2 Timothy - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 1, Bible, The: Its Sufficiency and Supremacy

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It was in the month of January, 1858, that we were permitted to issue the first number of this little serial. From that time to the present, we have sought, according to our measure, to unfold some of the precious doctrines of the Bible, and to apply them to the various phases of Christian life and experience. We would, now, desire to furnish our readers with an article on the Bible itself. This we consider needful, just now, when not only are many doctrines of the Bible set aside, but even the divine authority and sufficiency of the Bible itself boldly called in question, and that, too, in quarters where we should least have expected such things. We therefore proceed to state, very simply, what we believe in reference to the Bible, and also what we feel with respect to those who presume to tamper with its sacred pages. We do not, by any means, undertake the task of silencing the skeptic or the infidel. We leave such work to abler hands; but we believe we ought to raise our voice in testimony to the incomparable excellencies of that book which our God has graciously given us to be “A lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path,” and which, as being a divine revelation, must needs be adapted to all ages, all conditions, and all climes.

Some, we are aware, would fain persuade us that things are so totally changed since the Bible was penned, that we need other guidance than that which its precious pages supply. They tell us that society is not what it was; that the human race has made progress; that there has been such a development of the powers of nature, the resources of science, and the appliances of philosophy, that to maintain the sufficiency and supremacy of the Bible, at such a point in the world's history as the nineteenth century of the Christian era, can only be regarded as childishness, ignorance, or imbecility.

Now, the men that tell us these things may be very clever and very learned; but we have no hesitation whatever in telling them that, in this matter, “they do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” We certainly do desire to render all due respect to learning, genius, and talent, whenever we find them in their right place, and at their proper work; but when we find them lifting their proud heads above the word of God; when we find them sitting in judgment, and casting a slur upon that peerless revelation, we feel that we owe them no respect whatever; yea, we treat them as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to shake those eternal pillars on which the faith of God's elect has ever rested. We cannot listen, for a moment, to men, however profound in their reading and thinking, who dare to treat God's book as though it were man's book, and speak of those pages that were penned by the All wise, Almighty, and Eternal God, as though they were the production of a shallow and short-sighted mortal.

It is important that the reader should see clearly that men must either deny that the Bible is the Word of God, or admit its sufficiency and supremacy in all ages, and in all countries—in all stages and conditions of the human race. Grant us but this, that God has written a book for man's guidance, and we argue that that book must be amply sufficient for man, no matter when, where, or how we find him. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.....that the man of God may be perfect () thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. 3]6, 17.) This, surely, is enough. ' To be perfect, and thoroughly furnished, must needs render a man independent of all the boasted powers of science and philosophy, falsely so called.

We are quite aware that, in writing thus, we expose ourselves to the sneer of the learned rationalist, and the polished and cultivated philosopher. But we are not very careful about this. We greatly admire the answer of a pious, but, no doubt, very ignorant woman to some very learned man who was endeavoring to show her that the inspired writer had made a mistake in asserting that Jonah was in the whale's belly. He assured her that such a thing could not possibly be, inasmuch as the natural history of the whale proved that it could not swallow anything so large. “Well,” said the poor woman, “I do not know much about natural history; but this I know, that if the Bible were to tell me that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would believe it.” Now, it is quite possible that many would pronounce this poor woman to have been under the influence of ignorance and blind credulity; but, for our part, we should rather be the ignorant woman, confiding in God's Word than the learned rationalist picking holes in it. We have no doubt as to who was in the safer position.

But, let it not be supposed that we prefer ignorance to learning. Let none imagine that we despise the discoveries of science, or treat with contempt the achievements of sound philosophy, Far from it. We honor them highly in their proper sphere. We could not say how much we prize the labors of those learned men who have consecrated their energies to the work of clearing the sacred text of the various errors and corruptions which, from age to age, had crept into it, through the carelessness or infirmity of copyists, taken advantage of by a crafty and malignant foe. Every effort put forth to preserve, to unfold, to illustrate, and to enforce the precious truth of scripture, we most highly esteem; but, on the other hand, when we find men making use of their learning, their science, and their philosophy, for the purpose of undermining the sacred edifice of divine revelation, we deem it our duty, as the conductors of a Magazine, to raise our voice, in the clearest and strongest way, against them, and to warn our readers, most solemnly, against their baneful influence.

We believe that the Bible, as written in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, is the very word of the only wise and the only true God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, who saw the end from the beginning, and not only the end, but every stage of the way. We therefore hold it to be nothing short of positive blasphemy to assert that we have arrived at a stage of our career in which the Bible is not sufficient, or that we are compelled to travel outside its covers to find ample guidance and instruction for the present moment, and for every moment of our earthly pilgrimage. The Bible is a perfect chart in which every exigency of the Christian mariner has been anticipated. Every rock, every sand-hank, every shoal, every strand, every island, has been carefully noted down. All the need of the Church of God, its members, and its ministers, has been most fully provided for. How could it be otherwise, if we admit the Bible to be the word of God? Could the mind of God have devised, or His finger sketched an imperfect chart? Impossible. We must either deny the divinity or admit the sufficiency of THE Book.. We are absolutely shut up to this alternative. There is not so much as a single point between these two positions. If the book is incomplete, it cannot be of God; if it be of God, it must be perfect. But if we are com-polled to betake ourselves to other sources for guidance and instruction, as to the path of the Church of God, its members or its ministers, then is the Bible incomplete,

and, being such, it cannot be of God at all.

What then, dear reader, are we to do? Whither can we betake ourselves? If the Bible be not a divine and therefore all-sufficient guide-book, what remains? Some will tell us to have recourse to tradition. Alas! what a miserable guide. No sooner have we launched out into the wide field of tradition than our ears are assailed by ten thousand strange and conflicting sounds. We meet, it may be, with a tradition which seems very authentic, very venerable, well-worthy of respect and confidence, and we commit ourselves to its guidance; but, directly we have done so, another tradition crosses our path, putting forth quite as strong claims on our confidence, and leading us in quite an opposite direction. Thus it is with tradition. The mind is bewildered, and one is reminded of the assembly at Ephesus concerning which we read that, “Some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused.” The fact is, we want a perfect standard, and this can only be found in a divine revelation, which, as we believe, is to be found within the covers of our most precious Bible. What a boon! What a treasure! How we should bless God for it! How we should praise His name for His mercy in that He hath not left His Church dependent upon the ignis fatuus of human tradition, but upon the steady light of divine revelation! We do not want tradition to assist revelation, but we use revelation as the test of tradition. We should just as soon think of bringing out a rushlight to assist the sun's meridian beams, as of calling in human tradition to aid divine revelation.

But there is another very ensnaring and dangerous resource presented by the enemy of the Bible, and alas! accepted by too many of the people of God, and that is expediency, or the very attractive plea of doing all the good we can, without due attention to the way in which that good is done. The tree of expediency is a wide-spreading one, and yields most tempting clusters. But ah! beloved reader, remember its clusters will prove bitter as wormwood, in the end. It is, no doubt, well to do all the good we can; but let us look well to the way in which we do it. Let us not deceive ourselves by the vain imagination that God will ever accept of services based upon positive disobedience to His word. “It is a gift,” said the elders, as they boldly walked over the plain commandment of God, as if He would be pleased with a gift presented on such a principle. There is an intimate connection between the ancient “corban” and the modern “expediency,” for, “there is nothing new under the sun.” The solemn responsibility of obeying the word of God was got rid of under the plausible pretext of “corban,” or “It is a gift.” Thus it was of old. The “corban” of the ancients justified, or sought to justify, many a bold transgression of the law of God; and the “expediency” of our times allures many to outstep the boundary line laid down by divine revelation.

Now, we quite admit that expediency holds out most attractive inducements. It does seem so very delightful to be doing a great deal of good, to be gaining the ends of a large hearted benevolence, to be reaching tangible results. It would not be an easy matter duly to estimate the ensnaring influence of such objects, or the immense difficulty of throwing them overboard. Have we never been tempted as we stood upon the narrow path of obedience, and looked forth upon the golden fields of expediency lying on either side, to exclaim, “Alas! I am sacrificing my usefulness for an idea?” Doubtless; but then what if it should turn out that we have the very same foundation for that “idea” as for the fundamental doctrines of salvation? The question is, What is the idea? Is it founded upon “Thus saith the Lord!” If so, let us tenaciously hold by it, though ten thousand advocates of expediency were hurling at us the grievous charge of narrow-mindedness.

