Hebrews - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 3, Christian, The: His Position and His Work Part 3

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We would recall for a moment to the reader's attention the third point in our subject, namely, " The witness of the Holy Ghost in scripture." We feel it to be of too much importance to be dismissed with such a cursory glance as we were able to give it at the close of our last paper.

It is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of settled peace that the heart should rest solely on the authority of holy scripture. Nothing else will stand. Inward evidences, spiritual experiences, comfortable frames, happy feelings, are all very good, very valuable, and very desirable; indeed we cannot prize them too highly in their right place. But, most assuredly, their right place is not at the foundation of the christian position. If we look to such things as the ground of our peace, we shall very soon become clouded, uncertain, and miserable.

The reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this point. He must rest like a little child upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word. It is blessedly true that " He that believeth hath the witness in himself." And again, " The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." All this is essential to Christianity; but it must, in no wise, be confounded with the witness of the Holy Ghost, as given to us in holy scripture. The Spirit of God never leads any one to build upon His work as the ground of peace, but only upon the finished work of Christ, and the unchangeable word of God; and we may rest assured that the more simply we rest on these the more settled our peace will be, and the clearer our evidences, the brighter our frames, the happier our feelings, the richer our experiences. In short, the more we look away from self and all its belongings, and rest in Christ, on the clear authority of scripture, the more spiritually minded we shall be; and the inspired apostle tells us that "to be spiritually minded (or, the minding of the Spirit) is life and peace." The best evidence of a spiritual mind is child-like repose in Christ and His word. The clearest proof of an un-spiritual mind is self-occupation. It is a poor affair to be trafficking in our evidences, or our anything. It looks like piety, but it leads away from Christ—away from scripture—away from God; and this is not piety or faith, or Christianity.

We are intensely anxious that the reader should seize, with great distinctness, the importance of committing his whole moral being to the divine authority of the word of God. It will never fail him. All else may go, but " the word of our God shall stand forever." Heart and flesh may fail. Internal evidences may become clouded; frames, feelings, and experiences may all prove unsatisfactory; but the word of the Lord, the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the clear voice of holy scripture, must ever remain unshaken. " And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto us.,é

Thus much, then, as to the divine and everlasting basis of the Christian's position, as set forth in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. Let us, now, see what this same scripture tells us of the Christian's work, and of the sphere in which that work is to be carried on.

The Christian is brought into the immediate presence of God, inside the veil, into the holiest of all. This is his proper place, if indeed we are to listen to the voice of scripture. " Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Our God, blessed be His holy name, would have us near unto Himself. He has made out for us a title clear and indisputable in " the blood of Jesus" Nothing more is needed. That precious blood stands out before the eye of faith in all its infinite value. In it alone we read our title. It is not the blood and something else, be that something what it may. The blood constitutes our exclusive title. We come before God in all the perfect efficacy of that blood which rent the veil, glorified God as to the question of sin, canceled our guilt according to all the demands of infinite holiness, silenced, forever, every accuser, every foe. We enter by a new and living way—a way which can never become old or dead. We enter by the direct invitation, yea, by the distinct command of God. It is positive disobedience not to come. We enter to receive the loving welcome of our Father's heart; it is an insult to that love not to come. He tells us to " come boldly,—to " draw near" with full unclouded confidence—a boldness and confidence commensurate with the love that invites us, the word that commands us, and the blood that fits and entitles us. It is offering dishonor to the eternal Trinity not to draw near.

Reader, is all this, think you, understood and taught in Christendom? Say, do Christendom's creeds, confessions, and liturgical services harmonize with apostolic teaching in Heb. 10? Alas! alas! they do not. Nay, they are in direct antagonism; and the state of souls, accordingly, is the very reverse of what it ought to be. In place of "draw near" it is keep off. In place of liberty and boldness, it is legality and bondage. In place of a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, it is a heart bowed down beneath the intolerable burden of unforgiven sin. In place of a great High Priest seated on the throne of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption, we have poor mortal—not to say sinful—priests standing from week to week, all the year round in wearisome routine, actually contradicting, in their barren formularies, the very foundation truths of Christianity.

How truly deplorable is all this! And then the sad condition of the Lord's dear people, the lambs and sheep of that precious flock for which He died I It is this that so deeply affects us. It is of little use attacking Christendom. We quite admit this; but we yearn over the souls of God's people. We long to see them fully delivered from false teaching, from Judaism, legalism, and every other ism that robs them of a full salvation and a precious Savior. We long to reach them with the clear and soul-satisfying teachings of holy scripture, so that they may know and enjoy the things that are freely given to them of God. We can truly say there is nothing which gives us such painful concern as the state of the Lord's dear people, scattered upon the dark mountains and desolate moors; and one special object for which we desire to live is to be the instrument of leading them into those green pastures and beside those still waters where the true Shepherd and Bishop of their souls longs to feed them, according to all the deep and tender love of His heart. He would have them near Himself, reposing in the light of His blessed countenance. It is not according to His mind or His loving heart that His people should be kept at a dim cold distance from His presence, in

doubt and darkness. Ah! no; reader, His word tells us to draw near—to come boldly—to appropriate freely—to make our very own of all the precious privileges to which a Father's love invites us, and a Savior's blood entitles us.

" Let us draw near." This is the voice of God to us. Christ has opened up the way. The veil is rent, our place is in the holiest of all, the conscience sprinkled, the body washed, the soul entering intelligently into the atoning value of the blood, and the cleansing, sanctifying power of the word—its action upon our habits, our ways, our associations, our entire course and, character.

All this is of the very utmost practical value to every true lover of holiness—and every true Christian is a lover of holiness. " The body washed with pure water" is a perfectly delightful thought. It sets forth the purifying action of the word of God on the Christian's entire course and character. We must not be content with having the heart sprinkled by the blood; we must also have the body washed with pure water.

And what then? " Let us holdfast the profession of our hope () without wavering (for he is faithful that promised)." Blessed parenthesis! We may well hold fast, seeing He is faithful. Our hope can never make ashamed. It rests, in holy calmness, upon the infallible faithfulness of Him who cannot lie, whose word is settled forever in heaven, far above all the changes and chances of this mortal life, above the din of controversy, the strife of tongues, the impudent assaults of infidelity, the ignorant ravings of superstition—far away above all these things, eternally settled in heaven is that word which forms the ground of our "hope."

It well becomes us, therefore, to hold fast. We should not have a single wavering thought—a single question—a single misgiving. For a Christian to doubt is to cast dishonor upon the word of a faithful God. Let skeptics, and rationalists, and infidels doubt, for they have nothing to believe, nothing to rest upon, no certainty. But for a child of God to doubt, is to call in question the faithfulness of the divine Promiser. We owe it to His glory, to say nothing of our own peace, to " hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." Thus may it be with every beloved member of the household of faith, until that longed-for moment " when faith and hope shall cease, and love abide alone."

But there is one more interesting branch of christian work at which we must glance ere closing this paper. " Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works."

This is in lovely moral keeping with all that has gone before. The grace of God has so richly met all our personal need—setting before us such an array of precious privileges—an opened heaven—a rent veil—a crowned and seated Savior—a great High Priest—a perfectly purged conscience—boldness to enter—a hearty welcome—a faithful Promiser—a sure and certain hope—having all these marvelous blessings in full possession, what have we got to do? To consider ourselves? Nay verily; this were superfluous and sinfully selfish. We could not possibly do so well for ourselves as God has done for us. He has left nothing unsaid, nothing undone, nothing to be desired. Our cup is full and running over. What remains? Simply to " consider one another;" to go out in the activities of holy love, and serve our brethren in every possible way; to be on the lookout for opportunities of doing good; to be ready for every good work; to seek in a thousand little ways to make hearts glad; to seek to shed a ray of light on the moral gloom around us; to be a stream of refreshing in this sterile and thirsty wilderness.

These are some of the things that make up a Christian's work. May we attend to them! May we be found provoking one another, not to envy and jealousy, but to love and good works; exhorting one another daily; diligently availing ourselves of the public assembly, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.

May the Holy Spirit engrave upon the heart of both writer and reader these most precious exhortations so thoroughly characteristic of our glorious Christianity—" Let us draw near"—" Let us hold fast"—" Let us consider one another!"

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 3, Christian, The: His Position and His Work Part 2

We must ask the reader to open his Bible and read Heb. 10:7-24. In it he will find a very deep and marvelous view of the Christian's position and his work. The inspired writer gives us, as it were, three solid pillars on which the grand edifice of Christianity rests. These are, first, the will of God; secondly, the work of Christ; and, thirdly, the witness of the Holy Ghost, in scripture. If these grand realities be laid hold of in simple faith, the soul must have settled peace. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that no power of earth or hell, men or devils, can ever disturb the peace which is founded upon Heb. 10:7-17.

Let us then, in the first place, dwell, for a few moments, on the manner in which the apostle unfolds, in this magnificent passage,

THE WILL OF GOD.

In the opening of the chapter, we are instructed as to the utter inadequacy of the sacrifices under the law. They could never make the conscience perfect—they could never accomplish the will of God—never fulfill the gracious desire and purpose of His heart. " The law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins"

Let the reader carefully note this. " The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." He does not say—" No more consciousness of sin." There is an immense difference between these two things; and yet, it is to be feared, they are often confounded. The Christian has, alas! the consciousness of sin in him, but he ought to have no conscience of sins 0)1 him, inasmuch as he is purged once and forever, by the precious blood of Christ.

Some of the Lord's people have a habit of speaking of their continual need of applying to the blood of Christ, which, to say the least of it, is by no means intelligent, or in accordance with the accurate teaching of holy scripture. It seems like humility; but, we may rest assured, true humility can only be found in connection with the full, clear, settled apprehension of the truth of God, and as to His gracious will concerning us. If it be His will, that we should have " no more conscience of sins," it cannot be true humility, on our part, to go on, from day to day, and year to year, with the burden of sins upon us. And, further, if it be true that Christ has borne our sins and put them away, forever—if He has offered one perfect sacrifice for sins, ought we not to know, assuredly, that we are perfectly pardoned and perfectly purged? Is it—can it be, true humility to reduce the blood of Christ to the level of the blood of bulls and of goats? But this is what is virtually done, though, no doubt,

unwittingly, by all who speak of applying continually to the blood of Christ. One reason why God found fault with the sacrifices under the law was, as the apostle tells us, "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." This, blessed be His name, was not according to His mind. He desired that every trace of guilt and every remembrance of it should be blotted out, once and forever; and hence it cannot be His will that His people should be continually bowed down under the terrible burden of unforgiven sin. It is contrary to His will; it is subversive of their peace, and derogatory to the glory of Christ and the efficacy of His one sacrifice.

