He that is washed needeth not except to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 13: 10). "The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10: 2). Does this make little of defilement? The very opposite! Did the provision of a molten sea, with its 3000 baths of water, make little of priestly defilement? Did it not rather prove how much was made of it, what a serious matter it was in the judgment of God, how impossible it was to go on with a single soil upon the hands and feet?

Let my reader ponder this matter. Let him examine it in the light of Scripture. Let him make sure he really understands it. There is, in many cases, a great lack of clearness as to the doctrine set forth in the brazen altar and the molten sea. Hence, so many earnest Christians get into spiritual darkness and trouble as to the question of daily sins and daily defilement. They do not see the divine completeness of their cleansing by the blood of Christ. They therefore entertain the idea that they must, on every fresh occasion, go as at the beginning to the brazen altar as if they had never been washed at all. This is a mistake. When once a man is purged by the blood of Jesus, he is clean forever. If Christ has cleansed me, I am divinely, eternally clean. I am introduced into a condition to which perfect cleanness attaches and I can never be out of it. I may lose the *sense* of it, the *power* of it, the *enjoyment* of it. Peter speaks of some forgetting that they were purged from their old sins. If sin be trifled with and if self be not judged, it is hard to say what a Christian may come to. The Lord give us to walk softly and tenderly before Him every day so we may not come under the blinding and hardening influence of sin!

But be it remembered that the most effective safeguard against the working and the influence of sin is to have the heart established in grace and to be clear in the understanding of our standing in Christ. To be dark or doubtful as to these things is the sure way of falling into Satan's snares. If I am seeking to live a holy life in order to establish my position before God, I shall either be propped up in pharisaism or be plunged into some horrible sin. But when I know that all my sins and all my defilements were judged and condemned in the cross, and that I am justified and accepted in a risen Christ, then I stand on the true ground of holiness. And if I fail, as I do constantly, I can bring my failure to God in confession and self-judgment and know Him as faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

I judge myself on the ground that Christ has been already judged before God for the very thing which I confess in His presence. If it were not so, my confession would be of no use. The only ground on which God can be "faithful and just to forgive and cleanse" is that Christ has already been judged on my behalf. And most assuredly, God will not execute judgment twice for the same thing. Blessedly true it is, I must confess and judge myself if I have gone wrong. A single sinful thought is sufficient to interrupt my communion. Every such thought must be judged before my communion can proceed. *But it is as a purged one that I confess. I am no longer viewed as a sinner, having to do with God as a Judge. I am now in the position of a child having to do with God as a Father.* He has made provision for my daily need, a provision which does not involve a denial of my place and portion or an ignoring of the work of Christ, but a provision which tells me at once of the holiness and grace of Him who made it. I am not to ignore the altar because I need the sea, but I am to adore the grace of Him who

provided both the one and the other.

Having said thus much on the material and contents of Solomon's molten sea, a few words will suffice as to *the object thereof*. "*The sea was for the priests to wash in.*" There came the priests from day to day to wash their hands and feet so they might always be in a fit condition to go through their priestly work. This is a striking type of God's spiritual priests — of all true believers whose works and ways need to be cleansed by the action of the Word. Both the brazen laver in the tabernacle and the brazen sea in the temple foreshadowed that "washing of water by the Word" which Christ is now carrying on by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ in Person is acting up in heaven for us; by His Spirit and Word, He is acting in us and on us. Only thus are we enabled to get on. He restores us when we wander; He cleanses us from every soil; He corrects our every error. He ever lives for us. We are saved daily by His life. He maintains us in the full power and integrity of the position in which His precious blood has set us. All is secured in Him. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water *by the Word*, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5: 25-27).

Finally, one word as to the "oxen" which held up the brazen sea. The ox is used in Scripture as the symbol of patient labor. Hence their significant place beneath the brazen sea. From whatever side the priest approached, he was met by the apt expression of patient labor. It mattered not how often or in what way he came, he could never exhaust the patience that was devoted to the work of cleansing him from all his defilements. What a precious figure! And we have the substance in Christ. *We can never weary Him by our frequent coming. His patience is exhaustless.* He will not tire until He presents us to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

May our hearts adore Him who is our Altar, our Laver, our Sacrifice, our Priest, our Advocate, our All!

THE GRAPES OF ESHCOL

(Numbers 13)

The grand principle of the divine life is faith — simple, earnest, wholehearted faith that just takes and enjoys all that God has given, faith that puts the soul in possession of eternal realities and maintains it therein habitually. This is true in reference to the people of God in all ages. "According to your faith, so be it unto you," is ever the divine motto. There is no limit. All that God reveals, faith may have. All that faith can grasp, the soul may abidingly enjoy.

It is well to remember this. We all live very far below our privileges. Many are satisfied to move at a great distance from the blessed Center of all our joys. We are content with merely knowing salvation, while at the same time, we taste but little of holy communion with the Person of the Savior. We are satisfied with merely knowing that a relationship exists, without earnestly and jealousy cultivating the affections belonging thereto. This is the cause of much of our coldness and barrenness. As in the solar system the further a planet is from the sun the colder its climate and the slower its movement. So in the spiritual system, the further one moves from Christ, the colder will be the state of his heart toward Christ and the slower his movement for Christ. Fervor and rapidity will ever be the result of felt nearness to that central Sun, the great Fountain of heat and light.

The more we enter into the power of the love of Christ, the more we realize His abiding presence with us, the more intolerable we shall feel it to be away from Him. Everything will be dreaded and avoided which would tend to withdraw our hearts from Him or hide from our souls the light of His

blessed countenance. The one who has really learned anything of the love of Christ cannot live without it; yes, it can part with all else for it. When away from Him, nothing is felt except the gloom of midnight and the chilling breath of winter, but in His presence the soul can mount upward like the lark as he rises into the bright blue heavens to salute with his cheerful song, the sun's morning beams.

Nothing exhibits more the deep-seated unbelief of our hearts than the fact that, while our God would have us enjoying communion with the very highest truths, few of us ever think of aspiring beyond the mere basics. Our hearts do not sigh after the highest walks of spiritual scholarship. We are satisfied with having the foundation laid, and are not as anxious as we should be to add layer after layer to the spiritual superstructure. Not that we can ever do without the foundation. This would be impossible. The most advanced scholar must carry the basics along with him, and the higher the building is raised, the more the need of a solid foundation is felt.

Let us look at Israel's case. Their history is full of rich instruction for us. It is “written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10: 11). We must contemplate them in three distinct positions — as sheltered by the blood, as victorious over Amalek and as introduced into the land of Canaan.

Now, clearly, an Israelite in the Land of Canaan had lost nothing of the value of the first two points. He was not the less shielded from judgment or delivered from the sword of Amalek because he was in the land of Canaan. No, the milk and honey, the grapes and pomegranates of that goodly land would but enhance the value of that precious blood which had preserved them from the sword of the destroyer and afford the most unquestionable evidence of their having passed beyond the cruel grasp of Amalek.

Still no one would say that an Israelite ought to have sought nothing beyond the blood-stained lintel. It is plain he ought to have fixed his steady gaze on the vine-clad hills of the promised land and said, “There lies my destined inheritance, and by the grace of Abraham's God, I shall never rest satisfied until I plant my foot triumphantly thereon.” The blood-stained lintel was the starting post; the land of promise, the goal. It was Israel's high privilege not only to have the assurance of full deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh and the sword of Amalek, but also to cross the Jordan and pluck the mellow grapes of Eshcol. It was their sin and their shame that with the clusters of Eshcol before them, they could ever long after “the leeks, the onions and the garlic” of Egypt.

