Isaiah - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

Christian Truth: Volume 26, Only One Altar: Two Thrones but Only One Altar

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We want the reader to turn aside with us for a few moments and look at two thrones which are presented on the page of inspiration, one in the 6th of Isaiah, and the other in the 20th of Revelation. We shall do little more than introduce them to his notice, in the very words of the inspired penman, and then leave him to muse upon those solemn realities in the immediate presence of God.

1) '"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of. unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Here then we have something peculiarly solemn. We have the throne of God, and the effect produced by that throne upon the heart of a man of like passions with ourselves. It is a serious thing to find oneself in the presence of God-to see ourselves in the light of His throne—to hearken to the sound of a voice that could move the very posts of the door. This truly is real work. All is laid bare here. Man sees himself in his true condition. He sees the deep moral roots of his being. He sees not only his acts, but his nature; not only what he has done, but what he is. He sees not only the negative, but the positive; not only what he is not, but what he actually is.

Thus it was with Isaiah when he got a view of himself in the light of the holiness of God. He discovered himself. He found out what he was, and the tale was easily told—the confession was brief, pointed, and profound. "Woe is me! for I am undone." This was the sum of the matter. It took in everything. It was no mere lip profession—no formal statement of an unfelt truth that "We are all sinners." Ah! no; it was deep and thorough work. The depths were reached. The arrow had entered the soul. Isaiah saw himself in the presence of the throne of God, an utterly undone man.

The throne at which we are now gazing has a special feature attached to it—a peculiar fact connected with it. There is an altar near at hand. Thanks be to God for this precious, this consolatory fact. There is grace and salvation for the guilty and undone. The guilt which the light of the throne reveals, the grace of the altar removes. "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

What grace shines in all this! What mercy in the fact that we can now have to do with a throne which has an altar attached to it-a throne of grace! The Lord be praised. This is a most weighty, telling, powerful fact. Grace is triumphant. It reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21).

2) But we must turn to another throne of which we read in Revelation 20. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. AND WHOSOEVER WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE." vv. 11-15.

This is a throne of judgment. No grace, no mercy here. We look in vain for an altar in the vicinity of this throne. There is no such thing to be found. It is a scene of unmingled judgment. We have the claims of the throne—alas! alas! unanswered claims—without any of the provisions of the altar. "The books were opened"—those solemn records of the life and conduct of each. Yes, of each one in particular. There will be no such thing as escaping in the crowd—no getting off with mere generalities. The judgment will be intensely individual—awfully personal - "every man according to their works."

Reader, mark the character of the judgment: "according to their works." It is a fatal mistake •to think that people will only be judged for rejecting the gospel. No doubt, the rejection of the gospel, wherever it has been heard, leaves people on the ground of judgment; but the judgment will be, in every case, according to a man's works. The inspired Apostle most distinctly teaches us in Eph. 5:3-6, and Col. 3:5, 6, that the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience on account of certain sins which he specifies. In short, it is perfectly plain from Scripture that each one, "small and great," will be judged according to his works. Solemn truth! Every one who dies in his sins—dies unrepentant, unconverted, unbelieving—will have to give an account of all his deeds. All will stand out in terrific array on the tablets of memory and conscience; all will be seen in the light of that throne from which nothing is hidden, and from which none can escape.

How dreadful to stand before the throne of judgment! How many a "Woe is me!" will break forth from the countless myriads who shall stand before that throne. But there will be no altar there! No flying seraph! No live coal! No mercy! No provision of grace! What then? "The lake of fire"! It cannot be otherwise if the judgment is to be according to every man's works. Fire unquenchable and the never dying worm must be the consequence with all who stand before the great white throne of Revelation 20. Men may deny this. They may try to put it from them. They may reason about it. But all their reasoning and all their philosophy, and all their learning, and all their criticism, can never shake the clear and solemn testimony of Holy Scripture. That testimony proves beyond all question, first, that those whose names are in the book of life shall not come into judgment at all, because Christ was judged in their stead. And second, that those whose names are not written in the book

of life, shall be judged according to their works, and—appalling thought!—"cast into the lake of fire."

