

THE MASTER'S TRUMPET

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From the Editors	<i>page 2</i>
The Patient of Many Physicians <i>Alexander Moody Stuart</i>	<i>page 4</i>
Ten Letters of John Love <i>John Love</i>	<i>page 15</i>
Temporary Faith <i>Sherman Isbell</i>	<i>page 32</i>
Sacrament Day <i>John Leyburn</i>	<i>page 38</i>
Christ Our Prophet <i>Marcus Dods (of Belford)</i>	<i>page 43</i>

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From the Editors

THE SERMON ON THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD, with which we open, is from a book of meditations on the deeds of Jesus at Capernaum. The author, Alexander Moody Stuart (1809–1898), was the patriarch of a distinctive school of experimental preaching which included R. M. M’Cheyne, John Milne, and Horatius and Andrew Bonar. This sermon epitomizes their depiction of the freeness of the gospel. Among Moody Stuart’s appreciative hearers at St. Luke’s, Edinburgh, was the Free Church professor of Hebrew, “Rabbi” John Duncan, who joined the Session.

A selection of the correspondence of John Love (1757–1825) gives direction for maintaining the influence of divine things over a distracted heart. His first ministerial charge was at London, and he retained a distaste for the dissuasive from spiritual-mindedness presented by life in a modern metropolis. Love was a coadjutor first in the London Missionary Society and later in the Glasgow Missionary Society, and the message which he sought to promote to the nations of the globe was the conscience-scrutinizing religion exemplified in the writings of his New England mentors, Thomas Shepherd and Jonathan Edwards.

The account of a communion Sabbath in early America is set at New Monmouth Presbyterian Church, outside Lexington, Virginia. In the same building, the young Archibald Alexander (1772–1851) witnessed the Spirit’s unction on gospel preaching during times of revival around 1790. The preacher who figures largely in this narrative is George Addison Baxter (1771–1841), pastor of the church from 1799 until 1831, when he left to take the presidency of Union Theological Seminary, at Hampden-Sydney. It was Baxter’s persuasion that, “Much depends on the character of ministers. We need men full of the Holy Ghost,—men who cannot rest while the Church is asleep; men who agonize in prayer for the prosperity of Zion; men who keep a close walk with God, and are importunate with him continually, for a present blessing on their labors for the conversion of sinners.” The communion at New Monmouth lingered in the thoughts of our essayist, John Leyburn (1814–1893), who pastored churches at Petersburg, Virginia, and Baltimore, and revamped the operations of the Presbyterian Board of Publications at Philadelphia.

Marcus Dods (1786–1838), a Scot who ministered at Belford in Northumberland, England, was the author of a masterful reflection on Christ's incarnation. Exposing the folly in Edward Irving's theory that the flesh Christ assumed was fallen and sinful, Dods illustrated how the Messiah's discharge of his offices as prophet, priest and king could avail for our redemption only if his human nature was pure and holy. The result is a moving portrayal of the faithfulness of Christ in pursuing our salvation, and of how the incarnation opens for us an unparalleled disclosure of the character of God.

The Patient of Many Physicians

Alexander Moody Stuart

“And a certain Woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment; for she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be made whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” Mark 5:25–34. See Matt. 9:20–22; Luke 8:43–48.

ON THE WAY TO THE RULER’S HOUSE, where Jesus raised the dead Maiden to life, an unusual interruption occurred. This tried the anxious father’s spirit by his child’s death during the delay. We have now to take up the case of the Sufferer whose urgency occasioned it.

But first of all it is to be observed, that the interruption itself is of a most remarkable character; there being nothing similar to it in the New Testament. Jesus, though hindered, was not stopped by the crowd, nor by an importunate petitioner that would not be denied, but simply by the change that passed on his own spirit. Virtue has gone out of him; a portion of the Spirit within him has entered into some one else. He has undertaken a great work which he goes to perform, and there is a pressing throng around him; but he instantly marks the alteration that has occurred within himself, and will not proceed till it is accounted for; although he possesses the Spirit without measure, and that is not lost by him which is gained by another.

Jesus has thus left us an example, of watchfulness over our own spirits from morning till night; of possessing our souls in patience, even in the midst of work and hurry. Recollectedness throughout the day saves the hard labour of recovering what we lose by forgetfulness. It is recorded of a holy man in former times, who was greatly prospered in his earthly calling; that if his spirit departed from God, in the course of the day, he immediately repaired to his closet till his soul was restored. Such a plan would seem most likely to break the business of life in pieces; but in a soul so watchful the wanderings would be, for the most part, both few and brief. Jesus, in the heart of pressing business, marks the sinless change in his own spirit, and suffers himself to be interrupted by it. We cannot, indeed, be always expressly looking to Christ; in doing with our might what our hand findeth to do, such an exercise is often impossible. But when occupied with reading or working by night, we look not at the candle but at the work before us; yet if the light be obscured, we note the difference as quickly as if we were expressly watching it. Let us strive so to walk under the light of God's countenance all the day, that if a cloud passes between the Light of Life and our souls, it may be instantly perceived and its removal diligently sought.

In this miraculous cure we have one touching among many pressing on Jesus, her case the worst in all the crowd, and her immediate healing.

I. One Touching Out of Many Pressing on Jesus

There was love, power, and nearness enough for all the crowd, yet one alone touched Christ for healing.

There was *love* enough for all in the heart of Jesus. It was in this same Capernaum, and to these very people that he announced, Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. True, there might be none sick in the crowd except herself. But she came for her soul's health, as well as for the outward cure, because her sickness shut her out from the sanctuary of God; and she found the salvation of the soul, along with the healing of her plague. When she is healed Jesus announces to her: Go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole, or thy faith hath saved thee. It is either, it is both; for the words are the very same as those addressed by Jesus to the weeping penitent who washed his feet, and whose only plague was the sickness of sin. There were others in the crowd, who needed this health quite as much as she; it was as free for them as for her;

but they sought not the grace of the Saviour, and were therefore given over to judgment more intolerable than the doom of Sodom.

There was *power* enough in Christ to heal them every one; ample virtue to go forth for the salvation of them all. A single Sufferer comes to him today and is healed; but a whole crowd of sick with diverse diseases had come one Sabbath evening, and all were healed. The one is healed, because the one cometh; and many were healed, when many came. A hundred are as welcome to Jesus as one; and the healing of a hundred, as easy with him and as certain as the healing of one. He casts out in no wise; he casts none out for any evil in the applicant, and he casts none out because the applicants are too many. If all the world from east, and west, and north, and south should come, not one would be cast out; for there is love enough in Jesus for all, and virtue enough for all.

Further, there was *nearness* enough to Christ to draw the virtue out of him, if they had desired it. But they thronged him and pressed him, yet they touched him not; touched him not in sense of want, with any urgent desire, any object to be gained, or any faith to find it. 'Who touched me?' Jesus asks; and all deny. All the saints deny touching, and all the sinners deny. Peter denies, James and John deny; all the apostles, and all the disciples deny. They were conscious of no healing in themselves; of no virtue entering into them out of Jesus. They were conscious of no touching on their part for the sake of health; of no hand stretched out by them in that moment for any salvation. One only denies not, yet neither does she confess, but withdraws. She was farthest off; had come nearest and obtained life; and now she is hid again in the crowd. But she has taken Christ with her, and health and salvation along with Christ.

How similar is the case of many an assembly in the house of God. Jesus is in the midst of it according to his promise; nearer to each, than each is to his neighbour; in the midst of all, and thronged by the people. Yet how true may it be that not one touches him, out of many crowding around him. There is health for all, and none need go unsaved; yet most must deny that any virtue enters into them.

In every meeting in the name of Jesus, a vast amount of sickness and of death is gathered together; there are many lepers, many blind, many lame, many dead in trespasses and sins. The assembly may be little else, than an hospital of souls that are sick; a graveyard of souls that are dead. Yet there is more health in the house than disease, more life than death,

infinitely more; health enough to cure all the sickness, life to quicken all the death. Christ is in the midst, full of grace and truth; Christ in the midst, the Resurrection and the Life. There is a fountain of life and health in him, seeking any outlet; and if the fountain is sealed up, it is only because none will drink the living waters. He is pressed and straitened with the overflowing abundance of life, that is pent up within him; because no heart is open to receive it, no empty vessel brought to be filled.

This poor Woman touches; touches not himself, but the hem of his garment; and Christ is so full of life, that she is filled with life in a moment. Through that narrow and distant outlet, that slightest touch of the outer hem of the clothing, the full flood of life enters body and soul at once. It pervades her whole being with the lively consciousness of health; fills the body from head to foot with vigour; fills the soul with salvation, cleanses all the conscience, renews all the heart. If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole: Jesus Christ is the same to me as to her; the same yesterday, today, and for ever; the same in the midst of us now, as in the midst of them of old; as near as loving, as full of virtue for all that touch him.

Nearer even than in the house of God many often are, yet without touching Jesus. At the sacramental table, how near have you often been; seeing, handling, tasting; yet not by faith touching Jesus. The bread is eaten, but Christ is by unbelief shut out from it and never touched; the wine is drunk, yet unbelief refuses Christ and touches him not. At such a table, how many are thronging and pressing on the Saviour; yet like many in that Galilean crowd, with their backs toward him, and no hand of faith stretched forth. The proof of having touched is virtue issuing out of Christ into your soul; and if no healing power has penetrated your heart, you may have thronged and pressed, but the hand of faith has never touched the Healer.

But some sadly mistake in this matter; and reverse the order of the Gospel to their own loss and sorrow. Because the virtue from Christ entering the soul is the proof of health given; they conceive, that it is likewise the warrant for touching Christ to obtain health; and they will not draw nigh to touch, till they have first been healed. But it is the sick that need the Physician, and that are invited to him for saving health. The warrant for coming to Jesus is his word, Come unto me; and the

souls warranted to come are such as he is sent to redeem, when he came into the world to save sinners and the chief of them.

II. Her Case Is the Worst of All

I. She is the *weakest* in all the crowd, yet she presses through till she reaches Jesus. It is not easy for the weak to stand a crowd at all; and hard for them indeed, to press through to its very center. Christ's brethren sought to find him in the midst of a crowd, young men in the fulness of their strength; but they were baffled in the attempt; and had to content themselves with sending a message through many mouths, that they desired to speak with him. Yet this Woman, worn out with disease and perhaps also weakened by want, finds her way to Jesus in the center of all this throng.

Where there is a will, there is a way. Every saved one has indeed learned, that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. The weakness of our will to all good, our inability even to will what is right, is a humbling but most needful lesson for us all. Yet our invitation is, Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely; and our reproof, Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. It is amazing what a man will do for that which his heart is set upon; and how he will not stagger at what seems impossible to another. And so by grace it is, in the awakened sinner's pressing to enter in at the strait gate. The weakest with a determined will is far more than equal to the strongest who is but half-hearted. This woman's case had become desperate; quite desperate, except for the one bright hope that now dawns upon her in Jesus Christ. She said, It will be enough if I may but touch his garment; that is, not if I be allowed to touch, but if by any means I do but touch. Therefore at any cost she must touch it, and she does. Despair of every other resource, with faith in this One, makes it impossible for any crowd to keep her back. She is indeed stronger than them all; for she has in that hour the strongest will and the liveliest faith.

