

Editor's Note: The following information has been gleaned from issues of The Earthen Vessel and Christian Record from the 1864 issue. They consist of a series of letters between B. B. Wale and J. E. Cracknell on duty faith. They are included here because of the very close relationship they bear to the ministry of James Wells. In Wale's argument against duty faith he refers to James Wells account of Mr. Spurgeon from ten years ago and how accurate his assessment proved to be. These letters highlight the importance of this subject.

Letters on Ministerial Appeals to the Unconverted

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Opening Letter by Wale - pages 121ff May 1864

MINISTERIAL "APPEALS TO THE UNCONVERTED."

A LETTER TO A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EARTHEN VESSEL."

Dear Brother Banks, — Having had occasion within the last week to write the accompanying letter to a brother in the ministry, it has struck me since, that considering the importance of the subject of which it

treats, its insertion in the Earthen Vessel would not be without advantage at the present moment; I accordingly forward "it for that purpose, if you should deem it worth inserting.

Dear Brother,—Your letter is to hand. I can at least congratulate you on your increased temporal prosperity; and pray that in things spiritual you may be equally blest; though I may venture to remind you, that the two things seldom co-exist long together in the Christian minister's path. When the Lord means to speak comfortably to us, he generally allures us into the wilderness, and not into a well-watered plain; though he may leave us to choose the latter for ourselves. Gen. xiii. 10.

Now, you know, my dear brother, my attachment to you, and my esteem for you; you know also, that I am not one of the most "straight-laced" of the sect whom the professing world calls "Hypers;" that I have no sympathy with that narrow-minded illiberality, which characterizes some of them: that intolerant, and intolerable bigotry, which hesitates not to launch the thunderbolts of condemnation against everyone who does not see eye to eye with it, even in points indifferent and non-essential. I do not believe in that Christianity which is synonymous with spitefulness; which would make a man an offender for a word; and feeds with greater gusto upon the serpent's meat, (Isaiah lxxv. 25) than it does upon the bread of life.

But with all these concessions, there are some points on which I am as strict a "Hyper" as the strictest of them; that is in relation to maintaining the pure and undiluted doctrines of grace; for, here, "Hyperism," as the professing world courteously calls it, is identical with the truth as it is in Jesus; and from that truth, by God's grace, I hope never to budge an inch; and I am always deeply grieved, when I see any minister of truth manifesting an inclination to give up any portion of that truth; or, to diverge so much as a hair's-breadth from the right line of the "doctrine which is according to godliness."

Now, I have been led to these remarks by a sentence in your letter which pained, alarmed, and surprised me. You say, that "finding the people at ----- were not quite as straight-laced as the people at-----, in going there, you dealt, and mean to deal more, in 'Appeals to the unconverted.'" And you add, that "God has blessed this kind of preaching to the conversion of sinners in thousands of cases." That is, as I understand it, that God has blessed the preaching of error to the furtherance of truth. Never! Now you will pardon me, my brother, if I address myself to these two remarks in rather a serious manner. I feel them to be most important; and to my mind pregnant with error. I tremble for you; and I feel that I should be wanting in brotherly kindness and faithfulness, if I did not at once point out the precipice on which you have taken your stand. "C'est le premier pas qui coute" says the French proverb. "It is the first step that costs all:" that taken, the slope is easy, the descent certain, and the end disastrous.

But what do you mean my brother, by "Appeals to the unconverted?" What are you going to appeal to them to do?

The Holy Ghost declares that they are dead in trespasses and sins. Will you call upon them to give themselves life? Or, do you think that spiritual acts can be performed, without spiritual life? Or, do you think that this description of man's state by nature is merely a figurative one? "Let us take a single captive:" Adam, the first culprit, (all are in the same plight,) his sin placed him beneath the penalty of a broken law that was judicial death; he could no more get rid of, that than the condemned murderer sentenced by the law to the gallows. He had lost fellowship with God, and conformity to his image, and that was spiritual death. Could he regain his lost happiness, by any act of his own? He was dead morally: that is, he was as powerless as a dead man, to make that past transgression not a transgression; or, to undo what he had done. Now, every sinner occupies the same position as Adam. What then would you appeal to him to do? He is blinded by the god of this world. Would you call upon him to strip off the

bandage by his own efforts? Will you call upon the sinner to rise, and turn out the strong man armed?" Or, do you believe with Jesus, that the strong man will not stir, till a stronger than he cometh! O believe me, my brother, this "strong man armed," is not to be frightened, nor moved, by any display of human power; or the puny assaults of freewill. He laugheth at the shaking of that spear; esteemeth its iron as straw, its brass as rotten wood. Bind him with the green withes of human resolutions, he snaps them in twain at will, and resumes his old dominion in the soul.

But you will call upon them to repent and believe? Allow me to ask you, Are faith and repentance the gifts of God, or the product of the creature? Are they according to modern theology, the "conditions" of salvation; or, are they not rather among the things that accompany salvation? Is it not expressly affirmed by the Holy Ghost, that "faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God!" Why, by that one sentence the Holy Ghost knocks down at one blow that proud modern theology which would compel God's free grace to stand as a dutiful lacquey behind the chair of my Lord Freewill.

As for repentance, the Holy Ghost, affirms expressly that Christ was exalted to give it. Acts v. 31. And mark, my brother, the other great gift with which the Holy Ghost associates this gift of repentance—"Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission (pardon) of sin." If now, in the face of this passage, you can contend that the "repentance that needs not to be repented of" is in the power of the unconverted sinner,—and you can yet call upon him to exercise it before God gives it to him,— you may, upon the same ground, appeal to him to pardon his own sins. For the Holy Ghost affirms the first to be as much the gift of God as the last; and if the sinner may, with impunity, pluck the one jewel from the Saviour's diadem, to bedizen his own, why should he hesitate to steal the other?

