

Short Papers — Section 3 of 10.

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PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Deuteronomy 20: 1-9.

Privilege and responsibility! Yes, this is the divine order, and how important it is in dealing with the things of God to place them in the order in which He places them and leave them there! The human mind is ever prone to displace things. Hence it is that we so frequently find the responsibilities which belong to the people of God, pressed upon those who are yet in their sins. This is a great mistake. I must be in a position before I can fulfill the responsibilities attaching thereto. I must be in a relationship before I can know the affections which belong to it. If I am not a father, how can I know or exhibit the affections of a father's heart? Impossible. I may speak about them and attempt to describe them, but in order to feel them I must be a father.

Thus it is in the things of God. I must be in a position before I can enter into the responsibilities which belong to it. I must be in a relationship before I can understand the affections which flow out of it. Man has been tested in every possible way. He has been tried in creation. He has been tried under divine government. He has been tried under law. He has been tried with ordinances. He has been tried by the ministry of the prophets. He has been tried by the ministry of righteousness in the person of John the Baptist. He has been tried by the ministry of grace in the person of Christ. He has been tried by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. What has been the result? Total failure! An unbroken chain of testimony from Paradise to Pentecost has only tended to make manifest man's utter failure in every possible way. In every position of responsibility in which man has been set, he has broken down. Not so much as a single exception can be shown.

So much for man's responsibility. He has proven himself unfaithful in everything. He has not a single inch of ground to stand upon. He has destroyed himself, but in God is his help. Grace has come in, in the Person of Christ, and perfectly met man's desperate case. The cross is the divine remedy for all the ruin, and by that cross the believer is introduced into a place of divine and everlasting privilege. Christ has met all the need, answered all the demands, discharged all the responsibilities, and having done so by His death upon the cross, He has become in resurrection, the basis of all the believer's privileges. We have all in Christ, and we get Him, not because we have fulfilled our responsibilities, but because God loved us even when we had failed in everything. We find ourselves, unconditionally, in a place of unspeakable privilege. We did not work ourselves into it, we did not weep ourselves into it, we did not pray ourselves into it, we did not fast ourselves into it. We were taken up from the depth of our ruin, from that deep pit into which we had fallen as a result of having failed in all our responsibilities. We have been set down by God's free grace in a position of unspeakable blessedness and privilege, of which nothing can ever deprive us. Not all the powers of hell and earth combined, not all the evil of Satan and his emissaries, not all the power of sin, death and the grave, arrayed in their most terrific form, can ever rob the believer in Jesus of that place of privilege in which, through grace, he stands.

My reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this. We do not reach our place of privilege as the result of faithfulness in the place of responsibility. Quite the reverse. We have failed in everything. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We deserved death, but we have

received life. We deserved hell, but we have received heaven. We deserved eternal wrath, but we have received eternal favor. Grace has entered the scene and it “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Hence, in the economy of grace, *privilege* becomes the basis of responsibility, and this is beautifully illustrated in the passage of Scripture which stands at the head of this paper. I shall quote it for my reader. “When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them, for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people and shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel; ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies; let not your hearts faint; fear not and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

Here we have Israel's privileges distinctly set forth. “The Lord thy God is with thee,” and that in the very character in which He had brought them out of the land of Egypt. He was with them in the power of that sovereign grace which had delivered them from the iron grasp of Pharaoh and the iron bondage of Egypt, which had conducted them through the sea and led them across “the great and terrible wilderness.” This made victory sure. No enemy could possibly stand before Jehovah acting in unqualified grace on behalf of His people.

Let my reader note carefully that there is not a single condition proposed by the priest in the above quotation. He states in the most absolute way, the relationship and consequent privilege of the Israel of God. He does not say, “The Lord thy God will be with you, *if* you do so and so.” This would not be the proper language of one who stood before the people of God as the exponent of those privileges which grace had conferred upon them. Grace proposes no conditions, raises no barriers, makes no stipulations. Its language is, “The Lord thy God is with thee... He goeth with you... to fight for you... to save you.” When Jehovah fights for His people they are sure of victory. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Grant me but this, that God is with me, and I argue full victory over every spiritual foe.

Thus much as to the question of privilege. Let us now turn to the question of responsibility.

“And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard and hath not yet eaten of it? Let him also go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her. And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.”

There is uncommon moral beauty in the order in which the priest and the officer are introduced in this passage. The former is the exponent of Israel's privileges; the latter, of Israel's responsibilities. How interesting it is to see that, before the officers were permitted to address the assembly on the question of responsibility, the priest had established them in the knowledge of their precious privilege. Imagine the case reversed. Suppose the officer's voice had first been heard. What would have been the result? Fear, depression and discouragement! To press responsibility before I know my position — to call for affections before I am in the relationship — is to place an intolerable yoke upon the neck, an insufferable burden upon the shoulder. This is not God's way. If you search from Genesis to Revelation,

you will find, without so much as a single exception, that the divine order is privilege and then responsibility. Set me upon the rock of privilege and I am in a position to understand and fulfill my responsibility, but talk to me of responsibility while yet in the pit of ruin, the mire of legality or the ditch of despondency, and you rob me of all hope of ever rising into that hallowed sphere upon which the sunlight of divine favor pours itself in living luster, and where alone responsibilities can be discharged to the glory of the name of Jesus.

Some talk to us of “gospel conditions.” Whoever heard of a gospel fenced with conditions? We can understand law-conditions, but a gospel with conditions is “a different gospel” (Gal. 1: 6-7). Conditions to be fulfilled by the creature pertain not to the gospel, but to the law. Man has been tried under all possible conditions. And what has been the result? Failure! Yes, failure only, failure continually. Man is a ruin, a wreck, bankrupt. Of what use can it ever be to place such an one under conditions, even though you call them “gospel conditions?” None whatever!

Man, under any kind of conditions, can only prove unfaithful. He has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. He has been condemned, root and branch. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” It does not say, “they who are in the *body*.” No, but “they that are in the *flesh*.” The believer is not in the flesh, though in the body. He is not looked at in his old creation standing, in his old Adamic condition in which he has been tried and condemned. Christ has come down and died under the full weight of his guilt. He has taken the sinner's place with all its liabilities, and by His death settled everything. He lay in the grave after having answered every claim and silenced every enemy — justice, law, sin, death, wrath, judgment, Satan, everything and everyone. There lay the divine Surety in the silent tomb, and God entered the scene, raised Him from the dead, set Him at His own right hand in the heavens, sent down the Holy Spirit to testify to a risen and exalted Savior, and to unite to Him, as thus risen and exalted, all who believe in His name.

Here, then, we get onto new ground altogether. We can now listen to the officer as he tells out in our hearing the claims of Christ upon all those who are united to Him. The priest has spoken to us and told us of the imperishable ground which we occupy, the indestructible relationship in which we stand, and now we are in a position to listen to the one who stands before us as the exponent of our high and holy responsibilities. Had “the officer” come first, we should have fled from his presence, discouraged and dismayed by the weight and solemnity of his words, and giving utterance to the despairing inquiry, “Who then can be saved?” But, inasmuch as “the priest” — the minister of grace, the exponent of privilege — has set us upon our feet in the new creation and strengthened our hearts by unfolding the unconditional grace in which we stand, we can listen to the “commandments” of the officer and find them “not grievous,” because they come to us from off the mercy-seat.

And what does the officer say to us? Just this: “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.” This is the sum and substance of the officer's message. He demands on the part of God's warriors, a disentangled heart. It is not a question of salvation, of being a child of God, of being a true Israelite. It is simply a question of ability to wage an effective warfare, and clearly, a man cannot fight well if his heart is entangled with “a house,” “a vineyard” or “a wife.”

It was not a question of *having* such things. By no means. Thousands of those who went forth to tread the battlefield and gather the spoils of victory, had houses and lands and domestic ties. The officers had no quarrel with the possessors of these things. The only point was, not to be *entangled* with them. The apostle does not say, “No man that warreth engages in the affairs of this life.” Had he said this, we should all have to live in idleness and isolation, whereas he distinctly teaches us, elsewhere, that, “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.” The grand point is to keep the heart disentangled.

God's warriors must have free hearts, and the only way to be free is to cast all our care upon Him who cares for us. I can stand in the battlefield with a free heart when I have placed my house, my vineyard and my wife in the divine keeping.

Further, God's warriors must have courageous hearts as well as free hearts. "The fearful and the faint-hearted" can never stand in the battle or wear the laurel of victory. Our hearts must be disentangled from the world and be bold by reason of our absolute confidence in God. Be it well remembered that these things are not "gospel conditions," but gospel results — a deeply-important distinction. What a mistake to speak of gospel conditions! It is simply the old leaven of legality presented in a new and strange form, and dubbed with a name which is a contradiction. If those precious clusters which are the result of union with the Living Vine, be set forth as the necessary conditions of that union, what must become of the sinner? Where shall we get them if not in Christ? And how do we become united to Christ? Is it by conditions? No, but by faith.

May the Holy Spirit instruct my reader as to the divine order of "privilege and responsibility!"

EXHORTATION

There are few things less understood than the real nature of exhortation. We are apt to attach an idea of legal effort to that word which is quite foreign to it. Divine exhortation always assumes that a certain relationship exists, that a certain standing is enjoyed, that certain privileges are understood. The Spirit never exhorts except on a divine basis. For example, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God" (Rom. 12: 1). Here we have an excellent example of divine exhortation. "The mercies of God" are first put before us in all their fullness, brightness and preciousness, before we are called to hear the voice of exhortation.

Again, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4: 30). Here we are exhorted on the settled ground of our being "sealed." He does not say, "Grieve not the Spirit, lest ye be eternally lost." Such would not be in keeping with the true character of divine exhortation. We "are sealed," not as long as we behave ourselves, but "until the day of redemption." It is absolutely done, and this is the powerful reason why we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit. If that which is the eternal seal of God, set upon us until the day of redemption, be the Holy Spirit, how careful should we be not to grieve Him.

