

Editor's Note: The following information has been gleaned from issues of The Earthen Vessel and Christian Record from the 1854 to 1856 issues. These and the subsequent letters were published in the 19th century but have been long out of print. I have added headings briefly summarizing the subject of each letter. The location within the Vessel is given for reference.

The Letters to Theophilus being the substance of James Wells theology: Letters 11 through 20

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Epistles to Theophilus Letter 11 - pages 108ff 1855

The perfection of the cleansing of the leper.

We have now to look to the cleansing of the leper, in the perfection thereof.

Now, my good Theophilus, see if you can follow me, step by step, in this matter.

The priest was to go forth out of the camp to where the leper was. (Leviticus xiv. 3). The leper must not come in by himself, but the priest, by a true judgment of his case, and by sacrifice, is to bring him in. Here we see our great High Priest, that while we could not come unto him, he yet came unto us. His righteousness reached unto all that believe, and his atonement can reach unto the uttermost—even reaching farther to save than sin and the law can reach to condemn. Sin is indeed deep—even deep as satan's hell; yet is the atonement of Jesus deeper than hell; it reaches up to a vast eternity, and takes away sorrows we must have felt ten millions of years to come. It has gathered up every penalty under which, in the boundless deep, we must have forever lain. Hell has no morning — no hope; on the other hand, heaven has no night—no despair. By Him it is we have the sweet influence of Pleiades seven ministerial stars, which he hath created. These proclaim that summer is near, and that the bands of Orion, the messengers of cold, are loosed. He comes forth unto us "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race."

Now, when he comes unto us in the manifestation thereof, he will, as soon as we are bad enough for him, pronounce us clean. This will be the judgment—the first step towards bringing us into the enjoyment of holy things.

I have said this judgment will be pronounced when we are bad enough for him; for your reconciliation to him cannot, without this, be complete. You will want a Saviour only in proportion as you are a sinner; and until your fleshly hope utterly perish in your own corruption, you are not fitted for the Saviour in his eternal Priesthood.

And here I may just once and for all say to you, that no promise of the gospel can do you good, no precept can minister useful caution, no one relation of the Saviour as Shepherd, Son of God, King, or Bridegroom—no favor from God the Father, no one grace of the Holy Spirit can come to you, apart from the one great atonement. Everything must be done, and be achieved, and be possessed by this. Those who do not dwell together in the unity of this eternal Priesthood, do not dwell in the true unity of the Spirit.

Unless, therefore, you are vile and loathsome, and helpless, and poor enough to receive Christ rightly, you are deceiving, to all intents and purposes, your own soul. You must become, as it were, a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls; and from experience say, with Job, "My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat: my harp, also, is turned into mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep." (Job xxx.) This felt solitude—this blackness of self—

this destruction of the bones of creature strength—this turning of fleshly music into mourning, will make your reconciliation to the Saviour no feigned matter, no mere educational, customary, or dead-letter form; not a mere blind assent to your know-not what; but just so deep as the ploughshare of conviction has entered into your soul, just so deep will the incorruptible seed of truth take root therein; and if the whole field of your soul be well ploughed, the whole range thereof will in due time bring forth fruit unto God.

But we must not yet run away from our leprosy. The only testimony the leper could give concerning himself was, "Unclean, unclean."

Now, in being brought into the camp, he was to be sprinkled seven times. Fullness and perfection appear to be the meaning here intended; but besides these general meanings, will not the seven times bear giving in detail, so that each separate time shall have its distinct, yet connective meaning?

When the leper was cleansed he was a new man, and came, as it were, into a new world; and as the first creation is a figure of the new creation, is there not in the number seven an allusion to the first and literal creation? Let us, then, take the seven, not in too close a sense, but as close as it is needful. The type should be to the antitype; for a type, or shadow, is not the very image of the thing signified, but only a general outline.

1st, Light. The first sprinkle of the atonement would give light; and is it not so? Is not the first ray of light, the first beam of hope, by the blood of the Lamb? Is there any other way in which God will ever command the light to shine into our hearts? and is not the very object of this light, to give us this as the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ? And God sees this light, that it is good. And if you just look for one moment at what it is, I am sure you will say it is good indeed. Take the Holy Spirit's own explanation—it is this— "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." This, then, is the light—it is Christ in his eternity. How, then, can the light of the righteous ever be put out?

But "God divided the light from the darkness." And so you will find that this light will separate you from those who have not this light. They cannot see the Saviour in that attractive light that you do. You are drawn to him by that infinite and eternal sufficiency which you now see in him, and those self-same excellences which make him so suitable to you, will make him correspondingly repulsive to others. They will hate him for the self-same reasons that you love him; and therefore the two are nominated accordingly; for the light he called day. Now, the word day signifies action—movement; that is, action and movement in accordance with the light; walking as children of light.

The word translated night, signifies tuning away; so it is that the carnal mind turns away its ears from the truth. Thus the one comes to the light of truth, and looks forth as the morning. The other turns away from the truth, and very much prefers walking in darkness—dreaming all the time that their works are good; whereas, not being works of faith in, and love to the truth, they are not good, but evil. But it lies with the Lord to shew them this, for he alone can command the light to shine into the heart.

If, then, you have been but once touched by the blood of sprinkling, it will give you this light, and you will see Jesus. And when you once rightly see him, you will never forget the sight, and you will soon find that there is neither end nor limit to the glories of this mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh. So that we may go on with perfect safety, without the least fear of not finding in him all we need, for illustration, salvation and glorification. Let us, then, look at sprinkle the

2nd. Here we have arrangement: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of heaven." This firmament will mean the atmospheric expanse. Now, this arrangement was essential to earth's fruitfulness; this expanse bears up the treasures of rain, and diffuses the same in their descent upon the earth. Now, you know, these are gathered up by the sun from the sea; and if the ocean's waters were gathered up as they are, and rained down upon the earth, it would destroy all vegetation; so, if the bitter waters of the curses recorded in the Bible were gathered up and rained down upon us, we should then be destroyed, as thousands have been, from off the face of the earth. But amidst these many curses recorded in the Bible, there are many exceeding great and precious promises. Now, these are gathered up by the Sun of Righteousness, and rained down upon us in "blessings on our heads;" and is not the Holy Spirit that heavenly Expanse, that Wind that bloweth where it listeth? Does he not diffuse and disperse abroad, and regulate these descending mercies, so that these do not come on the one hand at random, without law or rule, nor on the other hand do they wait for man, nor tarry for the sons of men?

"And God called the firmament heaven." And I am sure you will find your heaven in these showers of blessings; if only a little cloud like a man's hand has appeared in your heavenly horizon, if you have been only slightly sprinkled, with only one promise, it is to you "a sound of abundance of rain;" so that ere long your soul will be as "a watered garden, even as a watered garden, whose waters fail not." And if you are living, as I believe you are, in the expanse of gospel freedom, then you are raised above the bitter waters of, the curse, and are where Jesus will come unto you as the Early and the Latter Rain.

Sprinkle the second, then, will bring you out of the land spiritually, called Sodom, and Egypt, where our Lord is still crucified, and in which land there is either no rain, or, what is worse still, a rain of fiery judgments from heaven, which shall devour the adversaries.

Sprinkle the 3rd. Here we have the waters gathered together into one place. Shall the waters here mean the waters of the law, gathered together into one place? And as Jesus rolled back all that wrath that belonged to his people, for he shall save his people from the penalty as well as from the power of their sins; and is it not hereby that the land of promise rises to view? and though we have to cross seas of tribulation to reach this promised land, yet we have not to cross the dead sea of condemnation. Jesus hath done this, and made a way for the ransomed to pass over; and as the dry land appeared at the command of the Most High, so, by the command of the same God, the earth is made to bring forth in every variety for the service of man. So, my good Theophilus, if you have been sprinkled and freshened up far enough to see how Jesus hath made a path as in the mighty deep of his sufferings for you, you will see that no land can vie with that gospel land revealed to you. All its fruit will be sweet to your taste. You will be too well pleased with this better country to have any desire to return.

But we must hasten on as fast as we can unto perfection. It lies before us, and if we do not come to it in this letter, we will, if God permit, in our next.

Now let me have a word with you under sprinkle the fourth. Well, now that you are sprinkled the fourth time, what do you see? Why, (say you) I see two great lights, the one to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night; and I see the stars also." Well, I am glad you do; it shows you are not blind; and a sweet and pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the Sun of Righteousness. All his rays are rays of mercy and truth and loving-kindness; it may therefore well be said that he hath healing in his wings. But then, here is the lesser light. They are both great lights, yet one is the lesser light. Is not this lesser light the Gospel? And so it is a delightful truth, that great as is the light of the Gospel, Christ himself is greater still. Men are very often very much over-rated, and made out to be greater in excellency than they really are: but it is not so with the Saviour, for the half cannot be told us. But the time will come when the gospel shall shine out in all the fullness of its meanings. Then when all its promises are fulfilled, the light of this Moon shall be as the light of the Sun.

The Sun is to rule the day; and so you will find it, that your days of prosperity will be just in proportion as you are favored with the presence of the Saviour, and no farther; and in his absence you will be glad with a little gospel moon-light; and you may depend upon it that you will have in the greater part of your journey short days and very long nights, and sometimes very cold and stormy. But still you must go on; and when you have no moon-light, you will be glad with a little starlight. Some ministerial star, some prophet, or some apostle will twinkle a little light upon you; and if you should cry and shout, and the Lord should shut out your prayer, you will have Jeremiah, even in this dark corner, to twinkle upon you. Indeed, you will find these ministerial stars ranged over all the skies of the new heavens: so that whether you get into the frigid, temperate, or torrid zone, you will find some of these stars with you. And all these stars will be sure to fight against Sisera, and bring you at last to know that all that love Jesus shall be as the Sun when he goes forth in his might.

But I must not omit here to tell you that clouds will sometimes so intervene that you will not be able for a time to read your case in the experience or circumstances in any one instance in the Bible. Thus neither sun nor stars will appear; but this will not last very long, as he will not suffer you to be so tried as to give up his blessed truth.

Now you have had only four sprinklings, you have three more yet to come, but these must be reserved for next month.

Really, we are saying so much about sprinkling, that we shall, I fear, be in danger of being taken for High Churchmen; and indeed, such would not be far out in their opinion, for the true Church is, as the Poet sings,

"High built on a rock, and is seen from afar, With bulwarks around her, and banners of war; Her walls of salvation the foe shall ne'er scale, Nor Satan's dark legions against her prevail."

To such a Church would not Theophilus wish to belong? so also would A Little One

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 12 - pages 126ff 1855

Completion of the cleansing of the leper – Our perfection in Christ.

The leper, as I observed in my last, was, before he was brought into the camp, to be sprinkled seven times. Now, you will not understand me, as supposing for a moment, that these seven sprinklings bore any direct reference to the seven days creation; but that I am merely availing myself of this circumstance to set before you the more fully that work of God upon the mind, which brings it by degrees to a true knowledge of that perfection which is established by the (new) creation of God. Under this view I will go on to notice sprinkle the

5th. Here you would behold on the fifth day sea and air abundantly peopled. Yet, among them all you find no companionship. They are a figure of the world: God blessed them; and so is the world blest with many temporal blessings; so it is that none of these fishes of the sea, or fowls of the air, have any interest in eternal things. And so, my good Theophilus, you will find that many whom you once took to be Christians prove (now that your eyes are opened to see) nothing but high flying Pharisees; or groveling covetous beasts of the earth; or mere fishes of the sea of this world: all these creatures differ in form, and taste, and pursuit, but still all belong to earth's elements; some more gross, and some more refined, but among them all, the soul that is born of God, can find no companion or communion while among them. You will see leviathan, and behemoth, the devil and the pope, but at these you must not be alarmed, for at the very most, they can kill only the body, while they themselves must come to perdition. You will find in the salvation-arm of the Lord all the victory you need; he will not leave you long to battle alone with your enemies; he will leave you to have a try to silence the storm, to cast out the devil, and remove satan from your right hand; and when you are fairly beaten out of your false confidence, he will then appear for you: and so runs the promise, and "God shall bruise satan down under your feet shortly."

But while these fishes of the sea, and beasts of the earth, and fowls of the air, do in one sense represent the world, they do in another sense represent (as is seen in Peter's vision, Acts x.) the people of God in their state by nature. But the Gospel of the blessed God will reach them all; yes, however deeply buried in the sea of this world, however monstrous they may be as sinners, however lofty others may be, yet shall the word of truth entangle one, stop another, bring another down into the dust, and conform them all to the likeness of the Son of God. Much, very much, may be said upon this matter, but I must hasten on to sprinkle the (editor: it stops here in the Vessel so there is no way to tell what is missing)

6th. What do you see now? A perfection you have not seen before. You see Adam, the figure of him who was to come. I need not here remind you of the many respects in which Adam was a type of the Saviour; but one of the chief, was that of his federal relation to, and headship of, the whole human race — for they are all his offspring. The 5th of Romans, and the 15th of Corinthians, are a most wonderful, solemn, and at the same time, beautiful illustration of this vast and eternal matter. Those contrasts are most instructive; we cannot, either in our experience or judgment, be too well established therein.

