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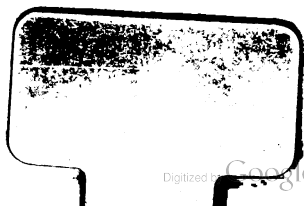
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PAGES FOR THE ANXIOUS.



C.H.M.



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PAGES FOR THE ANXIOUS:

BEING

GLAD TIDINGS,

AND THE

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION,

Reprinted from "Things New and Old"



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PART I.

GLAD TIDINGS.

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

THERE are some passages of holy scripture which seem to contain, in a line or two, an entire volume of most precious truth. The verse which we have just penned is one of such. It is part of our Lord’s memorable discourse with Nicodemus, and it embodies, in a condensed form, a very full statement of gospel truth—a statement which may well be termed “Glad Tidings.”

It should ever be borne in mind, both by preachers and those to whom they preach, that one grand object of the gospel is to bring God and the sinner together in such a way as to secure the sinner’s eternal salvation. It reveals a *Saviour-God* to a *lost man*. In other words, it presents God to the sinner in the very character that meets the sinner’s need. A Saviour is precisely what suits the lost, just as a life-boat suits a drowning man, or a physician a sick man, or bread a hungry man. They are fitted

the one for the other ; and when God as a Saviour, and man as a lost sinner, meet together, the whole question is settled for ever. The sinner is saved, because God is a Saviour. He is saved according to the perfection which belongs to God, in every character He wears, in every office He fills, in every relationship He sustains. To raise a question as to the full and everlasting salvation of a believing soul, is to deny that God is a Saviour. So it is in reference to justification. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier ; and, hence, the believer is justified according to the perfection which attaches to God in that character. If a single flaw could be detected in the title of the very weakest believer, it would be a dishonour to God as a Justifier. Grant me but this, that God is my Justifier, and I argue, in the face of every opposer and every accuser, that I am, and must be, perfectly justified.

And, on the same principle, grant me but this, that God has revealed Himself as a Saviour, and I argue, with unclouded confidence and holy boldness, that I am, and must be, perfectly saved. It does not rest upon aught in me, but simply and entirely upon God's revelation of Himself. I know He is perfect in everything ; and, therefore, perfect as my Saviour. Hence, I am perfectly saved, inasmuch as the glory of God is involved in my salvation. "There is no

God else beside me ; a just God and a Saviour ; there is none beside me." What then ? "*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else.*" (Isaiah xlv. 21, 22). One believing *look* from a lost sinner to a just God and a Saviour, secures eternal salvation. "*Look !*" How simple ! It is not "Work"—"Do"—"Pray"—"Feel"—no ; it is simply "*Look.*" And what then ? Salvation—everlasting life. It must be so, because God is a Saviour ; and the precious little monosyllable "*look*" fully implies all this, inasmuch as it expresses the fact that the salvation which I want is found in the One to whom I look. It is all there, ready for me, and one look secures it—secures it for ever—secures it for *me*. It is not a thing of to-day or to-morrow ; it is an eternal reality. The bulwarks of salvation behind which the believer retreats have been erected by God Himself—the Saviour-God, on the sure foundation of Christ's atoning work ; and no power of earth or hell can ever shake them. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious ; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." (Isaiah xxviii. 16 ; 1 Peter ii. 6.)

But let us now turn directly to the profound and comprehensive passage which forms the special subject of this paper. In

it, most assuredly, we listen to the voice of a Saviour-God—the voice of Him who came down from heaven to reveal God in such a way as He had never been revealed before. It is a marvellously blessed fact that God has been fully revealed in this world—revealed, so that we—the writer and the reader of these lines—may know Him, in all the reality of what He is—know Him, each for himself, with the utmost possible certainty, and have to do with Him, in all the blessed intimacy of personal communion.

Reader, think of this! Think, we beseech you, of this amazing privilege. You may know God for yourself, as *your* Saviour, *your* Father, *your* own very God. You may have to do with Him; you may lean upon Him, cling to Him, walk with Him, live and move and have your being in His own most blessed presence, in the bright sunshine of His loving countenance, under His own immediate eye.

This is life and peace. It is far more than mere theology or systematic divinity. These things have their value; but, be it remembered, a man may be a profound theologian, an able divine, and yet live and die without God and perish eternally. Solemn, awful, overwhelming thought! A man may go down to hell, into the blackness and darkness of an eternal night, with all the dogmas of theology at his fingers'

ends. A man may sit in the professor's chair, stand in the pulpit and at the desk; he may be looked up to as a great teacher and an eloquent preacher: hundreds may sit at his feet and learn, thousands may hang on his lips and be enraptured, and, after all, he himself may descend into the pit, and spend a dismal miserable eternity in company with the most profane and immoral.

Not so, however, with one who knows God as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. Such a one has gotten life eternal. "This," says Christ, "is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.) It is not life eternal to know theology or divinity. A man may sit down to the study of these, as he would to study law or medicine, astronomy or geology, and all the while know nothing of God, and therefore be without divine life, and perish in the end.

So also as to mere religiousness. A man may be the greatest devotee in the world. He may most diligently discharge all the offices, and sedulously attend upon all the ordinances, of systematic religion; he may fast and pray; hear sermons and say prayers; be most devout and exemplary; and all the while know nothing of God in Christ; yea, he may live and die without God, and sink into hell for ever. Look at Nicodemus.

Where could you find a better sample of religious human nature than in him? A man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews, a master in Israel; one, moreover, who seemed to discern in the miracles of our Lord the clear proofs of His divine mission; and yet the word to him was, "Ye must be born again." We have no need, surely, to go farther than this to prove that a man may be, not only religious, but actually a guide and a teacher of others, and yet not have a single spark of divine life in his soul.

But it is not so with one who knows God in Christ. Such a one has life and an object. He has God Himself for his priceless portion. This is divine. It lies at the very foundation of personal Christianity and true religion. It is above and beyond everything. It is not, we repeat, mere theology, divinity, or religiousness; it is God Himself, known, trusted, and enjoyed. It is a grand, unmistakable reality. It is the soul of theology, the groundwork of divinity, the life of true religion. There is nothing in all this world like it. It is something which must be *felt* in order to be known. It is acquaintance with God, confidence in Him, and enjoyment of Him.

Now, it may be that the reader is disposed to ask, "How can I possess this priceless treasure? How can I know God for myself, in this living, saving, powerful

manner? If it be true that without this personal knowledge of God I *must* perish eternally, then how am I to obtain it? What am I to do, what am I to be, in order to know God?" The answer is, God has revealed Himself. If He had not, we may say with decision that, nothing that we could do, nothing that we could be, nothing in us or of us, could possibly make us acquainted with God. If God had not manifested Himself, we should have remained for ever in ignorance of Him and perished in our ignorance. But, seeing that He has come forth from the thick darkness and showed Himself, we may know Him according to the truth of His own revelation, and find, in that knowledge, everlasting life, and a spring of blessedness at which our ransomed souls shall drink throughout the golden ages of eternity.

We know of nothing which so clearly and forcibly proves man's utter incompetency to do aught towards procuring life, as the fact that the possession of this life is based upon the knowledge of God; and this knowledge of God must rest upon the revelation of God. In a word, to know God is life; to be ignorant of Him is death.

But where is He to be known? This is, in very deed, a grave question. Many a one has had to cry out, with Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find him."

Where is God to be found? Am I to look for Him in creation? Doubtless, His *hand* is visible there; but ah! that will not do for me. A Creator-God will not suit a lost sinner. *The hand of power* will not avail for a poor guilty wretch like me. I want *a heart of love*. Yes, I want a heart that can love me in all my guilt and misery. Where can I find this? Shall I look into the wide domain of Providence—the widely extended sphere of God’s government? Has God revealed Himself there in such a way as to meet me, a poor lost one? Will Providence and government avail for one who knows himself to be a hell-deserving sinner? Clearly not. If I look at these things, I may see what will perplex and confound me. I am short-sighted and ignorant, and wholly unable to explain the ins and outs, the bearings and issues, the why and the wherefore, of a single event in my own life, or in the history of this world. Am I able to explain all about the loss of *The London*? Can I account for the fact that a most valuable life is suddenly cut short, and an apparently useless one prolonged? There is a husband and the father of a large family: he seems perfectly indispensable to his domestic circle; and yet, all in a moment, he is cut down, and they are left in sorrow and destitution. While, on the other hand, yonder lies a poor bed-

ridden creature, who has out-lived all her relations, and is dependent on the parish, or on individual benevolence. She has lain there for years, a burden to some, no use to any. Can I account for this? Am I competent to interpret the voice of Providence in this deeply mysterious dispensation? Certainly not. I have nothing in or of myself wherewith to thread my way through the mazes of the labyrinth of what is called Providence. I cannot find a Saviour-God there.

Well, then, shall I turn to the law—to the Mosaic economy—the Levitical ceremonial? Shall I find what I want there? Will a Lawgiver, on the top of a fiery mount, wrapped in clouds and thick darkness, sending forth thunders and lightnings, or hidden behind a veil—will such a One avail for me? Alas! alas! I cannot meet Him—I cannot answer His demands nor fulfil the conditions. I am told to love Him with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my strength; but I do not know Him. I am blind and cannot see. I am alienated from the life of God, an enemy by wicked works. Sin has blinded my mind, blunted my conscience, and hardened my heart. The devil has completely perverted my moral being, and led me into a state of positive rebellion against God. I want to be renewed in the very source of my being, ere I can do what

the law demands. How can I be thus renewed? Only by the knowledge of God. But God is not revealed in the law. Nay, He is hidden—hidden behind an impenetrable cloud, an unrent veil. Hence I cannot know Him there. I am compelled to retire from that fiery mount, and from that unrent veil, and from the whole economy of which these were the characteristic features, the prominent objects, still crying out, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him." In a word, then, neither in creation, nor in providence, nor in the law, is God revealed as "a just God and a Saviour." I see a God of power in creation; a God of wisdom in providence; a God of justice in the law; a God of love *only* in the face of Jesus Christ. "*God was in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself." (2 Cor. v. 19.)

To this stupendous fact we call the reader's earnest attention; that is, if he be one who does not yet know the Lord. It is of the very last possible importance that he be clear as to this. Without it there can be nothing right. To know God is the first step. It is not merely knowing some things about God. It is not unrenewed nature turning religious, trying to do better, endeavouring to keep the law. No, reader; it is none of these things. It is God, known in the face of Jesus Christ. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of

darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is the deep and blessed secret of the whole matter. The reader, so far as his natural condition is concerned, is in a state of darkness. There is not so much as a single ray of spiritual light. He is, spiritually and morally, just what creation was physically before that sublime and commanding utterance fell from the lips of the Almighty Creator, "Let there be light." All is dark and chaotic, for "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.)

Here are two things, namely, the god of this world blinding the mind, and seeking to hinder the inshining of the precious life-giving beams of the light of God's glory; and, on the other hand, God, in His marvellous grace, shining in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus all hinges upon the grand reality of the knowledge of God. Is there light? It is because God is known. Is there darkness? It is because God is not known. No doubt there are various measures in the experience and exhibition of this light: but there is light, because there is the knowledge of God. So also there may

be various forms of darkness; some more hideous than others; but there is darkness because God is not known. The knowledge of God is light and life. Ignorance of God is darkness and death. A man may enrich himself with all the treasures of science and literature; but if he does not know God he is in the darkness of primeval night. But, on the other hand, a man may be profoundly ignorant of all human learning; but if he knows God he can walk in broad daylight.

In the passage of scripture which is engaging our attention, namely, John iii. 16, we have a very remarkable illustration of the character of the entire Gospel of John, and especially the opening chapters. It is impossible to meditate upon it without seizing this interesting fact. In it we are introduced to God Himself, in that wondrous aspect of His character and nature, as loving *the world*, and giving His Son. In it, too, we find, not only the "world" as a whole, but the individual sinner, under that most satisfactory title of "whosoever." Thus God and the sinner are together—God, *loving and giving*; and the sinner, *believing and having*. It is not God judging and exacting; but God loving and giving. The former was law; the latter, grace: that was Judaism; this, Christianity. In the one, we see God demanding obedience in order to life; in the other, we see God giving life as the only basis of obedience. In

the one, we see man struggling for life, but never obtaining it; in the other, we see man receiving life as a free gift, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the contrast between the two systems—a contrast which cannot be too deeply pondered. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John i. 17.)

But let us mark the way in which this is unfolded in our text. “God so loved the world.” Here we have the wide aspect of the love of God. It is not confined to any particular nation, tribe, caste, or family. It embraces the whole world. God is love; and, being so, it is not a question of the fitness or worthiness of the object of His love. It is what He is. He is love, and He cannot be anything else. It is the very energy and activity of His nature. The heart may have many a question, many an exercise as to its state and condition before God, and very right it should have them. The Spirit Himself may produce such exercises and raise such questions; but, after all, the grand truth shines forth in all its lustre, “God is love.” Whatever we are, whatever the world is, that is what God is: and we know that the truth as to God forms the deep and rich substratum which underlies the whole system of Christianity. The soul may pass through deep and sore conflict, under the sense of its own wretchedness; there

may be many doubts and fears ; many dark and heavy clouds ; weeks, months, or years may be spent under the law, in one's inward self-consciousness, and that, moreover, long after the mere intellect has yielded its assent to the principles and doctrines of evangelical religion. But, after all, we must be brought into direct personal contact with God Himself—with what He is—with His nature and character, as He has revealed Himself in the gospel. We have to acquaint ourselves with Him, and He is love.

Observe, it does not say merely that God is *loving*, but that He is *love*. It is not only that love is an attribute of His character, but it is the very activity of His nature. We do not read that God is justice, or holiness ; He is just and He is holy ; but it would not express the full and blessed truth to say that God is loving ; He is much more, He is love itself. Hence, when the sinner—"whosoever" he be, it matters not—is brought to see his own total and absolute ruin, his hopeless wretchedness, his guilt and misery, the utter vanity and worthlessness of all within and around him, that there is nothing in the whole world that can satisfy his heart, and nothing in his heart that can satisfy God, or satisfy even his own conscience—when these things are opened, in any measure, to his view, then is he met by this grand substantial truth that "God is love," and that

He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son.

Here is life and rest for the soul. Here is salvation, full, free, and everlasting, for the poor, needy, guilty, lost one—salvation, resting not upon anything in man or of man—upon aught that he is or can be, aught that he has done or can do, but simply upon what God is and has done. God *loves* and *gives*, and the sinner *believes* and *has*. This is far beyond Creation, Government, or Law. In Creation, God spake and it was done. He called worlds into existence by the word of His mouth. But we hear nothing, throughout the entire record of creation, of God loving and giving.

So as to Government, we see God ruling in unsearchable wisdom, amid the armies of heaven, and among the children of men; but we cannot comprehend Him. We can only say, as to this subject, that

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.”