I grant, indeed, that there is a faith which is in man's power but that faith is not the faith of the heart by which a man believeth unto, up to, Christ's righteousness, (Rom. x. 10); but by which he believeth down to his own; a faith like that the Saviour encountered in the days of his flesh, (John ii. 24) but to which he would not "commit himself" because he knew what was in the heart, and he knew that faith; was not there. No, Jesus never associates himself with or is to be found in connection with that faith, which is the act of the un-renewed human mind; it is a faith which went then, and can go now one way, while Jesus goes another, a faith which can do without Christ.

I grant also that there is a repentance in man's power, but not that repentance which needs not to be repented of. Esau had this repentance, when he lifted up his voice and wept, (Gen. xxvii. 41, Heb. xii. 17.) but it was a repentance perfectly compatible with the premeditated murder of his brother. Judas had it but it is said that he "repented himself." that is, the Holy Ghost had nothing to do with it, so it ended in suicide. You will probably base your "appeals to the unconverted" on such passages as Ezek. xxxvii. 4—9, Luke vi. 10., and Acts, ii. 38. and iii. 19. - Let us look at these passages closely. I once heard your friend and patron the Rev. C. H. S. quote all three passages. in one sermon to justify his appeals to the unconverted, and as he put the case as strongly and clearly perhaps as it could be put on his own side, I will as nearly as possible give you his words.

But first of all, you know my feelings to Mr. S. No one ever heard me speak an unkind word of him. I admire his genius, have reveled in the creations of his fancy, admire his kind-heartedness, his frank and noble nature; but his ministry is to me a "dry breast." From all the sermons I have ever heard or read of his, I never had one drop of heavenly dew, nor one element of spiritual strength. They have produced much the same effect upon my mind as Bower's novels did in the years of my unregeneracy—an irritability—a void—a craving after something that wasn't there— an indefinable consciousness that there

was something wanting. I felt as I guess the poor Israelite did, whom he was set hard to work to make the full tide of brick without any straw.

But to return. In the sermon referred to he quoted the 37th of Ezekiel, and said, "Was not the Prophet commanded to preach to dry bones?" Answer—Yes. And so 'tis the minister's mission to 'preach to every creature." "Did he not at the command of the Lord call upon them to hear the Word of the Lord, and bid them live?" Answer—No. So far from that, he invokes or presents a prayer to the Holy Spirit to breathe upon them that they may live (v. 9).

Ezekiel did not call upon the dry bone to perform the work of the Holy Ghost.

Mr. S. then quoted Luke vi. 10, and said, "When the Lord bid the man with the withered hand to stretch it out, he didn't say he couldn't, but he did it." Admitted. "Where the word of a King is, there is power." Neither you, nor I, nor Mr. S., is Jesus Christ. We might have told the man to have stretched out his long enough before he could have done it; but with the Word of Jesus went forth the power that enabled him to do it. Does anyone believe that when God said, "Let there be light," that light was an intelligent agent heard him and came? Or that when Jesus rebuked the waves they were endowed with intelligence, that they understood him, and understanding, obeyed? Or rather with the Word, did there not go forth a power which compelled obedience? Did Lazarus hear Jesus when he said Come forth? If so, he wasn't dead, and the miracle was no miracle but with the Word went forth the life.

Mr. S. then referred to Acts ii. 3, and asked, "Did not Peter exhort them to repent and be baptized?" Answer—Yes; those who being convinced of sin, cried out, "What must we do to be saved?"

But this exhortation, say you, is not limited to such persons in the 3rd chapter 19th v., where Peter says, "Repent, be converted." Admitted again. They were called upon to repent of their false conceptions of Christ's character and work. But the one word is active, the other passive. He doesn't say, "Repent and convert yourselves," but repent and be converted; a proof that, as I have previously affirmed, that there is a repentance that may exist without conversion, but God's order of things in the soul is, conversion first and repentance afterwards, as a fruit of conversion.

Be faithful, my brother, to the work of grace in your own soul. If your faith and repentance are your own work, you are justified in telling the poor sinner to go and do likewise. But if they sprang from no higher source than the flesh, they will end there. But if they sprang from the Holy Ghost, how can you with any consistency urge a dead sinner to do that for his own soul which God alone could accomplish for yours? Did Paul appeal to Agrippa to become a Christian then and there, as most of our modern preachers would have done? , No. He said, "I would to God,"- literally meaning if it were His will, knowing that Agrippa hadn't the power unless God gave it to him. This one case is a sufficient that, he invokes or presents a prayer to the | answer to all "appeals to the unconverted." Imagine one of our modern believing in the efficacy of "appeals to the unconverted." standing by Paul's side at that moment how different would have been his language – "Become a Christian at once, Agrippa; don't delay another moment." But this was not, is not the Gospel of Christ, nor the Gospel that Paul preached; it is that other Gospel, against which and its ministers he pronounces that terrible anathema, "Let them be accursed," Gal. i. 9. A most terrible imprecation—sufficient to warn off any minister of truth from done it; but with the Word of Jesus went ground so nigh to cursing. Heb. vi. 8.

Pardon me, my brother, for my freedom in writing thus, Depend upon it, I should not have written so seriously and freely did I not feel the extreme importance of the step you have taken, and the erroneous nature and tendency of the views you have broached.