We have set before us there, death reigning by sin, that is by the one offence of Adam, the deed is done, finished and completed, and that entirely independent of any one of, or of all of Adam's offspring. Look you well to this matter, for if you err here, you will err everywhere. This one entire death in Adam, is the root of all evil, and unless we get at the root, it is not likely to be rooted up. This death is two-fold, personal and legal; that is, first, the soul and body, while not literally dead, are as to condition, dead in sin—that is, dead to God, having no communion with him; second, dead legally, or according to law. This law is (through sin) an everlasting barrier between God and man. It is a law of Divine supremacy, firmer than creation; the heavens and the earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law can fail. It fixes between God and man an unfordable gulf. Little do men think how helpless, how ruined, how lost, how curst they are in that relation in which they stand to eternity; and although they may know what they are in their personal transgressions—if for instance, a man be a swearer, a liar, or a drunkard, he knows he is all this — but the root, his death in Adam, is hidden from him: therefore it is when by the workings merely of the letter of the word, and of natural conscience, he becomes religious, his religion is in reality like himself—a thing of naught; the hidden concupiscence of the heart is not truly ploughed up, and his outward reformation, if he be but sincere, satisfies him. He will adopt the terms: "regeneration," "born again," and "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" but never rightly receives the word of eternal life, nor can he endure a ministry of the Spirit, but will seek a ministry that will soothe him in his dead-letter religion—a ministry that does at the same time flog him tremendously; for if the minister do not turn himself into a kind of drover, and goad the people along well, he will soon get out of the good graces of these doctrinal, dead-letter professors. Such will put you in mind of one of the dispatches of a Chinese general, some years ago, who, when the English had defeated him, entreated the Emperor to punish him for being defeated; this certainly was a Strange sort of request, but it is like these whip-loving professors. With them, to get a good exhortation-beating, is the very gist of hearing well, not that they are a whit the better for it, but they love to have it so — it is more congenial to their feelings, than would be the real root of the matter.

But you, my good Theophilus, have not so learned Christ; but are brought to feel and know that in Adam you are dead, in the senses above stated, and that you can be delivered from this double death only by regeneration and the substitutional work of the new covenant; and as the death in the first Adam is personal and legal, so life in the second Adam must be personal and legal also; and as our death in Adam was relative before it was personal, so were our life and justification in Christ relative before it was personal. Nothing but electing grace could give this antecedent relationship to Christ; and none but the election will obtain it; the rest will be, or rather are, blinded.

And the apostle is very careful to set before us not only the awful truth of our death in Adam, but also that "it is not by the righteousness of many that many shall be made righteous, but by the righteousness of One, by the obedience "of One." And therefore it is that before the foundation of the world the election of grace were constituted complete in him; and as we had no personal or natural existence before we were born, so we have no spiritual existence personally until we are born of God. That law spiritual existence we had before the fall, we have lost by the fall—and that spiritual existence we had in the first Adam, was only such as was natural to the soul in its primeval state, and was spiritual only in as far as the law was spiritual; and therefore it was not supernatural spirituality, but only natural; and so the apostle reckons it—the first Adam natural, the second Adam spiritual. Here spiritual will mean that Divine life which Christ is in and to the soul, a life

superior every way to the life of holiness we had in the first Adam. The one has no glory, by reason of the glory that excelled.

And the law is made to enter the conscience, that the offence might abound; but where the law abounds to condemn, the gospel much more abounds to justify; and where sin has abounded to make guilty, grace has much more abounded to pardon; and where death hath reigned, grace much more reigns; for sin can reign only unto death; but grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

But Adam was also a type of the Saviour, not only as the head of all his offspring, but also as the husband of the church, I may here just remind you of the current observations upon this point, though no doubt you are well acquainted with them—viz., that the woman when formed out of Adam, was not formed out of his feet, because she was not to be trodden under foot; not from his hands— she was not to support herself; not from his back—she was not to bear the burden; not from his head—she was not to bear rule; but from his side, near his heart; and near that heart, and dear to that heart ever to remain. It is the second Adam that fulfils all these conditions. Will he ever tread that church, which he loved and gave himself for, under his feet? Will he ever leave her to support herself? Will he ever cease to be her Strength?—will he ever leave her to the burden of her sins? Has he not himself taken the burden? He bore her "sins, in his own body, on the tree." And in her right mind will she ever wish to rule over him? No: her desire will be unto him that he would rule over her; for his banner over her is love. Will she ever cease to be near and dear to his heart? Never! His love is like himself—it is eternal.

But to come back to our subject—the leper. All the washings, and sprinklings, and ceremonies, led on to the perfection of his health and cure. This perfection is especially denoted by the number seven: and so sprinkle the seventh will bring this part of our correspondence to a close.

And if perfection of place and state were not entirely of God, where should we be? He will therefore take care that not one particle of the leprosy of sin or mortality shall be left, but will present us with exceeding joy before the eyes of his glory; pure even as Jesus is pure; every department both of place and state is perfect; Jesus gave not up his life until he could say, "It is finished!" Not anything can be added to it; this work has in it the perfection both of manhood and of Godhead: the law is met in its original requirement; and in addition to this, is honored with all the excellency of eternal divinity, for the Saviour, as God and man, honored the law, and atoned for sin; hence he is called, "Jehovah our righteousness;" and, again, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." So that nowhere does the majesty of the law shine forth as in the work of mediation. All that the Saviour did was done in infinite and perfect love to God and man; and if love be the fulfilling of the law, and if the Saviour fulfilled it according to the dignity of his complex person, then what must be the glory of his righteousness, and the excellency of his atonement? May it not well be written, "That he is the end of the law for righteousness?" Wherefore then attempt to serve the law, seeing it is done and completed for you? Now unto him that worketh not at the law, but believeth on him, that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness, and it is clear that if the Lord justify any one at all, it must be the ungodly, for there is nothing else to justify, for apart from the righteousness and atonement of Jesus, even the blameless and zealous Saul of Tarsus is nothing but a man ungodly; every one, without exception, is by nature carnal, sold under sin; and for the law to justify such would be to

justify sin and ungodliness. Such, therefore, can be justified only by that atonement which takes away sin, and "by that righteousness which "fulfils, magnifies, establishes, and honors the law of God. Therefore, it is by faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.

Having then such a foundation as this, is it any wonder that it should be written, that "he that begins a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ?"—that "the Lord will perfect that which concerns us?"—that "his mercy endureth forever?" —and that "he will not forsake the work of his own hands?" And will not also the resurrection of the body be in every way perfect? But I will not here touch upon that wondrous subject, but hope in due time to give one whole epistle thereon.

Now, as the Saviour hath established perfection of state personal, so he hath established a perfection of place - eternal: for the new heavens and the new earth are finished, and all the hosts of them. Jesus hath ended his work which he wrought and made, and now rests from all his work which he hath wrought —and this is that Sabbath that remains to the people of God—a day of blessing, and nothing but blessing, a day set apart, sanctified and made meet for saints in light, as they are made meet for that; and as the temple of old was dedicated and sanctified by sacrifice; so heaven is dedicated to the saints by the blood of Jesus, he entered, and thereby prepared not the holy place made with hands, but heaven itself by his own blood; and whatever blessedness there may be in heaven to which his atonement does not reach, that would be blessedness we could never possess. But, my good Theophilus, here your comfort stands— Jesus hath ascended far above all heavens and opens all the departments of Paradise: "in my Father's house are many mansions," but not one can be reached but by his atonement, even angels can ascend only by the Son of Man.

And as he hath thus prepared a place for us, we also are prepared for that place by the same blood of the Lamb which hath prepared the place for us: he hath sanctified the people with his own blood.

This, then, is the perfection towards which we are to press; this is the prize of our high calling of God; this will be our crown of life, of righteousness, and of glory; "therefore, I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed" in Theophilus, and even in A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 13 - pages 157ff 1855

Summing up why we must be born again to enter heaven – knowledge, reconciliation and love.

My good Theophilus, this my thirteenth letter to you, together with my next, must be a kind of summing up letters, before entering upon other departments which I have in contemplation. I will

then here, under three words, sum up the reasons we cannot, except born of God, enter the kingdom of heaven: and these shall be the three words:—knowledge, reconciliation, love.

The knowledge must be experimental; there must be both a downward and an upward experience. The one is not safe without the other: where it is all downward experience, all sin, and self, and bondage, and woe, there is great danger of desperation and apostasy— this apostasy arising from a secret enmity against the truth as it is in Jesus. This was the case with Cain, and he went out from the presence of the Lord. This was the case also with King Saul; he had nothing but downward experience, but this alone could give him no anchorage in God's truth. Judas had downward experience enough to make him go and hang himself. Felix had downward experience enough to make him tremble, but his downward experience alone did not bring him to God. Pilate had downward experience enough to make him very unhappy, but it did not give him strength to overcome the fear of man, nor prevent his giving sentence against Jesus. Nor, on the other hand, is upward experience alone by any means safe. The stony ground hearer has upward experience enough to make him joyful; but his joy does not, when he is offended, prevent his apostasy. Many have upward experience enough to eat the bread and drink the wine at the Lord's Table, and at the very same time lift up their heel against new covenant living truth. There have been thousands who have had upward experience enough to cry to-day, Hosanna! but to-morrow the cry is changed, and then it is, "Crucify him!" Some have upward experience enough to be wondrously enlightened, and become splendid and wonderful preachers, and have intellectually tasted of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers (in the letter of his testimony) of the Holy Ghost, and have intellectually tasted the good Word of God, and in the natural conscience the powers of the world to come; and sometimes these hold out in their delusion unto the end, and are signed and sealed for heaven by a most eulogistic funeral sermon. But sometimes such apostatize; and if they do fall away, it is generally into such a deadly enmity against the truth, that no remonstrance can renew them again to repentance, but go away into open reproach against the Son of God, and to the uttermost of their power reproach the members of Christ, raking up both their real and supposed faults, joining with the accuser of the brethren, calling them Antinomians, and thus they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame: for what is done unto the members of Christ done unto him. Thus the upward experience of such is merely intellectual; and their downward experience—if they should go down before they die—for the apostle throws an if into the matter—" if they shall fall away,") —if, then, they should go down, they have no downward experience, but that of enmity and apostasy.

So true, then, is it, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it." It is not always easy to distinguish true experience from false experience; the counterfeit looks so much like the genuine coin, the wild grape so much like the fruit of the true Vine; the apples of Sodom look so much like the apples of gold in pictures of silver, so much like the produce of the true Paradise, the evil figs so much like the good figs, the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal so much like the gentle sound of the bells on Aaron's robe, that many, very many are so deceived, that although they are seeking to enter into the kingdom of heaven, they shall not be able.

There must, then, in order for us rightly to learn that song which none can learn but those who are redeemed from among men— there must be two corresponding parts in our experience—the downward and the upward. If the downward experience be right, there will be an upward

experience spring from it; and if the upward experience be right, there will be a downward experience connected with it. You cannot—and if you have only a one footed experience, you will not, walk far, or rather not at all, in the right way.

The Pharisee's experience was all upward; the Publican had both the downward and the upward; he felt that he was a lost sinner; he thirsted and cried for mercy. Every one whose petition was granted by the Saviour in the days of his flesh, had in their experience both a downward root and upward fruit—the leper, the blind man, the woman who touched the hem of his garment. So on the day of Pentecost, they were pricked in the heart. Here is the downward; they said to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Here is the upward longing, arising out of the downward conviction; and as the downward conviction remains, so the upward longing remains; and while "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," yet, when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life; and as both the downward conviction and the upward longing remain, so such who are thus taught are sure to remain, until they are brought out of the pit of corruption and miry clay, and are set upon a rock; and the more downward experience such have, the more upward experience they will have; the deeper and stronger the root, the sweeter and more abundant the fruit. Their downward experience will keep them from being offended, like the stony-ground hearer; and their upward experience will keep them from going away, like Cain, from the presence of the Lord.