There is immense power in Samuel's brief but pointed reply to Saul, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord! Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam. xv. 22.) Saul's word was, “Sacrifice.” Samuel's word was, “Obedience.” No doubt, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen were most exciting. They would be looked upon as substantial proofs that something was being done; while on the other hand, the path of obedience seemed narrow, silent, lonely, and fruitless. But oh! those pungent words of Samuel! “To obey is better than sacrifice.” What a triumphant answer to the most eloquent advocates of expediency! They are most conclusive—most commanding words. They teach us that it is better, if it must be so, to stand, like a marble statue, on the pathway of obedience, than to reach the most desirable ends by transgressing a plain precept of the word of God.

But let none suppose that one must be like a statue on the path of obedience. Far from it. There are rare and precious services to be rendered by the obedient one—services which can only be rendered by such, and which owe all their preciousness to their being the fruit of simple obedience. True, they may not find a place in the public records of man's bustling activity; but they are recorded on high, and they will be published at the right time. As a dear friend has often said to us, “Heaven will be the safest and happiest place to hear all about our work down here.” May we remember this, and pursue our way, in all simplicity, looking to Christ for guidance, power, and blessing. May His smile be enough for us. May we not be found looking askance to catch the approving look of a poor mortal whose breath is in his nostrils, nor sigh to find our names amid the glittering record of the great men of the age. The servant of Christ should look far beyond all such things. The grand business of the servant is to obey. His object should not be to do a great deal, but simply to do what he is told. This makes all plain, and, moreover, it will make the Bible precious as the depository of the Master's will to which he must continually betake himself to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. Neither tradition, nor expediency will do for the servant of Christ. The all-important inquiry is, “What saith the scripture? “

This settles everything. From the decision of the word of God there must be no appeal. When God speaks, man must how. It is not by any means, a question of obstinate adherence to a man's own notions. Quite the opposite. It is a reverent adherence to the word of God. Let the reader distinctly mark this. It often happens that, when one is determined, through grace, to abide by scripture, he will be pronounced dogmatic, intolerant and imperious, and, no doubt, one has to watch over his temper, spirit, and style, even when seeking to abide by the word of God. But, be it well remembered that obedience to Christ's commandments is the very opposite of imperiousness, dogmatism, and intolerance. It is not a little strange that when a man tamely consents to place his conscience in the keeping of his fellow, and to bow down his understanding to the opinions of men, he is considered meek, modest, and liberal; but let him reverently bow to the authority of holy scripture, and he will be looked upon as self-confident, dogmatic, and narrow-minded. Be it so. The time is rapidly approaching when obedience shall be called by its right name, and meet its recognition and reward. For that moment the faithful must be content to wait, and, while waiting for it, be quite satisfied to let men call them whatever they please. “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”

But we must draw to a close, and would merely add, in conclusion, that there is a third hostile influence against which the lover of the Bible will have to watch, and that is rationalism—or the supremacy of man's reason. The faithful disciple of the word of God will have to withstand this audacious intruder, with the most unflinching decision. It presumes to sit in judgment upon the word of God—to decide upon what is and what is not worthy of God—to prescribe boundaries to inspiration. Instead of humbly bowing to the authority of scripture, which continually soars into a region where poor blind reason can never follow, it proudly seeks to drag scripture down to its own level. If the Bible puts forth

aught which, in the smallest degree, clashes with the conclusions of rationalism, then there must be some flaw. God 18 shut out of His own book, if He says anything which poor blind, perverted reason cannot reconcile with her own conclusions—which conclusions, be it observed, are not infrequently the grossest absurdities.

Nor is this all. Rationalism deprives us of the only perfect standard of truth, and conducts us into a region of the most dreary uncertainty. It seeks to undermine the authority of a book in which we can believe everything, and carries us into a field of speculation in which we can be sure of nothing. Under the dominion of rationalism the soul is like a vessel broken from its safe moorings in the haven of divine revelation, to be tossed like a cork upon the wild watery waste of universal skepticism.

Now we do not expect to convince a thorough rationalist, even if such an one should condescend to scan our unpretending pages, which is most unlikely. Neither could we expect to gain over to our way of thinking, the decided advocate of expediency, or the ardent admirer of tradition. We have neither the competency, the leisure, nor the space, to enter upon such a line of argument as would be required were we seeking to gain such ends as these. But we are most anxious that the Christian reader should rise up from the perusal of this paper with a deepened sense of the preciousness of his Bible. We earnestly desire that the heading of this article should be engraved, in deep and broad characters, upon the tablet of the reader's heart—“The Bible: its sufficiency and supremacy.”

We feel that, as the conductors of a periodical-, we have a solemn duty to perform, at a moment like the present, in the which Superstition, Expediency, and Rationalism are all at work, as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to sap the foundations of our holy faith. We owe it to that blessed volume of inspiration, from which we have drank the streams of life and peace, to bear our feeble testimony to the divinity of its every page—to give expression, in this permanent form, to our profound reverence for its authority, and our conviction of its divine sufficiency for every need, whether of the believer individually, or the church collectively.

We owe it to our readers to exhort them earnestly to set a higher value than ever upon the Holy Scriptures, and to warn them, in most urgent terms, against every influence, whether of tradition, expediency, or rationalism, which might tend to shake their confidence in those heavenly oracles. There is a spirit abroad, and there are principles at work, which make it imperative upon us to keep close to scripture—to treasure it in our hearts—and to submit to its holy authority.

May God the Spirit—the Author of the Bible, produce, in the writer and reader of these lines, a more ardent love for that Bible! May He enlarge our experimental acquaintance with its contents, and lead us into more complete subjection to its teachings, in all things, that God may be more fully glorified in us, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,

Is laid up for faith in God's excellent word!

What more can He say, than to you He has said, -

You who to the Savior for refuge have tied?

In every condition,—in sickness, in health;

In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;

At home, or abroad; on the land, on the sea;

As need may demand, shall our strength ever be.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 1, All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 5

If the reader has been enabled, through grace, to make his own of what has passed before our minds in this series of papers, he will have a perfect remedy for all uneasiness of conscience and all restlessness of heart. The work of Christ, if only it be laid hold of by an artless faith, must, of blessed necessity, meet the former; and the Person of Christ, if only He be contemplated with a single eye, must perfectly meet the latter. If, therefore, we are not in the enjoyment of peace of conscience, it can only be because we are not resting on the finished work of Christ; and if the heart is not at ease, it proves that we are not satisfied with Christ Himself.

And yet, alas! how few, even of the Lord's beloved people, know either the one or the other. How rare it is to find a person in the enjoyment of true peace of conscience and rest of heart! In general, Christians are not a whit in advance of the condition of Old Testament saints. They do not know the blessedness of an accomplished redemption. They are not in the enjoyment of a purged conscience. They cannot draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. They do not apprehend the grand truth of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, enabling them to cry, “Abba, Father.” They are, as to their experience, under law. They have never really entered into the deep blessedness of being under the reign of grace. They have life. It is impossible to doubt this. They love divine things. Their tastes, their habits, their aspirations, yea, their very exercises, their conflicts, their anxieties, doubts, and fears, all go to prove the existence of divine life. They are, in a way, separated from the world, but their separation is rather negative than positive. It is more because they see the utter vanity of the world, and its inability to satisfy their hearts, than because they have found an object in Christ. They have lost their taste for the things of the world, but they have not found their place and their portion in the Son of God where He now is at the right hand of God. The things of the world cannot satisfy them, and they are not in the enjoyment of their proper heavenly standing, object, and hope; hence they are in an anomalous condition altogether; they have no certainty, no rest, no fixedness of purpose; they are not happy; they do not know their true bearings; they are neither one thing nor the other.