Again, "Since ye then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Col. 3: 1). As those who are risen, what should we seek but "things above?" We do not seek these things in order to be risen, but because we *are* risen. In other words the solid basis of our standing is laid down by the Spirit of grace, before ever the voice of exhortation falls on the ear. This is divine. Anything else would be mere legality. To call upon a man to set his affections upon things above, before he knows upon divine authority that he is "risen with Christ," is to begin at the wrong end and to lose your labor. It is only when I believe that precious emancipating truth that when Christ died, I died; when He was buried, I was buried; when He rose, I rose; it is only when this grand reality takes possession of my soul that I can lend an open ear and an understanding heart to exhortation's heavenly voice.

It is well for my reader to understand this thoroughly. There is no need whatever for a multitude of words. Let him simply take his New Testament and beginning with the epistle to the Romans, trace throughout the exhortations of the Spirit of God. He will find without a single exception, that they are as completely divested of the legal element as are the promises which glitter like gems on the page of inspiration. This subject is not fully understood. Exhortation in the hands of man is widely different from what it is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. How often do we hear men exhorting us to a certain line of action so we may reach certain privileges. The way of the Spirit is the reverse of this. He sets before

us our standing in Christ in the first place, and then He unfolds the walk. He first speaks of privilege — free, unconditional privilege — and then He sets forth the holy responsibility connected therewith. He first presents the settled and unalterable relationship in which free grace has set us, and then dwells upon the affections belonging thereto.

There is nothing so hateful to the Spirit of God as legality, that hateful system which casts us as *doers* back upon self, instead of casting us as lost sinners over upon Christ. Man would eagerly do something, but he must be brought to the end of himself and to the end of all beside, and then as a lost sinner, find his rest in Christ — a full, precious, all-sufficient Christ. In this way alone can he ever expect solid peace and true happiness. Only then will he ever be able to yield an intelligent response to the Spirit's "word of exhortation."

THE TWO LINKS

There are two very important links in Christianity which we should seek to understand. First is the link of everlasting life; secondly, the link of personal communion. These links, being distinct, should never be confounded, and being intimately connected, should never be separated. The former is the *ground* of our security; the later, the secret *spring* of our enjoyment and the source of all our fruitfulness. The first can never be broken; the second may be snapped by a thousand things.

Seeing that these links are of such immense importance, let us reverently and prayerfully enter upon the examination of them in the divine light of inspiration.

First, as to the precious link of everlasting life, we cannot possibly do better than quote a few plain passages of Scripture, setting forth from where it comes, what it is, when and how it is formed.

First of all, it must be distinctly borne in mind that man in his natural state knows nothing of this link. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." There may be much that is truly amiable — great nobility of character, great generosity, strict integrity — but there is no eternal life. The first link is unknown. It matters not how you cultivate and elevate nature, you cannot form the grand link of everlasting life. You may make it moral, learned, religious, but so long as it is mere nature, there is no eternal life. You may select all the very finest moral virtues and concentrate them in one individual, and that individual may never have felt so much as a single pulsation of everlasting life.

It is not that these virtues and qualities are not good and desirable in themselves; no one in his senses would question that. Whatever is morally good in nature is to be estimated at its proper value. No one would think for a moment of placing a sober, industrious, amiable, well-principled man on a level with a drunken, idle spendthrift. Looked at from a social and moral point of view, there is a wide and very material difference. But, be it clearly understood and well-remembered that we can never by the finest virtues and noblest qualities of the old creation purchase a place in the new. We can never by all the excellencies of the first Adam, even if concentrated in one individual, establish a title to membership in the second. The two are totally distinct, the old and the new, the first and the second. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

Nothing can be more explicit, nothing more conclusive than the last quoted passage from 2 Corinthians 5. "Old things," of whatever kind, "are passed away." They are not recognized as having any existence in the new creation wherein "all things are of God." The old foundation has been completely removed and new foundations laid in redemption. Nor is there so much as a single particle of the old material worked up into the new. "All things are become new", "All things are of God." The

old creation “bottles” have been flung aside and redemption-bottles set in their stead. The old creation “garment” has been cast away and the new, the spotless robe of redemption, substituted. In this fair robe, man's hand never wove a thread nor set a stitch. How do we know? How can we speak with such confidence and authority? For the best of all reasons, because the divinely authoritative and therefore absolutely conclusive voice of Holy Scripture declares that in the new creation, “All things are of God.” The Lord be praised that it is so! It is this that makes all so secure, that places all so entirely beyond the reach of the enemy's power. He cannot touch anything or anyone in the new creation.

Death is the limit of Satan's domain. The grave forms the boundary of his dominion. But the new creation begins at the other side of death. It opens upon our enraptured gaze at heaven's side of that tomb where the Prince of Life lay buried. It pours the brilliant beams of its glories around us in the midst of a scene where death can never enter, where sin and sorrow are unknown, where the hiss of the serpent can never be heard, nor his hateful trail be seen. “All things are of God.”

It would remove a host of difficulties and perplexities, and simplify matters amazingly, if this point of the new creation were clearly understood. If we look around on what is called the religious-world or the professing Church, what do we see? A large amount of effort to improve man in his Adamic, his natural or old creation condition. Philanthropy, science, philosophy, religion, are all brought into play. Every species of moral leverage is brought to bear for the purpose of raising man in the scale of existence. What do men mean when they talk of “elevating the masses?” How far can they go in their operations? To what point can they elevate them? Can they raise them into the new creation? Clearly not, seeing that in that creation all things are of God.

Further, who or what are these “masses” that men seek to elevate? Are they born of the flesh or born of the Spirit? Of the flesh confessedly and assuredly! Well then, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” You may elevate it as high as you please. You may apply the most powerful lever and raise it to the very loftiest point attainable. Educate, cultivate, sublimate it as you will. Let science, philosophy, religion (so-called) and philanthropy bring all their resources to bear, and what has been done? You cannot make it spirit. You cannot bring it into the new creation. You cannot form the first grand link of everlasting life. You have done absolutely nothing towards man's best, his spiritual, his eternal interests. You have left him still in his old Adamic state, his old creation circumstances. You have left him in his liabilities, his responsibilities, his sins, his guilt. You have left him exposed to the righteous wrath of a sin-hating God. He may be more cultivated in his guilt, but he is guilty all the while. Cultivation cannot remove guilt, education cannot blot out sins, civilization cannot remove from man's horizon the dark and heavy clouds of death and judgment.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not want to belittle education or civilization, true philanthropy or true philosophy. We say distinctly, let them go for what they are really worth, let them be estimated at their true value. We are ready to allow as large a margin as may be demanded in which to insert all the possible advantages of education in all its branches; and having done so, we return with accumulated force to our grand thesis, namely, that in “elevating the masses,” you are elevating that which has no existence before God, no place in the new creation. We repeat with emphasis and urge it with energy, that until you get the soul into the new creation, you have done absolutely nothing for it with respect to eternity, to heaven and to God.

True, you may smooth man's way through this world, you may remove some of the roughnesses from the highway of human life, you may place the flesh in the delusive lap of luxury and ease. You may wreath man's brow with every species of laurel that ever was won in the various arenas in which men have carried on the competitive struggle for fame. You may adorn his name with all the titles that

ever were bestowed by mortal upon his fellow mortal, and after all this, you leave him in his sins and exposed to death and eternal damnation. If the first grand link is not formed, the soul is like a vessel broken from her moorings and driven over the watery waste, without either rudder or compass.

We most earnestly desire to press this point upon the attention of the reader. We deeply feel its immense practical importance. We believe there is hardly any truth to which the devil offers more fierce and constant opposition than the truth of the new creation. He knows well its mighty moral influence, its power to lift the soul up out of present things, to produce deadness to the world, and practical and habitual elevation above the things of time and sense. Hence his effort is to keep people ever engaged in the hopeless work of trying to elevate nature and improve the world. He has no objection to morality, to religion as such, in all its forms. He will even use Christianity itself as a means of improving the old nature. Indeed his masterpiece is to tack on the Christian religion as a “new piece” upon the “old garment” of fallen nature. You may do what you like, provided you leave man in the old creation, for Satan knows full well that as long as you leave him there, you have left him in his clutches.

All in the old creation is in the grasp of Satan and within the full range of his guns. All in the new creation is beyond him. “He that is born of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not.” It is not said that the believer keeps himself and the wicked one touches him not. The believer is a complex being, having two natures — the old and the new, the flesh and the Spirit — and if he does not watch, “that wicked one” will speedily touch him, upset him and cut out plenty of sorrowful work for him. But the divine nature, the new creation, cannot be touched, and so long as we walk in the energy of the divine nature and breathe the atmosphere of the new creation, we are perfectly safe from all the assaults of the enemy.

Now, let us proceed to enquire how we get into the new creation, how we become possessed of the divine nature, how this link of everlasting life is formed. A quotation or two from the Word will be sufficient to open this point to us. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Mark these words, reader, observe the connection, “Believeth in Him” ... “Have everlasting life.” This is the link: simple faith. Thus it is we pass from the old creation with all its belongings, into the new creation with all its belongings. This is the precious secret of the new birth — faith wrought in the soul by the grace of God the Holy Spirit; faith that takes God at His word, that sets to its seal that God is true; faith that links the soul with a risen Christ, the Head and beginning of the New Creation.

Take another quotation, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My words and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” Here is the link again. “Believeth on Me” ... “Hath everlasting life.” Nothing can be more simple. By natural birth we enter the precincts of the old creation and become heirs of all that pertained to the first Adam. By spiritual birth we enter the precincts of the new creation and become the heirs of all that pertains to the Second Adam. And if it be asked, what is the secret of this great mystery of the spiritual birth? the answer is, “Faith.” “He that believeth on Me.” Hence, if the reader is one who believes in Jesus, according to the language of the above passages, he is in the new creation. He is a possessor of the divine nature. He is linked on to Christ by a link which is perfectly indissoluble. Such an one can never perish. No power of earth or hell, men or demons, can ever snap that link of everlasting life which connects all Christ's members with their risen Head in glory, and with one another.