We see in the case of Saul of Tarsus, that when he was brought down, there was at the same time an upward longing—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Thus, my good Theophilus, you will see that only a little right experience is better than a great deal of wrong experience. Hence some who have boasted of being shook over hell, have gone out by apostasy, and left us reason to fear that they will at last be shook into hell; and others whose joys have been so wondrous as to lift them far beyond poor little faith. But alas! their joys have gone first into the vinous, then into the acetous, and then into the putrefactive fermentation; that is, they first become intoxicated with conceit, and then turn sour against the truth, and then their religion putrefies, and they are gone; thus proving that in this case new wine was put into old bottles; these old bottles could not keep the wine in its pure state, but set it fermenting, and destroyed both it and themselves too.

Now, my good Theophilus, do not forget this one thing—that there are both in the wrong and in the right experience; that there are great and little experiences in both; and thus you will see that the importance lies more in the quality than in the quantity.

Let what I have here said, then, be a rule to judge by—viz., that true experience differs both from Cain and from the stony-ground hearer—having in it at one and the same time downward conviction and upward longing; and by this two-fold experience you will persevere until the fulfilment of every promise shall be realized in the ultimate salvation of your soul. I might say much more to you here upon this matter, but it will be enough for the present if I have pointed out to you the beginning merely of the right path.

I wish, my good Theophilus, also to carefully notice that in true experience there will be heart work, as well as conscience work. Conscience work, without heart work, is the religion and fatal delusion of thousands; though you know that where there is true heart work, there will be

conscience work; but conscience work without heart work can never establish the heart with grace. Saul of Tarsus was highly and sincerely conscientious when he verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus; but when it pleased the Lord to open up the concupiscence of Saul's heart, he became a new man. When there is conscience work only, there can be no right knowledge of God. Hence conversions to Romanism, and thousands of conversions to religion, are mere natural conscience work; the heart is neither pricked nor ploughed up; therefore their religion consists more of mere moral right and wrong, than of any experimental acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; and in leaving these mere natural conscience professors, and going on into the glorious realities of eternal salvation, they will declare you to be an enemy to good works; nor, if you could live as holy as the Saviour himself lived, could you alter their opinion of you: no; for you must be hated by these moral philosophy men; and though your conscience be ten times more tender than theirs is, still, contending for the real liberty of the gospel, is with them the unpardonable sin; and if these natural-conscience men called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they, they of his servants! The disciple must not be above his Master.

Here again, then, you will see the two must go together—both heart work and conscience work; and you thus come to an experimental knowledge of the truth; and as none could sing the song of Moses but those who experienced the salvation from Egypt, so none can, acceptably to God, sing of salvation, but the experimentally saved by grace. Without this knowledge the soul cannot know the way of God, nor how he is to be glorified; and this knowledge can be had only by Divine teaching; and where this knowledge is, such are born of God.

Reconciliation is another essential in this meetness for the kingdom of heaven; it is a reconciliation both of necessity and choice, and meets first in the mediation of Christ, in the non-imputation to us of sin, and in the imputation unto us of righteousness. To this mediation of the Saviour we are driven of necessity, and yet drawn thereto by the loving-kindness of the Most High. To this blessedness of the man to whom God will not impute sin, the soul sincerely cleaves; it is the soul's first door of hope—the first foot-hold of the promised land—the first and last and only fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness—the first and last and only way to God. Here in this mediation is everything to reconcile a poor sensible self-condemned sinner to a holy and a righteous God; and when the soul is enabled to add virtue to its faith, and so realize the healing power of this atonement, the reconciliation becomes established. And, being so far rightly taught, the consequence will be, that one testimony after another connected with this mediation will be experimentally received. When its eternity is opened up, the soul will glory therein. Here electing grace is seen, and felt to be an essential part of eternal salvation. This truth by the substitutional work of Christ—becomes interwoven in and with the soul; and, as well may men tell such a one that he has nothing to do with God or the gospel as to tell him he has nothing to do with election. To tell such that he need not trouble himself about election is to tell him a gross falsehood, for they have to do with election two ways; first, with God's election, and secondly, with their own election. They know that there is in reserve a rejoicing for those whose names are in the book of life, which there is for none others. And they have to do also with their own election—"Make your calling and election sure;" not only your calling, but also your election.

Now, my good Theophilus, election means choice, and you may be pretty sure of your calling; but then you are not to stop here, but to go on and make a sure choice of the truth. See that your choice

of the truth be with a full appreciation of its value; then if you make such a choice of the truth as to know its infinite and eternal worth, you will never give it up; therefore, look well to this matter: for if you do not make your election sure, that is, make sure election — that is, a sure choice, then your choice of the truth does not accord with the Lord's choice of his people; for he hath chosen them with one sure and eternal choice, and intends never to part with them. So, I say, if you are born of God, you will give diligence to make that kind of vital experimental choice of the truth that you shall part with it no more forever. You know when people marry it is until death do them part; but Jehovah's choice of you will never die, nor will a right choice of him ever die.

Now, this truth must be chosen where it hath chosen you, namely, in Christ Jesus. If you choose it merely as a doctrine apart from the Saviour, you do not choose it rightly. Those, therefore, who profess to hold it, and preach it boldly in one part of their sermon, and make light of it in another part of the sermon, just demonstrate their ignorance of its real value; for, while they profess to hold the truth of eternal election, and preach it merely because it is found in the letter of the word, yet such men are evidently more at home in something much more of a creature kind; and therefore go off to their oxen and lash and goad them along in creature effort; or they are off to a formality farm and going to do a wonderful deal for God; or they are off to a wedding, marrying high and low doctrine churches. These weddings are in our day very numerous, showing that election has not only its determined foes, but also its hypocritical friends. But, O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these his doings? Do not his words, without human device, do good to him that walk uprightly.

Therefore, my good Theophilus, if your religion be right in this reconciliation department, you will earnestly, and honestly, and boldly, and consistently, and throughout all the departments of truth, glory in electing grace.

But the remaining parts of this reconciliation, and of the inextinguishable love of Christ in the true Christian, I must leave until next month. I say but little at a time, as I am but A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 14 - pages 188ff 1855

The Love of God in the heart, its true nature

My good Theophilus, — I have dwelt in my last letter to you upon experimental knowledge of, and reconciliation to the truth as it is in Jesus, essential to preparation for a better world.

The subject of this letter, as also my next letter, will be the love of God in the heart; and as there is so much love which is not vital, not genuine, not real, we must be careful to see that our matters are right and good before the King. Yet I shall, by which to try both you and myself, take but one rule, and that one shall be the word of truth. Now let it be with you an unexceptionable rule, that whatever religious love a man may have, it cannot be acceptable to God unless it be the love of the truth; therefore, to truly love God, and yet make light of, or disapprove his truth, is impossible.

To love God contrary to his truth, is to love a fancied, an imaginary God. For it is only in what he is in the new covenant, that he can be, ever was, or will be savingly endeared to any soul under heaven; and all the parts of this covenant accord, and that perfectly, with its main part, and which is that he hath sworn by himself. He hath sworn, and will not repent. And now, remember, that the love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is in perfect keeping with Jehovah's immutable oath, and it is as unquenchable, and as inextinguishable as the oath of God is unchangeable. It is everlasting love to us; it is endless love in the soul, springing up into everlasting life.

Now look, on the one hand, at your necessities, and on the other hand, at the several parts of this covenant — and see if in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, a substitute for any one part of this covenant can be found; and also, ask yourself the question — whether by those relations and parts of the new covenant, the living and blessed God be so endeared to you, that nothing else can be gospel to you? And ask also another question, namely, whether, if there be any one item in this covenant short of perfection, where penal wrath could reach you, do not the daily workings of a fallen nature assure you, that only one vulnerable point would infallibly hurl you headlong from a covenant having in it one, only one, defect? For what sense is there, in which you are not corrupt, and unclean? What one commandment of the law is there, that can find anything in you as a sinner, but that which is evil? Yes, you feel that as a sinner, your character answers with awful exactness to those who are excluded from the holy city, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." But what is there pertaining to God, that we can, as sinners, touch without defiling it? And what else, (pertaining to God's truth,) can they that are in the flesh do, but work abomination, and make and propagates, concerning God, falsehood? Alas for man, how true it is, that "there is none righteous, no, not one."

Seeing then, things are so, — where is the root, the secret, the mainspring of the difference? For some do enter in; and clear it is, that this root, this mainspring, this secret, was not with man, but with God. Yes, it is thus decided, and decided forever, that none can enter in but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. Yes, my good Theophilus, "it was grace that gave you to the, Lamb, who all your sins and sorrows took." And will you say here of our great high priest, as Corah said of Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you?" Is there any part of your sin or sins that you would like to have taken yourself? Is there any one burning commandment of a fiery law that you would have wished to encounter? Is there any one of heaven's thunderbolts that you would like to have braved? Is there one of Sinai's war chariots that you could take captive, and change it from an iron chariot of sure destruction, into a chariot of salvation—could thou have touched its burning pillars, and placed in their stead, pillars of silver — could thou have overlaid it with heavenly gold — hast thou a purple stream at command, with which to dye a covering to beautify and adorn the same—could thou have finished off the same by paving it with purest and perfect love? No, it was Jesus, and Jesus alone, who could contend with horses—roll back Jordan's fearful waves, and make a way for the ransomed to pass over.

Now, if electing grace had not given you to the Saviour, what else could have given you to him? Can the law let its prisoners go by any other than that ransom which Jesus hath paid? And can the precept of the law appear otherwise than with vengeance in its eyes, and thunder on its tongue, except by Jehovah our righteousness? How true then are the words of the Holy One, that "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Now the death of Christ is the seal of the new covenant, and it is a seal which from the very nature of it, cannot be broken or invalidated, for his death cannot be recalled; so also, is the seal of the Holy Spirit in the conscience a seal which from the very nature of it, cannot either be broken or invalidated. "Ye were," saith the Apostle, "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;" this promise is "Yea and amen in Christ Jesus;" therefore, whatever may intervene between the first sealing the promise home to the heart, and the fulfilment of the same — it is nevertheless certain, and the fulfilment thereof sure.

Many years, and many troubles, and infirmities, and sins intervened between the giving and the fulfilling of the promises made unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; but being not old covenant or conditional promises, but new covenant "I will, and they shall" promises, they all come to pass; and our God is still as willing as ever to reveal, abundantly reveal unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel.

This is solid ground, fear not—venture on it, venture wholly, let no other trust intrude—for the new covenant parts of the Bible never place real love to God on any other grounds than those upon which we now are: hence, when the Apostle would assure us that to those who love God all things work together for good, he is very careful to shew where and in what relations true Christians love him, and therefore immediately adds these words: "Whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Love to God in this fore-knowledge and gracious decree is one most essential part of conformity to the image of his Son, for Jesus testified and said, "Thou lovest me before the foundation of the world." And again, "Thou lovest them as thou hast loved me." For the Saviour to be verily foreordained before the foundation of the world and yet not to love the Father in that decree of foreordination, would be a strange light indeed in which to represent the Son of God, and so with us; for us to be predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son and life with God in an eternity of aversion to and hatred of that same decree that ordained us to life, would indeed be most unaccountable. Therefore if you are taught of God, as God hath loved you in foreknowledge and decree, so you will love him where he hath loved you. These transactions of grace are the meeting places of God and man, and these meeting places, or, as the Apostle calls them, heavenly places, are in Christ: these are the peaceable habitations, and sure dwellings, and quiet resting places of the people of the Most High.

Calling comes next: called out of the powers of darkness, so that it is not possible for the gospel any longer to be hidden from our eyes. Justification comes next; and then next to that is glorification. The Apostle, therefore, could not go farther back nor farther forward; so that what the mercy of the Lord was from everlasting, it is to everlasting; and what it was before time, it is in time; and what it is in time, it will be after time; so that the sins and circumstances of time have not lessened it nor altered it, but only made way for it, and subsequently brought about a manifestation of it, bringing us by degrees into possession of it; and this is the suited and beautiful order of this mercy, that it has taken the curse out of our afflictions, so that in the end they can prove but light afflictions, "working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Now, my good Theophilus, is this where you are? is it in this light of that Sun that will never go down that you walk? is it these new heavens, and in this new earth that you are in heart and soul one with Jesus? for he is in every one of these, foreknown in him, ordained to life by him, called

as one of his sheep by him, justified by faith in him, and that in order to be glorified with him. Now, just as the Israelites were outwardly to be devoted to God by the manna, for they were to eat unto God—and by the rock, for they were to drink as unto God—and by the sacrifices, for they were to come unto God—and by the High Priest, for he was to represent them at the mercy-seat unto God, as they were to live unto God by his own mercies; so you are to present yourself body and soul unto God a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. But this can be done only by the mercies of the Lord; therefore, just as we are fed with that Bread that strengthens man's heart, just as we are refreshed from the Rock, and just as we have access to God, and just as our High Priest is pleased to bless us, just so far, and no farther, can we present our bodies a living sacrifice; for when we are not either pushed by hunger, or strengthened by heavenly food, we are dead, cold, helpless, and have no life in exercise to serve God with either body or soul with that holiness we have when he brings us to his table, anoints us with fresh oil, and makes our cup run over; but nevertheless the root of the matter remains in us; for though we sleep we are not dead; and when the voice of our Beloved is again heard, we shall awake, and he will give us light, and we shall live in his sight.

