Genesis - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 6, Arise, Go Up to Bethel: Down to Shechem

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Genesis 35

The words which stand at the head of this paper contain in them a great practical truth to which we desire to call the reader's attention for a moment or two.

It has been well remarked by some one that "God, in His dealings with us, always keeps us up to the original terms." This is true, but some may not exactly understand it. It may, perhaps, savor of the legal element. To speak of God as keeping up to certain terms may seem to militate against that free grace in which we stand and which has reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Many, we are aware, have a kind of horror of everything bordering in the most remote way upon the legal system; and we may say, we most fully sympathize with such horror. But, at the same time, we must take care not to carry that feeling to such an extent as would lead us to throw overboard anything that is calculated to act, in a divine way, upon the heart and conscience of the believer. We really want practical truth. There is a vast amount of what is called abstract truth in circulation among us, and we prize it, and would prize it more and more. We delight in the unfolding of truth in all its departments. But then we must remember that truth is designed to act on hearts and consciences, and that there are hearts and consciences to be acted upon. We must not cry out, "Legal! legal!" whenever some great practical truth falls upon our ears, even though that truth may come before us clothed in a garb which, at first sight, seems strange. We are called to "suffer the word of exhortation"-to listen to wholesome words—to apply our hearts diligently to everything tending to promote practical godliness and personal holiness. We know that the pure and precious doctrines of grace- those doctrines which find their living center in the Person of Christ, and their eternal foundation in His work- are the means which the Holy Ghost uses to promote holiness in the life of the Christian; but we know also that those doctrines may be held in theory, and professed with the lips, while the heart has never felt their power, and the life never exhibited their molding influence. Yes; and we frequently find that the loudest and most vehement outcry against everything that looks like legality is sure to proceed from those who, though they profess the doctrines of grace, have never felt their sanctifying influence; whereas, those who really understand the meaning of grace, and feel its power to mold and fashion, to purify and elevate, are ever ready to welcome the most pungent appeals to the heart and conscience.

Still, the pious reader may desire to know what is meant by the expression quoted above; namely, "God always keeps us up to the original terms." Well, we understand it to mean simply this, that when God calls us to any special position or path and we fall short of it or wander from it, He will recall us to it again and again. And further, when we set out in the profession of some special principle of action or standard of devotedness, and swerve from it or fall below it, He will remind us of it and bring us back to it. True, He bears with us patiently and waits on us graciously; but He "always keeps us up to the original terms."

And can we not praise Him for this? Assuredly we can. Could we endure the thought of His allowing us to fall short of His holy standard, or to wander hither and thither, without uttering a word to urge us on or call us back? We trust not. Well then, if He does speak, what must He say? He must just remind us of "the original terms." Thus it is, and thus it has ever been. When Peter was converted at the lake of Gennesaret, he forsook all and followed Jesus; and the last words that fell on his ear, from the lips of his ascending Lord, were, "Follow thou Me." This was simply keeping him to the original terms. The heart of Jesus could not be satisfied with less, and neither should the heart of His servant. By the lake of Gennesaret, Peter set out to follow Jesus. What then? Years rolled on; Peter had many a stumble; Peter denied his Lord; Peter went back to his boats and nets. What then? Peter was thoroughly restored; and, when as a restored soul he stood by the side of his loving Lord at the sea of Tiberias, he was called to listen to that one brief, pointed utterance, "Follow... Me"-an utterance embracing in its comprehensive grasp all the details of a life of active service and of patient suffering. In a word, Peter was brought back to the original terms-the terms between Christ and his soul, and between his soul and Christ. He was brought to learn that the heart of Jesus had undergone no change toward him-that the love of that heart was inextinguishable and unalterable -and because it was so, it could not tolerate any change in his heart-any decline or departure from the original terms.

Now we see the same thing precisely in the history of the patriarch Jacob. Let us just turn to it for a moment. At the close of Genesis 28 we have the record of the original terms between the Lord and Jacob. We shall quote at length.

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Here then we have the blessed statement of what the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob undertook to do for Jacob and for his seed—a statement crowned by these memorable words, "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Such are the terms by which He binds Himself to Jacob, which terms, blessed be His name, have been and will be fulfilled to the letter, though earth and hell should interpose to prevent. Jacob's seed shall yet possess the whole land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance; and who shall prevent Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God Almighty, from accomplishing His promise?

Let us now hearken to Jacob. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el.... And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee."