There is always *a crowd* between you and Christ, inquiring soul: a crowd of past sins oppressing your conscience, a crowd of earthly lusts stifling better desires, a crowd of worldly friends opposing your progress, a crowd of evil spirits wrestling against you; all between you and Christ. But there is not only welcome for you in Christ's bosom, but help for you in his arm; more far to help, than all that can hinder; and the

moment you touch the border of his garment, you are healed. Strive on, press through, yield not but wrestle forward; and by his own grace you will reach Him, and all will be well for ever.

2. She is the *vilest* of all, the most unfit to touch the Holy One, for her very touch defiles. Being herself ceremonially unclean and shut out from the sanctuary, her hand pollutes for that day all whom it touches. Yet she believes, that her vileness will not defile the Holy One; but that his purifying holiness will cleanse her. Her disease is quite incurable by herself, or by any earthly means; yet she is confident, that the slightest touch of Christ will heal her altogether. For twelve sad years, she has proved how deeply seated the plague is within her, and how far beyond all human remedy; yet she believes, that there is power in Jesus in one instant to remove it for ever. This poor defiled one, shut out from all the holy; and this Holy One, undefiled and separate from sinners: stand to each other in most complete contrast. But it is their contrast that makes their mutual fitness; the outcast needing the Saviour, and the Saviour all-sufficient for the outcast.

Sinful soul, there is ever *a contrast* between you and Jesus; for there is nothing unholy in him, and nothing holy in you; nothing common to both. Yet the High and Holy One, becoming flesh for men, was numbered with sinners for their salvation. You need him, he receives you, and his blood cleanses you from all sin. Fear not therefore to draw nigh to Him because you are so contrary, since it is the contrast between you that makes you meet for each other. He is health for the sick, cleaning for the vile, clothing for the naked, and life for the dead.

3. Her coming is the *worst timed* of all applications; no accosting of Christ could have been more unseasonable. He is in the very midst of another case; a case which he has undertaken, and in which he is engaged; a case of life and death, in which every moment is precious. The Ruler's daughter is at the very point of dying; but this woman's disease is chronic, and an hour or a day will make no difference. She has been ill for twelve long years, ever since the maiden drew the first breath of life; yet she arrests Jesus in the very crisis of life and death to the girl; and while she delays him, the child is dead. She might surely at least have waited half an hour, till he had finished this pressing call.

It seems as if earnestness for her own case left her thought for another; and she comes to Jesus for immediate cure, more unseasonably than

any other ever came. But Jesus said, Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out; and a coming so ill-timed he does not at all refuse. Nay, he encourages and seeks such a coming; he heals her at once; and so heals her that the other sustains no injury, but only receives greater good. Through her intervention the father, instead of a sick daughter restored to health again, receives a dead daughter raised again to life.

Come at any time to Christ, only come; come the very first opportunity, make an opportunity and come, come in the absence of opportunity, come now. Say not that it is out of season, for he will instantly receive you; embrace the time and make no tarrying, but come.

4. Her coming seems to be in the very *worst way*; none other appears to have come so ill. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night; but this Woman comes to Jesus by stealth. If any comer had ever been rejected, surely she must have been that outcast. But Christ said, that he would not cast the comer out in any wise; however ill the time of coming, and however wrong the way, he promises that he will not cast the comer out. The truth is, that as there can be no wrong time of coming to Christ, so there can be no wrong way of coming; for Christ has come into the world, for the very purpose of putting right all that is wrong. If there could be wrong coming, such would hers have certainly been. But Christ is redemption out of all evil, recovery out of all error, rectification of all wrong; and if we come to Him, all is right. Many are so afraid of coming wrong, that they refrain from coming at all; whereas if we only come, all is well. Jesus does not declare, that he will not cast out the man that cometh in the right time, or in the right manner; but pledges himself, that him that cometh in any way He will in no wise cast out. If the sinner only come at all, Christ does not acknowledge, and man need not apprehend any ground of rejection.

III. Her Immediate Healing

1. Her *coming* to be healed is late, and yet *immediate*: late in reference to the past, immediate in the haste of this afternoon. 'When she heard of Jesus she came': yet this evening could not well be the first time he had heard of Jesus; because not only had all the Town been already filled with the praise of his works, but all Galilee and Judea. But the name of Jesus struck her ear and her heart now for the first time, as having any interest or hope for her. So it constantly is when a sinner feels himself lost; he is

ready to give up all; but the tidings of salvation sound in his ear for the first time, as having anything to do with himself, and come to him full of promise and life. Long before this the whole City had brought their sick to Christ, and he had healed all that were brought. But she was not dying, that kind friends might carry her to the good Physician; and it never occurred to herself, that her case was one for his help. But hearing now that Jesus passes through the street, from the feast in Matthew's house to the sick-room of the Ruler's daughter, she loses no time in trying to overtake him.

The act of her coming is good, but the reason is humbling: she comes hastily to Jesus now, but it is because she has spent her all. She has not thought Christ first, but last. Physician after physician she has tried; but the thought of Jesus never occurs, as of one able to relieve her. One advice she asks and follows, till it runs its course and leaves her no better; then she tries another and another, with the like result; hewing for herself cisterns, which when hewn can hold no water. Fee after fee she pays, giving her money for that which is not bread; while her patrimonial treasure dwindles steadily away, till at last she finds herself a pauper, 'all her living spent.' She has not half a shekel of silver remaining to fee another physician, else she had not thought of Jesus; seemingly not a few pence left to buy bread, with no strength to work for it. Yesterday she had spent her last; today she has nothing, and it draws toward evening. And now she begins to think that Jesus can help her. What an honour to pay to him! He will charge her *nothing* for advice and aid, for present health and eternal salvation.

This is exactly what every sinner does: no son of man comes to Christ first, but always last and after every other refuge has failed. He stands with his back to the living waters, laboriously hewing cistern after cistern; and only when he finds them all dry, does he turn and stoop to drink of the free and flowing fountain. The prodigal son has no thought of his father's house, till he is perishing for hunger; when the choice is between his father and death, he counts death still worse than his father's house and he will now go home. Death is worst of all; his father's roof only second worst. And this is all the honour, that any of us at first render to God and to Christ and to heaven. Earth, self, fancied righteousness, the pleasures of sin, the creature above the Creator: these are our own heart's choice. At length, when we come to see nothing before us but death,

judgment, woe, we flee to Christ as less terrible than death, and we think of heaven as not so intolerable as hell.

But though it begins thus, it never ends there. The want of bread drives the prodigal to think of home: but his thoughts once returning thither, there is found in him by grace the true heart of a son; there springs up within him a sincere longing, repenting, yearning, toward his offended Father. So in this impoverished Patient, though Christ has been her latest thought, he is highly exalted now; he is first, greatest, all. She desires no counsel now from vain physicians; if she had thousands of gold and silver, she would leave all for Jesus; the hem of his garment is more to her, than all the physicians and all the medicines in the world. To her believing Christ is precious; not because she has touched and been healed; but before she touches, and because she believes him full of health for every coming sufferer. Poor dying soul, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and as he was then to her, so is he now for you.

2. Her *cure is immediate*, complete, conscious: straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. The root of the disease is reached, and instantly removed; in a moment the spring of health and youth rises fresh within the inner depths of her frame; she is healed, and she feels and knows that she is well. She needs no experience to prove it; no trial, if she can walk erect and with elastic step; no bread set before her to test her appetite; no work to show her strength. Others will look to those evidences; and they will come to herself in due time, and be highly prized as daily proofs that she was the subject of no delusion. But meanwhile, independently of all the future, she knows for herself, because she feels within herself, that she is well: not dying now but living, not weak but strong; and not with any mere outward cleansing, but with a true healing in the inner springs of life.

Even thus is it with the immortal soul. The heart believes in Jesus Christ unto salvation; the conscience in that hour is cleansed and has peace with God; the soul is healed, is new-born, liveth and is strong with everlasting youth and health. Eternal life has begun within the man; the life lost in Adam, and corrupted from the womb, is more than restored; it is renewed unto life more abundant in Christ Jesus. And the man feels it, and knows it. Others will wait for the fruit of holiness; and he will himself carefully cultivate that fruit, both as precious in itself unto God,

and as a constant and essential evidence of the reality of the change. But already he recognizes and feels the root of life within him: a life which he knows to be everlasting; which he knows to be of God; which cannot but live, and grow, and be fruitful for ever. Into Christ Jesus the great root of all, the living and life-giving tree, he is now engrafted as a living and fruit-bearing branch.

Did this poor Woman feel within herself that she was cured of her bodily plague; and will the renewed man be all unconscious of his spiritual health and cure? Did her soul know the change that had taken place in the dull unconscious body; and will not our soul much more know and feel the immediate and everlasting change, which by grace has taken place within itself?

3. But she cannot depart in health without *confessing* Christ the Healer. Public confession has been her great cross; the fear of it had nearly become a great snare; and a little more might have kept her back altogether. Yet ashamed, timid, and retiring as she was, she faced a crowd for deliverance and she found it; not for the body alone, but still more for the soul. Go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole, thy faith hath saved thee, is a double deliverance; health spiritual and bodily, temporal and eternal. But the Healer must be publicly acknowledged, and the need of health openly confessed.

Her coming unseasonably Jesus not only allows, but commends; in the parable of the Friend at midnight, he encourages and enforces it. Her coming stealthily he allows and pardons, but corrects. He has not refused her on that account, because he casts out none that cometh in any wise; and he will therefore let her come in this way, or in any other way that any may choose to take. But having let her come thus, he will not thus let her go. If she is to go in peace, with everlasting health for the soul, and with a root of health for the body that will spring up again from the grave, she must go not ashamed of Christ and not ashamed of her need of Christ. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation: the heart-belief there has been in her, and her mouth must now make confession.

It is a much more public and detailed confession now, than it might have been had she come owning her sickness at the first. She might thus have obtained health, with perhaps no more publicity than in other cases of which we have no special record; passing as one amongst many.

But now she is singled out by herself, and has to detail all her history before all the people. In coming to Christ at all, there is often the taking up of the cross: and in her case a heavy cross it would have been to come openly. But Jesus said not, he that cometh unto me must take up his cross, but him that cometh I will in no wise cast out. But then he proclaims, If any will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. The *comer* need not, he may or he may not; but every *follower* must bear the cross of Christ. So with her: Jesus puts not the cross upon her before she comes, but he lays it on her expressly before she departs; for without it she cannot follow him, and no one can. We must all bear the cross now, if we would wear the crown hereafter.

Yet the cross is far lighter to bear afterward, than it would have been before. She was burdened beneath a heavy weight, that crushed her to the earth; and Jesus would not lay an added load of public shame upon the back so unequal to bearing it. But now she is relieved; her soul is forgiven, accepted, renewed; her bodily frame strong and well. Full of joy and health, she can lift the cross that she had shunned; it is now the only load she has to carry; and his yoke which is easy, with his burden light, Jesus gently lays upon her. For the moment she trembles and is ashamed, in narrating all her long and hopeless malady; yet even then, fallen on the ground, she can declare before all how the plague is gone, and how sound and whole she has become. Even already her cross becomes her crown: herself a healed one, rejoicing in the Lord's great goodness; and remembering her sorrow no more, for joy in the great salvation and in God her Saviour.