Praying that the Lord may guide you and keep you clear in the truth, and give you grace prayerfully to consider what I have written,

I remain, most cordially yours,

B. B. Wale. Plymouth, March, 1864.

Reply to Mr. Wale's Letter - pages 166ff June 1864

CALVINISM AND HYPER-CALVINISM:

Mr. J. E. Cracknell's Reply to Mr. Wale's

LETTER ON "MINISTERIAL APPEALS TO THE UNCONVERTED."

Dear Brother Wale,—Few readers of The Earthen Vessel will need to be informed who the "Minister of the Gospel" is, to whom your letter, which appeared in last month's issue, was originally addressed, should doubts exist in the minds of any, they will be removed by the reply which now appears, bearing the signature of the writer.

You had not informed me of your intention to send the letter for publication. I considered it a private correspondence, and treated it accordingly, replying to you in the regular way. It was not my wish to publish anything upon the subject, having no love for controversy, and believing with my esteemed predecessor that it generally "draws the heart from God, feeds pride, starves humility, and renders the soul barren." But since your letter appears in the pages of a magazine, I give equal publicity to my reply, hoping that it may not be without advantage at the present moment.

Passing by the introductory parts of your letter, I come at once to the point, which appears to be this, you consider that the way in which I feel led to preach the gospel to the unconverted is inconsistent with a full belief in the pure doctrines of grace; that in exhorting sinners I "depart from the truth," preach "not the gospel, but another gospel."

Now I am fully aware that we must ever appeal to the word and to the testimony, and that the opinions and practices of uninspired men are not to be taken as our authority. Yet it is pleasing to find one's self in good company, and part of my reply will go to prove that in this matter about which you write, I am not alone, but in company with those whom I have often heard extolled as champions for the truth.

I ask do you consider Dr. Owen, Calvin, Goodwin, Charnock, Sibbs, and Abraham Booth, men of truth. Did they preach Christ's gospel, "or that other gospel" to which you refer? I know you to be an admirer of

John Owen, and presume you consider he was a sound theologian, what then do you say to the following extract:—

"Wherever there is a declaration of the excellences of Christ, in his person, grace, or offices, it should be accompanied with an invitation and exhortation unto sinners to come unto Him. This method Christ himself first made use of (Matthew xi. 27, 30. John vii. 37, 38,) and consecrated it unto our use also. Besides, it is necessary from the nature of the things themselves; for who can dwell on the consideration of the glory of Christ, being called there with to the declaration of it, but his own mind will engage him to invite lost sinners unto a participation of him?"

In the following we have his method of dealing with the unconverted sinner:—

"Jesus Christ yet stands before sinners, calling, inviting, and encouraging them to come unto Him. This is somewhat of the word which He now speaks unto you,—Why will ye die?—Why will ye perish?—Why will ye not have compassion on your own souls? Can your hearts endure or your hands be strong in the day of wrath that is approaching? It is but a little while before all your hopes, your reliefs, your presumptions, will forsake you and leave you eternally miserable! Look unto me and be ye saved. Come unto me and I will ease you of all your sins, sorrows, fears, burdens, and give rest unto your souls. Come I entreat you, lay aside all procrastinations, all delays, put me off no longer, eternity lies at the door. Cast off all cursed self-deceiving reserves, do not so hate me, as that you will rather perish than accept of deliverance from me. These, and the like things doth the Lord Christ continually declare, proclaim, plead, and urge on the souls of sinners as it is fully declared (Prov. i, 20, 34). He doth it in the preaching of the word as if He were present with you, stood amongst you, and spoke personally to every one of you. And because this world does not suit His present state of glory, He hath appointed the ministers of the gospel to appear before you, and to deal with you in His stead, avowing as His own the invitations that are given you in His name (2 Corinthians, v. 19, 20)."—Owen's *Glory of Christ*, page 535.

Such were the views of one of your favorite divines. Is it not then a marvelous thing that with a book in your library containing such sentiments (and which you once specially recommended me to read) you should now be "alarmed, pained, and surprised" at finding the sentence, "appeals to the unconverted," in my letter. If that sentence be "pregnant with error," as you say it is, how much error must there be in that which I have quoted from the pen of one of the best of theologians, and if I stand upon a precipice from which the "slope is easy, the descent certain, and the end disastrous," what position could he have occupied who in such a way "appealed to the unconverted?"

But to proceed, I see by *The Earthen Vessel* that the Tri-centenary of John Calvin's death will be commemorated on the 27th May, and in June the industrious editor announces that he will publish "Calvin's Tri-centenary Supplement," with a portrait of that great reformer. I think myself most happy to have the opportunity you have afforded me at such a time of giving you, and the readers of *The Earthen Vessel*, with "all who profess and call themselves Calvinists," the following extract from his writings Calvin says:—

"Christ began His sermons thus, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel. First of all he declares that the treasures of mercy are set open in Him. Secondly, He requires acceptance. Lastly, confidence in God's promises. 'To what end,' some will ask, 'do exhortations tend? Why are not men rather left to the conduct of the Holy Spirit? Why are they solicited by exhortations, since they can only comply with them so far as the Holy Spirit enables them?' This briefly is our answer: The sinner cannot impute the hardness of his heart to any one besides himself, and oh man, who art thou that wouldst

impose laws on God? If he choose to prepare us by means of exhortations to receive that very grace to obey those exhortations which are addressed to us, what hast thou to object to this conduct of the Lord, and what is there in it which thou canst justly condemn?"