Let the reader note particularly that, in reference to the link of eternal life and its formation, we must take God's thoughts in place of our own. We must be governed exclusively by the Word of God

and not by our own vain reasonings, foolish imaginings and ever changing feelings. Moreover, we must be careful not to confound the two links which, though intimately connected, are completely distinct. We must not displace them, but leave them in their divine order. The first does not depend upon the second, but the second flows out of the first. The second is as much a link as the first, but it is second and not first. All the power and malice of Satan cannot snap the first link; the weight of a feather may snap the second. The first link endures forever; the second may be broken in a moment. The first link owes its permanency to the work of Christ for us, which was finished on the cross, and to the Word of God to us, which is settled forever in heaven; the second link depends upon the action of the Holy Spirit in us, which may be and sadly is interfered with by a thousand things in the course of a single day. The former is based upon Christ's victory *for* us; the latter is based upon the Spirit's victories *in* us.

Now, it is our firm conviction that thousands get shaken as to the reality and perpetuity of the first link of everlasting life, by reason of failure to maintain the second link of personal communion. Something occurs to snap the latter, and they begin at once to question the existence of the former. This is a mistake, but it only serves to show the immense importance of holy vigilance in our daily walk so the link of personal communion may not be broken by sin in thought, word or deed; or if it should be broken, of having it instantly restored by self-judgment and confession, founded upon the death and advocacy of Christ. It is an undeniable fact, confirmed by the sad experience of thousands of true saints of God, that when the second link is snapped, it is next to impossible to realize the first. And this, though so vitally important to us, is in reality only a secondary thing; for surely, the suspension of our communion is a small thing when compared with the dishonor done to the cause of Christ and the grief given to the Holy Spirit by that which occasioned the suspension.

May the Spirit of God work in us mightily to produce watchfulness, prayerfulness, seriousness and earnestness, that nothing may occur to interrupt our communion, but that the two links may be understood and enjoyed in their due place and order, to the glory of God by us, the stability of our peace in Him, and the integrity and purity of our walk before Him!

In order to unfold somewhat more fully on the subject of "the two links," we would like to call our reader's attention to a very important passage in 1 Corinthians 5. "For even Christ our passover is slain for us; therefore let us keep the feast." In this brief quotation we have a wide range of truth presented. We have, first, a great fact stated, "Christ our passover is slain." Secondly, we have an earnest appeal, "let us keep the feast." In the former, we have the *ground* of our security, in the latter, the true secret of personal holiness.

Here again, we have the two links in their proper distinctness and yet in their proper order. We have a sacrifice and a feast, two things quite distinct, but yet intimately connected. The sacrifice is complete, but the feast is to be celebrated. Such is the divine order. The completeness of the sacrifice secures the believer's title, and the celebration of the feast involves the whole of the believer's practical life.

We must be careful not to confound these things. The feast of unleavened bread was founded upon the death of the paschal lamb. It typified that practical holiness which is to characterize the whole of a Christian's life down here. "Christ is slain." This secures everything as to title. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." God as a *Judge* was fully met and satisfied by the blood of the lamb. The destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt at the midnight hour with the sword of judgment in his hand, and the only means of escape was the sprinkled blood. This was divinely sufficient. God had declared, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Israel's salvation rested on God's estimate of the blood of the lamb. This is a most precious truth for the soul to dwell upon. Man's salvation rests upon

God's satisfaction. The Lord be praised! "Christ our passover is slain for us." Mark the words "is slain" and that, "for us." This settles everything as to the great and all-important question of salvation from judgment and wrath. Thus the precious link of salvation is formed, a link which can never be broken. The link of eternal life and the link of eternal salvation is one and the same. The Lord Jesus Christ — the living Savior, the risen Head — maintains and ever will maintain this link in unbroken integrity. He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Now a word or two as to the exhortation of the apostle, "therefore let us keep the feast." Christ keeps us, and we are to keep the feast. He was slain to spread a feast for us, and that feast is a life of personal holiness — practical separation from all evil. Israel's feast was composed of three things — a roasted lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Precious ingredients! They set forth in typical language, first, Christ as having endured the wrath of God for us; second, those deep, spiritual exercises of heart which flow from our contemplating the cross; and third, personal holiness or practical separation from evil. Such was the feast of God's redeemed, and such is our feast now. Oh that we may have grace to celebrate it according to its due order! May our loins be girded, our feet shod and our pilgrim staff in hand.

Be it remembered, it is not a feast celebrated in order to reach a sacrifice, but a sacrifice slain to provide a feast. We must not reverse this order. We are very prone to reverse it because we are apt to regard God as an *exacter* instead of a *giver* — to make duty the basis of salvation instead of making salvation the basis of duty. An Israelite did not put away leaven in order to be saved from the sword of the destroyer, but because he *was* saved. In other words, there was first the blood-stained lintel and then the unleavened bread. These things must not be confounded, neither must they be separated. We are not saved from wrath by unleavened bread, but by a blood-stained lintel, but we can only enjoy the latter as we are diligently and jealousy maintaining the former. The two links are ever to stand in their divine order and in their inseparable connection. Christ Himself infallibly maintains the one; we by the grace of His Spirit, are to maintain the other. May He enable us so to do!

FOUR POINTS OF KNOWLEDGE

(READ DEUTERONOMY 8: 1-9)

In these verses we have four valuable points of knowledge connected with our walk through the wilderness, namely the knowledge of ourselves, the knowledge of God, the knowledge of our relationship, and the knowledge of our hope.

First, as to the knowledge of self, we read, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." Here is a wondrous point of knowledge. Who can say it? Who can penetrate the depths of a human heart? Who can tell its windings and labyrinths? The details of a wilderness life tend to bring out much of the evil that is in us. At the beginning of our Christian career, we are apt to be so occupied with the present joy of deliverance that we know very little of the real character of nature. It is as we get on, from stage to stage of our desert course, that we become acquainted with self.

Secondly, we are not to suppose that, as we grow in self-knowledge, our joy must decline. Quite the opposite. This would be to make our joy depend upon ignorance of self, whereas it really depends upon the knowledge of God. In point of fact, as the believer advances in the knowledge of himself, his joy becomes deeper and more solid, since he is led more thoroughly out of and away from himself, to find his sole object in Christ. He learns that nature's total ruin is not merely a true doctrine of the

Christian faith, but a deep reality in his own experience. He also learns that divine grace is a reality; that salvation is a deep, personal reality; that sin is a reality; the cross a reality; the advocacy of Christ, a reality. He learns the depth, the fullness, the power, the application of God's gracious resources. "He humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger," not that you might be driven to despair, but that He might "feed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that He might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment became not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years."

Touching and beautiful appeal! "Forty years" of evidence of what was in the heart of God toward His redeemed people. "Six hundred thousand footmen" clothed, fed, kept and cared for during "forty years" in "a vast howling wilderness!" What a noble and soul-satisfying display of the fullness of divine resources! How is it possible that, with the history of Israel's desert wanderings lying open before us, we could ever harbor a single doubt or fear? Oh! that our hearts may be more completely emptied of self, for this is true humility, and more completely filled with Christ, for this is true happiness and true holiness. "For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee, *thou hast lacked nothing*" (Deut. 2: 7).

Thirdly, all we have been dwelling upon flows out of another thing, and that is the relationship in which we stand. "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." This accounts for all. The hunger and the food, the thirst and the water, the trackless desert and the guiding pillar, the toil and the refreshment, the sickness and the healing — all tell of the same thing, a Father's hand, a Father's heart. It is well to remember this "lest we be weary and faint in our minds" (Heb. 12). An earthly father will have to use the rod of discipline as well as to imprint the kiss of affection, to administer the rebuke as well as express his approval, to chasten as well as minister supplies. Thus it is with our heavenly Father. All His dealings flow out of that marvelous relationship which He stands towards us. He is a "Holy Father." All is summed up in this. Our Father is the "Holy One;" "the Holy One" is our Father. To walk with, lean on and imitate Him "as dear children," must secure everything in the way of genuine happiness, real strength and true holiness. When we walk with Him, we are happy; when we lean on Him, we are strong; and when we imitate Him, we are practically holy and gracious.

Finally, in the midst of all the exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and even the mercies and privileges of the wilderness, we must keep the eye steadily fixed on that which lies before us. The joys of the kingdom are to fill our hearts and give vigor and buoyancy to our steps as we pass across the desert. The green fields and vine-clad hills of the heavenly Canaan, the pearly gates and golden streets of the New Jerusalem are to fill the vision of our souls. We are called to cherish the hope of glory, a hope which will never make ashamed. When the sand of the desert tries us, let the thought of Canaan cheer us. Let us dwell upon the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us" (1 Peter 1: 4). "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." Bright and blessed prospect! May we dwell upon it and upon Him who will be the eternal source of all its brightness and blessedness!

"To Canaan's sacred bound

We haste with songs of joy,
Where peace and liberty are found,
And sweets that never cloy;
Hallelujah!
We are on our way to God!
“How sweet the prospect is!
It cheers the pilgrim's breast;
We're journeying through the wilderness,
But soon we'll gain our rest.
Hallelujah!
We are on our way to God!”

“IF THE LORD TARRY”

My Beloved Friend,

Since our last conversation, I have been thinking a good deal of the subject which was then before us, and the more I think of it, the more disposed I am to doubt the moral fitness of the use so frequently made of the sentence which stands at the head of my letter. I have never been able to adopt the phrase, either in writing or speaking. In fact, it is not according to Scripture, though it seems lately to have become a favorite expression with many Christian people who desire to speak and act as in the divine presence and according to the direct teaching of Holy Scripture.

I trust I need not assure you, my friend, that in raising an objection to this special form of speech, I would not want to weaken in any heart the sense of the nearness of the Lord's coming, that most blessed hope which ought each day to become brighter and brighter in the vision of our souls. Far be the thought! That hope abides in all its moral power and in no wise depends on the using or not using of any set form of words.

Suppose I say, “If the Lord tarry, I mean to go to London next week.” I make my going to London dependent upon the Lord's tarrying, whereas He may tarry and yet it may not be His will that I should go at all. Hence I ought to place all my movements, all my actions, all my plans, under the commanding influence of my Lord's will.

Is not this in direct accordance with Scripture? What does the inspired apostle James say on the point? “Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that” (James 4).