This much as to Beth-el and the terms entered into there. God pledged Himself to Jacob; and though heaven and earth should pass away, that pledge must be maintained in all its integrity. He revealed Himself to that poor, lonely one who lay sleeping on his stony pillow, and not only revealed Himself to him, but linked Himself with him in a bond which no power of earth or hell can ever dissolve.

And what of Jacob? Why, he dedicated himself to God and vowed that the spot where he had enjoyed such a revelation and hearkened to such exceeding great and precious promises, should be God's house. All this was deliberately uttered before the Lord and solemnly recorded by Him; and then Jacob went on his journey. Years passed—twenty long and eventful years—years of trial and exercise during which Jacob experienced many ups and downs, changes and chances; but the God of Beth-el watched over His poor servant and appeared to him in the midst of his pressure, and said to him, "I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred." God had not forgotten the original terms; neither would He let His servant forget them. Is this legality? No; it is simply the exhibition of divine love and faithfulness. God loved Jacob, and He would not suffer him to stop short of the old standard. He jealously watched over the state of His servant's heart, and lest it should by any means remain below the Bethel mark, He gently reminds him by those touching and significant words, "I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me." This was the sweet expression of God's unchanging love, and of the fact that He counted on Jacob's remembrance of Bethel scenes.

How amazing that the High and Mighty One who inhabits eternity should so value the love and remembrance of a poor worm of the earth! Yet so it is, and we ought to bear it more in mind. Alas! we forget it. We are ready enough to take mercies and blessings from the hand of God, and most surely He is ready enough to bestow them. But then we ought to remember that He looks for the loving devotion of our hearts to Him; and if we, in the freshness and ardor of other days, set out to follow Christ, to live for Him, and give up all for Him, can we suppose for a moment that He could coldly and indifferently forego His claims upon our hearts' affections? Should we like Him to do so? Could we endure the thought of its being a matter of indifference to Him whether we loved Him or not? God forbid! Yea it should be the joy of our hearts to think that our blessed Lord really seeks the loving devotion of our souls to Him, and that He will not be satisfied without it—that when we wander hither and thither, He calls us back to Himself in His own gentle, gracious, touching way.

Yes; His banner ever floats, bearing its own inscription upon it to win back our vagrant hearts, and remind us of the original terms. He says to us in one way or another, as He said to Jacob, "I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar." Thus He deals with us in the midst of all our wanderings, our haltings, and our stumblings. He makes us to know that as we cannot do without His love, so neither can He do without ours. It is truly wonderful, yet so it is. He will keep the soul up to the old terms. Hearken to those touching appeals of the Spirit of Christ to His saints in other days, "Thou halt left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:4, 5). "Call to remembrance the former days" (Heb. 10:32). "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" (Gal. 4:15).

What is all this but calling His people back to the old point from which they had declined? It may be said, They ought not to have needed this. No doubt; yet they did need it and, because they needed it, Jesus did it. It may be said, further, that tried love is better than first love. Granted; but do we not find, as a matter of fact, in our spiritual history, that upon our first setting out to follow Jesus, there is a simplicity, an earnestness, a freshness, fervor and depth of devotion which, from various reasons, we fail to keep up? We become cold and careless; the world gets in upon us and eats up our spirituality; nature gains the upper hand in one way or another and deadens our spiritual sensibility, dampens our ardor and dims our vision. Is the reader conscious of anything like this? If so, would it not be a peculiar mercy if, at this very moment, he were called back to the old terms? Doubtless! Well, then, let him be assured that the heart of Jesus is waiting and ready. His love is unchanging; and not only so, but He would remind you that He cannot be satisfied without a true response from you. Wherefore, beloved friend, whatever has drawn you away from the measure of your earliest dedication to Him, let your heart now spring up and get back at once to Him. Do not hesitate! Linger not! Cast yourself at the feet of your loving Lord, and let your heart be only for Him. This is the secret spring of all true service. If Christ has not the love of your heart, He does not want the labor of your hands. He does not say, "Son, give Me thy money, thy time, thy talents, thine energies, thy pen, thy tongue, thy head"; all these are utterly unavailing, perfectly unsatisfying to Him. What He says to you is, "My son, give Me thine heart." Where the heart is given to Jesus, all will come right. Out of the heart come all the issues of life, and if only Christ have His right place in the heart, the work and the ways, the walk and the character, will be all right.

But we must return to Jacob, and see further how our subject is illustrated in his fruitful history. At the close of Gen. 33 we find him settling down at Shechem, where he gets into all sorts of trouble and confusion. His house is dishonored, and his sons, in avenging the dishonor, endanger his life. All this Jacob feels keenly, and he says to his sons, Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me... among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." Gen. 34:30.