But how was this? What kept them back? Just that hateful thing which, from day to day and hour to hour, robs us of the precious privilege of treading the very highest stages of the divine life. And what is that? *Unbelief!* “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3: 19). This caused Israel to wander in the desert for 40 tedious years. Instead of looking at Jehovah's power to bring them into the land, they looked at the enemy's power to keep them out of it. Thus they failed. In vain did the spies, whom they themselves proposed to send (Deut. 1: 22*), bring back a most attractive report of the character of the land. In vain did the spies display in Israel's view a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol, so luxuriant that two men had to bear it upon a staff. All was useless. The spirit of unbelief had taken possession of their hearts. It was one thing to admire the grapes of Eshcol when brought to their tent doors by the energy of others, and quite another to move onward in the energy of *personal faith* and pluck those grapes for themselves.

{*It is important to note that the proposal to send the spies originated with Israel. "And ye came near unto me, every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come" (Deut. 1: 22). An artless faith would have taught them that the One who had conducted them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea and across the desert, could and would lead them onward into Canaan, show them

the way, and tell them all about it. But, alas! they wanted an arm of flesh. The chariot of Jehovah, moving majestically before the host, was not sufficient for them. They would "send men before them." God was not sufficient, Ah! what hearts we have! How little we know and hence how little we trust God!

Some, however may ask, "Did not the Lord command Moses to send the spies?" (Num. 13: 1-3). True; and the Lord commanded Samuel to anoint a king over Israel (1 Sam. 8: 22). Did this clear them of the sin of asking for a king and thus rejecting Jehovah? Surely not. Well, then, the same holds good with respect to the spies. The unbelief of the people led them to ask for spies, and Jehovah gave them spies. The same unbelief led them to ask for a king, and Jehovah gave them a king. "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 56: 15). How often this is the case with us!}

And if "twelve men" could get to Eshcol, why not 600,000? Could not the same hand that shielded the one, shield the other likewise? Faith says "Yes." But unbelief shrinks from responsibility and recoils before difficulty. The people were no more willing to advance after the spies returned than before they set out. They were in a state of unbelief, first and last. And what was the result? That out of 600,000 which came up out of Egypt, only *two* had sufficient energy to plant their foot in the land of Canaan. This tells a tale. It utters a voice. It teaches a lesson. May we have ears to hear and hearts to understand.

It may be said by some that the time had not yet arrived for Israel's entrance into the land of Canaan inasmuch as "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." This is but a one-sided view of the subject and we must look at both sides. The apostle expressly declares that Israel "could not enter in *because of unbelief*." He does not assign as a reason "the iniquity of the Amorites" or any secret counsel of God with respect to the Amorites. He simply gives as a reason, the unbelief of the people. They might have got in if they would.

Nothing can be more unwarrantable than to make use of the unsearchable counsels and decrees of God to throw overboard man's solemn responsibility. It will never do. Are we to fold our arms and lie back in the indolence of unbelief because of God's eternal decrees about which we know nothing? To say so can only be viewed as a piece of monstrous extravagance, the sure result of pushing one truth to such an extreme as to interfere with the range and action of some other truth equally important. We must give each and every truth its due place. We should not run one truth to seed while some other truth is not even allowed to take root. We know that unless God blesses the labors of the farmer there will be no crop at the time of harvest. Does this prevent the diligent use of the plough and the harrow? Surely not, for the same God who has appointed the crop as the end, has appointed patient labor as the means.

Thus it is also in the spiritual world. God's appointed end must never be separated from God's appointed means. Had Israel trusted God and gone up, the whole assembly might have delighted themselves on Eshcol's luxuriant clusters. This they did not do. The grapes were lovely: this was obvious to all. The spies were constrained to admit that the land flowed with milk and honey. But there was sure to be a "nevertheless." Why? Because they were not trusting in God. He had already declared to Moses the character of the land and His testimony ought to have been amply sufficient. He had said in the most unqualified manner, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3: 8). Should not this have been sufficient? Was not Jehovah's description much more trustworthy than man's? Yes, to faith, but not to unbelief. Unbelief can never be satisfied with divine testimony, it must have the testimony of the senses. God had said it was "a land flowing with milk and honey." This the spies admitted. But hear the additions. "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in

the land and the cities are walled and very great; and moreover, we saw the children of Anak there and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight” (Num. 14: 28).

Thus it was with them. They only “saw” the frowning walls and towering giants. They did not see Jehovah because they looked with the eye of sense and not with the eye of faith. God was shut out. He never gets a place in the calculations of unbelief. It can see walls and giants, but it cannot see God. It is only faith that can “endure as seeing Him who is invisible.” The spies could declare what they were in their own sight and in the sight of the giants, but not a word about what they were in God's sight. They never thought of this. The land was all that could be desired, but the difficulties were too great for them. They had not faith to trust God. The mission of the spies proved a failure. Israel “despised the pleasant land” and “in their hearts, turned back again into Egypt.”

This is the sum of the matter. Unbelief kept Israel from plucking the grapes of Eshcol and sent them back to wander for 40 years in the wilderness. These things, be it remembered, “were written for our admonition.” May we deeply and prayerfully ponder the lesson! Out of 600,000 who came up out of Egypt, only two planted their foot on the fruitful hills of Palestine! Israel passed the Red Sea, triumphed over Amalek, but drew back in fear and retreated before “the sons of Anak,” though these latter were no more to Jehovah than the former.

Now, let the Christian reader ponder all this. The special object of this paper is to encourage him to arise and in the energy of a full, unqualified trust in Christ, tread the very highest stages of the life of faith. Having our solid foundation laid in the blood of the cross, it is our privilege not only to be victorious over Amalek (indwelling sin) but also to taste of the old corn of the land of Canaan, to pluck the grapes of Eshcol and delight ourselves in its flowing tide of milk and honey: in other words, to enter into the living and elevated experiences which flow from habitual fellowship with a risen Christ with whom we are linked in the power of an endless life. It is one thing to know that our sins are cancelled by the blood of Christ. It is another thing to know that Christ has destroyed the power of indwelling sin. And it is a still higher thing to live in unbroken fellowship with Himself.

It is not that we lose the sense of the two former when living in the power of the latter. Quite the opposite. The more closely I walk with Christ, the more I have Him dwelling in my heart by faith, the more I shall value all He has done for me, both in the putting away of my sins and in the entire subjugation of my evil nature. The higher the superstructure rises the more I shall value the solid foundation beneath. It is a great mistake to suppose that those who move in the higher spheres of spiritual life could ever undervalue the title by which they do so. Oh! no; the language of those who have passed into the innermost circle of the upper sanctuary is, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” They talk of the love of Christ's heart and the blood of His cross. The nearer they approach to the throne, the more they enter into the value of that which placed them on such a delightful elevation. And so with us; the more we breathe the air of the divine presence, the more we tread in spirit the courts of the heavenly sanctuary, the more highly shall we estimate the riches of redeeming love. It is as we pluck the grapes of Eshcol in the heavenly Canaan, that we have the deepest sense of the value of that precious blood which shielded us from the sword of the destroyer.

