

Editor's Note: The following information has been gleaned from issues of The Earthen Vessel and Christian Record from the 1856 and 1857 issue. 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 21 through 30 (26 is missing)

Table of Contents

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 21 - pages 55ff 1856	2
The true gospel must be preached to all men - The sermon of Acts ii - Against Duty Faith	2
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 22 - pages 80ff 1856.....	6
No duty faith in the book of Acts – Just the opposite	6
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 23 - pages 104ff 1856.....	10
No duty faith in the book of Acts – Acts chapter 3 continued –	10
About Jesus Christ	10
About Simon Magus and other professors	10
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 24 - pages 128ff 1856.....	14
More against Duty-Faith: Many are called but few are chosen	14
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 25 - pages 157ff 1856.....	17
More against Duty-Faith: Nothing good in ourselves. The character of God	17
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 27 - pages 207ff 1856.....	23
More against Duty-Faith: various other scriptures examined	23
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 28 - pages 3ff 1857	26
The Song of Solomon examined	26
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 29 - pages 30ff 1857.....	28
More on the Song of Solomon – Warning against duty-faith	28
Epistles to Theophilus Letter 30 - pages 57ff 1857.....	31
Song continued: Solemn prayer, gospel government, judgment and love	31

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 21 - pages 55ff 1856

The true gospel must be preached to all men - The sermon of Acts ii - Against Duty Faith

My good Theophilus, in my eighteenth letter to you I have shown in what sense it is the duty of all men to believe and obey God; that while it is the duty of man to act according to the light given to him, yet that this principle of human duty is a principle quite distinct from that of regeneration. Regeneration is the work of God, and of God only; it is even as much the work of God as that of raising the body from the dead; indeed the one is made the parallel illustration of the other— the change is no less wonderful and great; witness the dry bones, Ezek. xxxvii. But this is so close a matter, that the enemy adopts every possible means of evading and perverting the same. Once admit that it is the duty of man savingly to believe in Christ, and you at once reduce regeneration to a mere nominal thing, and the work of delusion can go prosperously on, even where all the sound and high doctrines of grace are, in the letter of them, preached. But what of this? It makes the delusion only the more powerful; it catches the unwary traveler; it is a way that *seems* right unto man, but the end thereof is death, even the second death. These men, what they call, preach to sinners, but they do not preach the truth to them, for they speak to them as though they were not already condemned—as though the sentence of condemnation were not already passed upon them—as though they were not already (*spiritually*) in prison—as though the Saviour were wishing them to come to him, (though himself hath said, none can come, except it were given him of my father,) and damning them for not coming. It is even worse than going to the condemned cell and telling a culprit that he is invited to leave his cell, and if he do not shake off his chains, kill the jailor, and get out of his prison, he will be put to death for not doing this. Now, although this would be adding mockery to misery, yet the criminal not being literally dead, may make some little stir in this matter, and peradventure may (as some have actually done) make his escape, but he would be a *criminal still*—as I fear thousands of professors are, who escape, (and so far so good) by a decent profession of religion, the grosser profanities of the world, but who still carry with them a latent and refined, but keen enmity, against new covenant, vital, harmonious truth—they are criminals still.

But the dead is worse off spiritually, as to his real state, than the criminal, for being spiritually dead, he is unconscious of his *real state* before God; nor can any but God himself make him truly conscious of his real state; and for this reason, that none but God can quicken the dead—a sinner, dead and bound in stronger chains than those of the literal criminal, enclosed in a stronger cell, and guarded by a stronger officer, and will be called to judgment by a stronger and a surer law: yet such are to be told that they are condemned for not coming to Christ, as though they were not condemned already: "He that believeth shall be saved," but "faith is the gift of God;" and "He that believeth not, the wrath of God *abideth* on him," and he must await the judgment to come.