Such is Calvin's Calvinism, and I am bold to affirm myself a Calvinist according to Calvin; a "Hyper" must be what the term signifies "above and beyond" Calvin. It will be well if those who bear his name and join in these commemorative services, will resolve in future to imitate his method of preaching the gospel, or at any rate let them cease to designate as "unsound" and untruthful those who do.

I could give extracts from all whose names I have mentioned and many others, to shew that the great bulk of the Puritans held the sentiments you condemn as "modern theology," but I fear to make this letter too lengthy, and thus intrude upon the kindness of the editor, and therefore have only to add, give up calling these "men of truth," before you charge me with "departing from the truth."

I now come to the sure word of prophecy. You are very decided in your statement that faith (saving faith) is not a duty. Allow me to ask is unbelief a sin? If you reply no, then I ask you to explain the following passages: "When He (the Holy Spirit) is come He will reprove the world of sin ... because they believe not on me." (John xvi. 8, 9.) "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thes. i. 7, 9.) "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John iii. 19.) "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 15) I know the meaning some would give to these passages in order to make them square (according to human reasoning) with other portions of the truth, but the plain teaching appears to be, that unbelief is a sin, the damning sin. If you admit this, what becomes of your statement that faith is not a duty? If it is a sin to reject Christ, is it not a duty to receive Him? If unbelief be a sin, then must not faith be a duty?

You ask do I believe that faith and repentance are the gifts of God. Answer, yes, most decidedly, and that no creature has power apart from Him to exercise them, and therefore to your explanation of Acts ii, 3, that they were convinced of sin, whom Peter bid repent, I reply granted, and could they in that state any more repent and believe without God bestowing those gifts on them than they could before? No, then what becomes of your point, the inconsistency of bidding men do what they have no power to do?

"This is God's commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John iii. 23.) "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29.) True, man has no power, but seeing that his inability arises from the corruption of his nature, the enmity and wickedness of his heart, his lack of power is sin, and for this he is justly condemned.

Dr. Gill is generally quoted as being sound in the faith by those who hold the same views as yourself, but he distinctly states man's guilt is the greater for rejecting and despising the gospel. I quote the following from his writings:—

"Though such is the condition of man by the fall, that he cannot believe in Christ without the powerful influence of that divine grace which God is not obliged to communicate, yet it is not the withholding of that influence, or denying of that grace, which lays him under the necessity of not believing, but it is the corruption of his nature that lays and holds him in the chains of unbelief, and therefore his unbelief is not to be imputed to the want of this powerful influence, which God is not obliged to give, but to the enmity and wickedness of his heart, on which account he is justly shame worthy."

My opinions have not changed in the least with regard to the great doctrines of the gospel, the truth I have preached, I preach now. Salvation by the free and sovereign grace of God is still the great theme of my ministry, and my continued aim to exalt Christ in the glories of His person, the riches of His grace, and the infinite merit of His blood. I feel more dependent than ever on the power of the Holy Ghost to make the word effectual to the conversion of the sinner and comfort of the saint, and believe that the church will be saved to the praise and glory of the great Sacred Three.

Upon these points I am unchanged, but I trust that we all grow wiser as we grow older; no man should be ashamed to say (humbling though it may be) I have seen reason to alter my opinion, "he must be miserable who is constantly watching to see that the opinion he holds to-day dove-tails exactly with that he held years ago." Dr. Owen, when taunted with having changed his views on one point, replied, "He that can glory that in fourteen years he has not altered in his conception of some things, shall not have me for a rival." It is about a year and a half since my mind began to be exercised on the subject "how should the gospel be preached to the unconverted? I asked some well-known ministers of truth what they understood by 2 Corinthians v. 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." I asked in vain, no answer was given, because to have admitted the plain meaning, would have involved a difficulty, and not squared with that system to which, alas, many are still so wedded that they continually bring it to God's word and reject or seek to explain away that which does not harmonize therewith. It is clear that Paul was not then addressing himself to the Corinthian believers, for they were already reconciled, but he is giving an account of what he preached and how he preached it, in a word, of what his own ministry was. Let us more carefully study the preaching of our Master, attend to His commands, lay our reason at His feet, and seek to imitate the bright examples of His apostles, in going forth to preach the gospel in all its simplicity, remembering that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. I have said I do not love controversy, and it is not my intention to take up time with it, wishing to live in peace with all men, and prosecute my work without interruption, and in the words of a living writer, I say, "Let us look back on that battle field where much wiser men than we have fought in vain, . . . and learn the lesson it teaches, and be contented to say the short cord of my plummet does not quite go down to the bottom of the bottomless, and I do not profess either to understand God or to understand man, both of which I should want to do before I understood the mysteries of their conjoint action."

I cannot close without noticing your remarks on the ministry of the Rev. C. H Spurgeon. If it lead you to "feel like the poor Israelite did when he was set hard to work to make the full tail of brick without straw," remember you are but one, and don't forget that there are many thousands who have felt under it, rather like the Israelite when, emancipated from Egyptian thralldom, and brought safely across the Red Sea, he "sang unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously." That which has been to you but a 'I dry breast," has been the means of conveying rich consolations to thousands of distressed souls.

And now my prayer for you, and all those ministers with whom I have long associated, is that you may be faithful to your convictions, and not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, and may His blessing ever attend you.

With Christian love, yours faithfully,

Joan Edmund Cracknell
Rose Villa, Leckhampton, Cheltenham.

Reply to Mr. John Edmund Cracknell's Letter - pages 229ff August 1864

HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE UNCONVERTED!

A REPLY TO MR. JOHN EDMUND CRACKNELL.

'Call no man master, for one is your Master, even Christ.'

"Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

Dear Brother Cracknell,—I have prefixed the above texts to my reply to your letter, for two reasons: first, because you say you prefer peace and would fain decline controversy. So do I so would I, if that peace were consistent with an earnest maintenance of truth; otherwise I prefer a wholesome warfare, to a false, flattering, and delusive peace. Secondly, because a large portion of your letter is made up of the opinions of other men—opinions which you seem to make your ultimate standard of appeal.

It is perfectly true that I recommended you to read Dr. Owen's Works; and so I should recommend all young ministers to read not only his Works, but the Works of all the other Divines whose names you mention, and many others. For myself, I read all I can lay my hand upon, that is worth perusal; but I never recommended you, or any other minister, to adopt all their opinions, and treat them as if they were all infallible. Here it becomes us to call no man master, seeing that one is our Master, even Christ. A thoughtful Christian mind will not only read, but it will mark, learn, and inwardly digest; it will "prove all things" by the standard of God's Word and its own experience, and will only hold fast that which is good; like the Gospel net, it will keep the good, and cast the bad away. But by your process of reasoning, my brother, you take these men's errors in teaching, and adopt them as truths, because they are theirs. In the same way, Talkative, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," took the moral failings of God's people as his pattern of actions, simply because they were the tailings of God's people.

I admire Dr. Owen, but I don't agree with him on infant sprinkling; I admire Calvin, but I do not admire his burning of Servetus, nor his Church polity; I admire Adams, and Howe, and Charnock; but I do not admire Howe's Arminianism, nor Adams' Episcopalianism. And these are just the points too, my brother, where you have to split off from them, and to call them master no longer. I seek to follow good men as far as I consider they follow Christ; when they diverge from the right line, I bid them good-bye, be they great men, or small men; their teachings, however plausible, must give way before the facts of personal experience. In passing by, then, this part of your letter, with all the writings you quote, and the names to which you refer, as having no weight whatever in the controversy between us, I would merely add that my recommending you to read their writings, no more implied a recommendation that you should adopt all their opinions, than my recommending you to read Bolingbroke's Letters on History, because of the beauty of their style, would be a recommendation to you to adopt his deistical principles.

I turn to the second part of your letter. You ask me, "Is unbelief a sin?" and you quote many passages to prove that it is. Answer, Yes! The unbelief named in the passages quoted, is and was unquestionably a great sin, for it is the denial of the Messiahship of Christ. The Jews were guilty of this sin, and crucified Him for claiming to be the only begotten Son of God; Pagan Rome was guilty of this sin in denying His Divinity, and persecuted those who believed it; the Mahomedans in our own day, and the Deists. Atheists, and Socinian's in our own country, are all guilty of this great sin of unbelief in the name of the only begotten Son of God. But I presume that we have not many infidels of this class in our congregations.

Permit me to say that your confusion of thought here, and your mistaken conclusions on the subject under discussion— arise from you're not recognizing the distinction between an historical faith and a saving faith; the one is man's duty, the other is God's gift; faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.— Ephes. ii. 5. Nor can I forbear saying here that your letter is not a reply to mine, for you leave the principal points in my letter unnoticed—/. e., the distinction between the two faiths. The Scripture abounds with passages clearly marking this distinction, which you so quietly pass by and ignore, and which is the pivot on which the whole controversy turns. The devils believe and tremble.—James ii. 19. There's a faith! — A faith followed by trembling, surely a very different faith to that which brings "joy and peace in believing." You and I, from childhood, always believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and the only Saviour; but were we, in the court of conscience, "justified" by that faith, or did we, by it, "enter into rest?"

Many believed on Jesus, to whom he refused to commit himself.—John ii. 24. Was that faith the Lord's gift, with which the Lord himself refused to have anything to do? Many of his disciples who once believed on Him, turned back and walked no more with Him.—John vi. 66. Was that faith the gift of God, or the work of man? Clearly the work of man. It began in the flesh, and having lived a little while, it ended there, as all faith will, which a dead sinner can be exhorted to perform. Others for "a while believe"—(Luke vii. 13)—and then fall away. But I need not multiply quotations; every mind not biased by a preconceived theory, with a due reverence for the word of God, and a tolerable familiarity with it, must recognize this two-fold faith —one being clearly in man's power, the other being clearly the gift of God. If, therefore, you ask me if the non-possession of saving faith be a sin, I answer Certainly Not, for that faith the Holy Ghost declares is not of ourselves (i. e., not in our power), but the gift of God. And had you, my brother, recognized this distinction, you would not have perpetrated the contradiction you have in the first and second paragraphs of this part of your letter. In the first you affirm that "saving faith must be a duty:" in the second you admit that "faith is the gift of God, and that no creature has the power to exercise it apart from Him."

Well did the late John Stevens call this the "Jumble Creed," which in one sentence admits that man has no power, and in the next calls upon him to exercise it; with one breath tells him that faith is the gift of God, and with the next that it is his own fault if he hasn't got it; pronounces him one moment dead in trespasses and in sins, and the next calls upon him to perform the acts of spiritual life. This is confusion indeed, but certainly the Holy Ghost is not the author of it. In any other department of thought, literature, or science, the pro-pounder of such contradictions would be simply laughed at; but here the matter is too serious for a smile.