Let us not, therefore, be deterred from aiming after a higher consecration of heart to Christ by a false fear of undervaluing those precious truths which filled our hearts with heavenly peace when first we started on our Christian career. The enemy will use anything and everything to keep the spiritual Israel from planting the foot of faith in the spiritual Canaan. He will seek to keep them occupied with themselves and with the difficulties which attend upon their upward and onward course. He knows that

when one has really eaten of the grapes of Eshcol, it is no longer a question of escaping from Pharaoh or Amalek. Hence he sets before them the walls, the giants and their own nothingness, weakness and unworthiness. But the answer is simple and conclusive. It is this: trust! trust! trust! Yes, from the blood-stained lintel in Egypt to the rare and exquisite clusters of Eshcol, it is all simple, unqualified, unquestioning trust in Christ. "By faith they kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood" and "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Heb. 11). From the starting post to the goal, and at every intermediate stage, "The just shall live by faith."

But let us never forget that this faith involves the full surrender of the heart to Christ, as well as the full acceptance of Christ for the heart. Reader, let us ponder this deeply. It must be wholly Christ for the heart and the heart wholly for Christ. To separate these things is to be "like a rowboat with only one oar, which goes round and round, but makes no progress. It only drifts with the stream, whirling as it drifts. Or like a bird with a broken wing, whirling over and over, and falling as it whirls." This is too much lost sight of. Hence, the uncertain course and fluctuating experience. There is no progress. People cannot expect to get on with Christ in one hand and the world in the other. We can never feast on "the grapes of Eshcol" while our hearts are longing after "the flesh pots of Egypt."

May the Lord grant us a whole heart, a single eye, an upright mind. May the one commanding object of our souls be to mount upward and onward. Having all divinely and eternally settled by the blood of the cross, may we press forward with holy energy and decision "toward the mark, for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

"O wondrous grace! O love divine!

To give us such a home;

Let us the present things resign,

And seek the rest to come;

And gazing on our Savior's cross,

Esteem all else but dung and dross:

Press forward till the race be run;

Fight till the crown of life be won."

THE TWO MITES

(Mark 12: 41-44)

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing."

How little did these people know whose eye was watching them as they cast in their offerings! How little did they think of being scanned by One whose eye could penetrate the deepest depths of their hearts and read the motives that actuated them in what they were doing. It may be the showy pharisee was there, displaying his wealth and making a pompous exhibition of his religiousness. Perhaps, too, the cold formalist was there, dropping in heartless routine, his stereotyped coin into the treasury. Jesus saw it all, weighed it all, judged it all.

It is well to think on this on every occasion in the which we are called to contribute to the Lord's cause. Well to remember, as the box or the basket is placed in my hand, that "Jesus is sitting over

against the treasury.” His holy eye rests, not upon the purse, but upon the heart. He weighs not the amount, but the motive. If the heart is right, the amount will be right, according to His judgment. Where the heart beats to His Person, the hand will be open to His cause. All who really love Christ will count it their high and happy privilege to deny themselves in order to contribute to His cause. It is most marvelous that He should condescend to ask us so to do. Yet He does so and it should be our deep joy to respond “according as God has prospered us,” ever remembering that He loves a cheerful giver because that is precisely what He is Himself, blessed be His holy Name!

However, the point on which we specially want to dwell in Mark 12 is the act of the poor widow. Amid the crowd of contributors who pressed forward to cast their offerings into the treasury, there was one who particularly engaged the attention of our blessed Lord. “There came a certain poor widow and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.”

Now, that was a very small amount indeed if looked at from a monetary point of view. But think of the offerer. She was a “widow” — a “poor widow,” the very impersonation of all that is desolate, helpless and lonely. A widow always gives us the idea of one deprived of every earthly stay and natural prop. “She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers, night and day.”

True, there are many so-called widows who are not of this stamp at all — many who look anything but lonely and desolate. But these are quite abnormal. They are entirely outside the sphere of true widowhood. The Holy Spirit has furnished us with a striking photograph of this class in 1 Timothy 5: 11-13.

But the poor widow at the treasury belonged to the class of true widows. She was one according to the mind of Christ. “And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Doubtless, had these been the days of the public press, the princely offerings of the wealthy would have been paraded in the columns of some newspaper with flattering allusion to their large amount, while the poor widow and her offering would have been passed over in contemptuous silence.

But our adorable Lord thought differently. The poor widow's two mites outweighed in His balance all the offerings put together. It is a comparatively easy thing to give tens, hundreds and thousands from our accumulated treasures, but it is not easy to deny self of a single luxury or comfort, to say nothing of a positive necessity. But she gave all her living to the house of her God. It was this which threw her into such moral kindredness of spirit with the blessed Lord Himself. He could say, “The zeal of Thy house has eaten Me up.” And she could say, “The zeal of Thy house has eaten up my living.” Thus she was very near to Him. What a privilege!

Reader, did you ever notice the shape in which she had her living? Why does the Spirit take such care to say “Two mites, which make a farthing?” Why not be content to say, “She threw in a farthing?” Ah! this would never do. It would not have bought out the real point of exquisite beauty, the true touch of wholehearted devotedness. *If she had had it all in one piece, she must have either given all or nothing.* Having it in two, she had the option of keeping half for her own living. And truly most of us would judge it extraordinary devotedness to give to the Lord's cause half of all we possessed in the world. But this poor widow had a whole heart for God. This was the point. There was no reserve whatever. Self and its interests were wholly lost sight of and she flung her whole living into that which to her heart represented the cause of her God. May God grant us something of this spirit!

“HE FROM WITHIN”

(Luke 11: 7)

The Word of God judges the human heart with perfect accuracy and discloses all its most secret springs of thought and action. Indeed, this is one special way in which we may know that it is the Word of God. The poor Samaritan woman could say, “Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” She judged that a Man who could lay bare before her the deep secrets of her heart and of her life, must needs be the long expected Messiah, and she judged rightly. In like manner, we may say, “Come, see a book that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Word of God?” No one can read the heart but God. No book can disclose the human heart but God's book. Inasmuch as the Bible perfectly discloses the human heart, we may know, even had we no other mode of judging, that the Bible is the Word of God.

Such an argument may be utterly condemned by an infidel, a skeptic or a rationalist who must, therefore, be met on other grounds. But it is impossible for any upright mind to ponder the simple fact that the Bible perfectly unfolds man's very nature, his thoughts, his feelings, his desires, his affections, his imaginations, the most secret chambers of his moral being, and not be convinced that the Bible is the very Word of God which is “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4: 12).

Nor is it merely in the Word of God as a whole that we observe this intense power of “discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart,” but also in detached passages, in brief sentences, in a verse or clause of a verse. Look for instance at the three words which appear at the head of this article. What a revelation of the selfishness of the human heart do these words contain! What an expression of the narrow enclosure within which it lives! What a brief, pointed, concise commentary upon man's reluctance to be intruded upon when he has made arrangements for his personal ease! Who can read them and not see in them a perfect mirror in which the very pulsations of his own heart are reflected?

We do not like to be intruded upon when we have retired from the scene around us into the narrow circle of our personal or domestic enjoyment. When we have drawn the curtains, made ready the fire, opened the desk or the book, we do not like to have to respond to a call from without. It is at such times we can enter into the words, “He from within.” They really contain a volume of profound moral truth. They graphically and vividly set forth an attitude of heart in which we are all far too frequently to be found. We are all too ready when a call comes, to send forth our answer “from within.” We are too prone to say, “Dear me! this is a most inconvenient moment for that person to call, just when I am so particularly engaged.” All this is precisely the attitude of heart set forth in the selfish words, “He from within.”