Here, the Spirit of God furnishes us with the proper form of words to be used in all our acts and ways. Surely we cannot find anything better than what He graciously deigns to give. “If the Lord will” includes everything which is to regulate our movements, whether the Lord is pleased to tarry or not.

But in writing this I have no thought of judging anyone in his use of any particular phrase. I am merely giving you my reasons for not adopting the form in question. And I may just add, in conclusion, that whether we say, “If the Lord tarry” or “If the Lord will,” we should ever seek, most earnestly, to be

in the present power of the words we use and thus avoid everything bordering in the remotest degree upon mere empty phraseology or religious cant. May the Lord make us very real in all our words and ways!

Most affectionately yours, C.H.M.

GOD PREACHING PEACE

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all” (Acts 10: 36).

One of the most momentous questions which can be put to a human being is this, “Have you peace with God?” It is a question of the deepest solemnity, and it claims a direct and immediate answer from every heart. There is no reason why any truly anxious soul should continue for one moment without settled peace with God. Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross. God is preaching peace by Jesus Christ, and here we have the solid foundation of the believer's peace — Christ's finished work received on the authority of God's Word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the divine basis of peace. The more simply we build thereon, the more solid our peace will be. The reason why so many are in a state of miserable uncertainty is because they do not rest in absolute faith on God's foundation. They are occupied with themselves instead of building exclusively on Christ. They are looking to *experience* rather than to a risen Savior. Feelings and attainments engage them instead of Christ. They are vainly hoping to find some sort of improvement in themselves, and not finding it to their satisfaction — for what honest soul ever does? — they are filled with gloomy doubts. The heart is oppressed with anxious fear and the spirit is overcast with heavy clouds. They have no divine certainty, so they try to find comfort in the exercises of a religious life. Inasmuch as imperfection attaches to their very best and most pious exercises, they are ever kept in a condition of spiritual darkness and bondage. Neither in our inward feelings and experiences, nor in our outward exercises — of whatsoever kind these may be — have we the true ground of our peace in the divine presence. God did not send to the children of Israel, nor does He now send to us Gentiles, peace by spiritual experiences or by religious exercises, but simply by Jesus Christ.

The reader cannot be too simple in laying hold of this great truth. He may rest assured that it is God's gracious desire that his soul should find peace. If not, why should God send, preach, proclaim, announce peace. If God sends us a message of peace, He surely means that we should have it. He has provided it for us by the precious atoning death of His Son, and He declares it unto us by His Spirit in the Holy Scriptures. Thus it is all of God from first to last. Hence it is called the peace of God. It comes forth from His heart. It bears the imprint of His hand and it is to the praise of His own eternal Name. We have nothing to do but to receive with all thankfulness, this precious peace, and let it flow like an even river through our souls.

Here we would turn directly to the reader and press home upon his soul this grand question, “Do you have peace with God?” Do not, we beseech you, put it aside. It is a question of eternal importance — a question, in comparison with which all mere earthly questions dwindle into utter insignificance.

It may be that someone whose eye scans these lines feels really anxious about this grand question, and would give worlds, if he possessed them, for a full, clear and satisfactory answer. Such an one may feel disposed to ask, “What is the ground of this peace and how may I have it for myself?” Two deeply important questions, most surely — questions which we shall seek, by the grace of God, to answer.

First, as to the real ground of the soul's peace. If the reader will turn to the last verse of Romans 4

he will find it set forth in two brief but weighty sentences. In this passage the inspired apostle, in speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, declares that “He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.”

Here, we have the solid and imperishable foundation of the sinner's peace, the divine ground on which God can preach peace. Jesus Christ was delivered for our offenses. Let this be carefully noted. Let us mark particularly who was delivered, who delivered Him, and for what He was delivered. All these are essential to our enjoyment of peace.

Who was delivered? The Holy One, the spotless One, the Lamb, the Christ, the Son of God, that blessed One who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, the object of the Father's supreme delight from everlasting, the Eternal Son. This blessed One who lay in the bosom from before all worlds, lay in the womb of the virgin, in the manger of Bethlehem, was baptized in Jordan, was tempted in the wilderness, was transfigured on the Mount, was bowed down in the garden, was nailed to a tree, buried in the grave, raised from the dead and is now seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

This is He who was “delivered.” He stood with our offenses. He represented us on the cross. He stood in our place and received from the hand of Eternal Justice all that we deserved. There was a transfer of all our guilt, all our offenses, all our iniquities, all our transgressions to Him who knew no sin, who had no more to do with sin than we had to do with righteousness. He died in our place. The One whose whole human life was a sweet odor always ascending to the throne of God, was delivered up to death, charged with all our offenses.

Who delivered Him? This is a vital question. Who delivered Jesus up to the death of the cross? Isaiah 53 and 2 Corinthians 5 furnish the answer: “It pleased *Jehovah* to bruise Him.” Such is the language of the inspired prophet. And now hear the apostle: “God hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us.” God has done it. It will not do to say that “we lay our sins on Jesus.” We want much more than this. If it were merely a question of our laying our sins on Jesus, we could never have peace with God, seeing we do not know the extent of our sin, the depth of our guilt, the true amount of our liabilities as God knows it. To have peace with God, I must know that *He* is satisfied. *God* was the offended party, the grieved One, and He must be satisfied. Well, blessed be His name, He is satisfied, for He Himself has found the ransom. He has laid our sins, according to *His* estimate of them, on the head of the divine Sin-bearer.

All that was needful, not merely to meet our condition, but to satisfy His claims, vindicate His majesty and glorify His name, He Himself has provided in the atoning death of His own Son. Thus He is satisfied. Hence He can preach peace to us by Jesus Christ, Lord of all. The spotless Christ was judged on the cross in our place. God hid His face from that blessed One, turned away His countenance, closed His ear and forsook Him for the moment. Why? Because He was delivered for our offenses. God forsook Him that He might receive us. He treated Him as we deserved in order that He might treat us as He deserved. Jesus took our place in death and judgment, that we might take His place in life, righteousness and everlasting glory.

Now, let us ask, for *what* was the precious Savior delivered? “For our offenses.” For how many? For all, most surely. When Jesus hung on the cross, all the believer's offenses were laid upon and imputed to Him. Yes, all. Then, they all were future when Christ bore them on the cross, yet there is no such distinction as past, present or future with Him who spans eternity as a moment. All our sins were laid on Jesus. He answered for them and put them away forever, so they are gone out of God's sight. Instead of our sins, there is nothing before God except the Christ who bore them and blotted them out

forever, and was raised for our justification. Who raised Him? Even the same one who delivered Him. And why did He raise Him? Because all was settled for which He had been delivered. Christ glorified God in the putting away of our sins, and God glorified Christ by raising Him from the dead and crowning Him with glory and honor. Most marvelous, most precious truth! Christ forsaken on the cross because our sins were laid on Him. Christ crowned on the throne because our sins are put away. "He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." Such is the true, the solid, the everlasting ground of a sinner's peace in the presence of God.

Now one word as to the question of how the sinner can have this peace for himself. The answer is as simple as God can make it. What is it? Has the sinner to do anything? Has he to be anything but what he is — a poor lost, worthless, guilty creature? No. He has simply to believe God's Word — to receive into his heart, not merely into his head, the blessed message which God sends to him; to rest in Christ; to be satisfied with that which has satisfied God. God is satisfied with Christ without anything else whatever. Is the reader satisfied or is he waiting for something more, something of his own — his vows and resolutions, his feelings and experiences? If so, he cannot get peace. To be satisfied with Christ is to have peace with God.

The Lord of Life in death hath lain,
To clear me from all charge of sin;
And, Lord, from guilt of crimson stain
Thy precious blood hath made me clean.

"RIVERS OF LIVING WATER"

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7: 37-38).

The feast referred to in this lovely scripture was "the feast of tabernacles," called at the opening of the chapter, "The Jews' feast." This stamped its character. It could no longer be called, as in Leviticus 23, "A feast of Jehovah." The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality, a powerless ordinance, a piece of barren routine — something in which man could boast himself while God was entirely shut out.

This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. Power may clothe itself in a certain form, and so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old, and thus it is with the professing Church now. We have all to watch against this snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise, the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained.

The reader may have noticed that in the opening chapters of John's Gospel, the inspired writer invariably designates the feasts as *feasts of the Jews*. Not only so, but we find the Lord Jesus displacing one after another of these feasts and offering Himself as an object for the heart. Thus at the opening of John 7 we read, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand." Terrible anomaly! Deadly delusion! Seeking to murder the Son of God, and yet keeping the feast of tabernacles! Such is religious

man without God. "His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see Thy works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe on Him."

Near as His brethren were to Him according to the flesh, they knew Him not, they believed not on Him. They wanted Him to make a display of Himself before the world. They knew not His object. He had not come from heaven to be gazed at and wondered after. "All the world will wonder after the beast" by-and-by, but the blessed Son of God came to serve and to give. He came to hide Himself, to glorify God and to serve man.

He therefore refused to exhibit Himself at the feast. "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet to this feast, for My time is not yet fully come. When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee. But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret."

And for what did He go up? He went up to serve. He went up to glorify His Father and to be the willing Servant of man's necessity. "Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, saying, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." Here His moral glory, as the self-hiding Servant, shines out. "My doctrine is not Mine." Such was His answer to those who wondered where He got His learning. Alas! they knew Him not. His motives and His objects lay beyond the reach of carnal and worldly-minded men. They measured Him by their own standard; hence all their conclusions were utterly false. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true and no unrighteousness is in Him."

The blessed One did not speak from Himself, as if He were independent of the Father, but as One who lived in absolute and complete dependence and in unbroken communion, drawing all His springs from the living God, doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing apart from the Father.

We have the same truth with reference to the Holy Spirit in John 16. "Howbeit, when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come." The Holy Spirit did not speak from Himself as independent of the Father and the Son, but as One in full communion with them.

We must turn to the words which form the special subject of this paper. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Here we have set before us a truth of infinite preciousness and immense practical power. The Person of Christ is the divine spring of all freshness and spiritual energy. It is in Him alone the soul can find all it really needs. It is to Him we must go for all our personal refreshment and blessing. If at any time we find ourselves dull, heavy and barren, what are we to do? Make efforts to raise the tone? No, this will never do. What then? Let him "Come unto Me and drink."