You say that it is about a year and a half ago that your mind began to be exercised as to how the Gospel should be preached to the unconverted? The answer was at hand had you referred to the preaching of the Apostles. Read Peter's Pentecostal Sermon (Acts ii. 14—37), and make that your model. What is it but the declaration of the way of salvation, not one exhortation to the dead sinner to perform the acts of spiritual life. It was a simple declaration of God's way of salvation. See the description of Paul's preaching to the unconverted at Thessalonica.—Acts xvii. 1, 2, 3. Preaching Christ—no vain exhortations there. See also his sermon on Mars Hill; same chapter. See him again before Agrippa, when Agrippa was almost persuaded to be a Christian. Hear his reply: "I would to God, King Agrippa, that not only thou, but all who hear me, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Why, had you been there, my brother, instead of Paul, preaching to a man so nearly converted, you would have urged him to come to Christ then and there. Paul, on the other hand, referred the matter to the will of God; he knew that Agrippa's conversion depended upon God. You, with your present views, would have told him that it depended upon himself. Who would have been right, you or the Apostle? One must be wrong. You seem to have found it difficult to understand 2 Cor. v. 20. "Now then we are ambassador's for Christ, as though

God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." You say, "It is clear that Paul was not then addressing himself to the Corinthian believers, because they were already reconciled." A most groundless assumption, and utterly opposed to fact, and to the truth! The verse is part of the Epistle, and is of course addressed to the same persons to whom the Whole is addressed; and who are they? Turn to the first verse, and look at the direction on the Letter: "To the Church of God at Corinth, with all saints in Achaia." That is pretty explicit; and he must be a bold man, that in the face of Paul's declaration, that he is writing to the saints, contends that he is writing to the world at large. This is sad sporting with the word of God, to support a theory, and that cause must be a poor one which requires such a wretched crutch as this to lean upon. It is perfectly true that the Corinthian believers were reconciled to God in Christ; and I suppose equally true that they were not reconciled to all the crosses and trials the Lord saw fit they should have. Job was reconciled to God in Christ, but was he reconciled to the will of God in his troubles, when he said, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me? Why dost Thou not leave me alone till I swallow down my spittle?"

Jonah knew that salvation was of the Lord, and was reconciled to God in Christ. But was he reconciled to the withering of his gourd? And who of us now, when we have seen our gourds wither, have been reconciled to the Divine dispensation that placed the worm at the root? This was the reconciliation that the Apostle urged upon the saints in Corinth—and the reconciliation which we all need more of to make us happy in this life.

In closing this letter, permit me to point out briefly the legitimate tendency of the teaching you advocate. In exhorting the dead sinner to believe in Christ, and to come to Christ, you dishonor the Holy Ghost, for you call upon the creature to perform that which the Holy Ghost alone has the power to work in the human heart—saving faith. You put the power of the un-renewed sinner, and the power of the Holy Spirit on the same level.

In calling upon the unconverted to come to Christ, and to believe in Christ, you can only do it upon the ground that Christ has died for them—in other words—that Christ hath died to redeem every member of the human race—in other words, you will be compelled to shift your ground from Particular to Universal Redemption, otherwise such invitation would be the very refinement of cruelty—inviting the unconverted sinner to a participation in a salvation in which, perchance, he had no part. So clear is it that universal exhortations must rest upon universal redemption, that Howard Hinton himself, a man with whose views I have no sympathy, points out the contradiction and the absurdity of that ministry which accepts the one and pretends to reject the other, in the following passage from his "Harmony of Religious Truth with Human Reason,"—

"How any persons who hold that Christ did not die for all, can ever enjoin or invite all to come to Jesus, except by a thoughtless inconsistency, I confess myself unable to conceive. If I thought the Bible was written on such a principle, it would fill me with the deepest melancholy."

And he is right. The two must go together.

One remark more, in allusion to Mr. S. and I close. I said nothing disparagingly of Mr. S., but only stated my own feelings in relation to his ministry; but your reference to my remarks reminds me of a letter which appeared in *The Earthen Vessel* some ten years ago, signed Job (it was attributed to Mr. W.). Every word in that letter has come true in relation to Mr. S., though at that time I and many others felt chagrined at its contents.

I remain, my dear brother, most cordially yours in Him we love,

Plymouth, June, 1864. B. B. Wale.

Reply from Mr. John Edmund Cracknell to Mr. B.B. Wale - pages 262 September 1864

RECONCILIATION TO GOD

A Letter from Mr. J. R. Cracknell to Mr. B. B. Wale

Dear Brother Wale, I stated in my last letter that it was not my intention to take up time with controversy, and decided to give no further reply.

But seeing that in your last letter in August's Vessel you misrepresent me, and then find fault with what I did not write, truth requires that you be corrected. I shall confine myself to this one point.

Referring to 2nd Corinthians v. 20. You say, "That must be a bold man that in the face of Paul's declaration that he is writing to saints, contends that he is writing to the world at large;" but who said that any portion of it was addressed to the world at large? Your quotation from my letter is as follows "It is clear that Paul was not then addressing himself to the Corinthian believers, because they were already believers, because they were already reconciled" why stop at the comma after the word reconciled, read the remainder of the sentence," but his is giving an account of what he preached, and how he preached it, in a word, of what his own ministry was." Where is there anything about writing to the world? It was perfectly consistent that in an epistle to the church, he should refer to the way in which he preached to the world.

Look at the 20th verse again, and you will see that in the English version of the Bible, the pronoun you is in italics- not in the original- omit it, and it reads thus- "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech by us, we pray, in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Then follows "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. "How plain to "every mind not biased by a pre-conceived theory "that this a statement of how Paul preached the "ministry of reconciliation."