Her soul hath mingled with the spirits of the just made perfect; and her body hath mingled with the dust of the earth till the resurrection. But one of the everlasting memorials in heaven, of the Lord's works on earth, will be in the resurrection unto life of this Woman; who had suffered in vain so many things from many physicians; and was healed in a moment by the good Physician, through the believing touch of the hem of his garment. May we be partakers of her living faith, that we may share with her in that blessed rising from the dead; when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible have put on incorruption, and death shall have been swallowed up of life. Amen.

Alexander Moody Stuart, *Capernaum*, London 1863.

Ten Letters of John Love

John Love

Letters of the Late John Love, D.D., Glasgow 1840.

London, 13th December, 1796.

Rev. dear Sir,—Your complaints of the want of lively spiritual concern respecting the heathen are much to be preferred to the frothy declamations of Laodicean self-sufficiency. It would be, in my estimation, a favourable token if many of the friends of this institution were brought to a stand in this respect, and compelled to put off their ornaments from a felt want of inward spiritual wrestling, compassion, and zeal in behalf of a world lying on the shores of perdition. I wish to hear more of the language of real humiliation, and of a sense of the unworthiness, guilt, and pollution of the people whose salvation we desire to promote, and of a lively prostration of spirit before the sovereignty of the high and holy One, and of astonishment at the idea of his condescending to give the least encouragement to the endeavours of vile rebels in behalf of rebels. I fear we are not yet, as a body, brought low enough in these respects to be fit for close dealing with Him with whom we have to do, or for receiving much substantial blessing from his hands. I shall not, therefore, be surprised if he should take some very unexpected method for the awakening and humiliation of those who have the goodliest appearance amongst us. With respect to the generality of professors in this country, what I have known of them convinces me that, if a contrite and humble spirit be essential to real religion, their share of it is small indeed. But, I apprehend, the wheels of divine government are moving towards such a state of things as will oblige the profane infidel, the masked hypocrite, and the real convert, to speak out, and to take openly their several stations. Blessed are those servants who shall be found watching, and watching chiefly over that which is least seen! When emptying and humiliation have made room enough for it, the sea of heavenly light and grace will flow in upon us, so as that there shall not be room enough to receive it. That state of things which shall be as the shadow of death to wretched worldlings and hypocrites, shall be as a morning without

clouds to the true children of Zion, in whom that kingdom is which no storms can shake.

I fear the time is approaching when those gates shall be wide opened through which unprepared souls must pass into the horrors of the second death. Our utmost endeavours to improve the present interval of tranquillity are loudly called for; but we can do nothing without power from on high.

J. L.

Greenock, 7th December, 1798.

Dear Sir,—The goods have arrived safe, through the kindness of Providence, excepting the box with papers, which was designed to go by the waggon; of it I have not yet heard, though it may perhaps be come to Glasgow. We reckon ourselves much obliged to you for your diligent and faithful attention respecting these matters.

Though I have no reason to repent of having given up London, yet I retain a concern for the abiding effect of my ministry among the few whose minds and consciences were accessible to its influence; and I wish to entertain solemn and tender compassion towards them, as living in the midst of such a deformed chaos of iniquity, of filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, against which God will one day appear in the glory of his sin-avenging power, and clad with zeal as with a cloak. They who pass through such a crowd of base hypocrites and profane rebels against the Most High, without being dragged with them to their hell, must be wonderfully kept, guarded, and fortified by the wonderful grace of God, and will have much need of Christ's praying for them that their faith fail not. That the number of such in London is comparatively small indeed, will, I am persuaded, be made fully known to men and angels in that day when the dreadful Judge of the earth shall cause his fire to rend the bowels of this vast globe, dry up its seas, and consume its detestable idols. It is your concern, my dear sir, to seek to have it made very sure in your own conscience, that you shall be among the few who shall be seen undismayed at the coming of the Lord.

I have no need to write to you any new doctrine or to alter my manner of address to you on the subjects of eternity, excepting as to the degree of earnestness, vehemence, and power, though I were sure that the solemnities of judgment would commence the next morning

after your receiving this letter. I have only to call you to remember and to follow up the clear aim and tendency of my ministry, with respect to a deep conviction of sin and wrath, the consuming purity of the living God, the high demands of his glorious and eternal justice, the precious virtue of the blood and obedience of Him who is God, the supernatural quality of that faith which truly receives the atonement, the riches of the love and truth of Jehovah towards those whom he draws to himself in Christ, the greatness and universality of their renewing by his power the glory of their character and prospects in time and to all eternity. If you practically preserve and entertain the impression of the instructions and warnings you have heard on these and similar subjects, I do not hesitate to say that it shall be well with you. Following this course, and obeying in all points the dictates of an enlightened and lively conscience, you will find marvellous light bursting in from above and shining on your path, and every needful providential supply and deliverance shall assuredly be imparted.

I find it necessary to rise every day with new ardour to the Christian race, work, and warfare; and to assault heaven with fresh violence, and to press into the realizing sight of the Ancient of days, and of his bright throne and tribunal, and of that high paradise where he walks, shedding abroad the sweet odours of his love and glory, that I may be ready to contend for him in this ill-smelling world, and to stand among his saints and angels when the vapour of life shall vanish.

I request the Christian remembrance and prayers of those who have loved me “for the truth’s sake, which dwelleth with us, and shall be with us for ever.”

J. L.

Anderston, May 6, 1801.

Dear Madam,—We are much concerned at the continuance of your gloomy apprehensions, which, though your own power cannot remove, yet it is your duty to oppose to the uttermost. When God clothes the heavens with blackness and makes sackcloth their covering, and shuts up in the prison-house where no light can be perceived, it is natural to take a kind of pleasure in yielding to despondency, and in defending it by many arguments. But to resist this tendency requires self-denial, and is the path of duty, however difficult. Let me, therefore,

request you to attempt this self-resistance, and to say to yourself, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?” And, though, you may suppose it no hard matter to assign strong reasons to justify discouragement, yet remember, that though these reasons may now seem firm like the immovable mountains, yet shall they be as chaff before the whirlwind, before a just, believing view of that incomprehensible, infinitely high Saviour, whose excellency and love and riches of salvation are beyond all search. Therefore, when the cloud appears blackest and most impenetrable, and when conscience or imagination are mustering up their heaviest charges and forebodings, endeavour to believe that there is One hiding himself behind and above the cloud, whose beams of grace will at length break through it, and shine in upon you with a sweeter lustre than ever.

In the all-fulness, the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, compassion, grace, and power, laid up in Jesus the Son of God, there is infinitely more than enough to swallow up your deepest complaints and miseries: Let nothing put you away from knocking at this door, and watching at these gates; though you should seem to be slain at them, and though Satan should raise a Euroclydon (Acts 27), a combination of storms striving one with another. What, though your strength and confidence seem quite gone, and nothing left but fainting, overwhelming, and sinking, as in the belly of hell! these are no more than the trial of faith, felt more bitterly than can be painted in words, by David, Job, Jonah, Heman, and myriads since their time. What, though faith itself seems quite extinguished! This is necessary that you may know your entire dependence on the Author and Finisher of faith, for that influence of omnipotence which gives being to the principle and to every act of faith, and which secretly maintains it when no human eye can trace it out. What, though the precious word of God, and all means and ordinances, seem to have quite lost their efficacy! When the God of the Bible and of the ordinances comes again into them, these will be as life from the dead. Therefore wait, and continue waiting, and resolve to die waiting: “Although thou sayest, I shall not see him, yet judgment (that is, wise, holy mercy) is before him, therefore trust thou in him.” Be sparing of complaints in the ears of men, especially of whole-hearted secure professors—rather complain to God.

Express our sympathy to Mrs. M—, and desire her to think of that expression, “the good-will of Him who dwelt in the bush.” Her distress of body and of spirit may be piercing as the element of fire, and may seem to overspread her wholly, and to threaten destruction every moment: but that “good-will” is mighty to control and check the flame—and it dwells in the midst of it for that purpose. May the Almighty visit her with strong consolation, and her son with strong subduing grace, through the infinitely precious and powerful blood of the Lamb!

J. L.

Glasgow, October 4th, 1804.

My dear Sir,—I was lately much gratified with your communication, but shall not be able to reply with sufficient minuteness to all the interesting particulars it contains. I trust the Lord of the church has approved your zeal and activity for his interest, both where it has apparently failed of effect, and where the event promises better success. We have no reason to be surprised at meeting with inexplicable occurrences in the accomplishment of designs formed in that eternal light, which is to the noblest of created intelligencies unapproachable, and the object of their humble adoration and wonder. It is to be esteemed an expression of immense benignity and condescension, if, in any one case, our desires and exertions to do what appears to us good in relation to the glory of God, do coincide with the counsel of his incomprehensible wisdom, which must ultimately stand.

And now let us often stir up ourselves to look through the clouds and darkness, far beyond this passing scene of imperfection, anxiety, and trial, into that glorious kingdom of unsearchable riches, delight, and triumph, into which the cross and victory of our living Redeemer have burst open our passage. With respect to myself, I find my views and desires still more strongly than ever centering in the humiliation and sufferings of the Holy Lamb of God, as connected with the majesty and power of his present exalted state in the heaven of heavens. And I am permitted from time to time to take such a survey of this wonderful, incomprehensible, inexhaustible object, as conveys to me assurance of complete and eternal victory; and that all the intermediate difficulties and temptations shall be surmounted and at length swallowed up in an unknown fulness of joy. But my chief complaint is constant interruption, the frequent returning

power of darkness, even after the clearest and sweetest light. I see also an immense subject of mourning and supplication in the alarming state of a guilty nation, church, and world, lulled asleep by the artifice of infernal powers under the most portentous appearances and alarms of Divine judgment; and willing, alas! too willing, to remain unvisited with those mighty breathings of quickening grace, which alone can remedy the wide-spreading disease, and bring into propitious order the tremendous chaos of evil.

But why do I make mention of these things? Why but because I trust they accord with your sentiments and progress in the spiritual course and warfare, and because every opportunity is to be embraced for mutual excitement to faith, diligence, and thanksgiving.

J. L.

Glasgow, September 33, 1806.

My dear Sir,—I shall be exceedingly glad if my meeting you in the way of letter, amidst the hurry of London, may be of any avail for your establishment, consolation, and improvement. I have had experience enough how difficult it is to maintain spirituality of mind, while so tumultuous a medley of men and things is constantly humming all around. I have known also the possibility and high advantage of overcoming the world and its god in that arduous situation.

Your difficulties, however, may be considered as still greater than mine were, from the pressure of important worldly concerns, from the want of leisure and retirement to look through the deception of the noisy phantoms which crowd the metropolis, and from the want of intercourse with the spiritually-minded, who may be here and there met with. But the sufficiency of grace is to be resorted to and honoured, as being prepared to display itself in the face of every possible complication of difficulties. Still, however, the inquiry may be urged, how and by what methods may the mind most successfully exert itself in such circumstances, that it may draw down and cherish the sacred influence of heavenly grace, and attain the high establishment and consistency of sentiment and character marked out in such passages as 2 Cor. 4:10, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body”?