Now you have seen, by my eighteenth letter to you that I leave no room for men to excuse themselves in what they know to be wrong; but their state as dead sinners before God is another thing: this is that which no one can deal with rightly unless he, by Divine teaching, knows what that state is. But you may say, What, then, are not sinners to be spoken to at all? Are not ministers to speak to sinners? I answer—Yes; only let them preach the truth to them: the gospel is truth, and the gospel is to be preached to every creature, only let it be the gospel; that is, let it be the truth: "His "Word is truth." But men have but very little faith in the truth; they are more of the sentiment of the rich man in hell. Send one from the dead, and frighten them, and then they will repent. And so, having no faith in God's truth, they at the end, especially of their sermons, try to be very eloquently awful, telling men all sorts of old wives fables, in

order to convert them, and they are always more outrageously zealous in this, than in any other part of their sermons; feeling, I suppose, that, as the iron is blunt, they must put to more strength. Now the reality of this duty-faith part of their sermons amounts to this, that it is one of the most feasible, and, to the flesh, one of the most powerful apologies the enemy could devise, for having in the previous part of the sermon said so much in favor of eternal truth, and they do hereby nicely, and neatly, avoid the offence of the cross, for when this under current of universalism breaks out, it does away with all danger of their being called Antinomians, and thus it is "the lines have fallen to them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage"—such lines as they are, and such an heritage as it is! But the poor and the needy have waters of a full cup wrung out to them. Their name is cast out as evil; and thus— "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it;" while, wide is this duty-faith gate, and broad is this false-charity way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at. And many, very many, follow these pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of; for their feasible system would deceive, if it were possible, even God's own elect.

I will here lay before you the doctrine, purpose, and manner of life of one of the most useful sermons ever preached—I mean, the sermon preached on the Day of Pentecost, and recorded in Acts ii. And it is a remarkable thing, that it takes its tones from Divine sovereignty; in other words, from eternal election. All is in accordance therewith. No softening; no adopting another gospel, in order to convert sinners; nor did the people who were converted truly by God's gospel adopt another gospel, but abode steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine; they did not adopt another gospel, until deceivers crept in among them.

Now, of the work done on this Day of Pentecost, who was the first beginner — man or God? Those who were true disciples, who first constituted them disciples? Who was it that turned his hand upon them, and gathered them together into one place? Who kept them waiting, and praying with one accord? And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, when did Peter begin usefully to preach? Was it before the Holy Ghost came upon them—or after? And what, when he did preach, were the doctrines by which the three thousands were converted to God? We will see.

The first doctrine was that of Divine faithfulness to Divine prediction. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel?" Here, then, is a definite prophecy, and definitely fulfilled. Here is the Spirit poured out upon all flesh; but the "all flesh" will mean simply, young and old, male and female, Jew and Gentile — all orders and conditions of men; and those upon whom the Spirit was to be poured, were to prophecy or to testify— that is, to testify of what the Lord had done for them; and they were to see visions; that is, have revelations of eternal mercy by Christ Jesus made to them; and old men were to dream dreams—that is, were, like the prophets of old, to be favored with manifestations of glory, like Jacob going to Padan Aram; and so they would see heaven open, and the angels or messengers of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. No duty-faith here.

The *time* of the prophecy's fulfilment is marked by notes clear and distinct. There were to be wonders shown in the heavens; and what wonders were shown in the heavenly places during the Saviour's life of sorrow, are recorded; how he was honored at Jordan, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and at Jerusalem, when, for the third time, the voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And what wonders were shown in the heavens, when he ascended in all the wonders that he had done? And if, as I think, we may take heaven here to mean not only heaven above, but also the heavenly or New Testament dispensation, then what wonders did the Saviour and the apostles shew in this dispensational heaven? These wonders, then, are one of the notes—one of the signs of the time of the fulfilment of this prophecy. Another note, or sign of the time which was to follow upon the fulfilment of this prophecy, was the destruction of the Jewish nation—blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke; and

which awful signs took place to the very letter. Torrents of blood were shed; the temple was burned to the ground, and pillars of smoke closed the scene; and thus was the sun of the Jewish nation turned into darkness, and its moon eclipsed; and this was done *testimonially*, before the Day of Pentecost arrived.

The apostle having closed this part of his sermon, goes on next to show how entirely the character, and life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth answered to Old Testament prediction concerning him. First, in his character: "I foresaw the Lord always before my face." Or, as Psalm xvi. has it—"I set the Lord always before me." None but the Saviour himself answers to this. What Christian on earth can say, "I foresaw the Lord always;" "I have set the Lord always before me?" No man who knows his own heart dares to say this.