Now look at your explanation of the passage, viz., that it meant reconciliation to the crosses and trials the Lord saw fit they should have, to His dealings with them in Providence. My brother, may I not adopt your own words, and say, "This is sad sporting with the word of God to support a theory." Read the closing part of the chapter again, and say is there one word to justify such an interpretation? And would you have given it if you had not a purpose to serve? I ask, in all honesty, are you satisfied with your own explanation? And in the face of the apostle's own words, "reconciliation To God," are you prepared to maintain it was reconciliation to the dealings of God?

If I needed anything to confirm my views and convince me that I was right, I have it in this portion of your letter. Your explanation of the verse in question will astonish many, and do more towards opening the eyes of men to see the evils of that one-sided theology, than anything that has been written on the

subject; shewing as it does how its advocates must wrest the plain meaning of some portions of the word, in order to make them square with their system.

Whatever else may appear, I shall not again take up my pen to discuss this subject. Be faithful, my brother, be honest, and may God bless you, so prays, yours sincerely, J. E. Cracknell.

Rose Villa, Lockampton, Cheltenham,

A Reply to Mr. John Edmund Cracknell's Letter on Reconciliation - pages 277ff October 1864

APOSTOLIC PREACHING

A REPLY TO MR. CRACKNELL'S LETTER ON "RECONCILIATION TO GOD."

Dear Brother Cracknell, —When I was a boy I read an anecdote, the effect of which has never left me. A poor cobbler was in the habit of attending the Latin disputations in the Leyden University. One of the professors seeing him so constant in his attendance, asked him if he knew Latin. "No," was his reply. "Then what is the use of your attending?" "Why," said the cobbler shrewdly, "I always know who has the weakest side of the argument, for the man that is in the wrong always loses his temper first."

I quote this anecdote because the tone of your last letter proves that you have sadly lost your temper in this controversy, otherwise you would not leave the main point at issue to descend to personalities,—a low land into which you will pardon me for declining to follow you. You accuse me of "wresting Scripture to serve a purpose." A serious accusation for one minister to bring against another. You ask me if I am satisfied with my own explanation, clearly implying that I have said that which I do not believe. You adjure me to be faithful, to be honest, clearly implying that in your opinion I have not been. And why? Because my interpretation of the passage under discussion differs from yours! Really, my brother, I am grieved for your own sake that you should have stooped to language like this, in calmer moments you will regret it too. Look through my letters, and you will find nothing akin to this addressed to yourself: no insinuations of dishonesty, no charges of wresting Scripture to serve a purpose, &c, charges which, even if they were true, would hardly come with befitting grace from one who for the last six years, and still within the last few months, has preached those very truths which he now renounces, and denounces as a one-sided theology. That this course of conduct may be Necessary For Your Present Position, I will not dispute; but that it is consistent with right principle you must permit me to deny. No, my brother, I have no personal "purpose to serve," in maintaining the purity of the Gospel. The defense of the truth has never been a "profitable speculation" yet. Whether its abandonment is not so, I will leave others to answer. But passing from this to the controversy in general, and your last letter in particular, where the subject under discussion not so grave, I should positively smile at the agility you evince in leaping from pillar to post, and post to pillar, with a kind of leap-frog logic which in its amusing summersaults, always cleverly contrives to jump over the main questions in dispute, and to settle down upon some secondary issue.

Our correspondence commenced on "Exhortations to the Dead Sinner." Faith and Repentance, were they the gifts of God, or the acts of un-renewed human nature? In your first letter, you asked me if "unbelief" were a sin. In my answer, I admitted that there was an unbelief that is a sin; but that the non-possession of saving faith is not a sin. I established from God's Word the distinction between the two faiths. Did you, in your next letter, withdraw your theory or refute my argument? Neither. What did you then? Leap over it without any reference to it! Certainly the easiest way of surmounting a difficulty.

You were exercised as to how to preach the Gospel to the unconverted: I gave you apostolic examples. Did you modify your theory, or prove that my quotations were incorrect? Neither. What did you? Adopted your favorite maneuver, and leapt over the examples in silence; in other words, stuck to your theory, and flung the apostles overboard. And now, in your last letter, you put all these points aside, and raise another issue, the correct interpretation of 2 Cor. v. 20.

Well, be it so; I join issue with you there, and strong in the truth as it is in Jesus, I am content to fight the battle out over this text, and if you are contending for truth, not merely for victory, you shall be compelled, at the close of this discussion, to confess that you are wrong in your view of the passage, or else be silent. But if you reply again, let your letter be a reply or an admission.

Now for the passage. "Now then, we, as ambassadors for God, we beseech you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." You contend that in this passage the apostolic Paul is telling the Corinthians how he preached the Gospel to the world;—that is, that he exhorted the world to reconcile itself to God.

Now, I shall first proceed to prove that this interpretation is contradicted by fact; and, secondly, that it is contrary to the analogy of faith, and the general tenor of God's Word. 1st. It is contrary to the facts. Link your arm in mine, my brother, and walk with me into the synagogue at Damascus; there's Paul, just coming in, and going to begin his first sermon. Acts ix. 20—22. 'Tis only a few days since he went and "reconciled himself" to God on the way to Damascus, according to your theory. (O God-dishonoring—Christ-insulting thought!) And, now, doubtless, he is about to exhort his hearers to do the same! Is it so? Not a word like it. So far from exhorting his hearers to do, he preaches what Christ had done. "He preached Christ in the synagogue;" "proving that this is very Christ." How did he know it? By his own experience. He had proved His love, His power, His grace. His electing love,—("He is a chosen vessel unto me"),—His power to subdue the bitter enmity of his heart, His grace to blot out his black transgressions, and so he preaches what he has experienced; not the power of the un-renewed human heart to reconcile itself to God, but the grace and power of Christ in reconciling the heart of the rebellious sinner to himself.