Now, my good Theophilus, you will feel in your heart and soul one with Jesus in all this; yea, one with the blessed God, Father, Word, and Holy Ghost; and you will love him most willingly with all your heart, with all your strength, all your soul, and the brethren as brethren, as yourself; and thus, as love is the fulfilling of the law, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in you; for as your walk is a walk of faith in, and love to, the truth, it is a walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and although you have another law in your members, warring against the law of your mind, yet that law shall not so prevail against you as to make you weary of well doing, or weary of the truth. No; you cannot be weary of what you sincerely and supremely love. Yet the laws in the members will gain at times great ascendancy, so that you will be made to sigh, and say, my soul is weary because of murderers; and this is bad and trying enough; but it is not so bad as love to the truth waxing so cold that you begin, as many do, to call it light bread, and say, our soul loathes this light bread. No; for having the love of God in the heart, you will not, though compassed with infirmity, commit the great transgression of willful enmity against the truth, and though you are not to sin that grace may abound, yet you are not to lift your infirmities or your sins up, either against or above the atonement of Christ, as though you had sinned beyond his power to save. No, this disbelief of the power of his atonement would be the worst of all your sins—"for to him that believeth all things are possible;" and, besides, he intends that as he loves you much, so you shall love him much; for there will be much to be forgiven; and so shall you bear much fruit: that is, you shall praise him not sparingly, but greatly; you shall be indebted to him not triflingly, but infinitely; he will roll in his mercies and pile them up around you, and will himself, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, be round about you forever; he is sworn to you in oath sacred, eternal, and immutable. Who that knows him can but love him? Though, alas, in this as well as in other departments, I am but A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 15 - pages 205ff 1855

About our own infirmities

In my last I have shown that all true love to God must be in accordance with truth—viz., "the truth of an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David."

Now, mind it is not after the flesh that you are made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; no, for flesh and blood cannot, in their mortal state, inherit the kingdom of heaven, neither can corruption inherit incorruption. "The body is dead, because of sin; but the spirit is life, because of righteousness."

There are four things under which you will often sigh and groan, and at which you will often stagger and rebel; and these are, first, the plague of the heart, filling you with anything but the fruits of righteousness. You will be a pestilence to yourself. The second is the crooks and stumbles you will make by the way. Yes, the very things you would not, you will sometimes do; so that your mouth shall be stopped here also; for there shall not be such a likeness between your life and the righteousness of the Saviour as to cause you to mistake the one for the other. No; for your own righteousness, when brought before God, will be at the best but filthy rags. The third is the dealings of the Lord with you in providence. Some of these dealings may be such as to cause you to curse the very day in which you were born. The fourth is death. This will sometimes try you. Death is a dread to some all their life time. Now, then, with your old man of sin, with your often infirmities, with crosses in providences, and the occasional fear of death, you will not be without your troubles; so you must not look to any of these for that meetness which you have for eternity. Your love to God rests on better grounds than these.

Nor can I in this part forbear reminding you of the greatness of the difference between the opposite qualities found in the true Christian; and I do this the more readily as some people think there cannot be—at least, ought not to be—anything bad about a real Christian; while on the other hand, the true Christian sees and feels so much evil about himself, that everything good is often hidden from him. There is no contrast in nature sufficiently strong to set forth the contrast between the mind that serves the law of truth, and the flesh which serves the law of sin; and these two irreconcilable armies are found in one and the same Christian man—fire and water; darkness and life; health and disease; death and life; mortality and immortality; corruption and incorruption; earthly and heavenly; spiritual and carnal; holy and unholy; the finest gold and the basest dross; inextinguishable love to God, and deadly enmity against him; the lowest and the very dregs of hell, and the highest and noblest dignities of heaven; all the infidelity and atheism satan could wish, and yet all that faith and godliness that shall bring the soul off with boundless triumph at the last.

Thus, you will see, that when you come to die there will be a great deal to part with. You have parted with a great deal already, only just to make room for that small portion of truth which is to be received on this side Jordan. But you will have bye-and-bye to part with mortal life itself to make room for a better life.

You know that our worst, as well as our best qualities, are parts of ourselves. The one belongs to old self, the other to new self; and to both these we have a strong liking; old self likes itself, and new self likes itself. You cannot get old self to dislike itself, and new self has no occasion to dislike itself. How clear it is, then, that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." And if ever the truth was spoken in this world, it was spoken when it was declared that these are contrary one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. This last clause is true both ways; for the true Christian cannot sin as he (according to the flesh) would, nor can he serve God as (according to the Spirit) he would.

Seeing, then, we have so great, so thick, so dark a cloud of witnesses against us, as well a great, a bright, and true cloud of witnesses for us, is it any wonder it should so often be so difficult to find out our signs and evidences of belonging to the Lord? for although these dark-cloud witnesses are in one sense false witnesses, having by what the Saviour has done lost their right against us, yet they do truly demonstrate what we are, and often confuse us, and hide everything else from us. But still these witnesses, having lost their right against us, cannot ultimately prevail. This troop may overcome God at the first, and at times, but God shall overcome at the last; for the testimony of Christ can never lose its right to speak for us: and if God be for us, who then can fatally be against us?

Now, my good Theophilus, it is only by thus knowing your own heart that you can become a true lover of true holiness. Every evil which you see and feel in your heart will be to you a reason why you should love that holiness which the truth is unto you; and the more evils you see and feel in your own heart, the more and greater will be your reasons to love true holiness—that true holiness which is by the Word of truth. "Now ye are clean," saith the Saviour, "through the Word I have spoken unto you." That holiness which is by the blood of the Lamb; the blood of Christ giving a pardoned conscience, that you may in living affection and love serve the God of love; that holiness which is by the truth of eternal election. This truth taking you from the reprobate and the fatally hardened and uniting you in thanksgiving to him who hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit—that is, the Holy Spirit roots in your soul the truth of eternal election; and this chooses you out of the world, and makes this eternal election one of the essential ties which unites your soul to God, making you see and feel that you cannot be saved without it; therefore, election has not only chosen you, but becomes also an essential part of your sanctification. Your sanctification is not complete without election; for as election is good in the sight of God, so it must be good in your sight; for your eye must not be evil, where he is good. It is in this way you become a true lover of true holiness.

Now, your present participation in holiness is but partial; you know only in part; and your love to God in all that perfection of holiness and beauty by which he shines out of Zion, is but comparative. There are many Scriptures that can be understood only by the doctrine of degrees of comparison; not decrees, mind, of comparison; but the doctrine of degrees of comparison.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Psalm lxvi. 18. Again, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. Now, how are we to understand these Scriptures? Must we interpret them in direct opposition to actual facts? for it is a truth beyond all dispute, that every believer does regard iniquity in his heart; and it is a truth, too, that every believer, as well as unbeliever, loves the world. Yes, he who knows his own heart well knows that

when in a carnal state of mind, many things are cherished there which he would tremble to be seen of men, and for which, when in his right mind, he loathes himself in the sight of God; and he who denies that he has this sinful love to sinful self, does thereby prove that he does not know his own heart; and as to the love of the world, where is there the man, even among the most favored, who does not shew some symptoms of love to the world, and to the things thereof— which do not sometimes linger among the graves in the congregation of the dead, and shew some attachment to swine's flesh? Isa. lxxv. 4. "For if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." How, then, shall we make these things straight? for we must not leave them thus crooked. "Ye are complete in him" is a most delightful truth; but this is not the department upon which we are now dwelling; we are not now dwelling upon that relative perfection we have in him; but we are here dwelling upon personal fitness for heaven. Let us, then, see if the doctrine of degrees of comparison will not set these matters right and straight. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother," &c. Now, what does this mean? Why, not what it seems to mean. It seems to mean hatred to parents, but it does not mean so; for it is in another place explained by the doctrine of degrees of comparison. "He that loveth father or mother more than me." Here, then, is the key to the whole; and the meaning of the above Scriptures will run thus; if I so regard iniquity in my heart, as to turn away from the truth, or sell it as Judas did; if I so regard iniquity in my heart, as to prefer, to choose, to follow iniquity, rather than follow the Lamb of God, then the Lord will not hear me. There is therefore nothing in this Scripture really to discourage you; for with all the fleshly attachment to and regard for the iniquity in your heart which you feel, yet the blood of the Lamb, the Word of his testimony, and that eternal life which is by him, are dearer to you, precious to your soul, by which you can truly say that you do love him more than you love the downward tendencies of mortal flesh. David, supposed to be the author of the above Psalm, certainly gave as clear a proof as any of the Old or New Testament saints, that he did at times regard iniquity in his heart, and was from this regard, as circumstances shew, capable of anything to which he might be left; yet he supremely loved God's truth, and could and did in his old age say, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies;" and could and does in this same Psalm, wherein he says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." He does, I say, in this same Psalm bear testimony, saying, "Verily, God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." Now, do mind this; his prayer was for mercy. Now, as the word iniquity most generally in Scripture means error, so, the special allusion here seems to be to error— error against the Lord. So, if I regard false doctrine, satanic falsehood, in my heart, against God's truth, then my prayer, like the prayer of the Pharisee, or the rich man in hell, would not accord with God's truth; it would not accord with his covenant of mercy; it would not accord with the perfect mediation of the Saviour; therefore could not, from the very nature of things, be heard or answered.

Thus, by the doctrine of degrees of comparison, and by looking at the word iniquity here to have a special allusion to error—even that kind of error which makes empty the soul of the hungry, and causes the drink of the thirsty to fail. Isaiah xxxii. 6. Taking this view of the matter, I think we get hold, pretty nearly, of the Psalmist's meaning.

This degree of comparison must apply also to the words of John, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Now every Christian, as we have said, does love the world; and this, as well as the other department I have just noticed, are departments wherein we need reproof, admonition, exhortation, and expostulation: and, above all, grace to profit thereby. Otherwise, like

Demas, we should soon be so in love with this present world, evil as it is, that we should apostatize from the truth, and be drowned in perdition; but this, sin shall not have such deadly dominion over us, as we are not under a galling, condemning, unendurable law; for then we might be glad to run anywhere to get away from such a law:—but we are under grace. This is the best thing we can be under; and there can be no just reason why we should wish to get away from it; "Its yoke is easy, and its burden is light;" and however sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded: it does not say how much more—only let me say that this is the Everlasting God's much more. Sin with the saints can go no further than death; but grace will go on when sin and death are dead, and that, unto eternal life. What! my good Theophilus, you born of God, and yet so regard iniquity in your heart, and so love the world, that you wish to get away from him who has loved you eternally, provided a city for you to dwell in, an inheritance for you to range in, a rest for you to repose in, a river for you to bathe in, a righteousness for you to appear in, riches for you to roll in, a name for you to glory in, eternity — yes, eternity for you to breathe in? Jesus lay down a life of infinite value for you — obtain redemption for you—gain victory for you—open heaven for you—bear all your sins for you—bear the curse for you—swallow up death for you—plead before the throne for you—make all things subserviently work for you—dedicate heaven itself with his own blood to and for you—create the world for you— govern it for you—will end it for you—will raise up into his own likeness your mortal body for you, having established endless perfection for you? He is meek and lowly in heart for you—and that he might live with you, his heart will never be lifted up above you.

The Holy Spirit with you by the Father's love—by Immanuel's name—by the covenant of peace—by his own testimonies! and will be with you forever, to keep up the health of your countenance—the life of your hope—the strength of your faith—the purity of your love —the sincerity of your desires—the progress of your experience—the increase of your knowledge—the clearness of your eye-sight—the firmness of your steps—the decision of your soul—the certainty of your race—the conquest after conquest of your march—and, at last, command the gates of heaven to lift up their heads, and the everlasting doors of truth so to open that you and the King of Glory and the Father of Mercies in and by him, may meet on eternity's hallowed ground; with every tear forever wiped from your eyes. You comforted on every side—the banner of eternal love rejoicing over your head—and everything in all that world to make you welcome and happy there? What! leave such a God as this? We might then indeed say, "Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon." "But I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak."

And, although, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it," yet we are not (in our correspondence), left quite alone. A kindly word was given for us on the wrapper of the July number of the Vessel: not that I for a moment think my humble attempts to be a help to you can be really entitled altogether to such encouraging remarks, so sincerely and feelingly made by our unknown Christian well-wisher; yet that I hope again next month you will hear from A Little One

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 16 - pages 224ff 1855

About our inheritance in Christ

My good Theophilus, I now attempt to set before you some of those things which form that inheritance, into the full possession of which you will ere long come.