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 6, Throne and the Altar, The

(Isa. 6:1-8.)

In this very sublime passage of scripture, we notice two prominent objects, namely, the throne and the altar; and, moreover, we perceive the action of these two objects upon the soul of the prophet. The entire scene is full of interest and instruction. May we gaze upon it aright!

" In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." This was a solemn and a soul-subduing sight. It is ever a serious matter for a sinner to find himself standing before the throne of God, with the unanswered claims of that throne bearing down upon his conscience. Isaiah found it to be so. The light of the throne revealed to him his true condition. And what was that light? It was the moral glory of Christ, as we read in the gospel of John, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him." (Chap. xii. 41.) Christ is the perfect standard by which every one must be measured. It matters not what I may think of myself; nor yet what others may think about me. The question is, what am I as viewed in the presence of Christ? The law may tell me what I ought to be; conscience may tell me I am not that; but it is only when the bright beams of Christ's glory pour themselves around me that I am enabled to form a just estimate of what I am. Then it is that the hidden chambers of my heart are flung open, the secret springs of action revealed, the deep foundations of character laid bare.

But, perhaps my reader may feel disposed to ask, "What do you mean by the moral glory of Christ?" I mean the light which shone forth from Him in all His ways when He was down here in this dark world. It was this light that detected man, that disclosed what he was, that brought to light all that was in him. It was impossible for any one to escape the action of that light. It was a perfect blaze of divine purity, in view of which the seraphim could only cry out, " Holy, holy, holy!"

Need we marvel, then, if, when Isaiah saw himself in the light of that glory, he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone?" Nay; this was the proper utterance of one whose heart had been penetrated to its very center by a light which makes all things perfectly manifest. We have no reason to suppose that Isaiah was, in any respect, worse than his neighbors. We are not told that the catalog of his sins was heavier or darker than that of thousands around him. He may have been, to all human appearance, just like others. But ah! my reader, only remember, I pray you, where the prophet stood, when he exclaimed, " Woe is me!" It was not at the foot of the burning mount where "the ministration of death and condemnation " was given forth amid thunderings and lightnings, blackness, darkness, and tempest. It was not there he stood; though even there, a Moses had to say, " I exceedingly fear and quake." But it was in the presence of the glory of Christ, the Lord God of Israel, that our prophet stood, when he saw himself to be "Unclean and undone." Such was his condition when seen in the light which reveals men and things just as they are.

"I am undone" He does not say, "Woe is me! I am not what I ought to be." No; he saw deeper than this. He stood revealed in the power of alight which reaches to the most profound depths of the soul, and discloses " the thoughts and intents of the heart." Isaiah had never before seen himself in such a light—measured himself by such a rule—weighed himself in such a balance. He now saw himself standing in the presence of Jehovah's throne, without any ability whatever to meet the claims of that throne. He "saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up." He saw himself a helpless, ruined, guilty sinner, at an immeasurable distance from that throne, and from the blessed One who sat thereon. He heard the cry of the seraphim, " Holy, holy, holy;" and the only response which he could send back from the depths of a broken heart was, "Unclean, unclean, unclean." He beheld a gulf of guilt and uncleanness separating him from Jehovah which no effort of his could ever bridge. Thus it was with him, in that solemn moment, when he gave forth that cry of a truly convicted soul, "Woe is me!" He was wholly engrossed with one thought, namely, his own utter ruin. He felt himself a lost man. He thought not of comparing himself with others, or of seeking out some fellow-sinner worse than he. Ah! no; a divinely convicted soul never thinks of such things. There is one grand, all-pervading idea, and that idea is embodied in the words, "I am undone."