And then in his death; his life was not left in the grave, neither did his flesh see corruption. And then the apostle goes on to his exaltation—that he is at God's right hand until his foes become his footstool. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Now here is a straightforward testimony of Divine truth; the whole of it resting upon Divine appointment and Divine power; all governed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; all the confidence of the apostle is in God's truth; and he bears testimony unto the truth. And when they heard Peter's exposition of Old Testament truth, as fulfilled in the Person, and life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension, and glory, and power of Christ, they were pricked in the heart.

Now, all this savors of eternal election. Here is a chosen work to be done: the Holy Spirit is to be given; here is a chosen people to be partakers of the Spirit; here is a chosen Saviour, divinely chosen, and ordained to a chosen work; here is a chosen time for the Holy Spirit to be poured out; here is a chosen place—it was to be at Jerusalem; here is a chosen preacher to preach the sermon; and David was the chosen man to put the substance of the Pentecostal sermon upon record, and which was to stand as the sixteenth Psalm; and on the Day of Pentecost the apostles were enabled to speak sixteen different languages.

And why, out of the numbers present, were there about three thousand only pricked in the heart? Who was it that gave life giving power to the gospel trumpet? Who was it that went with these whirlwinds of the south? Who was it that directed these lightning-like arrows to the hearts of these particular persons? And who was it that rendered these arrows effectual in the hearts of these three thousand? And was it any fault of the others that they were not so pricked in the heart? Verily, no: it would be false, and a mere mockery, so to say. Look back, then, my good Theophilus; look again at my eighteenth letter to you, and you will there see that their fault did not consist in not having that saving faith, and that repentance unto salvation which God alone can bestow, and which Jesus is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give.

My eighteenth letter to you shews, then, I say, in what their fault did consist, and which J. will not again enter upon here. Not that this is so unimportant a matter as may seem at first sight. I think that you will not reckon it a light thing to believe the God of truth; although this is just what every free-willer, and yea and nay gospel in the world, is every day doing.

Again, I say, what were the doctrines by which these three thousand were pricked in the heart? The answer to this question is plain and clear. Just ask yourself what are the truths, the doctrines, contained in the 16th Psalm? for these are the truths as carried out and established by the Saviour; those are the truths by which three thousand at once were brought to know the Lord? But men have very little faith in

these truths; they preach them up to a certain point, simply because they find them in the Bible; but their real confidence is in their duty-faith department. Here their seal rises to the boiling point; here, they tell us, they could cry their eyes out of their sockets for the conversion of souls. These are great words, with great poverty of meaning, while the truths of the gospel are put quietly back, with, "Never mind, DEAR FRIENDS! *do not trouble yourselves about election!*" and so they wrap it up. Indeed, so far from their having any God-honoring confidence in God's truth, they have the blindness, the effrontery, the daring, the arrogance, to say that the doctrine of electing grace too much preached is dangerous!! As though any of the blessed truths of the gospel could be too clearly, and too prominently set forth. Well, for me they are welcome to all their duty-faith trash; for trash it is, clothe it with what gravity or awfulness they may. My soul can never more be awed by it. Of God's blessed Word of grace, my soul would ever stand in awe, and sin not; but the doctrine of duty-faith, or, which is the same thing, the doctrine that men are ultimately condemned for not having — saving faith—this doctrine I throw to Paul's dung heap, and do count it but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him.

Nothing, my good Theophilus, can make me happy concerning you, but seeing you valiant for the truth; not for contention's sake, but for love to the truth; for have what you may, if you have not the love of the truth, you will surely be damned.