There can be no evidence of your fitness for eternity that can surpass in excellency that of the oneness of your soul with the truth as it is in Jesus: and you know that the truth is in Jesus as it is nowhere else. It is called "the truth as it is in Jesus," to distinguish it not only from the traditions and devices of men, but also to distinguish it from Edenic truth, which truth was merely legislative truth; also to distinguish it from Levitical truth, which was after the law of a carnal or temporal commandment; and also from killing truth—for the law is, in consequence of sin, the ministration of death; but the truth, as it is in Jesus, hath in it, in all its parts, eternal life; for whatever the Saviour is in his mediation, that is his blessed truth. He is a Priest forever, after the power of an endless life; therefore no promise in him can die, nor one of his brethren come finally short of entire conformity to any one precept of his holy Word. They shall by him all shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father; and when and wherever the truth is truly known, there will be a serving the Lord willingly, with the whole heart. And the Lord often meets him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; as Abraham did when he shewed his willingness to part rather with his son Isaac, than to part with God's truth; as Rahab did, when she ventured her life for the messengers of Jehovah; as Moses did when he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which pleasures could be but for a season, and that a very short one, too. Yes, he meets him that worketh righteousness, as Jesus did when he was baptized in Jordan, and the heavens were opened unto him with, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; the Holy Spirit also descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."

Yes, he meets him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, as he did Paul and Silas, (Acts xvi.,) who had righteously preached a righteous gospel, and were un-righteously cast into prison. But the God in whom they rejoiced shakes the prison's foundations, breaks asunder the bands of the prisoners, threw open the prison doors, called the jailer by his grace, and thus overturned the powers of darkness.

Gospel workers are free and willing workers. They would not, even if they could, leave the Master whom they so cheerfully serve. These are they that remember the Lord in his ways. Every man more or less remembers God; but none but his own rightly remember him in his ways. "Those (saith the prophet, Isa. liv.) that remember thee in thy ways." Here lies another vital distinction between the man who is born of God, and the man who is not born of God; and one of the features of those ways is, that in them there is continuance. Yes, love, and choice, and mediation, and regeneration, and preservation, and resurrection, and glorification, continue forever, world without end, or we could not be saved; but in those ways is continuance, and we shall be saved.

Now, my good Theophilus, follow me into some of the parts—some of the fields of your inheritance; and you will, I am encouraged to hope, get at some of the evidences you have of interest in so great salvation; for the evidences are laid down very clearly.

"Thou art wroth, for we have sinned." Here, then, is a consciousness of the wrath of God against sin; these same were led by the Holy Ghost to say, "We shall be saved." Here, then, is a consciousness of three things— sin, wrath, lost; but salvation changes the scene—sin is put away forever; wrath is turned away, and favor eternal in its place; and instead of being lost, you will be saved, and no returned prodigal will be more happy than you.

But we are all as an unclean thing. What, then, is the remedy for such, but this—that "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin?" As one unclean you can have no other hope, no other plea, and the Holy Spirit will keep up in you by various means such a conviction of your state that he will take care you shall have no other hope; your life, your soul, will be safe nowhere else. But all our righteousness's are as filthy rags. Well, then, all that these righteousness's can do, is to bear witness against us, and just demonstrate how far we have wandered into the regions of corruption, and how entirely we have lost our original conformity to God, and to his holy and righteous law. Well, now, my good Theophilus, can you be otherwise than loathsome in your own sight? and can you be otherwise than delighted with that part of the truth as it is in Jesus, which declares him to be the end of the law for righteousness unto all them that believe—that is, unto all them that rightly believe this, that he is the end of the law for righteousness? "You know that in the Word of God wondrous things are spoken of those who are believers in and receivers of this Divine righteousness; that they are justified; that they are without blame, without spot, and without blemish; that they are complete in him; that they are by this righteousness united inseparably with eternal glory; that they shall inherit the land forever; that they walk in the light, even as He who justifies is in the light; that Jesus being unto them Jehovah their Righteousness, we cannot think or speak too highly of such a way of acceptance with God. It is indeed the best robe, which gives an exaltation which the highest angel can never reach. No one who does not receive this wedding garment, will be allowed to remain at the marriage supper of the Lamb; and no one who is truly seeking it will be denied either the possession or advantages of it; for it is unto and upon all, that, from a sense of need, believe in it. Now you, my good Theophilus, have found out what your own righteousness really is; that it is at best but like yourself—carnal and under sin; so that I am sure you will be glad to read in the Word of truth of being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It was because the Jews were ignorant both of what their own righteousness really was, and of what the righteousness of Christ was, that they went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. We here see what an essential thing it is to be convinced of the majesty, and spirituality, and integrity, and severity, and certainty of every jot and tittle of the law of God; for there can be no right receiving of the truth of the Saviour's righteousness, until, by the Holy Spirit of God, we are so convinced of sin as to know, that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Now, the works of the law are not of faith; for the law is not a law of faith, but of works; and as we are carnal, sold under sin, we cannot be justified by works; therefore "it is not to him that worketh," but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness.

You will observe that there is a constant tendency among men, even those who profess to be justified in no other way, to make very little of this righteousness; they seem not to enter into the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin—the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works; and yet we can have and enjoy peace with God in no other way. I want you, then, to be as the Psalmist was, and where he was, when he said, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

But not only are we as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness as filthy rags, but we also "all do fade as a leaf." Well, then, we need something which will not fade—and what is that something? That something is the incorruptible Word of truth, of which we are born of God. This root of the matter will keep us alive and fresh in our souls, even when the outer man shall perish; and so the promises and assurances of the Word run. And I wish you to look well to this part of your inheritance—for your inheritance it is; for being one with the truth as it is in Jesus, you cannot walk in counsels which are opposite to that truth, nor can you stand up to defend a way which leads from that truth, nor can you scorn to be saved by grace without works. Thus, as you cannot walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful; you are happily one of the blessed of Him who made heaven and earth. Now, as you have the law of life within you, so, from this possession within, you will delight in the law of life; you will, through prosperity, and through adversity, meditate therein; you will see that this law of life is by the Priesthood of the great High Priest of your profession; and you will read the Word, especially the Epistle to the Hebrews, upon this great matter of Jesus being a Priest—not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Here you will be delighted to see how death is swallowed up in victory; and to see how it is you will be as "a tree planted by the rivers of water;" and these rivers can never run dry. Therefore, you will not cease from bearing fruit; you will never cease to believe the truth; you will never cease to love the truth; you will never cease to understand and know the truth; neither shall the leaf of your profession wither. No: you shall still go on to own his name, never being ashamed thereof, nor weary thereof; "and so shall you prosper, and bring forth fruit in old age." You shall even be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright to his promise, that he is a Rock immovable, and that there is no unrighteousness in him to forget your labor of love, and patience of hope.

Thus it is, that just as the Lord of life and glory is to you as a Tree of Life, bearing precious fruit from the beginning of the year, even unto the end, and as his leaf, shall not fade; but as he has owned you, so he will never cease to own you; but the leaves of the tree, the words by which he overshadows and owns you, shall heal whatever diseases you have; "So that you shall be to him for a name, and for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off." But I must not forget here to remind you that our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Here you see the simile used in the preceding clause continued. There we fade as a leaf—here, as dried, faded leaves, we are by a violent wind taken away. What a testimony is this of our helplessness, worthlessness, and utter ruin by nature! And Isaiah is not the first who bare testimony of this truth; it is a testimony the truth of which you will be made more and more to feel. "Wilt thou (said Job to the Lord) wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? for thou write bitter things against me, and make me to possess the iniquities of my youth." Job xiii. 25, 26. Yes, your experiences and trials will often be very bitter, and seem very much against you, and you will truly learn what a poor broken leaf, what poor dry stubble you are, liable to be set on fire by every temptation which may come nigh you. Here it is you will sigh and cry to God for help; but from being in and of

yourself but a broken leaf, and dry stubble, he will not (until death) deliver you. It is what you are, and this must be known and felt. His grace is sufficient, but the thorn must remain. "But (you will say) what will this profit me?" Much, every way; but chiefly in making you to glorify God, that you have an oneness with the Mediator of the new covenant, from which you cannot be taken away; for as no man taketh your joy from you, so none can pluck you out of his hands. You cannot be separated from his love; no, here Jehovah's immutable oath, with all the immutabilities of the gospel, bind you eternally fast; and as a prince, you have power with God and with men, and must prevail—that is, whatever power the Prince of peace has with God and with men, and to whatever extent he prevails, that will be the measure of your success; for you walk in his name, ore called after his name, and have the victory, and are saved in his name; and those your iniquities which in the first Adam and in yourself took you away, he hath taken them away from you forever, that you may never be taken away from him. Here is the love of God to you; not that you loved God, but that he loved you, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for your sins; so that now you love him, because he first loved you.

But not only are you thus by his blood cleansed from all sin, not only are you accepted in his righteousness, not only are you constituted an unfading tree of righteousness, and not only are you sealed unto the day of redemption; not only have you in oneness with him this personal dignity, but you have a glorious inheritance to possess, of which I can give you, in concluding this letter, but a very few hints; for we must get on in our next into other departments of truth.

Your inheritance, then, will be just the reverse of what is said in the 10th and 11th verses of this 64th of Isaiah. The holy cities of the earthly Canaan are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Therefore it is that there is a city which never can become a wilderness; a Zion where the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore; a Jerusalem which is great, glorious, and free; nor shall there be any complaining in her streets.

The holy and the beautiful house of the earthly Canaan, was burned up with fire; "but we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and where our pleasant things can never be laid waste.

Now, my good Theophilus, the natural man receives not these things, neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned. Thus it is that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit." It is true we know but in part; but still, we do know a little, and that little is the earnest of our inheritance. May we, then, still be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as our labor is not in vain in the Lord; for we shall reap a full reward; so says the Word, and so believes A Little One

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 17 - pages 247ff 1855

Standing firm in the truth - beware of the yea and nay gospel

My good Theophilus, you have, through grace, gained some experimental knowledge of, and possession of the truth. Now it will be for you to look to yourself that you lose not those things which you have wrought, but that you receive a full reward. (2 John viii). "We ought (saith the apostle) to take the more earnest heed to things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

And you well know that such delusions are to abound, that would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect. I hope, therefore, to see you stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free; that you may not only not go back again to Egypt—that you may not only not go back to Sinai—that you may not only not call the manna of truth light bread, which your soul would refuse—that you may not only not bring up an evil report of the promised land—and that you may not only not say a confederacy, to all to whom so many so-called free-grace men say a confederacy—that you may not only not give up one inch of the ground you have gained, but that you may say to every compromising professor, as your father Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou should say, I have made Abraham rich." Gen. xiv. 22, 23.

The enemy will not care to attack you with bare-boned Arminianism; this would be laying the snare too openly before you; and he knows that you are too old a bird to be caught with such chaff as this. No, no; he is too old a fowler for this; he takes care to come to you as an angel of light; he will, by his ministers, hold out a good portion to you of undeniable truth; and if he can get you to approve so far of truth intellectually held out to you, and can get you to lose sight, even where doctrinal truth runs mountains high, of the vitality that is lacking, then he has partly gained his end; for remember, it is not enough for a man to have the truth — the question is, how he came by it, and how he holds it; for if he come by it by Divine teaching, he will hold it in absolute supremacy; everything in heaven, and in earth, and in hell, must bend and bow before it; for if an angel bring another gospel, he is to be accursed; and woe unto any apostle that dared to preach any other gospel! Kingdoms and men must be subservient to it. Legions of fallen angels may take possession of a Gadarene, but when the I will, and they shall gospel comes for the said Gadarene, devils must instantly fly. No parleying, no bringing anything against the Gadarene as a reason they should keep possession of him. No; the one short sentence, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," will bring satan and all his hosts down like lightning, and let them get up again if they can. The Captain of our salvation has got the devil down under him, and he will keep him down, too; and the Lord will in due time tread satan down under the feet of his saints, also.

Truth occupies every inch of the ground of our salvation; and it is this that makes all the ground good. Your heart could not be a good ground heart, were not living truth rooted therein. This made the Psalmist say to the Lord, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Jesus hath established the truth of the law, and the truth of the new covenant, and this truth endures; let it have what it may to endure, it endures forever.