Mark the words. It is not, "Come unto Me and draw." We may draw for others and be dry ourselves, but if we drink, our own souls are refreshed with "rivers of living water."

Nothing is more miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion. We may be very busy; our hands may be full of work; our feet may run here and there; the head may be full of

knowledge; but if the heart is not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will — it must be — all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned. Also, there will be no “rivers of living water” flowing out for others. If we are to be made a blessing to others, we must feed upon Christ for ourselves. We do not “drink” for other people; we drink to satisfy our thirst, and as we drink, the rivers flow. Show us a man whose heart is filled with Christ and we will show you a man whose hands are ready for work and his feet ready to run, but unless we begin with heart communion, our running and our doing will be a miserable failure. There will be no glory to God, no rivers of living water.

Yes, reader, we must begin in the very innermost circle of our own moral being and there be occupied by faith with a living Christ, else all our service will prove utterly worthless. If we want to influence others, if we would be made a blessing in our day and generation, if we desire to bring forth any fruit to God, if we would shine as lights amid the moral gloom around, if we would be a channel of blessing in the midst of a sterile desert, then we must hearken to our Lord's words in John 7: 37. We must drink at the fountain head. And what then? Drink still, drink always, drink largely, and then the rivers must flow. If I say, “I must try and be a channel of blessing to others” I shall only prove my own folly and weakness. But if I bring my empty vessel to the fountain-head and get it filled there, then without the smallest effort, the rivers will flow.

A FRAGMENT ON WORSHIP

It is deeply important that the Christian reader should understand the true character of the worship God looks for and in which He delights. God delights in Christ. Hence it should be our constant aim to present Him to God. Christ should ever be the material of our worship, and He will be in the proportion we are led by the Holy Spirit. How often it is otherwise with us! Both in the assembly and in the closet, how often is the tone low and the spirit dull and heavy! We are occupied with self instead of with Christ. Then the Holy Spirit, instead of being free to do His own proper work, which is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, is obliged to occupy us with ourselves in self-judgment because our ways have not been right.

All this is to be deeply deplored. It demands our serious attention both as assemblies and as individuals, in our public meetings and in our private devotions. Why is the tone of our public meetings frequently so low? Why such feebleness, such barrenness, such wandering? Why are the hymns and prayers so often wide of the true mark? Why is there so little that really deserves the name of worship? Why is there so little in our midst to refresh the heart of God? Why is there so little that He can speak of as “My bread for My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto Me?” We are occupied with self and its surroundings — our wants, our weakness, our trials, our difficulties — and we leave God without the bread of His sacrifice. We actually rob Him of His due and of that which His loving heart desires.

SEPARATION: NOT FUSION

“Therefore, thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth; let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them” (Jer. 15: 19).

The principle laid down in the foregoing passage is of the deepest possible importance to all who desire to walk with God. It is by no means a popular principle; very far from it. But this does not detract from its value in the judgment of those who are taught of God. In an evil world the popular thing is almost sure to be the wrong thing, and whatever has the most of God, the most of Christ, the most of pure truth, is sure to be most unpopular. This is an axiom in the judgment of faith inasmuch as Christ and the world are at opposite points of the moral compass.

Now, one of the most popular ideas of the day is fusion or amalgamation, and all who desire to be accounted men of broad sympathies and liberal sentiments go in for this grand object. But we do not hesitate to clearly state that nothing can be more opposed to the revealed mind of God. We make this statement in the full consciousness of its opposition to the universal judgment of Christendom. For this we are quite prepared. Not that we court opposition, but we have long since learned to distrust the judgment of what is called the religious world, because we have so constantly found *its* judgment to be diametrically opposed to the plainest teaching of Holy Scripture. It is our deep and earnest desire to stand with the Word of God against everything and everyone, for we are well assured that nothing can abide forever except that which is based upon the imperishable foundation of Holy Scripture.

What then does Scripture teach on the subject of this paper? Is it separation or fusion? What was the instruction to Jeremiah in the passage quoted above? Was he told to try and amalgamate with those around him? Was he to seek to mingle the precious with the vile? The very reverse! Jeremiah was taught of God first of all to return himself, to stand apart even from those who were the professed people of God, but whose ways were contrary to His mind. And what then? "I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before Me."

Here we have Jeremiah's personal path and position most clearly laid down. He was to return and take his stand with God in thorough separation from evil. This was his required duty, regardless of the thoughts of men or of his brethren. They might deem and pronounce him narrow, bigoted, exclusive, intolerant, and the like, but with that he had nothing whatever to do. His one grand business was to obey. Separation from evil was the divine rule, not amalgamation with it. The latter might seem to offer a wider field of usefulness, but mere usefulness is not the object of a true servant of Christ: it is simply obedience. The business of a servant is to do what he is told, not what *he* considers right or good. If this were better understood, it would simplify matters amazingly. If God calls us to separation from evil, but we imagine we can do more good by amalgamation with it, how shall we stand before Him? How shall we meet Him? Will He call that "good" which resulted from positive disobedience to His Word? Is it not plain that our first, our last, our *only* duty is to obey? Assuredly! This is the foundation; yes, it is the sum and substance of all that can really be called good.

But was there not something for Jeremiah to do in his narrow path and circumscribed position? There was. His practice was defined with all possible clearness. What was it? "If thou separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth." He was not only to stand and walk in separation himself, but he was to try to separate others also. This might give him the appearance of a proselytizer or of one whose object was to draw people over to his way of thinking. But here again he had to rise above all the thoughts of men. It was far better, far higher, far more blessed for Jeremiah to be as God's mouth than to stand well with his fellows. What are man's thoughts worth? Just nothing. When his breath goes out of him, in that very hour his thoughts perish. But God's thoughts shall endure forever. If Jeremiah had set about mingling the precious with the vile, he would not have been as God's mouth; he would have been as the *devil's* mouth. Separation is God's principle; fusion is Satan's.

It is counted liberal, large-hearted and charitable to be ready to associate with all sorts of people. Confederacy, association, limited liabilities, are the order of the day. The Christian must stand apart from all such things, not because he is better than other people, but because God says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It was not because Jeremiah was better than his brethren that he had to separate himself, but simply because he was commanded to do so by Him whose Word must ever define the course, govern the conduct and form the character of His people. Further, we may rest assured, it was not in sourness of temper or severity of spirit, but in profound sorrow of heart and humility of mind that Jeremiah separated himself from those around him. He could weep day and night

over the condition of his people, but the necessity of separation was as plain as the Word of God could make it. He might tread the path of separation with broken heart and weeping eyes, but tread it he must if he would be as God's mouth. Had he refused to tread it, he would have been making himself to be wiser than God. Though those around him, his brethren and friends, might not be able to understand or appreciate his conduct, with this he had nothing whatever to do. He might refer them to Jehovah for an explanation, but his business was to obey, not to explain or apologize.

Thus it is always. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6: 14-18).

It may seem very plausible and very popular to say, “We ought not to judge other people. How can we tell whether people are believers or not? It is not for us to set ourselves up as holier than others. It is charitable to hope the best. If people are *sincere*, what difference does it make as to creeds? Each one is entitled to hold his own opinions. It is only a matter of views after all.”

To all this we reply, God's Word commands Christians to judge, to discern, to discriminate, to come out, to be separate. This being so, all the plausible arguments and reasonings that can possibly be presented are, in the judgment of a true-hearted, single-eyed servant of Christ, lighter by far than dust.

Hearken to the following weighty words from the blessed apostle Paul to his son Timothy — words bearing down with unmistakable clearness upon all the Lord's people at this very moment. “Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man purge himself from these (the dishonorable vessels), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2: 19-21).

Here we see that if any man desires to be a sanctified vessel, fit for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work, he must separate himself from the iniquity and the dishonorable vessels around him. There is no getting over this without flinging God's Word overboard; and surely to reject God's Word is to reject Himself. His Word commands me to purge myself, to depart from iniquity, to turn away from those who have a form of godliness, but deny its power.

TWO IMPOSSIBLES

(HEBREWS 6)

There are few who have set out to follow the Lord Jesus who have not, at some time or other, gone through painful exercise of heart in connection with the opening verses of Hebrews 6. While, in the long run, they have no reason to regret the exercise, yet it is always needful to distinguish between the Spirit's using a scripture to search us, and Satan's abusing it to stumble us. Searching is good for us. It is most healthful. We all need it, and we have to be thankful when we get it, but we are so prone to be light and superficial and to retire from anything that probes the conscience.

Still, we have not the slightest doubt that many true and earnest souls, many to whom Hebrews 6: 4-6 has no application whatever, have been stumbled and discouraged through not understanding the

true force and bearing of the passage. It is to help such that we pen the following, for we can truly say there is no work in which we have a more intense interest than in taking the stumbling-blocks out of the way of God's beloved people. We feel most fully assured it is work which He delights to have done, inasmuch as He has given express commandment to His servants to do it. We have just to take care lest, in our desire to remove the stumbling-blocks, we should in any wise disturb the landmarks. May the blessed Spirit graciously help us to a right understanding of this sadly misunderstood passage of Holy Scripture!

So we inquire who are they of whom the inspired writer speaks in verses 4-6 — those of whom he declares, “It is impossible to renew them again to repentance?” A correct answer to this question will remove much of the difficulty felt in respect to this portion of Hebrews. In reaching this answer there are two things to be borne in mind. First, in verses 1 and 2 there is not a single feature belonging to Christianity as distinct from Judaism; secondly, in verses 4 and 5 there is not a single expression that rises to the height of the new birth or the sealing of the Spirit.

Let us quote the apostle's words: “Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,” or as the margin reads it, “The word of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms or washings, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment.”

Now it must be plain to the reader that the apostle could never exhort those professing Hebrew Christians to *leave* anything belonging to Christianity. There is not a single fact in that glorious economy from first to last — not a single stone in that glorious superstructure from foundation to topstone; not a single principle in that magnificent system from beginning to end — that we could afford to leave or dispense with for a moment. What is the grand foundation of Christianity? The cross. And what are its two characteristic facts? A Man glorified in heaven and God dwelling in man on the earth. Could we leave these? God forbid! To whom or to what should we go? It is impossible that we could leave or give up a single fact, feature or principle of our glorious Christianity.