Finally, as to the Law, it is, from beginning to end, a perfect system of command and prohibition—a system perfect in its

action as testing man, and making manifest his entire alienation from God. "The law worketh wrath." And again, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But what could such a system do in a world of sinners? Could it give life? Impossible. Why? Because man could not fulfil its holy requirements. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, then verily righteousness should have been by the law." But no; the law was a ministration of death and condemnation. (See 2 Cor. iii.) The only effect of the law, to any one who is under it, is the pressure of death upon the soul, and of guilt and condemnation upon the conscience. It cannot possibly be otherwise with an honest soul under the law.

What, then, is needed? Simply this, the knowledge of the love of God, and of the precious gift which that love has bestowed. This is the eternal groundwork of all. Love, and the gift of love. For, be it observed and ever remembered, that God's love could never have reached us save through the medium of that gift. God is holy, and we are sinful. How could we come near Him? How could we dwell in His holy presence? How could sin and holiness ever abide in company? Impossible. Justice demands the condemnation of sin; and if love will save the sinner, it must do so at no less a cost than the gift of the only begotten Son. Darius loved

Daniel, and laboured hard to save him from the lions' den; but his love was powerless because of the unbending law of the Medes and Persians. He spent the night in sorrow and fasting. He could weep at the mouth of the den; but he could not save his friend. His love was not mighty to save. If he had offered himself to the lions instead of his friend, it would have been morally glorious; but he did not. His love told itself forth in unavailing tears and lamentations. The law of the Persian kingdom was more powerful than the love of the Persian king. The law, in its stern majesty, triumphed over an impotent love which had nothing but fruitless tears to bestow upon its object.

But the love of God is not like this—eternal and universal praise to His name! His love is mighty to save. It *reigns* through righteousness. How is this? Because "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." The law had declared, in words of awful solemnity, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Was this law less stern, less majestic, less stringent, than the law of the Medes and Persians? Surely not. How, then, was it to be disposed of? It was to be magnified and made honourable, vindicated and established. Not one jot or tittle of the law could ever be set aside. How, then, was the difficulty to be solved? Three things had to be done:

the law had to be magnified; sin condemned; the sinner saved. How could these grand results be reached? We have the answer in two bold and vivid lines from one of our own poets,—

“On Jesus’ cross this record’s graved,
Let sin be damned, and sinners saved.”

Precious record! May many an anxious sinner read and believe it! Such was the amazing love of God that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. His love cost Him nothing less than the Son of His bosom. When it was a question of creating worlds, it cost Him but the word of His mouth; but when it was a question of loving a world of sinners, it cost His only begotten Son. The love of God is a holy love, a righteous love, a love acting in harmony with all the attributes of His nature, and the claims of His throne. “Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” The soul can never be set at liberty till this truth is fully laid hold of. There may be certain vague hopes in the mercy of God, and a measure of confidence in the atoning work of Jesus, all true and real so far as it goes; but true liberty of heart cannot possibly be enjoyed until it is seen and understood that God has glorified Himself in the manner of His love toward us. Conscience could never

be tranquillized, nor Satan silenced, if sin had not been perfectly judged and put away. But "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." What depth and power in the little word "so"!

It may here be needful to meet a difficulty which often occurs to anxious souls, in reference to the question of appropriation. Thousands have been harassed and perplexed by this question, at some stage or other of their spiritual history; and it is not improbable that many who shall read these pages may be glad of a few words on the subject. Many may feel disposed to ask, "How am I to know that this love, and the gift of love, are intended for *me*? What warrant have I for believing that 'everlasting life' is for *me*? I know the plan of salvation; I believe in the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness and justification of all who truly believe. I am convinced of the truth of all that the Bible declares. I believe we are all sinners, and, moreover, that we can do nothing to save ourselves—that we need to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and to be taught and led by the Holy Ghost, ere we can please God here, and dwell with Him hereafter. All this I fully believe, and yet I have no assurance that I am saved, and I want to know on what authority I am to believe that my sins are forgiven and that I have everlasting life."

If the foregoing be, in any measure, the language of the reader—if it be, at all, the expression of his difficulty, we would, in the first place, call his attention to two words which occur in our precious text (John iii. 16), namely, “*world*” and “*whosoever*.” It seems utterly impossible for any one to refuse the application of these two words. For what, let us ask, is the meaning of the term “*world*”? What does it embrace? or, rather, What does it not embrace? When our Lord declares that “God so loved the world,” on what ground can the reader exclude himself from the range, scope, and application of this divine love? On no ground whatever, unless he can show that he alone belongs not to the world, but to some other sphere of being. If it were declared that “the world” is hopelessly condemned, could any one making a part of that world avoid the application of the sentence? Could he exclude himself from it? Impossible. How then can he—why should he—exclude himself, when it is a question of God’s free love, and of salvation by Christ Jesus?

But, further, we would ask, What is the meaning—what the force—of the familiar word, “*whosoever*”? Assuredly it means “*anybody*”; and if anybody, why not the reader? It is infinitely better, infinitely surer, and more satisfactory to find the word “*whosoever*” in the gospel than to find my

own name there, inasmuch as there may be a thousand persons in the world of the same name; but "whosoever" applies to me as distinctly as though I were the only sinner on the face of the earth.

Thus, then, the very words of the gospel message—the very terms used to set forth the glad tidings, are such as leave no possible ground for a difficulty as to their application. If we listen to our Lord in the days of His flesh, we hear such words as these, "God so loved the *world* that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Again, if we listen to Him after His resurrection, we hear these words, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*." (Mark xvi.) And lastly, if we listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost sent from a risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, we hear such words as these, "The same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon him. For *whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. x. 12, 13.)

In all the above-cited passages we have two terms used, one general, the other particular, and both together so presenting the message of salvation as to leave no room whatever for anyone to refuse its application. If "all the world" is the scope, and "every creature" is the object of the precious gospel of Christ then on what ground can any one

exclude himself? Where is there authority for any sinner out of hell to say that the glad tidings of salvation are not for him? There is none. Salvation is as free as the air we breathe—free as the dewdrops that refresh the earth—free as the sunbeams that shine upon our pathway; and if any attempt to limit its application they are neither in harmony with the mind of Christ, nor in sympathy with the heart of God.

But it may be that some of our readers would, at this stage of the subject, feel disposed to ask us, "How do you dispose of the question of election?" We reply, "Very simply, by leaving it where God has placed it, namely, as a landmark in the inheritance of the spiritual Israel, and not as a stumbling-block in the pathway of the anxious inquirer." This we believe to be the true way of dealing with the deeply important doctrine of election. The more we ponder the subject, the more thoroughly are we convinced that it is a mistake on the part of the evangelist or preacher of the gospel to qualify his message, hamper his subject, or perplex his hearers, by the doctrine of election or predestination. He has to do with lost sinners in the discharge of his blessed ministry. He meets men where they are, on the broad ground of our common ruin, our common guilt, our common condemnation. He meets them with a mes-

sage of full, free, present, personal, and eternal salvation—a message which comes fresh, fervent, and glowing from the very bosom of God. His ministry is, as the Holy Ghost declares in 2 Corinthians v., “a ministry of reconciliation,” the glorious characteristics of which are these, “God in Christ”—“reconciling the world unto himself”—“not imputing their trespasses”; and the marvellous foundation of which is, that God has made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Does this trench, in the smallest degree, upon the blessed and clearly established truth of election? By no means. It leaves it, in all its integrity and in its full value, as a grand fundamental truth of holy scripture, exactly where God has placed it, not as a preliminary question to be settled ere the sinner comes to Jesus; but as a most precious consolation and encouragement to him when he has come. This makes all the difference. If the sinner be called upon to settle beforehand the question of his election, how is he to set about it? Whither is he to turn for a solution? Where shall he find a divine warrant for believing that he is one of the elect? Can he find a single line of scripture on which to base his faith as to his election? He cannot. He can find scores of passages declaring him to be

lost, guilty, and undone—scores of passages to assure him of his total inability to do aught in the matter of his own salvation—hundreds of passages unfolding the free love of God, the value and efficacy of the atonement of Christ, and assuring him of a hearty welcome to come, *just as he is*, and make his own of the precious fruits of God's salvation. But if it be needful for him to settle the prior question of his predestination and election, then is his case hopeless, and he must, in so far as he is in earnest, be plunged in black despair.

And is it not thus with thousands at this moment, through the misapplication of the doctrine of election? We fully believe it is; and hence our anxiety to help our readers by setting the matter in what we judge to be the true light before their minds. We believe it to be of the utmost importance for the anxious inquirer to know that the stand-point from which he is called to view the cross of Christ is not the stand-point of election, but of conscious ruin. The grace of God meets him as a lost, dead, guilty sinner, not as an elect one. This is an unspeakable mercy, inasmuch as he knows he is the former, but cannot know that he is the latter until the gospel has come to him in power. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he know it? "Because our gospel came not unto

you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. i. 4, 5.) Paul preached to the Thessalonians as lost sinners, and when the gospel had laid hold of them as lost, he could write to them as elect.

This puts election in its right place. If the reader will turn for a moment to Acts xvii. he will there see how Paul discharged his business, as an evangelist, amongst the Thessalonians: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach to you is Christ." So also in that splendid passage at the opening of 1 Corinthians xv.: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures" (ver. 1—4).

From this passage, and many others which might be quoted, we learn that the apostle preached not merely a doctrine, but a person. He did not preach election. He taught it to saints, but never preached it to sinners. This should be the evangelist's model at all times. We never once find the apostles preaching election. They preached Christ—they unfolded the goodness of God—His loving-kindness—His tender mercy—His pardoning love—His gracious readiness to receive all who come in their true character and condition as lost sinners. Such was their mode of preaching, or rather, such was the mode of the Holy Ghost in them, and such too was the mode of the blessed Master Himself. "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*" "*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*" (Matt. xi.; John vi., vii.)

Here are no stumbling-blocks in the way of anxious inquirers—no preliminary questions to be settled—no conditions to be fulfilled—no theological difficulties to be solved. No, the sinner is met on his own ground—met as he is—met just now. There is rest for the weary, drink for the thirsty, life for the dead, pardon for the guilty, salvation for the lost. Do these free invitations touch the doctrine of election? Assuredly not.

And what is more, the doctrine of election does not touch them. In other words, a full and free gospel leaves perfectly untouched the grand and all-important truth of election: and the truth of election, in its proper place, leaves the gospel of the grace of God on its own broad and blessed base, and in all its divine length, breadth, and fulness. The gospel meets us as lost, and saves us; and then, when we know ourselves as saved, the precious doctrine of election comes in to establish us in the fact that we can never be lost. It never was the purpose of God that poor anxious souls should be harassed with theological questions or points of doctrine. No; blessed for ever be His name, it is His gracious desire that the healing balm of His pardoning love, and the cleansing efficacy of the atoning blood of Jesus, should be applied to the spiritual wounds of every sin-sick soul. And as to the doctrines of predestination and election, He has unfolded them in His word to comfort His saints, not to perplex poor sinners. They shine like precious gems on the page of inspiration, but they were never intended to lie as stumbling-blocks in the way of earnest seekers after life and peace. They are deposited in the hands of the teacher to be unfolded in the bosom of the family of God; but they are not intended for the evangelist, whose blessed mission is to the highways and

hedges of a lost world. They are designed to feed and comfort the children, not to scare and stumble the sinner. We would say, and that with real earnestness, to all evangelists, "Do not hamper your preaching with theological questions of any sort or description. Preach Christ. Unfold the deep and everlasting love of a Saviour-God. Seek to bring the guilty conscience-smitten sinner into the very presence of a pardoning God. Thunder, if you please, if so led, at the conscience—thunder loud at sin—thunder forth the dread realities of the great white throne, the lake of fire and everlasting torment; but see that you aim at bringing the guilty stricken conscience to rest in the atoning virtues of the blood of Christ. Then you can hand over the fruits of your ministry to the divinely qualified teacher to be instructed in the deeper mysteries of the faith of Christ. You may rest assured that the faithful discharge of your duty as an evangelist will never lead you to trespass on the domain of sound theology."

And, to the anxious inquirer, we would say, with equal earnestness, "Let nothing stand in your way in coming this moment to Jesus. Let theology speak as it may, you are to listen to the voice of Jesus, who says, '*Come unto me.*' Be assured there is no hindrance, no difficulty, no hitch, no question, no condition. You are a lost sinner, and

Jesus is a full Saviour. Put your trust in Him, and you are saved for ever. Believe in Him, and you will know your place amongst the 'elect of God' who are 'predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.' Bring your sins to Jesus and He will pardon them, cancel them by His blood, and clothe you in a spotless robe of divine righteousness. May God's Spirit lead you, now, to cast yourself simply and entirely upon that precious all-sufficient Saviour!"

We will now notice very briefly three distinct evils resulting from a wrong application of the doctrine of election, namely,

I. The discouragement of really earnest souls, who ought to be helped on in every possible way. If such persons are repulsed by the question of election, the result must be disastrous in the extreme. If they are told that the glad tidings of salvation are only for the elect—that Christ died only for such, and hence only such can be saved—that unless they are elect they have no right to apply to themselves the benefits of the death of Christ: if, in short, they are turned from Jesus to theology—from the heart of a loving, pardoning God to the cold and withering dogmas of systematic divinity, it is impossible to say where they may end; they may take refuge either in superstition on the one hand, or in infidelity on the other. They may end in high church, broad church, or

no church at all. What they really want is Christ, the living, loving, precious, all-sufficient Christ of God. He is the true food for anxious souls.

II. But, in the second place, careless souls are rendered more careless still by a false application of the doctrine of election. Such persons, when pressed as to their state and prospects, will fold their arms and say, "You know I cannot believe unless God gives me the power. If I am one of the elect I must be saved; if not, I cannot. I can do nothing, but must wait God's time." All this false and flimsy reasoning should be exposed and demolished. It will not stand, for a moment, in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ. Each one will learn there that election furnished no excuse whatever, inasmuch as it never was set up, by God, as a barrier to the sinner's salvation. The word is, "*Whosoever* will, let him take the water of life *freely*." The very same form of speech and style of language which removes the stumbling-block from the feet of the anxious inquirer, snatches the plea from the lips of the careless rejecter. No one is shut out. All are invited. There is neither barrier on the one hand, nor a plea on the other. All are made welcome; but all are responsible. Hence, if any one presumes to excuse himself for refusing God's salvation, which is as clear as a sunbeam, by

urging God's decrees, which are entirely hidden, he will find himself fatally mistaken.

• III. And now, in the third and last place, we have frequently seen, with real sorrow of heart, the earnest, loving, large-hearted evangelist damped and crippled by a false application of the truth of election. This should be most carefully avoided. We hold that it is not the business of the evangelist to preach election. If he is rightly instructed, he will *hold* it; but if he is rightly directed he will not *preach* it.

In a word, then, the precious doctrine of election is not to be a stumbling-block to the anxious—a plea for the careless—a damper to the fervent evangelist. May God's Spirit give us to feel the adjusting power of truth!