But you are thinking, my brother, that one sermon is hardly a sufficient test of Paul's preaching, particularly, too, as it is his first. Perhaps he will get "clearer light" as he proceeds, and contradict before his congregation at Antioch what he has preached at Damascus.

Well, it is rather a long journey; but as it is somewhat important to settle the point, we will follow him there. (Acts xiii. 15—41.) See, the Rabbi has just finished reading the lessons of the day out of the Law and the Prophets, and has just sent a messenger to Paul to know if he has any "word of exhortation" for the people (the true Rabbinical or legal style of preaching, according to the law, not the Gospel, of which the Rabbi who sent the message knew nothing): a capital opportunity this for Paul to exhort them all to reconcile themselves to God. Does he? Silence! He's beginning. Listen; let us take notes. 1st. Division; Christ the sum and substance of prophecy (verses 16—22). 2nd. Christ, in His life, death, and resurrection the fulfilment of prophecy (23—37). 3rd. Application, result, full and free forgiveness, justification, perfect

and complete (38, 39). To whom is this salvation sent? "To whomsoever among you feareth God." Verse 26.

Ah! My brother, you scratch your head and rub your chin; Paul's preaching lends no countenance to your interpretation yet, does it? But don't be cast down; we'll do with Paul as Balak did with Israel, "look at him from another place," and see if we can catch him tripping into Arminianism.

See, he is now going into the synagogue at Thessalonica to preach there; he is a long way off from his old hearers, and he can spice his sermon now with something flattering to human nature; he can modify or soften down his manner of preaching; besides, he has been eighteen years in the ministry, and must have clearer views than when he started, and his long experience of human nature must have convinced him that it can do some little spiritual good without God's help, believe, reconcile itself to God. Again, then, my brother, we listen to the apostle. Acts xvii. 2, 3. He "reasons with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs suffer and rise again from the dead, and that Jesus is the Christ." Why, really, it is almost verbatim; the same sermon that we heard him preach at Damascus eighteen years ago, and this is said to be his constant "manner" of preaching. Verse 2.

But we have not done with him yet. I see you are loath to go any farther, my brother; but we must follow him to Mars Hill—there, under the shadow of the Areopagus, he has begun preaching the Unknown God. He proclaims His eternity, spirituality, power, and omnipresence: and calls upon the wretched idolaters to repent have had their hearts and souls made glad, and have rejoiced like good old Simeon, in God's salvation. You speak of changes; we are like children at school, our restrictions seem great and hard lessons to learn, and we sometimes become tired of our present position, and the more so as the correction increases to bring down our self-wills to submit to the will of our heavenly Father, who will withhold no good thing from His family beloved in Christ Jesus. Whether it be prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, persecutions or bereavements, He in love wipes the ingredients of the cup that He in love places into the hand of each member of His family to drink. Each member hath his own peculiar potion, and will have its medicinal effect, and the effect will result in glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life. You said in your letter that I should be glad to hear that your dear Saviour has favored you with the light of His countenance, and like Peter on the mount, say "It is good to be here." Oh how I should like to abide here; I don't like coming down into the valley of complaining darkness, coldness, and deadness. Yes, dear sister, I am glad to hear of the Lord's gracious dealings with your soul, and as the pathway to your desired haven lies through a wilderness of temptations and sorrows, be not discouraged, the more troublesome the journey the sweeter will be the rest; here the cross, there the crown. The love of God, of which your letter speaks so much, will then be your happy employment.

Wale's Final Remarks on this subject - pages 301ff November 1864

APOSTOLIC PREACHING

A Letter To Rev. John E. Cracknell,

Minister of Cambray Chapel, Cheltenham.

Dear Brother Cracknell,—In my last, I proved from Paul's preaching that your interpretation of 2 Cor. v. 20, was contrary to the fact; and now proceed to prove in a few words that it is contrary to the general tenor of God's Word.

The question is, Can a man dead in trespasses and sins reconcile himself to God?

1st, observe how the Holy Ghost describes man's state by nature. He is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. ii. 1); the understanding is darkened. He is alienated from the life of God, through blindness and hardness of heart—past feeling.

The throat is an open sepulcher.

With the tongue they have used deceit.

Under the lips is the poison of asps.

Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood.

The way of peace they have not known.

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Destruction and misery are in their ways.

Every imagination of the thought of the heart is only evil, and that continually.

They are blinded by the god of this world. He rules in them as the children of disobedience.

They desire not the knowledge of God's ways.

And you call upon a man in this state to reconcile himself to God?

My brother, the whole of God's Word is full of declarations of man's utter incapacity to do aught that is spiritually good.

Spiritual life must precede spiritual acts, and that life is the gift of God: "I give unto them eternal life;" "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him;" "All that the Father hath given Me shall come to me; and him that Cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

If in any portion of God's Word we come into contact with a passage, which seems to run in a contrary direction, to these, it must be interpreted according to the analogy of faith, and the general tenor of God's Word;—the rule being, that that which is dark or ambiguous shall be interpreted by that which is light and clear.

Reconciliation with God, must spring from a sense of His love to us, but the natural mind is enmity against God; "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, and therefore all exhortations to him in that state to reconcile himself to God are as vain—as would be an address to the dead in some cemetery, to come back again from dust and ashes, to take part in the busy activities of life.

Wishing you every new covenant blessing, and with an earnest desire that this correspondence may not interfere in any degree with our old friendship, I remain, my dear brother, most cordially yours in Him we love.

Trinity Chapel, B. B. Wale.

Plymouth, October, 1864.