All this was most deplorable; but it does not appear to have once occurred to Jacob that he was in a wrong place. The defilement and confusion of Shechem failed to open his eyes to the fact that he was not up to the old terms. How often is this the case! We fall short of the divine standard in our practical ways; we fail in walking up to the height of the divine revelation; and although the varied fruits of our failure are produced on every side, yet our vision is so dimmed by the atmosphere around us, and our spiritual sensibilities so blunted by our associations, that we do not discern how low we are and how very far short of the proper mark.

However, in Jacob's case, we see the divine principle again and again illustrated. "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." Gen. 35:1.

Reader, note this. We have here a most exquisite feature in the divine method of dealing with souls. There is not one word said about Shechem, its pollutions and its confusions. There is not a word of reproof for having settled down there. Such is not God's way. He employs a far more excellent mode. Had we been dealing with Jacob, we should have come down upon him with a heavy hand, and read him a severe

lecture about his folly in settling at Shechem, and about his personal and domestic habits and condition. But oh! how well it is that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways like ours! Instead of saying to Jacob, "Why have you settled down in Shechem?" He simply says, "Arise, go up to Bethel"; and the very sound of the word sent a flood of light into Jacob's soul, by which he was enabled to judge himself and his surroundings. "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

This was, assuredly, getting back to the original terms. It was the restoring of a soul and a leading in the paths of righteousness. Jacob felt that he could not bring false gods and defiled garments to Bethel; such things might pass at Shechem, but they would never do for Beth-el. "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.... So Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el; because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."

"El-beth-el." Precious title which had God for its Alpha and its Omega! At Shechem, Jacob called his altar "El-Elohe-Israel," that is, "God the God of Israel"; but at Beth-el, the true standpoint, he called his altar "El-beth-el," that is, "God—the house of God." This was true restoration. Jacob was brought back, after all his wanderings, to the very point from which he had started. Nothing less than this could ever satisfy God in reference to His servant. He could wait patiently on him—bear with him—minister to him—care for him—look after him; but He could never rest satisfied with anything short of this: "Arise, go up to Beth-el."

Christian reader, pause here. We want to ask you a question. Are you conscious of having wandered from Jesus? Has your heart declined and grown cold? Have you lost the freshness and ardor which once marked the tone of your soul? Have you allowed the world to get in upon you? Have you, in the moral condition of your soul, got down into Shechem? Has your heart gone after idols, and have your garments become defiled? If so, let us remind you of this, that the Lord wants you back to Himself. Yes, beloved, that is what He wants, and He wants it now. He says to you, "Arise, go up to Beth-el." You will never be happy, you will never be right until you yield a full response to this blessed and soul-stirring call. 0 yield it now, we beseech you. Rise up, and fling aside every weight and every hindrance; put away the idols and change your garments and get back to the feet of your Lord, who loves you with a love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown; and who cannot be satisfied until He has you with Himself according to the original terms. Say not this is legal; it is nothing of the sort. It is the love of Jesus—His deep, glowing, earnest love—love which is jealous of every rival affection—love which gives the whole heart, and must have a whole heart in return. May God the Holy Ghost bring back every wandering heart to the true standard! May He visit with fresh power every soul that has gone down to Shechem, and give no rest until a full response has been yielded to the call, "Arise, go up to Beth-el, AND DWELL THERE."

Short Papers, Devotedness: What Is It? Part 1

(Read Gen. 22:1-12.)