But let us come back for a moment to our three thousand friends. Now, as they were pricked in the heart, and their former religion was hereby slain within them, and before their eyes, they were naturally at a loss which way to look, or what to do; they became living, sincere enquirers in the way to Zion. Well the Apostle meets them with, "repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" "Repent" here means "change:" as though he had said, Give up your former position altogether; and humble yourselves before God, in the name of Jesus Christ; and in that name ye have remission of sins and eternal life; for the promise is unto you; for you are now brought into the "hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began;" for the promise is unto you, as is proved by your being effectually pricked in the heart; "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Here we are still on new covenant grounds.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Now, how were these -believers, for they were now believers, how then were these believers to save themselves from that untoward generation, from which generation grace had now separated them; how I say were they to do this? If you will listen for a moment I will tell you, or rather the word of God shall tell you. Here it is, 1 Tim. iv. 16, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee, and they did continue steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, (now do not forget, 10th Psalm,) and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Nor was there one among them that refused to be baptized; and thus they stood a gospel-formed people, walking with one accord in the liberty of the gospel; and so saved themselves from a confederacy with the truth-perverting generation around them, and as they thus honored the Lord, he honored them, and even gave them honor in the sight of the people, yes, even the world, though it hates our principles, is constrained sometimes to admire our decision of character and conduct.

To lose our confidence in God's blessed truth, his covenant gospel, would be to fall from our first love, as some at this time evidently have done, and if we take away or hide under a bushel the candle of truth, we must not be surprised at the candlestick being removed out of its place, yes, the true church, the golden candlestick, will be satisfied with no other light but the light of new covenant truth; true Christians will soon depart from that Ministry which departs from them. And if we leave the truth, we leave the true

power of godliness, and when men have the form and deny the power of God's truth, and substitute in the place thereof what is called the "preaching to sinners' system," the sooner we turn from such the better, lest they bring us into their own feasible delusions, so testifies. A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 22 - pages 80ff 1856

No duty faith in the book of Acts – Just the opposite

My good Theophilus, I will now continue, as much as lies in me, my course through those parts of the Acts of the Apostles, which men are so fond of taking hold of to justify their perversions of the new covenant truth of the Most High; my object being, to set the truth before you as it is in Jesus, and to shew that riot only has the doctrine of duty-faith no place in the public addresses of the apostles, but the doctrine of its being the duty of a dead sinner savingly to believe in Christ, is a blast, a mildew from the enemy; and by such a doctrine no man was ever yet, or over will be, regenerated; under and by such doctrine, no regenerated man ever yet profited.

Let us, then, next look at Acts iii., and we shall find everything here quite in keeping with the helplessness of the sinner, and with the sovereignty of our God. Yea, I wish you to take, at the very outset, particular notice of this one thing: that the 3rd chapter deals, if there be any difference, still more clearly with the delightful theme of eternal election, as is here so clearly laid down, and so effectually; as I will, by the help of the Lord God of truth, clearly demonstrate to you.

1st. By circumstance; this circumstance being this: that Peter was commissioned from on high to say to the lame man at the temple, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." (Verse 6.) And the apostle is very careful to show that it was not by his power or holiness that he had made this man walk; and so in the fourth chapter, when brought before the rulers, he is still careful to shew that it was by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, through faith in this name, that this man stood before them whole.

Now, here we come to a difficulty; not, my good Theophilus, a difficulty on our side; no the difficulty lies here; that when Peter and John were brought before the chief priests, and rulers, why did not Peter and John invite and exhort these men to come to Jesus Christ? Surely it could not be from any want of feeling in them, for the welfare of the souls of men! What, then, could be the reason, but that they were better taught? They knew it was the work of God to bring a sinner; that the Lord does this, not by the wisdom, or learning, or eloquence of men, but by the Word of truth; therefore it is that Peter and John told the truth to these rulers, and there left it. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." No duty-faith here.

Now, what were the relations to God, into which this lame man was brought? "The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath glorified his Son Jesus," whom ye delivered up in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go "but ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." Now, my good Theophilus, be very attentive here. The God of Abraham. "But the God of Abraham (as he could swear by no greater, swore) by himself." The God of Abraham shows unto the

heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel. The God of Abraham called Abraham alone; the God of Isaac set Ishmael aside, and sovereignly constituted Isaac a child of promise. The God of Jacob said— "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Nor does he assign any reason, but that of his own will, for so doing.