Is it thus with the reader? We fondly hope not. We trust he is one of those who, through infinite grace, “know the things that are freely given them of God,” who know that they have passed from death unto life—that they have eternal life; who enjoy the precious witness of the Spirit; who realize their association with a risen and glorified Head in the heavens, with whom they are linked by the Holy Ghost who dwells in them;

who have found their object in the Person of that blessed One whose finished work is the divine and eternal basis of their salvation and peace; and who are earnestly looking for the blessed moment when Jesus shall come to receive them to Himself, that where He is they may be also, to go no more out forever.

This is Christianity. Nothing else deserves the name. It stands out in bold and striking contrast with the spurious religiousness of the day, which is neither pure Judaism on the one hand, nor pure Christianity on the other, but a wretched mixture, composed of some of the elements of each, which unconverted people can adopt and go on with, because it sanctions the lusts of the flesh, and allows them to enjoy the pleasures and vanities of the world to their heart's content. The arch-enemy of Christ and of souls has succeeded in producing an awful system of religion, half-Jewish, half-Christian, combining, in the most artful manner, the world and the flesh, with a certain amount of scripture so used as to destroy its moral force, and hinder its just application. In the meshes of this system souls are hopelessly entangled. Unconverted people are deceived into the notion that they are very good Christians indeed, and going on all right to heaven. And, on the other hand, the Lord's dear people are robbed of their proper place and privileges, and dragged down by the dark and depressing influence of the religious atmosphere which surrounds and almost suffocates them.

It lies not, we believe, within the compass of human language to set forth the appalling consequences of this mingling of the people of God with the people of the world in one common system of religiousness and theological belief. Its effect upon the former is to blind their eyes to the true moral glories of Christianity as set forth in the pages of the New Testament; and this to such an extent, that if any one attempts to unfold these glories to their view, he is regarded as a visionary enthusiast, or a dangerous heretic. Its effect upon the latter is to deceive them altogether as to their true condition, character, and destiny. Both classes repeat the same formularies, subscribe to the same creed, say the same prayers, are members of the same community, partake of the same sacrament, are, in short, ecclesiastically, theologically, religiously one.

It will, perhaps, be said in reply to all this, that our Lord, in His wonderful discourse in Matt. 13, distinctly teaches that the wheat and the tares are to grow together. Yes; but where? In the church? Nay; but “in the field;” and He tells us that “the field is the world.” To confound these things is to falsify the whole christian position, and to do away with all godly discipline in the assembly. It is to place the teaching of our Lord in Matt. 13 in opposition to the teaching of the Holy Ghost in 1 Cor. 5

However, we shall not pursue this subject further just now. It is far too important and too extensive to be disposed of in a brief article like the present. We may, perhaps, discuss it more fully on some future occasion. That it demands the serious consideration of the christian reader we are most thoroughly convinced; bearing, as it does, so manifestly on the glory of Christ, on the true interests of His people, on the progress of the gospel, on the integrity of christian testimony and service, it would be quite impossible to overestimate its importance. But we must leave it for the present, and draw this paper to a close by a brief reference to the third and last branch of our subject, namely,

THE WORD OF CHRIST AS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT GUIDE FOR OUR PATH.

If Christ's work suffices for the conscience, if His blessed Person suffices for the heart, then, most assuredly, His precious word suffices for the path. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that we possess in the divine volume of holy scripture all we can ever need, not only to meet all the exigencies of our individual path, but also the varied necessities of the church of God, in the most minute details of her history in this world.

We are quite aware that in making this assertion we lay ourselves open to much scorn and opposition, in more quarters than one. We shall be met on the one hand by the advocates of tradition, and on the other by those who contend for the supremacy of man's reason and will. But this gives us very little concern indeed. We regard the traditions of men, whether fathers, brothers, or doctors, if presented as an authority, as the small dust of the balance; and as to human reason, it can only be compared to a bat in the sunshine, dazzled by the brightness, and blindly dashing itself against objects which it cannot see.

It is the deepest joy of the Christian's heart to retire from the conflicting traditions and doctrines of men into the calm light of holy scripture; and when encountered by the impudent reasonings of the infidel, the rationalist, and the skeptic, to bow down his whole moral being to the authority and power of holy scripture. He thankfully recognizes in the word of God the only perfect standard for doctrine, for morals, for everything. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be, perfect [], thoroughly furnished unto all good works”

What more can we need? Nothing. If scripture can make a child “wise unto salvation,” and if it can make a man “perfect,” and furnish him “thoroughly to all good works,” what do we want of human tradition or human reasonings? If God has written a volume for us, if He has graciously condescended to give us a revelation of His mind, as to all we ought to know, and think, and feel, and believe, and do, shall we turn to a poor fellow-mortal—be he ritualist or rationalist—to help us? Far away be the thought! As well might we turn to our fellow-man to add something to the finished work of Christ, in order to render it sufficient for our conscience, or to supply some deficiency in the Person of Christ, in order to render Him a sufficient object for the heart, as to betake ourselves to human tradition or human reason to supply some deficiency in divine revelation.

All praise and thanks to our God, it is not so. He has given us in His own beloved Son all we want for the conscience, for the heart, for the path—for time, with all its changing scenes—for eternity, with its countless ages. We can say, “Thou, Christ, art all we want; more than all in Thee we find.” There is, there could be, no lack in the Christ of God. His atonement and advocacy must satisfy all the cravings of the most deeply exercised conscience. The moral glories, the powerful attractions, of His divine Person must satisfy the most intense aspirations and longings of the heart. And His peerless revelation—that priceless volume contains within its covers all we can possibly need, from the starting-post to the goal of our christian career.

Christian reader, are not these things so? Dost thou not, from the very center of thy renewed moral being, own the truth of them? If so, art thou resting, in calm repose, on Christ's work? Art thou delighting in His Person? Art thou submitting in all things to the authority of His word? God grant it may be so with thee, and with all who profess His name! May there be a fuller, clearer, and more decided testimony to “The All-sufficiency of Christ,” till “that day!”

To all whose eyes have been opened to see their true condition, by nature—who have been brought under the convicting power of the Holy Ghost—who know aught of the real meaning of a broken heart and a contrite spirit—to all such it must be of the deepest possible interest to know the divine secret of rest and peace. If it be true—and it is true, because God says it—that " they that are in the flesh cannot please God "—then how is any one to get out of the flesh? How can he pass off the platform of nature? How can he reach the blessed position of those to whom the Holy Ghost declares, " Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit?"

These are momentous questions, surely. For, be it thoroughly known and ever remembered, that no improvement of our old nature is of any value whatsoever, as to our standing before God. It may be all very well, so far as this life is concerned, for a man to improve himself, by every means within his reach, to cultivate his mind, furnish his memory, elevate his moral tone, advance his social position. All this is quite true, so true as not to need a moment's argument.

But, admitting, in the fullest manner, the truth of all this, it leaves wholly untouched the solemn and sweeping statement of the inspired apostle that " They that are in the flesh cannot please God." There must be a new standing altogether, and this new standing cannot be reached by any change in the old nature—by any doings—any sayings—any feelings—ordinances of religion, prayers, alms or sacraments. Do what you will with nature and it is nature still. " That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and do what you will with flesh you cannot make it spirit. There must be a new life—a life flowing from the new man, the last Adam, who has become, in resurrection, the Head of a new race.

How is this most precious life to be had? Hear the memorable answer—hear it, anxious reader—hear it and live. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, turtle everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24.

Here we have a total change of standing—a passing from death to life—from a position in which there is not so much as a single link with heaven—with the new creation—with the risen Man in glory, into a position in which there is not a single link with the first man—with the old creation—and this present evil world. And all this is through believing on the Son of God—not saying we believe, but really, truly, heartily, believing on the Son of God—not by a head belief, a nominal, notional, intellectual faith—but by believing with the heart.