It has often been said, “ There are two sides to every question.” This saying is true and very important. It demands special attention in approaching the subject which stands at the head of this paper. The history of the professing church affords many proof’s of the fact that serious mischief has been done by devoted men who were not guided by sound principle. Indeed it will ever be found that, in proportion to the ardor of the devotedness, will be the gravity of the mischief, where the judgment is not wisely directed. We must confess we long for more true devotedness in ourselves and others. It does seem to us the special want in this our day. There is abundance of profession, and that, too, of a very high character. Knowledge is greatly increased amongst us, and we are thankful for knowledge; but knowledge is not energy—profession is not devotedness. It is not that we desire to set the one against the other; we want to combine the two. “ God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Mark this lovely union—this exquisite entwining of a threefold cord—“ Power, love, and a sound mind.” Were it “ power” alone, it might lead one to carry himself with a high hand—to push aside or crush any who could not come up to one’s own mark—to cherish and manifest a spirit of haughty independence—to be intolerant of any contrariety ©f thought or feeling. On the other hand, were it a spirit of “ love “ only, it might induce an easy-going temper—a total indifference as to the claims of truth and holiness—a readiness to tolerate error for the sake of peace. But there is both love and power, the one to balance the other; and, moreover, there is the “sound mind” to adjust the two, and give to each its proper range and its just application. Such is the adjusting power of holy scripture for which we cannot be too thankful. We are so apt to be one-sided—to run into wild extremes—to run one principle to seed, while another, though equally important, is not even allowed to take root. One will be all for what he calls power; another, for what he calls love. Again, one will extol energy; another will only speak of the value of principle. We want both, and our God does most graciously supply both. A man who is all for principle may do nothing, through fear of doing wrong. A man who is all for power may do mischief through fear of doing nothing. But the man who is enabled, by grace, to combine the two, will do the right tiling, at the right time, and in the right way. This is what we want, and to meet, in some feeble way, this want is one special object of the following paper, to which may God most graciously attach the seal of His blessing.

Now, in handling our theme, it may help us, in the way of clearness and precision, to consider, first, the ground; secondly, the spirit; and, thirdly, the object of true devotedness. What, then, is The Ground of True Devotedness?

If we answer this question from the ample materials furnished by the history of Abraham, we must, without any hesitation, say, it is, simple faith in the living God. This is, this must be the solid ground of true, earnest, steady devotedness. If there be not the link of personal faith in God, we shall be driven hither and thither by every breath of human opinion, and tossed about by every ripple of the tide of circumstances. If we are not conscious of this living link between our souls and God, we shall never be able to stand at all, much less to make any headway in the path of real devotedness. “ Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Heb. 11:6.

Here lies the secret. We must believe that He is, and what He is. We must have to do with God, in the secret of our own souls, apart from, and independent of all beside. Our individual connection with God must be a grand reality, a living fact, a real and unmistakable experience, lying at the very root of our existence, and forming the stay and prop of our souls, at all times, and under all circumstances. Mere opinions will not do; dogmas and creeds will not avail. It will not suffice to say with the lips, " I believe in God, the Father Almighty." Neither this nor any other form of mere words will do. It must be a heart question—a matter between the soul and God Himself. Nothing short of this can sustain the soul, at any time, but more particularly in a day like the present, in the which we find ourselves surrounded by so much that is hollow and superficial. Few things perhaps tend more to sap the foundations of the soul's confidence than a large amount of unreal profession. One may gather this, in some measure, from the fact that the finger of the infidel is continually pointed at the gross inconsistencies, exhibited in the lives of the teachers and professors of religion. And although it be true, that such inconsistencies, even were they multiplied ten thousand fold, will never shelter the infidel from the just consequences of his unbelief, inasmuch as each one must give account of himself, and for himself, before the judgment seat of Christ; yet it is a fact that unreal profession tends to shake confidence, and hence the urgent need of simple, earnest, personal faith in God—of unquestioning childlike confidence in His word—of constant artless dependence upon His wisdom, goodness, power, and faithfulness.

This is the anchor of the soul without which it will be impossible to ride securely in the midst of Christendom's troubled waters. If we are, in any way, propped up by our fellow, if we are leaning upon an arm of flesh, if we are deriving support from the countenance of a mortal, if our faith stands in the wisdom of man, or the best of men, if our fear toward God is taught by the precept of men, we may rest assured that all this will be tested and fully manifested. Nothing will stand but that faith that endures as seeing Him who is invisible—that looks not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things that are unseen and eternal.

How vividly all this was illustrated in the life of the father of the faithful, we may easily learn from the marvelous history of his life given by the pen of inspiration. "Abraham believed God." Observe: it was not something about God that he believed—some doctrine or opinion respecting God, received by tradition from man. No; this would never have availed for Abraham. It was with God Himself he had to do, in the profoundest depths of his own individual being. " The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee." Acts 7:2, 3.