To this inquiry I might give an answer in different ways. To check the almost irresistible tide of worldly liveliness and vigour flowing in on every side, it may be useful to think of the London which is under ground, of the astonishing multitude of citizens and strangers, who make no further figure or disturbance, their bodies having become undistinguishable dust, and their spirits either happy or miserable in the unseen regions, equally far removed from all connection with the once fondly pursued objects of this earth. To stop here, however, would be but a melancholy method to preserve sobriety and elevation of spirit. It is necessary to look up out of such a vortex of vanity, wickedness, and misery, as is found in London, to the City of true life, glory, and delight, in comparison whereof all the boasted liveliness and delight of earth are insipidity and degradation. For this end it must be the endeavour of the mind to realise often, though it should be but in short broken glances, the perpetual presence of the invisible God of the spirits of all flesh, before whom the assembled nations make no higher figure than that of a drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance; that God who, with transcendent majesty and awful composure, looks through at once, as their Judge, all the human spirits that stir over the face of the world, and closely follows each individual, as though he were standing solitary before him, the lonely inhabitant of a desert globe.

With the majesty, purity, and power of the ever-present and governing Deity, it is necessary to mingle the recollection of patient condescending kindness and bounty, but especially to think of this high God as becoming man, and dwelling with mortals to take a near view of their condition and misery, to endure their contradiction and provocations, and to exhibit the sublime mystery of love in providing the only adequate sacrifice of atonement, ransom from hell, and price of heaven. If the mind, through the solicited influence of grace, can dart its thoughts now and then to the cross and to the throne of the Lamb, and to the paradise which is around that throne, the world will be controlled, and will be conquered. The conquest will be not gloomy, but joyful, and attended with a kind of grateful ease, enabling the Christian to pass through worldly scenes and transactions with all the activity which can be reasonably required, and without the just charge of affected demureness. Even to fail in the attempt will be profitable. And in some cases it will be found possible to take advantage of some hint, suggested

even by a worldly person, to convey spiritual sentiments with lasting and important effect.

That the God of all power and kindness may be with you to guard you from evil, to prosper your exertions, and to restore you with additional comfort to the satisfaction of home, is the earnest desire of

J. L.

Glasgow, January 2, 1807.

Dear Sir,—I heartily congratulate you on occasion of the favourable movement of Providence, which gives you access to a situation of usefulness, in itself highly important, and in various respects adapted to meet your wishes. This interposition of Providence will be the more precious in your eyes, when you compare it, either, perhaps, with your own fears, or with the procedure of God towards others; some of them not your inferiors in ability, diligence, and piety, who have been long tossed about at the caprice of the world, before reaching any fixed situation. I hope you are disposed to say, “Who am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto?” and to shrink into the dust before the sovereign kindness of the great God.

I confess that my satisfaction in your success is in some degree checked by anxiety respecting the dangers attached to your new condition. To creatures so foolish, carnal, and proud as we are, all prosperity is dangerous. When Providence smiles, we are permitted, indeed, to rejoice; but, if we know ourselves, it will be “with trembling.” But in such a case as yours, the indulgence of pride and carnality, even secretly and hardly perceptibly to ourselves, must be peculiarly dangerous, inasmuch as it disqualifies for real usefulness, and moves the jealousy of Him, on whose continual presence, guidance, and mighty influence, all genuine success and comfort in the gospel ministry entirely depend.

“The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit!” was the wish breathed from the loving heart of the dying apostle, in behalf of Timothy. As I truly wish to adopt this desire on your behalf, I am emboldened to endeavour to remind you of such things as may tend to secure the fulfilment of so weighty a petition. And with this view, it can hardly be sufficiently felt, of what essential importance it is, that the heart be brought down to that low contrition and abasement, which are so congenial to the presence of that High and Lofty One, in whom are so strongly united the remotest extremes of majesty and condescension.

But let us put the question, Where is the occasion for pride in undertaking a work, for which we are so poorly qualified—a work at approaching to which an angel might tremble? If you look well to the nature of the ministerial charge, and to the workings of your own heart, unless your heart be very different from mine, you will never want sufficient matter of humiliation: the applauses and the resistance of poor blind men will equally abase you. We may have a flow of words: but what is it to be set up, like a Balaam, with a word in his mouth, to be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal? Where are the secret wrestlings and travailing in birth? What is the proportion between our concern, and the danger of souls bleeding to death under the disease of sin, awfully suspended between heaven and hell? And though our concern were a thousand times greater than it is, what is it, when compared with the tears and blood, and travail of soul of the Holy One of God? You know the life of Brainerd; what a spirit of self-abasement he manifested; how, in the midst of the most strenuous exertions, in the midst of supplications to God and addresses to men the most fervid, in the midst of successes the most splendid, he was ever complaining of vileness and short-coming, often crying out of blood-guiltiness.

All this, however, must not be permitted to degenerate into despondency or indifference. The work of faith and labour of love, connected with ever-increasing humility, shall not be in vain. When the lesson of the insufficiency of all means, and the defilement of all our exertions, hath been duly learned, and when crumbs falling from the children's table appear precious and marvellous in our eyes, and when we cease from vain confidence in our own sword and bow; then shall the arm of the Lord be revealed, "and he that reapeth shall receive wages, and gather fruit to everlasting life." Then shall those wonders be wrought, which are so far above the might, and even the comprehension of angelic spirits, that, after all they have witnessed on earth and in heaven, new examples of them engage afresh their search, admiration, praises, and delight. And at the great appearing of the worshipped Lord of the angelic hosts, the instruments of conveying salvation to others, though once confessedly vile and imperfect, shall, through grace, "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."

"The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, be with thy spirit," to inspire faith, zeal, wisdom, patience, fortitude! I trust you are truly desirous

to give up yourself into his forming hands; and that, trembling at the thoughts of being betrayed by the deceitful heart in any degree, (“I am rich and increased with goods”), you will choose to be under the control, and loving though humbling rebukes, of the Son of God, and seek as a privilege of the noblest kind, “that he may sit over you as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

I might, in the way of counsel, refer to many things, which, however, will be thoroughly learned only by your own experience. It will be of some importance to be cautious of the intoxicating incense of flatterers, who are to be dreaded, as a corrupting, treacherous race; and, on the other hand, to guard against the irritation of opposers. The religious mistakes and imperfections of your people must be marked, but not too violently opposed. True grace, beset with much ignorance and defilement, must be valued, and preferred to the hypocrisy which may lurk under an officious readiness to chime in with all your opinions and views. It will require much prudence to avoid the extremes of a selfish, unfeeling recluseness, and of an unprofitable mingling with society of a merely worldly and sensual nature. No parties must be set up, of the rich against the poor, or the poor against the rich; or of one congregation as a rival to another. The greatest candour, respect, and delicacy, ought to adorn your deportment towards elder brethren in the ministry; particularly towards him who is placed by Providence in a situation of superiority to you, which you should endeavour to yield to him in an easy and grateful manner, wherever conscience is not really affected, which, I hope, will seldom or never occur.

But I will leave these and other things to your own thoughts, and to the guidance of the wisdom which is from above. Having thus far signified my concern for your true welfare and prosperity in the work of the Lord, and for the coming of his kingdom among your people, I once more repeat, wishing to do it with much humility and concern, the apostolical desire, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit!”

J. L.

Glasgow, January 31, 1809.

Dear Sir,—I sincerely sympathise with the distressed state of your mind; and, in the view of all the circumstances which have occasioned and tend to aggravate it, I wish to enter into the deepest concern, that

the wounds of your conscience may be truly, not slightly, healed. I begin with remarking that you must beware of supposing that your having fallen into such evils, though they are of a very heinous and hateful nature, is a sure token of God's entirely rejecting and casting you away. They may prove the means of preventing evils really greater, though generally little dreaded, namely, a proud self-righteous presumption, and a secure carnal resting in the world and its comforts, attended with the haughty rejection of Christ as a Saviour, and of God in him as the portion and felicity of the soul now and for ever. There is another occasion of discouragement against which you must endeavour to guard your mind, that which may arise from difficulties and delays when you approach the gate of life and salvation. Be not surprised though you find a serious meaning in those words of the Saviour, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." But, in order to secure a good issue of your present perplexing anxieties, the first part of the more practical counsel which I would offer is, that you seek from God, and earnestly endeavour to attain a spiritual conviction of the evil nature of sin, and of your own universal sinfulness. It is so far well that you perceive something of the virulence of grosser evils. You must, however, not be satisfied until you see such evils in that spiritual commanding light which will at the same time bring to view more hidden and refined evils of the heart.

Those abominations which relate to the sinful gratification of bodily appetite are really evil, for the same reason on account of which a dominant covetousness or worldly spirit—or a becoming manly pride as it may be accounted in the world—is evil. The great evil is in substance the same in them all—the departure of the heart from the living God, the preferring of self and the creature to the infinitely high and glorious God. That great and holy God, if spiritually realized to your mind, will rouse conscience, and show you evils unspeakable, not merely in some particular acts of sensuality and rebellion, but in the whole frame of your mind, course of your thoughts, and stream of your inward affections.

Let not your attention, however, be too long fixed on these awakening views of your state as a sinner. Endeavour, as soon as possible, to bring them into connection with enlarged views of the mercy, love, wisdom, power, and all-sufficiency of God as shining forth in Jesus, the Redeemer of lost souls. Where sin hath abounded, it is the plan and triumph of grace much more to abound.

God is glorified when we see and confess that our sins are immensely evil; because done against so glorious a majesty, against so wonderful an assemblage of infinite perfections. The same God is glorified still more when we see and believe that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, and possesses for this purpose an unlimited virtue; because all the glory and majesty of the incomprehensible Godhead is impressed on the obedience and sacrifice of the Man who is the fellow of Jehovah the Father.

I am aware that of yourself you cannot enter into this high healing light of salvation; but it is your duty to go as far as you can in the deliberate rational consideration of these things; and when you have done or are doing so, to look up to the almighty Spirit of God to carry you farther. You must try to cast yourself and your whole case upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the all-sufficient loving Saviour of vile sinners, and wait till the sacred fire of the Spirit change your carnal effort and exertion into that view of the Saviour and approach to him which is of a spiritual and saving nature. This, when clearly attained, will speak for itself, and will, in a surprising manner, lift you above all your fears, above all your distresses of body and soul. For this you ought to continue to believe and pray until you obtain it. Having given you this counsel, I have only to request that you would send me a note of your having received this.

J. L.

Glasgow, 28th February, 1815.

My dear Sir,—I hope to be enabled by grace to meet your wishes respecting the Friday evening's service. I am concerned to find that your sorrow and anxiety are so heavily "turned on you" at this time; and am inclined to watch the opportunity of standing behind the ever-living High Priest, in making request for you and your interesting fellow-sufferer. Pressing burdens and large necessities become our privileges, when brought near that high throne where compassion and bounty and inviolable truth appear in forms so majestic. A dark and tempestuous ocean of grief is the proper situation for the near approaches of the glorified Man of sorrows, whose acquaintance with grief has not been effaced by many ages of heavenly delight. Manifold and great tribulations are a measure showing us the height of that purity

and the riches of the eternal pleasures prepared for us by that strange manner of love which the Father has bestowed on us.

To Him who so loved us from of old in the awful recesses of a past eternity, and to the grace of Him who became our days-man and suffering, loving Surety, and to the Spirit of truth, power, and love, I commend you, your afflicted partner, your aged parent, and your surviving children.

J. L.

Glasgow, 26th September, 1815.