Thus only does any one become

A Man In Christ

Every true believer is a man in Christ. Whether it be the convert of yesterday or the hoary headed saint of fifty or sixty years' standing as a Christian, each stands in precisely the same blessed position—he is in Christ. There can be no difference here. The practical state may differ immensely; but the positive standing is one and the same. As on the platform of nature, you may meet with every imaginable shade, grade, class and condition, though all having one common standing; so on the new, the divine, the heavenly platform, you may meet with every possible variety of practical condition: the greatest possible difference in intelligence, experience, and spiritual power, while all possessing the same standing before God, all being in Christ. There can be no degrees as to standing, whatever there may be as to state. The convert of yesterday, and the hoary headed father in Christ are both alike as to standing. Each is a man in Christ, and there can be no advance upon this. We sometimes hear of " The higher christian life;" but, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a higher or a lower christian life, inasmuch as Christ is the life of every believer. It may be that those who use the term mean a right thing. They probably refer to the higher stages of the christian life—greater nearness to God—greater likeness to Christ—greater power in the Spirit—more devotedness—more separation from the world—more entire consecration of heart to Christ. But all these things belong to the question of our state, not to our standing. This latter is absolute, settled, unchangeable. It is in Christ, nothing less, nothing more, nothing different. If we are not in Christ, we are in our sins; but if we are in Christ, we cannot possibly be higher, as to standing.

If the reader will turn with us, for a few moments, to 1 Cor. 15:45-48, he will find some powerful teaching on this great foundation truth. The apostle speaks hero of two men, " the first and the second."

And let it be carefully noted that the second Man is, by no means, federally connected with the first, but stands in contrast with him—a new, independent, divine, heavenly source of life in Himself. The first man has been entirely set aside, as a ruined, guilty, outcast creature. We speak of Adam federally—as the head of a race. Personally, Adam was saved by grace; but if we look at him from a federal standpoint, we see him a hopeless wreck.

The first man is an irremediable ruin. This is proved by the fact of a second Man, for truly we may say of the men as of the covenants, " If the first had been found faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." But the very fact of a second Man being introduced demonstrates the hopeless ruin of the first. Why a second, if aught could be made of the first? If our old Adam nature was, in any wise, capable of being improved, there was no need of something new. But " they that are in the flesh cannot please God." " For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Rom. 8, Gal. 6

There is immense moral power in all this line of teaching. It sets forth Christianity in vivid and striking contrast with every form of religiousness under the sun. Take Judaism or any other ism, that ever was known or that now exists in this world, and what do you find it to be? Is it not invariably something designed for the testing, trying, improvement, or advancement of the first man? Unquestionably.

But what is Christianity? It is something entirely new—heavenly—spiritual—divine. It is based upon the cross of Christ, in the which the first man came to his end—where sin was put away—judgment borne—the old man crucified and put out of God's sight forever, so far as all believers are concerned. The cross closes, for faith, the history of the first man. " I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle. And again, " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

Are these mere figures of speech, or do they set forth, in the mighty words of the Holy Ghost, the grand fact of the entire setting aside of our old nature, as a thing utterly worthless and condemned The latter, most assuredly, blessed be God. Christianity starts, as it were, from the open grave of the second Man, to pursue its bright career onward to eternal glory. It is, emphatically, a new creation in which there is not so much as a single shred of the old thing—for " all things are of God." And if all things" are of God, there can be nothing of man.

What rest! What comfort! What strength! What moral elevation! 'What sweet relief for the poor burdened soul that has been vainly seeking, for years perhaps, to find peace in self-improvement! 'What deliverance from the wretched thralldom of legality, in all its phases, to find out the precious secret that my guilty, ruined, bankrupt self—the very thing that I have been trying, by every means in my power, to improve, has been completely and forever set aside—that God is not looking for any amendment in it—that He has condemned it and put it to death in the cross of His Son! What an answer is here to the monk, the ascetic, and the ritualist! Oh! that it were understood in all its emancipating power! This heavenly, this divine, this spiritual Christianity. Surely were it only known in its. living power and reality, it would deliver the soul from the thousand and one forms of corrupt religion whereby the arch-enemy and deceiver is ruining the souls of untold millions. We may truly say that Satan's masterpiece—his most successful effort against the truth of the Gospel, against the Christianity of the New Testament—is seen in the fact of his leading unconverted people to take and apply to themselves ordinances of the christian religion, and to profess many of its doctrines. In this way he blinds their eyes to their own true condition, as utterly ruined, guilty, and undone; and strikes a deadly blow at the pure Gospel of Christ. The best piece that was ever put upon the " old garment " of man's ruined nature is the profession of Christianity; and, the better the piece, the worse the rent. See Mark 2:21.

Let us bend an attentive ear to the following weighty words of the greatest teacher and best exponent of true Christianity the world ever saw. " For I through law aim dead to law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Mark this, " I—not I—but Christ." The old. "-I"—" crucified." The new " I"—Christ. " And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:19, 20.1

This, and nothing else, is Christianity. It is not " the old man "—the first Adam—nature, becoming religious, even though the religion be the profession of the doctrines, and the adopting of the ordinances of Christianity. No; it is the death, the crucifixion, the burial of the old man—the old I—the old nature, and becoming a new man in Christ. Every true believer is a new man in Christ. He has passed clean out of the old creation-standing—the old estate of sin and death, guilt and condemnation; and lie has passed into a new creation-standing—into a new estate of life and righteousness in a risen and glorified Christ—the Head of the new creation—the last Adam.

Such is the position and unalterable standing of the very feeblest believer in Christ. There is absolutely no other standing for any Christian. I must either be in the first man or in the second. There is no third man, for the second Man is the last Adam. There is no middle ground. I am either in Christ, or I am in my sins. But if I am in Christ, I am as He is before God. " As he is so are we, in this world." He does not say, " As he was" but " as he is." That is, the Christian is viewed by God as one with Christ, in every respect—His Deity, of course, excepted, as being incommunicable. That blessed One stood in the believer's stead—bore his sins, died his death, paid his penalty, represented him, in every respect; took all his guilt, all his liabilities, all that pertained to him as a man in nature, stood as his substitute, in all the verity and reality of that word, and having divinely met his case, and borne his judgment, He rose from the dead, and is now the Head, the Representative and the only true definition of the believer before God.

To this most glorious and enfranchising truth, holy scripture bears the amplest testimony. The passage which we have just quoted from Galatians is a most vivid, powerful, and condensed statement of it. And if the reader will turn to Rom. 6 he will find further evidence. We shall quote some of the weighty sentences.

" What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Far be the thought. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also of resurrection. Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:1-11.

Reader, mark, especially, these words in the 'foregoing quotation—" We that are dead"—" We are buried with him "—" Like as Christ was raised... even so we also "—" Our old man is crucified with him"—" Dead with Christ "—" Dead indeed unto sin." Do we really understand such utterances? Have we entered into their real force and meaning? Do we, in very deed, perceive their application to ourselves. These are searching questions for the heart; but they are needful. The real doctrine of Rom. 6 is but little apprehended. There are thousands who profess to believe in the atoning virtue of the death of Christ, but who do not see aught therein beyond the forgiveness of their sins. They do not see the crucifixion, death, and burial of the old man—the destruction of the body of sin—the condemnation of sin—the entire setting aside of the old system of things belonging to their first Adam condition—in a word their perfect identification with a dead and risen Christ. Hence it is that we press this grand and all important line of truth upon the attention of the reader. It lies at the very base of all true Christianity, and forms an integral part of the truth of the Gospel.

Let us hearken to further evidence on the point. Hear what the apostle saith to the Colossians: " Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though. living in, the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men, [such as] touch not, taste not, handle not "—thus it is that human ordinances speak to us, telling us not to touch this, not to taste that, not to handle the other, as if there could possibly be any divine principle involved in such things—" which all are to perish with the using;" and which, " have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Here, again, let us inquire how far we enter into the true force, meaning, and application of such words as. these—" Why as though living in the world," &c.? Are we living in the world or living in heaven—which The true Christian is one who has died out of this present evil world. He has no more to do with it than Christ. " Like as Christ.... even so we." He is dead to the law—dead to sin: alive in Christ—alive to, God—alive in the new creation. He belongs to heaven. He is enrolled as a citizen of heaven. His religion, his politics, his morals are all heavenly. He is a heavenly man walking on the earth, and fulfilling all the duties. which belong to the varied relationships in which the. hand of God has placed him, and in which the word of God most fully recognizes him, and amply guides him, such as husband, father, master, child, servant, and such like. The Christian is not a monk, an ascetic, or a, hermit. He is, we repeat, a heavenly, spiritual man, in the world, but not of it. He is like a foreigner se, far as his residence here is concerned. He is in the body, as to the fact of his condition; but not in the flesh as to the principle of

his standing. He is a man in Christ.