What then are we to leave in Hebrews 6: 1-2? Simply those elements of truth contained in the Jewish system which, in so far as they possessed any permanent value, are reproduced in Christianity, but *as a system* were to be abandoned forever. Where is there a word unique to Christianity in this passage? Can we not see at a glance that the apostle has Judaism before his mind? It is this he exhorts his brethren to leave and to go on to Christianity which he here calls “perfection.”

It is a commonly believed idea that the words “Let us go on to perfection” refer to our leaving the earlier stages of the divine life and getting on to the higher. This is a total mistake. As to what is called “the higher Christian life,” there is in reality no such thing. If there be a higher life, there must be a lower one, but we *know* that Christ is our life, the life of each, the life of all. There cannot be anything higher than that. The merest babe in Christ has as high a life as the most matured and profoundly-taught member of the Church of God.

There is *progress* in the divine life, growth in grace, faith growing exceedingly. All this we own most fully and would charge ourselves to seek after it most earnestly. But it is not the subject of Hebrews 6: 1-2. It is not a question of going from one form in the school of Christ to another, but of leaving the school of Moses to enter fully, heartily and intelligently into the school of Christ. It is not a question of going from one stage of Christian life to another, but of abandoning Judaism to go on to Christianity. We could not abandon a single atom of Christianity without abandoning Christ Himself, for He is the foundation, the source, the center, the spring of it all.

But the reader may feel disposed to ask, Have we not got “repentance, faith, resurrection and

eternal judgment” in Hebrews 6: 1-2?* True, but only as elements of the Jewish system. There is not a word about “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”, not a word about Christ at all. It is simply Judaism, to which some of the Hebrew professors were in danger of returning, but from which the apostle earnestly urges them to go on.

{*Resurrection, as seen in Christianity, is not merely "resurrection of the dead," but, "resurrection from *among* the dead."}

Let us now turn for a moment to verses 4 and 5. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come (of the coming millennial age), if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.”

The reader will notice that, as in verses 1 and 2, we have not a single clause specially characteristic of Christianity. Also in verses 4 and 5, we have not a single clause that rises to the height of the new birth or the sealing of the Holy Spirit. A person might be all that is here spoken of and yet never have been born again, never sealed by the Holy Spirit. How many thousands have been “enlightened” by the gospel without being converted by it! Wherever the gospel has been preached, wherever the Bible has been received and read, an enlightening influence has gone forth, altogether irrespective of any saving work wrought in souls. Look at the nations of Europe since the Reformation. In all those countries that have received the Bible, we see the moral effect produced in the way of intelligence, civilization and refinement, apart altogether from the question of the conversion of individual souls. On the other hand those countries which have refused the Bible, exhibit the depressing results of ignorance, moral darkness and degradation. In a word, there may be enlightenment of the understanding without any divine work in the conscience or in the heart.

But what means the “tasting the heavenly gift?” Does not this imply the new birth? By no means. Many have gotten a taste of the new, the heavenly things set forth in the glorious gospel of God, and yet never have passed from death unto life, never have been broken down before God about their sins — never have received Christ into their hearts. *Tasting* of the heavenly gift and passing by new birth into the heavenly kingdom, are totally different things.

Also many were made “*partakers* of the Holy Spirit” so as to speak with tongues, prophesy and the like, who nevertheless were never born of the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost, His presence pervaded the whole Assembly. His power was felt by all, converted or unconverted. The word rendered “partakers” does not express intelligent fellowship. This makes it all the more clear that there is not the slightest thought of new birth or sealing.

Further, as to “*tasting* the good Word of God,” do we not all know too well that unconverted people can in a certain sense enjoy the Word of God and have a measure of delight in hearing a full, free gospel preached? Have we not often heard persons who furnished no evidence of divine life, speak in highly appreciative terms of what they call the savory doctrines of grace? There is a wide and very material difference indeed between a person *tasting* the good Word of God and the Word of God entering the soul in living, quickening, convicting and converting power.

Finally, a person might *taste* “the power of the coming age” — the age when Messiah will set up His kingdom. He might heal diseases and cast out demons; he might take up serpents and drink poison; he might speak with tongues. He might do all these things and yet never have been born again. “Thus,” as a recent writer has solemnly and forcibly put it, “we may fairly give the fullest force to every one of these expressions. Yet, write them out ever so largely, they fall short both of the new birth and of sealing with the Holy Spirit. There is everything except inward spiritual life in Christ or the indwelling

seal of it. One may have the very highest endowments and privileges in the way both of meeting the mind and also of exterior power, and yet all may be given up and the man become so much more the enemy of Christ. Indeed such is the natural result. It had been the mournful fact as to some. They had fallen away. Hence renewal to repentance is an impossibility — declared to be so by the authoritative and conclusive testimony of the Holy Spirit — “seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God and put him to an open shame.”

Why impossible? The case supposed is not anyone who ever possessed a single spark of divine life in his soul; no, nor yet anyone with the very feeblest desire after Christ or one atom of true repentance or desire to flee from the wrath to come. The case is of persons, after the richest proof and privilege, turning aside as apostates from Christ, to take up Judaism once more. As long as that course is pursued, there cannot be repentance. Supposing a man had been the adversary of Messiah here below, as for example, Paul himself, the very writer of the epistle. There was still the opening for him of grace from on high. It was possible that the very man that had slighted Christ here below, might have his eyes opened to see and receive Christ above, but this abandoned, there is no fresh condition in which He could be presented to men. Those who rejected Christ in the fullness of His grace and in the height of His glory in which God had set Him as Man before them — not merely on earth, but in heaven as attested by the Holy Spirit sent down from the ascended and glorified Man on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens — what was there to fall back upon? What possible means to bring them to repentance after that? There is none. What is there but Christ coming in judgment?”*

{*Lectures Introductory to Paul's Epistles," by W. Kelly.}

For one who, from amid the full blaze of gospel light and privilege, could deliberately go back to the darkness of Judaism, there remains nothing but hopeless impenitence, hardness of heart, judicial blindness and eternal judgment.

It is not, be it carefully observed, a child of God falling into sin and getting at a distance from God. Such an one will, most surely, be brought back and restored, though it may be through sore affliction under the chastening hand of God. It is not an anxious soul earnestly seeking the way of life and peace. It is not the case of a poor soul ignorant and out of the way. To none of these does the “impossible” of Hebrews 6: 4 apply. There is not a single anxious, earnest soul beneath the canopy of heaven whose case is impossible. There is just one case that approaches awfully near to Hebrews 6: 4 and that is one who has gone on sinning against light, refusing to act on the plain Word of God, knowingly and deliberately resisting the truth because of the consequences of acting upon it.

This is indeed most solemn. No one can take it upon him to say at what depths of darkness, blindness and hardness of heart, a case of this kind may arrive. It is a terrible thing to trifle with light and to go on with what we know to be wrong because of worldly advantage, to please friends, to avoid persecution and trial, or for any reason whatsoever. “Give glory to the Lord your God before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness” (Jer. 13: 16).

Having sounded this warning note for any whose case may need it, we close this part of our subject by presenting to any troubled soul whose eye may scan these lines, that precious word at the very end of the inspired volume — a word issuing forth from the very heart of God and the heart of Christ, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*.”

Let us now look at other warnings and consolations. In reading the Epistle to the Hebrews, we can hardly fail to notice the way in which the most solemn words of warning stand side by side with words of deepest comfort and consolation. Thus, for example, Hebrews 4 opens with “Let us therefore

fear,” and closes with “Let us therefore come boldly.” When we think of who we are, what we are and where we are, we have reason to fear. But when we think of God — His grace, His goodness, His tender mercy, His faithfulness — we may cherish the most fearless confidence. When we think of the world with all its dangers, temptations and snares, we may well be on our guard. But when we think of “the throne of grace” with its exhaustless provisions, and of our most merciful, faithful and sympathizing High Priest, we can draw near with holy boldness and find an ample supply to meet our deepest need.

So also in Hebrews 10, we have the same striking contrast of the warning voice and the sweet words of comfort and encouragement. Hearken to the former. “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

How awfully solemn is all this! How searching! Should we seek to blunt the edge of the warning? God forbid! We should only see that it has its true direction, its proper application. Can it ever touch an anxious inquirer or a true-hearted, earnest follower of Christ? Assuredly not, except indeed that it may deepen the earnestness of the follower and quicken the pace of the inquirer, for only see, reader, how close the word of comfort and encouragement stands to the awful note of warning and admonition. “But call to remembrance the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Thus we see how the inspiring Spirit connects, in this epistle, the most precious consolation with the most solemn warning. Both are needed and therefore both are given, and it will be our wisdom to seek to profit from both. We need never be afraid to trust Scripture. If we find a difficulty, in stead of puzzling over it, let us quietly wait on God for further light, meanwhile calmly resting in the assurance that no one part of the Word of God can ever contradict another. All is in the most perfect harmony. The apparent discrepancies are entirely owing to our ignorance. Hence, instead of putting forth our gratuitous efforts to reconcile things, we should just allow each passage of Scripture to come home in all its moral force to the heart and conscience, and produce its divinely-appointed result in the formation of our character.

Read such words as “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand. My Father which gave them to Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.” It is our sweet privilege to take them in, in all their divine simplicity and heavenly clearness, and rest in them in calm confidence. There is no difficulty, no obscurity, no

vagueness about them. All Christ's sheep are as safe as He can make them, as safe as He is Himself. The hand that would touch them must touch Him. They are divinely and eternally secure. Persons may imagine or profess themselves to be His sheep, who are not so in reality. They may fall away from their mere profession, bring much reproach on the cause of Christ, cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of honest inquirers by leading them to think that true Christians can fall away and be lost. All this may be true, but it leaves wholly untouched the precious and most comforting words of our good and faithful Shepherd, *that His sheep have eternal life and shall never — can never — perish*. No passage of Holy Scripture can, by any possibility, contradict the plain statement of our Lord.