Having thus briefly endeavoured to clear away any difficulty arising from the mis-use of the precious doctrine of election, and to show the reader; "whosoever" he be, that there is no hindrance whatever to his full and hearty acceptance of God's free gift, even the gift of His only begotten Son; it now only remains for us to consider the result, in every case, of this acceptance, as set forth in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here, then, we have the result in the case of every one who simply believes in Jesus. He shall never perish, but shall possess everlasting life. But who can attempt to unfold all that is included in this word "*perish*"? What mortal tongue can set forth the horrors of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"? We believe, assuredly, that none but the One who used the word, in speaking to Nicodemus, can fully expound it to any one; but still we feel called upon to bear our decided and unequivocal testimony to the solemn truth of Eternal Punishment. We have, occasionally, referred to this subject, but we believe it demands from us a formal notice; and, inasmuch as the word "*perish*" occurs in the passage which has, for some months, been occupying our thoughts, we cannot do better than call the reader's attention to it.

It is a serious and melancholy fact that the enemy of souls and of the truth of God is leading thousands, both in Europe and America, to call in question the momentous fact of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. This he does on various grounds, and by various arguments, adapted to the habits of thought and moral condition and intellectual stand-point of individuals. Some he seeks to persuade that God is too kind to send any one to a place of torment. It is

contrary to His benevolent mind and His beneficent nature to inflict pain on any of His creatures.

Now, to all who stand, or affect to stand, upon this ground of argument, we would suggest the important inquiry, "What is to be done with the sins of those who die impenitent and unbelieving?" Whatever force there may be in the idea that God is too kind to send sinners to hell, there is equal force in the idea that He is too holy to let sin into heaven. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Hab. i. 13.) God and evil cannot dwell together. This is plain. How, then, is the case to be met? If God cannot let sin into heaven, what is to be done with the sinner who dies in His sins? He must perish? But what does this mean? Does it mean annihilation, that is, the utter extinction or blotting out of the very existence of body and soul? Nay, reader, this cannot be. Many would like this, no doubt. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," would, alas! suit many thousands of the sons and daughters of pleasure who think only of the present moment, and who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue. There are millions, on the surface of the globe, who are bartering their eternal happiness for a few hours of guilty pleasure, and the crafty foe of mankind seeks to persuade such that there

is no such place as hell, no such thing as the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone ; and, in order to obtain a footing for this fatal suggestion, he bases it upon the plausible and imposing notion of the kindness of God.

Reader, do not believe the arch-deceiver. Remember, God is holy. He cannot let sin into His presence. If you die in your sins you must perish, and this word "perish" involves, according to the clear testimony of holy scripture, eternal misery and torment in hell. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, in His solemn description of the judgment of the nations : "Then shall the king say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.) And, while you hearken to these awfully solemn accents, remember that the word translated "everlasting" occurs seventy times in the New Testament, and is applied as follows : "everlasting fire"—"eternal life"—"everlasting punishment"—"eternal damnation"—"everlasting habitations"—"the everlasting God"—"eternal weight of glory"—"everlasting destruction"—"everlasting consolation"—"eternal glory"—"eternal salvation"—"eternal judgment"—"eternal redemption"—"the eternal Spirit"—"eternal inheritance"—"everlasting kingdom"—"eternal fire."

Now, we ask any candid, thoughtful person, upon what principle can a word be said to mean *eternal* when applied to the Holy Ghost or to God, and only *temporary* when applied to hell-fire or the punishment of the wicked? If it means eternal in the one case, why not also in the other? We have just glanced at a Greek Concordance, and we should like to ask, Would it be right to mark off some half-dozen passages in which the word "everlasting" occurs, and write opposite to each these words, "everlasting here only means for a time?" The very thought is monstrous. It would be a daring and blasphemous insult offered to the Volume of Inspiration. No, reader, be assured of it, you cannot touch the word "everlasting" in one case, without touching it also in all the seventy cases in which it occurs. It is a dangerous thing to tamper with the Word of the living God. It is infinitely better to bow down under its holy authority. It is worse than useless to seek to avoid the plain meaning and solemn force of that word "perish" as applied to the immortal soul of man. It involves, beyond all question, the awful—the ineffably awful reality of burning for ever in the flames of hell. This is what scripture means by "perishing." The votary of pleasure, or the lover of money, may seek to forget this. They may seek to drown all thought of it in the glass or in the busy

mart. The sentimentalist may rave about the divine benevolence; the sceptic may reason about the possibility of eternal fire; but we are intensely anxious that the reader should rise from the study of this paper with the firm and deeply wrought conclusion and hearty belief that the punishment of all who die in their sins will be eternal in hell, as surely as the blessedness of all who die in the faith of Christ will be eternal in the heavens. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost would, most assuredly, have used a different word when speaking of the former, from that which He applies to the latter. This, we conceive, is beyond all question.

But there is another objection urged against the doctrine of eternal punishment. It is frequently said, "How can we suppose that God would inflict eternal punishment as a penalty for a few short years of sin?" We reply, It is beginning at the wrong end to argue in this way. It is not a question of time, as viewed from man's stand-point, but of the gravity of sin itself, as looked at from God's stand-point. And how is this question to be solved? Only by looking at the cross. If you want to know what sin is in God's sight, you must look at what it cost Him to put it away. It is by the standard of Christ's infinite sacrifice, and by that alone, that you can rightly measure sin. Men may compare their few years with

God's eternity; they may compare their short span of life with that boundless eternity that stretches beyond; they may seek to put a few years of sin into one scale, and an eternity of woe and torment into the other, and thus attempt to reach a just conclusion: but it will never do to argue thus. The question is, Did it require an infinite atonement to put away sin? If so, the punishment of sin must be eternal. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver from the consequences of sin, those consequences must be eternal.

In a word, then, we must look at sin from God's point of view, and measure it by His standard, else we shall never have a just sense of what it is or what it deserves. It is the height of folly for men to attempt to lay down a rule as to the amount or duration of the punishment due to sin. God alone can settle this. And, after all, what was it that produced all the misery and wretchedness, the sickness and sorrow, the death and desolation of well-nigh six thousand years? Just *one act* of disobedience—the eating of a little fruit. Can man explain this? Can human reason explain how one act produced such an overwhelming amount of misery? It cannot. Well, then, if it cannot do this, how can it be trusted when it attempts to decide the question as to what is due to sin? Woe be to all those

who commit themselves to its guidance in this most momentous point!

Ah! reader, you must see that God alone can estimate sin and its just deserts, and He alone can tell us all about it. And has He not done so? Yes, verily, He has measured sin in the cross of His Son, and there, too, He has set forth, in the most impressive manner, what it deserves. What, think you, must that be that caused the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If God forsook His only begotten Son when He was made sin, must not sin deserve infinite and everlasting punishment? We believe the conclusion is unavoidable. We consider that the infinite nature of the atonement proves, unanswerably, the doctrine of eternal punishment. That peerless and precious sacrifice is at once the foundation of our eternal life, and of our deliverance from eternal death. It delivers from eternal wrath, and introduces to eternal glory. It saves from the endless misery of hell, and procures for us the endless bliss of heaven. Thus, whatever side of the cross we look at, or from whatever side we view it, we see Eternity stamped upon it. If we view it from the gloomy depths of hell, or from the sunny heights of heaven, we see it to be the same infinite, eternal, divine reality. It is by the cross we must measure both the blessedness of heaven and the misery of

hell. Those who put their trust in that blessed One who died on the cross, obtain everlasting life and felicity. Those who reject Him, must sink into endless perdition.

We do not, by any means, pretend to handle this great question theologically, or to adduce all the arguments that might be advanced in defence of the doctrine of eternal punishment; but there is one further consideration which we must suggest to the reader as tending to lead him to a sound conclusion, and that is the immortality of the soul. "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The fall of man in nowise touched the question of the soul's immortality. If, therefore, the soul is immortal, annihilation is impossible. The soul must live for ever. Overwhelming thought! For ever! For ever! For ever! The whole moral being sinks under the awful magnitude of the thought. It surpasses all conception and baffles all mental calculation. Human arithmetic can only deal with the finite. It has no figures by which to represent a never-ending eternity. But the writer and the reader must live throughout eternity, either in that bright and blessed world above, or in that terrible place where hope can never come.

May God's Spirit impress our hearts more and more with the solemnity of eternity and of immortal souls going down into hell. We

are deplorably deficient in feeling as to these weighty realities. We are daily thrown in contact with people, we buy and sell and carry on intercourse in various ways with those who must live for ever, and yet how rarely do we seek occasion to press upon them the awfulness of eternity and the appalling condition of all who die without a personal interest in the blood of Christ.

Reader, let us ask God to make us more earnest, more solemn, more faithful, more zealous in pleading with souls, in warning others to flee from the wrath to come. We want to live more in the light of eternity, and then we shall be better able to deal with others.

It only remains for us, now, to ponder the last clause of the fruitful passage of scripture which has been under consideration (John iii. 16). It sets forth the positive result, in every case, of simple faith in the Son of God. It declares, in the simplest and clearest way, the fact that every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is a possessor of everlasting life. It is not merely that his sins are blotted out, that is blessedly true. Nor is it merely that he is saved from the consequences of his guilt, which is equally true. But there is more. The believer in Jesus has a new life, and that life is in the Son of God. He is placed upon a new footing altogether. He is no longer looked at in the old Adam condition, but in a risen Christ.

This is an immense truth, and one of deepest possible moment. We earnestly pray the reader's calm and prayerful attention while we seek, in some feeble way, to present to him what we believe to be wrapped up in the last clause of John iii. 16.

There is, in the minds of many, a very imperfect sense of what we get by faith in Christ. Some seem to view the atoning work of Christ merely as a remedial measure for the sins of our old nature—the payment of debts contracted in our old condition. That it is all this, we need not say; blessed be God for the precious truth. But it is much more. It is not merely that the sins are atoned for, but the nature which committed them is put to death and set aside by the cross of Christ, and to be "*reckoned*" dead by the believer. It is not merely that the debts contracted in the old condition are cancelled, but the old condition itself is completely ignored by God, and to be so accounted by the believer.

This great truth is doctrinally unfolded in 2 Corinthians v., where we read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (ver. 17). The apostle does not say, "If any man be in Christ, he is pardoned—his sins are forgiven—his debts paid." All this is divinely true; but the statement just quoted goes very much further.

It declares that a man in Christ is a new creation altogether. It is not the old nature pardoned, but completely set aside, with all its belongings, and a new creation introduced in which there is not a single shred of the old. "All things are become new; and all things are of God."

Now this gives immense relief to the heart. Indeed, we question if any soul can enter into the full liberty of the gospel of Christ until he lays hold, in some measure, of the truth of the "new creation." There may be a looking to Christ for pardon, a vague hope of getting to heaven at the last, a measure of reliance on the goodness and mercy of God—there may be all this, and yet no just sense of the meaning of "everlasting life," no happy consciousness of being "a new creation,"—no understanding of the grand fact that the old Adam nature is entirely set aside, the old system in which we stood completely abolished.

But it is more than probable that some of our readers may be at a loss to know what is meant by such terms as "the old Adam nature"—"the old system"—"the flesh"—"the old man," and such like. These expressions may fall strangely on the ears of those for whom we specially write; and we certainly wish to avoid shooting over the heads of our readers. As God is our witness, there is one thing we earnestly desire,

one object which we would ever keep before our minds, and that is the instruction and edification of our readers ; and therefore we would rather run the risk of being tedious, than make use of phrases which convey no clear or intelligible idea to the mind. And, further, we would add, that we have no desire to press any peculiar theory or notion of our own. To do so could be of no possible value to any one. But no one can look upon the subject of "everlasting life" as a mere notion. And as to such terms as "the old man"—"the flesh," and the like, scripture uses them in manifold places ; for example, in Romans vi. we read, "Our *old man* is crucified with him [Christ], that *the body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (ver. 6).

Now what does the apostle mean by the "old man" ? We believe he means our old Adam nature—that nature which we inherited from our first parents. And what does he mean by "the body of sin" ? We believe he means the whole system or condition in which we stood in our unregenerate, unrenewed, unconverted state. The old Adam nature, then, is declared to be crucified—the old system of sin is said to be destroyed by the death of Christ. Hence the soul that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is privileged to know that his old nature, his sinful, guilty self, is looked upon by God

as dead and set aside completely. It has no existence whatever before God. He sees it dead and buried.

Observe, it is not merely that our sins are forgiven, our debts paid, our guilt atoned for; but the nature that committed the sins, contracted the debts, and incurred the guilt, is put for ever out of God's sight. It is not God's way to forgive us our sins, and yet leave us in the sinful nature that committed them. No; He has, in His marvellous grace and vast plan, condemned and abolished for ever for the believer, the old Adam nature, with all its belongings, so that it is no longer recognized in any way. "He that is dead is freed [justified] from sin." It is not that we are pardoned and our sinful nature left alive. No; we are declared, by the voice of holy scripture, to be crucified—dead—buried, and risen with Christ. God tells us we are so, and we are to "*reckon*" ourselves to be so. It is a matter of faith, and not merely a matter of feeling. If I look at myself from *my* stand-point, or judge by my feelings, I shall never—can never understand this truth. And why? Because I feel myself to be just the same sinful creature as ever. I feel that there is sin in me; that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; that my old nature is in nowise changed or improved; that it has the same evil tendencies as ever, and if not

mortified and kept down by the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, it will break out in its true character.

And it is just here, we doubt not, that so many sincere souls are perplexed and troubled. They are looking at themselves, and *reasoning* upon what they see and feel, instead of resting in the truth of God, and *reckoning* themselves to be what God tells them they are. They find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile what they feel in themselves with what they read in the word of God—to make their inward self-consciousness harmonize with God's revelation. But we must remember that faith takes God at His word. It ever thinks with Him on all points. It believes what He says, because He says it. Hence, if God tells me that my old man is crucified—my old nature dead and out of sight—that He no longer sees me as in the old Adam state, but in a risen Christ, I am to believe, like a little child, what He tells me, and walk in the faith of it from day to day. If I look in at myself for evidences of the truth of what God says, it is not faith at all. Abraham "considered not his own body now dead when he was about an hundred years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." (Rom. iv. 19, 20.)

This is the great principle which underlies the whole christian system. "Abraham believed God," not something about God, but God Himself. This is faith. It is taking God's thoughts in place of our own. It is, in short, allowing God to think for us.

Now, when we apply this to the subject before us, it makes it most simple. He that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life. Mark, it is not he that believeth something about the Son of God. No, it is he that believeth in Himself. It is a question of simple faith in the person of Christ; and every one that has this faith is the actual possessor of everlasting life. This is the direct and positive statement of our Lord in the Gospels. It is repeated over and over again. Nor is this all. Not only does the believer thus possess eternal life, but by the further light which the Epistles throw upon this grand question he may see that his old life—that in which he lived in nature—that which the apostle designates "the old man," or "the flesh," is accounted by God as dead and buried. This may be difficult to understand; but let the reader remember that he must believe, not because he understands, but because it is written in God's word. It is not said, "Abraham understood God." No; but he "believed God." It is when the heart believes that light is poured in upon the understanding.