Ere closing this article, we should like to call the reader's attention to 2 Cor. 12 In it he will find, at once, the positive standing and the possible state of the believer. The standing is fixed and unalterable, as set forth in that one comprehensive sentence—" A man in Christ." The state may graduate between the two extremes presented in the opening and closing verses of this chapter. A Christian may be in the third heaven, amid the seraphic visions of that blessed and holy place; or lie may, if not watchful, sink down into all the gross and evil things named in verses 20, 21.

It may be asked, " Is it possible that a true child of, God could ever be found in such a low moral condition?" Alas! alas! reader, it is indeed possible. There is no depth of sin and folly into which a Christian is not capable of plunging, if not kept by the grace of God. Even the blessed apostle himself, when he came down from the third heaven, needed " a thorn in the flesh" to keep him from being " exalted above measure." We might suppose that a man who had been up in that bright and blessed region could never again feel the stirrings of pride. But the plain fact is that even the third heavens cannot cure the flesh. It is utterly incorrigible, and must be judged and kept under, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, else it will cut out plenty of sorrowful work for us.

Still, nothing can touch the believer's standing. He is in Christ, forever—justified, accepted, perfect in Him, and never can be anything else. And, moreover, he must ever judge his state by his standing, never his standing by his state. To attempt to reach the standing by my state is legalism, to refuse to judge my state by the standing is antinomianism. Both—though so diverse one from the other—are alike false—alike opposed to the truth of God—alike offensive to the Holy Ghost—alike removed from the divine idea of " A Man in Christ."

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 3, Man of God, The: Part 1

The sentence which we have just penned occurs in Paul's second Epistle to his beloved son Timothy—an epistle marked, as we know, by intense individuality. All thoughtful students of scripture have noticed the striking contrast between the two Epistles of Paul to Timothy. In the first, the church is presented in its order, and Timothy is instructed as to how he is to behave himself therein. In the second, on the contrary, the church is presented in its ruin. The house of God has become the great house, in the which there are vessels to dishonor as well as vessels to honor; and where, moreover, errors and evils abound—heretical teachers and false professors, on every hand.

Here, then, it is, in this epistle of individuality, that the expression, " The man of God" is used with such obvious force and meaning. It is in times of general ruin, failure, declension, and confusion that the faithfulness, devotedness, and decision of the individual man of God are specially called for. And it is a signal mercy for such an one to know that, spite of the hopeless failure of the church, as a responsible witness for Christ, on this earth, it is the privilege of the individual to tread as lofty a path, to taste as deep communion, and to enjoy as rich blessings, as ever were, or could be known, in the church's brightest and palmiest days.

This is a most encouraging and consolatory fact—a fact established by many infallible proofs, and set forth in the very passage from which our heading is taken; and which we shall here quote, at length, for the reader—a passage of singular weight and power.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works”1 2 Tim. 3:17.

Here we have " the man of God," in the midst of all the ruin and confusion, the heresies and moral pravities of the last days, standing forth in his own distinct individuality, " perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And, may we not ask, what more could be said in the church's brightest days? If we go back to the day of Pentecost itself, with all its display of power and glory, have we anything higher, or better, or more solid than that which is set forth in the words " perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good work?"

And is it not a signal mercy for anyone who desires to stand for God, in a dark and evil day, to be told that, spite of all the darkness, all the evil, all the error and confusion, he possesses that which can make a child wise unto salvation, and make a man perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works? Assuredly it is; and we have to praise our God for it, with full and overflowing hearts. To have access, in days like these, to the eternal fountain of inspiration, where the. child and the man can meet and drink and be satisfied—that fountain so clear that you cannot see its depth, and so deep that you cannot reach the bottom—that peerless priceless volume which meets the child at his mother's knee, and makes him wise unto salvation; and meets the man in the most advanced stage of his practical career and makes him perfect and fully furnished for exigence of every hour.

However, we shall have occasion, ere we close this paper, to look, more particularly, at " the man of God," and to consider what is the special force and meaning of this term. That there is very much more involved in it than is ordinarily understood, we are most fully persuaded.

There are three aspects in which man is presented in scripture; in the first place, we have man in nature; secondly, a man in Christ; and, thirdly, we have, the man of God. It might perhaps be thought that the second and third are synonymous; but we shall find a very material difference between them. True, I must be a man in Christ before I can be a man of God; but they are, by no means, interchangeable terms.

Let us then, in the first place, contemplate

Man In Nature

This is a very comprehensive phrase indeed. Under this title, we shall find every possible shade of character, temperament and disposition. Man, on the platform of nature, graduates between two extremes. You may view him at the very highest point of cultivation, or at the very lowest point of degradation. You may see him surrounded with all the advantages, the refinements and the so-called dignities of civilized life; or you may find him sunk in all the shameless and barbarous customs of savage existence. You may view him in the almost numberless grades, ranks, classes, and castes into which the human family has distributed itself.

Then again, in the self-same class or caste, you will find the most vivid contrasts, in the way of character, temper and disposition. There, for example, is a man of such an atrocious temper that he is the very horror of every one who knows him. He is the plague of his family circle, and a perfect nuisance to society. He can only be compared to a porcupine with all his quills perpetually up; and if you meet him once you will never wish to meet him again. There, on the other hand, is a man of the sweetest disposition and most amiable temper. He is just as attractive as the other is repulsive. He is a tender, loving, faithful husband; a kind, affectionate, considerate father; a thoughtful liberal master; a kindly, genial neighbor; a generous friend, beloved by all, and justly so; the more you know him the more you must like him, and if you meet him once you are sure to wish to meet him again.

Further, you may meet on the platform of nature, a man who is false and deceitful, to the very heart's core. He delights in lying, cheating and deception. Even where there is no object to be gained or interest to be served, he would rather tell a lie than the truth. He is mean and contemptible in all his thoughts, words, and ways; a man to whom all who know him would like to give as wide a berth as possible. And, on the other hand, you may meet a man of high principle, frank, honorable, generous, and upright; one who would scorn to tell a lie, or do a mean action, whose reputation is unblemished—his character unexceptionable. His word would be taken for any amount; he is one with whom all who know him would be glad to have dealings; an almost perfect natural character; a man of whom it might be said, he lacks but one thing.

Finally, as you pass to and fro on nature's platform, you may meet the atheist who affects to deny the existence of God; the infidel who denies God's revelation; the skeptic and the rationalist who disbelieves everything. And, on the other hand, you will meet the superstitious devotee who spends his time in prayers and fastings, ordinances, and ceremonies; and who feels sure he is earning a place in heaven by a wearisome round of religious observances that actually unfit him for the proper functions and responsibilities of domestic and social life. You may meet men of every imaginable shade of religious opinion, high church, low church, broad church, and no church; men who, without a spark of divine life in their souls, are contending for the powerless forms of a traditionary religion.

Nov, there is one grand and awfully solemn fact common to all these various classes, castes, grades, shades, and conditions of men who occupy the platform of nature, and that is there is not so much as a single link between them and heaven—there is no link with the Man who sits at the right hand of God—no link with the new creation. They are without Christ and without hope. They are unconverted. They have not gotten eternal life. As regards God, and Christ, and eternal life, and heaven, they all—however they may differ, morally, socially, and religiously—stand on one common ground; they are far from God—they are out of Christ—they are in their sins—they are in the flesh—they are of the world—they are on their way to hell.

This being the case, it follows as a necessary and terrible consequence, that, underneath the platform of nature, and right in front of all who stand thereon, there are the flames of an everlasting hell. There is really no getting over this, if we arc to listen to the voice of holy scripture. False teachers may deny it. Infidels may pretend to smile contemptuously at the idea; but scripture is plain—as plain as plainness itself. It speaks, in manifold places, of a fire that NEVER shall be quenched and of a worm that shall never die.