Now, these are the gospel relations to God, into which the lame man was brought; and these are the relations in which Christ himself came into the world, and the truths expressive of, and arising from, these relations, were the truths he preached; and had he have softened them down with a little freewill, or duty-faith, the world would have received him; for the world will receive its own; and had he have overlaid the truth of God with the admired adornments of this world's religion, their antipathy would not have been so strong, that a murderer was preferable in their eyes to Jesus of Nazareth, who preached such discriminating doctrines. But the antipathy they had to him, is now transferred from him to his truth and to his people. Jesus Christ is the God of the true Christian; and as the Jews of old professed to love the God of Abraham, but hated the true doctrines of Abraham, so, now, thousands profess to love Jesus Christ, but hate both his truth and his people; having called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they now transfer the title to his people. What an awful position and state does the carnal mind here appear in! Here is the God of Abraham glorifying his Son Jesus, who carried out to perfection the covenant, the immutable covenant, which God swore unto Abraham, saying, "In blessing I will bless thee." Here, then, lies the secret of the offence of the cross. The enemy well knows, that when a soul is brought into the bond of this covenant, that he (Satan) has forever lost that soul.

Thus, you see, the apostle here opens his discourse with those truths which look with disdain down upon the efforts of dying mortals, and the petty boastings of weakness itself. It is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, before whom all nations are as nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity; to be weighed in the balance, they are lighter than vanity.

It was by the testimony of this contrast between man and God — man crucifying the Saviour, God glorifying him—it was the testimony which the apostles bore of this contrast, together with the sovereign and effectual healing of the lame man; it was by these means many, perhaps two thousand, were awakened. Now, when they were awakened, the apostle began to change the tone of his address—"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." He then shews that there is no counsel of God overturned by what they had done; as he fulfilled what he before shewed by his holy prophets.

Well, now, the people being, by the power of God, awakened, as the three thousand had been before them, were no doubt trembling at God's Word, and knew not what to do. "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Here, then, is no exhorting dead sinners to do what God alone can work in a man to will and to do. The apostle's exhortation is to these now awakened sinners, amounts simply to this: there is repentance for you; there is reconciliation for you; there is forgiveness for you. Do not despair; but humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and be converted to, united to, Jesus Christ; and in these paths you will find, that when the times (for there is a set time to favor Zion) "when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," you will know that your sins are blotted out.

Well, now, my good Theophilus, you will here see that I have assumed that these persons to whom the apostles said, "Repent," &c, were not unbelievers, but awakened and believing sinners.

And I shall here set before you four reasons for this conclusion. 1st. Because of the analogy of faith—in other words, the order of the gospel of the new covenant. It is not the manner of the new covenant, so to speak to men dead in sin, except where the Word of truth takes men on the ground of the profession they make; and even then they are not as carnal, dead-in-sin men, exhorted to do that which the natural man cannot do, but they are exhorted, as professed disciples. Hence, in John vi. 27, who, in verse 60 of that chapter, are called disciples. It is, therefore, needful, that as they professed to be disciples, they should be put to the test, and told to do the work of true disciples—"Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall (if you are true disciples) give unto you." But what is there here to patronize the doctrine of duty-faith, or to justify the solemn mockery of telling dead sinners to do what God alone can give them faith to do?

These persons in John vi., who were exhorted to "labor for the meat that endureth to everlasting life," were, to all intents and purposes, carnal men, and followed the Saviour merely from carnal motives; still, they professed to be disciples; and therefore as disciples, they were, as I have said, exhorted to do the work of disciples, and thus demonstrate that they were true disciples. But instead of doing this, they became offended, and walked no more with him; thus shewing the truth of the Saviour's own words in this same chapter, that "no man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father." So that this seeming exception is, in reality, no exception at all; for they professed to be disciples; so here in this 3rd chapter of the Acts, the persons wore, or at least evidently professed to be, awakened sinners; and I shall presently give you, I think, satisfactory proof that they were truly awakened sinners.

I again repeat, that, to my mind, one proof that they became, by the first part of Peter's discourse, awakened sinners, is, that it is contrary to the order of the gospel to exhort a carnal mind to do a spiritual work.