And be it carefully noted by the reader, that the prophet, when under the convicting light of the throne, is not occupied with what he had done or left undone. The question before his soul was not as to the evil he had done or the good he had left undone. No; it was something far deeper than this. In a word, he was occupied, not with his acts, but with his condition. He says, " I am "—what? Defective in many things? Far behind in my duty? Deplorably short of what I ought to be? No. These and such like confessions could never embody the experience of a heart on which the bright beams of Jehovah's throne had fallen in convicting power. True it is, "We have done that which we ought not to have done, and left undone that which we ought to have done." But all this is merely the fruit of a nature which is radically corrupt; and when divine light breaks in upon us, it will always lead us to the root. It will not merely conduct us from leaf to leaf, or from branch to branch; but, passing down along the trunk, it will lay bare the hidden roots and thinnest fibers of that nature which we inherit, by birth, from our first parents, and cause us to see that the whole thing is irremediably ruined. Then it is we are constrained to cry out, "Woe is me!" Not because my conduct has been defective, but my nature is undone.

Thus it was that Isaiah stood before Jehovah's throne. And oh! what a place for a sinner to stand in! There are no excuses there—no palliating circumstances there—no qualifying clauses there—no blaming of men or things there. There is but one object seen there—seen in its guilt, its wretchedness, and its ruin, and that object is SELF; and as to that object, the tale is easily told. It is all summed up in that most solemn, weighty, suggestive word, " undone." Yes; self is undone. That is all that can be said about it. Do what you will with it, and you cannot make it out to be aught but a hopelessly undone thing; and the more speedily and thoroughly this is understood, the better. Many take a long time to learn this foundation truth. They have not, as it were, stood in the full blaze of the throne, and, as a consequence, they have not been led to cry out with sufficient depth, emphasis, or intensity, " I am undone." It is the glory that shines from the throne which evokes the cry from the very depths of the soul. All who have ever stood before that throne have given utterance to the same confession; and it will ever be found that just in proportion to our experience of the light of the throne, will be our experience of the grace of the altar. The two things invariably go together. In this day of grace, the throne and the altar are connected. In the day of judgment, "The great white throne" will be seen without any altar. There will be no grace then. The ruin will then be seen without the remedy; and as for the remit, it will be eternal perdition. Awful reality!

Oh! reader, beware of having to meet the light of the throne without the provision of the altar!

This conducts us, naturally, to the second object in the interesting scene before us, namely, the altar. The very moment Isaiah gave utterance to the deep conviction of what he was, he was introduced to the divine provisions of God's altar. " Then flew one of the Seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Here, then, we have the rich provisions of Jehovah's altar, which, be it well remembered, is seen in immediate connection with Jehovah's throne. The two things are intimately connected in the history and experience of every convicted and converted soul. The guilt which the throne detects, the altar removes. If, in the light of the throne one object is seen, namely, a ruined, guilty, undone self; then, in the light of the altar, one object is seen, namely, a full, precious, all-sufficient Christ. The remedy reaches to the full extent of the ruin, and the same light that reveals the one reveals the other likewise. This gives settled repose to the conscience. God Himself has provided a remedy for all the ruin which the light of His throne has revealed. "This hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Isaiah was brought into personal contact with the sacrifice, and the immediate result was the perfect removal of all his iniquity—the perfect purgation of all his sin. Not a single spot remained. He could now stand in the light of that throne which had just detected and exposed his uncleanness, and know assuredly by that self-same light, that not a speck of uncleanness remained. The very same light which manifested his sin, made manifest also the purging efficacy of the blood.

Such, then, is the precious and beautiful connection between the throne and the altar—a connection which may be easily traced through the inspired volume, from Genesis to Revelation, and through the history of God's redeemed, from Adam down to the present moment. All who have been really brought to Jesus, have experienced the convicting light of the throne and the peace-giving virtues of the altar. All have been made to feel the ruin, and cry out, "I am undone;" and all have been brought into personal contact with the sacrifice and had their sin purged.

God's work is perfect. He convicts perfectly, and He purges perfectly. There is nothing superficial when He is allowed to carry on His mighty work. The arrow of conviction penetrates to the very center of the soul, only to be followed by the divine application of that blood which leaves not a stain upon the conscience; and the more deeply we are penetrated by the arrow, the deeper and more settled is our experience of the power of the blood. It is well to be thoroughly searched at the first -well to let the chambers of the heart be fully thrown open to the convicting action of the throne; for then we are sure to get a bolder grasp of that precious atoning blood that speaks peace to every believing heart.