And what answer is sure to be returned from the one who speaks “from within?” Just what might be expected. “Trouble me not.” The man who has retired into the narrow circle of his own personal ease and enjoyment, closed his door and drawn his curtains around him, does not like to be “troubled” by anyone. Such an one is sure to say, even though appealed to as a “friend,” “I cannot rise.” And why could he not “rise?” Because “the door was shut and his children were with him in bed.” His reasons for not rising were all selfish, and when he did rise it was only from a selfish desire to avoid further trouble. *Insistence* prevailed over a selfishness which was insensitive to the appeals of friendship.

How unlike all this was the blessed Lord Jesus Christ! His door was never shut. He never answered “from within.” He ever had a ready response to every needy applicant. He had not time to eat bread or take rest, so occupied was He with human need. He could say, “I forget to eat My meat,” so

entirely was He given up to the service of others. He never murmured on account of the ceaseless intrusion of needy humanity. He kept no record of all He had to do, nor did He ever complain of it. "He went about doing good." His food and His drink were to do the will of Him who sent Him and to finish His work. To Him the poor and the needy, the heavy-laden and the heart-broken, the outcast and the wretched, the homeless and the stranger, the widow and the orphan, the diseased and the desolate, might all flock in the full assurance of finding in Him a fountain ever flowing and sending forth in all directions the abundant streams of living sympathy toward every possible form of human need. The door of His heart was always wide open. He never said to any son of want or child of sorrow, "I cannot rise and give thee." He was ready to "arise and go" with every needy applicant and His gracious word ever was "Give."

Such was Jesus when down here, and He is still "the very same, whose glory fills all heaven above." His door stands open so the vilest, the guiltiest and the neediest of sinners are welcome. They can have their crimson and scarlet sins washed away in His atoning blood. They can have pardon and peace, life and righteousness, heaven and its eternal weight of glory, all as the free gift of grace divine. And while on their way from grace to glory, they can have all the love of His heart and the strength of His shoulder — that heart which told forth its affection on the cross and that shoulder which shall bear up the pillars of divine government forever.

Now, Christian reader, permit the word of exhortation. Remember that Christ is your life and that Christianity is nothing less than the living exhibition of Christ in your daily walk. Christianity is not a set of opinions to be defended or a set of ordinances to be observed. It is far more than these. It expresses itself thus, "To me to live is Christ." This is Christianity. May we know and manifest its power! May we be more occupied with Him who is our life! Then we too shall keep the door of the heart open to the sorrows, the miseries, the wants and the woes of fallen and suffering humanity. We shall be ready to "rise and give" to every case of real need. If we cannot give "three loaves" or the price of them, we shall at least give the look of love, the word of kindness, the tear of sympathy, the words of fervent intercession. And in no case shall we allow ourselves to get into the attitude of intense selfishness expressed in the words, "he from within." "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

A MOTTO FOR THE NEW YEAR

Dear reader, we want you to accept a little motto for the year on which you have just entered. We think you will find it a precious motto for every year during which your Lord may see fit to leave you on this earth. It consists of two short but most weighty passages from the divine Volume. You will find them in Psalm 119. The first is this: "Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven" (v. 89). The second is, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (v. 11).

These are golden sentences for the present moment. They set forth the true place for the Word — "settled in heaven" and "hidden in the heart." Nor is this all; they also link the heart to the very throne of God by means of His own Word, thus giving to the Christian all the stability and all the moral security which the divine Word is capable of imparting.

We do not forget that to enter into the power and value of these words, there must be faith worked in the soul by the Holy Spirit. We would remember this. But our present subject is not faith nor yet the precious work of the Spirit of God, but simply the Word of God in its eternal stability and its holy authority. We esteem it an unspeakable mercy and privilege in the midst of all the strife and confusion, the discussion and controversy, the conflicting opinions and dogmas of men, the ever shifting sands of

human thought and feeling, to have something “settled.” It is a sweet relief and rest to the heart that perhaps has been tossed about for many a year on the troubled sea of human opinion, to find there is, in spite of all, that on which one may lean with all the calm confidence of faith and find therein divine and eternal stability.

What a mercy, in the face of the unrest and uncertainty of the present moment, to be able to say, “I have gotten something settled *forever* and *in heaven!*” What effect, we may ask, can the bold and insolent reasoning of infidelity or the sickly vapourings of superstition have upon the soul that can say, “My heart is linked to the throne of God by means of that Word which is settled forever in heaven?” None whatever. Infidelity and superstition, the two great agents of hell in this day in which we live, can only affect those who really have nothing settled, nothing fixed, no link with the throne and heart of God. The wavering and undecided — those who remain undecided between two opinions, who are looking this way and that way, who are afloat, who have no heaven, no anchorage — are in imminent danger of falling under the power of infidelity and superstition.

We invite the special attention of the young reader to all this. We would sound a warning note in the ears of such. The present is a moment of deep solemnity. The arch-enemy is putting forth every effort to sap the very foundations of Christianity. In all directions the divine authority and all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture is being called in question. Rationalism is gaining ground to a fearful extent at our seats of learning and polluting the fountains where the streams of religious thought and feeling are spreading over the land. Truth is discounted even among those who ought to be its guardians. We may now-a-days behold the strange sight of professing Christian teachers taking part at meetings where professed infidels preside. Sorrowfully, men who are professed infidels themselves may become pastors and teachers in that which calls itself the Church of God.

In the face of all this, how precious, how weighty is our motto, “Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven!” Nothing can touch this. It is above and beyond the reach of all the powers of earth and hell, men and demons. “The Word of our God shall stand forever.” The Lord be praised for the sweet and solid consolation of this!

But let us remember the counterpart: “Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” Here lies the great moral safeguard for the soul in this dark and evil day. To have God's Word hidden in the heart is the divine secret of being preserved from all the snares of the enemy and from all the evil influences which are at work around us. Satan and his agents can do absolutely nothing with a soul that reverently clings to Scripture. The man who has learned in the school of Christ, the force and meaning of that one commanding sentence, “It is written,” is safe against all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Dear reader, let us earnestly entreat you to ponder these things. Let us remind you that the one grand point for the people of God at all times is *obedience*. It is not a question of power or of gift or of external show or of numbers; it is simply a question of obedience. “To obey is better than sacrifice.” To obey what? The Church? No! The Church is a hopeless ruin and cannot therefore be an authority. Obey what? The Word of the Lord! What a rest for the heart! What authority for the path! What stability for the whole practical career! There is nothing like it. It tranquilizes the spirit in a wonderful manner and imparts a holy consistency to the character. It is a divine answer to those who talk of power, boast of numbers, point to external show and profess reverence for antiquity. Moreover, it is the divine antidote for the spirit of independence, so common at the present day, and for the haughty uprisings of the human will and the bold assertion of man's rights. The human mind is tossed like a ball from superstition to infidelity and can find no rest. It is like a ship without compass, rudder or anchor, driven

here and there.

Thanks be to God for all those to whom the Holy Spirit has applied our mottos.

REASON AND REVELATION

Feeling as we do the deep solemnity of the present time and the danger which besets the Christian's path on every side, we press upon our readers the immense importance of the Word of God and implicit subjection to its holy authority in all things.

We do not exactly feel called upon to take formal notice of attacks upon the Word. We look upon such attacks as the direct and positive work of Satan who is seeking in every possible way to shake the foundations of our most holy faith and to pave the way for the march of infidelity and blasphemy which will before long darken the whole civilized world. It is surely most appalling to think that the professed pastors and teachers of Christianity should be the very men to rise up and lay impious hands upon the pillars upon which Christianity stands. May the Lord have mercy upon them and open their eyes that they may see their folly, guilt and danger, and flee for refuge to that precious blood which cleanses from all sin!