It is the very height of folly for any one to seek to set aside the plain testimony of the word of God on this most solemn and weighty subject. Better far to let that testimony fall, with all its weight and authority, upon the heart and conscience—infinitely better to flee from the wrath to come than to attempt to deny that it is coming, and that, when it does come, it will abide forever—yes; forever, and forever, and forever! Tremendous thought!—overwhelming consideration! May it speak, with living power, to the soul of the unconverted reader, leading him to cry out, in all sincerity, What is to be done?"

Yes, here is the question, " What must I do to be saved?". The divine answer is wrapped up in the following words which dropped from the lips of two of Christ's very highest and most gifted ambassadors. " Repent and be converted," said Peter to the Jew. " Believe on the Lard Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house," said Paul to the Gentile. And again, the latter of these two blessed messengers, in summing up his own ministry, thus defines the whole matter, " Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks', repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.''

How simple! But how real! How deep! How thoroughly practical! It is not a nominal, national, head belief. It is not saying, in mere flippant profession, " I believe." Ah! no; it is something far deeper and more serious than this. It is much to be feared that a large amount of the professed faith of this our day is deplorably superficial. There are vast numbers of those who throng our preaching rooms and lecture halls who are, after all, but wayside and stony ground hearers. The plow has never passed over them. The fallow ground has never been broken up. The arrow of conviction has never pierced them through and through. They have never been smashed to pieces—turned inside out—thoroughly revolutionized. The preaching of the gospel to all such is just like scattering precious seed on the hard asphalt, the pavement, or the beaten highway. It never penetrates. It does not enter into the depths of the soul; the conscience is not reached; the heart is not affected. The seed lies on the surface and is carried away by the first passing breeze.

Nor is this all. It is also much to be feared that many of the preachers of the present day, in their efforts to make the gospel simple, lose sight of the eternal necessity of repentance, and the essential necessity of the action of the Holy Ghost, without which so-called faith is a mere human exercise and passes away like the vapors of the morning, leaving the soul still in the region of nature, satisfied with itself, daubed with the untempered mortar of a merely human gospel that cries peace, peace where there is no peace, but the most imminent danger.

All this is very serious, and should lead the soul into profound exercise. We want the reader to give it his grave and immediate consideration. We would put this pointed question to him, which we entreat him to answer, now, "Have you (dot eternal life?" Say, dear friend, have you? " He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." Grand reality! If you have not got this, you have nothing. You are still on that platform of nature of which we have spoken so much. Yes, you are still there, no matter though you were the -very fairest specimen to be found there—amiable, polished, affable, frank, generous; truthful, upright, honorable, attractive, beloved, learned, cultivated, and even pious after a merely human fashion. You may be all this, and yet not have a single pulsation of eternal life in your soul.

This may sound harsh, stern, and severe. But it is true; and you will find out its truth sooner or later. We want you to find it out now. We want you to see that you are a thorough bankrupt, in the fullest sense of that word. A deed of bankruptcy has been filed against you in the high court of heaven. Here are its terms, " They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Have you ever pondered these words? Have you ever seen their application to yourself. So long as you are unrepentant, unconverted, unbelieving, you cannot do a single thing to please God—not one. " In the flesh" and " on the platform of nature" mean one and the same thing; and so long as you are there and thus, you cannot please

God. " You must be born again "renewed in the very deepest springs of your being, unrenewed nature is wholly unable to see and unfit to enter the kingdom of God. You must be born of water and of the Spirit—that is by the living word of God, and of the Holy Ghost. There is no other way by which to enter the kingdom. It is not by self-improvement but by new birth, we reach the blessed kingdom of God. " That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and " the flesh profiteth nothing " for " they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

How distinct is all this! How pointed! How full! How personal! How earnestly we desire that the unawakened or undecided reader should, just now, take it home to himself, as though he were the only individual upon the face of the earth. It will not do to generalize—to rest satisfied with saying, " We are all sinners." No; it is an intensely individual matter. " You must be born again." If you again ask, " How?" hear the divine response from the lips of the Master Himself, " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Here is the sovereign remedy, for every poor brokenhearted, conscience-smitten, hopelessly ruined, hell deserving sinner—for every one who owns himself lost—who confesses his sins, and judges himself—for every weary, heavy laden, sin-burdened soul—here is God's own blessed promise. Jesus died, that you might live. He was condemned, that you might be justified. He drank the cup of wrath, that you might drink the cup of salvation. Behold Him hanging on yonder cross for thee. See what He did for thee. Believe that He satisfied, on your behalf, all the claims—the infinite and everlasting claims of the throne of God. See all your sins laid on Him—your guilt imputed to Him—your entire condition represented and disposed of by Him. See His atoning death answering perfectly for all that was or ever could be brought against you. See Him rising from the dead, having accomplished all. See Him ascending into the heavens, bearing in His divine Person the marks of His finished atonement. See Him seated on the throne of God, in the very highest place of power. See Him crowned with glory and honor. Believe in Him there, and you will receive the gift of eternal life—the seal of the Holy Ghost—the earnest of the inheritance. You will pass off the platform of nature—you will be " A man in Christ."

(To be continued if the Lord will)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 3, Man of God, The: Part 3

Having considered, in our last two numbers, the deeply interesting question of " A man in nature " and " A man in Christ," it remains for us, now, to dwell for a little, in the third and last place, on the thoroughly practical subject suggested by the title of this paper, namely,

The Man Of God

It would be a great mistake to suppose that every Christian is a man of God. Even in Paul's day—in the days of Timothy, there were many who bore the christian name who were very far indeed from acquitting themselves as men of God, that is, as those who were really God's men, in the midst of the failure and error which, even then, had begun to creep in.

It is the perception of this fact that renders the Second Epistle to Timothy so profoundly interesting. In it we have what we may call ample provision for the man of God, in the day in which he is called to live—a dark, evil and perilous day, most surely, in which all who will live godly must keep the eye steadily fixed on Christ Himself—His Name—His Person—His word, if they would make any headway against the tide.

It is hardly possible to read 2 Timothy without being struck with its intensely individual character. The very opening address is strikingly characteristic. " I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day."

What glowing words are these! How affecting to hearken thus to one man of God pouring the deep and tender feelings of his great, large, loving heart into the heart of another man of God! The dear apostle was beginning to feel the chilling influence that was fast creeping over the professing church. He was tasting the bitterness of disappointed hopes. He found himself deserted by many who had once professed to be his friends and, associates in that glorious work to which he had consecrated all the energies of his great soul. Many were becoming " ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, and of his prisoner." It was not that they altogether ceased to be Christians, or abandoned the christian profession; but they turned their backs upon Paul, and left him alone in the day of trial.

Now, it is under such circumstances that the heart turns, with peculiar tenderness, to individual faithfulness and affection. If one is surrounded, on all hands, by true hearted confessors—by a great cloud of witnesses—a large army of good soldiers of Jesus Christ—if the tide of devotedness is flowing around one and bearing him on its bosom, he is not so dependent upon individual sympathy and fellowship.

But, on the other hand, when the general condition of things is low—when the majority prove faithless—when old associates are dropping off, it is then that personal grace and true affection are specially valued. The dark background of general declension throws individual devotedness into beauteous relief.

Thus it is in this exquisite Epistle which now lies open before us. It does the heart good to hearken to the breathings of the aged prisoner of Jesus Christ who can speak of serving God from his forefathers with pure conscience, and of unceasing remembrance of his beloved son and true yoke fellow.

It is specially interesting to notice that, both in reference to his own history and that of his beloved friend, Paul goes back to facts of very early date—facts in their own individual path—facts prior to their meeting one another, and prior to what we may call their church associations—important and interesting as these things most surely are in their place. Paul had served God, from his forefathers, with pure conscience, before he had known a fellow Christian. This he could continue to do though deserted by all his christian companions. So also, in the case of his faithful friend, he says, " I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."