And, my reader, let me ask you to pause here, for a moment, and mark the peculiar style of the divine action in the case of the prophet. We all know how much depends upon the way in which a thing is done. A person may do me a favor, but he may do it in such a style as to do away with all the good of it. Now, in the scene before us, we not only see a marvelous favor conferred, but conferred after such a fashion as to let us into the very secrets of the bosom of God. The divine remedy was not only applied to Isaiah's felt ruin, but applied in such a way as to let him know, assuredly, that the whole heart of God was in the application. " Then flew one of the Seraphims unto me." The rapidity of the movement speaks volumes. It tells us, distinctly, of heaven's intense desire to tranquillize the convicted conscience, bind up the broken heart, and heal the wounded spirit. The energy of divine love gave swiftness to the seraphic messenger, as he winged his way down from Jehovah's throne to where a convicted sinner stood confessing himself " undone." What a scene! One of those very seraphim that, with veiled face, stood above Jehovah's throne, crying, " Holy, holy, holy," passes from that throne to the altar, and from the altar away down to the deep depths of a convicted sinner's ruin, there to apply the balmy virtues of a divine sacrifice. No sooner had the arrow from the throne wounded the heart, than the seraph from the altar " flew " to heal the wound. No sooner had the throne poured forth its flood of living light to reveal to the prophet the blackness of his guilt, than a tide of love rolled down upon him from the altar, and bore away upon its bosom every trace of that guilt. Such is the style—such the manner of the love of God to sinners! Who would not trust Him?

Beloved reader, whoever you are, I feel there is a sacred link connecting us, and in the power of that link, and in earnest desire for the welfare of your immortal soul, permit me to ask you if you have experienced the action of the throne and the altar? Have you ever retired from all that false light which the enemy of your precious soul would fling around you in order to prevent your getting a true insight into your total ruin? Have you ever stood where Isaiah found himself, when he cried out, " Woe is me! for I am undone?" Have you ever been brought to own from your heart, " I have sinned?" (Job 33) If so, it is your privilege to enter, this moment, into the rich enjoyment of all that Christ has done for you on the cross. You do not need to see any vision. You do not require to see a throne, an altar, a flying seraph. You have got the word of God to assure you that " Christ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3:18.) That same word also assures you that " All that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:39.) And is not this far better than ten thousand visions, or than ten thousand seraphim? Isaiah believed that his "iniquity was taken away, and his sin purged" when the angelic messenger told him so. And should you not believe that Jesus died for you when the word of God tells you so?

But, perhaps, you say, "How can I know that Jesus died for me" I reply, how can any one know it? Simply by the word of God. There is no other way of knowing anything. But you still object, " I do not see my name in the word of God." No; and even though your name were mentioned, this would in no wise satisfy you, inasmuch as there might be hundreds bearing your name. But you see your state, your character, your condition. You see your photograph flung, with divine precision, upon the page of inspiration, by the action of that light which makes all things manifest. Do you not own yourself to be a lost sinner? If so, the death of Christ applies itself as perfectly to you as the " live coal" did to Isaiah when the seraph declared to him, " This hath touched thy lips." The word is, " If any say, I have sinned." What then? He will send him to hell? No; but " He will deliver him " The very moment you take your true place, and cry out, "Undone!" all that Christ has done, and all that He is becomes yours—yours now—yours forever. You need not make any effort to improve your condition. Do what you -will, and you cannot make yourself anything but undone. A single effort at improvement is but the evidence that you know not yet how bad—how incorrigibly and incurably bad you are. You are " undone," and, as such, you have but to stand still and see the salvation of God—a salvation, the foundation of which was wrought out over eighteen hundred years ago—a salvation which the Holy Ghost reveals on the authority of that word which is settled forever in heaven, and which God " has magnified above all his name." May the blessed Spirit lead you, note, to put your trust in the name of Jesus, that so, ere you lay down this paper, you may know that your "iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." Then you will be able to follow me, while, in a few closing words, I seek to unfold the practical result of all that has been engaging our attention.