My second reason is, that the apostle speaks to them as to awakened sinners, in teaching them where and when to look for the blotting out of sin. Does not this look as though the Holy Ghost had written their sins upon their consciences? for without this, what is there to blot out? What was there to blot out in the conscience of Saul of Tarsus? Until the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. Now, there is something to blot out, because here is something written, and an awful something it is, as all who are born of God are made to feel. Like the publican, they feel that mercy, and mercy only, can save them. Now, as the law is the strength of sin, the Saviour becomes unto such awakened sinners the end of the law for righteousness; and so the apostle says unto these now believing sinners, "He (the Lord) shall send Jesus Christ unto you." Now, what does this mean, but a manifestation unto them of the Saviour as the Way, the Truth, and the Life? It is a promise direct and positive to them, and that because it was manifest to the apostle that they were heirs of promise.

My third reason for concluding they were now quickened sinners, is, that by this same discourse a great number was added unto the church. This is proved by the 4th verse of the next chapter, which says, that "many of them which heard the Word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." Now, if we include in this five thousand the three thousand of the second chapter, on the Day of Pentecost, we, even, at this reckoning, get two thousand, by this discourse of the 3rd chapter: one pretty good proof that the persons to whom the apostle said—"Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," were not unbelieving sinners, dead in sin. It is true they were not yet brought into the possession of the gospel for themselves; they had yet to be converted to the truth, so as to be one with it; and when thus they were converted to the truth as it is in Jesus, they could, from their own souls' experience, strengthen their brethren, and so edify one another. The apostle's sermon, then, did not fall to the ground. The number of the disciples was multiplied to five thousand. We scarcely need further

proof that duty-faith, and the fashionable exhortation to sinners-mockery—has no place in this discourse of Acts iii. But then, my good Theophilus, you must know that this general invitation-system, so much applauded by the world, takes away the transverse form of the cross, and a gospel is made to set easily upon the natural man, by leaving room for his free-agency, and so the offence of the cross ceases.

I think I hear you exclaim, Free-agency! What! Free-agency in eternal things!! What! the dry bones in the valley of death free agents! What! a criminal in the condemned cell, a free agent! What! a mere brand in the fire a free agent! Does not God himself ask concerning us, under the figure of the vine tree, "Behold, when it was whole, was it meet for any work? How much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?" Free-agency in eternal things! Whereas, if the dead are not awakened by the voice of the Son of God, they cannot be awakened to life at all. It is a solemn truth, that if the Son of God be not the Author of the religion of your soul, and of mine, he will at the last day own neither us nor our religion. "Ye must be born again."

But I will now come to the fourth and last proof I will at present give you, that these persons, to whom Peter said, "Repent," &c., and this last proof is like the three preceding—such as none but a presumptuous, free-agent professor would attempt to set aside. This last proof consists in the Holy Ghost, by the apostle Peter, recognizing the people as the new covenant people of God. "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with Abraham, saying, Unto Abraham, and unto thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Verse 26.) Children of the prophets! What does this mean? This must mean that they were the offspring of the prophets. But the prophets were spiritual men; and if these people to whom the apostle was speaking were the children of the prophets, then they were spiritual children, and so bore the image and likeness of their fathers. But they were children not only of the prophets, but also of the covenant which God made with Abraham; and the apostle is careful to give us to understand that the covenant here referred to, is not the covenant of a mere earthly Canaan; for here is direct reference to the promised seed. This, therefore is not the mere Jewish covenant, but the

"—nobler covenant,
Sealed by David's greater Son."

Now, then, if these persons were the children—which the Holy Ghost declares they were—of the covenant of God in Christ, then their names must have been in the book of eternal life; and to that life they were ordained; and so, "as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

And is it not also somewhat remarkable, that these persons, only just brought to begin to know the truth, should thus be spoken to so early of God's immutable covenant? As though the apostle would at once bring them into Ezekiel's river! As though he would give them to understand that they were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" and that whatever glorious promises were given to Abraham, belonged also to them; and as Abraham already has possession of the kingdom, shall they, by that mercy which endureth forever," come in the same inheritance, reserved in heaven for them; closing, as the apostle does, by setting before them that blessing which includes every blessing; unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. Now, who are the everyone, but the "everyone" who was brought into the bond of the new covenant?" Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant." This is the everyone he came to bless. "He came to lay down his life for the sheep; and they are all brought to hear his voice, and follow him; and by faith in him they are turned away from their iniquities. His blood cleanses them from all sin; and so they

overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of their testimony: and they "love not their lives unto the death."