One grand point of the inspired argument, in Hebrews x., is to show that the continual remembrance of sins and the continual repetition of the sacrifice go together; and therefore, if Christians now are to have the burden of sins constantly on the heart and conscience, it follows that Christ should be offered again and again, which were a blasphemy. His work is done, and hence our burden is gone—gone forever. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, God. Above, when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified [or set apart] by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once"

Here we are conducted, in the most distinct and forcible manner, to the eternal source of the whole matter, namely, the will of God—the purpose and counsel formed in the divine mind, before the foundation of the world, before any creature was formed, before sin or Satan existed. It was the will of God, from all eternity, that the Son should, in due time, come forth and do a work which was to be the foundation of the divine glory and of all the counsels and purposes of the Trinity.

It would be a very grave error indeed to suppose that redemption was an afterthought with God. He had not, blessed be His holy name, to sit down and phi what He would do, when sin entered. It was all settled beforehand. The enemy, no doubt, imagined that he was gaining a wonderful victory when he meddled with man in the garden of Eden. In point of fact, he was only giving occasion for the display of God's eternal counsels in connection with the work of the Son. There was no basis for those counsels, no sphere for their display in the fields of creation. It was the meddling of Satan—the entrance of sin—the ruin of man that opened a platform on which a Savior-God might display the riches of His grace, the glories of His salvation, the attributes of His nature, to all created intelligences.

There is great depth and power in those words of the eternal Son, " In the volume of the book it is written of me." To what " volume" does He here refer? Is it to Old Testament scripture? Surely not; the apostle is quoting from the Old Testament. What then is the volume? It is nothing less than the roll of God's eternal counsels in which the " vast plan" was laid, according to which, in the appointed time, the eternal Son was to come forth and appear on the scene, in order to accomplish the divine will, vindicate the divine glory, confound the enemy utterly, put away sin, and save ruined man in a manner which yields a richer harvest of glory to God than ever He could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation.

All this gives immense stability to the soul of the believer. Indeed it is utterly impossible for human language to set forth the preciousness and blessedness of this line of truth. It is such rich consolation to every pious soul to know that One has appeared in this world to do the will of God—whatever that will might be. " Lo, I come to do thy will, God." Such was the one undivided purpose and object of that perfect human heart. He never did His own will in anything. He says, " I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." It mattered not to Him what that will might involve to Himself, personally. The decree was written down in the eternal volume that He should come and do the divine will; and, all homage to His peerless name! He came and did it perfectly. He could say, " A body hast thou prepared me." " Mine ears hast thou opened/' " I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Isa. 1:3-6.

But this leads us, in the second place, to contemplate

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

It was ever the delight of the heart of Jesus to do His Father's will and finish His work. From the manger at Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, the one grand object that swayed His devoted heart was the accomplishment of the will of God. He perfectly glorified God, in all things. This, blessed be God, perfectly secures our full and everlasting salvation, as the apostle, in this passage, so distinctly states. " By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once."

Here our souls may rest, beloved reader, in sweetest peace and unclouded certainty. It was the will of God that we should be set apart to Himself, according to all the love of His heart, and all the claims of His throne; and our Lord Christ, in due time, in pursuance of the everlasting purpose as set forth " in the volume of the book," came forth from the glory which He had with the Father, before all worlds, to do the work which forms the imperishable basis of all the divine counsels and of our eternal salvation.

And—forever be His name adored!—He has finished His work. He has perfectly glorified God in the midst of the scene in which He had been so dishonored. At all cost He vindicated Him and made good His every claim. He magnified the law and made it honorable. He vanquished every foe, removed every obstacle, swept away every barrier, bore the judgment and wrath of a sin-hating God, destroyed death and him that had the power of it, extracted its sting, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, He gloriously accomplished all that was written in the volume of the book concerning Him; and now we see Him crowned with glory and honor, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, lie traveled from the throne to the dust of death, in order to accomplish the will of God, and having done so, He has gone back to the throne, in a new character and on a new footing. His pathway from the throne to the cross was marked by the footprints of divine and everlasting love; and His pathway from the cross back to the throne is sprinkled by His atoning blood. He came from heaven to earth to do the will of God, and, having done it, He returned to heaven again, thus opening up for us "a new and living way" by which we draw nigh to God, in holy boldness and liberty, as purged worshippers.

All is done. Every question is settled. Every barrier is removed. The veil is rent. That mysterious curtain which, for ages and generations, had shut God in from man, and shut man out from God, was rent in twain, from top to bottom, by the precious death of Christ; and now we can

look right up into the opened heavens and sec on the throne the Man who bore our sins, in His own body, on the tree. A seated Christ tells out, in the ear of faith, the sweet emancipating tale that all that had to be done is done—done forever—done for God—done for us. Yes; all is settled, now, and God can, in perfect righteousness, indulge the love of His heart, in blotting out all our sins and bringing us nigh unto Himself in all the acceptance of the One who sits beside Him on the throne.

And let the reader carefully note the striking and 224-2 ' beautiful way in which the apostle contrasts a seated Christ in heaven with the standing priest on earth. " Every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever [—in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever [in perpetuity] them that are sanctified."

This is uncommonly fine. The priest, under the Levitical economy, could never sit down, for the obvious reason that his work was never done. There was no seat provided in the temple or in the tabernacle. There is remarkable force and significance in the manner in which the inspired writer puts this. " Every priest"—"standeth daily"—"offering oftentimes"—" the same sacrifices"—"which can never take away sins." No human language could possibly set forth, more graphically, the dreary monotony and utter inefficacy of the Levitical ceremonial. How strange that, in the face of such a passage of holy scripture, Christendom should have set up a human priesthood, with its daily sacrifice!—a priesthood, moreover, not belonging to the tribe of Levi, not springing from the house of Aaron, and therefore having no sort of divine title or sanction. And, then as to the sacrifice, it is, according to their own admission, a sacrifice without blood, and, therefore, a sacrifice without remission, for, " Without shedding of blood, there is no remission." Heb. 9:22.

Hence, Christendom's priesthood is a daring usurpation, and her sacrifice a worthless vanity—a positive lie—a mischievous delusion. The priests of whom the apostle speaks in Heb. 10 were priests of the tribe of Levi and of the house of Aaron—the only house, the only tribe ever recognized of God as having any title to assume the office and work of a priest upon earth. And, further, the sacrifices which the Aaronic priests offered were appointed by God, for the time being; but they never gave Him any pleasure, inasmuch as they could never take away sins; and they have been forever abolished.

Now, in view of all this, what shall we say of Christendom's priests and Christendom's sacrifices? What will a righteous Judge say to them? We cannot attempt to dwell upon such an awful theme. We can merely say, alas! alas! for the poor souls that are deluded and ruined by such antichristian absurdities. May God in His mercy deliver them and lead them to rest in the one offering of Jesus Christ—that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin. May many be led to see that a repeated sacrifice and a seated Christ are in positive antagonism. If the sacrifice must be repeated, Christ has no right to His seat and to His crown—God pardon the very penning of the words! If Christ has a divine right to His seat and to His crown, then to repeat a sacrifice is simply a blasphemy against His cross, His name, His glory. To repeat, in anyway, or under any form whatsoever, the sacrifice is to deny the efficacy of Christ's one offering, and to rob the soul of anything like an approach to the knowledge of remission of sins. A repeated sacrifice and perfect remission are an absolute contradiction in terms.

But we must turn, for a moment, to the third grand point in our subject, namely,

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

This is of the deepest possible moment for the reader to understand. It gives great completeness to the subject. How are we to know that Christ has, by His work on the cross, absolutely and divinely accomplished the will of God? Simply by the witness of the Holy Ghost in scripture. This is the third pillar on which the Christian's position rests, and it is as thoroughly divine and, therefore, as thoroughly independent of man as the other two. It is very evident that man had nothing to do with the eternal counsels of the Trinity—nothing to do with the glorious work accomplished on the cross. All this is clear; and it is equally clear that man has nothing to do with the authority on which our souls receive the joyful news as to the will of God, and the work of Christ, inasmuch as it is nothing less than the witness of the Holy Ghost.

We cannot be too simple as to this. It is not, by any means, a question of our feelings, our frames, our evidences, or our experiences—things interesting enough in their right place. We must receive the truth solely and simply on the authority of that august Witness who speaks to us in holy scripture. Thus we read, " Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Here, then, we have fully before us the solid foundation of the Christian's position and the Christian's peace. It is all of God, from first to last. The will, the work, and the witness are all divine. The Lord be praised for this glorious fact! What should we do, what would become of us, were it otherwise? In this day of confusion, when souls are tossed about by every wind of doctrine—when the beloved sheep of Christ are driven hither and thither, in bewilderment and perplexity—when ritualism with its ignorant absurdities, and rationalism with its impudent blasphemies, and spiritualism with its horrible traffic with demons, are threatening the very foundations of our faith, how important it is for Christians to know what those foundations really are, and that they should be consciously resting thereon!

(To be concluded in our next, if the Lord will.)

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 128. Hebrews 10:39

In reply to “W. T.,” Stafford, we would say that Hebrews 10:39 does not imply that Christians could “draw back to perdition.” So far from this, it directly teaches the very opposite.

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Living by Faith in All Things

“The just shall live by faith” (Heb. 10:38).

It is by faith we are justified, by faith we live, by faith we stand and by faith we walk.

Now this is true of all Christians, and all should seek to enter into it fully. Every child of God is called to live by faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]” (Heb. 11:6). It is a very grave mistake, indeed, to single out certain individuals who happen to have few or no visible source of temporal supplies and speak of them as though they only may live by faith. According to such a view of the question, ninety-nine out of every hundred Christians would be deprived of the precious privilege of living by faith.

If a man has a settled income, if he has a certain salary, if he has what is termed a secular calling by which he earns bread for himself and his family, is he not still privileged to live by faith? Do none live by faith save those who have little or nothing in regards to material support? Is the life of faith to be confined to the matter of trusting God only for food and raiment?

To live by faith is to be completely and continually shut up to Him in everything; fully dependent upon Him apart from and above every natural confidence, human hope or earthly expectation.