We have seen the complete ruin of the sinner; we have seen the complete remedy in Christ; let us now look at the result as exhibited in whole-hearted consecration to the service of God. Isaiah had nothing to do for salvation, but he had plenty to do for his Savior. He had nothing

to do to get his sins purged, but plenty to do for the One who had purged them. Now, he gave unmistakable expression to his readiness to act for God, when, on hearing that a messenger was needed, he exclaimed, " Here am I; send me." This puts works in their proper place. The order is absolutely perfect. No one can do good works until he has experienced, in some degree, the action of " the throne and the altar." The light of the former must show him what he is; and the provisions of the latter must show him what Christ is, ere he can say, " Here am I; send me." This is a settled, universal truth, established in every section of inspiration, and illustrated in the biography of the saints of God, and the servants of Christ, in every age, in every clime, in every condition. All have been brought to see their ruin, in the light of the throne, to see the remedy, in the provisions of the altar, ere they could exhibit the result, in a life of practical devotedness. All this is from God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Holy Ghost, to whom be all the glory, world without end! Amen, and Amen!

Handfuls of Pasture: Volume 2, Landmarks and Stumblingblocks: Part 1

" Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance." Deut. 19:14.

" Take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people." Isa. 57:14.

What tender care, what gracious considerateness, breathe in the above passages! The ancient landmarks were not to be removed; but the stumblingblocks were to be taken up. The inheritance of God's people was to stand forth in all its length and breadth, while the stumblingblocks were to be sedulously removed out of their pathway. Such was the grace of Israel's God! Such His care for His people! The portion which God had given to each was to be enjoyed, while, at the same time, the path in which each was called to walk should be kept free from every occasion of stumbling.

Now, if we are to judge from the tone and character of several recent communications, we believe we are called upon to give attention to the spirit of those ancient enactments. Some of our friends have, in their letters to us, opened their minds, very freely, as to their spiritual condition. They have told us of their doubts and fears, their difficulties and dangers, their conflicts and exercises. We must say we feel truly grateful for such confidence; and it is our earnest desire to be used of God in the interesting work of helping our readers by pointing out the landmarks which He, by His Spirit, has set up, and removing the stumblingblocks, which the enemy has so diligently flung in their path. It never was our object merely to conduct a Magazine—to bring out a monthly number—to fill so many pages. But we have desired, and that most earnestly, that "Things New and Old" should be a direct agent in the hands of the Holy Ghost, in the great work of quickening, liberating, and edifying souls. The day will declare how far our desire has been answered. We have abundant reason to bless God for the fruit which He has allowed us to gather; and our earnest prayer is that when our little serial ceases to be useful, it may cease to exist—that its issue may cease with its interest—that it may never outlive its freshness. For this we count on God; and to Him we look for grace to say the right thing in the right way, and at the right time.

In pondering the cases which have lately been submitted to us, we have found some in which the enemy was most manifestly using as a stumblingblock the doctrine of election misplaced. We have reason to believe that thousands have stumbled over this stumblingblock, and we are most anxious to see it taken up. The doctrine of election, in its right place, instead of being a stumblingblock in the pathway of anxious enquirers, will be found to be a landmark set by them of old time, even by the inspired apostles of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in the inheritance of God's spiritual Israel. But we all know that misplaced truth is more dangerous, by far, than positive error. If a man were to stand up, and boldly declare that the doctrine of election is false, we should, without hesitation, reject his words. But we might not be quite so well prepared to meet one who, while admitting the doctrine to be true and important, puts it out of its divinely appointed place. And yet this latter is the very thing which is so constantly done, to the damaging of the truth of God, and the darkening of the souls of men.

What, then, is the true place of the doctrine of election? Its true, its divinely appointed place, is in the inside of the house, in the hands of the teacher, for the establishment of true believers. Instead of this, the enemy has put it outside the house, in the hands of the evangelist, for the stumbling of anxious enquirers. Hearken to the following language of a deeply exercised soul. " If I only knew that I was one of the elect I should be quite happy, inasmuch as I could then confidently apply to myself the benefits of the death of Christ."