If I wait till I understand in order to believe, I am leaning to my own understanding, instead of committing myself, in childlike faith, to God's word.

Reader, ponder this! You may say you cannot understand how your sinful nature can be looked upon as dead and gone, while you feel its workings, its heavings, its tossings, its tendencies, continually within you. We reply, or rather God's eternal word declares, that if your heart believes in Jesus then is all this true for you, namely, you *have* eternal life; you *are* justified from all things; you *are* a new creation; old things *are* passed away; *all* things *are* become new; and *all* things *are* of God. In a word, you are "*in Christ*," and "*as he is so are you in this world*." (1 John iv. 17.)

And is not this a great deal more than the mere pardoning of your sins, the cancelling of your debts, or the salvation of your soul from hell? Assuredly it is. And suppose we were to ask you on what authority you believe in the forgiveness of your sins. Is it because you feel, realize, or understand? Nay; but because it is written, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.) Well, then, upon precisely the same author-

ity you are to believe that your old man is crucified, that you are not in the flesh, not in the old creation, not in the old Adam condition; but that, on the contrary, you are viewed by God as actually in a risen and glorified Christ—that He looks upon you as He looks upon Christ.

True it is—alas, how true!—the flesh is in you, and you are still here, as to the fact of your condition, in this old world, which is under judgment. But, then, hear what your Lord saith, when speaking about you to His Father, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” And again, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”

Hence, therefore, if you will just bow to God’s word; if you will not reason about what you see in yourself, and feel in yourself, and think of yourself, but simply *believe* what God says, you will enter into the blessed peace and holy liberty flowing from the fact that you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; not in the old creation, but in the new; not under law, but under grace; not of the world, but of God. You have passed clean off the old platform which you occupied as a child of nature, and a member of the first Adam; and you have taken your place on a new platform altogether, as a child of God, and a member of the body of Christ.

All this is vividly prefigured by the de-

luge and the ark, in the days of Noah. (See Gen. vi.—viii.) “And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, *The end of all flesh* is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” Here, then, was, in type, the end of the old creation. All was to pass under the waters of judgment. What then? “Make thee an ark of gopher wood.” Here we have set forth a figure of the new thing. That ark, floating peacefully over the dark abyss of waters, was a type of Christ, and the believer in Him. The old world, together with man, was buried beneath the waves of judgment, and the only object that remained was the ark—the vessel of mercy and salvation, riding in safety and triumph over the billows. Thus it is now, in truth and reality. There is nothing before the eye of God but a risen, victorious, and glorified Christ, and His people linked with him. The end of *all* flesh has come before God. It is not a question of some very gross forms of “flesh,” or of nature, of that merely which is “vile and refuse.” No; it is “the *end of all.*” Such is the solemn, sweeping verdict; and then—what? A risen Christ. Nothing else. All in Him are seen by God as He is seen. All out of Him are under judgment. It all

hinges upon this one question, "Am I in or out of Christ?" What a question!

Reader, are you in Christ? Do you believe in His name? Have you given Him the confidence of your heart? If so, you have "eternal life"—you are "a new creature"—"old things are passed away." God does not see a single shred of the old thing remaining for you. "All things are become new, and all things are of God." You may say, you do not *feel* that old things are all passed away. We reply, God says they are, and it is your happy privilege to *believe* what He says, and "*reckon*" yourself to be what He declares you are. God speaks according to that which is true of you in Christ. He does not see you in the flesh, but in Christ. There is absolutely nothing before the eye of God but Christ; and the very weakest believer is viewed as part of Christ, just as your hand is a part of your body. You have no existence apart from Christ—no life—no righteousness—no holiness—no wisdom—no power. Apart from Him, you are nothing, and can do nothing. In Him you have all and can do all; you are thoroughly identified with Christ. Marvellous fact! Profound mystery! Most glorious truth! It is not a question of attainment or of progress. It is the settled and absolute standing of the feeblest member of the Church of God. True, there are various

measures of intelligence, experience, and devotedness ; but there is only one life, one standing, one position before God, and that is Christ. There is no such thing as a higher or a lower christian life. Christ is the believer's life, and you cannot speak of a higher or a lower Christ. We can understand the higher stages of christian life ; but there is no spiritual intelligence in speaking of a higher christian life. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life."

This is a grand truth, and we earnestly pray that God the Spirit may open it fully to the mind of the reader. We feel assured that a clearer understanding thereof would chase away a thousand mists, answer a thousand questions, and solve a thousand difficulties. It would not only have the effect of giving settled peace to the soul, but also of determining the believer's position in the most distinct way. If Christ is my life—if I am in Him and identified with Him, then not only do I share in His acceptance with God, but also in His rejection by this present world. The two things go together. They form the two sides of the one grand question. If I am in Christ and as Christ before God, then I am in Christ and as Christ before the world ; and it will never do to accept the result of this union before God, and refuse the result of it

as regards the world. If we have the one, we must have the other likewise.

All this is fully unfolded in John xvii. There we read, on the one hand, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and *hast loved them as thou hast loved me*" (ver. 22, 23). And, on the other hand, we read, "I have given them thy word; and *the world hath hated them*, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (ver. 14). This is as plain and positive as anything can be. And be it remembered that, in this wondrous scripture, our Lord is not speaking merely of the apostles, but, as He says, of "them also who shall believe on me through their word," that is, of all believers. Hence it follows that all who believe in Jesus are one with Him, as accepted above; and one with Him, as rejected below. The two things are inseparable. The Head and the members share in one common acceptance in heaven, and in one common rejection upon earth. Oh that all the Lord's people entered more into the truth and reality of this! Would that we all knew a little more of the meaning of fellowship with a heaven-accepted, earth-rejected Christ.

PART II.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION.

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. v. 18—21.)

THE fifth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians takes rank amongst the very weightiest sections of inspiration. Its closing lines contain the special thesis of the following pages; but ere we proceed to handle it, we must call the reader’s attention to some most interesting and important points presented in the course of the chapter.

And, first of all, let us dwell, for a moment, on the opening sentence, “*We know.*” In it we have the language of christian certainty. It does not say, “*We hope.*” Still less does

it say, "*We fear*," or "*We doubt*." No; such language would not express that unclouded certainty and calm assurance which it is the privilege of the very feeblest child of God to possess. And yet, alas! how few, even of the children of God, enjoy this blessed certainty—this calm assurance! Many there are who look upon it as the height of presumption to say, "*We know*." They seem to think that doubts and fears argue a proper condition of soul—that it is impossible for any one to be sure—that the most we can expect is to cherish a vague hope of reaching heaven when we die.

Now, it must be admitted that if we ourselves had aught to do with the ground of certainty or assurance, then it would indeed be the very height of folly to think of being sure; then assuredly our hope would be a very vague one. But, thanks be to God, it is not so. We have nothing whatever to do with the ground of our certainty; it lies entirely outside of ourselves, and it must be sought only and altogether in the eternal word of God. This renders it so blessedly simple. It makes the whole question hinge upon the truth of God's word. Why am I sure? Because God's word is true. A shadow of uncertainty or misgiving on my part would argue a want of authority or security in the word of God. It really comes to this. Christian certainty rests on

the faithfulness of God. Before you can shake the former, you must shake the latter.

We can understand this simple principle by our dealings with one another. If my fellow man makes a statement to me, and I express the smallest doubt or misgiving, or if I feel it without even expressing it, I am calling in question his truthfulness, or credibility. If he is a faithful, competent authority, I have no business to entertain a single doubt. My certainty is linked with his credibility. If he is a competent authority, I may enjoy perfect repose as to the matter concerning which he has spoken. Now, we all know what it is to receive in the most unqualified way the testimony of man, and to repose with calmness therein. It is not a question of feeling, but of receiving, without a single question, a plain statement, and resting on the authority of a competent witness. Well, then, as we have it in the First Epistle of John, "If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater." So also our Lord said to the men of His time, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (John viii.) He appeals to the truth of what He says as the reason why, or the ground on which He expected to be believed.

This, christian reader, is a very weighty principle, and one which demands special

attention on the part of all anxious enquirers, as also on the part of all who undertake to deal with such. There is a strong and constant tendency to look *within* for the ground of assurance—to build upon certain feelings, experiences, and exercises, either past or present—to look back at some special process through which we have passed, or to look in at certain impressions or convictions of our own minds, and to find in these the ground of our confidence—the warrant for our faith. This will never do. It is impossible to find settled peace or calm repose in this way. Feelings, however true and real, change and pass away. Experiences, however genuine, may prove defective. Impressions and convictions may prove utterly false. None of these things therefore can form a solid ground of christian certainty. This latter must be sought and found in God's word alone. It is not in feelings, not in experiences, not in impressions or convictions, not in reasonings, not in human traditions or doctrines, but simply in the unchangeable, eternal word of the living God. That word which is settled for ever in heaven, and which God has magnified above all His Name, can alone impart peace to the mind and stability to the soul.

True, it is only by the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost that we can properly grasp and ever hold fast the word of God; but

still it is His word, and that word *alone*, that forms the ground of christian certainty, and the true basis and authority for the Christian in the entire range of practical life and action. We cannot be too simple as to this. We can only adopt the opening sentence of our chapter, and say, "We know," when we take God's word as the all-sufficient ground of our personal confidence. It will not do to be, in anywise, propped up by human authority. Thousands of the people of God have been made to taste the bitterness of leaning upon the commandments and doctrines of men. It is sure to end in disappointment and confusion, sooner or later. The edifice which is built upon the sand of human authority must fall at some time or other; whereas that which is founded on the rock of God's eternal truth shall stand for ever. God's word imparts its own stability to the soul that leans upon it. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isa. xxviii. 16.)

As is the foundation, so is the faith that builds thereon. Hence the solemn importance of seeking to lead souls to build *only* upon God's precious word. Look at the anxiety of the apostle Paul, in reference to this matter. Hear what he says to the

Corinthians who were in such danger of being led away by human headship and human authority. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you *the testimony of God*. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. ii. 1—5.)

Here is a grand model for all preachers and teachers. Paul declared the "testimony of God," nothing more, nothing less, nothing different. And not only so, but he delivered that testimony in such a way as to connect the souls of his hearers immediately with the living God. Paul did not want the Corinthians to lean upon him; nay, he "trembled" lest they should be tempted to do so. He would have done them a grievous wrong had he, in anywise, come in between their souls and the true source of all authority—the true foundation of confidence and peace. Had he led them to build upon himself, he would have robbed them of God, and this would have been a wrong indeed. No marvel therefore that he was among them "in fear

and in much trembling." They were evidently very much prone to set up and follow after human leaders, and thus miss the solid reality of personal communion with, and dependence upon, the living God. Hence the jealous care of the apostle in confining himself to the testimony of God; in delivering unto them *only* that which he had received of the Lord (see 1 Cor. xi. 23, xv. 3); lest the pure water should suffer in its passage from its source in God to the souls of the Corinthians—lest he should, in the smallest degree, impart the colour of his own thoughts to the precious truth of God.

We see the same thing in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. "For this cause also," says the faithful servant of Christ, "thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it *not as the word of men*, but, *as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (chap. ii. 13). Had he been seeking his own things, he would have been glad to obtain influence over the Thessalonians, by linking them on to himself, and leading them to lean upon him. But no; he rejoices in seeing them in living connection—in direct and realized association, with God Himself. This is always the effect of true ministry, as it is ever the object of the true minister. Unless the

soul be livingly linked with God, there is really nothing done. If it be merely following men—receiving what they say, because they say it—an attachment to certain preachers or teachers because of something in their style and manner; or because they seem to be very holy, very separated, or very devoted—all this will come to nought. Those human links will soon be snapped asunder. The faith that stands, in any measure, in the wisdom of men will prove hollow and worthless. Nothing will prove permanent—nothing will endure, but that faith which rests on the testimony and in the power of the only true God.

Christian reader, we earnestly invite your attention to this point. We do indeed feel its importance at the present moment. The enemy is seeking diligently to lead souls away from God, away from Christ, away from the Holy Scriptures. He is seeking to get them to build on something short of *the truth*. He does not care what it is, provided it is not Christ. It may be reason, tradition, religiousness, a human priesthood, fleshly pietism, holiness in the flesh, sectarianism, morality, good works, service so-called, human influence, patronage, philanthropy; anything short of Christ, short of God's word, short of a lively, personal, direct faith in the living God Himself.

Now, it is the sense of this pressing home

upon the heart that leads us to urge with earnestness upon the reader the necessity of being thoroughly clear as to the ground on which he is, at this moment, standing. We want him to be able to say, in the face of all around him, "*I know*." Nothing less than this will stand. It will not do to say, "*I hope*." No; there must be certainty. There must be the ability to say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, *we have* a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This is the language of faith—the language of a Christian. All is calm, clear, and sure, because all is of God. There may be an "if" with regard to "the earthly house." It may be dissolved, it may crumble into dust. All that belongs to this scene may bear the stamp of death; it may change and pass away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and the faith that grasps and rests upon that word partakes of its eternal stability. It enables one to say, "*I know that I have*." Nought but faith can say this. Reason can only say, "I doubt"; superstition, "I fear"; only faith can say, "I know and am sure."

An infidel teacher once said to a dying woman, whom he had indoctrinated with his infidel notions, "Hold fast, Mary." What was her reply? "I can't hold fast, for you have never given me anything to hold by."

Cutting rebuke ! He had taught the poor woman to doubt ; but he had given her nothing to believe ; and then when flesh and heart were failing, when earthly scenes were passing away, and the dread realities of eternity were crowding in upon her soul's vision, infidelity altogether failed her ; its wretched cobwebs could afford no refuge, no covering, in view of death and judgment. How different the condition of the believer — of the one who, in all simplicity of heart and humility of mind, takes his stand on the solid rock of Holy Scripture ! Such an one can calmly say, "*I am now ready* to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6—8.)

It is more than probable that some may find it difficult to reconcile the calm certainty expressed in the first verse of our chapter with the groan of verse 2. But the difficulty will vanish the moment we are enabled to see the true reason of the groan. "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven ; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that

are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Here we see that the very certainty of having "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," makes us groan to possess it. The apostle did not groan in doubt or uncertainty. He did not groan under the weight of guilt or fear. Still less did he groan because he could not satisfy the desires of the flesh or of the mind, or because he could not surround himself with this world's perishable possessions. No; he longed for the heavenly building—the divine, the real, the eternal. He felt the heavy burden of the poor crumbling tabernacle; it was a grievous hindrance to him. It was the only link with the scene around, and, as such, it was a heavy clog of which he longed to be rid.