These opening sentences of Stephen's powerful address to the Council, set forth the true secret of Abraham's entire career, from Ur of the Chaldees to Mount Moriah. It is not our purpose, here, to dwell upon the solemn and instructive interval at Charran; our desire is rather to set before the reader, as plainly and pointedly as we can, the unspeakable value, yea, the absolute necessity of faith in God, not only for life and salvation, but for anything like true devotedness of heart to Christ and His cause. True, that honored servant of God tarried at Charran, traveled down into Egypt, turned to Hagar, trembled at Gerar and denied his wife. All this appears upon the surface of his history, for he was but a man—even a man of like passions with ourselves. But " He believed God." Yes, from first to last, this remarkable man exercised, in the main, an unshaken confidence in the living God. He believed in that great truth that lies at the bottom of all truth, namely, that God is; and he believed also that God is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him. It was this that drew Abraham forth from Ur of the Chaldees—from the midst of all those ties and associations in the which he had lived and moved, and had his being. It was this that sustained him through all the vicissitudes of his pilgrim-course; and, finally, it was this that enabled him to stand on Mount Moriah, and there show himself ready to lay upon the altar that one who was not only the son of his bosom, but also the channel through which all the families of the earth were yet to be blessed. Nothing but faith could have enabled Abraham to turn his back upon the land of his birth, to go forth not knowing whither he went. To the men of his day he must have seemed to be a fool or a madman. But oh! he knew whom he believed. Here lay the source of his strength. He was not following cunningly devised fables. He, most assuredly, was not propped up by the circumstances or the influences which surrounded him. He was not supported by the countenance of man. Flesh and blood afforded him no aid in his wonderful career. God was his shield, his portion, and his reward, and in leaning on Him, he found the true secret of all his victory over the world, and of that calm and holy elevation which characterized him from first to last.

Reader, have you faith in God? Do you know Him? Is there a link between your soul and Him? Can you trust Him for everything? Are you, at this moment, consciously leaning upon Him—upon His word—upon His arm? Remember, if there is any darkness or hesitation as to this, devotedness is, and must be, out of the question. All steady devotedness rests upon the solid ground of personal faith in the living God. We cannot too strongly insist upon this, in a day of profession as wide-spread as it is shallow. It will not do to " say" we believe. There is far too much of this far too much head knowledge and lip profession—far too much of mere surface work. It is easy to say we believe; but as James puts it, " What doth it profit though a man say he have faith?" Faith is a divine reality, and not a mere human effort. It is based upon divine revelation and not upon the working of human reason. It connects the soul with God, with a living, mighty link, which nothing can ever snap. It bears the soul above and carries it on in triumph,, come what may. There may be failure and confusion, error and evil, coldness and deadness, strife and division, breaking down and turning aside, stumblings and inconsistencies—all manner of things to shake the confidence and stagger the soul; but faith holds on its peaceful, steady way, undaunted and undismayed; it leans on God alone and finds all its springs in Him. Nothing can touch the faithfulness of God, and nothing can shake the confidence of the heart that simply takes God at His word.

And, be it remembered, that faith is, in reality, taking God at His word. It is believing what God says, because-He says it. It is taking God's thoughts in place of our own. " He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true." How simple! God has revealed Himself, faith walks in the light of that revelation. God has spoken; faith believes the word. But, if it be asked, " How has God revealed Himself? and where is His voice to be heard?" He has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ; and His voice may be heard in His word. He has not, blessed be His name, left us in the darkness of night, nor even in the dimness of twilight; He has poured upon us the full flood-tide of His own eternal truth, in order that we may possess all the certainty, all the clearness,, all the authority, which a divine revelation can give.

Is it inquired," How can we know that God has spoken?" We reply, " How can we know the sun is shining?" Surely by the genial influence of his beams. How can we know that the dew has fallen? Surely by its refreshing influence upon the earth, if not by the luster of its pearly drops. So of the precious word of God. It speaks for itself. Do I want a philosopher to tell me the sun is shining, or the dewdrops falling? Assuredly not. I feel their influence. I own their power. No doubt a philosopher might explain to me the properties of light, and a chemist might instruct me as to the component parts of the dew. They might do all this for me, even though I had been born and reared in a coal-mine, and had never seen either the one or the other. But they could not make me feel their influence. So it is, in a divine way, as to the word of God. It makes itself felt—felt in the heart, felt in the conscience, felt in the deep chambers of the soul. True, it is by the power of the Holy Ghost; but, all the while, there is power in the word.

Let us remember this. Let no one imagine that God cannot speak to the heart, or that the heart cannot understand what He says, and feel the power of His word. Cannot a father speak to his child, and cannot the child understand his father? Yes, verily; and our heavenly' Father can speak to us—to our very hearts, and we can hear His voice, and know His mind, and lean upon His eternal word. And this is faith—simple, living, saving faith. Such a definition of faith might not satisfy a profound theologian; but that makes no difference. The heart does not need learned theological definitions. It wants God, and it has Him in His word. God has spoken. He has revealed Himself. He has come forth from the thick darkness, chased away the shades of twilight, and shone upon us in the face of Jesus Christ, and on the eternal page of holy scripture.