Doubtless, this would be the language of many, were they only to tell out the feelings of their hearts. They are making a wrong use of the doctrine of election—a doctrine blessedly true in itself—a most valuable " landmark," but a most dangerous " stumblingblock." It is very needful for the anxious enquirer to bear in mind that it is as a lost sinner, and not as " one of the elect," that he can apply to himself the benefits of the death of Christ. The proper stand-point from which to get a saving view of the death of Christ is not election but conscious ruin. This is an unspeakable mercy, inasmuch as I know I am a lost sinner; but I do not know that I am one of the elect until I have received, through the Spirit's testimony and teaching, the glad tidings of salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Salvation—free as the sunbeams, full as the ocean, permanent as the throne of the eternal God—is preached to me, not as one of the elect, but as one utterly lost, guilty, and undone; and when I have received this salvation there is conclusive evidence of my election. " Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for () our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:4, 5.) Election is not my warrant for accepting salvation; but the reception of salvation is the proof of election. For how is any sinner to know that he is one of the elect? Where is he to find it? It must be a matter of divine revelation, else it cannot be a matter of faith. But where is it revealed? Where is the knowledge of election made an indispensable prerequisite, an essential preliminary, to the acceptance of salvation? Nowhere, in the word of God. My only title to salvation is that I am a poor good-for-nothing, guilty, hell-deserving sinner. If I wait for any other title, I am only removing a most valuable landmark from its proper place, and flinging it as a stumblingblock in my way. This, to say the least of it, is very unwise.

But it is more than unwise. It is positive opposition to the word of God, not only to the quotations which stand at the head of this paper, but to the spirit and teaching of the entire volume. Hearken to the risen Savior's commission to His first heralds: " Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15.) Is there so much as a single hair's breadth of ground, in these words, on which to base a question about election? Is any one, to whom this glorious gospel is preached, called to settle a prior question about his election? Assuredly not. "All the world" and " Every creature" are expressions which set aside every difficulty, and render salvation as free as the air, and as wide as the human family. It is not said, " Go ye into a given section of the world, and preach the gospel to a certain number." No; this would not be in keeping with that grace which was to be proclaimed to the wide, wide world. "When the law was in question it was addressed to a certain

number, in a given section; but when the gospel was to be proclaimed, its mighty range was to be, " All the world," and its object, " Every creature."

Again, hear what the Holy Ghost saith, by the apostle Paul: " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. 1:15.) Is there any room here for raising a question as to one's title to salvation? None whatever. If Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and that I am a sinner, then I am entitled to apply to my own soul the benefits of His precious sacrifice. Ere I can possibly exclude myself there from I must be something else than a sinner. No doubt, if it were anywhere declared in scripture that Christ Jesus came to save only the elect, then clearly, I Should, in some way or another prove myself one of that number, ere I could make my own of the benefits of His death. But, thanks be to God, there is nothing the least like this in the whole gospel scheme. " The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) And is not that just what I am? Truly so. Well then is it not from the standpoint of a lost one that I can look at the death of Christ? Doubtless. And can I not, while contemplating that precious mystery from thence, adopt the language of faith and say, " He loved me, and gave himself for me?" Yes, as unreservedly and unconditionally as though I were the only sinner on the surface of the globe.

Nothing can be more soothing and tranquilizing to the spirit of an anxious enquirer than to mark the way in which salvation is brought to him in the very condition in which he is, and on the very ground which he occupies. There is not so much as a single stumblingblock along the entire path leading to the glorious inheritance of the saints—an inheritance settled by landmarks which neither men nor devils can ever remove. The God of all grace has left nothing undone, nothing unsaid, which could possibly give rest, assurance, and perfect satisfaction to the soul. He has set forth the very condition and character of those for whom Christ died, in such terms as to leave no room for any demur or hesitation. Listen to the following glowing words: " For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." " But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." " For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," &c. Rom. 5:6, 8, 10.