C. H. Mackintosh (adapted)

A Help or a Hindrance: Which?, Help or a Hindrance: Which?, A

(A Question for All in the Assembly)

Of the many favors conferred upon us by our ever-gracious Lord, one of the very highest is the privilege of being present in the assembly of His beloved people, where He has recorded His name. We may assert, with all possible confidence, that every true lover of Christ will delight to be found where He has promised to be. Whatever may be the special character of the meeting—whether it be around the Lord’s table, to show forth His death; or around the Word, to learn His mind; or around the mercy seat, to tell Him our need, and draw from His exhaustless treasury—every devoted heart will long to be there; and we may rest assured that anyone who willfully neglects the assembly is in a cold, dead, dangerous state of soul. To neglect the assembling of ourselves is to take the first step on the inclined plane that leads down to the total abandonment of Christ and His precious interests. (See Heb. 10:25-27.)

And here at the very outset, we would remind the reader that the object of this brief paper is not to discuss the oft-raised question: “How are we to know what meeting to go to?” This is, assuredly, a question of cardinal importance which every Christian, man, woman, and child, is bound and privileged to have divinely settled ere he takes his place in an assembly. To go to a meeting without knowing the ground on which such meeting is gathered, is to act in ignorance or indifference, wholly incompatible with the fear of the Lord and the love of His Word.

But, we repeat, this question is not now before us. We are not occupied with the ground of the meeting, but with our state and conduct on the ground—a question, surely, of vast moral importance to every soul professing to be gathered in or to the name of Him who is holy and true. In a word, our thesis is distinctly stated at the head of this article. We assume that the reader is clear as to the ground of the assembly, and hence our immediate business with him just now, is to raise the solemn question in his heart and conscience, “Am I a help or a hindrance to the assembly?” That each individual member is either the one or the other, is as clear as it is weighty and practical.

If the reader will just open his Bible and read, thoughtfully and prayerfully 1 Corinthians 12, he will find, most clearly established, the great practical truth that each member of the body exerts an influence on all the rest. Just as in the human body, if there be anything wrong with the very feeblest and most obscure member, all the members feel it, through the head. If there be a broken nail, a broken tooth, a foot out of joint, any limb, muscle, or nerve, out of order, it is a hindrance to the whole body. Thus it is in the Church of God, the body of Christ: “If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” The state of each member affects the whole body. Hence it follows that each member is either a help or a hindrance to all. What a profound truth! Yes; and it is as practical as it is profound.

And be it remembered that the Apostle is not speaking of any mere local assembly, but of the whole body, of which, no doubt, each particular assembly ought to be the local expression. Thus he says, in addressing the assembly at Corinth, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” True, there were other assemblies; and had the Apostle been addressing any of them on the same subject, he would have used the same language; for what was true of each was true of all; and what was true of the whole was true of each local expression. Nothing can be clearer, nothing simpler, nothing more deeply practical. The whole subject furnishes three most precious and powerful motives for a holy, earnest, devoted life—namely, first, that we may not dishonor the Head to whom we are united; secondly, that we may not grieve the Holy Spirit by whom we are united; and thirdly, that we may not injure the members with whom we are united.

Can anything exceed the moral power of such motives as these? Oh! that they were more fully realized among God’s beloved people! It is one thing to hold and teach the doctrine of the unity of the body, and another thing altogether to enter into and exhibit its holy formative power. Alas! the poor human intellect may discuss and traffic in the highest truths, while the heart, the conscience, and the life have never felt their holy influence. This is a most solemn consideration for everyone. May we ponder it in our hearts, and may it tell upon our whole life and character! May the truth of the “one body” be a grand moral reality to every member of that body on the face of the earth!

Here we might close this paper, feeling, as we do, that if the glorious truth on which we have been dwelling were held in the living power of faith by all the Lord’s beloved people, then, assuredly, all the precious, practical results would follow. But in sitting down to write, there was one special branch of the subject prominently before the mind, and that is the way in which the various meetings are affected by the condition of soul, the attitude of heart, and the state of mind, of all who attend. We repeat, and with emphasis, all who attend—not merely all who audibly take part, but all who form the meeting.

No doubt a special and very weighty responsibility rests on those who take any part in the ministry, whether it be in giving out a hymn, engaging in prayer or thanksgiving, reading the Word, teaching, or exhortation. All who do so should be very sure that they are divinely called and fitted, yea, that they are simply the instruments in the hand of the Lord for whatever they undertake to do. Otherwise, they may do the most serious damage to the meeting. They may quench the Spirit, hinder the worship, interrupt the communion, mar the integrity of the

occasion.

All this is most serious, and calls for holy watchfulness on the part of all who engage in any branch of ministry in the assembly. Even a hymn may prove a positive hindrance; it may interrupt the current of the Spirit and lower the tone of the assembly. Yea, the precious Word of God may be read out of place. In short, whatever is not the direct fruit of the Spirit, can only hinder the edification and blessing of the assembly. All who take part in the ministry should have the distinct sense that they are led by the Spirit in what they do. They should be governed by the one commanding, absorbing object, the glory of Christ in the assembly and the blessing of the assembly in Him. If it be not thus, they had better be quiet and wait on the Lord. They will render more glory to Christ, and more blessing to the assembly, by quiet waiting than by restless action and unprofitable talking.

But, while feeling and owning the gravity of all that has to be said in reference to the holy responsibility of all who minister in the assembly, we are thoroughly persuaded that the tone, character, and general effect of public meetings are very intimately connected with the moral and spiritual condition of all. It is this, we confess, that weighs upon the heart and leads us to pen this brief address to every assembly under the sin. Every soul in the meeting is either a help or a hindrance—a contributor or a waster. All who attend in a devout, earnest, loving spirit; who come simply to meet the Lord Himself; who flock to the assembly as the place where His precious name is recorded; who delight to be there, because He is there—all such are a real help and blessing to a meeting. May God increase their number! If all assemblies were made up of such blessed elements, what a different tale would have to be told!

And why not? It is not a question of gift or knowledge, but of grace and godliness, true piety and prayerfulness. In a word, it is simply a question of that condition of soul in which every child of God and every servant of Christ ought to be, and without which the most shining gifts and the most extensive knowledge are a hindrance and a snare. Mere gift and intelligence, without an exercised conscience and the fear of God, may be, and have been, used of the enemy for the moral ruin of souls. But where there is true humility and that seriousness and reality which the sense of the presence of God ever produces, there you have what will most surely—gift or no gift—impart depth of tone, freshness, and a spirit of worship to an assembly.

There is a vast difference between an assembly of people gathered round some gifted man, and one gathered simply to the Lord Himself, on the ground of the one body. It is one thing to be gathered by ministry, and quite another to be gathered to it. If people are merely gathered to ministry, when the ministry goes, they are apt to go, too. But when earnest, truehearted, devoted souls are gathered simply to the Lord Himself, then, while they are most thankful for true ministry when they can get it, they are not dependent upon it. They do not value gift less, but they value the Giver more. They are thankful for the streams, but they depend only upon the Fountain.

It will invariably be found that those who can do best without ministry, value it most when they get it. In a word, they give it its true place. But those who attach undue importance to gift, who are always complaining of the lack of it, and cannot enjoy a meeting without it, are a hindrance and a source of weakness to the assembly.

And alas! there are other hindrances and sources of weakness which demand the serious consideration of all. We should, each one of us, as we take our places in the assembly, honestly put the question to our hearts, “Am I a help or a hindrance—a contributor or a wafter?” If we come in a cold, hard, careless state of soul—come in a merely formal manner, unjudged, unexercised, unbroken, in a faultfinding, murmuring, complaining spirit, judging everything and everybody except ourselves—then, most assuredly, we are a serious hindrance to the blessing, the profit and the happiness of the meeting. We are the broken nail, the broken tooth, or the foot out of joint. How sorrowful, how humiliating, how terrible is all this! May we watch against it, pray against it, firmly disallow it!

But on the other hand, those who present themselves in the assembly in a loving, gracious, Christlike spirit; who simply delight to meet their brethren, whether around the Table, around the fountain of holy Scripture, or around the mercy seat for prayer; who, in their heart’s deep and tender affections, embrace all the members of the beloved body of Christ; whose eyes are not dimmed, or their affections chilled by dark suspicions, evil surmisings, or unkindly feelings toward any around them; who have been taught of God to love their brethren, to look at them “from the top of the rocks” and see them “in the vision of the Almighty”; who are ready to profit by whatever the gracious Lord sends them, even though it may not come through some brilliant gift or favorite teacher —all such are a divinely sent blessing to the assembly wherever they are. Again we say, with a full heart, May God add to their number! If all assemblies were composed of such, it would be the very atmosphere of heaven itself. The name of Jesus would be as ointment poured forth; every eye would be fixed on Him, every heart absorbed with Him, and there would be a more powerful testimony to His name and presence in our midst than could be rendered by the most brilliant gift.

May the gracious Lord pour out His blessing upon all His assemblies throughout the whole earth! May He deliver them from every hindrance, every weight, every stumbling block, every root of bitterness! May the hearts of all be knit together in sweet confidence and true brotherly love! May He crown, with His richest blessing, the labors of all His beloved servants, at home and abroad, cheering their hearts and strengthening their hands, giving them to be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in His precious work, in the assurance that their labor is not in vain!

C. H. M.

Handfuls of Pasture: Volume 2, God of Peace, The

" Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Heb. 13:20.

The title under which the Holy Ghost, in this passage, introduces God to our thoughts, is peculiarly expressive. He calls Him, " The God of peace." That is what He is to us, in connection with the opening grave of " The great Shepherd of the sheep," and on the foundation of "The blood of the everlasting covenant." In short, we have, in this most comprehensive passage, two persons, and two things. We have the God of peace, and the Lord Jesus; the blood of the everlasting covenant, and the resurrection from the dead. All these we have under the pen of the Holy Ghost But there is another title under which God must be seen before the soul can really enjoy Him as " The God of peace," and that is as

" The God of judgment." To speak of peace, while the claims of God, in this latter character, lie unanswered, is the very height of presumptuous folly. God can have no peace with sin, In any shape or form. If sin be not put away, there can be no peace with God. There may be the peace of ignorance, the peace of carnal security, the peace of a hardened heart, the peace of a seared conscience; but there can be no peace with God, so long as sin remains unjudged. Hence, therefore, it becomes us to inquire on what ground can the inspired apostle speak of God as " The God of peace."