Now the enemy will, in order to get you to first sanction, and afterwards receive something that is not truth, try to work upon your fleshly sympathies, by pointing out to you the supposed or real natural excellences of certain smooth, easy-going professors; and whatever yea and nay sort of

gospel they hold, you must not in any way insinuate that you do not feel quite sure that they are right in the truth, or the truth rightly rooted in them; for if you do, you will be immediately reported as a man of bad, bitter, bickering, bigoted, censorious spirit; anything but like the meek and lowly Jesus; (a cant phrase for slim professors;) and you must be avoided; and thus will they cast out your name as evil. "Well, be it so; your comfort is, that you know their judgment of your spirit is as wrong as wrong can be. The bitterness, though covered with great softness of manner, is on their side, and not on yours. You love the truth well enough to contend for it throughout, nor can you do otherwise. Such was the spirit of the Saviour himself, that the fashionables of the day said he had a devil; and your decision for God's truth, though in the spirit of all humility and sincerity with God and man, will not be looked upon in a more favorable light; for "if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of his household." You will, in the face of these false accusations, need great grace to keep you firm, and yet in a right spirit; but our God is able to make all grace abound toward you.

But that cover under which, with the most feasibility, the secret approvers of a yea and nay gospel will shelter themselves, is that of insisting upon good works, a blameless life, and filling up your place at their table of nothings. But none of these things must move you either from the truth of the gospel, or from the tried and true Disciples of Christ. No, you must still choose afflictions with the people of God, rather than suffer for a yea and nay gospel, for which false gospels many have suffered many things; but they have suffered in vain, excepting, of course, those who have so suffered by them as to learn their need of the true gospel. But no thanks to them that they have thus profited; for if they could have settled down with physicians of no value, they would; but their wound is too deep to be thus slightly healed.

You, then, I say, must be still willing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the fleshly and sinful errors of men for a season. Nor must you forget this one thing—that six months' morality in a yea and nay man, is thought more of by men than a life of seventy years' irreproachable devotion to God, by a real Christian. They (the yea and nay) must therefore needs go well, because against them there is no rising up. Why, a Simon Magus was the wonder of his age, to whom all gave heed, from the least unto the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God;" (Acts viii. 10); while of Paul they said, "Away with such a fellow! it is not fit that he should live." You must not, therefore, I say, be moved by this old practice device; there is no reality in it; the men who make such ado about it, are as infirm and faulty as other people, and do not practice one half of what they preach: if they were as ready at practice as they are at pretension, we might almost be tempted to take them as our examples. "But we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place."

The Saviour was looked upon by the Scribes and Pharisees as no friend to good works; John the Baptist, they said, had a devil; and the accusation against Stephen was, that he spoke blasphemous words against the holy place, and the law. (Acts vi. 13).

Beware, then, lest any man in the garb of pretended superior sanctity, deceive you, and by imperceptible degrees draw you away from the simplicity that is in Christ; for there are men who sanction such a yea and nay gospel, which they do not dare to preach in their own pulpits, simply because the people are more honest than the priest. Such are deceitful workers; yes, workers, of course transforming themselves—not the Holy Ghost transforming them, but transforming

themselves into the ministers of Christ; and no marvel, for satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it is no great thing if his ministers be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works (of deception). (2 Cor. xi.)

These delusions are very powerful; this superior practical sanctity devise has a very powerful effect upon the awakened conscience of a regenerate soul; and feeling as such do, what poor creatures they are, and that, as saith the Apostle, "in many things they all offend;" and thirsting, as they do, for more of the spirit of holiness and of God, it is not to be wondered at, that great talkers about doing, should appear (until the devise is discovered) to be the very persons who possess what the living soul thirsts for. So powerful, old as it is, is this good work's dodge, that here and there even a Barnabas is stupefied, and led away by this well mixed opiate, and so bewildered are their eyes, and so benumbed their former right feelings, that they have fallen into a ditch, and do not see it. They do not feel altogether easy or happy, but they are determined still to go on, though in so doing, some of them have already "pierced themselves through with many sorrows." They seem like the man of God of old (1 Kings. xiii.) who, after faithfully delivering his message, suffered himself to be decoyed by a false prophet. The command given to the man of God was very significant. He was not to eat bread nor drink water, neither was he to return the way that he came. So it seems with some now; they have hitherto faithfully delivered their message, and did for a time run well; but now they are making one table of yea and nay, and they are turning back the way that they came; yes, advocating the very bondage from which they professed to be delivered. And who reproved the man of God? Why, the very prophet by whom he had been deluded into a disobedience of faith, (see verse 21.) So that the man of God made himself despicable in the eyes of the very prophet whom he had so kindly obliged. "And a lion met him and slew him." As he, the man of God, had ceased to vindicate faithfully God's truth, a righteous God stepped in and vindicated his own truth; and thus shewed, that he would rather have no prophet at all, than have an unfaithful one, or one ready to listen more unto man than unto God. Beware then, my good Theophilus, of men. Let no man deceive you by any means, let the means be what they may. And you will need great care upon this matter, and especially as the greatest deceiver of all is within you; yes, your own heart is the most dangerous of all. If you be truly sensible of what that is, you will be kept very low in the dust before God, and will carefully see, and as carefully feel your way along; for you must not believe even all you see, much less all you hear. Your growing necessities and the Word of God will be a great means in the Lord's hands of keeping you right.

And, notwithstanding deceitful workers and misled Barnabases, you will find a few poor and afflicted people, and ministers too, who are firm as rocks; their hearts are fixed; they fear not man, but God; and all their springs are in God, and in God is their boast all the day long.

Many of these faithful men of God, from straitened circumstances, and the opposition everywhere more or less manifested to vital truth, suffer much. One with a Pharisaic, covetous, iron-hearted deacon; and another, from some great supporter, who threatens to withdraw his family from the chapel, if the minister do not preach differently, or if they do not get another minister. Another suffers from some officious member, who is never happy but when he is poisoning all the comforts of the church, by his ceaseless and senseless harangues at church meetings, and getting up a party against someone, or perhaps against the minister himself; so that he who has labored with all his might for their welfare, becomes the object of their bitterest incentives. What are all these, but the wriggings of the old serpent to hinder the Gospel of Christ? "But their folly shall be made

manifest" in due time, while honor will also in due time crown those, who, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, stand fast and immovable in all the departments of eternal truth, in all the counsel of God. They will enter at last into the joy of him whose they are, and whom they serve.

But there are some good ministers, who have, happily, none of the troubles above named; but are at peace among themselves; the Word of the Lord being magnified and glorified by them.

Now, my good Theophilus, I wish you to consider this letter as a few preliminary remarks to some things I hope to bring before you, concerning the "sin of unbelief;" the responsibility of man, and the faith of God's elect. And if this intended path should call up a few outcries against us, we must not be alarmed, for rain or shine, the Lord being with us, we must go on; and if going on in this direction be the beginning of sorrows, we must not be troubled, for the end is not yet. So hopes, A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 18 - pages 282ff 1855

The sin of unbelief – two kinds of believing: human duty verses regeneration – against duty faith

My Good Theophilus,—What think you of such a Scripture as this, "And thou Capernaum which art exalted unto heaven shall be brought down to hell, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day?"

Here, then, we come to the sin of unbelief; but I shall want your attention here rather closely, that you may distinguish between that faith which can save temporally, a town, a city, or a kingdom, and yet cannot save a soul. There is an essential difference between the nature, the cause and the advantage of these two kinds of believing. The one is the duty of the creature, as a responsible being, the other is the gift of God, to all whom he has ordained to eternal life. But it is with the former that we have in this letter chiefly to do. Now, what are the heaven and hell spoken of in the above Scripture? Not, certainly, the heaven of glory, nor the hell of the lost. The words, therefore, are highly figurative, contrasting the highest prosperity with the lowest desolation and temporal destruction, and this because of their sin of unbelief.

Now the matter appears to me to stand thus; that man, notwithstanding his fallen state as a sinner before God, and notwithstanding that he is in relation to the eternal salvation of his soul utterly helpless, for no one part of this matter lies with man, even his very faith, with which savingly he is to believe in Christ, is the gift of God. Therefore, there is no part of the work of salvation committed, apart from the grace of God, to man. Man cannot be in whole or in part, responsible for the salvation of his own soul, neither will he ever be reproached for not saving his soul, as his destiny was fixed by his fall in the first Adam. But his amount of suffering is another question, for though we do not read of one having a greater salvation than another, yet we do read of some

having a greater condemnation than others, and thus it is that man is responsible to God for his actions; in other words, for the use he makes of the physical and rational powers which he possesses. Even the heathen were left without excuse, that is, without excuse for doing as they did; for though they possessed not the Scriptures, yet the creation testified to their consciences the eternal power and Godhead of the Most High, and yet they substituted for the blessed God, the beasts of the earth, and which led to practices as vile as their adopted religion was base, and they will, therefore, be judged accordingly. So, where ever the Bible comes, it brings its own evidence of its own truth to every man's conscience (except they who are given up to a reprobate mind) and men become enlightened, elevated, civilized refined, and derive therefrom every possible temporal, moral, and social advantage; for while "sin is a reproach to any people," "righteousness certainly "exalteth a nation." Well, then, if the Jews had repented at the preaching and miracles of Jesus, as Sodom would have done, and as the Ninevites did at the preaching of Jonah, would Jerusalem have been destroyed? Certainly not; but they were willingly ignorant of the day of their visitation; they did in spite of their own consciences carry their enmity against the Saviour to the very uttermost, and so the wrath of God came upon them to the very; uttermost. They knew that the Saviour was a good man, though they did not know that he was God-man; they knew that God was with him (John iii. 2.) though they knew not that he was God. But had they have acted upon what they did know, they would have said, "let this man alone, lest haply we be found to fight even against God." It is true the Lord foresaw how they would act, and therefore predicted what they would do; but his foreknowledge of their doings, with determination to overrule the same, neither released them of their responsibility, nor justified their satanic conduct towards the Saviour. There are some few Scriptures that seem to militate against this position, but they will come under our notice in the proper place.

The Jews having perverted the laws of Moses, they were thereby prepared to despise the testimony of Christ, and that to their own destruction; and the Saviour himself could but weep over them, in their having sealed their own destruction. They willingly turned away from the things that belonged to their (national) peace, and those things were judicially now hidden from their eyes. Luke xix.

Thus it appears, that when a heavenly dispensation is providentially committed unto men, that it brings corresponding responsibilities. And why should it not? When a man's own conscience does by the Word of God convince him of wrong, and shew him that moral right which God commands and approves. Man then becomes justified or condemned according as he follows the right or the wrong; and he who follows the right cannot at the last day be condemned for a wrong which he hath not done. This principle of moral right and wrong was propounded immediately after the fall, as well as having existed before the fall. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen? if thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted, or, as the margin is, have the excellency, and if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door; and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Genesis iv. 6, 7. This last clause shews what the advantage of doing well was to be; he, as the elder brother, was to have the preeminence. But this principle of human responsibility, and the great principle of regeneration, from which regeneration all saving faith must spring; these, I say, are two very different matters. It was upon the principle of human responsibility that the Jewish covenant was founded, but the new covenant in Christ Jesus is founded in the sovereign and eternal love and mercy of God, irrespective of man altogether.

But I will confine myself for the present chiefly to the New Testament. The very first principle of the New Testament dispensation as a dispensation; for the kingdom of heaven vitally bringing regeneration, is one thing; and the kingdom of heaven dispensation-ally, is another. The very first principle then, I say, of the New Testament dispensation as a dispensation, is that of man's responsibility to God. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel." And so "as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so was the Son of Man unto the Jews; that is, that if the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, they and their city are to be spared; if they do not repent, their city within forty days (perhaps meaning forty years) was to be overturned. But they did repent, and were therefore not destroyed. So the Jews, if they repent, leave the Messiah to agonize out his own life, which in the garden of Gethsemane he had begun to do, for "he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;" if, I say, the Jews had done by him as the Ninevites did by Jonah, then their house would not have been "left unto them desolate;" and as man, the Saviour wished them well, and would peacefully have gathered the people together, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings;" and have spoken to them the Word of the Lord. But the Popish rulers did all they could to hinder it; but though the Saviour here as man, underwent hindrances, yet what has this to do with eternal salvation? Could the hindrances he underwent, as man, in preaching the Word of God, make any difference to, or have any effect upon the salvation of his people? Not the slightest whatever; for his sheep shall hear his voice, and shall never perish.

Now, although responsibility belongs to all, both to sinner and to saint, (for if there be a sword for the one, there is a rod for the other), yet we must keep these principles of regeneration and human responsibility distinct.