But, most clearly, he would not and could not have groaned for the heavenly house if he had a single question on his mind with respect to it. Men are never anxious to get rid of the body unless they are sure of possessing something better; nay, they grasp this present life with intense eagerness, and tremble at the thought of the future, which is all darkness and uncertainty to them. They groan at the thought of quitting the body; the apostle groaned because he was in it.

This makes all the difference. Scripture never contemplates such a thing as a Christian groaning under sin, guilt, doubt, or fear ; or sighing after the riches, honours, or pleasures of this vain, sin-stricken world. Alas ! alas ! they do thus groan through ignorance of their true position in a risen Christ, and their proper portion in the heavens. But such is not the ground or character of the groan in the scripture now before us ; Paul saw, with distinctness, his house in the heavens ; and, on the other hand, he felt the heavy burden of the tabernacle of clay ; and he ardently longed to lay aside the latter and be clothed with the former.

Hence, then, there is the fullest harmony between "*we know*" and "*we groan*." If we did not know for a certainty that we have a building of God, we should like to hold our earthly house as long as possible. We see this constantly. Men cling to life. They leave nothing untried to keep body and soul together. They have no certainty as to heaven. They cannot say, "*we know*" that "*we have*" anything there. On the other hand, they have a terrible dread of the future, which to their vision is wrapped up in clouds and thick darkness. They have never committed themselves in calm confidence to God and His word ; they have never felt the tranquillizing power of His love. They have viewed Him as an angry

Judge instead of seeing Him as the sinner's friend—a just God and a Saviour—the righteous Justifier. No marvel, therefore, if they shrink with terror from the thought of meeting Him.

But it is a totally different thing with a man who knows God as his Father—his Saviour—his best Friend; who knows that Jesus died to save him from his sins, and from all the consequences thereof. Such an one can say,—

“ I have a home above,
 From sin and sorrow free ;
 A mansion which eternal Love
 Designed and formed for me.
 The Father's gracious hand
 Has built this blest abode ;
 From everlasting it was planned,
 The dwelling-place of God.
 The Saviour's precious blood
 Has made my title sure ;
 He passed through death's dark raging flood,
 To make my rest secure.”

These are the breathings of simple faith, and they perfectly harmonize with the groans of a spirit “that looks beyond its cage and longs to flee away.” The believer finds his body of sin and death a heavy burden, and longs to be free from the encumbrance, and to be clothed upon with a body suited to his new and eternal state—a new creation body—a body perfectly free from every

trace of mortality. This cannot be until the morning of resurrection, that glorious moment, long looked for, when the dead in Christ shall rise, and the living saints be changed, in a moment; when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

It is for this we groan, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon. The unclothed state is not *the* object, though we know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; and to depart and be with Christ is far better. The Lord Jesus is waiting that glorious consummation, and we wait in sympathy with Him. Meanwhile, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. viii. 22—25.)

Thus, then, beloved reader, we have before us a very distinct answer to the question, "Why does the believer groan?" He groans, being burdened. He groans in sympathy with a groaning creation, with which he is linked by means of a body of sin and death

—a body of humiliation. He sees around him, day by day, the sad fruits of sin. He cannot pass along the streets of our cities and towns without having before his eyes a thousand proofs of man's sad state. He hears on one side the wail of sorrow ; on another, the cry of distress. He sees oppression, violence, corruption, strife, heartless villany and its victims. He sees the thorn, the thistle, and the brier. He notes the various disturbing forces which are abroad in the physical, the moral, and the political world. He marks the varied forms of disease and misery around him. The cry of the poor and the needy, the widow and the orphan, falls sadly upon his ear and upon his heart ; and what can he do but send up from the deepest depths of his spiritual nature a sympathetic groan, and long for the blissful moment when "the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God" ? It is impossible for a true Christian to pass through a world like this without groaning. Look at the blessed Master Himself ; did not He groan ? Yes, verily. Mark Him as He approached the grave of Lazarus, in company with the two weeping sisters. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where

have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." (John xi. 33—35.)

Whence came those tears and groans? Was He not approaching the grave of His friend as the Prince of Life—the Quickener of the dead—the Conqueror of death—the Spoiler of the grave? Why, then, did He groan? He groaned in sympathy with the objects of His love, and with the whole scene around Him. His tears and groans emanated from the profound depths of a perfect human heart which felt, according to God, the true condition of the human family and of Israel in particular. He beheld around Him the varied fruits of sin. He felt for man, He felt for Israel. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He never even cured a person without bearing upon His spirit the reality of that with which He was dealing. He did not, He would not, lightly bid away death, disease, and sorrow. No; He entered into it all, as man; and that, too, according to the infinite perfections of His divine nature. He bore it all upon His spirit, in the reality of it, before God. Though perfectly free from it all, and above it all, yet did he in grace voluntarily enter into it most thoroughly, so as to taste, and prove, and know it all, as none else could know it.

All this is fully expressed in the eighth chapter of Matthew, where we read the following words: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*" (ver. 16, 17).

We have very little idea of what the heart of Jesus felt as He passed through this sorrowful, because sinful, world; and we are far too apt to miss the reality of His sufferings by confining them merely to what He endured on the cross; and also by supposing that because He was God over all, blessed for ever, He did not feel all that a human heart is capable of feeling. This is a sad loss. Indeed we may say it is an incalculable loss. The Lord Jesus, as the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings. See Hebrews ii., where the inspired writer distinguishes carefully between "the suffering of death," and the "sufferings" of the Captain of our salvation. In order to save sinners from *wrath*, "he tasted death for every man," and having done so, we see Him "crowned with glory and honour." But in order to "*bring many sons to glory*," He had to be "perfected through sufferings." And now

all true believers have the unspeakable privilege of knowing that there is one at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens who, when in this world of sin and woe, tasted every form of suffering and every cup of sorrow which it was possible for any human heart to know. He could say, "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none." (Ps. lxi. 20.)

How deeply affecting is all this! But we cannot pursue this subject here. We have merely touched upon it in connection with the question, "Why does the believer groan?" We trust that the reader will see clearly the true answer to this enquiry; and that it will be most evident to his mind that the groans of a Christian proceed from the divine nature which he actually possesses, and cannot therefore, by any possibility, be occasioned by doubts or fears, on the one hand, nor yet by selfish desires or the insatiable cravings of nature, on the other. But that, on the contrary, the very fact of his possessing everlasting life, through faith in Christ, and the blessed assurance of having a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, causes him to long for that blessed, indestructible building, and to groan because of his con-

nection with a groaning creation, as well as in sympathy therewith.

If any further proof were needed, on this deeply interesting question, we have it in the fifth and sixth verses of our chapter (2 Cor. v.), where the apostle goes on to say, "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are *always confident* [not doubting or fearing], knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight), we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (ver. 5—8).

Here we have two grand cardinal truths laid down, namely, first, The believer is God's workmanship; and secondly, God has given him the earnest of the Spirit. Most marvellous—most glorious facts! facts which demand the special attention of the reader. Every one who simply and heartily believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is God's workmanship. God has created him anew in Christ Jesus. Clearly, therefore, there can be no possible ground for questioning his acceptance with God, inasmuch as God can never call in question His own work. He will, assuredly, no more do this in His new creation than He did in the old. When

God looked upon His work, in the opening of the book of Genesis, it was not to judge it or call it in question, but to pronounce it very good, and express His complacency in it. So, now, when God looks upon the very feeblest believer, He sees in him His own workmanship, and, most assuredly, He is not going, either here or hereafter, to call in question His own work. God is a rock, His work is perfect, and the believer is God's work; and, because he is His work He has sealed him with the Holy Ghost.

The same truth is stated in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where we read, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This, we may truly say, is a point of the weightiest moment. It claims the grave attention of the reader who desires to be thoroughly established in the truth of God as to what a Christian—what Christianity really is. It is not a ruined, lost, guilty sinner seeking to work himself up into something or other fit for God. It is the very reverse. It is God, in the riches of His grace, on the ground of the atoning death of Christ, taking up a poor, dead, worthless, condemned thing—a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, and creating him anew in Christ Jesus. It is, as it were, God beginning *de novo*—on the new, as we may say—to form

man in Christ, to place him on a new footing altogether, not now as an innocent being on a creation basis, but as a justified one, in a risen Christ. It is not man's old condition improved by human effort of any sort or description; but it is God's new workmanship in a risen, ascended, and glorified Christ. It is not man's old garment pieced or patched by human device in any shape or form whatever; but it is God's new garment introduced in the Person of Christ, who having, in infinite grace, gone down into the dust of death, and endured, on man's behalf, the judgment due to sin, the righteous wrath of a sin-hating God, was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and is become the Head of the new creation—"The beginning of the creation of God." (Rev. iii. 14.)

Now, it must be perfectly clear to the reader, that if our Lord Jesus Christ be, in very deed, "the *beginning*" of God's creation, then we must begin at the beginning, else we have done absolutely nothing at all. We may labour and toil—we may do our very utmost, and be perfectly sincere in our doing—we may vow and resolve—we may seek to improve our state, to alter our course, to mend our ways, to live in a different way—but all the while we are in the old creation, which has been completely set aside, and is under the judgment of God;

we have not begun at "the beginning" of God's new creation, and, as a necessary consequence, we have gained nothing at all. We have been spending our strength for nought and in vain. We have been putting forth efforts to improve a thing which God has condemned and set aside altogether. We are, to use a very feeble figure indeed, like a man who is spending his time, his pains, and his money in painting and papering a house that has been condemned by the government surveyor, on account of the rottenness of the foundation, and which must be taken down at once.

What should we say to such a man? Should we not deem him very foolish? Doubtless. But if it be folly to paint and paper a condemned house, what shall we say to those who are seeking to improve a condemned nature—a condemned world? We must say this, at least, they are pursuing a course which must, sooner or later, end in disappointment and confusion.

Oh that this were understood and entered into! Would to God that Christians more fully entered into it! Would to God that all christian writers, preachers, and teachers entered into it, and set it forth distinctly with pen and voice! At the least, we earnestly desire that the reader should thoroughly grasp it. We are most fully persuaded that it is pre-eminently, "Truth .

for the Times." It is truth to meet the need of thousands of souls—to remove their burdens, relieve their hearts and consciences—solve their difficulties—chase away their clouds. There are, at this moment, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, countless multitudes engaged in the fruitless work of painting and papering a condemned house—a house on which God has pronounced judgment, because of the hopelessly ruined condition of its foundations. They are seeking to do little jobs of repairs here and there throughout the house, forgetting, or perhaps not knowing, that the whole building is very shortly to be demolished by order of the Divine Government. Some are doing this with the utmost sincerity, amid much sore exercise of soul, and many tears, because they cannot succeed in satisfying their own hearts even, much less the claims of God. For God demands a perfect thing, not a patched up ruin. There is no use in seeking to cover with paper and paint old walls tottering on a rotten foundation. God cannot be deceived by surface work, by shallow outside appearances. The foundations are bad, the whole thing must come down, and we must put our whole trust in Him who is "the beginning of the creation of God."

Reader, pause here for a moment's calm and serious reflection. Ask yourself the

question, "Am I seeking to patch up a ruin? Am I seeking to improve the old nature? Or have I really found my place in God's new creation, of which a risen Christ is the Head and Beginning?" Remember, we beseech you, that you cannot possibly engage in more fruitless toil than seeking to make yourself better. Your efforts may be sincere, but they must, in the long run, prove worthless. Your paper and paint may be all good and genuine enough, but you are putting them on a condemned ruin. You cannot say of your unrenewed nature that it is "God's workmanship"; and, most assuredly, *your* doings, *your* good works, *your* religious exercises, *your* efforts to keep the ten commandments—nothing, in short, that *you* can do, could possibly be called "God's workmanship." It is yours, and not God's. He cannot acknowledge it. He cannot seal it with His Spirit. It is all false and good for nothing. If you cannot say, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God," you have really nothing. You are yet in your sins. You have not begun at God's beginning. You are yet "in the flesh"; and the voice of holy scripture declares that "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. viii.)

This is a solemn and sweeping sentence. A man out of Christ is "in the flesh"; and such a man cannot please God. He may be

most religious, most moral, most amiable, most benevolent, a loving husband, an affectionate father, a most excellent master, a generous friend, a liberal giver, a genial companion, a patron of the poor, upright and honourable in all his dealings, he may be an eloquent preacher and a popular writer, and all the while not be "*in Christ*," but "*in the flesh*," and therefore he "cannot please God."

Can aught be more solemn than this? Only to think of how far a person may go in all that is deemed excellent among men, and yet not be in Christ, but in his sins—in the flesh—in the old creation—in the condemned house. And be it noted, that it is not a question of gross sins, of scandalous living, in all its varied hideous shapes, of immorality, in its deeper and darker shades; no, the declaration of holy scripture is, that "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." This truly is most soul subduing, and calls for deep and solemn reflection on the part of every thoughtful and earnest soul.

But it may be that, to the reader's view, difficulties and stumblingblocks still surround this most weighty subject. He may still be utterly at a loss to know what is meant by the expression, "*In the flesh*." If so, it will, we fondly hope, help him, not a little, to remember that scripture speaks of

two men—"the first man" and "the second man." These two men are presented as the heads of two distinct races. *Adam fallen* is the head of one race; *Christ risen* is the Head of the other race. Now, the very fact of there being "a second man" proves that the first man has been set aside; for if the first man had proved faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. This is clear and unquestionable. The first man is a total wreck—an irreparable ruin. The foundations of the old edifice have given way; and albeit, in man's view, the building seems to stand, and to be capable of being repaired, yet in God's view it is completely set aside, and a Second Man—a new edifice set up, on the solid and imperishable ground of redemption.

Hence, we read, in the third chapter of Genesis, that God "*drove out the man* ; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned *every way*, to keep the way of the tree of life." In other words, the first man was driven out, and every possible way of return was closed against him, as *such*. He could only get back by "a new and living way," namely, through the rent veil of the Saviour's flesh. The flaming sword "turned every way," so that there was positively no way by which the first man could ever get back to his former state. The only hope,

now, was through "the seed of the woman"—"the second man." The flaming sword declared, in symbolic yet impressive language, the truth, which comes out in the New Testament divested of all symbol and shadow, namely, that "They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God"—"Ye must be born again." Every unconverted man, woman, and child is part and parcel of the first man, fallen, ruined, set aside, and driven out. He is a member of the first Adam—the old race—a stone in the old condemned building.

Thus it stands if we are to be guided by scripture. The head and his race go together. As is the one so is the other; what is true of the one is true of the other. They are, in God's view, absolutely identical. Was the first Adam fallen when he became the head of a race? Was he driven out? Was he completely set aside? Yes, verily, if we are to believe scripture; then the unconverted—the unregenerated reader of these lines is fallen, driven out, and set aside. As is the head, so is the member—each member in particular—all the members together. They are inseparable, if we are to be taught by Divine Revelation.