Dear Madam,—We were painfully surprised by the account of your heavy trial, the evening before we left G—. Important circumstances, which could not then be altered, prevented us from stopping to be with you at the time of the funeral; this we much regretted. But sometimes counsel and comfort come more seasonably and with greater force after the first shock of severe trial is a little abated. For, at first, when heavy calamity breaks in suddenly, it has the effect of stupifying and confounding the sufferer. Then the mind is unhinged and agitated, like the sea in a storm; and, if this should be prevented at the first opening of such trial, yet it generally takes place soon after, as we see exemplified in the case of the illustrious pattern of suffering patience, Job. Though at first he bowed submissively to the will of the Almighty, yet it is on record that, soon after, Job “opened his mouth and cursed his day.” And, from this very circumstance, you may learn not to give up hope of attaining to true resignation and comfort under your trial, though for a time you may find within you a multitude of disorderly rebellious thoughts, which you know not how to control and overcome.

What may now be your feelings and the state of your mind we can only conjecture. But it may be of some use to point out the right frame of spirit, and the manner of struggling towards it, in circumstances like yours. Such a trial carries with it the voice, “It is the Lord,” “Be still, and know that I am God,” “Stand in awe, and sin not”; and also another voice, “Look unto me, and be ye saved,” “Come to me and I will give you rest.” Whatever be the tumultuating of flesh and blood, your endeavour certainly ought to be to set God before you, and to come to a serious meeting with him in this solemn trial—the most solemn, in some respects, that can ever befall you.

Let me request you, therefore, looking for light and help from above, to try to take a realizing view of the majestic sovereignty of the high and lofty One before whom the angels of light veil their faces, and in whose sight the assembled nations appear mean and insignificant as the drop of a bucket or the small dust of the balance. Admit and cherish the idea of your own meanness in the presence of the infinite Majesty, that you may at least be silent before him, and may not venture to judge rashly, or to charge him foolishly; and let this open the way to your listening to the voice of Scripture and of conscience respecting your sinfulness as a fallen creature, and the injustice as well as danger of censuring the procedure which, however stern and awful its aspect, is mingled with great mercy. Say, then, with Job, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes see thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

When, through the teaching of grace, you come to this posture of humiliation in the free acknowledgment of sin, [then] mercy and consolation will not be far off. But you must seek actively to press forward, to behold and approach Him who is "God manifested in the flesh," the Lamb of God, taking away sin and the curse, who was himself the deepest sufferer, a man of sorrows; and who, when visibly on earth, looked on the tears and sorrows of mourners with an eye incomparably tender, and with a voice of power said to them, "Weep not." He then carried about with him the true balm for the wounds of the heart, which now, unseen, he dispenses from heaven.

Here, indeed, there are difficulties. The consolation in Christ is rich and powerful; but not to be reached without a struggle—a struggle sometimes tedious as well as severe.

When the mind is dark and the heart dreary, burdened, and enfeebled, the causes of grief are near, and press on the senses and imagination. It is then difficult to apprehend, with clearness and force, the personal glory and the true spiritual presence of a Saviour unseen. It is difficult to perceive the waters of life, though flowing near us in the law-purity and obedience, and in the bloody sufferings recorded by the Gospels, and to feel the authority and power of that voice which invites and warrants the saints to draw near. Here there must be striving to enter in at the strait gate.

But there is an Almighty Spirit, spoken of particularly [in] John

16, by whose wonderful energy Christ and his riches of love are made evident, and with sweet power brought home to the heart.

I must not further dwell on these things, but must call and intreat you to continue asking, seeking, and knocking, till you taste and feel more of these things than language can describe. In this way you shall obtain support, victory, and rest. You will learn to avoid unprofitable musings on outward circumstances and rash gloomy conclusions. You will leave room for what the God of all grace and power may have secretly wrought, amidst the hurry and disorder of affliction. You will, also, look on your weighty charge with solemn concern, yet with resolute trust in the living God, and ardent desire to bring them to him.

J. L.

Glasgow, March 4th, 1816.

Mr dear Sir,—By a variety of circumstances connected with the sacrament at C— my answer has been deferred. I look forward with desire and hope to the solemnity with you, and am willing to go as far as my strength will permit in the services you mention. But of late I have had much labour beyond the usual course, and feel the effect so far as requires me to be cautious. I dare not, therefore, positively engage for the Sabbath evening, unless it be, to use moderate language, imperiously necessary.

I am just returned from a public service, wherein a minister from the country has given us a display of privileges, glaring and overloaded, with little of the spirituality of those privileges, and nothing at all of the difficulty or conflict connected with them, and without calling us to almost any account, excepting gross despisers who may be presumed to be absent. How often, and with how many different notes, is the lullaby sung, the result of which is a sleeping sanctuary, joined with the silly simpering smile of an assumed enjoyment of things really unknown and unfelt, and joined with ill-nature and malignity against any untoward wight [i.e., person] who may be hardy enough to attempt to break in upon the sweet dream! But there is One who walks with fiery eyes in the midst of the candlesticks; and who though a Lamb is also a Lion, able to sound an awakening alarm in his own holy mountain; and who can, when he pleases, bring to view the spectacle of sinners in Zion afraid in earnest, and of hypocrites surprised in spite of shame with a fearfulness

which mocks every false attempt to soothe and plaster it over. Of him may we catch and retain a true sight, that we may be daunted or seduced by no multitude of the criers of a false and ill-accented proclamation of peace. I wish I were endued with power from on high, to give some conveyance here, and in other places, to the voice of Him who can make the dead to start from their graves of vile carnality, worldly confident daring, and foul, putrifying hypocrisy, while, as with a lady hand, he manages broken bones and broken hearts.

I desire to be more earnest than ever, in seeking to bring on, by prayer and otherwise, times of light, power, and refreshing from the presence of the highest crowned Lord, who “sets one foot on the sea and another on the land,” and can when he pleases utter that lion-like voice, which shall annoy and conquer earth and hell, and shall shake the enemies’ kingdom to its deepest centre.

I hope for a meeting with you in the mountain of God, attended with blessings.

J. L.

Appropriating the Death of Christ

Memorials of the Rev. John Love, D.D., Glasgow 1857–1858

1. I am to distinguish between these two things—(1.) Christ’s so dying for me, as that, He having died, his death is offered to me, and there is nothing between me and my actually possessing the benefit of it, but my accepting of it; and (2.) Christ’s so dying for me, as that, He having died, his death is offered to me, not only so that I *may* take it, but that through virtue proceeding from this death I *shall* take it to myself; and that it shall turn out according to God’s ordination, that not only has Christ been offered to me, but, through my acceptance of that offer, it is made evident that Christ died in my stead. Now, the first of these two propositions I am bound to believe on God’s testimony in the gospel offer. But the second I am not to believe, (for I know not whether it is true or not,) till I believe, and know that I have believed in Christ: and then upon the same testimony I must believe it. I am only to believe that the offer is as full to me as though I were elected—as full as it is to any of the elect, and that there is no bar arising from God’s secret

decree to hinder, that what is offered shall be mine in actual possession, if I accept of it,—as it is already mine in the offer and grant of a right to intermeddle with it. A beggar has a right to take what is held out to him. It is the same in this case as it is with regard to the light of the sun, or food, or medicine. God has really ordained in His decree, that, when these things are set before me, I shall either use them, and get the good of them, or shall obstinately refuse to take them, and so destroy myself. But this does not at all hinder the fulness of God's offer of them: it is so full, that there is no impediment but my own will; so that, if I were willing, and would just now take them, then it would appear that it was ordained that I should get the good of them. Now, every sinner has as good a right to appropriate Christ, and His death, to himself, as he has to take the benefit of the sun's light; although there is in both cases a decree, as to who shall, and who shall not, take the benefit of the grant. So that, on account of the difference of the event, it may be said that the grant is given to me in one way, and to another in another; and that Christ really, in the purpose of God, died only properly for those who shall, upon the offer, accept of him. The unsearchable power and wisdom of God appear in so ordering the event, as to correspond to his own design.

2. I am not first to feel myself willing to take Christ, and thence conclude that He died for me, and then to proceed upon that to take him. But I am, on the footing of God's free grant, to proceed immediately to take him, and, when I have taken him, to believe that he is mine in actual possession; and thence to conclude, that he was mine in the decree of God. His dying for me as one of the elect, is not the ground of my faith: this only comes out by reflection upon the acting of my faith, after it is consummated.

3. True willingness to take Christ, is willingness to venture upon him, not on a secret apprehension of our election, but on the clear gospel offer and warrant given to us, not as elect persons, but as sinners of mankind.

4. Christ did put forth his saving virtue in dying, and all are invited to take home his death to themselves. But, all being unwilling, God has determined that some shall infallibly do so; and by his secret mysterious operation on the will He brings this about. But still the offer is not the less free to all, notwithstanding that ordination.

Temporary Faith

Sherman Isbell

WE READ IN SCRIPTURE of those who believe the word of God, and yet are not saved, as in Luke 8:13: “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away,” or in Acts 26:27–28: “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Or James 2:19: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” Faith of a certain kind, constrained by evidence, will be found even in those who hate the truth with which they are confronted. Gardiner Spring comments, “We receive, compound, and compare ideas, whether we wish to or not. When we see the evidence of a religious doctrine to be clear and convincing, we cannot withhold our assent from it, while at the same time we may hate what we believe and love what we reject.”¹

Though this kind of believing of the Word of God manifests the generic character of faith as a state of mind induced by evidence, it is worth considering how it is to be distinguished from saving faith. It is usually referred to by theologians as ‘historical faith,’ because, as John Owen observes, it has no spiritual life in it, but is nothing more than that assent “such as we give unto historical things that are credibly testified unto us.”² That an inquirer would get no further than historical faith has always been a great peril for many associated with the Christian church. What is pertinent to observe in regard to our own age, when infidel principles predominate in society, is that we must not encourage anyone to conclude that if they abandon worldliness to the extent of opposing such distinctive forms of modern infidelity as evolution, and assent to many biblical and even Reformed doctrines, that this necessarily implies that they have saving faith.