One of the chief things connected with this principle of the moral government of God to be lamented, is, that it is by great numbers of professed Christians substituted for the higher principle of regeneration; not, indeed, exactly in word, but it is in fact; and hence they hold that it is the duty of man savingly to believe in Christ, and that men are condemned for the sin of not having saving faith; as though Ishmael is to be condemned for not believing that he is Isaac; as though Esau is to be condemned for not believing that he is Jacob; as though Satan was to be condemned for not believing that he is an elect angel; and because the names of some men are in the Book of Life, others are to be condemned for not having their names there also. As though it was any fault of theirs that their names are not there; whereas, those whose names are there, were there from and before the foundation of the world. (Rev. xvii. 8; Eph. i. 4). And because Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, and laid down his life for the sheep, that others, for whom he did not die, are to be condemned because Christ did not die for them. That while Christ did not procure salvation for them, that he hath, nevertheless, lighted up hell, and procured damnation for them; and that while some are quickened by the Spirit of God, are regenerated and constituted sons and heirs of God, that others are to be punished for not having what is sovereignly bestowed upon others. Just as though the dry bones had any hand in their own resurrection, or could help or hinder. This is making the mercy of God to one the cause of his vengeance to others; and if it be so, the ungodly may well hate the gospel, as, in proportion to the blessing of the one, so is to be the curse of the other. Such is the delusion that, with thousands, passes for gospel truth; and man, being by nature a liar against God, they naturally fall in with this delusion; it suits their taste; it gives a general welcome and popularity to its teachers; for the world will love its own. But he that is of God is not of the world, and the world will not hear them.

The old world and ancient nations were not destroyed because they were not regenerated persons; but because, in the face of conscience, they went on in acts of sin and violence, which they knew to be wrong; so the Saviour gave every proof that he was of God; and Nicodemus, a very good representative of them, ingeniously confessed, and said, "We know thou art a teacher come from God." Well, then, why did they persecute Jesus? Why did they crucify him? Why not have given up the old dispensation, and have adopted the new one? In so doing they would have prospered nationally, and the Romans then could not have taken away their place and nation; but their country might have been in their hands to this day.

Now, if the Saviour had come with pretensions that rose above his practice, they might have been somewhat excused in opposing him; and in this way the Saviour reasons with them—"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, (in my doctrine), believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." (John x. 37, 38). But this reasoning with them on the ground of rational and moral responsibility, and the dead hearing the quickening voice of the Son of God, are two very different things; yes, as different as directing a living man the way he should go, and that of raising Lazarus from the grave. The one is the duty of the creature, the other the work of God: that is, it is the duty of the creature to follow what he knows to be right; but it is the work of God to raise the dead soul to life.

Now, if the Saviour, I say, had not demonstrated that he was a Teacher come from God, then they would not have had the sin of rebelling against light so clear, and evidence so conclusive. And so, again, it is written, "If I had not spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin, and if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but, now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." (John xv. 24) Now, in what sense had they seen both Christ and the Father? Not certainly in the same sense that the disciples had; not certainly as Peter did, when the Lord said, "blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven." Here then is a distinction between flesh and blood revelation, and supernatural revelation, the one is merely natural and intellectual, the other by the quickening power of God: thousands know Christ after the flesh, but not after the spirit. So it was here with the Jew; they had seen Christ as a Teacher come from God, and through him had so far seen the mind of God; but instead of letting him alone, and offering no opposition to what they saw was of God, they stifled their own consciences in condemning him. Judas, though not a regenerated man knew that he had betrayed innocent blood; and Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered Jesus unto him, and he knew it was an awful abuse of his magisterial power to give sentence against him, and yet Pilate could not have had this magisterial power if God in his providence had not have given him that power: therefore it made the sin of Judas, the Jews, and Pilate, the greater, in so perverting the ordinance of God, and thus to use a power intended to be a terror only to evil doers, to condemn a man whom they knew had done no violence, neither could they answer his challenge,— "which of you convinceth me of sin?" Thus you will see, they were not condemned for not being regenerated; for not having saving faith in Christ; for not having the faith of God's elect; for not having that faith that results from being created in Christ Jesus; for not being that people of whom the Lord says,- "This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise." No; they were condemned, not on the ground of a non-possession of supernatural life in the soul, but for the sin of that infidel and willful unbelief, and its corresponding fruits, which they, against light and knowledge, brought forth.

Banish this principle of individual responsibility, and with what propriety can you reprove the wrong-doer, punish the evil doer, or maintain either law, or order, or safety, or comfort in society, and among men? But, on the other hand, to make this principle take the place of Divine sovereignty, and so deal in indiscriminate invitations, is indeed committing many great evils in one, as I hope, before I close this part of our correspondence, clearly to shew. At this I hope humbly, but earnestly to aim, though I am but A Little One

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 19 - pages 8ff 1856

More on unbelief – those making a profession of believing in Christ – against duty faith continued

My good Theophilus, in my last letter to you I set before you the two distinct principles of regeneration, and of human, individual responsibility, and proposed to go on to shew some of the delusions and evils arising from substituting the principle of human duty for that of regeneration. But before going on into such matters, I think it will tend to clear our way if I set before you another principle in which many of the invitations, exhortations, expostulations, and parables of the Word of God are founded. The principle to which I here refer is that of a profession of the name of the Lord. He that saith he abideth in him, ought to walk also as he walked. The Saviour walked in perfect harmony with the new covenant; and in walking in perfect harmony with this covenant, he walked in harmony with all that was of God; love being the fulfilling of the law, as well as of the gospel.

Now, I wish you here to take particular notice that the exhortation and parables I am about to set before you are founded, not in the false delusive doctrine—that it is the duty of a dead sinner to come savingly to Christ, No; but are founded on the profession made by those to whom they are addressed.

Let us begin with Psalm xcv. Here we have those who stood out clear, as the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. But there were some who professed to be the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand, who seemed to have but very little ear or heart for pastoral or new covenant truth; and yet professed to be people of God. Now, then, not, I say, founded on the ground of the humanly devised doctrine of its being the duty of the dead sinner to come savingly to Christ; no, but on the ground of the profession they made; therefore it is, "If ye will hear his voice, (that is, his truth—for the truth is his voice), if ye will bear his voice, harden not your hearts."

The living new covenant truth of God in the order and vital experience of it, is that against which the heart of a mere professor, more than against anything under heaven, is hardened. Strong may be their pity for Barrabas—but of the truth their language is— "Away with it!" It is, then, to those who profess the name of the Lord, that the words are addressed, "If ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." As though it said, You profess to be the seed of Abraham; see that you are brought

experimentally into the bond of the same sworn and immutable covenant; see that ye are sealed with the same Spirit of promise as was Isaac; see that ye prevail with God as did Jacob; that you are brought to the same ladder of eternal truth. By these truths Jehovah will, by his own people, be remembered to all generations.

The apostle Paul, as you are aware, makes, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, considerable use of this 95th Psalm; and the apostle is there addressing the professing church; and there were some among them of whom he stood in doubt; they seemed not rightly united to the great theme of the first chapter of that Epistle—and that theme is summed up in one verse: "Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his Person, upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

1st. Here is a brightness which is sure not only to charm and enliven the aged pilgrim, but will attract also the eyes of the new-born soul.

2nd. Here is an oneness with the Father, which commends the Saviour to a poor, helpless, self-despairing sinner. He is almighty to save; he is the express, or exact Image of the Father. He is God.

3rd. Here is sustentation—"Upholding all things by the word of his power." Now, the law, in consequence of sin, will break down all things; and this you, my good Theophilus, felt when conviction of sin seized your soul. You were shaken to the very center; the heavens and the earth seemed to tremble around and under you; you felt that you were without hope and without God in the world. But there is still a nobler word—it is the word of the gospel; and if there be on the one hand an all things to be broken down, so, on the other hand, there is an all things to be holden up; an all things made new; an all things to be inherited; an all things which cannot be moved; and this all things is by the warfare accomplished by the Saviour. This word of his power is our strength; that just as this word stands good, so will our hope be sure and steadfast; while, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we shall abound therein.

4th. Here is the abolition — the putting away of sin, and that forever. There is no more remembrance of them; for if there were, there would be more sacrifice called for. Hence, under the Old Testament, there was a fresh remembrance of sin every year; but in one offering here made there is no more remembrance of sin; it is blotted out, forgiven, and forgotten. This one offering carries us without a cloud into eternity; constitutes us a morning without clouds; pure even as he is pure; righteous and free, even as he is righteous and free; no higher, stronger or dearer tie than this to unite to the blessed God can be found; it will make us perfect in love.

5th. He put away our sins by himself. Who shall undertake to describe the depth and awfulness of the solitude into which he went? Truly he was by himself. Of the people there was none with him, except those who were against him. He went to the end of the curse of the law. This is what neither lost man nor fallen angels can ever do. Hell itself is not so far from God in suffering as the Saviour went. He went deeper than hell, he drank the last drop of the cup of penal wrath. However far from God we had gone in sinning, he went in suffering; and such is our enmity naturally against God, that if we had it in our power, we should not spare the Almighty himself; as is beyond all dispute proved in the awful crime of slaying the Prince of life; and we are all virtually guilty. If men did

but know what sin is in the sight of God, never would they glory, save in Him who is worthy to be praised.

"By himself," therefore, will mean, not only that his own arm brought salvation unto him, but that he was driven by the Spirit into a wilderness in his death, infinitely worse than the wilderness into which he was driven in his life; into a wilderness not where there were wild beasts of earth, but the more ferocious wild beasts of hell. Psalm xxii. 13. None ever so well knew what the powers of darkness were, as did the Saviour, by what he suffered.

Man was originally driven out of Paradise. "He drove out the man from his presence," So it was one part of the curse taken by the Saviour. He was driven out from the presence of the Lord once in his life, and also in his death. We by sinning are driven out, but he by suffering for our sins. And he thus in his suffering reached the uttermost of our sinner-ship, and so "he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Then it was that he felt his need of being all that he was, both in holiness and in power. He had been tried all his life, yet not one spot could be fastened upon him. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him." He hath put him under all our grief's. And here it was he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Do not here overlook the emphasis laid upon filial relationship. "My God, my God." Is not this to shew that all the hell of hells, the curse of curses, the agony of agonies, and death of deaths, which he was thus enduring, could not make him disown God, nor cease to love him. No, these waters could not quench his love, neither could floods drown it. Whereas a very small portion of such wrath would set both men and devils blaspheming the God of heaven and earth. Isa. viii. 21. Not only did the Saviour remain spotless through life, but also through death.

The law in charging our sins upon him, ministered evil unto him, but truly he returned good for evil, truly when the law of retaliation for our sins came upon him, he was as a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers he opened not his mouth. When the law smote him on the one cheek, he turned the other also; and if the law sought of him a seamless coat of righteousness, he gave himself to the law in the cloak of his zeal also. And if the law compelled him to go as it were one mile, he went with it as it were twain. He honored it in life and in death; and if the law of him would borrow a good name, he turns not away, but magnifies the law, and makes it honorable. Its name without him is wrath, it is the ministration of wrath. But now that it is fulfilled its name is love, so that by Christ Jesus, God is in all the qualities of the law loved; and so "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And if the law was in a sense his adversary, and demanded of him the mighty debt we owed, then at the cost of his own life, he paid the uttermost farthing, so that both himself and those for whom he died, are eternally free. Well then, he is our way out of prison, and if he make us free, we shall be free indeed; for he hath by himself purged our sins. And now that he hath purged our sins, he hath sat down. This, as some have observed, is in contrast to the Jewish priests, who could not by their offerings reach a resting place; therefore, we never read of their sitting down, but of their standing and offering the same offerings of the law. But our great High Priest is forever sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The right hand will of course mean favor, honor, power, glory. And it denotes also, that the Father will do nothing without him. Here then, we have a great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens, to appear in the presence of

God for us. Let us then "hold last our profession, without wavering, for he is faithful that promised."

But why hast thou forsaken me? Does not the 3rd verse of the twenty-second Psalm suggest an answer to this? And is not that answer two-fold? 1st. "Thou art holy." The law cannot be laid aside or one jot or one tittle given up, all must be fulfilled; its curse must be endured. 2nd. "Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." And these praises we here see, are to be inhabited by Christ Jesus, by what he has done in giving himself for us. How solemnly then, and yet how beautifully, are things here joined together. The Saviour dies, holiness is established, the people consecrated, Christ exalted, the people saved, God glorified. Their praises of him and to him, are only the reflecting of his mercy to them. I hope, my good Theophilus, you will forgive me in making this digression, but who could help making such digression in pastures so fresh, and by springs of water so pure?

Let me then come back to the business in hand, which is, to shew that some exhortations of the Word of God are founded not only upon the principles of delineation and of human responsibility, but also upon the profession which people make of the Gospel, an epitome of which Gospel we have in the above 3rd verse of the 1st chapter to the Hebrews.