Still, though we do not deem it our place to review or expose infidel books, we will raise a warning cry against the influence of infidel principles. We see in all directions an effort to humanize everything divine and sacred; to bring everything down to the level of man's blind and perverted reason; to exclude all that is mysterious, all that is heavenly and divine; to exalt reason and insult revelation; to shut out God. Yes, beloved reader, this is the enemy's grand effort — to shut out God and upset God's revelation. We look in one direction and we see professedly Christian teachers seeking to undermine Christianity. We turn our eyes to another direction and behold a so-called Christian bishop sitting in judgment upon the Pentateuch and defiantly denying its divine inspiration. We look again and see some daring to approach the profound mystery of the cross, *to speculate as medical men upon the causes of the death of Christ!*

We shudder at the contemplation. We ask, where are we? What will come next? Is God to be shut out in everything? Must He not speak at all? Is He to be refused a hearing if He utters a word which man's stupid reason cannot understand? Does faith come by reason and reason by the word of man? It would seem so. The rare and exquisite touches of the pen of inspiration must be tried by the clumsy rules of arithmetic or the far more clumsy rules of the infidel's moral sense. The precious sacrifice of the Son of God must be treated more as a subject for a doctor's case-book than as a holy mystery revealed in the pages of the Book of God.

May God preserve His saints in these perilous times! May he fill our hearts with a very deep sense of the solemnity of the present moment and lead us to keep close to Himself and to His Word! Then shall we be safe from every hostile influence. Then shall we not regard the sneer of the skeptic or the arguments of the infidel. We shall know where all such things come and where they go. Christ will be our enjoyed portion, His Word and Spirit our guide, His coming the hope of our hearts.

“NEVERTHELESS”

The word which forms the heading of this paper occurs in Ephesians 5: 33. It is a very important word, indicating what we are all so prone to forget, that there are two sides to every question, and in particular to the great question before the apostle's mind in this passage. He is speaking of the subject of marriage and of the relative duties of husband and wife, and he uses as an illustration, “The great mystery of Christ and the Church.”

There are two sides to this subject. There is a heavenly side and there is an earthly side. We want them both. We cannot dispense with either, and the Holy Spirit has, in His infinite wisdom, bound them together by the little word “nevertheless.” And what God has joined together let not man put asunder! It is blessedly true that the Church's relation to Christ is heavenly. The Church is called to know, rejoice in, feed upon, walk with, follow and be conformed to a heavenly Christ.

All this is vital and fundamental truth which cannot for a moment be given up or lost sight of, without giving up, so far, the heavenly side of Christianity.

But are we not in danger of forgetting the *practical application* of all this to our present walk on the earth amid the stern realities of actual life day by day? Are not husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, *earthly* relationships? Unquestionably. True, they are formed upon a heavenly model and to be carried out after a heavenly pattern, as they also rest upon a heavenly base. Still they are relationships in nature, formed on the earth and to be carried out in daily life. There will be no such relationships in heaven. They do not belong to the resurrection-state. They belong to nature, to earth, to our time-condition, and we are called to walk in them as Christian men, women and children, and to glorify God by our spirit and temper and manner, our whole deportment therein, from hour to hour and day to day.

Thus, for example, of what use is it for a man to speak of lofty theories respecting the heavenly relationship of Christ and the Church while he fails every day of his life in his earthly relationship as a husband? His wife is neglected. She may be treated coldly or harshly. She is not nourished, cherished, sustained and ministered to according to the heavenly model of Christ and His Church.

No doubt, the same pointed question may be asked in reference to the wife and to all the other sacred relationships of our earthly and natural existence, for “there are two sides to every question.”

Hence the very great importance of the apostle's “nevertheless.” It has wide application. It is most evident that the Holy Spirit anticipated the need of such a qualifying, modifying, regulating clause when, having commented upon the heavenly side of the subject of marriage, He adds, “Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

Christian reader, let us remember the two sides. Let us deeply ponder the inspired “Nevertheless.” We may rest assured there is a need for it. There is the most urgent need of the practical application of divine and heavenly truth to our natural relationships and earthly ways. We have to remember that God recognizes nature, else why have we marriage? *Flesh is not recognized, but nature is*, and even admitted as a teacher (see 1 Corinthians 11: 14). We are not yet *actually* in heaven. We are there, thank God, as to our standing, there in spirit, there in principle, there by faith. Our life, our portion, our hope, our home is there because Christ is there.

But we are here on this earth, called to represent Christ in this world as He represents us in heaven. God views us as men, women and children, called to tread the sand of the desert and to meet the positive realities of daily life. Life is a reality, an actual bona fide practical reality. And our God has provided for us in view of this fact, by the priestly ministry of Christ on high and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Holy Scripture here below. We must have what is real to meet what is real. We are not called, thank God, to be occupied with visionary notions, with empty theories, with a powerless sentimentality, nor even with one-sided truth. No; we are called to be real, genuine, sound, practical Christian men, women and children. We are called to display in our daily history here on this earth, the practical results of that which we know and enjoy by faith in heaven. In one word, we must never forget that when the very highest truths are being unfolded before us, there is a healthful and holy

application of these truths indicated by the inspired “Nevertheless.”

HEADSHIP AND LORDSHIP

It is deeply interesting and most profitable to mark the varied lines of truth laid down in the Word of God and to note how all these lines stand inseparably linked with the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the divine Center of all truth. It is as we keep the eye of faith steadily fixed on Him that each truth will find its right place in our souls and exert its due influence and formative power over our course and character.

There is in all of us a tendency to be one-sided, to take up some one particular truth and press it to such a degree as to interfere with the healthy action of some other truth and hinder the growth of our souls. It is by *the* truth, not *some* truth, we grow; by the truth we are sanctified. But if we only take a part of the truth; if our character is molded and our way shaped by some particular truth, there can be no real growth, no true sanctification. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2: 2). “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth” (John 17: 17). It is by the whole truth of God as contained in the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit forms and fashions and leads in the Church collectively and in each individual believer. And we may rest assured that where some special truth is unduly pressed or some other truth practically ignored, there must be as a result a defective character and an inadequate testimony.

Take for example the two great subjects named at the head of this article — “Headship and Lordship.” Is it not important to give each of these truths its due place? Is not Christ Head of His body the Church as well as Lord of the individual members? And, if so, should not our conduct be ruled and our character formed by the spiritual application of the former as well as the latter? Unquestionably. Well then, if we think of Christ as Head, it leads us into a very distinct and a very practical range of truth. It will not interfere with the truth of His Lordship, but will tend to keep the soul well balanced, which is so needful in days like the present. If we think only of Christ as Lord of His servants individually, we shall entirely lose the sense of our relationship one to another as members of that one body of which He is the Head. Then we shall be drawn away into mere independency, acting without the slightest reference to our fellow members. Each will stand out in his own intense individuality, practically disowning all vital connection with his brethren.

On the other hand when the truth of Christ's Headship gets its proper place in our souls — when we know and believe that “there is one body” and we are members one of another — then we will most fully own that each one of us, in our individual path and service, is responsible to the “one Lord.” It will follow as a grand practical result that our walk and ways are affecting every member of the body of Christ on earth. “If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.” We can no longer view ourselves as independent, isolated atoms, seeing we are incorporated as members of “one body” by “one Spirit” and thus linked with the “one Head” in heaven.