Owen speaks of the varied effects of this historical faith. “With some it doth no way, or very little, influence the will or the affections, or work any change in the lives of men. So is it with them that profess they believe the gospel, and yet live in all manner of sins . . . and is an assent of the

very same nature and kind with that which devils are compelled to give; and this faith abounds in the world.” But with others this historical faith has produced such significant changes in their thinking and behavior that, in Owen’s judgment, their neighbors ought, in the judgment of charity, to look on them as true believers. Nevertheless, known perhaps only to God, their faith is something other than saving faith, because it is unaccompanied by any “spiritually vital principle of obedience,” such as would always be found in a heart purified by faith (Acts 15:9).³

Let us look more closely at these two groups. Those who have experienced only a minimal effect from this historical faith, whose “assent unto all divine revelation may be true and sincere” but who do not have the root of the matter in them, are often identified by the absence of conviction of sin. Owen insists that the dislike of sin, a shame for sin, a fear of the wrath of God, and restlessness to be delivered from a lost condition, necessarily come prior to justification, because the sinner will not seek deliverance from an evil of which he is not convicted. If saving faith is “the flight of a penitent sinner unto the mercy of God in Christ,” something essential is missing from the faith of those who have no distress about sin and so have not been moved to flee for refuge. A faith which is not concerned with relieving the souls of men from the sentence and curse of the law is not the faith whereby we are justified.⁴

Thomas Halyburton points out the fallacy of those who, because they are not troubled by doubts about the Christian religion, imagine that they have faith. A more likely explanation for their lack of doubt, he says, is that they judge that little is at stake for them in the matter. They find it easy to believe the gospel, because they feel that it would be no inconvenience to them if the gospel were found to be untrue. They are in fact ignorant of any experimental acquaintance with God’s holiness and their own sinfulness. “They think sin no great matter, and therefore think God may be soon reconciled to them.” But if once they saw the danger in which they stand, and how much their personal interest depends upon whether the gospel is true, they would be more scrupulous about identifying the way of reconciliation, and eager to be reassured that they had found it.⁵

John Howe unmasks the thoughtless way in which many claim to be Christians. He remarks that while they profess that Jesus is Christ, they have never considered whether there are valid and sufficient grounds for

making such an affirmation. What I profess may be itself true, and there may be clear grounds on which that truth is founded, but if I myself am without any intelligent appreciation of why it can be affirmed as true, this is not faith. Faith entails a knowledgeable assent to testimony supported by evidence, and Christian faith is a conviction born of reflection on the claims of truth found in Scripture. “I pray consider this well; ungrounded faith is no faith: . . . if I believe this at random, if men will call that believing when I believe and I cannot tell why, and I care not why, I believe as a matter of common hearsay or of uncertain report, I take it up from the people amongst whom I live. Such an ungrounded faith as this is a nullity, a perfect nullity, it goes for nothing; it is not believing, it is but a hovering, fluttering opinion, a vague opinion only I met with by chance, a thing that falls in my way And this is all that the most have to say for their being Christians: that religion which was the religion of my forefathers, which is the religion of the country where I live, which is the religion established by law, which is the religion that most suits my external conveniences to profess.” Howe goes on to note that not only are these the grounds on which many claim to have adopted the Christian faith, but they are the same grounds that furnish the pagan world with its faith.⁶

Turning now to those in whose lives historical faith has had a profounder effect, Charles Hodge notes that an inward experience confirming to them that the Scriptures are true may issue only in an unsettling conviction about guilt and hell. “Men who all their lives have neglected or reviled the truth . . . are often brought to believe by a power which they cannot resist. An awakened conscience affirms the truth with an authority before which they quail. . . . To disbelieve is now impossible. That there is a God, that he is holy and just, and that there is a hell, they would give the world to doubt, but cannot. . . . The truth, therefore, has great power over them. It destroys their former peace. It forces them to self-denial and the performance of religious duties. Sometimes this influence soon wears off, as conscience subsides into its accustomed slumber. At others, it continues long, even to the end of life. It then constitutes that spirit of bondage and fear under which its unhappy subjects endeavour to work out a way to heaven, without embracing the gospel of the grace of God.”⁷ Those who never progress beyond historical faith either have had little experiential appreciation

of their danger, or if once awakened have never come to rest in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. They have never finished with self-complacency and self-reliance, and found Christ as the anchor of their soul. Thoughts of the mediation of Christ have been shallow and presumptuous, and the treasure of their heart lies elsewhere. They have never known Jesus the forerunner to take them by the hand and bring them trembling into the presence of God within the veil, with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus.

When we read in Scripture of those who receive the Word of God, but who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away, the reference will be to those who have an enthusiastic interest in religion, but who never have that experimental acquaintance with God's holiness and their own sin which empties them of their own self-righteousness and brings them to an entire dependence upon the redemption procured by the Mediator. Their profession does not reflect an inward coming to terms with the extent of their need for a divine Savior. Then when difficulty arises for the gospel's sake, they have no real attachment and fall away under the pressure. Owen comments, "When once they enter into temptation they are gone for ever. Temptation withers all their profession, and slays their souls. We see this accomplished every day. Men who have attended on the preaching of the gospel, been affected and delighted with it, that have made profession of it, and have been looked on, it may be, as believers, and thus have continued for some years; no sooner doth temptation befall them that hath vigour and permanency in it, but they are turned out of the way, and are gone for ever. They fall to hate the word they have delighted in, despise the professors of it, and are hardened by sin. So Matt. 7:26, 'He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, is like unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.' But what doth this house of profession do? It shelters him, keeps him warm, and stands for a while. . . . Demas will preach the gospel until the love of the world befall him, and he is utterly turned aside. . . . Entrance into temptation is, with this sort of men, an entrance into apostacy, more or less, in part or in whole; it faileth not."⁸

Saving faith yields a different kind of enthusiasm. It produces a joy in Christ as the heart's only treasure. William Guthrie gives us "three great essentials of religion and true Christianity" by which hypocrites are excluded. "(1) They are not broken in heart, and emptied of their

own righteousness, so as to loathe themselves. . . . (2) They never took up Christ Jesus as the only treasure and jewel that can enrich and satisfy. . . . 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.' (3) They never in earnest close with Christ's whole yoke without exception, judging all His 'will just and good, holy and spiritual'; and therefore no rest is given to them by Christ—"Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."'⁹

Notes

¹ Gardiner Spring, *The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, n.p.), 10.

² John Owen, "The Doctrine of Justification by Faith," *The Works of John Owen* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965–1968), 5:71–73 (quotation on p. 72). Cf. John Murray, "Faith," *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976–1982), 2: 235–237; William Cunningham, *Theological Lectures* (London: James Nisbet & Company, 1878), 312–314.

³ Owen, "Doctrine of Justification by Faith," 5:72–73. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 554–558 (III.ii.10–12).

⁴ Owen, "Doctrine of Justification by Faith," 5:74–83, 98–99 (quotations on pp. 82 and 75). Cf. 5:99: "There is nothing in this whole doctrine that I will more firmly adhere unto than the necessity of the convictions mentioned previous unto true believing; without which not one line of it can be understood aright, and men do but beat the air in their contentions about it."

⁵ Thomas Halyburton, "The Great Concern of Salvation," *Works of Thomas Halyburton* (London: Thomas Tegg & Son, 1835), 158–159 (quotation on p. 159); cf. 167–170. Cf. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1992–1997), 2:587–593 (2:589: "Accordingly it is an empty presumption and confidence rather than a true trust; such as was exhibited in the young man (Mt. 19:16–22) and in various hypocrites rashly glorying in the grace and salvation of God. . . . while without any

examination of themselves (which they avoid as too troublesome and inconvenient), they proudly claim for themselves the grace of Christ and securely sink into a vain sleep, not inquiring, or wishing to inquire, what is the foundation of their imagination.”)

⁶ John Howe, “Sermon XXXVIII” (on 1 John 5:1), *The Works of John Howe* (New York: John P. Haven, 1838), 2:885, 888–890 (quotation on p. 885). Cf. Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1978), 139. Robert Riccaltoun, *A Sober Enquiry Into the Grounds of the Present Differences in the Church of Scotland* (n.p.: n.p., 1723), 168–169, identifies the defects in false faiths, and notes that there are what he calls “partial or half believers” (quotation on p. 168): “These are such, as either regard only the history, leaving out both the law and the gospel; or, the law without the gospel; or, even the gospel without the law, which men may sometimes seem to do; but, in reality, believe nothing when they believe not all. Those who regard only the history, turn the Word of God into the same rank with human composures. Those who believe the law without the gospel, . . . make the Word of God a mere covenant of works; and these who believe the gospel without the law, turn the grace of God into wantonness, and in reality believe neither.”

⁷ Hodge, *Way of Life*, 139–140, 142–143 (quotation on pp. 139–140). Cf. Halyburton, “Great Concern of Salvation,” 165–167.

⁸ John Owen, “Of Temptation,” *Works of John Owen*, 6:102–103 (quotation on p. 103).

⁹ William Guthrie, *The Christian’s Great Interest* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), 93.

Sacrament Day

John Leyburn

William Henry Foote, *Sketches of Virginia, Historical and Biographical*, Philadelphia 1856.

THREE MILES FROM OUR VILLAGE WAS AN OLD CHURCH, a favorite and memorable resort of the villagers on special occasions. Built of blue limestone, blackened by the pencil of time, with a steep stairway to the gallery outside on the front, crowning the summit of a beautiful knoll, and peering out from a dense grove of majestic old oaks, it was the very *beau ideal* of an ancient rural house of God. For many years it was under the same pastoral charge with our village congregation; and after this connection was severed, it was customary for our minister to assist the pastor on 'Sacrament days,' and for many of his people to resort thither. Most of the older people went on horseback, but the younger ones were afoot; and as the sacraments were usually in the spring and autumn, it was a beautiful walk over the hills, through the well-tilled fields, and amid the noble forests. Some of those bright autumn Sabbaths have left their pictures clear and strong in my memory; the delicious inspiring October air, the very atmosphere seeming to sparkle as with diamonds; the deep blue of the fathomless heavens, with fleets of white clouds floating lazily on its ocean bosom, and here and there one aground upon a mountain top: the grand old mountains in parti-colored livery of black, green, red, and yellow; the forests waving their lofty pennants of crimson and gold.

The scene as we gained the summit of the last hill, bringing us in view of the Church, was most inspiring. From every country road, old men and matrons, young men and maidens, in long processions, two abreast, came pouring in on horseback, emerging from the thick forests, and clattering across the limpid brook that murmured through the intervening vale; hundreds of impatient steeds tied under the trees of the grove, neighing salutations to newcomers, groups sitting upon rude benches, or on the moss-covered rocks, or clustered around the sparkling spring; the sound of sacred song floating from the old Church

doors, mellowed and harmonized by the distance; friends meeting and greeting, and the crowd growing too great to be contained within doors. In the Session House adjoining the Church in the rear, the ministers and elders assembled at an early hour to exchange fraternal salutations, to spend a season in prayer, examine candidates for communion, and make arrangements for the day. Here baskets and napkins filled with provision were deposited till the “interval” between the public services, the stated time for taking refreshments; and here rustic mothers, who could not leave their babes at home, brought their infant charges, and sometimes remained during the sermons, listening with eager ears to the minister’s words, as they fell through the open door over head, adjoining the pulpit.

The interior of the meetinghouse wore an antique and time-worn aspect. The pulpit, unlike our primeval octagon box in the old Church at home, was long, and capable of accommodating a goodly number of ministers, and the sounding board overhead, suspended by a rusty iron rod, sufficiently extended to have shut them all in, had it come down from its fastenings; the pews were extravagantly tall, and the aisles depressed, so that when persons were in the latter, nothing but their heads and shoulders could be seen—the benches and backs, as you sat in them, being the perfection of discomfort, and to the young folks the most serious drawback to the favorite sacrament days. Not a speck of paint had ever touched pulpit, pew, or gallery; the yellow pine, grown tawny by the lapse of years, stood up in its native nudity. But when village, farmhouse, and mountain glen had poured their quotas into the old sanctuary, until every nook and crevice was filled, below and above stairs, leaving crowds at the doors and on the benches without, it was a congregation which might have fired the heart of any minister.