But then there are other passages designed to search the conscience, to make us watchful, to produce holy circumspection in our ways, to lead us to judge ourselves, to induce self-denial. Take the following weighty and most searching scripture: “Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9: 24-27).

Now, will anyone attempt to place 1 Corinthians 9 in opposition to John 10? Far be the thought! What then? We are simply to receive both in all their divine force and allow them to act upon us according to the divine purpose in giving them to us — the latter on our hearts for comfort and consolation; the former on our consciences for admonition and warning! How terrible it would be for anyone to say or to think that, because he is a sheep of Christ, he may walk in self-indulgence since he can never perish — that he need not seek to keep his body under, but may give loose rein to his desires, because nothing can separate him from the love of Christ! Surely such an one would afford most sad evidence that he is anything but a sheep of the flock of Christ.

But we must return to Hebrews 6 and dwell for a moment upon our second “Impossible.” The first, as we have seen, had respect to man; the second has respect to God. Man, with the very highest advantages, with the very rarest privileges, with the most powerful array of evidence, will turn his back upon God and Christ. He will deliberately apostatize from Christianity, give up the truth of God, go back into darkness, and plunge into a condition from which the Holy Spirit declares “it is impossible to renew him again to repentance.”

But as usual in this marvelous epistle, the “strong consolation” stands in close and most gracious proximity to the awful warning. And, blessed be God, this same strong consolation is designed for us in connection with the very smallest measure of living faith in the Word of God. It is not a question of great attainments in knowledge, experience or devotedness; no, it is simply a matter of having even that measure and character of faith and earnestness pictured by the man-slayer as he fled to the city of refuge to escape the avenger of blood. How precious is this for every true and earnest soul! The very feeblest spark of divinely-given faith secures eternal life, strong consolation and everlasting glory, because “it is impossible for God to lie.” He cannot and will not deny Himself, blessed forever be His name! He has pledged His word and added His oath, the “two immutable things.” Where is the power, human or demonic, that can touch these two things?

We close with another quote from William Kelly, from his “Lectures Introductory to Paul's Epistles.”

Another point of interest which may be remarked here in Hebrews 6 is the intimation at the end,

compared with the beginning of the chapter. We have seen the highest external privileges — and they were merely external — not only the mind of man, as far as it could, enjoying the truth, but the power of the Holy Spirit making the man an instrument of power, not a subject of grace, even though it be to his own shame and deeper condemnation afterwards. In short, man may have the utmost conceivable advantage and the greatest external power, even of the Spirit of God Himself, and yet all come to nothing.

How solemnizing! But the very same chapter which affirms and warns of the possible failure of every advantage, shows us the weakest faith that the whole New Testament describes coming into the secure possession of the best blessings of grace. How consolatory! How truly encouraging! Who but God could have dictated that this same chapter should depict the weakest faith that the New Testament ever acknowledges? What can look feebler, what more desperately pressed, than a man fleeing for refuge? It is not a soul as coming to Jesus; it is not as one whom the Lord meets and blesses on the spot, but here is a man hard-pushed, fleeing for his very life (evidently a figure drawn from the man-slayer fleeing from the avenger of blood), yet eternally saved and blessed according to the acceptance of Christ — the very lowest character of faith met by the very fullest, richest and most permanent blessing!

There was no reality found in the persons referred to in verses 4 and 5, though so highly favored. Hence, as there was no conscience before God, no sense of sin, no clinging to Christ, that everything came to nought. But here, in the end of the chapter, there is the fruit of faith, feeble indeed and sorely tried, but in the light that appreciates the judgment of God against sin. Hence, although it be only fleeing in an agony of soul for refuge, what is it that God gives to one in such a state? Strong consolation, and that which enters within the veil. Impossible that the Son should be shaken from His place on the throne of God. And it is as impossible that the very least and weakest believer should come to any hurt whatsoever! The weakest of saints is more than conqueror.

Well may we exclaim, in view of all this surpassing grace, “Hallelujah!” Beloved Christian reader, may our whole life be spent in praising our ever blessed and most gracious Savior-God!

“RECONCILED AND SAVED”

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5: 10).

If ever there was a moment in which it was important to set forth the great foundation truths of Christianity, it is now. The enemy is seeking by every means in his power to loosen the foundations of our faith — to weaken the authority of Holy Scripture over the heart and conscience — to introduce, in the most specious and fascinating forms, deadly error to draw away the soul from Christ and His Word.

It may be said, “This is an old story.” It is as old as 2 Timothy, 2 Peter and Jude. But it is a new story also; and while we do not feel it to be our work to grapple in a controversial way with popular errors and evils, we do believe it to be our sacred duty to set forth and maintain constantly those grand, solid, fundamental truths which are our only safeguard against every form of doctrinal error and moral depravity.

Hence it is that we feel called upon to draw the attention of our readers to that very weighty passage which stands at the head of this paper. It is one of the fullest and most comprehensive statements of foundation doctrine to be found within the compass of the Volume of God. Let us meditate for a little upon it.

In examining the context in which this passage stands, we find four distinct terms by which the

inspired writer sets forth the condition of man in his unconverted state. He speaks of him as “without strength.” This is what we may call a negative term. Man is utterly powerless, wholly incapable of doing anything toward his own deliverance. He has been tried in every possible way. God has tested him and proved him, and found him absolutely good for nothing. When placed in Eden in the midst of the ten thousand delights which a beneficent Creator had poured around him, he believed the devil's lie rather than the truth of God (Gen. 3). When driven out of Eden, we see him pursuing a career of evil — “evil only” — evil continually — until the judgment of God falls upon the whole race with one solitary exception — Noah and his family (Gen. 6-8). Further, when in the restored earth man is entrusted with the sword of government, he gets drunk and exposes himself to contempt in the very presence of his sons. When entrusted with the holy office of the priesthood, man offers strange fire (Lev. 10). When entrusted with the high office of king and enriched with untold wealth, he marries foreign wives and worships the idols of the heathen (2 Chr. 11).

Thus, wherever we trace man — the human race — we see nothing but the most humiliating failure. Man is proved to be good for nothing, “without strength.”

But there is more than this. Man is “ungodly.” He is not only powerless as to all that is holy and good, but also without one single moral or spiritual link with the living and true God. Examine the unrenewed heart from its center to its circumference, and you will not find so much as one true thought about God or one right affection toward God. There may be a great deal that is amiable and attractive in the way of nature — much that is morally lovely in the eyes of men such as many social virtues and excellent qualities. Human nature, even in its ruins, may exhibit much of all these, just as the visible creation — this earth on which we live — displays, in spite of its ruined and groaning condition, many splendid traces of the master hand that formed it.

All this is perfectly true and perfectly obvious. Moreover, it must ever be taken into account in dealing with the great question of man's standing and condition. There is an extreme way of speaking of the sinner's state which is more likely to stumble and perplex the mind than to convict the conscience or break the heart. This should be carefully avoided. We should always take account of all that is really good in human nature. If we look at the case of the rich young ruler in Mark 10, we see that the Lord recognized something lovable in him, for we read that “Jesus beholding him, loved him,” though we have no warrant whatever to suppose there was any divine work in his soul, seeing he turned his back upon Christ and preferred the world to Him. But there was evidently something most attractive in this young man, something different from those gross, coarse and degraded forms in which human nature often clothes itself.

We cannot but judge that the man who, in writing or speaking about the sinner's moral and spiritual state, would ignore or lose sight of those moral and social distinctions, does positive damage to the cause of truth and neutralizes the very object which he has in view. If, for example, we approach an amiable, upright, frank and honorable person, and in a sweeping manner place him in the same category with a crooked, scheming, dishonest, contemptible character, we only drive him away in irritation and disgust. Whereas, if we recognize whatever is really good; if we allow, as Scripture most surely does, a sufficient margin in which to set down all that is morally and socially excellent even in fallen humanity, we are much more likely to gain our end, than by injudiciously ignoring those distinctions. Inasmuch as they clearly exist, it is the height of folly to deny them. Still, it holds good — and let the reader solemnly consider the weighty fact — that man, the very best, the very fairest specimen is “without strength” and “ungodly.” Nor is this all. The apostle does not rest in mere negatives. He not only tells us what man is not, but he goes on to tell us what he is. He gives us both sides of this great question. He not only declares that, “When we were without strength, in due time

Christ died for the ungodly,” but he adds that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Here we have the positive activity of evil, the actual energy of self-will. For, be it remembered, sin is doing our own will in whatever line that will may travel, whatever form it may assume. It may present itself in the shape of the grossest moral depravity or it may array itself in the garb of a cultivated and refined taste, but it is self-will all the while, and self-will is sin. It may be only like the acorn, the mere seed, but the acorn contains the wide spreading oak. Thus the heart of the newly born infant is a little seed-plot in which may be found the germ of every sin that ever was committed in the world. True, each seed may not germinate or bring forth fruit, but the seed is there and only needs circumstances or influences to unfold it.

If anyone be kept from gross outward sins, it is not owing to a better nature, but simply to the fact of his surroundings. All men are sinners. All by nature do their own will. This stamps their character. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” From the days of fallen Adam to this moment — about 6000 years — there has been but one solitary exception to this solemn and terrible rule. There was only One who never sinned, never did His own will, and that is the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Though God over all blessed forever, yet having become a Man, He surrendered His own will completely and did always and only the things that pleased His Father. From the manger to the cross, He was ruled in all things by the will and the glory of God. He was the only perfect spotless Man who ever trod this sin-stained earth. He was the only fair untainted sheaf that ever appeared in the field of this world — “the Man Christ Jesus” who died for us “sinners” and “suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

What marvelous grace! What soul-subduing love! What amazing mercy! Oh! how it should melt these hearts of ours! Think, dear reader, think deeply of this love, this grace, this mercy. Dwell upon it until your soul is absorbed in the contemplation of it. We are painfully insensible and indifferent. Indeed there is nothing more humbling than our guilty, shameful indifference to a Savior's love. We seem content to take salvation as the result of His cross and passion, His agony and grief, His inexpressible sorrow, while at the same time, our hearts are cold and indifferent to Him. He left the bright heavens and came down into this dark and sinful world for us. He went down into the gloomy depths of death and the grave. He endured the hiding of God's countenance, which involved more intense anguish to His precious soul than all that men and demons, earth and hell could do. He sank in deep waters, and went down into the horrible pit and into the miry clay. He did all this for us “sinners” when we were “ungodly” and “without strength.” Yet how little we think of it! How little we dwell upon it! How little we are moved by the record of it!