But, further, was every possible way of return finally closed against the fallen head? Yes, scripture declares that the flaming sword turned "*every way*, to keep the way

of the tree of life." Then is it utterly impossible that the unconverted—unregenerate reader can improve himself or make himself fit for God. If the fallen head could not get back to the tree of life, neither can the fallen member. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." That is, they that are on the old footing, in the old creation, members of the first Adam, part and parcel of the old edifice, cannot please God. "Ye must be born again." Man must be renewed in the very deepest springs and sources of his being. He must be God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them." He must be able to say, in the language of our text, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God."

But this leads us to another point. How is any one to get into this marvellous position? How can any soul take up such language? How can any one whose eyes have been opened to see his utter and hopeless ruin, as connected with the first man, as standing in the old creation, as a stone in the old edifice—how can such an one ever reach a position in which he can please God? The Lord be praised, scripture gives an answer, full, clear, and distinct, to this serious question. A Second Man has appeared upon the scene—the seed of the woman, and, at the

same time, God over all, blessed for ever. In Him all begins afresh. He came into this world born of a woman, made under the law, pure and spotless, free from every taint of sin, personally apart from every claim of sin and death, standing in the midst of a ruined world, a guilty race, Himself that pure, untainted grain of wheat. We see Him lying as a helpless babe in the manger. We see Him growing up as a youth beneath the parent roof. We see Him as a man working in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth. We see Him baptized in Jordan, where all the people were baptized confessing their sins—Himself sinless, but fulfilling all righteousness, and, in perfect grace, identifying Himself with the repentant portion of the nation of Israel. We see Him anointed with the Holy Ghost for the work that lay before Him. We see Him in the wilderness faint and hungry, unlike the first man who was placed in the midst of a paradise of creature delights. We see Him tempted of Satan and coming off victorious. We trace Him along the pathway of public ministry—and such a ministry! What incessant toil! What weariness and watching! What hunger and thirst! What sorrow and travail! Worse off than the fowls and the foxes, the Son of man had not where to lay His head. The contradiction of sinners by day, the mountain-top by night.

Such was the marvellous life of this blessed One. But this was not all. He died! Yes, He died under the weight of the first man's guilt. He died to take away the sin of the world, and alter completely the ground of God's relationship with the world, so that God might deal with man and with the world on the new ground of redemption, instead of the old ground of sin. He died for the nation of Israel. He tasted death for every man. He died the just for the unjust. He suffered for sins. He died and was buried, according to the scriptures. He went through all—met all—paid all—finished all. He went down into the dust of death, and lay in the dark and silent tomb. He descended into the lower parts of the earth. He went down to the very bottom of everything. He endured the sentence passed on man. He paid the penalty, bore the judgment, drained the cup of wrath, went through every form of human suffering and trial, was tempted in all points, sin excepted. He made an end of everything that stood in the way, and, having *finished all*, He gave up His spirit into the hand of His Father, and His precious body was laid in a tomb on which the smell of death had never passed.

Nor was this all. He rose! Yes, He rose triumphant over all. He rose as the

Head of the new creation—"The beginning of the creation of God"—"The first-begotten from among the dead"—"The first-born among many brethren." And now the Second Man is before God, crowned with glory and honour, not in an earthly paradise, but at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. This Second Man is the *last* Adam, because there is none to come after Him, we cannot get beyond the last. There is only one Man before God now. The first is set aside. The last is set up. And as the first was the fallen head of a fallen race, so the last is the risen Head of a saved, justified, and accepted race. The Head and His members are inseparably identified—all the members together, and each member in particular. There is no difference. "As he is, so are we in this world." (1 John iv. 17.) There is nothing before God but Christ. The Head and the body, the Head and each individual member are indissolubly joined together—inseparably and eternally one. God thinks of the members as He thinks of the Head—loves them as He loves Him. Those members are God's workmanship, incorporated by his Spirit into the body of Christ, and having no other existence, no other footing, no other rank, position, or station whatsoever but "in Christ." They are no longer "in the flesh, but in the

Spirit." They can please God, because they possess His nature, and are sealed by His Spirit, and guided by His word. "*He that hath wrought them is God,*" and God must ever delight in His own workmanship. He will never find fault with or condemn the work of His own hand. "God is a rock, his work is perfect," and hence the believer, as God's workmanship, must be perfect. He is "IN CHRIST," and that is enough—enough for God—enough for faith—enough for ever.

And, now, if it be asked, "How is all this to be attained?" scripture replies, "BY FAITH." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

The reader who has travelled intelligently with us through the opening lines of our chapter will be in a position to understand something of the solemn and momentous subject to which we now approach, namely, the judgment-seat of Christ. If indeed it be true that the believer is God's workmanship—if he is actually a member of Christ—associated with the Second Adam—bound up in the bundle of life with the risen and glorified Lord: if all this be true—and God's word declares it is—then it must be perfectly

evident that the judgment-seat of Christ cannot, by any possibility, touch the Christian's position, or prove, in any wise, unfriendly to him. No doubt it is a most solemn and serious matter, involving the most weighty consequences to every servant of Christ, and designed to exert a most salutary influence upon the heart and conscience of every man. But it will do all this just in proportion as it is viewed from the true stand-point, and no further. It is not to be supposed that any one can reap the divinely appointed blessing from meditating on the judgment-seat, if he is looking forward to it as the place where the grand question of his eternal salvation is to be settled. And yet how many are thus regarding it! How many of God's true people there are who, from not seeing the simple truth involved in these words, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God," are anticipating the judgment-seat of Christ as something that may, after all, condemn them.

This is greatly to be deplored, both because it dishonours the Lord, and completely destroys the soul's peace and liberty. For how, let us ask, is it possible for any one to enjoy peace so long as there is a single question to be settled? We conceive it is wholly impossible. The peace of the true believer rests on the fact that every possible

question has been divinely and eternally settled; and, as a consequence, no question can ever arise, either before the judgment-seat of Christ, or at any other time. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith in reference to this great question: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or judgment]; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

It is important that the reader should understand that the word used by our Lord in the above passage is not "condemnation" but "judgment." He assures the believer that he shall never come into judgment; and this, too, be it observed, in immediate connection with the statement that "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (ver. 22). And, again, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (ver. 26, 27).

Thus, then, the One to whom all judgment is committed—who alone has authority to execute judgment, by the Father's just decree—this blessed One assures us that if we hearken to His word, and believe on Him that sent Him, we shall never come into judgment at all.

This is clear and conclusive. It must tranquillize the heart completely. It must roll away every cloud and mist, and conduct the soul into a region where no question can ever arise to disturb its deep and eternal repose. If the One who has all judgment in His hand, and all authority to execute it—if He assures me that I shall never come into judgment, I am perfectly satisfied. I believe His word, and rest in the happy assurance that whatever the judgment-seat of Christ may prove to others, it cannot prove unfriendly to me. I know that the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and that word tells me I shall never come into judgment.

But it may be that the reader finds it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile this entire exemption from judgment with the solemn fact stated by our Lord, that "For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." But there is really no difficulty in the matter. If a man has to meet judgment at all, he must give account for every idle word. How awfully solemn the thought! There is no escaping it. Were it possible for a single idle word to be let pass, it would be a dishonour to the judgment-seat. It would be a sign of weakness and incompetency which is utterly impossible. It were blasphemy against the Son of God to

suppose that a single stain could escape His scrutinizing gaze. If the reader comes into judgment, that judgment must be perfect, and, hence, his condemnation must be inevitable.

We would press this serious matter upon the attention of the unconverted reader. It imperatively demands his immediate and earnest consideration. There is a day rapidly approaching when every idle word, and every foolish thought, and every sinful act, will be brought to light, and he will have to answer for it. Christ, as a Judge, has eyes like unto a flame of fire, and feet like unto fine brass—eyes to detect, and feet to crush the evil. There will be no escape. There will be no mercy then: all will be stern and unmitigated judgment. “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the *books* were opened; and another *book* was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the *books* according to their *works*. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged *every man according to their works*. And death and the grave

were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. xx. 11—15.)

Mark here the difference between "the books" and "the book of life." The entire scene sets forth the judgment of the wicked dead—of those who have died in their sins, from first to last. "The book of life" is opened; but there is no judgment for those whose names are written therein by the hand of electing and redeeming love. "The books" are opened—those awful records written in characters deep, broad, and black—those terrible catalogues of the sins of every man, woman, and child, from the beginning to the end of time. There will be no escaping in the crowd. Each one will stand in his own most intense individuality in that appalling moment. The eye of each will be turned in upon himself, and back upon his past history. All will be seen in the light of the great white throne, from which there is no escape.

The sceptic may reason against all this. He may say, "*How* can these things be? *How* could all the dead stand before God? *How* could the countless millions, who have passed away since the foundation of the world, find sufficient space before the judgment-seat?" The answer is very simple to the true believer, whatever it may be to

the sceptic ; God, who made them, will make a place for them to stand for judgment, and a place to lie in everlasting torment. Tremendous thought ! “ God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts xvii. 31.)

And be it remembered that “ *every man* will be judged according to *his* works.” The solemn session of the judgment referred to in Revelation xx. will not be an indiscriminate act. Let none suppose this. There are “ *books* ”—rolls—records. “ *Every man* ” will be judged. How ? “ According to *his* works.” Nothing can be more precise and specific. Each one has committed his own sins, and for them he will be judged and punished everlastingly. We are aware that many cherish the notion that people will only be judged for rejecting the gospel. It is a fatal mistake. Scripture teaches the direct contrary. It declares that people will be judged according to their works. What are we to learn from the “ many stripes ” and the “ few stripes ” of Luke xii. ? What is the force of the words “ more tolerable ” in Matthew xi. ? Are we not plainly taught by these words that there will be a difference in the degrees of judgment and punishment ? And does not the apostle most

distinctly teach us in Ephesians iv. and Colossians iii. that the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience (or unbelief) "because of" certain sins against which he solemnly warns the saints?

No doubt the rejection of the gospel leaves people on the ground of judgment, just as the true belief of the Gospel takes people off that ground. But the judgment will be, in every case, according to a man's works. Are we to suppose that the poor ignorant savage, who has lived and died amid the gloomy shades of heathen darkness, will be found in the same "book," or punished with the same severity as a man who has lived and died in the total rejection of the full blaze of gospel light and privilege? Not for a moment, so long as the words "more tolerable" stand on the page of inspiration. The savage will be judged according to his works, and the baptized sinner will be judged according to his works, but assuredly it will be more tolerable for the former than the latter. God knows how to deal with people. He can discriminate, and He declares that He will give to each according to his works.

Reader, think of this, we beseech you. Think deeply, think seriously. If thou art unconverted, think of it for thyself, for, assuredly, it concerns thee. And if thou art converted, think of it for others, as the

apostle says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." It is impossible for any one to reflect upon the great and awful fact of judgment to come, and not be stirred up to warn his fellows. We believe it is of the very last possible importance that the consciences of men should be acted upon by the solemn truth of the judgment-seat of Christ—that they should be made to feel the seriousness of having to do with God as a Judge.

Should the reader, whoever he be, have been led to feel this—if he has been roused by this weighty matter—if he is, even now, asking the question, "What must I do?" the answer is blessedly simple. The gospel declares that the One who will, ere long, act as a Judge, is now revealed as a Justifier—even a Justifier of the ungodly sinner that believeth in Jesus. This changes the aspect of things entirely. It is not that the thought of the judgment-seat loses a single jot or tittle of its gravity and solemnity. Quite the contrary. It stands in all its weight and magnitude. But the believer looks at it from a totally different point of view. In place of looking at the judgment-seat of Christ as a guilty member of the first Adam, he looks at it as a justified and accepted member of the Second. In place of looking forward to it as the place where the question of his eternal salvation or per-

dition is to be decided, he looks to it as one who knows that he is God's workmanship, and that he can never come into judgment, inasmuch as he has been taken clean off the ground of guilt, death, and judgment, and placed, through the death and resurrection of Christ, on a new ground altogether, even the ground of life, righteousness, and cloudless favour.

It is most needful to be clear as to this grand fundamental truth. Very many even of the people of God are clouded in reference to it, and hence it is that they are afraid when they think of the judgment-seat. They do not know God as a Justifier. Their faith has not grasped Him as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. They are looking to Christ to keep God out as a Judge, very much in the same way as the Israelites looked to the blood to keep out the destroyer. (See Exod. xii.) It is true and real enough, so far as it goes; but it falls very far short of the truth revealed in the New Testament. There is a vast difference between keeping God out as a destroyer and a Judge, and bringing Him in as a Saviour and a Justifier. An Israelite would have dreaded, above all things, God's coming in to him. Why? Because God was passing through the land as a destroyer. The Christian, on the contrary, delights to be in the presence of God. •

Why? Because He has revealed Himself as a Justifier. How? By raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

There are three forms of expression used by the inspired apostle in Romans iii. and iv. which should be carefully pondered. In chapter iii. 26, he speaks of "Believing in Jesus." In chapter iv. 5, he speaks of "Believing in him that justifieth the ungodly." And, verse 24, he speaks of "Believing in him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."

Now, there is no distinction in scripture without a difference; and when we see a distinction it is our business to enquire as to the difference. What, then, is the difference between believing in Jesus, and believing in Him that raised up Jesus? We believe it to be this. We may often find souls who are really looking to Jesus and believing in Him, and yet they have, deep down in their hearts, a sort of dread of meeting God. It is not that they doubt their salvation, or that they are not really saved. By no means. They are saved, inasmuch as they are looking to Christ, by faith, and all who so look are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. All this is most blessedly true; but still there is this latent fear or dread of God, and a shrinking from death. They know that Jesus is friendly to them, inasmuch as he died for

them ; but they do not see clearly the friendship of God as expressed in the act of His raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

Hence it is that we find so many of God's people in uncertainty and spiritual distress. Their faith has not yet laid hold of God as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. They are not quite sure of how it may go with them. At times they are happy, because the new nature, of which they are assuredly the partakers, gets occupied with Christ ; but at times they are miserable, because they begin to look at themselves, and they do not see God as their Justifier, and as the One who has condemned sin in the flesh. They are thinking of God as a Judge with whom some question still remains to be settled. They feel as if God's eye were resting on their indwelling sin, and as if they had, in some way or another, to dispose of that question with God.

Thus it is, we feel persuaded, with hundreds of the true saints of God. They do not see God as the Condemner of sin and the Justifier of the believing sinner. They are looking to Christ on the cross to screen them from God as a Judge, instead of looking to God as a Justifier, in raising up Christ from the dead. Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our

justification. Our sins are forgiven; our indwelling sin, or evil nature, is condemned and set aside. It has no existence before God. It is in us, but He does not see us in it. He sees us only in a risen Christ; and we are called to *reckon* ourselves dead, and, by the power of God's Spirit, to mortify our members, to deny and subdue the evil nature which still dwells in us, and will dwell until we are passed out of our present condition, and find our place for ever with the Lord.