One sacrament day which occurred in my childhood will be remembered as long as one of those blackened stones stands upon another—as long, indeed, as lasts that sanctuary not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For some time previous there had been an extraordinary degree of religious interest in the village and surrounding country. Many had been inquiring the way of salvation, and not a few had found the pearl of great price. Prayer meetings and special services had been held night after night. Religion was the great theme of conversation in the streets and in domestic circles. Hardly was there a house where one

or more of its inmates had not been wrought upon by the Spirit's power. Spiritual songs, lively and stirring, or plaintive and heart-touching, were sung with zest and soul, and a pamphlet, containing a selection of them, was published for this special use. A dire and fatal epidemic which had prevailed, carrying off numbers to their graves, and filling almost every home in the village with sorrow, had brought death and eternity near, and prepared the way for the impressions of the gracious work. Not a few of the subjects of the revival were awaiting the sacrament, publicly to profess their new-born love. The session house and the adjoining grove, on the morning of that memorable day, presented a scene over which angels might have rejoiced. Here is a fond-hearted mother, giving words of counsel to a daughter convulsed with grief because of the burden of sin; here is a venerable father, with a favorite son beside him under that great old oak, to whom he is making solemn appeals, not to let this favored season and this affecting day pass without making his peace with God; and here on the rude bench against the wall sits our venerable pastor, with weeping eyes, listening to the delightful narrative of what God had just been doing for one of his flock, for whom he had so often prayed. Not a careless face was seen in all the throng which today has been drawn together in unusual numbers, by the tidings of the revival.

Our minister preached the morning sermon. He was always evangelical, solemn, and impressive, and at times there was a sublime and majestic roll in his utterances, which marked him the great man all acknowledged him to be. But today there is a power, a vivid spreading out of eternal things—a directness and earnestness altogether peculiar. At times his voice would falter, as he almost choked with the swelling emotion. A divine afflatus had breathed upon his heart, and from its profound depths he spoke as a dying man to dying men. To this day that discourse is remembered by many who heard it, as one of the most remarkable efforts of a man whose ordinary sermons would have honored any pulpit. The scenes in which he had recently mingled, and the stories of broken hearts, troubled consciences, and heavenly hopes, which had been poured into his ear, had unsealed the great fountains of his soul.

The sermon well prepared the way for the communion; and when the invitation was given to the young converts to assemble around the table spread before the pulpit in the cross aisle, there was a spectacle

which moved every heart, and drew tears of joy from many an eye. Fathers, mothers, ministers, Christian friends, at last saw the answer to their prayers. Those who had been dedicated to God in infancy, and rededicated a thousand times since in the closet, at the family altar, and at this very sacramental table, had now, after tedious years of waiting, which had almost sickened the heart with hope deferred, come forward to avouch Jesus as their new Lord and Master. The village beauty, the ere-while careless and wild young man, the sturdy bronze-faced mountain farmer, and the old veteran with the weight of years upon him, together left their several pews, and made their way through the crowded aisles for the first time to sit at this affecting festival. The scene was too much for some of them. Hearts *would* overflow, tears would fall, and, in the midst of the minister's address, as he spoke to them in touching terms, well suited to their present case, reminding them of what they had been by nature, of what grace had done for them in snatching them as brands from the burning, and of the debt of gratitude and love they owed to Him who had shed his blood to save them, one young man sobbed aloud, overcome by his emotions. This touched a sympathetic cord in all hearts, and the old meetinghouse became a Bochim—a place of tears—sweet tears of penitence, and a peace passing all understanding. The unconverted, who sat wondering spectators, felt the power of the eloquent appeal; they were cut to the heart, and resolved that they too must seek the Lord; and many a pious saint, feeling that his cup of joy was full, was ready to say with old Simeon, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

One of the ministers, either on this or a similar occasion at the same period, held up the sacramental cup, and asked, in language that went to every unconverted heart, "Can you, will you longer reject and trample on this precious blood, poured from the wounds of a dying Saviour?" "I call God and this great assembly to witness," said he, "that it is offered you afresh this day. Again dare to spurn it from your lips, and the record will be written against you on high, which, in the terrible day of God's coming judgment will flame out to your astonishment and dismay in letters of fire." Not a few, who felt the power of that appeal, were soon after drinking of that cup, in memory of Him who had washed them from their sins, and given them a hope, through grace, of drinking it with him hereafter in his heavenly kingdom.

The many hours of the services, protracted by the numerous successive tables of communicants, and the afternoon sermon, passed swiftly on, no one heeding the lapse of time, until at last, when the great festival was ended, and the crowds turned into the various roads and byways to their several homes, the long shadows of approaching evening were already spreading their sable mantle over mountain, field, and forest.

Years have passed since that memorable day. Some of those who shared its blessings have long since become ministers of the gospel, and valued officers and members in the household of faith. Some soon tired of the service upon which they had prematurely professed to enter, and turned back to the world, their last state being worse than the first; and others have died in the glorious hopes of the gospel, and are now in the company of the just made perfect, around the throne on high, blessing God and the Lamb for that sacrament day.

Christ Our Prophet

Marcus Dods (of Belford)

On the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, London 1849.

THE DUTY OF CHRIST AS OUR PROPHET is to reveal to us the Father, as he saith, "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him"; and again it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Now, how did Christ reveal to us the Father? Not by any set proofs of his existence, nor by any abstract discussions upon his nature or character, nor by didactic discourses, but by action; a mode of instruction as level to the comprehension of the meanest capacity, as to that of the loftiest; as intelligible to the peasant as to the philosopher.

He taught us, for example, that God is Holy. But how did he do this? Not by any set dissertations on his holiness, but by the unceasing and spotless holiness of his own conduct. Never were allurements more enticing than those by which he was sometimes solicited, and never were trials so severe as those to which he was commonly exposed, and [yet] never were testimonies so numerous, unequivocal, and decisive, as those by which it is proved that by no allurement was he ever enticed, by no trial was he ever pressed into a deviation, or into any thing approaching a wish to deviate from the path of duty. Not only could he himself challenge his bitterest foes to convince him of sin, but the testimony of his friends and foes alike concurs to assure us that he "did no sin," and that in his mouth no guile was found.

In the same manner he teaches us that God is Good, not by regular proofs of this in his discourses, but by the constant exhibition of it in his practice. When the infirm and the distressed applied to him, the application was never made in vain. He never said to the applicant, you are of too abandoned a character for notice, and richly deserve all the miseries that you endure; or, your disease is of too desperate a nature, or of too long standing, to admit of relief. No, but his language was, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Now, he who exhibited this unceasing holiness, and this unlimited goodness, was God with us, God manifest in the flesh. And such as he was in the world, even such is God. If we wish to know the character of God, we shall find it revealed there, where the life of Jesus is recorded. Hence the following most distinct language is used by our Lord himself on this subject: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

Hence, too, when we are called upon to combat the fears that take possession of the awakened soul, and the arguments which ignorance and unbelief raise up in the heart of the convinced sinner, against faith and hope, we find the record of our Saviour's life one of the best and most efficient grounds on which they may be combated. We say with powerful effect to the sinner, under these circumstances, He, whose goodness was so unlimited, was God manifested in the flesh, and manifested there for this very purpose, that we might see with our own eyes, and have the most perfect knowledge of the gracious dispositions of God toward us. If you say that you admit the general proposition, that there is mercy with God for sinners, but dare not specifically apply the general proposition to your own individual case, and hope that there is mercy for *you*, then we say that you are negating not only his manifold and gracious declarations, whereby he encourages the weary and heavy laden to come to him, that they may find peace and rest; but you are negating the import of the lesson taught by the whole course of his conduct. For, [beginning] from that exercise of inconceivable goodness which he manifested when, leaving the glory which he had with the Father before the world began, he condescended to become obnoxious to every suffering which human nature knows, in that flesh which he took into personal union with himself, [and continuing] down to that other equally inconceivable exercise of goodness which he manifested, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, giving his own life for that of a lost world, what one act in the whole course of his earthly existence is not in most perfect accordance with the grace and the goodness, which distinguished alike its commencement and its close?

What wretch ever applied to him, and was sent away unrelieved? Whom did he ever ask, by what right, or on the ground of what merit, they laid claim to his interposition in their favour? Whom did he ever reproach with the guilt that had brought their miseries upon them? If he healed the sick, and raised the dead, if out of one he cast seven devils, and dispossessed another of a whole legion, it was for the very purpose of convincing you, that there is no limit either to his power or his willingness to heal your spiritual sickness, to quicken you from your death in sin. You have the same access to him now, that the miserable had when he was on earth. What he was then, he is now. He asks no questions as to the past. He asks not if you be laden with the sins of a few days, or with the sins of many years. He asks not if your crimes be few or many, slight or aggravated. They all lie equally within the compass of his power; and his only question is, "Wilt thou be made whole?" If, for a moment, he refused the woman of Syrophenicia, it was only to teach you the happy effect of persevering and importunate prayer. If he refused her for a moment, it was only the more emphatically to teach this truth, that he will never refuse,—that *whosoever* cometh unto him shall not be denied.

And if the life of Christ was in reality a living manifestation of all the perfections of God, and if we know God, because God has verily dwelt in the flesh amongst us, then it is obvious, not merely that the Son, who became our Prophet to reveal unto us the Father, must of necessity become flesh, since in no other way that we know could he make that revelation; but it is not less obviously necessary, that the flesh which he took should be perfectly holy, else it is not conceivable how his life could afford us any exhibition of the holiness of God. He might have showed to us the holiness of a man, such as Abraham or Moses, carried to a higher degree of perfection, even to the extent of avoiding all actual transgression of the law of God. But if his flesh was really sinful, if it ever felt the slightest propensity or inclination to sin,—an inclination which required to be repressed, in order to prevent it from proceeding to actual guilt [i.e., the guilt of actual as opposed to original sin], then this propensity was itself criminal,—it was just that carnal concupiscence, that lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, which we derive from the fall, and which effectually disqualified him in whom it dwelt from giving any practical revelation of the divine holiness in his life. [In that case,] he was exactly in the situation of other fallen

men; he might be a very bright monument of divine grace; but the revealer of God,—the author of the grace of illumination, he could no more be, than any other fallen and regenerated man. Of that grace he might have received a richer abundance than any other fallen man ever received; but he stood in exactly the same predicament as they did, and, therefore, though perhaps we cannot reasonably hope to receive quite as large a measure of that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation, from Abraham, “the friend of God,” or from Aaron, the “saint of the Lord,” or from Paul, “the apostle of the Gentiles,” as from him in whom the work of regeneration had a more perfect operation than it had in them; yet assuredly the same principle that authorizes us to expect that grace from one fallen and regenerated man, authorizes us to expect the same grace, though perhaps in a somewhat inferior degree, from any other fallen and regenerated man.

And this is not the only point on which the doctrine of our Lord’s [supposedly] fallen humanity gives the most direct and decisive sanction to the worship of the Saints: the sanction becomes still stronger and more decisive, when we reflect, that though we may probably expect a more abundant measure of wisdom from Christ, than from any other fallen and regenerated man, yet we may unquestionably expect the highest measure of that wisdom, when we seek it both from him, and also from all other fallen and regenerated men. In him, indeed, that concupiscence of the flesh, which characterizes fallen man, might be kept as “a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed,” from which no emanation of actual guilt was ever permitted to proceed. The motions of sin in the flesh might in him be so powerfully and successfully repressed, that it might be truly said of him in whom these motions wrought, that he “*did* no sin.” But with what truth it could be said of him,—whose whole life was [allegedly] an unceasing, however successful, struggle against the will of the flesh, compelling “the flesh *against* its will,” into however perfect a harmony with the will of God,—that he “*knew* no sin,” is to me altogether incomprehensible. If the concupiscence of the flesh existed in him at all, however successfully subdued, it existed as the germ of all actual transgression,—as containing in it the elements of all human guilt,—as the object of just wrath, and deserved punishment,—as that which can be rendered fit for communion with God, only through that shedding of blood, without which there can be no remission, and, consequently, totally depriving him in

whom it existed of all claim to the title, and of all power to accomplish the purposes, of a “Lamb without blemish, and without spot.”