The ground is this—may the anxious reader understand it!—-"The God of judgment" met the Sin-Bearer, at the cross, and there went into the entire question of sin and settled it once and forever. The Divine Substitute made peace, by the cross, in order that " The God of peace" might meet us, without judgment, at the opening grave. All that the God of judgment had against my sins, He laid on the head of my substitute, on the cross, in order that I might know and enjoy Him as the God of peace. This is the grand fundamental truth of the gospel which must, when simply believed, give settled peace to the conscience. The justice of God has been perfectly satisfied about sin, by the death of Christ. Nay, more, God has been glorified about sin, by the death of Christ. Yes, dear reader, not only has God been perfectly satisfied, but eternally glorified in reference to sin, by the blood of the cross. This must give peace to every one who simply believes it.

It is truly wonderful to think of the meager view we take of the gospel, notwithstanding its moral grandeur, as it shines before us in the pages of the book of God. From the way in which one sometimes hears the gospel put, it would seem as though forgiveness of sins were the fruit of an exercise of mercy at the expense of justice, or as though justice consented to stand aside while mercy pardons and saves. How different is this from that stupendous scheme of redemption which had its origin in the bosom of God; which was laid in the eternal counsels of the Trinity, before the foundation of the world; which was ratified by the blood of the everlasting covenant; which is revealed by the Holy Ghost, in the scriptures of truth, and received by faith into the hearts of all those who, through grace, "set to their seal that God is true!" In that glorious scheme we behold mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, blessedly combined; so that the sinner is as positively saved by righteousness and truth as by mercy and peace. The latter are not more favorable to him than the former. Justice and judgment are the pillars of that blood-sprinkled throne of grace to which the saved sinner approaches in worship and adoration.

Is my reader anxious about salvation? Is he desirous of knowing the pardon of his sins? Does he sigh after the peace of the gospel? If so, let him only pause and think of this;—"The God of judgment" met Christ on the cross, and there entered into and definitively settled the great question of sin. How is this to be known? Is it by some feeling in my own mind? Is it by my passing through some mental process? Is it by aught that I can do, or say, or think, or feel? Nay. How then? " The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." This is the way I am to know that the question of sin has been eternally settled. If it had not been settled, we should never have heard aught of " The God of peace," or seen aught of " The great Shepherd's " opening grave, or known aught of the changeless efficacy of the blood of " The everlasting covenant." The God of peace could never have appeared on the scene, if all the claims of the God of judgment had not been divinely answered. How were they answered? By the blood of Jesus—nothing less—nothing more—nothing different. Naught else could avail. If I had all the good works that were ever performed beneath the canopy of heaven; if I had all the morality, all the fleshly pietism, all the legal righteousness that ever man could boast of; if I had all the alms that ever were distributed by the hand of benevolence; if I had all these and ten thousand times ten thousand more besides placed to my credit, it would not answer the claims of the God of judgment with respect to my sins. But the death of Christ has answered for me. That sacrifice stands before the eye of infinite holiness, in all its solitary grandeur, in all its divine sufficiency. It needs no addition. It has met all. What more do I want, as the ground of my peace? Nothing more. God is satisfied; so am I; the matter is settled forever, nor can any one or anything ever unsettle it.

Reader, are you satisfied? Is Christ sufficient for you?

Has He done enough to meet the claims of your conscience? Do you want to add something of your own doings or feelings to His all-sufficient atonement? If not, what are you waiting for? You say, " I do not feel" I reply, we are not saved by feeling, but by faith. " The just shall live," not by feeling, but " by faith." Do you not see that while you talk of not feeling, you are still on legal ground -on the ground of works. You have, it may be, abandoned the idea of manual labor, but you are still looking to your mental labor. The one is as worthless as the other. Give up both, as a ground of salvation, and take Christ. This is what you want in order to be happy. If you were to hear a person say, " I am happy, now, I have peace with God, because I have given a hundred pounds in charity," would you not pronounce him self-deceived? Doubtless; and yet you say, " If I could feel, I should be happy." Where lies the difference between " do " and " feel?" Is not the one as stable a foundation for a sinner's peace as the other? Would it not be better to let Christ supplant both? Is there not enough in Him without your feelings, as well as without your works? If your feelings or your works had been necessary, then why did " The God of peace bring again from the dead our Lord Jesus?" Is it not evident that you are seeking something more, as a ground of peace, than that which is presented to you in the gospel?

Dear friend, do think of this. My heart's desire is that you may rest, now and evermore, in a full Christ; that He may be sufficient for you, as He is sufficient for God. Then feelings and works of the right kind will be forthcoming, not as a ground of peace, but as the fragrant fruits of an enjoyed salvation—not as a title to life, but as the outflow of a life possessed through faith in Christ. May the blessing of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, rest abundantly upon you!

Note.—It is interesting to observe the three titles applied to oar blessed Lord Jesus Christ as Shepherd. In John 10 He is called " The good Shepherd," in death. In Heb. 13 He is called " The great Shepherd," in resurrection; and in 1 Pet. 5 He is called " The chief Shepherd," in glory. Each title has its own specific meaning, and its own appropriate place.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 3, Christian, The: His Position and His Work Part 1

What is the true position of a Christian? and what has he got to do? are questions of the very deepest practical importance. It is assumed, of course, that he has eternal life: without this one cannot be a Christian at all. " He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." This is the common portion of all believers. It is not a matter of attainment, a matter of progress, a thing which some Christians have and others have not. It belongs to the very feeblest babe in the family of God as well as to the most matured and experienced servant of Christ. All are possessed of eternal life, and can never, by any possibility, lose it.

But our present theme is not life, but position and work; and in briefly handling it, we shall ask the reader to turn for a moment to a passage in Heb. 13 Perhaps we cannot do better than quote it for him. There is nothing like the plain and solid word of holy scripture.

" Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Ver. 9-14.)

Here, then, we have one grand aspect of the Christian's position. It is defined by the position of his Lord. This makes it divinely simple; and, we may add, divinely settled. The Christian is identified with Christ. Amazing fact! " As he is, so are we in this world." It is not said, " As he is, so shall we be in the world to come." No; this would not come up to the divine idea. It is, " so are we in this world" The position of Christ defines the position of the Christian.

But this glorious fact tells in a double way; it tells upon the Christian's place before God; and it tells on his place as regards this present world. It is upon the latter that Heb. 13 instructs us so blessedly, and it is that which is now more especially before us.

Jesus suffered without the gate. This fact is the basis on which the apostle grounds his exhortation to the Hebrew believers to go forth without the camp. The cross of Christ closed His connection with the camp of Judaism; and all who desire to follow Him must go outside to where He is. The final breach with Israel is presented, morally, in the death of Christ; doctrinally, in the Epistle to the Hebrews; historically, in the destruction of Jerusalem. In the judgment of faith, Jerusalem was as thoroughly rejected when the Messiah was nailed to the cross, as it was when the army of Titus left it a smoldering ruin. The instincts of the divine nature, and the inspired teachings of scripture, go before the actual facts of history.

" Jesus suffered without the gate." For what end? " That he might sanctify [or set apart] the people with his own blood." What follows? What is the necessary practical result? é' Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

But what is " the camp?" Primarily, Judaism; but, most unquestionably, it has a moral application to every organized system of religion under the sun. If that system of ordinances and ceremonies which God Himself had set up—if Judaism, with its imposing ritual, its splendid temple, its priesthood and its sacrifices, has been found fault with, condemned, and set aside, what shall be said of any or all of those organizations framed by a human hand? If our Lord Christ is outside of that, how much more is He outside of these!

Yes, christian reader, we may rest assured that the outside place, the place of rejection and reproach is that to which we are called, if indeed we would know aught of true fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark the words! "Let us go forth." Will any Christian say, "No; I cannot go forth. My place is inside the camp. I must work there?" If so, then, your place is clearly not with Jesus, for He is as surely outside the camp as He is on the throne of God. If your sphere of work lies inside the camp, when your Master tells you to go forth, what shall we say for your work? Can it be worth much? Can it have your Lord's approving smile? It may exhibit His overruling hand, and illustrate His sovereign goodness; but can it possibly have His unqualified approval while carried on in a sphere from which He peremptorily commands you to go forth?

The all-important thing for every true servant is to be found exactly where his Master would have him.

The question is not, " Am I doing a great deal of work? but am I pleasing my Master?" I may seem to be doing wonders, in the way of work; my name may be heralded to the ends of the earth, as a most laborious, devoted, and successful workman; and, all the while, I may be in an utterly false position, indulging my own unbroken will, pleasing myself, and seeking some personal end or object.

All this is very solemn indeed, and demands the consideration of all who really desire to be found in the current of God's thoughts. We live in a day of much willfulness. The commandments of Christ do not govern us. We think for ourselves, in place of submitting ourselves absolutely to the authority of the word. When our Lord tells us to go forth without the camp, we, instead of yielding a ready obedience, begin to reason as to the results which we can reach by remaining within. Scripture seems to have little or no power over our souls. We do not aim at simply pleasing Christ. Provided we can make great show of work, we think all is right. We are more occupied with results which, after all, may only tend to magnify ourselves, than with the earnest purpose to do what is agreeable to the mind of Christ.

But are we to be idle? Is there nothing for us to do in the outside place to which we are called? Is christian life to be made up of a series of negations? Is there nothing positive? Let Heb. 13 furnish the clear and forcible answer to all these inquiries. We shall find it quite as distinct in reference to our work as it is in reference to our position.

What, then, have we got to do? Two things; and these two in their comprehensive range take in the whole of a Christian's life, in its two grand aspects. They give us the inner and the outer life of the true believer. In the first place, we read, " By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

Is not this something? Have we not here a very elevated character of work? Yes, verily; the most elevated that can possibly engage the energies of our renewed being. It is our privilege to be occupied, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight, in presenting the sacrifice of praise to God—a sacrifice which, He assures us, is ever most acceptable to Him. " Whoso offereth praise," He says, " glorifieth me."

Let us carefully note this. Praise is to be the primary and continual occupation of the believer. We, in our fancied wisdom, would put work in the first place. We are disposed to attach chief importance to bustling activity. We have such an overweening sense of the value of doing, that we lose sight of the place which worship occupies in the thoughts of God.

Again, there are some who vainly imagine that they can please God by punishing their bodies. They think that He delights in their vigils, fastings, floggings, and flagellations. Miserable, soul-destroying, God-dishonoring delusion! Will not those who harbor it and act upon it bend their ears and their hearts to those gracious words which we have just penned, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." True it is, that those words are immediately followed by that grand practical statement, "And to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation

of God." But still, here, as everywhere, the highest place is assigned to praise, not to work. And, most assuredly., no man can be said to be ordering his conversation aright who abuses his body and renders it unfit to be the vessel or instrument by which he can serve God.