This is very touching and very beautiful. We cannot but be struck with such references to the previous history of those beloved men of God. The " pure conscience" of the one, and " the unfeigned faith" of the other, indicate two grand moral qualities which all must possess if they would prove true men of God in a dark and evil day. The former has its immediate reference, in all things, to the one living and true God; the

latter draws all its springs from Him. That leads us to walk before God; this enables us to walk with Him. Both together are indispensable in forming the character of the true man of God.

It is utterly impossible to over-estimate the importance of keeping a pure conscience before God, in all our ways. It is positively invaluable. It leads us to refer everything to God. It keeps us from being tossed hither and thither by every wave and current of human opinion. It imparts stability and consistency to the entire course and character. We are all in imminent danger of falling under human influence—of shaping our way according to the thoughts of our fellow man—of adopting his cue, and mounting his hobby.

All this is destructive of the character of the man of God. If you take your tone from your fellow; if you suffer yourself to be formed in a merely human mold; if your faith stands in the wisdom of man; if your object is to please men, then instead of being a man of God, you will become a member of a party or clique. You will lose that lovely freshness and originality so essential to the individual servant of Christ, and become marked by the peculiar and dominant features of a sect.

Let us carefully guard against this. It has ruined many a valuable servant. Many who might have proved really useful workmen in the vineyard, have failed completely through not maintaining the integrity of their individual character and path. They began with God. They started on their course in the exercise of a pure conscience, and in the pursuit of that path which a divine hand had marked out for them. There was a bloom, a freshness, and a verdure about them, most refreshing to all who came in contact with them. They were taught of God. They drew near to the eternal fountain of holy scripture and drank for themselves. Perhaps they did not know much; but what they did know was real because they received it from God, and it turned to good account for " there is much food in the tillage of the poor."

But, instead of going on with God, they allowed themselves to get under human influence; they got truth secondhand, and became the vendors of other men's thoughts; instead of drinking at the fountain head, they drank at the streams of human opinion; they lost originality, simplicity, freshness, and power, and became the merest copyists, if not miserable caricatures. Instead of giving forth those " rivers of living water " which flow from the true believer in Jesus, they dropped into the barren technicalities and cut and dry common-places of mere systematized religion.

Beloved christian reader, all this must be sedulously guarded against. We must watch against it, pray against it, believe against it, and live against it. Let us seek to serve God, with a pure conscience. Let us live in His own immediate presence, in the light of His blessed countenance, in the holy intimacy of personal communion with Him, through the power of the Holy Ghost. This, we may rest assured, is the true secret of power for the man of God, at all times, and under all circumstances. We must walk with God, in the deep and cherished sense of our own personal responsibility to Him. This is what we understand by " a pure conscience."

But will this tend, in the smallest degree, to lessen our sense of the value of true fellowship—of holy communion with all those who are true to Christ? By no means; indeed it is the very thing which will impart power, energy, and depth of tone to the fellowship. If every " man in Christ " were only acquitting himself thoroughly as " a man of God," what blessed fellowship there would be! what heart work! what glow, what unmistakable power! How different from the dull formalism of a merely nominal assent to certain accredited dogmas of a party, on the one hand, and from the mere esprit de corps of cliquism, on the other.

There are few terms in such common use and so little understood as "fellowship." In numberless cases, it merely indicates the fact of a nominal membership in some religious denomination—a fact which furnishes no guarantee whatsoever of living communion with Christ, or personal devotedness to His cause. If all who are nominally " in fellowship " were acquitting themselves thoroughly as men of God, what a very different condition of things we should be privileged to witness!

But what is fellowship? It is, in its very highest expression, having one common object with God, and taking part in the same portion; and that object—that portion is Christ—Christ known and enjoyed through the Holy Ghost. This is fellowship with God. What a privilege! What a dignity! What unspeakable blessedness! To be allowed to have a common object and a common portion with God Himself! To delight in the One in whom He delights! There can be nothing higher, nothing better, nothing more precious than this. Not even in heaven itself shall we know aught beyond this. Our own condition will, thank God, be vastly different. We shall be done with a body of sin and death, and be clothed with a body of glory. We shall be done with a sinful, sorrowful, distracting world,. where all is directly opposed to God and to us, and we shall breathe the atmosphere—the pure and exhilarating atmosphere of that bright and blessed world above. But, in so far as our fellowship is concerned, it is now as it shall be then, " with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ "—" In the light," and by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus much as to our fellowship with God. And, as regards our fellowship one with another, it is simply as we walk in the light, as we read, " If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) We can only have fellowship one with another as we walk in the immediate presence of God. There may be a vast amount of mere intercourse without one single particle of divine fellowship. Alas! alas! a great deal of what passes for christian fellowship is nothing more than the merest religious gossip—the vapid, worthless, soul-withering chit-chat of the religious world, than which nothing can be more miserably unprofitable. True christian fellowship can only be enjoyed in the light. It is when we are individually walking with God, in the power of personal communion, that we really have fellowship one with another, and this fellowship consists in real heart enjoyment of Christ as our one object—our common portion. It is not heartless traffic in certain favorite doctrines which we receive to hold in common. It is not morbid sympathy with those who think, and see, and feel with us, in some favorite theory or dogma. It is something quite different from all this. It is delighting in Christ, in common with all those who are walking in the light. It is attachment to Him—to His Person—His Name—His word—His cause—His people. It is joint consecration of heart and soul to that blessed, One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and brought us into the light of God's presence, there to walk with Him and with one another. This and nothing less is christian fellowship; and where this is really understood it will lead us to pause and consider what we say when we declare, in any given case, " such an one is in fellowship."

But we must proceed with our Epistle, and there see what full provision there is for the man of God, however dark the day may be in which his lot is cast.

We have seen something of the importance—yea rather we should say, the indispensable necessity of " a pure conscience," and " unfeigned faith," in the moral equipment of God's man. These qualities lie at the very base of the entire edifice of practical godliness. which must ever characterize the genuine man of God.

But there is more than this. The edifice must be erected as well as the foundation laid. The man of God has to work on amid all sorts of difficulties, trials, sorrows, disappointments, obstacles, questions and controversies. He has his niche to fill, his path to tread, his work to do. Come what may, he must serve. The enemy may oppose; the world may frown; the church may be in ruins around him; false brethren may thwart, hinder, and desert; strife, controversy, and division may arise and darken the atmosphere; still the man of God must move on, regardless of all these things, working, serving, testifying, according to the sphere in which the hand of God has placed him, and according to the gift bestowed upon him. How is this to be done? Not only by keeping a pure conscience and the exercise of an unfeigned faith—priceless, indispensable qualities! but, further, he has to hearken to the following weighty word of exhortation—" Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."

The gift must be stirred up, else it may become useless if allowed to lie dormant. There is great danger of letting the gift drop into disuse through the discouraging influence of surrounding circumstances. A gift unused will soon become useless; whereas, a gift stirred up and diligently used grows and expands. It is not enough to possess a gift, we must wait upon the gift, cultivate it, and exercise it. This is the way to improve it.

And observe the special force of the expression, " Gift of God." In Eph. 4 we read of " the gift of Christ," and there, too, we find all the gifts, from the highest to the lowest range, flowing down from Christ the risen and glorified Head of His body the church. But in 2 Timothy, we have it defined as " the gift of God." True it is—blessed be His holy name!—our Lord Christ is God over all, blessed forever, so that the gift of Christ is the gift of God. But we may rest assured there is never any distinction in scripture without a difference; and hence there is some good reason for the expression "gift of God." We doubt not it is in full harmony with the nature and object of the Epistle in which it occurs. It is " the gift of God" communicated to " the man of God" to be used by him notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the professing church, and spite of all the difficulty, darkness, and discouragement of the day in which his lot is cast.