This makes all so blessedly clear. We have already dwelt upon the fact, that "They that are in the flesh cannot please God"; but the believer is not in the flesh, though the flesh be in him. He is in the *body*, and on the *earth*, as to the fact of his existence; but he is neither in the *flesh* nor of the *world*, as to the ground or principle of his standing. "Ye," says the Holy Ghost, "are not in the flesh but in the Spirit." (Rom. viii.) "They," says our blessed Lord, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John xvii.)

What a sweet relief to a heart bowed down under a sense of indwelling sin, and not knowing what to do with it! What solid peace and comfort flow into the soul when I see God condemning my sin in the cross, and justifying me in a risen Christ! Where are my *sins*? Blotted out. Where

is my *win*? Condemned and set aside. Where am I? Justified and accepted in a risen Christ. I am brought to God without a single cloud or misgiving. I am not afraid of my Justifier. I confide in Him, love Him, and adore Him. I joy in God, and rejoice in hope of His glory.

Thus, then, we have, in some measure, cleared the way for the believer to approach the subject of the Judgment-seat of Christ, as set forth in the tenth verse of our chapter, which we shall here quote at length, in order that the reader may have the subject fully before him in the veritable language of inspiration. "For we must all appear [or rather, be manifested] before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Now there is, in reality, no difficulty or ground of perplexity here. All we need is to look at the matter from a divine standpoint, and with a simple mind, in order to see it clearly. This is true in reference to every subject treated of in the word of God, and specially so as to the point now before us. We have no doubt whatever that the real secret of the difficulty felt by so many in respect to the question of the judgment-seat of Christ is self-occupation. Hence it is we so often hear such questions as the

following, "Can it be possible that all our sins, all our failures, all our infirmities, all our naughty and foolish ways, shall be published, in the presence of assembled myriads, before the judgment-seat of Christ?"

Well, then, in the first place, we have to remark that scripture says nothing of the kind. The passage before us, which contains the great, broad statement of the truth on this weighty subject, simply declares that "we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." But how shall we be manifested? Assuredly, *as we are*. But how is that? As God's workmanship—as perfectly righteous, and perfectly holy, and perfectly accepted in the Person of that very One who shall sit on the judgment-seat, and who Himself bore in His own body on the tree all the judgment due to us, and made a full end of the entire system in which we stood. All that which, as sinners, we had to meet, Christ met in our stead. Our *sins* He bore; our *sin* He condemned. He stood in our stead and answered all responsibilities which rested upon us as men alive in the flesh, as members of the first man, as standing on the old creation ground. The Judge Himself is our righteousness. We are in Him. All that we are and all that we have, we owe it to Him and to His perfect work. If we, as sinners, had to meet Christ as a Judge, escape were utterly

impossible; but, inasmuch as He is our righteousness, condemnation is utterly impossible. In short, the matter is reversed. The atoning death and triumphant resurrection of our Divine Substitute have completely changed everything, so that the effect of the judgment-seat of Christ, will be to make manifest that there is not, and cannot be, a single stain or spot on that workmanship of God which the saint is declared to be.

But, then, let us ask, Whence this dread of having all our naughtiness exposed at the judgment-seat of Christ? Does not He know all about us? Are we more afraid of being manifested to the gaze of men and angels than to the gaze of our blessed and adorable Lord? If we are manifested to Him, what matters it to whom beside we are known? How far are Peter and David and many others affected by the fact that untold millions have read the record of their sins, and that the record thereof has been stereotyped on the page of inspiration? Will it prevent their sweeping the strings of the golden harp, or casting their crowns before the feet of Him whose precious blood has obliterated for ever all their sins, and brought them, without spot, into the full blaze of the throne of God? Assuredly not. Why then need any be troubled by the thought of their being thoroughly mani-

fested before the judgment-seat of Christ? Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? May we not safely leave all in the hands of Him who has loved us and washed us in His own blood? Cannot we trust ourselves implicitly to the One who loved us with such a love? Will he expose us? Will He—can He, do aught inconsistent with the love that led Him to give His precious life for us? Will the Head expose the body, or any member thereof? Will the Bridegroom expose the bride? Yes, he will, in one sense. But how? He will publicly set forth, in view of all created intelligences, that there is not a speck or a flaw, a spot or a wrinkle, or any such thing, to be seen upon that Church which He loved with a love that many waters could not quench.

Ah! christian reader, dost thou not see how that nearness to the heart of Christ, as well as the knowledge of His perfect work, would completely roll away the mists which enwrap the subject of the judgment-seat? If thou art washed from thy sins in the blood of Jesus, and loved by God as Jesus is loved, what reason hast thou to fear that judgment-seat, or to shrink from the thought of being manifested before it? None whatever. Nothing can possibly come up there to alter thy standing, to touch thy relationship, to blot thy title, or cloud thy prospect. Indeed we are fully persuaded that the

light of *the judgment-seat* will chase away many of the clouds that have obscured *the mercy-seat*. Many when they come to stand before that judgment-seat will wonder why they ever feared it for themselves. They will see their mistake and adore the grace that has been so much better than all their legal fears. Many who have hardly ever been able to read their title here, will read it there, and rejoice and wonder, they will love and worship. They will then see, in broad daylight, what poor, feeble, shallow, unworthy thoughts they had once entertained of the love of Christ, and of the true character of His work. They will perceive how sadly prone they ever were to measure Him by themselves, and to think and feel as if His thoughts and ways were like their own. All this will be seen in the light of that day, and then the burst of praise—the rapturous hallelujah will come forth from many a heart that, when down here, had been robbed of its peace and joy by legal and unworthy thoughts of God and His Christ.

But, while it is divinely true that nothing can come out before the judgment-seat of Christ to disturb, in any way, the standing or relationship of the very feeblest member of the body of Christ, or of any member of the family of God ; yet is the thought of that judgment most solemn and weighty.

Yes, truly, and none will more feel its weight and solemnity than those who can look forward to it with perfect calmness. And be it well remembered, that there are two things indispensably needful in order to enjoy this calmness of spirit. First, we must have a title without a blot; and, secondly, our moral and practical state must be sound. No amount of mere evangelical clearness as to our title will avail unless we are walking in moral integrity before God. It will not do for a man to *say* that he is not afraid of the judgment-seat of Christ because Christ died for him, while, at the same time, he is walking in a loose, careless, self-indulgent way. This is a most dreadful delusion. It is alarming in the extreme to find persons drawing a plea from evangelic clearness to shirk the holy responsibility resting upon them as the servants of Christ. Are we to speak idle words because we know we shall never come into judgment? The bare thought is horrible; and yet we may shrink from such a thing when clothed in plain language before us, while, at the same time, we allow ourselves to be drawn, through a false application of the doctrines of grace, into most culpable laxity and carelessness as to the claims of holiness.

All this must be sedulously avoided. The grace that has delivered us from judgment

should exert a more powerful influence upon our ways than the fear of that judgment. And not only so, but we must remember that while we, *as sinners*, are delivered from judgment and wrath, yet, *as servants*, we must give account of ourselves and our ways. It is not a question of our being exposed here or there to men, angels, or devils. No; "we must give account to God." (Rom. xiv. 11, 12.) This is far more serious, far more weighty, far more influential, than our being exposed in the view of any creature. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as *to the Lord*, and not unto men; knowing that of *the Lord* ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve *the Lord* Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." (Col. iii. 23—25.)

This is most serious and salutary. It may be asked, "When shall we have to give account to God? When shall we receive for the wrong?" We are not told, because that is not the question. The grand object of the Holy Ghost in the passages just quoted is to lead the conscience into holy exercise in the presence of God and of the Lord Christ. This is good and most needful in a day of easy profession, like the present, when there is much said about grace, free salvation, justification without works, our

standing in Christ. Is it that we want to weaken the sense of these things? Far be the thought. Yea, we would, in every possible way, seek to lead souls into the divine knowledge and enjoyment of those most precious privileges. But then we must remember the adjusting power of *truth*. There are always two sides to a question, and we find in the pages of the New Testament the clearest and fullest statements of grace, lying side by side with the most solemn and searching statements as to our responsibility. Do the latter obscure the former? Assuredly not. Neither should the former weaken the latter. Both should have their due place, and be allowed to exert their moulding influence upon our character and ways.

Some professors seem to have a great dislike to the words "duty" and "responsibility"; but we invariably find that those who have the deepest sense of grace have also, and as a necessary consequence, the truest sense of duty and responsibility. We know of no exception. A heart that is duly influenced by divine grace is sure to welcome every reference to the claims of holiness. It is only empty talkers about grace and standing that raise an outcry about duty and responsibility. God deals in moral realities. He is real with us, and He wants us to be real with Him. He is

real in His love, and real in His faithfulness; and He would have us real in our dealings with Him, and in our response to His holy claims. It is of little use to say, "Lord, Lord," if we live in the neglect of His commandments. It is the merest sham to say, "I go, sir," if we do not go. God looks for obedience in His children. "He is a rewarder of them that *diligently* seek Him."

May we bear these things in mind, and remember that all must come out before the judgment-seat of Christ. "We must all be manifested" there. This is unmingled joy to a really upright mind. If we do not unfeignedly rejoice at the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ, there must be something wrong somewhere. Either we are not established in grace, or we are walking in some false way. If we know that we are justified and accepted before God in Christ, and if we are walking in moral integrity, as in His presence, the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ will not disturb our hearts. The apostle could say, "We are made manifest to God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." Was Paul afraid of the judgment-seat? Not he. But why? Because he knew that he was accepted, *as to his person*, in a risen Christ; and, *as to his ways*, he 'laboured that whether present or absent he might be accepted of him."

Thus it was with this holy man of God and devoted servant of Christ. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." (Acts xxiv. 16.) Paul knew that he was accepted *in* Christ, and therefore he laboured to be accepted *of* Him.

These two things should never be separated, and they never will be in any divinely taught mind or divinely regulated conscience. They will be perfectly joined together, and, in holy harmony, exert their formative power over the soul. It should be our aim to walk, even now, in the light of the judgment-seat. This would prove a wholesome regulator in many ways. It will not, in any wise, lead to legality of spirit. Impossible. Shall we have any legality when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? Assuredly not. Well, then, why should the thought of that judgment-seat exert a legal influence now? In point of fact, we feel assured there is, and can be, no greater joy to an honest heart than to know that everything shall come clearly and fully out, in the perfect light of that solemn day that is approaching. We shall see all then as Christ sees it—judge of it as He judges. We shall look back from amid the blaze of divine light shining from the judgment-seat, and see our whole course in this world. We shall see what blunders we have made—how badly we did

this, that, and the other work—mixed motives here—an undercurrent there—a false object in something else. All will be seen then in divine truth and light. Is it a question of our being exposed to the whole universe? By no means. Should we be concerned, whether or no? Certainly not. Will it, can it, touch our acceptance? Nay, we shall shine there in all the perfectness of our risen and glorified Head. The Judge Himself is our righteousness. We stand in Him. He is our all. What can touch us? We shall appear there as the fruit of His perfect work. We shall be associated with Him in the judgment which He executes.

Is not this enough to settle every question? No doubt. But still we have to think of our individual walk and service. We have to look to it that we bring no wood, hay, and stubble into the light of the coming day, for as surely as we do we shall suffer loss, though we ourselves shall be saved through the fire. We should seek to carry ourselves now as those who are already in the light, and whose one desire is to do what is well pleasing to our adorable Lord, not because of the fear of Judgment, but under "the vast constraining influence" of His love. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live

unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." This is the true motive spring in all christian service. It is not the fear of judgment impelling, but the love of Christ constraining us; and we may say, with fullest assurance, that never shall we have so deep a sense of that love as when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

" When this passing world is done,
 When has sunk yon radiant sun,
 When I stand with Christ on high,
 Looking o'er life's history;
 Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
 Not till then, how much I owe."

There are many other points of interest and value in this marvellous chapter; but we feel we must bring our paper to a conclusion; and, most assuredly, we could not do this more suitably than by unfolding, as God's Spirit may enable us, that theme which has been before us all along, but from which we have been detained by the weighty subjects which have been occupying us. No doubt, each one of those subjects might have been handled separately, and thus each paper in the series have been given as an independent article: but this we conceive to be a matter of comparative indifference. If the articles possess any value, when viewed separately, we trust they will lose none of that value when taken together. And, further, we think it will be found, on calm

reflection, that each one of the subjects handled in the foregoing series is intimately connected with "The Ministry of Reconciliation," to which we shall now direct the reader's attention as briefly as we can.

In handling this great subject, it may be well to view it under three distinct heads; namely, first, the *foundation* on which this ministry rests; secondly, the *objects* toward whom it is exercised; thirdly, the *features* by which it is characterized. May God the Holy Ghost control our thoughts!

I. And first, then, as to the foundation on which the ministry of reconciliation rests. This is set before us in the closing verse of our chapter—a passage of surpassing weight, fulness and power. "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

We have here three parties, namely, God; Christ; sin. This latter is simply the expression of what we are by nature. There is in "us" nought but "sin," from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot—from the centre of our hearts to the circumference thereof—the whole man is sin. The principle of sin pervades the entire system of fallen humanity. The root, trunk, branches, leaves, blossom, fruit—all is sin. It is not only that we have committed sins; we are actually nothing but sin. True, we have, all

of us, our characteristic sins. We have not only, all of us, "gone astray," but "we have turned every one to his own way." Each has pursued his own specific path of evil and folly; and all this is the fruit of that thing called "sin." The outward life of each is but a stream from the fountain—a branch from the stem. That stem—that fountain, is sin.

And what, let us ask, is sin? It is the acting of the will in opposition to God. It is doing our own pleasure—doing what we like ourselves. This is the root—this the source of sin. Let it take what shape, or clothe itself in what forms it may; be it gross or be it most refined in its actings, the great root-principle, the parent stem, is self-will, and this is sin. There is no necessity for entering into any detail; all we desire is that the reader should have a clear and thorough sense of what sin is, and, not only so, but that he, by nature, is sinful. Where this great and solemn fact takes full possession of the soul, by the power of the Holy Ghost, there can be no settled rest until the soul is brought to lay hold on the truth set forth in 2 Corinthians v. 21. The question of sin had to be disposed of ere there could be so much as a single thought of reconciliation. God could never be reconciled to sin. But fallen man was a sinner by practice and sinful in nature. The very sources of his being were corrupt

and defiled, and God was holy, just, and true. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity. Hence, then, between God and sinful humanity there could be no such thing as reconciliation. True it is—most blessedly true, that God is good, and merciful, and gracious. But He is also holy; and holiness and sin could never coalesce.

What was to be done? Hear the answer: "God hath made Christ to be sin." But where? Reader, look well to this. Where was Christ made sin? Was it in the virgin's womb? Nay. Was it in the manger of Bethlehem? Nay. Was it in Jordan's flood? Nay. Was it in the garden of Gethsemane? Nay; though, most assuredly, in that garden the shadows were lengthening, the darkness was thickening, the gloom was deepening. But where and when was the holy, spotless, precious Lamb of God made sin? *On the cross, and only there!* This is a grand cardinal truth—a truth of vital importance—a truth which the enemy of God and His word is seeking to darken and set aside in every possible way. The devil is seeking, in the most specious manner, to displace the cross. He cares not how he compasses this end. He will make use of anything and everything in order to detract from the glory of the cross, that great central truth of Christianity round which every other truth

circulates, and on which the whole fabric of divine revelation rests as upon an eternal foundation.