The remembrance of this should humble us in the dust before our precious Savior-God. The hardness of our hearts in the presence of the profound mystery of the cross and passion of our Lord Christ is, if possible, a more remarkable and striking proof of our depravity than the sins for which He died. But we have rather anticipated what may yet come before us in the further unfolding of our subject. And now a brief reference to the fourth term by which the apostle sets forth our condition in nature. This is contained in the verse which forms our present thesis. “We were enemies.” What a thought! We were not merely powerless, godless, sinful, but actually hostile — in a state of positive enmity against God.

Nothing can possibly exceed this. To be the enemy of God gives the most appalling idea we can possibly have of a sinner's state. Yet such is the actual condition of the unconverted reader of these lines. He is an enemy of God. He may be amiable, polite, attractive, refined, cultivated, educated, moral

and even outwardly religious. He may occupy the very highest platform of religious profession. He may be a church member, a regular communicant, a worker in the vineyard, a Sunday School teacher, a preacher, a minister, and all the while be an enemy of God.

How awful the thought! Oh beloved reader, do pause and consider, we beseech you. Give this solemn question your undivided attention. Do not put it aside. We appeal to you with all earnestness, as in the presence of Almighty God, of His Son Jesus Christ and of the Eternal Spirit. We adjure you by the value of your immortal soul, by the dread reality of the judgment seat of Christ, by all the horrors of that lake which burns with fire and brimstone, by the worm that never dies, by the awful fact of eternity — an eternity in the gloomy shades of hell — by the unutterable agony of being separated forever from God, from Christ and from all that is pure and lovely. By the combined force of all these arguments, we earnestly and affectionately beseech you to flee, this moment, to the Savior who stands with open arms and loving heart to receive you. Come to Jesus! Come now, just as you are! Only trust Him and you are safe — safe forever — safe as He.

We also would call the attention of our readers to the important distinction between *atonement* and *reconciliation*. They are often confounded through lack of attention to the precise terms of Holy Scripture. The fact is, they are distinct, though intimately connected — distinct as the foundation is from the building — connected as the building is with the foundation. Atonement is the foundation on which reconciliation rests. Without atonement, there could not possibly be any reconciliation, but reconciliation is not atonement. The reader will do well to weigh this matter thoroughly in the light of inspiration. It is most needful for all Christians to be clear and sound in their thoughts on divine subjects, and accurate in their way of stating them. It will invariably be found that the more spiritual anyone is, the closer he will keep to the language of Scripture in putting forth foundation truth. Unfortunately, our most excellent Authorized Version [KJV] is not accurate in this matter, inasmuch as we find in Romans 5: 11 the word “atonement” where it ought to be “reconciliation.” On the other hand, we have in Hebrews 2: 17, the word “reconciliation” where it ought to be “atonement” or “propitiation.” However, the two things are distinct and it is important that the distinction should be understood and maintained.

Furthermore, we would remind the reader that *there is no foundation whatsoever in the Word of God for the idea that God needed to be reconciled to us*. There is no such thought to be found within the covers of the Bible. It was man that needed to be reconciled to God, not God to man. Man was the enemy of God. He was not only “without strength,” “ungodly,” and “a sinner,” but actually “an enemy.”

Now it is the enemy — the alienated one, the estranged one — that needs to be brought back, to be reconciled. This is plain. But God, blessed be His name, was not man's enemy. He was man's friend, the Friend of sinners. Such was the blessed Lord Jesus Christ when on earth. “He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10). It was His delight to do good unto all. He spent His life in doing good to those who preferred a robber and a murderer to Him, and nailed Him to a cross between two thieves. Thus, whether we look at the life or at the death of Christ, we see in the clearest and most forcible manner the enmity of man, but the friendship, the kindness, the love of God.

How is man to be reconciled to God? Momentous question! Let us look well to the answer. The passage of Scripture which forms the theme of this article declares in the most distinct manner, that “We are reconciled to God *by the death* of his Son” (Rom. 5: 10). Nothing else could do it. The death of the cross — the atoning death — the vicarious sacrifice — the precious priceless blood of Jesus — is

the absolutely essential basis of our reconciliation to a sin-hating God. We must state this great truth in the most emphatic and unequivocal manner. Scripture is as clear and definite as possible. For us to be reconciled to God, sin must be put away, and “without shedding of blood, there is no remission” (Heb. 9: 22).

Thus the matter stands if we are to be taught simply by Scripture. No blood-shedding, no remission; no remission, no reconciliation. Such is the divine order. Let men beware how they tamper with it. It is a very serious thing to touch the truth of God. We may rest assured that all who do so will meddle to their own hurt.

We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son. It is not by his incarnation, that is, His taking human nature upon Him. Incarnation could not reconcile us to God inasmuch as it could not blot out our sins. Incarnation is not atonement. It is well to note this. There is a subtle way of playing upon the word *atonement* which consists of a false division of the syllables — as though the word were “*at-one-ment*.” This “atonement” is referred to the incarnation as though, in that mysterious act, our Lord took our fallen human nature into union with Himself. Against this we solemnly warn the reader. *It is fatally false doctrine.* It is an effort of the enemy to displace or set aside altogether the atoning death of Christ, with all those grand foundation truths which cluster round that most precious mystery.

We hold as a cardinal truth the incarnation of the eternal Son! It forms the foundation of that great mystery of godliness of which the topstone is a glorified Man on the throne of God. “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3: 16).

We hold incarnation to be an integral part of the faith of a true Christian, nor could we own as a Christian anyone who denied it. But it is one thing to hold a truth and another thing altogether to displace it. It is a constant effort of Satan, if he cannot get men to reject a truth, to displace it. In this way he gains some of his greatest apparent triumphs. Thus it is with the essential doctrine of incarnation. Assuredly, the Son of God had to become a Man to die, but becoming Man is one thing and dying upon the cross is another. He might have become a Man; He might have lived and labored for 33 years on this earth; He might have been baptized in Jordan and tempted in the wilderness; He might have ascended from the mount of transfiguration to that glory from which He had come and which He had with the Father from before all worlds. At any moment during His blessed life, He might, so far as He was personally concerned, have returned to that heaven from where He had descended. What could hinder Him? There was no necessity laid on Him to die except the necessity of infinite and everlasting love. Death had no claim on Him inasmuch as He was the sinless, spotless, holy One of God. He had not come under the federal headship of the first man. Had He done so, He would have been under the curse and wrath of God all His days, and that not vicariously, but in virtue of His connection with the first Adam. This would be an open and positive blasphemy against His Person. He was the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, the only untainted grain of human wheat on which the eye of God could rest. As such, we repeat, He could at any point between the manger and the cross, have returned to the bosom of the Father — that dwelling-place of inexpressible love.

Let the reader seize with clearness and power this great truth. Let him dwell upon it. It is a truth of very great importance. Jesus stood alone in this world. He was alone in the manger, alone in the Jordan, alone in the wilderness, alone on the mount, alone in the garden. All this is in perfect keeping with His own memorable words in John 12, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Here is the grand point — “If it die.” Unless

He was to return to glory alone, He must die. If He was to have us with Him, He must die. If sins were to be forgiven, He must die. If sinners were to be saved, He must die. If a new and living way was to be opened for us into the presence of God, He must die. If the veil was to be rent, He must die. That mysterious curtain remained intact when the blessed One lay in the manger of Bethlehem — and when He was baptized and when He was anointed and when He was tempted and when He was transfigured and when He was bowed in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood, and when He was scourged before Pontius Pilate. Through all these stages of His marvelous life, the veil was unrent. There and thus it stood to bar the sinner's approach to God. Man was shut out from God and God shut in from man. Nor could all the living labors of the eternal Son — His miracles, His precious ministry, His tears, His sighs, His groans, His prayers, His sore testings and His untold living sorrows — have rent the veil. But the very moment death was accomplished, “The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”

Such is the distinct teaching of Scripture on this vital question. The death of Christ is the foundation of everything. Is it a question of life? He has given His flesh for the life of the world. Is it a question of pardon? “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Is it a question of peace? “He made peace by the blood of His cross.” Is it a question of reconciliation? “We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” In short, it is through death we get everything; without death we get nothing. It is on the ground of death, the atoning death of Christ, that we are reconciled to God and united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and glorified Head in heaven. All rests on the solid groundwork of accomplished redemption. Sin is put away, the enmity is slain, all barriers are removed, God is glorified, the law magnified, and all this by the death of Christ. “He passed through death's dark raging flood” to settle everything for us, and to lay the imperishable foundation of all the counsels and purposes of the Holy Trinity.

Now a few words as to the life of Christ in heaven for us. “If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” Be it carefully noted that this refers to His life after death — His life in resurrection, His life in heaven. Some would teach us that it is His life on earth — His fulfillment of the law in our place. This is flatly contradicted by the very structure of the passage and by the entire teaching of the New Testament. It is not life before death, but life *after* death that the apostle speaks of. It is the priestly life of our blessed and adorable Lord, who ever lives to make intercession for us. It is by this we are saved through all the difficulties and dangers, the snares and temptations of this wilderness world.

We, though reconciled to God by the death of Christ, are nevertheless in ourselves, poor, feeble, helpless, erring creatures. We are prone to wander, ever liable to failure and sin, totally unable to get on for a single moment, if not kept by our great High Priest, our blessed Advocate, our Comforter. He keeps us day and night. He never slumbers nor sleeps. He maintains us continually before God in all the integrity of the position in which His death has placed us. It is impossible that our cause can ever fail in such hands. His intercession is all prevailing. “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The One who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, now bears our sorrows on His heart upon the throne. And He will come again to bear the government upon His shoulder.

What a Savior! What a Victim! What a Priest! How blessed to have all our affairs in His hand and to be sustained by such a ministry! How precious to know that the One who has reconciled us to God by His death is now alive for us on the throne. Because He lives we shall live also! All praise to His peerless name!