This great doctrine is clearly and fully unfolded in Romans 12: 3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12, to which we beg the reader's serious attention. Be it remembered that this truth of Christ's Headship and our membership is not a thing of the past merely; it is a present reality, a grand formative truth to be tenaciously held and practically carried out from day to day. “There is one body.” This holds good today, just as thoroughly as when the inspired apostle penned the epistle to the Ephesians. Hence it follows that each individual believer is exerting a good or a bad influence upon other believers.

Does this seem incredible? If so, it is only to carnal reason and blind unbelief. Surely we cannot reduce the Church of God, the body of Christ, to a matter of geographical position. That Church, that body, is united by what? Life? No. Faith? No. By what, then? *By God the Holy Spirit!* Old Testament

saints had life and faith, but what could they have known about a Head in heaven or a body on earth? Nothing whatever. If anyone had spoken to Abraham about being a member of a body, he would not have understood it. How could he? There was nothing of the kind existing. There was no Head in heaven and hence there could be no body on earth. True, the eternal Son was in heaven as a divine Person in the eternal Trinity, but He was not there as a glorified Man or as Head of a body.

Even in the days of His flesh, we hear Him saying, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." No union, no Headship, no membership, no vital connection until *after* His death upon the cross. It was not until redemption became an accomplished fact that heaven beheld that wonder of wonders — glorified humanity on the throne of God. The counterpart of that was God the Holy Spirit dwelling in men upon earth. Old Testament saints would have understood Lordship, but not Headship. This latter had no existence except in the eternal purpose of God. It did not exist in fact until Christ took His seat on high, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hence this truth of Headship is most glorious and precious. It claims the earnest attention of the Christian reader. We would solemnly and earnestly entreat him not to regard it as a mere speculation, as a matter of no importance. Let him be assured it is a great fundamental truth, having its source in a risen Christ in glory; its foundation in accomplished redemption; its present sphere of display, this earth; its power of development, the Holy Spirit; its authority, in the New Testament.

DAVID'S THREE ATTITUDES

In the course of David's most eventful and deeply instructive history, we find him presented by the pen of inspiration in three remarkable attitudes — lying as a penitent; sitting as a worshiper; standing as a servant. We also hear his utterances in these attitudes. The seeing and the hearing are full of deep moral instruction for our souls. May the Holy Spirit enable us to profit by it! May He guide our thoughts as we look at and listen to King David as a penitent, a worshiper and a servant! First, we have him:

Lying as a Penitent

"And David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the earth" (2 Sam. 12: 16). Here we have David lying upon the earth in the attitude of a true penitent. The arrow of conviction had entered his conscience. Nathan's pointed word, "Thou art the man," had fallen with divine power upon his heart. He takes his place in the dust, conscience-smitten and heart-broken before God.

Such is the attitude. Let us now listen to the utterance. We find it in Psalm 51. And what an utterance! How fully in keeping with the attitude! "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." This is real work. The penitent places his sins side by side with the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God. This was the very best thing for him to do. The best place for a convicted conscience is the presence of divine mercy. When a convicted sinner and divine love meet, there is a speedy settlement of the question of sin. It is the joy of God to pardon sin. He delights in mercy. Judgment is His strange work. He will cause us to feel the sinfulness of sin, to judge it, to hate it. He will never work with untempered mortar or cry *peace* where there is no peace. He will send the arrow home. But, blessed be His name, the arrow from *His* quiver is sure to be followed by the love of His heart. The wound which His arrow inflicts will be healed by the precious balm which His love ever applies. This is the order: "Thou art the man," "I have sinned against the Lord," "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

Yes, beloved reader, sin must be judged in the conscience. And the more thoroughly it is judged the better. We greatly dread a superficial work of conscience — a false peace. We like to see the

conscience probed to its deepest depths by the action of the Word and the Spirit of God. We want to see the grand question of sin and righteousness fully discussed and finally settled in the heart.

We have to bear in mind that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and in this dangerous character, it is quite possible he may endeavor to lead souls into a kind of false peace and happiness not founded upon the cross as the divine provision for the sinner's deepest need. We should deeply ponder those weighty words in the parable of the sower. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the Word and immediately with joy receiveth it: yet hath he no root in himself, but endureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended" (Matt. 13: 20-21).

Mark the words, "Immediately, with joy receiveth it." There is no deep work of conscience, no moral judgment of self or of sin, and as a consequence, no depth of root, no power of endurance. This is very solemn and worthy of the most profound consideration at the present moment. We cannot too carefully ponder the connection between the expressions, "Immediately, with joy," "No root," "Withered away." There is great danger of a merely *intellectual* reception of the plan of salvation, apart from any spiritual work in the conscience. This is frequently attended with the most joyous emotions. The natural feelings are worked upon, but the truth has not penetrated the heart. There has been no furrow made by the action of the Word. Hence, when the time of trial comes, there is no power of continuance. It is found to be mere surface work which cannot stand the action of the sun's scorching rays.

Now, let not the reader suppose that we attach undue importance to conscience-work in the matter of conversion. We are fully persuaded that it is the Christ we reach and not the way we reach Him, that saves our souls. Moreover, the foundation of the soul's peace is not a certain process or exercise of any kind, whether of the heart, the conscience or the understanding. It is the divinely-effective sacrifice of the Son of God that purges the conscience and imparts peace to the convicted soul. It is the assurance on God's authority, received by the grace of the Holy Spirit, that the momentous question of sin was settled once and forever on the cross, that liberates the soul and gives a peace which nothing can ever disturb.

All this is so plain that if anyone were to say to us, "I have peace because I have passed through such deep exercises of conscience," we would without hesitation tell him he was self-deceived. It was not an exercise of conscience that ever satisfied the claims of God; therefore it is not an exercise of conscience that can ever satisfy the earnest cravings of a convicted soul. Christ is all, and having Him we want no more.

We deem it a thorough mistake for persons to build anything on the *mode* of their conversion. It is, in point of fact, affording the enemy an advantage over them which he is sure to use in shaking their confidence. The ground of the believer's peace is not that he was converted in such and such a manner — that he felt so deeply and wept so much, or struggled so hard or prayed so fervently. All these things have their place and their value. We do not suppose that Paul ever forgot the moment between Jerusalem and Damascus, but we are sure he never built his peace upon the remarkable circumstances of his conversion. Luther could never forget his two years in the monastery, but Luther never built his peace upon the profound exercises of those years. Bunyan could never forget the despondency, but Bunyan never built his peace upon the mental anguish which he tasted therein.

No doubt, the exercises through which these three remarkable men passed, exerted a very important influence on their future course and character, both as Christians and as ministers, but the ground of their peace was not anything they had felt or passed through, but simply what Christ had

done for them on the cross. Thus it must ever be; Christ is all and in all. It is not Christ and a process, but Christ alone. Let souls ever remember this and let it be well understood that, while we press upon our readers the immense importance of a deep and thorough work of conscience, we do not want them to build upon the work *in* their conscience but upon Christ's work *on the cross*. It is the work accomplished *for* us and not the work done in us, that saves our souls. True, they are intimately connected and must not be separated, but they are thoroughly distinct and must not be confounded. We can know nothing of the work accomplished for us except by the work worked in us, but just in proportion to the depth and intensity of the work done in us, will be the clearness and fixedness of our rest in the work done for us.