No, reader, if we really desire to please God, to gratify His heart and to glorify His name, we shall give our heart's attention to Heb. 13:15, and seek to offer the sacrifice of praise, continually. Yes, " continually." Not merely now and then, when all goes on smoothly and pleasantly. Come what may, it is our high and holy privilege to offer the sacrifice of praise to God.

And oh! how delightful it is to cultivate a spirit of praise and thankfulness! To be always ready to cry, " Hallelujah!" It does so glorify God when His people live in an atmosphere of praise. It imparts a heavenly tone to their character, and speaks more powerfully to the hearts of those around them than if they were preaching to them from morning till night. A Christian should always be happy, always bright with the spirit of praise, always reflecting back upon this dark world the blessed beams of His Father's countenance.

Thus it should ever be. Nothing is so unworthy of a Christian as a fretful spirit, a gloomy temper, a sour morose-looking face. And not only is it unworthy of a Christian, but it is dishonoring to God, and it causes the enemies of truth to speak reproachfully. No doubt, tempers and dispositions vary; and much allowance must be made in cases of weak bodily health. It is not easy to look pleasant when the body is racked with gout, neuralgia, or rheumatism; and, further, we should be very far indeed from commending anything like levity or the everlasting smile of mere unsubdued nature.

But scripture is clear and explicit. It tells us to " offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." How simple! " The fruit of lips!" Is this all? Yes; this is what our God delights in. It is His joy to be surrounded with the praises of hearts filled to overflowing with His abounding goodness. Thus it will be, throughout eternity, in that bright home of love and glory to which we are so rapidly hastening.

And let the reader specially note the words, " By him" We are to offer our sacrifice of praise by the hand of our Great High Priest, who is ever in the presence of God for us. This is most consolatory and assuring to our hearts. Jesus presents our sacrifice of praise to God. It must therefore be ever acceptable. We may safely believe that we should not know our sacrifice if we could see it laid on the altar by the priestly hand of the Great Minister of the sanctuary. It goes up to God, not as it proceeds from us, but as it is presented by Him. Divested of all the imperfection and failure attaching to us, it ascends to God in all the fragrance and acceptancy belonging to Him. The feeblest note of praise, the simple "Thank God!" is perfumed with the incense of Christ's infinite preciousness. This is unspeakably precious; and it should greatly encourage us to cultivate a spirit of praise. We should be " continually" praising and blessing God. A murmuring or fretful word should never cross the lips of one who has Christ for his portion, and who stands identified with that blessed One in His position and His destiny.

But we must draw this paper to a close by a rapid glance at the other side of the Christian's work. If it is our privilege to be continually praising and blessing God, it is also our privilege to be doing good to man. " But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." We are passing through a world of misery, of sin and death and sorrow. We are surrounded by broken hearts and crushed spirits, if we would only look them oat.

Yes; this is the point; if we would only look them out. It is easy for us to close our eyes to such things, to turn away from, to "forget" that there are such things always within reach of us. We can sit in our easy chair, and speculate about truth, doctrines, and the latter of scripture; we can discuss the theories of Christianity, and split hairs about prophecy and dispensational truth, and, all the while, be shamefully failing in the discharge of our grand responsibilities as Christians. We are in imminent danger of forgetting that Christianity is a living reality. It is not a set of dogmas, a number of principles strung together on a thread of systematized divinity, which unconverted people can have at their fingers' ends. Neither is it a set of ordinances to be gone through, in dreary formality, by lifeless, heartless professors. No; it is life—life eternal—life implanted by the Holy Ghost, and expressing itself in those two lovely forms on which we have been dwelling, namely, praise to God and doing good to man.

Such was the life of Jesus when He trod this earth of ours. He lived in the atmosphere of praise; and He went about doing good.

And He is our life, and He is our model on which the life is to be formed. The Christian should be the living expression of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not a mere question of leading what is called a religious life, which very often resolves itself into a tiresome round of duties which neither yield "praise" to God nor one atom of " good" to man. There must be life, or it is all perfectly worthless. " The kingdom of God is not meat or drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." Rom. 14:17, 18.

Beloved christian reader, let us earnestly apply our hearts to the consideration of these great practical truths. Let us seek to be Christians not merely in name but in reality. Let us not be distinguished as the mere vendors of peculiar "views." Oh! how worthless are views! How utterly profitless is discussion! How wearisome are theological hair-splittings! Let us have life, light, and love. These are heavenly, eternal, divine. All else is vanity. How we do long for reality in this world of sham—for deep thinkers and earnest workers in this day of shallow talkers!

Note.—The reader will find it profitable to compare Heb. 13:13-16 with 1 Pet. 2:4-9. " Let us go forth therefore unto him," says Paul. " To whom coming," says Peter. Then we have "The holy priesthood" offering up spiritual sacrifices of praise. And " The royal priesthood " doing good and communicating—" showing forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." The two scriptures give us a magnificent view of fundamental, devotional, and practical Christianity.

Short Papers, Two Impossibles: Part 2

In reading the Epistle to the Hebrews, we can hardly fail to notice the way in which the most solemn words of warning stand side by side with words of deepest comfort and consolation. Thus, for example, chapter iv. opens with, “Let us therefore fear;” and closes with, “ Let us therefore come boldly” When we think of who we are, what we are, and where we are, we have reason to fear. But when we think of God—His grace, His goodness, His tender mercy, His faithfulness—we may cherish the most fearless confidence. When we think of the world, with all its dangers, temptations, and snares, we may well be on our guard. But when we think of “the throne of grace,” with its exhaustless provisions,

and of our most merciful, faithful, and sympathizing High Priest, we can draw nigh with holy boldness, and find an ample supply to meet our deepest need.

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

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

Thus we see how the inspiring Spirit connects, in this epistle, the most precious consolation with the most solemn warning. Both are needed, and therefore both are given; and it will be our wisdom to seek to profit by both. We need never be afraid to trust scripture. If we find a difficulty, in place of puzzling over it, let us quietly wait on God for further light, meanwhile calmly resting in the assurance that no one part of the word of God can ever contradict another. All is in the most perfect harmony; the apparent discrepancies are entirely owing to our ignorance; and hence, instead of putting forth our gratuitous efforts to reconcile things, we should just allow each passage of scripture to come home in all its moral force to the heart and conscience, and produce its divinely appointed result in the formation of our character. Thus, when we read such words as these, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one," it is our sweet privilege to take them in, in all their divine simplicity and heavenly clearness, and rest in them in calm confidence. There is no difficulty, no obscurity, no vagueness about them. All Christ's sheep are as safe as He can make them, as safe as He is Himself. The hand that would touch them must touch Him. They are divinely and eternally secure. Persons may imagine, or profess themselves to be, His sheep who are not so in reality; they may fall away from their mere profession, bring much reproach on the cause of Christ, cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of honest inquirers, by leading them to think that true Christians can fall away, and be lost. All this may be true, but it leaves wholly untouched the precious and most comforting words of our good and faithful Shepherd, that His sheep have eternal life, and shall never—can never, perish. No passage of holy scripture can, by any possibility, contradict the plain statement of our Lord.

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

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

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

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

We close with a passage from a volume referred to in our paper for November.

"Another point of interest which may be remarked here (in Heb. 6) is the intimation at the end, compared with the beginning, of the chapter. We have seen the highest external privileges"—and they were merely external—" not only the mind of man, as far as it could, enjoying the truth, but the power of the Holy Ghost making the man, at any rate, an instrument of power"—not a subject of grace—" even though it be to

his own shame and deeper condemnation afterward. In short, man may have the utmost conceivable advantage, and the greatest external power, even of the Spirit of God Himself, and yet all come to nothing."

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

" There was no reality found in the persons referred to in verses 4 and 5, though so highly favored; and hence it was, as there was no conscience before God, no sense of sin, no cleaving to Christ, that everything came to naught. But here, in the end of the chapter, there is the fruit of faith, feeble indeed, and sorely tried, but in the light that appreciates the judgment of God against sin. Hence, although it be only fleeing in an agony of soul for refuge, what is it that God gives to one in such a state? Strong consolation, and that which enters within the veil. Impossible that the Son should be shaken from His place on the throne of God. And it is as impossible that the very least and weakest believer should come to any hurt whatever! The weakest of saints more than conqueror is."1

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

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 24. Hebrews 4:4

Hundreds as well as our correspondent "S. K. J." have been sorely troubled by Heb. 6:4; and, while we rejoice in seeing souls thoroughly searched by the word, we certainly do not like to see them stumbled.

We do not think our correspondent fully apprehends either the scope or object of this important scripture. The Apostle is urging the Hebrews to leave the mere elements or first principles confined in the Jewish ritual, in which they had been brought up, such as the ceremonial acts of washing, and laying on of hands, and the doctrines which, as mere Jews, they had been taught. He is not speaking in this place of Christian principles or privileges; for no matter how elementary these might be, he could never urge the Hebrews to leave them. The very first truths of the gospel which fell on my ear are those which I am to hold fast with the most earnest tenacity to the end. The redeemed in glory sing of the love of God, and the blood of Jesus; and are not these some of the very first principles of Christianity? How, then, could the Apostle exhort us to leave them behind? It is, in our judgment, a mistake to confound Jewish "repentance from dead works," with Christian "repentance unto life;" or Jewish "washings," with Christian "baptism."

Furthermore, we do not believe that the persons referred to in Hebrews 6:4-5, were ever regenerated at all. Not one of the expressions used rises to the idea of the new birth. The expression, "made partakers of the Holy Spirit," merely applies to one having certain gifts of the Spirit, which many might have possessed without being regenerated. No truly regenerated person can ever finally fall away; but if a Jew professed to receive the Christian system, and then went back to the Jewish system, it was impossible to do anything for him, inasmuch as he had given up the only thing by which God could bless, and gone back to that which could do nothing for anybody. Judaism could not save him, and he had given up Christianity. What could be done for him?

Want of space prevents our entering more fully into the exposition of this important passage, but we trust sufficient has been said to open it to our correspondent.

Short Papers, Two Impossibles: Part 1

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

Still, we have not the slightest doubt that many true and earnest souls, many to whom Heb. 6:4-6 has no application whatever, have been stumbled and discouraged through not understanding the true force and bearing of the passage. It is to help such that we pen the following lines, for we can truly say there is no work in which we have a more intense interest than in taking up the stumbling-blocks out of the way of God's beloved people. We feel most fully assured it is work which He delights to have done, inasmuch as He has given express commandment to His servants to do it. We have just to take care lest, in our desire to remove the stumbling-blocks, we should in any wise disturb the landmarks. May the blessed Spirit, then, graciously help us to a right understanding of this sadly misunderstood passage of holy scripture!