“He hath made him to be sin.” Here lies the root of the whole matter. Christ, on the cross, was made sin for us. He died and was buried. Sin was condemned. It met the just judgment of a holy God who could not pass over a single jot or tittle of sin; nay, He poured out His unmingled wrath upon it in the Person of His Son, when that Son was “made sin.” It is a serious error to believe that Christ was bearing the judgment of God during His lifetime, or that aught save the death of Christ could meet the question of sin. He might have become incarnate—He might have lived and laboured on this earth—He might have wrought His countless miracles—He might have healed, and cleansed, and quickened—He might have prayed and wept and groaned; but not any of these things, nor yet all of them put together, could blot out a single stain of that dreadful thing “*sin*.” God the Holy Ghost declares that “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Heb. ix. 22.)

Now, then, reader, if the holy life and labours of the Son of God—if His prayers, tears, and groans could not put away sin; how do you think that your life and labours, your prayers, tears, and groans, your good work, rites, ordinances, and ceremonies could

ever put away sin ? The fact is, that the life of our blessed Lord only proved man more and more guilty. It laid the topstone upon the superstructure of his guilt, and therefore left the question of sin wholly unsettled.

Nor was this all. Our blessed Lord Himself declares, over and over again, the absolute and indispensable necessity of His death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth *alone*; but if it *die* it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii.) "Thus it is written, and thus *it behoved* [or was necessary for] Christ to suffer." (Luke xxiv. 46.) "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it *must* be." (Matt. xxvi.) In a word, death was the only pathway of life, the only basis of union, the only ground of reconciliation. We cannot be too distinct and firm as to this—distinct in apprehending it—firm in maintaining and confessing it. Satan has reared up a vast edifice of error on the opposite of all this. He has led millions of professing Christians to believe that incarnation and not death is the ground of the ministry of reconciliation—to believe that, in incarnation, Christ took fallen, sinful, corrupt humanity into union with Himself—that He was not that pure and precious "corn of wheat" standing alone, abiding in absolute and necessary solitude, inasmuch as it was utterly impossible that that which was essentially pure, holy, and

spotless could link itself with that which is essentially impure, unholy, and defiled—to believe that we get eternal life from an incarnate, not a dead and risen Christ, and that this life is fed, nourished, and maintained by the offices and ordinances of religion, and by the sacraments of the Church. In this way is he actually, at this moment, sapping the very foundations of Christianity, blinding the minds of professing Christians, and leading them, thus blindfolded, down to the pit of hell.

We speak plainly. We must do so if we are to speak at all. We are not controversialists, but we must maintain and set forth the truth of a dead and risen Christ. It may be asked, "Who denies it?" All those who speak of incarnation as being the basis of our union with Christ deny, in the plainest way, the whole range of truth connected with a dead and risen Christ. Many may not see this; but Satan sees it, and he sees too how it will work. He knows what he is about, and surely the servants of Christ ought to know what is involved in the error against which we are warning our readers.

The fact is, the enemy does not want souls to see that, in the death of Christ, sentence was passed on fallen human nature and upon the whole world. This was not the case in incarnation at all. An incarnate Christ put man to the test—a dead Christ put man to

death—a risen Christ takes the believer into union with Himself. When Christ came in the flesh fallen man was still under probation. When Christ died on the cross, fallen man was wholly condemned. When Christ rose from the dead, He became the Head of a new race, each member of which, being quickened by the Holy Ghost, is viewed by God as united to Christ, in life, righteousness, and favour—he is viewed as having been dead, as having passed through judgment, and as being now as free from all condemnation as Christ Himself. “He hath made him to be sin for us, [he] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Now, it must be plain to the reader who bows to scripture, that incarnation did not, and could not, accomplish all this. Incarnation did not put away sin. Need we stop here to dwell upon the glories of the mystery of incarnation? Will any one imagine that we take away from the value, or mar the integrity of that priceless fundamental truth, because we deny that it puts away sin, or forms the basis of our union with Christ? We trust not. That incarnation was essentially necessary for the accomplishment of redemption is plain to all. Christ had to become a man in order to die. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” He had to give His flesh for the life of the world.

But this only goes to prove the absolute necessity of death. It was the *giving* of His flesh, not the *taking* of it, that laid the foundation of the whole fabric—life, pardon, peace, righteousness, union, glory, all. Apart from death, there is, and could be, absolutely nothing. Through death we have all. It is not an incarnate Christ giving life, and that life conveyed through the sacraments of the Church; but it is a crucified and risen Christ, the source and foundation of everything. The former is, in plain language, Satan's specious lie; the latter is God's most precious truth. That lies at the bottom of the whole system of false Christianity now prevailing around us, under various names; this is the foundation of true Christianity, and of all the counsels and purposes of the eternal Trinity.

But we cannot pursue this profound subject any further now. Enough has been said to set forth its connection with our special thesis, the ministry of reconciliation. When we read that "God hath made Christ to be sin for us," we must see that this involved nothing less than the death of the cross. "THOU," says that blessed One, "hast brought ME into the dust of death." (Ps. xxii.) What an utterance! Who can fathom the mighty depths of those words, "Thou"—"Me"—and "Death?" Who can enter into the question, "My God, my God,

why hast *thou* forsaken *me* ?” Why did a holy, righteous God forsake His only begotten, well-beloved, eternal Son ? The answer contains the solid basis of that marvellous ministry whereof we speak. Christ was made sin. He not only bore our *sins* in His own body on the tree ; but He was made *sin*. He stood charged with the entire question of sin. He was “the Lamb of God bearing away the sin of the world.” As such He gloriously vindicated God, in the very scene where He had been dishonoured. He glorified Him in respect to that very thing by which His majesty had been insulted. He took upon Himself the whole matter—placed Himself beneath the weight of the whole burden, and completely cleared the ground on which God could lay the foundations of the new creation. He opened those eternal floodgates which sin had closed, so that the full tide of divine love might roll down along that channel which His atoning death alone could furnish ; so long as sin was *in* question, reconciliation must have been *out* of the question. But Christ, being made sin, died and put it away for ever, and thus changed entirely the ground and character of God’s dealing with man and with the world.

The death of Christ, then, as we have seen is the alone basis of reconciliation. That divine work has opened the way for placing men and things in their right relationship to

God, and on their proper footing before Him. And this, be it remembered, is the true sense and meaning of reconciliation. Sin had alienated "*men*" from God, and set "*things*" entirely astray, and hence both men and things needed to be reconciled, or set straight; and the death of Christ has cleared the way for this.

It is well that the reader should see clearly the true distinction between "atonement" and "reconciliation." They are often confounded, through inattention to the language of holy scripture; and even the pious and honoured translators of our most excellent Authorized Version have not, with sufficient accuracy, marked this distinction. For example, in Romans v. 11, they have given us the word "atonement" where it ought to be rendered "reconciliation." And, on the other hand, in Hebrews ii. 17, we have the word "reconciliation" where it ought to be "atonement."

Nor is the distinction by any means unimportant. The word "atonement," or "propitiation," occurs, in some one or other of its forms, six times in the Greek New Testament. (See carefully Luke xviii. 13; Rom. iii. 25; Heb. ii. 17, ix. 5; 1 John ii. 2, iv. 10.) The word "reconciliation" occurs, in one or other of its forms, thirteen times in the New Testament. (See Rom. v. 10, 11, xi. 15; 1 Cor. vii. 11; 2 Cor. v.

18, 19, 20; Eph. ii. 16; Col. i. 20, 21.) If the reader will take the trouble of examining and comparing these passages, he will see that atonement and reconciliation are not the same thing, but that the former is the foundation of the latter. Sin had made man an enemy and thrown things into confusion; and in Colossians i. 20, 21, we read, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross [here is the foundation], by him to reconcile all *things* unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And *you*, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now *hath he reconciled*, in the body of his flesh, *through death*, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight." Here we have the death of Christ set forth as the ground of the reconciliation of both men and things.*

Now this leads to another point of immense

* If the reader will turn, for a moment, to 1 Corinthians vii. 11, he will see the use of the word reconciliation. "But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be *reconciled* to her husband." In classical Greek the word is applied to the *changing* money; the *exchanging* one thing for another; *exchanging* prisoners; the changing a person from *enmity* to *friendship*. In short, everywhere the distinction is maintained between "atonement" or "propitiation" and "reconciliation." The former is *λασμος*, the latter *καταλλαγη*.

importance. We often hear it said that "the death of Christ was necessary in order to *reconcile God to man*." This is a pious mistake, arising from inattention to the language of the Holy Ghost, and indeed to the plain meaning of the word "reconcile." God never changed—never stepped out of His normal and true position. He abideth faithful. There was, and could be, no derangement, no confusion, no alienation, so far as He was concerned; and hence there could be no need of reconciling Him to us. In fact it was exactly the contrary. Man had gone astray; he was the enemy, and needed to be reconciled. But this was wholly impossible if *sin* were not righteously disposed of; and sin could only be disposed of by *death*—even the death of One who, as being a man, could die, and being God, could impart all the dignity, value, and glory of His divine Person to the atoning sacrifice which He offered.

Wherefore, then, as might be expected, scripture never speaks of reconciling God to man. There is no such expression to be found within the covers of the New Testament. "God was in Christ reconciling *the world* [in its broad aspect—men and things] unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And again, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled *us* to himself by Jesus Christ." In a word, it is God, in His infinite mercy and grace,

through the atoning death of Christ, bringing us back to Himself, and placing us not merely in the original place, or on the original footing, or in the original relationship; but, as was due to the work of Christ, giving us back far more than we had lost, and introducing us into the marvellous relationship of sons, and setting us in His presence, in divine and eternal righteousness, and in the infinite favour and acceptableness of His own Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amazing grace! Stupendous and glorious plan! What a ministry! And yet need we wonder when we think of the death of Christ as the foundation of it all? When we remember that "Christ was made sin for us," it seems but the necessary counterpart that "we should be made the righteousness of God in him." It would have been no adequate result of such a work as Christ accomplished, to have brought men and things back to the Adamic or old creation ground. This would never have satisfied the heart of God in any way, whether as respects Christ's glory or our blessing. It would not have furnished an answer to that omnipotent appeal of John xvii.: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (ver. 4,5). Who

can gauge the depth and power of those accents as they fell upon the ear of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

But we must not enlarge, much as we should like to do so. We are compelled, through lack of space, to close these remarks rather abruptly. However, little remains to be said as to the *objects* of the ministry of reconciliation, inasmuch as we have, in a measure, anticipated them by speaking of "men and things," for these are, in very deed, the objects, and they are included in that comprehensive word "world." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." We would merely add here, that it is utterly impossible for any creature under heaven to exclude himself from the range of this most precious ministry. Before the reader can shut himself out from the application of all this grace to himself, he must prove that he does not belong to the world. This he cannot do, and hence he must see that God is beseeching him to be reconciled.

But this leads us to look, for a moment, at the *features* which characterize this glorious ministry.

I. And first, let us mark God's attitude. He is beseeching sinners. What a thought! It seems too much for the heart to conceive. Only think, reader, of the Most High and Mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the

earth—the One who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell—think of Him as beseeching and praying you to be friends with Him! It is not a question of your praying to Him and His hearing you. No: but the very reverse—He is praying you. And for what does He ask you? Is it to do anything or to give anything? Nay; He simply asks you to be friends with Him because He has befriended you at the cost of His own Son. Think of this. He spared not His only begotten and well-beloved Son, but bruised Him in your stead. He made Him to be sin for you. He judged your sin in the Person of His Son, on the cross, in order that He might be able to reconcile you. And now He stretches forth His arms and opens His heart to you, and prays you to be reconciled—to be friends with Him. Surpassing grace! It really seems to us as though human language can only tend to weaken and impoverish this grand reality.

We would only further suggest that the force of verse 20 is greatly weakened by the word “you,” which, as the reader will observe, ought not to be inserted. It makes it appear as though the apostle were beseeching the Corinthian saints to be reconciled, whereas he is only setting forth the terms and the style adopted by all “ambassadors” for Christ wherever they went through the wide world—the language in which they

were to address "every creature" under heaven. It was not "Do this or that"—"Give this or that." It was not command or prohibition; but simply, "Be reconciled."

II. And, then, what encouragement to the poor trembling heart that feels the burden of sin and guilt to be assured that God will not impute, will not reckon, one of his sins! This is another precious feature of the ministry of reconciliation. "*Not imputing their trespasses unto them.*" This must set the heart at rest. If God tells me that He will not count one of my trespasses to me, because He has already counted them to Jesus on the cross, this may well tranquillize my spirit and emancipate my heart. If I believe that God means what He says, perfect peace must be my portion. True, it is only by the Holy Ghost that I can enter into the power of this glorious truth; but what the Holy Ghost leads me to believe and rest in is, that God does not, and will not, blessed be His name, impute a single sin to me, because he has already imputed *all* to Christ.

But this leads us to the third feature of the ministry of reconciliation.

III. If God will not impute my trespasses to me, then, what will He impute? Righteousness—even the righteousness of God. We cannot attempt to unfold the nature and character of this righteousness. We

may do so on another occasion, if the Lord permit ; but here we confine ourselves to the statement contained in the passage before us, which declares that God hath made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us who were all sin, that we might become the righteousness of God IN HIM. Most glorious truth! Sin is made an end of, as regards the believer. Christ lives as our subsisting righteousness, before God, and we live in Him. There is not so much as one single entry to our debit in the book of divine justice ; but there is a risen and glorified Christ to our credit. Nor is this all. Not only are our sins gone, our guilt cancelled—our old self completely ignored—not only are we made the righteousness of God in Jesus ; but we are loved by God as Jesus is loved—accepted in Him—one with Him in all that He is and has, as a risen, victorious, ascended, and glorified Man at God's right hand. Higher than this it is impossible to go.

And now we must close, and we do it reluctantly. We do it with a certain painful consciousness of the feebleness and poverty of our handling of this lofty and comprehensive theme. But all this we must leave in the Master's hand. He knows all about the subject and the treatment thereof—all about the reader and the writer of these lines. To Him we commit all, while we make one

solemn closing appeal to the unconverted, unawakened reader.

Dear friend, let us remind you that this glorious ministry will very soon close. The acceptable year, the day of salvation, shall ere long come to an end. The ambassadors shall soon be all called home and their embassy be closed for ever. The door shall soon be shut, and the day of vengeance set in in terror and wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world. Let us entreat of you to flee from the wrath to come. Remember that the One who is now praying and beseeching you to be reconciled, has uttered the following awful words, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." (Prov. 24—26.) May the reader escape the unutterable horrors of the day of wrath and judgment!

C. H. M.