But there is another point in reference to which we are anxious to avoid misunderstanding. Some might suppose that the object of our remarks on David *as a penitent* is to prove that unless we have passed through precisely the same exercises, we have no just ground for believing we are really regenerated. This would be a grave mistake. First, David had been a child of God long before that solemn moment on which we have been meditating.* Further, David found his relief, not in any exercises within, but in communications from without, not on the fact that the arrow had entered his heart in the words, "Thou art the man" and drawn forth the penitential cry, "I have sinned against the Lord." No; but upon the precious truth conveyed to him in the words, "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

{*The reader will bear in mind that, in speaking of "David's three attitudes," we do not present them in their historical order, but simply view them as illustrating three grand points in the spiritual history of God's people.}

Finally, let not a damper be cast upon souls because the earliest moments of their spiritual history were characterized, not by profound penitential exercises, but rather by the most peaceful and happy emotions. It is impossible that the "glad tidings" of salvation can do anything else but gladden the believing soul. There was great joy in Samaria when Philip preached Christ to them, and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing when he learned that Jesus had died for his sins. How could it be otherwise? How could anyone believe in the forgiveness of sins and not be made happy by the belief? Impossible. "Glad tidings of great joy" must make the poor heart glad.

*"Forgiveness 'twas a joyful sound,
To us when lost and doomed to die."*

Surely it was. But does this fact interfere in the smallest degree with the value of a deep and thorough work of the Spirit of God in the conscience? By no means. A hungry man values bread, and although he will not think of feeding upon the pangs of hunger, yet the pangs of hunger make him value the bread. So it is with the soul. It is not saved by penitential exercises, but the deeper its exercises, the more solid its grasp of Christ and the more steady and vigorous its practical Christianity.

The simple fact, beloved reader, is this. We see in the present day a fearful amount of flippant, easy-going, airy Christianity, so called, which we greatly dread. We meet with many who seem to have attained a kind of false peace and frothy happiness without any real exercise of conscience or any application of the power of the cross to nature and its ways. These are stony-ground hearers. There is no root, no depth, no power, no permanency. And not only are such persons self-deceived, but the tone and aspect of their profession are, among other influences, forming the channel along which the tide of infidelity shall soon roll its poisonous and desolating waters. We believe that cold, powerless orthodoxy and flippant, formal, airy profession are, just as thoroughly as dark and degrading superstition, paving the way for that infidelity which shall yet cast its mantle over the whole civilized world.

This is a deeply solemn thought, but we dare not withhold it from our readers. We long to see a more effective testimony for Christ, a more earnest discipleship, a more thorough self-surrender and whole-hearted consecration to the name and cause of Christ. For this we sigh, for this we pray, but we certainly do not expect to find it amid the ranks of those who have never known much exercise of conscience or tasted the power of the cross of Christ.

However, we must not anticipate a line of thought which may come before us as we proceed with our subject. We shall, with God's blessing, see in David a noble illustration of personal devotedness. Meanwhile, let us contemplate him in the second of his remarkable attitudes:

Sitting as a Worshiper

In the opening of 2 Samuel 7 we find David sitting in his house of cedar and surveying the many and varied mercies with which the hand of Jehovah had surrounded him. "And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies, that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the Lord is with thee."

David would build a house for God. But he was not the man, nor was it the time for that. Nathan is dispatched to correct the mistake. The service was well-meant, but that was not sufficient. It must be well-timed as well as well-meant. David had shed much blood. Moreover, there were enemies and evil at hand. There were also deeper lessons of grace in which David had to be instructed. God had done much for him, but all that had been done in the past was as nothing compared with what was yet to be done in the future. If a house of cedar was a great thing, how much greater was an everlasting house and kingdom. The Lord telleth thee, that "He will make thee an house." This was reversing the matter altogether. The doings of the past were full of grace; the doings of the future would be full of glory. The hand of electing love had lifted David from the sheepfold to place him on the throne of Israel. "And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast also spoken of Thy servant's house for a great while to come." The past and the future are both brought in brilliant array before the vision of King David and he has only to bow his head and worship.

"Then went King David in and sat before the Lord, and he said, who am I, O Lord God?" Here we have David's second attitude. Instead of going out to build for the Lord, he went in and sat before the Lord. There is great moral beauty and power in this. To an unintelligent eye he might have seemed to be in a very useless attitude, but no one can ever stand as a servant who has not sat as a worshiper. We must have to do *with* the Lord before we can act *for* the Lord. Show us a man who has really occupied the place of a worshiper and we will show you one who, when he rises to his feet, will prove an effective servant.

Be it noted, it is one thing to sit before the Lord and another thing to sit before *our* work or service or preaching or circumstances or experiences — *our* anything. How often are we tempted to sit down and gaze at or think about *our* various exploits, even though these may be ostensibly in the Lord's work? This is sure to bring weakness. Nothing can be more miserable than self-occupation. It is right enough to feel thankful if the Lord has used us in any department of work, but let us beware of keeping self before our eyes in any shape or form, directly or indirectly. Let us not be found surveying the various things in which we are engaged, the different interests we have or the varied spheres of action in which we take part. All this tends to puff up nature, while it leaves the soul barren and impoverished.

Mark the difference! "Then went king David in and sat before the Lord, and said, who am I?" "I" is sure to fall into obscurity and oblivion when we sit before the Lord. We hardly know which to admire most, the attitude or the utterance. "He sat" and he said, "Who am I." Both are lovely, both in

exquisite moral order. May we know more of their deep meaning and immense practical power! May we prove what it is to sit in the divine presence and there lose sight of self and all its belongings!

We do not attempt to enter upon an exposition of Psalm 51 which is David's utterance as a penitent, nor yet of 2 Samuel 7 which gives us his utterance as a worshiper. We merely introduce these precious Scriptures to the reader and pass on in the third place, to look at David's:

Standing As A Servant

“Then David the king stood up upon his feet” (1 Chr. 28: 2). This completes the picture of this lovely character. We have seen him lying on the earth with the arrow of conviction piercing his conscience and the chastening rod of God held over him. We have seen him seated in the sanctuary, surveying the actings of grace in the past and anticipating the bright beams of glory in the future. And now we see him rising into the attitude of a truehearted servant to lay himself and his resources at Jehovah's feet. All is intensely real. The penitential cry, the aspirations of the worshiper, the words of devotedness and consecration — all is deep, fervent and genuine. “I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God.” “Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of God.” What self-forgetting devotedness is here! David was not to have the honor of building the house, but what was that to one who had found his place in the sanctuary and learned to say, “Who am I?” It was all the same to David who was to build the home. It was the house of his God and that was enough. The strength of his hand, the love of his heart and the resources of his treasury were all willingly devoted to such an object.

We would like to pause here to enlarge, but we must close. May the Holy Spirit apply these things to our hearts by His mighty power. Christian reader, do you not long for more whole-hearted devotedness? Do you not sigh after a more lofty consecration of yourself and all you have to Christ and His cause in the earth? Well then, just get a little nearer to Him. Seek to be more in His presence. You have risen up from the attitude of a penitent, go now and sit and gaze and worship. Then when the proper occasion arises, you will be ready to occupy the position of an effective servant.

“GAIN TO ME”

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Phil. 3: 7). What a marvelous change! Saul had many sources of gain. He had gathered many honors around his name. He had made progress in Judaism beyond many of his equals. He had achieved a legal righteousness in which no man could find a flaw. His zeal, his knowledge and his morality were of the very highest order. But from the moment Christ was revealed to him, there was a thorough revolution. Everything was changed. *His* righteousness, *his* learning, *his* morality, all that could in any wise be gain to Paul, became as dung. He does not speak of open sins, but of those things that could justly be esteemed as gain to him. The revelation of the glory of Christ had so completely changed the entire current of Paul's thoughts, that the very things which he had once esteemed as positive gain, he now regarded as positive loss.