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

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

doctrine of baptisms [or washings], and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

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

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

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

No doubt there is progress in the divine life, growth in grace, faith growing exceedingly. All this we own most fully, and would charge ourselves to seek after most earnestly. But it is not the subject of Heb. 6:1, 2. It is not a question of going from one form in the school of Christ to another, but of leaving the school of Moses to enter fully, heartily, and intelligently, the school of Christ. It is not a question of going from one stage of christian life to another, but of abandoning Judaism to go on to Christianity. We could not abandon a single atom of Christianity without abandoning Christ Himself, for He is the foundation, the source, the center, the spring of it all.

But the reader may feel disposed to ask, Have we not got “repentance, faith, resurrection, and eternal judgment” in Heb. 6:1, 2?1 True, but only as elements of the Jewish system. There is not a word about “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”—not a word about Christ at all; it is simply Judaism, to which some of the Hebrew professors were in danger of returning, but from which the apostle earnestly urges them to go on.

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

Now the reader will notice that, as in verses 1, 2, we have not a single clause specially characteristic of Christianity; so, in verses 4, 5, we have not a single clause that rises to the height of the new birth, or the sealing of the Holy Ghost. A person might be all that is here spoken of, and yet never have been born again, • Resurrection, as seen in Christianity, is not merely “ resurrection of the dead;” but,” resurrection from among the dead.”

never sealed by the Holy Ghost. How many thousands have been “ enlightened” by the gospel, without being converted by it! Wherever the gospel has been preached, wherever the Bible has been received and read, an enlightening influence has gone forth, altogether irrespective of any saving work wrought in souls. Look, for example, at the nations of Europe since the Reformation. In all those countries that have received the Bible, we see the moral effect produced in the way of intelligence, civilization, and refinement, apart altogether from the question of the conversion of individual souls. On the other hand, those countries which have refused the Bible exhibit the melancholy results of ignorance, moral darkness, and degradation. In a word, there may be enlightenment of the understanding without any divine work in the conscience or in the heart.

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

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

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

Finally, a person might taste “ the power of the coming age”—the age when Messiah will set up His kingdom—he might heal diseases, and cast out devils—he might take up serpents, and drink poison—he might speak with tongues: he might do all these things, and yet never have been born again. “ Thus”—as a recent writer has solemnly and forcibly put it—“ we may fairly give the fullest force to every one of these expressions. Yet, write them out ever so largely, they fall short both of the new birth and of sealing with the Holy Ghost. There is everything, one may say, save inward spiritual life in Christ, or the indwelling seal of it. That is to say”—and, oh, may it be deeply pondered in this day of intellectual knowledge and flippant profession!—“one may have the very highest endowments and privileges, in the way both of meeting the mind, and also of exterior power; and yet all may be given up, and the man become so much the keener enemy of Christ. Indeed such is the natural result. It had been the mournful fact as to some. They had fallen away. Hence renewal to repentance is an impossibility”—declared to be so by the authoritative and conclusive testimony of the Holy Ghost—“seeing they crucify’ to themselves the Son of God, and put him to an open shame.”

“Why impossible? The case supposed is”—not any one who ever possessed a single spark of divine life in his soul; no, nor yet any one with the very feeblest desire after Christ, or one atom of true repentance or desire to flee from the wrath to come, but that—“ of persons, after the richest proof and privilege, turning aside apostates from Christ, in order to take up Judaism once more. As long as that course is pursued, repentance there cannot be. Supposing a man had been the adversary of Messiah here below’—as, for example, Paul himself, the very writer of the epistle—“ there was still the opening for him of grace from on high. It was possible that the very man that had slighted Christ here below, might have his eyes opened to see and receive Christ above; but this abandoned, there is no fresh condition in which He could be presented to men. Those who rejected Christ, in the fullness of His grace, and in the height of His glory in which God had set Him as Man before them”—Christ the object of fourfold testimony, His works, the Father, John the Baptist, and Moses. (John 5)— Those that rejected Him, not merely on earth, but in heaven”—as attested by the Holy Ghost sent down from the ascended and glorified Man on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens—“ what was there to fall back upon? What possible means to bring them to repentance after that? There is none. What is there but Christ coming in judgment?”*

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

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

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

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

(to be continued, if the Lord will)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 6, Three Appearings, The: Part 1

(Read Heb. 9:24-28.)

" For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the ages hath he ' appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time apart from sin, unto salvation.''1

The foregoing passage sets before us three great facts in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. It speaks of what we may venture to call three distinct appearings, namely, an appearing in the past; an appearing in the present; and an appearing in the future. He hath appeared, •in this world, to do a certain work: He doth appear in heaven to carry on a certain ministry; and He shall appear in glory. The first is Atonement; the second is Advocacy; the third is the Advent. And first, then, let us dwell for a few moments on the atonement, which is here presented in its two grand aspects, first, to Godward; and secondly, to us ward. The apostle declares that Christ hath appeared "to put away sin;' and also " to * The English reader should be informed that the three words which are rendered in the above passage, <(appear," are not the same in the original Greek; but our object is to deal with the tacts set forth, rather than with the words employed. 130 bear the sins of many." This is a distinction of the utmost importance, and one not sufficiently understood or attended to. Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has glorified God in reference to the question of sin, in its very broadest aspect. This He has done, altogether irrespective of the question of persons, or the forgiveness of the sins of individuals. Even though every soul, from the days of Adam down to the very last generation, were to reject the proffered mercy of God, yet would it hold good that the atoning death of Christ had put away sin—had destroyed the power of Satan—had perfectly glorified God, and laid the deep and solid foundation on which all the divine counsels and purposes can rest forever.

It is to this that the Baptist refers in those memorable Words, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29.) The Lamb of God has wrought a work in virtue of which every trace of sin shall be obliterated from the creation of God. He has perfectly vindicated God in the very midst of a scene in which He had been so grossly dishonored, in which His character had been traduced, and His majesty insulted. He came to do this at all cost, even at the sacrifice of Himself. He sacrificed Himself in order to maintain, in view of heaven, earth, and hell, the glory of God. He has wrought a work by the which God is infinitely more glorified than if sin had not entered at all. God shall reap a richer harvest by far in the fields of redemption than ever he could have reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation.

It is well that the reader should deeply ponder this glorious aspect of the atoning death of Christ. We are apt to think that the very highest view we can take of the cross is that which involves the question of our forgiveness and salvation. This is a grave mistake. That question is divinely settled, as we shall seek to show; for the less is always included in the greater. But let us 'remember that our side of the atonement is the less; God's side 01 it the greater. It was infinitely more important that God should be glorified than that we should be saved. Both ends have been gained, blessed be God, and gained by one and the same work, the precious atonement of Christ; but we must never forget that the glory of God is of incalculably greater moment than the salvation of men, and further, that we never can have so clear a sense of the

latter as when we see it flowing from the former. It is when we see that God has been perfectly and forever glorified in the death of Christ, that we can really enter into the divine perfectness of our salvation. In point of fact, both are so intimately bound up together that they cannot be separated; but still God's part in the cross of Christ must ever get its own proper preeminence. The glory of God was ever uppermost in the devoted heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this He lived, for this He died. He came into this world for the express purpose of glorifying God, and from this great and holy object He never swerved, the breadth of a hair, from the manger to the cross. True it is—blessedly true, that in carrying out this object, He has perfectly met our case; but the divine glory ruled Him in life and in death.

Now, it is on the ground of atonement, looked at in this its higher aspect, that God has been dealing with the world in patient grace, mercy, and forbearance, for well nigh six thousand years. He sends His rain and His sunbeams upon the evil and upon the good, upon the just and the unjust. It is in virtue of the atonement of Christ—though despised and rejected—that the infidel and the atheist live, move, and have their being; yea, the very breath that they spend in opposing the revelation, and denying the existence of God, they owe to the atoning death of Christ. We speak not here, by any means, of the forgiveness 01 sins, or of the soul's salvation. This is another question altogether and to it we shall refer presently. But, looking at man in reference to his life in this world, and looking at the world in which he lives, it is the cross which forms the basis of God's merciful dealing with both the one and the other.

Furthermore, it is on the ground of the atonement of Christ, in this same aspect of it, that the evangelist can go forth " into all the world, and preach glad tidings to every creature." He can declare the blessed truth that God has been glorified as to sin—His claims satisfied—His majesty vindicated—His law magnified—His attributes harmonized. He can proclaim the precious message that God can now be just and yet the justifier of any poor ungodly sinner that believes in Jesus. There is no hindrance, no barrier of any kind whatsoever. The preacher of the gospel is not to be cramped by any dogmas of theology. His preaching leaves the domain of sound theology wholly untouched. He has to do with the large, loving heart of God, which, in virtue of atonement, can flow forth to every creature beneath the canopy of heaven. He can say to each and to all—and say it without reserve—" Come!" Nay, more, he is bound to " beseech" them to come. " We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Such is the proper language of the evangelist, the herald of the cross, the ambassador of Christ. He knows no less a range than the wide, wide world; and he is called to drop his message into the ear of every creature under heaven.

And why? Because " Christ hath put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself." He has, by His most precious death, changed completely the ground of God's dealings with man and with the world, so that instead of having to deal with them on the ground of sin, He can deal on the ground of atonement.

Finally, it is in virtue of the atonement, in this broad and lofty aspect, that every vestige of •sin, and every trace of the serpent shall be obliterated from the wide universe of God. Then shall be seen the full force of that passage above referred to, " The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and also another well known clause, namely, " The propitiation.....for the whole world."* 1 John 2:2.

Thus much as to what we may call the primary aspect of the atoning death of Christ—an aspect which cannot be too thoughtfully studied. A clear understanding of this weighty point would tend to remove a great deal of difficulty and misunderstanding in reference to the full and free preaching of the gospel. Many of the Lord's honored servants find themselves hindered in the presentation of the glad tidings of salvation, simply because they do not see this wide aspect of the atonement. They confine the death of Christ merely to its bearing upon the sins of God's elect; and they therefore deem it wrong to preach the gospel to all, or to invite—yea to beseech and entreat—all to come. They judge it to be false and wrong to invite any to come save the elect, inasmuch as they alone were the objects for whom Christ died.