Now, here it is: their turning away from their iniquities is not merely formal; not mere surface work. The root of the matter is in them; and in oneness with the Saviour they have an eternal salvation from a sin; and so they walk not in unbelief, but in faith; not in enmity to the truth, but in love to the truth; not in ignorance, but in the knowledge of the truth; and thus having a spiritual life, they walk towards God, and with God; not after the flesh; not after fleshly duty-faith, fleshly universal nothings, and formal fleshly conformity to the traditions of men; but they worship God in the Spirit of that gospel which is the ministration of life; and thus they walk not after the law of carnal commandment, but in the law of life; and thus "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And to such there is no condemnation." Jesus Christ is unto them the finisher of transgression, the end of sin; and hath for them made reconciliation for iniquity; and they are justified, and shall glory. They are new creatures endeavoring to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the (new covenant) bond of peace," and to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things."

Now, my good Theophilus, I think we still know where we are. We see the order of the new covenant; that it gives life before it exhorts to living acts; second, that the apostle spoke, in the latter part of his discourse, to some of his hearers as awakened sinners; third, that by this discourse a great number was added to the church; and forth, and above all, they are declared to be the children of the covenant which God made with Abraham, the covenant of God in Christ Jesus. Universal exhortation-ism, then, is wrong, unscriptural, and delusive. And he who bids it God speed, is a partaker of its evil deeds.

I hope therefore, still to go on "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and though the enemy begins to be a little uneasy, yet there is "a remnant according to the election of grace, who are with us. A very excellent minister of the gospel has given in the March number of the Vessel a word of encouragement to us. He is one of the few that knows, that to depart from the fashionable religion of the world is to make one's self a prey—yet he fears not man but God, and abides amidst deluges of hypocrisies and apostasies, by "the truth as it is in Jesus." These are the men, were the churches in their right minds, they would abide by; but alas, very many of them (the churches) are bent to backslide.

I will now close my letter, as I hope in a future letter to give you some clear account of good, bad and indifferent ministers; carrying with me a consciousness that of believers I am but A Little One.

P.S.—What is said of the prophet in the third of the Acts, I must set before you next month.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 23 - pages 104ff 1856

No duty faith in the book of Acts – Acts chapter 3 continued –

About Jesus Christ

About Simon Magus and other professors

I know, most excellent Theophilus, proceed to set before you the character of the prophet spoken of in Acts iii. I will set before you his mediatorial and legislative departments.

You will in Deut. xviii. 15, 16, see that one of the likenesses of this Prophet unto Moses was his mediatorial character. God had spoken to the people out of the midst of the fire, "And I, (saith Moses, Deut. v. 5,) stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord, for ye were afraid, and went not up into the mount." And as it was then outwardly and literally, so it is inwardly and spiritually, the need of a mediator is nowhere truly felt but where God has spoken in judgment to the conscience. Such then see, that their sins have lighted a fire unquenchable against them—that the thunder bolts of heaven must overtake them)—that there is a bottomless pit to receive and shut her mouth upon them, and that they cannot be saved unless this fire be quenched, these thunder-bolts stayed, and this bottomless pit, this great gulph forded: none of which things could Moses or any mere man do. And what, my good Theophilus, could you do in this matter, if you could now acquire all the holiness and creature-perfection the law originally demanded? Even then, what would you do with your fall in Adam? What would you do with sins already done and cannot be undone? Here you see and feel that you are stopped: you can say nothing, you can do nothing; but you see Jesus who hath done all for you, but here you were stopped again with this question, Was it for you that he died? You have learned also, that there is "a set time to favor Zion," and you had to wait for this set time, and still have to wait for the "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