But in order to see all the fulness with which he discharged the duties resulting from his prophetic character, and learn from his discharge of them all the knowledge which it is fitted and intended to convey, we must look, not merely to his life, but still more especially to his death. He was a Prophet on the cross, as well as “a Priest on the throne,” and not the less a King on both. And whatever knowledge of the character of God we derive from the life of Christ is both carried out to a greater extent, and taught with a more impressive emphasis, by his death. By his life we are taught that God is good, and the sinner is powerfully encouraged to come to him for pardon and for peace. But it was on the cross that he gave the highest exhibition of the Divine goodness.

To all his creatures the goodness of God was known, but to none of them was the infinite and inconceivable extent of that goodness known till Christ died on the cross. When man fell, had God freely forgiven the rebel, and by a word restored him to perfect purity, and placed him in a state of impeccable stability, this would have been an act of unexampled goodness.

But when they heard of the Incarnation, when they heard that the Eternal Word, who spoke the world into being, was himself to be made flesh, and in the weakness of flesh was to go forth into that world of which Satan had become the god, and to meet him in his own domain, and to contend with him and all his powers on his own ground, and by his own deeds and his own sufferings to take away the captives of the mighty, and to redeem the prey of the terrible,—and when they saw all this actually accomplished, then had they a view of the goodness of God, far beyond aught that they could possibly have had before. When they saw God willing to redeem from their captivity, and to ransom from destruction, creatures whose utter and final perdition could not have affected, in the slightest degree, his happiness or glory, [and] with no less a price than the blood of his own well-beloved Son, it is no matter of surprise that they, delighted to be thus assured, not only that God is good, but that his goodness is absolutely infinite, should, as well as the redeemed from among men, celebrate the death of Christ in the most exalted strains of gratitude and adoration, as we are assured by John in the Revelation that they do.

And well might the same writer, when contemplating the goodness of God, as it is set forth in the unspeakable value of the price by which he purchased our safety, thus speak of it, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:9–10. The love of God is indeed thus manifested to be something, the extent of which no language may describe, and no heart may conceive: and the redeemed of the Lord, while throughout eternity his love flows forth to them, in an ever-increasing weight of glory and blessedness, will feel no misgivings, lest he who thus blesteth them should grow weary in the exercise of his love, and should come to a limit beyond which they shall not go in its enjoyment. For they can ever look back to the cross of Christ, where the death of our Prophet gave an ineffaceable and irrefragable demonstration that the love of God is truly boundless and exhaustless, and passing all understanding.

Now, is it possible that the *life* of Christ,—clear, and distinct, and decisive as are the manifestations of the love and goodness of God which it affords,—could have manifested that love and goodness to as great an extent, or have given so impressive and indubitable a demonstration of them, as that which we derive from his *death*? Every reader will readily answer, No. It was through his whole life, but still more especially and emphatically in his death, that our great Prophet revealed unto us the Father. Then it follows that he died as a Prophet, not less than as a Priest; or, in other words, it was from his death as a sacrifice to expiate our sins that we derive the highest instruction, which, as our Prophet, he came to teach us. Had God sent his Son merely to instruct us by his doctrine, this would have been a great proof of love; but it might still have been supposed that that love was limited, [and] that though he gave him to be our instructor, yet he would not give him up to suffering for our sakes. But when Christ actually died, then was the love of God proved to be truly infinite; "For greater love hath no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friends."

But what mighty proof of love was this, if Christ was really a fallen sinful man? In that case his death could be of no avail to us, and could afford us no proof that the love of God is infinite, but it was essentially necessary on his own account. For if he were fallen, he needed

regeneration, having been generated by the Holy Ghost [as] a sinful thing; and regeneration can be perfected only through the medium of death. And if he died to perfect his own regeneration, then his death is no more to us than the death of any other fallen, sinful, but regenerated man; nor can I see how the love of God toward us is displayed in the one case more than in the other. But supposing that the death of Christ was not at all necessary on his own account, but was endured solely for our sakes, then the demonstration of the love of God which it affords becomes much more distinct and impressive, when viewed in connection with that demonstration of the exceedingly hateful and malignant nature of sin which was given by the same event. If the evil of sin be small, then the love that forgives it is not great, and, therefore, the death of Christ would not be a proof of the infinite love of God, unless it were also a proof of the infinite evil of sin.

That the evil of sin is infinite is easily proved by abstract reasoning; for its direct tendency is to dethrone God, and thus destroy the universe. But God does not teach us truths of importance by abstract reasonings which require close thinking to apprehend, but by practical demonstrations which are alike intelligible to all. And the death of Christ is the practical illustration, not only that sin is evil, but that its evil is infinite. When sin was first introduced into the dominions of God, some demonstration of its evil was given in the punishment inflicted on the offenders. That demonstration, however, was comparatively trifling. In them it was not immediately punished to the full extent of its demerit, nor, consequently, to the full extent of its evil shown. And had these first offenders been at once and freely forgiven, could this by any possibility have been done, it would have afforded a comparatively trifling manifestation of the grace of God.

Before that grace could be seen in all its glory, sin must first be seen in all its malignity. And this could not be seen merely in the fall of angels. One of its most awful characteristics their fall could not show. I refer to its generative nature,—its capability of being propagated from race to race through successive generations. Whatever number of angels there were who kept not their first state, each fell by his own personal act; and to however many other sins that first sin might give rise in the individual, this was only a proof that sin once admitted into the heart would propagate itself there, but could give no idea of another fact, which

far more fearfully demonstrates the malignity of sin,—namely, that sin might be committed under such circumstances, as would render it just in God to cause the poison of that sin to pass from the actual transgressor to unnumbered millions of other responsible creatures, connected in a particular manner with the transgressor, so as to involve them all in his guilt and in his doom. Till man fell, and the result of his fall was seen, it could not be known that such was the malignity of sin, that one sin of one man was sufficient to diffuse guilt and misery through all generations of men. One sin thus committed, under circumstances which afforded it an opportunity for producing all its natural and proper effects, gave a much more impressive view of its native malignity than the fall of angels could possibly do.

Many proofs of the hatefulnes of sin have been given, such as the sweeping away of a guilty world by the flood,—the sudden destruction of “the cities of the plain,”—the devotion of the Amorites to extermination when the measure of their iniquities was full. And all the madness, and folly, and guilt, and misery, that abound on earth, and every sin and every sorrow of every individual, when viewed, as it ought always to be, in connection with the original source whence it sprung, are all affecting and convincing proofs—proofs coming home to the bosom of every man who is capable of feeling—how evil a thing and bitter sin is; while, at the same time, they are proving that the “evil figment” of man’s heart, the “root of bitterness,” is at this day as vigorous, and fresh, and flourishing, and fruitful, as it was at the beginning; and while they are showing how one sin of one man, when committed under circumstances favourable to the development of its proper effects, is capable of resulting in the actual guilt and temporal sufferings of all, and in the final condemnation of many.

And when this demonstration of the malignity of sin has been for ages exhibited to the examination of men and of angels, when we have seen one sin spreading its contamination over a whole world, and over all generations of men, and showing its poison in the production of a guilt and a misery that baffle all calculation and all conception, is this demonstration, overwhelming though it be, the most painful and the most awful exhibition of the “exceeding sinfulness of sin,” which God hath given to angels and to men? No. Notwithstanding this demonstration, the evil of sin, inconceivable as it is shown to be, might yet have a limit, and its misery might have an end. Therefore, a

demonstration more striking still, and one which may prove that the evil of sin is truly and properly infinite, was wanted; lest men, ever apt to undervalue that evil, should come to think that the sufferings of life, and the pangs of death, form a sufficient expiation for it. The only begotten Son of God is sent forth to teach us this, among other things, that the holiness of God is something far beyond all conception,—that his aversion to sin is wholly unalterable,—and that, in short, there is a hatefulness in sin, which we can no more comprehend than we can comprehend the perfections of God. We have seen the effects of one sin, and these are disastrous beyond all calculation. But the death of our Divine Prophet affords a demonstration even beyond this, else it would not have been given.

When angels saw him, whom they were accustomed to worship, go forth into the world “in the likeness of sinful flesh,”—when they saw him take upon himself the penalty due to the sins of a lost world,—when they saw him undertake to pay a debt of such incalculable magnitude, they would be ready to say, ‘Surely it is sufficient that he has had goodness enough to undertake for these fallen creatures! The debt will not be in reality exacted; the penalty will not be unsparingly inflicted. The sins which could not be forgiven to the creature will be freely forgiven to the only begotten and well-beloved Son, when he has taken them upon himself. A little may be exacted, in order to prove the reality of his suretyship; a little may be inflicted, in order to prove the reality of his substitution; but surely the whole will never be either required or inflicted. The transgressions of the law, which could not be forgiven to the actually guilty creature, may well be forgiven, when they become, by imputation, the transgressions of him who is above the law. He will spare the Son.’ But no, not one pang due to our guilt was withheld, not one drop of gall which guilt had mingled in our cup, was abstracted from his. “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”; and he is able to forgive every sin, because there is no sin, the bitterness resulting from which he did not feel to the full. And this is what constitutes his death, so awful and solemn, and impressive a demonstration, beyond all other demonstrations, of the infinite and inconceivable holiness of God, and of the unspeakable hatefulness of sin, that though he who took our iniquities upon himself was the well-beloved Son, yet not one pang due to guilt was spared him.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland

Sabbath services 2 PM and 6 PM, 7801 Persimmon Tree Lane.

Minister: Rev. Sherman Isbell, 3155 Lindenwood Lane, Fairfax, VA 22031, telephone 703.359.0192, e-mail rsisbell@masterstrumpet.org.

Pilgrims' Hope Presbyterian Church, Cumberland, Maryland

Sabbath service 2 PM, 405 North Mechanic Street.

Information: Mr. David Biser, 18105 Vernon Estates Drive, Oldtown, MD 21555, telephone 301.478.5764, e-mail dbiser@masterstrumpet.org.

The service at Cumberland is an extension of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland.

Free Church Atlanta, Winder, Georgia

Sabbath services 11 AM and 2 PM, 1115 Jefferson Highway.

Supply: Rev. Warren Gardner, 1115 Jefferson Highway, Winder, GA 30680, telephone 770.867.5765, e-mail wegardner@masterstrumpet.org.

Dayton Free Church, Dayton, Ohio

Sabbath services 12:30 PM and 6:30 PM, New Burlington Friends Meeting House, 2938 Cemetery Road, Xenia, Ohio.

Information: Mr. John Greenewald, 3375 Cemetery Road, Xenia, OH 45385, telephone 937.488.4404, e-mail jgreenewald@masterstrumpet.org.

Smiths Falls Reformed Church, Smiths Falls, Ontario

Sabbath services 11 AM and 6 PM, corner of Abbott and Elm Streets.

Information: P.O. Box 102, Smiths Falls, Ontario K7A 4S9, Canada.

Interim Moderator: Rev. John MacLeod, Free Church Manse, Portmahomack, Tain, Ross-shire, Scotland KIV20 1YL, telephone 011.44.1862.871467, e-mail jmacleod@masterstrumpet.org.