Now, that Christ did die for the elect, scripture distinctly teaches, in manifold places. He died for the elect nation of Israel, and for the elect Church of God—the bride of Christ. But scripture toucheth more than this. It declares that " He died for (2 Cor. 5:14); that " He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9.) There is no need whatever for seeking to avoid the plain force and meaning of these and kindred statements of inspiration. And further, we believe it to be quite wrong to add our own words to God's words in order to reconcile them with any particular system of doctrine. When scripture affirms that Christ died for all, we have no right to add the words "the elect," And when scripture states that Christ " tasted death for every man," we have no right to say, u× every elect man." It is our place to take God's word as it stands, and reverently bow to its authoritative teaching, in all things. We can no more attempt to systematize God's word than we can. systematize God Himself. God's word, and God's heart, and God's nature are quite too deep, broad, and comprehensive to be included within the limits of the very broadest and best constructed human system of theology that was ever framed. We shall, ever and anon, be discovering passages of scripture which will not fall in with our system. We must remember that God is love, and this love will tell itself out to all without limit. True, God has His counsels, His purposes, and His decrees; but it is not these He presents to the poor lost sinner. He will instruct and interest His saints about such things; but to the guilty heavy-laden sinner, He presents His love, His grace, His mercy, His readiness to save, to pardon, and to bless.

And let it be well remembered that the sinner's responsibility flows out of what is revealed, and not out of what is secret. God's decrees are secret; His nature, His character, Himself, is revealed. The sinner will not be judged for rejecting what he had no means of knowing. " This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19.

We are not writing a theological treatise; but we do feel it to be a matter of the gravest moment to press upon the reader that his responsibility, as a sinner, is based upon the fact that the aspect of the salvation of God, and of the atonement of Christ, is, most distinctly and decidedly, "unto all," and not merely to a certain number of the human family. The glorious message is sent forth into all the world.

no Everyone who hears it is invited to come. This is grounded upon the fact that Christ has put away sin—that the blood of atonement has been carried into the presence of God -that the barrier which sin presented has been flung down and abolished, and now the mighty tide of divine love can flow freely forth to the very vilest of the sons of men.

Such is the message; and when any one, through grace, believes it, he can be further told that, not only has Christ put away sin, but that also He has borne his sins—the actual sins of all His people—-of all who believe in His name. The evangelist can stand up in the midst of assembled thousands and declare that Christ has put away sin—that God is satisfied—that the way is open for all; and he can whisper the same in the car of each and every sinner under heaven. Then, when any one has bowed down to this testimony—when the repentant, brokenhearted, self judged sinner receives the blessed record—he can be further taught that his sins were all laid on Jesus, all borne and forever put away by Him when He died on the cross.

This is the plain doctrine of Heb. 9:26, 28, and we have a striking type of it in the two goats of Lev. 16 If the reader will just turn to the passage, he will find there, first, the slain goat; and, secondly, the scape goat. The blood of the slain goat was brought into the sanctuary and sprinkled there. This was a type of Christ putting away sin. Then the high priest, on behalf of the congregation, confessed all their sins upon the head of the scape goat, and they were borne away into a land not inhabited. This was a type of Christ bearing the sins of His people. The two goats, taken together, give us a Ml view of the atonement of Christ, which, like the righteousness of God, in Romans hi. is " unto all, and upon all that believe."

All this is most simple. It removes many difficulties out of the way of the earnest seeker after peace. These difficulties arise, in many cases, from the conflicting dogmas of theological systems, and have no foundation whatever in holy scripture. There all is as plain and as clear as God can make it. Each one who hears the message of God's free love is bound, not to say invited, to receive it; and judgment will, most assuredly, fall upon each and all who refuse or neglect the proffered mercy. It is utterly impossible for any one who has ever heard the gospel, or ever had the New Testament in his hand, to get rid of the awful responsibility that rests upon him to accept God's salvation. Not a single soul will have to say, " I could not believe, because I was not one of the elect, and did not get power to believe." No one will ever dare to say or even to think this. If any could take such ground, then where were the force or the meaning of the following burning words?—" The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1:7, 8.) Will any one ever be punished for not obeying the gospel, if he is not responsible to yield that obedience? Most assuredly not. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

But does God send His gospel to people merely to place them under responsibility and increase their guilt? Ear be the monstrous thought. He sends His gospel to the lost sinner in order that he may be saved, for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. All, therefore, who perish shall have none but themselves to blame.

(To he continued, if the Lord will.)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 6, Three Appearings, The: Part 2

(Read Heb. 9:24-28.)

It is of the very last importance that the reader should he established in the knowledge and practical sense of what the Atonement of Christ has accomplished for all who simply trust in Him. It is, we need hardly say, the only basis of peace. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and He has borne our sins, in His own body, on the tree. It is, therefore, impossible that any question as to sin or guilt can ever arise. All has been ' once and forever' settled by the atoning death of the Lamb of God. True it is—alas! how true—we have sin in us; and we have, daily and hourly, to judge ourselves and judge our ways. It will ever hold good of us, so long as we are in a body of sin and death, that " in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing." But then nothing can ever touch the question of our soul's perfect and eternal acceptance. The conscience of the believer is as completely purged from every soil and stain, as will be the whole creation, by and by. If it were not so, Christ could not be where He now is. He has entered into the presence of God, there to appear for us. This leads us, in the second place, to consider the advocacy.

Very many souls are apt to confound two things which, though inseparably connected, are perfectly distinct, namely, Advocacy and Atonement. Not seeing the divine completeness of the Atonement, they are, hi a certain way, looking to the Advocacy to do for them what the Atonement has done. We must remember that though, as to our standing, we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; yet, as to the actual fact of our condition, we are in the body. We are, in spirit and by faith, seated in heavenly places in Christ; but yet we are actually in the wilderness, subject to all sorts of infirmities, liable to fail and err in a thousand ways. Now it is to meet our present actual state and wants that the Advocacy or Priesthood of Christ is designed. God be praised for the blessed provision! As those who are in the body, passing through the wilderness, we need a great High Priest to maintain the link of communion, or to restore it when broken. Such an One we have, ever living to make intercession for us; nor could we get on for a single moment without Him. The work of Atonement is never repeated; the work of the Advocate is never interrupted. When once the blood of Christ is applied to the soul, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the application is never repeated. To think of a repetition is to deny its efficacy, and to reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats. No doubt people do not see this; and, most assuredly, they do not mean it:. but such is the real tendency of the thought of a fresh application of the blood of sprinkling. It may be that persons who speak in this way, really mean to put honor upon the blood of Christ, and to give expression to their own felt unworthiness; but, in good truth, the best way to put honor upon the blood of Christ is to rejoice in what it has done for our souls: and the best way to set forth our own unworthiness is to feel and remember that we were so vile, that nothing but the death of Christ could avail to meet our case. So vile were we that nothing but His blood could cleanse us. So precious is His blood that not a trace of our guilt remains. " The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Thus it stands in reference to the very feeblest child of God whose eye scans these lines. " All sin's forgiven." Not a trace of guilt remains. Jesus is in the presence of God for us. He is there as a High Priest before God—as an Advocate with the Father.1 He has, by His atoning death, rent the veil—put away sin—brought us nigh to God, in all the credit and virtue of His sacrifice; and now He lives to maintain us by His Advocacy, in the enjoyment of the place and privileges into which His blood has introduced us.

Hence the apostle says, " If any man sin we have" -what? the blood? Nay; but—"an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The blood has done its work, and is ever before God according to its full value in His sight. Its efficacy is ever the same. But we have sinned; it may be only in thought; but even that thought is quite enough to interrupt our communion. Here is where Advocacy comes in. If it were not that Jesus Christ is ever acting for us in the sanctuary above, our faith would most assuredly fail in moments in the which we have, in any measure, yielded to the voice of our sinful nature. Thus it was with Peter, in that terrible hour of his temptation and fall: " Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith foil not; and when thou art converted [or restored] strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:31, 32.

Let the reader note this. " I have prayed for thee that"- what? Was it that he might not fail? Nay, but that, having failed, his faith might not give way. Had Christ not prayed for His poor feeble servant, he would have gone from bad to worse, and from worse to worst. But the

intercession of Christ procured for Peter the grace of true repentance, self-judgment, and bitter sorrow for his grievous sin; and, finally, complete restoration of his heart and conscience, so that the current of his communion—interrupted by sin, but restored by advocacy—might flow on as before.

Thus it is with us, when, through lack of that holy vigilance which we should ever exercise, we commit sin. Jesus goes to the Father for us. He prays for us; and it is through the efficacy of His priestly intercession that we are convicted, and brought to self-judgment, confession and restoration. All is founded on the Advocacy; and the Advocacy is founded on the Atonement.

And here it may be well to assert, in the clearest and strongest manner possible, that it is the sweet privilege of every believer not to commit sin. There is no necessity whatever why he should. " My little children," says the apostle, " these things write I unto you that ye sin not.' This is a most precious truth for every lover of holiness. We need not sin. Let us remember this. " Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." 1 John 3:9.

This is the divine idea of a Christian. Alas! we do not always realize it; but that does not, and cannot, touch the precious truth. The divine nature, the new man, the life of Christ in the believer cannot possibly sin; and it is the privilege of every believer so to walk as that nothing but the life of Christ may be seen. The Holy Ghost dwells in the believer, on the ground of redemption, in order to give effect to the desires of the new nature, so that the flesh may be as though it did not exist, and nothing but Christ be seen in the believer's life.

It is of the utmost importance that this divine idea of christian life should be seized and maintained. People sometimes ask the question, " Is it possible for a Christian to live without committing sin?" We reply in the language of the inspired apostle, " My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." (1 John 2:1.) And again, quoting the language of another inspired apostle, " How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6) The Christian is viewed by God as," dead to sin;" and hence, if he yields to it, he is practically denying his standing in a risen Christ. Alas! alas! we do sin; and hence the apostle adds; " If any mm sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, hut also for the whole world."

This gives wonderful completeness to the work on which our souls repose. Such is the perfect efficacy of the Atonement of Christ that we have one Advocate with us, in order that we may not sin; and we have another Advocate with the Father if we do sin. The word rendered " Comforter" in John 14:16, is the same as is rendered "Advocate" in 1 John 2:1. We have one divine Person managing for us here; and we have another divine Person managing for us in heaven; and all this on the ground of the atoning death of Christ.