Why? Simply because he had found his all in Christ. That blessed One had supplanted everything in Paul's heart. All that belonged to Paul was displaced by Christ. Hence it would have involved actual loss to possess any righteousness or wisdom, holiness or morality of his own, seeing that he had found all these in divine perfectness in Christ.

If Christ is made of God unto me righteousness, is it not a loss to me to have any righteousness of my own? Surely. If I have gotten that which is divine, have I any need of that which is human? Clearly not. The more completely I am stripped and emptied of everything in which “I” could glory or which

would be gain to “me,” the better, inasmuch as it only renders me all the more entitled to a full and all-sufficient Christ. Whatever it be that tends to exalt self, whether it be religiousness, morality, respectability, wealth, glory, personal beauty, intelligence or philanthropy, it is a positive hindrance to our enjoyment of Christ as both the foundation of the conscience and as the object of the heart. May the Spirit of God make Christ more precious to us!

THE SUFFICIENCY AND AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

We agree with you in saying, “I recognize the voice of Jesus alone in His Word.” Where else could we hear it? It is upon that blessed Word we are cast for everything. It is the solid foundation on which faith reposes. We want nothing else to give us full assurance but His faithful Word. No outward evidence, no inward feeling can possibly add to the truth and stability of the Word. How do I know I am a sinner? By the Word. How do I know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? By the Word. How do I know that my sins are forgiven? Is it by my feelings? No, but by the Word. That Word tells me that “Christ hath once suffered for sins.” But how do I know He suffered for my sins? Because the Word says, “the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” I know I am “unjust” because the Word tells me so. Hence Christ suffered for my sins and I am forgiven according to the effectiveness of Christ's atoning suffering. I am brought to God according to the virtue and value of the Person and work of Christ. “He was delivered for my offenses and raised again for my justification.” Thus, “being justified by faith, I have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Dear friend, you must lean like a little child on the Word. True, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit we believe in and feed upon the Word, but the Word is the solid foundation on which your precious soul must ever rest. May all your doubts and fears vanish in the pure and precious light of that Word which is “settled forever in heaven!”

You know from where such an infidel thought proceeds. It is from the father of lies. Treat it as such. Judge it and reject it utterly. It seems strange that after knowing the Lord for 40 years, you should even for a moment be troubled by the suggestion of one whom you know to be “a liar from the beginning.” Ask a poor ignorant man how he knows the sun shines. Ask a simple believer how he knows the Bible is the Word of God. He will tell you he has felt its power. Has not the Holy Spirit given you to feel the power of the Word of God? If God cannot make me know that it is He who speaks to me in His Word, who else can?

Were we merely to believe in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures from human testimony — be that testimony ever so powerful — it would not be faith at all. I believe what God says because He says it, not because of any human authority. If all the fathers who ever wrote, all the doctors who ever taught, all the councils that ever sat, all the angels in heaven and all the saints upon earth, were to agree in declaring the Bible is the Word of God and we were to believe on their testimony, it would not be divinely-given faith. On the other hand, were all to agree in declaring the Bible is not the Word of God, it could not for a moment shake our confidence in that peerless revelation. Fling back, dear friend, at once into the enemy's teeth his foul and blasphemous suggestion and rest like a little child in the love and truth of that blessed One whom you have known for so many years.

We have not seen the book to which you refer, and judging from the extract which you have sent us, we have no desire to see it. We heartily and reverently believe in the absolute inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, given of God in the Hebrew and Greek languages. No doubt errors are found in various versions, copies and translations. We speak only of the Scriptures as given of God.

Oh, dear friend, what an unspeakable comfort to have a divine revelation! What should we do, where should we run if we were left to men's thoughts on the subject? What a poor affair it would be

for us if we had to look to men to accredit the Word of God! They would very soon rob us of its authority and value. What impudent presumption for poor worms of the earth to dare to sit in judgment upon the Word of God, to pronounce upon what is and what is not worthy of God! If God cannot make us understand His Word, if He cannot give us the assurance that it is He Himself who speaks to us in Holy Scriptures, what are we to do? Can man manage the matter better? If God cannot make us understand His Word, no man can; if He does, no man need. We should earnestly counsel you, dear friend, to fling aside all such books, however highly commended.

Sadly, it seems to be the fashion today, in quarters where we should least expect it, to commend in most glowing terms all sorts of infidel books and blasphemous attacks upon the Word of God and the Person of Christ. We judge it to be a very great mistake indeed for Christians to read such books, unless they are called and fitted of God to expose them. Would you read a book entitled, "A treatise seeking to prove that two and three do not make five?" We hardly think you would. If God has graciously given you to rest by faith upon His eternal Word, what more do you want? Infidel books cannot help you. God is His own interpreter in Scripture as well as in providence. Would you think of turning to some skeptical or rationalistic book to help you in the solution of the mysteries of God's government? We trust not. Then why turn to such for a judgment as to inspiration? We cannot refrain from quoting for you that magnificent passage in 2 Timothy 3: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

We greatly fear, dear friend, you were not under the cover of the shield of faith while reading this book of which you speak, but we earnestly pray that your precious soul may be enabled to fling off with calm decision any dark and skeptical suggestions which may be troubling you and to return to the eternal stability of divine revelation. God grant it in His infinite mercy.

The inspired Volume carries its own credentials with it. It speaks for itself. It comes to us with an overwhelming body of evidence, both internal and external. The Apocrypha, on the contrary, carried its own condemnation. It contains passages which you have only to read to be convinced that they were never inspired by the Spirit of God. We reject it on the ground of evidence, both internal and external.

The word in 1 Corinthians 11: 2 should be rendered "traditions" or "directions." The apostle does not specify what they were, but thank God, we know that whatever ordinances, traditions or directions are essential for the Church to the end of time, are clearly laid down in the Scriptures of the New Testament. This is quite enough for us. Men have no authority whatever to set up rites and ceremonies in the Church of God; their doing so can only be regarded by every heart loyal to Christ as a daring usurpation of His authority which He will most assuredly judge before long.

We feel increasingly impressed, dear friend, with a sense of the urgent need of testing everything by the Word of God and of rejecting whatever cannot stand the test. It is not only deeply sorrowful, but most solemn to mark the way in which the authority of Christ as laid down in His precious Word is virtually set aside by those who profess to be His people and His servants. It never seems to occur to people that they are really responsible before God to judge by the light of His Word, the various things in which they are engaged. Hence they go on from week to week and year to year with a whole host of things having not a shadow of foundation in Holy Scripture. How appalling to think of the end of all this! It will not be with a scourge of small cords that all these things will be driven out of the temple! May God the Holy Spirit arouse by His mighty ministry, the whole Church to a more profound sense of

the supreme authority and all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures!

May all the Lord's dear people be kept from the spirit of the age! We want to cultivate a truly humble contrite spirit, a spirit of lowly obedience, a spirit which shall lead us to bow down with unreserved submission to the authority of Holy Scripture. "It is written" is a sentence of commanding power. It is a sentence uttered by our blessed Lord and Master at the opening of His public career and referred to again and again in the course of His marvelous ministry. It was reiterated with solemn emphasis to His disciples as He was about to pass into the heavens. May this weighty sentence be engraved on the tablets of our hearts!

If we were asked to state what we consider to be the one grand need of the day in which our lot is cast, we would say without hesitation, we want to give the Word of God its true place as the basis of our individual peace and the sole and all-sufficient authority for our individual path. Let us unite, beloved friend, in earnest prayer to our God that He will give us grace so to do, to the praise of His holy name.