Can aught be plainer or more pointed than these passages? Is there a single term made use of which could possibly raise a question in the heart of any sinner as to his full and undisputed title to the benefits of the death of Christ? Not one. Am I " ungodly? " It was for such Christ died. Am I a sinner? " It is to such that God commendeth His love. Am I " an enemy? " It is such God reconciles by the death of His Son. Thus all is made as plain as a sunbeam, and as for the theological stumblingblock caused by misplacing the doctrine of election, it is entirely removed. It is as a sinner I get the benefit of Christ's death. It is as a lost one I get a salvation which is as free as it is permanent, and as permanent as it is free. All I want, in order to apply to myself the value of the blood of Jesus, is to know myself a guilty sinner. It would not help me, the least, in this matter, to be told that I am one of the elect, inasmuch as it is not in that character God addresses me in the gospel, but in another character altogether, even as a lost sinner.

But then, some may feel disposed to ask, " Do you want to set aside the doctrine of election? " God forbid. We only want to see it in its right place. We want it as a landmark, not as a stumblingblock. We believe the evangelist has no business to preach election. Paul never preached election. He taught election, but He preached Christ. This makes all the difference. We believe that no one can be a proper evangelist who is, in any wise, hampered by the doctrine of election misplaced. We have seen serious damage done to two classes of people by preaching election instead of preaching Christ. Careless sinners are made more careless still, while anxious souls have had their anxiety intensified.

These, surely, are sad results, and they ought to be sufficient to awaken very serious thoughts in the minds of all who desire to be successful preachers of that free and full salvation which shines in the gospel of Christ, and leaves all who hear it without a shadow of an excuse. The grand business of the evangelist is to set forth, in his preaching, the perfect love of God, the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and the faithful record of the Holy Ghost. His spirit should be entirely untrammeled, and his gospel unclouded. He should preach a present salvation, free to all, and stable as the pillars which support the throne of God. The gospel is nothing more nor less than the unfolding of the heart of God as it expresses itself in the death of His Son, and in the deathless record of His Spirit.

Were this more carefully attended to there would be more power in replying to the oft-repeated objection of the careless, as well as in hushing the deep anxieties of exercised and burdened souls. The former would have no just ground of objection; the latter, no reason to fear. When persons reject the gospel on the ground of God's eternal decrees, they are rejecting what is revealed on the ground of what is hidden. "What can they possibly know about God's decrees? Just nothing. How then can that which is secret be urged as a reason for rejecting what is revealed? Why refuse what can be known, on the ground of what cannot? It is obvious that men do not act thus in cases where they wish to believe a matter. Only let a man be willing to believe a tiling, and you will not find him anxiously looking for a ground of objection. But alas! men do not want to believe God. They reject His precious testimony which is clear as the sun's meridian brightness, and urge as their plea for so doing His decrees which are wrapped in impenetrable darkness. What folly! What blindness! What guilt!

And then as to anxious souls who harass themselves with questions about election, we long to show them that it is not in accordance with the divine mind, that they should raise any such difficulty. God addresses them in the exact state in which He sees them and in which they can see themselves. He addresses them as sinners, and this is exactly what they are. There is nothing but salvation for any sinner, the moment he takes his true place as a sinner. This is simple enough for any simple soul. To raise questions about election is sheer unbelief. It is, in another way, to reject what is revealed on the ground of what is hidden; it is to refuse what I can know, on the ground of what I cannot. God has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ, so that we may know Him and trust Him. Moreover, He has made full provision in the atonement of the cross, for all our need and all our guilt. Hence, therefore, instead of perplexing myself with the question, " Am I one of the elect?" it is my happy privilege to rest in the perfect love of God, the all-sufficiency of Christ, and the faithful record of the Holy Ghost.

We must here close, though there are other stumbling-blocks which we long to see removed out of the way of God's people, as well as landmarks which are sadly lost sight of.

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 53. Watchman, What of the Night?

A very dear friend, who requests that even his initials may be withheld, desires some light on Isaiah 21:11-12. We cannot do better than quote for him Lowth’s beautiful translation of the passage.

“THE ORACLE CONCERNING DUMAH.”

11 “A voice crieth unto me from Seir:

Watchman, what from the night?

Watchman, what from the night?”

l2 “The watchman replieth:

The morning cometh, and also the night:

If ye will inquire, inquire ye: come again.”1

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