The man of God must not allow himself to be hindered in the diligent cultivation and exercise of his gift, though everything seems to look dark and forbidding, for " God bath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind." Here we have " God" again introduced to our thoughts, and that, too, in a most gracious manner, as furnishing His man with the very thing he needs to meet the special exigence of his day—" The spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Marvelous combination! Truly, an exquisite compound after the art of the apothecary! Power, love, and wisdom! How perfect! Not a single ingredient too much. Not one too little. If it were merely a spirit of power, it might lead one to carry things with a high hand. Were it merely a spirit of love, it might lead one to sacrifice truth for peace' sake; or indolently to tolerate error and evil, rather than give offense. But the power is softened by the love; and the love is strengthened by the power; and, moreover, the spirit of wisdom comes in to adjust both the power and the love. In a word, it is a divinely perfect and beautiful provision for the man of God—the very thing he needs for " the last days" so perilous, so difficult, so full of all sorts of perplexing questions and apparent contradictions. If one were to be asked what lie would consider most necessary for such days as these? surely be should, at once, say, " power, love, and soundness of mind." Well, blessed be God, these are the very things •which He has graciously given to form the character, shape the way, and govern the conduct of the man of God, right on to the end.

But there is further provision and further exhortation for the man of God. " Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." In pentecostal days, when the rich and mighty tide of divine grace was flowing in, and bearing thousands of ransomed souls upon its bosom; when all were of one heart and one mind; when those outside were overawed by the extraordinary manifestations of divine power, it was rather a question of partaking of the triumphs of the gospel, than its afflictions. But in the days contemplated in 2 Timothy, all is changed. The beloved apostle is a lonely prisoner at Rome; all in Asia had forsaken him; Hymenaeus and Philetus are denying the resurrection; all sorts of heresies, errors, and evils are creeping in; the landmarks are in danger of being swept away by the tide of apostasy and corruption.

In the face of all this, the man of God has to brace himself up for the occasion. He has to endure hardness; to hold fast the form of sound words; he has to keep the good thing committed to him; to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; to keep himself disentangled—however he may be engaged; he must keep himself free as a soldier; he must cling to God's sure foundation; He must purge himself from the dishonorable vessels in the great house; he must flee youthful lusts, and follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. He must avoid foolish and unlearned questions. He must turn away from formal and heartless professors. He must be thoroughly furnished for all good works, perfectly equipped through a knowledge of the holy scriptures. He must preach the word; be instant in season and out of season. He must watch in all things; endure afflictions; and do the work of an evangelist.

What a category for the man of God! Who is sufficient for these things? Where is the spiritual power to be had for such works? It is to be had at the mercy-seat. It is to be found in earnest, patient, believing, waiting upon the living God, and in no other way. All our springs are in Him. We have only to draw upon Him. He is sufficient for the darkest day. Difficulties are nothing to Him, and they are bread for faith. Yes, beloved reader, difficulties of the most formidable nature are simply bread for faith, and the man of faith can feed upon them and grow strong thereby. Unbelief says, " There is a lion in the way;" but faith can slay the strongest lion that ever roared along the path of the Nazarite of God. It is the privilege of the true believer to rise far above all the hostile influences which surround him—no matter what they are, or from whence they spring—and, in the calmness, quietness, and brightness of the divine presence, to enjoy as high communion, and taste as rich and rare privileges as ever were known in the church's brightest and palmiest days.

Let us remember this. Every man of God will need to remember it. There is no comfort, no peace, no strength, no moral power, no true elevation to be derived from looking at the ruins. We must look up out of the ruins to the place where our Lord Christ has taken His seat, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Or rather—to speak more according to our true position—we should look down from our place in the heavens upon all the ruins of earth. To realize our place in Christ, and to be occupied in„ heart and soul with Him, is the true secret of power to carry ourselves as men of God. To have Christ ever before us—His work for the conscience, His Person for the heart, His word for the path, is the one grand, sovereign, divine remedy for a ruined self—a ruined world—a ruined church.

But we must close. Very gladly would we linger, in company with the reader, over the contents of this most precious 2 Timothy. Truly refreshing would it be to dwell upon all its touching allusions, its earnest appeals, its weighty exhortations. But this would demand a volume, and hence we must leave the christian reader to study the epistle for himself, praying that the eternal Spirit who indicted it may unfold and

apply it, in living power to his soul, so that he may be enabled to acquit himself as an earnest, faithful, whole-hearted man of God and servant of Christ, in the midst of a scene of hollow profession, and heartless worldly religiousness.

May the good Lord stir us all up to a more thorough consecration of ourselves, in spirit, soul, and body—all we are and all we have—to His service! We think we can really say we long for this—long for it, in the deep sense of our lack of it—long for it, more intensely, as we grow increasingly sick of the unreal condition of things within and around us.

O beloved Christian, let us earnestly, believingly, and perseveringly cry to our own ever gracious God to make us more real—more whole-hearted—more thoroughly devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

Christian Truth: Volume 17, 2 Timothy 3:17

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

NOTE: The word which is rendered "perfect" in the above passage occurs but this once in the entire New Testament. In the Greek, it is "artios" and signifies ready, complete, well fitted, as an instrument with all its strings, a machine with all its parts, a body with all its limbs, joints, muscles and sinews. The usual word for "perfect" is "teleios," which signifies the reaching of the moral end in any particular thing.

Christian Truth: Volume 20, Trophimus the Invalid

2 Tim. 4:20

"Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." What a suggestive clause! The Apostle of the Gentiles, endowed with the gift of healing, and who had healed so many, leaves his friend behind him sick. When in the island of Melita, he healed the father-in-law of Publius, the chief man of the island; but here we find he has to leave Trophimus at Miletum sick. There was a needs-be for this (1 Pet. 1:6). God in His governmental dealings sometimes lays His hand on His children. The Father finds it needful at times to put forth His hand in wholesome discipline. It is often very good, very salutary, very necessary to be left in the condition of Trophimus at; Miletum. Nature does not like it, but we may be assured it is helpful. Trophimus had a lesson to learn on a sickbed at Miletum which he could not learn anywhere else, not even as Paul's companion in travel. The solitude, the prostration, the helplessness of a sickbed, are often most profitable to the soul. The Spirit of God makes use of such things to teach us some of our most sanctifying lessons. Very often it happens that a time of bodily illness is made the season of much solemn review and self-judgment in the presence of God.

It is instructive to contrast the position of Trophimus in Acts 21:29, with his position in 2 Tim. 4:20. In the former, we see him on the streets of Jerusalem in company with Paul; in the latter, we see him in the retirement of a sick chamber at Miletum. Now it was his presence with Paul that roused all the bitter prejudices of the Jews, who imagined that Paul had brought him into the temple. A Jew and an Ephesian in company was quite in harmony with Paul's gospel, but not at all so with Jewish prejudice. At Ephesus, Paul and Trophimus might have walked in company without exciting any suspicion—not so in Jerusalem. For a Jew and a Gentile to be seen together in Jerusalem was regarded as an open insult to Jewish dignity. It was a throwing down of the middle wall of partition, and boldly walking across the ruins. For this the Jews were not prepared. They gazed upon the two companions with an eye of dark suspicion. And the strange companionship fanned that flame which so speedily burst forth with terrible vehemence around the beloved Apostle of the Gentiles.

And one is disposed to ask why these two friends should be found in the streets of Jerusalem. Those streets were evidently not Paul's appointed sphere of labor. "Far hence unto the Gentiles" was to him the Master's word. But Paul would go to Jerusalem, and when there he could never refuse to walk in company with the Ephesian. He was too honest for that. He could not, like Peter, "stand aloof" from his Gentile brother for fear of the Jews. But then, the ceremonies of the temple and the company of Trophimus could never be harmonized. Here was the difficulty. If the institutions of the temple were to be honored and maintained, then why this companionship and fellowship with an uncircumcised stranger? If Paul and Trophimus were both enrolled as fellow citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, then why acknowledge in principle the old system of things, dividing them?

These reflections throw a peculiar interest around the name of Trophimus. It is deeply interesting and instructive just to look at the three passages in which his name occurs. First, we find Trophimus as one of a band of companions who accompanied Paul into Asia (Acts 20:4). Then we find him in company with the Apostle in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 21:29). And last, we find him laid on a sickbed at Miletum. Here the curtain drops upon him. Here, he is seen as an invalid at Miletum, and Paul is now a prisoner at Rome. But both could with undimmed eye look forward to that bright and blessed world above, to which they were both hastening onward, and where they are now safely housed with Christ whom they loved and served here.

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