Will it be said that, in writing thus, we furnish a license for committing sin? God forbid! We have already declared, and would insist upon, the blessed possibility of living in such unbroken communion with God—of walking so in the Spirit—of being so filled and occupied with Christ, as that the flesh or the old man may not appear. This we know is not always the case. " In many things we offend all," as James tells us. But no right minded person, no lover of holiness, no spiritual Christian, could have any sympathy with those who say that we must commit sin. Thank God it is not so. But what a mercy it is, beloved christian reader, to know that, when we do fail, there is One at the right hand of God, to restore the broken link of communion! This He does by producing in our souls, by. His Spirit who dwells in us—•that " other Advocate"—the sense of failure^ and leading us into self-judgment and true confession of the wrong, whatever it be.

We say " true confession," for it must be this if it be the fruit of the Spirit's work in the heart. It is not lightly and flippantly saying we have sinned; and then as lightly and flippantly sinning again. This is most sorrowful, and most dangerous. We know nothing more hardening and demoralizing than this sort of thing. It is sure to lead to the most disastrous consequences. We have known cases of persons living in sin, and satisfying themselves by a mere lip confession of their sin, and then going and committing the sin again and again; and this has gone on for months and years; until God in His faithfulness caused the whole thing to come out openly before others.

All this is most dreadful. It is Satan's way of hardening and deceiving the heart. Oh! that we may watch against it, and ever keep a tender conscience. We may rest assured that when a truehearted child of God is betrayed into sin, the Holy Ghost will produce in him such a sense of it -will lead him into such intense self-loathing—such an abhorrence of the evil—such thorough self-judgment in the presence of God, as that he cannot lightly go and commit the sin again. This we may learn from the words of the apostle, when he says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and"—mark this weighty clause—" cleanse us from all unrighteousness Here we have the precious fruit of the double Advocacy. It is all presented in its fullness, in this part of the first epistle of John. If any man sin, the blessed Paraclete on high intercedes with the Father—pleads the full merits of His atoning work—prays for the erring one, on the ground of His having borne the judgment of that very sin. Then the other Paraclete acts in the conscience, produces repentance and confession, and brings the soul back into the light, in the sweet sense that the sin is forgiven, the unrighteousness cleansed, and the communion perfectly restored. "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Psalm 23:3.

We trust the reader will be enabled to understand this great fundamental truth. Many, we are aware, find it difficult to reconcile the idea of intercession with the truth of a perfect atonement. " If," say they, " the atonement is perfect, what need is there of intercession? If the believer is made as white as snow by the blood of Christ- so white that God the Spirit can dwell in his heart -then what does he want of a priest? If by one offering Christ has perfected forever all them that are sanctified, then what need have these perfected and sanctified ones of an Advocate'? Surely we must either admit the thought of an imperfect Atonement or deny the need of Advocacy."

Such is the reasoning of the human mind; but such is not the faith of Christians. Scripture does most surely teach us that the believer is washed as white as snow; that he is accepted in the Beloved—complete in Christ -perfectly forgiven and perfectly justified through the death and resurrection of Christ; that he can never come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life; that he is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—not in the old creation, but in the new—not a member of the first Adam, but of the last; that he is dead to sin, dead to the world, dead to the law, because Christ has died, and the believer died in Him. All this is largely unfolded and constantly insisted upon by the inspired writers. Scores of passages might easily be quoted in proof, were it needful.

But, then, there is another aspect of the Christian which must be taken into account. He is not in the flesh as to the ground of his standing; but he is in the body as to the fact of his condition. He is in Christ as to his standing; but he is also in the world as to the fact of his existence. He is surrounded by all sorts of temptations and difficulties; and lie is, in himself, a poor, feeble creature, full of infirmities, not sufficient even to think anything as of himself. Nor is this all. Each true Christian is ever ready to acknowledge that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. He is saved, thank God, and all is eternally settled; but then he has, as a saved one, to get through the wilderness; he has to

labor to enter into God's rest; and here it is that priesthood comes in. The object of priesthood is not to complete the work of atonement, inasmuch as that work is as perfect as the One who accomplished it. But we have to be carried through the wilderness, and brought into the rest that remains for the people of God, and for tins end we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. His sympathy and succor are ours, and we could not get on, for one moment, without them. He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and by His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, He sustains us, day by day, in the full credit and value of His atoning work. He lifts us up when we fall; restores us when we wander; repairs the link of communion when snapped by our carelessness. In a word, He appears in the presence of God for us, and there carries on an uninterrupted service on our behalf, in virtue of which we are maintained in the integrity of the relationship into which His atoning death has introduced us.

Thus much as to Atonement and Advocacy. It only remains for us to treat of the Advent; but this we must reserve for our next issue. We deeply feel the meagerness and poverty of all that has been advanced, on both the points which have occupied us; and we wish specially to remind the reader that, in treating of the death of Christ, we have left wholly untouched one grand point therein, namely, our death in Him. This we may, if God permit, go into on another occasion. It is immensely important as the power of deliverance from indwelling sin, as well as from this present evil world, and from the law. There are many who merely look to the death of Christ for pardon and justification, but they do not see the precious and emancipating truth of their having died in Him, and their deliverance, in consequence, from the power of sin in them. This latter is the secret of victory over self and the world, and of deliverance from every form of legality and mere fleshly pietism.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 6, Three Appearings, The: Part 3

(Read Heb. 9:24-28.)

We have already glanced at two of the weighty subjects presented to us in the closing verses of Heb. 9, namely, first, the precious atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ, in its two aspects; and, secondly, His all prevailing advocacy at God's right hand for us. It only remains for us to consider, in the third place,

HIS ADVENT,

which is here presented to us in immediate connection with those great foundation truths which have already engaged our attention; and which, moreover, are held and prized by all true Christians. Is it true that Christ hath appeared in this world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and to bear the sins of the many who, through grace, put their trust in Him? Is it true that He has passed into the heavens and taken His seat on the throne of God, there to appear for us? Yes, blessed be God, these are grand, vital, and fundamental verities of the christian faith. Well, then, it is equally true that He shall appear again, apart from the question of sin, unto salvation. " It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, apart from sin, unto salvation."

Here, then, we have the matter most definitely stated. As truly as Christ hath appeared on this earth—as truly as He lay in the manger of Bethlehem—was baptized in the waters of Jordan—was anointed with the Holy Ghost -was tempted of the devil in the wilderness—went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil—groaned and wept and prayed in Gethsemane-hung upon Calvary's cursed tree, and died the Just for the unjust—was laid in the dark, silent tomb—rose victorious on the third day—ascended into the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for His people—so truly shall He appear, ere long, in the clouds of heaven, to receive His people to Himself. If we refuse one, we must refuse all. If we question one, we must question all. If we are unsettled as to one, we must be unsettled as to all, inasmuch as all rest upon precisely the same basis, namely, the holy scriptures. How do I know that Jesus hath appeared'? Because scripture tells me so. How do I know that He doth appear? Because scripture tells me so. How do I know that He shall appear? Because scripture tells me so.

In a word, then, the doctrine of the Atonement, the doctrine of the Advocacy, and the doctrine of the Advent all rest on one and the same irrefragable foundation, namely, the simple declaration of the word of God, so that if we receive one we must receive all.

How is it then that, while the Church of God, in all ages, has held and prized the doctrines of Atonement and Advocacy, she has practically lost sight of the doctrine of the Advent? How comes it to pass that while the first two are regarded as essential, the last is deemed nonessential? Nay, we may go further, and say, How is it that while a man who docs not hold the first two is regarded as a heretic, and justly so, yet the man who holds the last is by many regarded as hardly sound in the faith or sane in intellect?

What answer can we give to these questions? Alas alas! the Church has ceased to look for her Lord. Atonement and Advocacy are held because they concern us; but the Advent has been virtually let slip although it so deeply concerns Him. It is due to the One who suffered and died on this earth, that He should reign—to the One who wore a crown of thorns, that He should wear a crown of glory -to the One who humbled Himself to the very dust of death that He should be exalted, and that every knee should yet bow before Him.

Most surely this is so; and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will see to it, and bring it to pass in His own appointed time, " Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." (Psalm ex.; Heb. 10) The moment is rapidly approaching when that blessed One who is now hidden from the eyes of men shall appear in glory. Every eye shall see Him. As surely as He hung on the cross, and is now seated on the throne, so surely shall He appear in glory.

Reader, seeing these things are so, art thou among the number of " those who look for him?" This is a solemn question. There are those who look for Him, and there are those who do not. Now, it is to the former that He shall appear unto salvation. He will come and receive His people unto Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. (John 14) These arc His own loving words spoken at the moment of His departure, for the solace and comfort of His sorrowing disciples. He counted on their being troubled at the thought of His leaving them, and He seeks to comfort them by the assurance of His coming back. He does not say, " Let not your hearts be troubled, for you shall soon follow me." No; but " I will come again."

This is the proper hope of the Christian. Christ is coming. Are we ready? Are we looking for Him? Do we miss Him? Do we mourn His absence? It is impossible that we can be in the true attitude of waiting for Him if we do not feel His absence. He is coming. He may be here tonight. Ere another sun rises, the voice of the archangel and the blast of the trumpet may be heard in the air. And what then? Why then the sleeping saints—all who have departed in the faith of Christ—all the redeemed of the Lord, whose ashes repose in the graveyards and cemeteries around us, or in the mighty depths of the ocean—all these shall rise. The living saints shall be changed in a moment; and all shall ascend up to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13—v. 11.

But what of the unconverted—the unbelieving—the unrepentant—the unprepared? "What of all such? Ah! this is a question of awful solemnity. It makes the heart sink to reflect upon the case of those who are still in their sins—of those who have turned a deaf ear to all the entreaties and all the warnings which God, in His longsuffering mercy, has sent to them, from week to week, and year to year—of those who have sat under the sound of the gospel from their earliest days, and who have become, as we say, gospel hardened. How dreadful will be the condition of all such when the Lord comes to receive His own! They shall be left behind, to fall under the deep and dark delusion which God> will assuredly send upon all who have heard and rejected the gospel. And what then? "What is to follow this deep and dark delusion? The deeper and darker damnation of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Oh! shall we not sound a note of alarm in the ears of our fellow sinners? Shall we not, a little more earnestly and solemnly, warn them to flee from the wrath to come? Shall we not seek by word and deed—by the double testimony of the lips and the life—to set before them the weighty fact that, "the Lord is at hand?" May we feel it more deeply, and then we shall exhibit it more faithfully. There is immense moral power in the truth of the Lord's coming if it be really held in the heart and not merely in the head. If Christians only lived in the habitual expectation of the Advent, it would tell amazingly upon the unconverted around them.

May the Holy Ghost revive in the hearts of all God's people, the blessed hope of their Lord's return, that they may be as men that wait for their Lord, that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately!

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