Yet from such a Gospel there was and is, a constant tendency to deviate and depart; which made the Apostle say to some, "if ye will hear his voice, as though he should say, you profess to be sheep, you profess to follow him as your Shepherd; well then, if you are sheep, see to it that you do not do as the people did in the wilderness, get tired of the truth, and turn from it. Now, these ancient wilderness people had only an outward observation, mere intellectual knowledge of God, therefore, they did always err in their hearts, because they had not a right knowledge of the Lord's ways; though, no doubt, they would have been highly offended if anyone had told them so, for this order of professors are never wanting in a good opinion of themselves: yet when put to the test, when brought to the law and the testimony, will be pretty sure to make light of that which, with God and rightly taught men, is everything.

Let us look at this first in the parable, Matt, xxii: The marriage of the king's son. Now mind the persons who were invited to this marriage were already the professed subjects and servants of the king, and therefore, according to their profession, were poor and needy, and would be delighted with both the marriage and with the feast, and with the invitation thereto. Well, the king just simply puts them to the test. Now, before we go any farther, just notice two things, namely, the marriage and the feast: here you will see we have the eternal oneness of Christ and the church; for it is a life-time marriage, and his life is eternal, and because he lives the church must live also; and here is, as you see, amplitude of provision—in a word, here is eternal oneness with the Saviour and the fullness of the gospel. Hence the invitation runs "All things are ready; come unto the marriage."

Thus, you see, this invitation is founded not in the free agency of man, nor even that principle of moral responsibility which all are under; but is sent to them on the ground of the profession they made—they professed to be the king's servants. Nor is this a general or indiscriminate invitation, but only to the king's own professed subjects, who had already, by virtue of their profession, been bidden to the marriage—"Call them that were bidden to the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways; one to his farm, another to his merchandize." "They made light of it." What

a significant sentence! That the profane should make light of it we do not wonder; that mere moralists and free-willers should make light of it we do not wonder; but that many who profess to receive, to hold, and to preach eternal and indissoluble oneness with Christ, together with the fullness of the gospel, should, nevertheless, so far make light of it as to contend that men may live and die as safe and happy without being united to it, as in being united to it, is a matter of mystery; it looks like pulling down with one hand what has been set up by the other. Such work is a work not of order, but of confusion, and God is not the author of confusion: therefore, my good Theophilus, be not thou like unto them; but be thou valiant for the truth, that you may never make light of oneness with Jesus, nor of the fullness of the gospel, that no wife, oxen, or merchandize be put in the place of gospel truth; and, indeed, so far from this being the case, you will be drawn to the Saviour by the very same truths which are to mere deluded professors repulsive. But I am at the end of my letter before I have hardly reached the threshold of my subject, and which subject is not A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 20 - pages 33ff 1856

More on unbelief – about the calls and exhortations of the gospel – against duty faith continued

The parable of the laborers and the vineyard (Matt. 2), explained

My good Theophilus, I will now try to prove to you that many of the expostulations and exhortations of the Word of Truth are founded, not in any ability in the natural man to do that which is spiritual, but are founded on the profession they make of the name of the Lord. And this I do from the conviction that you are seeking for heavenly wisdom, as the best of silver, and searching for it as for the best of hid treasures. (Prov. ii. 4). And if we wish to be right in matters pertaining to this life, how much more may we seek the good and right way of eternal life? And we know that a wrong position in one respect, may make us wrong in all the rest; and I shall presently give you proof of this. It is the wisdom of the wise to understand his way; and if we have any grace in our hearts, we shall be concerned to grow in that grace.

“Now the (dispensational) kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard, (Matt, ii.), and finding men standing idle” Now, take careful notice of this—they were standing idle (verse 3)—that is, having nothing to do. They professed to want employment. Here, then, are people professedly tired of the world. They have let off working for satan, and they now wish to work for God. But they are as yet standing idle; the unclean spirit is gone out of them; but the Word of God has not yet taken hold of them: they are standing idle. By-and-bye the Word comes along and takes hold of them, and directs them to a free-grace vineyard, and assures them that they shall be daily supported: they shall have their penny a-day. Well, into the (outward) kingdom they come, and are very, very humble; and to work they go, gathering in all the grapes they can; and some of these gather the

promises very last, and soon possess them all, and make them all their own. No doubting; no fearing; no calling in question but that they are gathering the right grapes at the right time, and in the right way. Such is the character of the mere natural man, when he comes into a profession of the religion, and yet turns the gospel into a land of legal bondage and conditional rewards.

But here is another order of people standing idle, out of whom satan is cast; for when satan goes out, he takes the key with him; but when he is cast out, the Lord himself takes possession of the heart, with, "My son, I give me thine heart." Satan went out of Judas, and then Judas wanted religious employment, and he found that employment; but satan still had the key of his heart, and therefore at the suited time could and did re-enter the heart of Judas, and thus drive him on to deeds which should hasten his destruction; out of Peter's heart satan was cast, and therefore could not get back again into his old possession, though he did all he could towards it. He threw some of his heaviest artillery at Peter, and Peter staggered and fell; but a fall is not a surrender, although it certainly is the beginning of a surrender; and so Peter began to anathematize and to swear; but a look from the Saviour frowned satan away, brought Peter again to his feet, the Saviour still retaining possession of Peter's heart. And upon this point rested the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And the truth of the answer laid in the truth of the Saviour still possessing Peter's heart.

So here, in this second order, the Lord said, "Go, work in my vineyard, and whatsoever is right, I will give you." And now comes the test to which these two orders of workmen are to be put. The laborers are called to receive their hire, beginning with the last, and ending with the first. Now when the first saw how liberally those who came last into the vineyard were dealt with, they began to think they ought to receive more; for if those who have done next to nothing are to have a whole day's pay, and thus to be dealt with not according to the time and amount of their work, but according to their need; and according to the nature and willing-heartedness of their work, then what are these all-day working, formal, steady-going workmen to have? Why, of course, a great deal more than these come-late people. Such were their thoughts; but such were not the thoughts of the householder. No: the Lord's thoughts stand thus: "Let the wicked forsake his way." That is, the wicked shall forsake his way. Let, is God's imperative mood; and is founded in mediation and purpose eternal, and in power almighty. The sins of all such were laid upon the Saviour, and he has borne them away; so that every legal impediment being removed, God's command puts down all rule; and all authority against the sinner; so that to all the broken principalities of sin, death and hell, God says, "Let the sinner forsake his way;" "Let there be light, and there is light. And to set a poor, self-condemned sinner free to come, God says—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy. He will abundantly pardon." Now, these all day laborers had not forsaken their thoughts; they had forsaken their way, but they had not forsaken their thoughts; they think no better in reality of the householder now than they did before they became his servants; so that while here was an outward change, here was no real heart-change: no; but they went on, supposing that the longer they were at their formalities, the more they should receive; "supposed they should receive more;" so that they did not understand that the reward was of grace; but even undertook to take the householder to task, and charged him with injustice; they murmured against the good man of the house because the last were made equal unto them. They, of course, were for degrees in glory—they had no notion of a dying thief being made equal to a man of long and pious life; and yet they had as much as they agreed upon; they were very humble at first, and agreed for a penny a day—that is, just enough to

keep them, so that if their needs were supplied they would be content—this was their first agreement, and therefore the householder answered one of them—I suppose that one was the person who represented the rest—the householder then answered this one, and said, "Friend, I do thee no wrong, didst not thou agree with me for a penny? take that thine is and go thy way, I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?"

Now, of course, these good-works men would no longer work for such a master as this, for he does not encourage good works, and he does what he will with his own—not what we will, but what he will, giving to every man severally as he will; working all things after the counsel of his will, and having mercy on whom he will, and even hardening whom he will, and is even now vexing us, and provoking us, and so making us murmur against him, making us hate him, hardening us against him by this vexatious doctrine, that it is lawful for him to do what he will with his own; and the prophet Isaiah says, it shall be a vexation only to understand the report; and if it be a vexation to understand how it is lawful to do what he will with his own, what must it be to agree to such a dreadful doctrine? "Lawful to do what he will with his own!" Why it is enough to drive piety and good works out of the world. All the blessed day have we worked, and now these eleventh hour do-nothings are made equal unto us, and in the face of all our wonderful works, tell us it is lawful to do what he will with his own, as though it was not enough to shock our piety to the very center, to see these one-hour nothings made equal unto us: how then can we work for such a master as this? Why to have any love to such a master is quite out of the question; and, indeed, there is hardly any end to the vexation—for after treating us most shamefully, puts to us another most offensive question, a question which insinuates that our eye sight is not exactly clear, that we have diseased eyes, as though he would say to us, "all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye;" and insinuates not only that we have in our eyes a disease called envy, but to make the question the more aggravating, he asks, "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" Good indeed! To pass by all our good works, and give us only a shabby penny, just enough to live by, and hardly that. Good indeed!! if this is goodness, then no more of such a vineyard for us; no, we will go where our good works will be rewarded; talk, indeed, of this householder having punished Leviathan the piercing serpent, even Leviathan the crooked serpent, and slain the dragon that is in the sea. Talk of singing indeed, of a vineyard of red wine, and that the householder waters it every moment, and lest any hurt it, he keeps it night and day. Who would even go to work in such a vineyard as this, much less sing of it? To see how hard we have worked, and these one-hour nothings made equal to us —is not this enough to vex us? We know it is unchristian to be angry; but then we are angry and sin not, because it is right we should be angry against this dreadful doctrine of, "is it not lawful to do what I will with mine own?" And we are angry also at the most offensive question put to us, "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" And not only so, but this question was put us in the hearing of those one-hour do nothings. It is true we did out of curiosity just get near enough to them to see what these one-hour do-nothings received, and that gave them this advantage over us, that they heard what was said unto us, and this was to us unfortunate, and rather vexatious; and, no doubt, these one-hour do-nothings will chuckle about it finely, and run away telling about its being lawful for the householder to do what he will; also blab it out that our eye was evil because the householder was good, and thus try to make out that we do not love the laws of truth, whereas it is their dreadful doctrine of "it is lawful to do what he will with his own," or their not liking good works, that we are put out about. It is true, most of these one-hour do-nothings are unlearned and ignorant men, and while we reject their dangerous doctrines, we nevertheless pity their ignorance; but they are

not all either ignorant or unlearned, for there are some men among them who are, in all other respects, very sensible, learned, and well informed men: these ought to know better than encourage anyone to go into such a vineyard, much less to get singing about it. Lawful for me to do what I will with my own. Only think of it, and then to call that an evil eye that cannot see what they call the beauty and excellency of such a doctrine! But, still, most of those one-hour do-next-to nothings are unlearned and ignorant men and you may soon perceive what vineyard they belong to; they will take care they will not be where there is much to do. No no. Hence nothing suits them so well as the vineyard where the householder himself waters it every moment, and keeps it night and day. Yes, indeed, they may well sing when everything is done for them, and they get a penny a day for just nothing.

But we will leave them and their tyrannical doctrines; we will go into the vineyard let out to husbandmen, where the householder simply gathers out the stones, makes a hedge, and builds a tower, and leaves the husbandmen to do the rest. It is true, this vineyard let out to husbandmen did of old bring forth wild grapes, but that was their fault; we have more light than they had, they did not so well understand the cultivation of the vine; and there we shall be rewarded properly, and rise in the ultimate reward to deserved and well-earned dignity." So spoke the all-day laborers; but the other order of laborers were well content with their wages.

Now, my good Theophilus, call to mind, or look back at what I have said at the beginning of this letter: namely, that being wrong in one thing, may be the cause of our being wrong in everything. Here then, in the case of these murmurers, you have a striking and solemn instance of this; you see these murmurers stumbled at the sovereignty of the householder; now, mind these were standing idle in the market place; they professed to want employment; they go to work upon terms to which they express no objection; they, therefore, became the professed servants of the householder, and it was in this relation to him that he expostulated with them. Just so, when men take up a profession of religion—they are called upon by the word of God to make good that profession, and when it comes to pass that such cannot endure sound doctrine, they do thereby shew what they are. So with these murmurers: the householder, no doubt, saw what kind of workmen they were, and that while they were the first to make a profession, and the first to come into the vineyard, they were the last to have any real respect unto the householder. While the others, by the very manner of their working, plainly said, "we love our master;" and this the master knew; he would, therefore, part with the one, while he would take the other to be his permanent servants: and thus as these murmurers were professedly wishing to be religious to have religious employment; so on the ground of this, their expressed wish, they were called to try their hand; aye, and heart too; but they proved to be naught, and so proved that their faith was not the faith of God's elect; while the others worked not from a legal spirit, but in the spirit of the faith of God's elect. Thus it is, that the first became last; and thus it is, that "Many are called but few are chosen;" so that among the multitudes of professors you must not be surprised if you find the chosen flock to be but A Little One.