Reader, hast thou found Him? Dost thou really know Him by the revelation which He has given, and by the word which He has spoken? Is His word a reality to thee? Is it thy stay and support? Is it the real ground on which thou art resting for time and eternity? Do, we beseech thee, make sure work of it, at this moment. See to it. that thou hast a lively faith in God, and such a sense of the value, the importance, and the authority of His word, as that thou wouldest rather part with all beside than surrender it. It is, unquestionably, the only ground of devotedness. It is utterly impossible that a heart distracted and tossed about with unbelieving reasonings, can ever be truly devoted to Christ or His service. " He that cometh to God, must believe that he is." How simple! How plain! How could Abraham have left his country—how could he have run the race—how could he have given up everything and come forth as a stranger and a pilgrim, not having so much ground as to set his foot upon—how could he have stood upon Mount Moriah and stretched forth his hand for the knife to slay his son? How could he have done all or any of these things, if he had not had simple faith in the one living and true God? Impossible.

And so, in thy case, beloved reader, unless thou canst trust God—unless thou art sustained by the real power of naked faith in the word of the living God, thou wilt never be able to get on—nay, thou hast no life in thee. Truly we may say, " No faith no life." There may be high profession—there may be the semblance of devotedness; but if there be not a lively faith, there can be no spiritual life; and, if there be no life, there cannot be any true devotedness. " The just shall live by faith." They not only get life by faith, but live, day by day, and hour by hour, by faith. It is the spring of life and power to the soul, all the journey through. It connects the soul with God, and, by so doing, imparts steadiness, consistency, energy, and holy decision to the servant of Christ. If there be not the constant exercise of faith in God, there will be fluctuation and uncertainty. Work will be taken up, by fits and starts, instead of being the necessary result of calm abiding in Christ, by faith. There will be an occasional rush at some line of service which is merely taken up, for the time, and then coldly abandoned. The course, instead of being a steady, upward and onward one, will be zigzag and most unsatisfactory. At times, there will be a feverish excitement, and then again, deadness and indifference.

All this is the very reverse of true devotedness. It does serious damage to the cause of Christ. Better far never to start on the course at all, than, having started, to turn aside and give it up. "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." True devotedness is based upon a pre found and earnest faith in God. It has its root deep down in the heart. It is not fitful or whimsical, but calm, consistent, decided, and steadily progressive. It may, at times, perhaps, when tried by the rule of a romantic and visionary enthusiasm, seem slow-paced; but, if it is slow, it is only because it will be sure; and the end will prove the difference between the energy of nature, and the actings of faith.

May God, by His Spirit, lead all His people into a truer and deeper sense of what devotedness really is. There is an energy abroad. The minds of men are active. Principles as well as passions are in action. Contending elements are at work underneath the surface of human life. Society is becoming, more and more, an unsettled thing. Men seem to be on the look out, as we say, for something. There is evidently a crisis at hand. Men are taking sides. The stage is being cleared for some grand act of the drama. What is needed, in view of all this? Unquestionably, a calm, deep, earnest faith in the word of God. This, we feel persuaded, is the only thing to keep the heart steady, come what may. Nothing will keep the soul in peace—nothing can give fixedness to the course—nothing can maintain us in the path of devotedness but the realization of that living link between the soul and God Himself, which, as being divine and eternal, must, of necessity, outlive all that is merely human and temporal.

(To be continued, if the Lord Will)

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 93. Geology

"An Inquirer," Bury St. Edmunds. The subject of your note is of the deepest interest. We agree with you in thinking that God made heaven and earth in six days. Exodus 20:11, is quite conclusive as to the time; and Hebrews 11:3, as to the way. We have no objection, however, to the theory, that what is termed the geological period comes in between the first and second verses of Genesis 1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This may have been millions of years back: and then, at verse 2, the inspired penman proceeds with the account of the six days' work. Such is the theory; but we confess we have very little confidence in the conclusions of geologists. The facts of geology are intensely interesting; but the conclusions of geologists, and the systems based on these conclusions, are most uncertain, and wholly unworthy of confidence. One line of Holy Scripture is more precious to us than ten thousand volumes of geological speculation. Some of our most enlightened geologists are free to admit that "they are but on the threshold of the science; that the conclusions of the earth's antiquity, and of the formation of strata, cannot be sustained; and that we must wait for further light and additional facts, before any conclusions can be drawn."1

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