But you know something of this heavenly Prophet, not in his mediatorial character only, but also in his legislative character: take the tenth of John as a sample of the same: we have here (John x.) the law of his coming unto his own sheep; the law also of a right-minded minister; the law of attraction; and then we have the law of our coming unto him; the law of his goodness, and our eternal life,—"he that entereth by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep." Now, what is this door but his own mediatorial work, his own life and death? This is the way in which he came to us; and we could be reached in no other way, for we were gone astray to the uttermost penalty of the law; he, therefore, went to the end perceptively and penalty of the law, "to redeem us who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

"And to him the porter openeth." Then it must be a porter who knows the true Shepherd; and if the porter mean a true gospel minister, then I am sure such will bring, or admit, into the sheepfold none but the true Shepherd; as such a porter, or door-keeper, as the word means, well knows that,

"None but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

Such a porter knows both the Shepherd and the sheep too; he knows the several gates connected with the one door by which the true Shepherd comes into the sheepfold. Such a porter, Such a minister, will open the gates of discriminating grace, the gates of difficult experiences; and by all these, as connected with the substitutional work of the Saviour, the Shepherd enters the sheepfold, and causes his sheep to lie down in green pastures, and to be refreshed by the still waters.

And then, here is the law of attraction— "He putteth forth his own sheep, and he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." So, then, if he put them forth into freedom, they cannot put themselves forth; and if he go before them, then they must go his pace, at least they cannot go on faster than he is pleased to lead them. "And they follow him;" then they refuse to be led by any other; yea, to their honor it is written, that "a stranger will they not follow;" but they follow Jesus, for " they know his voice,— his voice is his truth, and this truth they know, and the truth it is that makes them free.

And then here is the law of our coming unto him: "I am (saith the Lord,) the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." This, my good Theophilus, is the door of faith, we enter by believing his blessed truth; it is a door of hope, a hope both sure and steadfast; it is the door of heaven; it is a door which no man can shut, and yet by it we are divinely shut in from an ungodly world, from the power of Satan, from death, from condemnation, from the wrath to come; the Lord shut him in, and he was safe. And yet by this door we come in, not only to the mercy-seat, but also into the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, when it is said, we are to "go in and out and find pasture," we are not to understand that we go out the same way that we came in: no! for this would be to go back again to Egypt and Sinai. Now, just notice, here is, first, by him as the door entering into the land of safety—"by me if any man enter in," he shall be safe; and then when once brought into the land of safety, then he is to go into the mercy-seat at the temple; and then into the land round about, that is, the promised land, and find pasture. So that we are to feed and to live upon the fair and fat lands of God, our good Father, who gave us his Son to be our Shepherd.

And here is also the law of his goodness, "he gave his life for the sheep." Why, if he had given the universe for them, it could not have been a price like this: is it any wonder that from a law of goodness like this should flow a law of certain and eternal life?

Thus, my good Theophilus, you know something of this Prophet, both in mediation and legislation; the laws he hath for his own are laws of life, and protection, of love, of prosperity, and eternal glory; and how did you come to him? was it by a duty-faith—by an effort of nature? because, if so, your religion is not the work of God, but it is of yourself; and being of man, it will come to naught. And was it your duty savingly to believe in Jesus Christ—your duty to believe you were one of his, when you were dead in trespasses and sins? If so, then it was your duty to believe a lie; for you would have believed you were a Christian, when you were not a Christian. Believe the Word of God you did, and lived conscientiously; and so far you did that which it was your duty to do, as a rational and responsible being; but you were brought to see that if you had died in such a mere natural faith as that, you must have been lost; and though many with this mere natural faith take a place among the people of God, and call themselves Christians, yet they do not receive the love of the truth; they acknowledge the truth in part, but they follow a yea and nay gospel, which the apostle Paul would not have received—no, not from an angel from heaven. The spirit of discriminating truth is what they call a bad, uncharitable spirit; so it is clear that blindness, in part, is happened unto them; and the Holy Ghost says of such, (Acts iii. 23), that "they shall be destroyed from among the people." They are to be broken off as unbelievers; for through they believe the letter of the Word, they are not awakened by the new covenant ministry of the Spirit; and being in the flesh, they may please themselves, but they cannot please God; and thus the Jews, while they professed to be the people of God, did not receive the love of his truth; thereby proving that they possessed not the Spirit of God; and therefore proving by their unbelief they were not of the true seed of Abraham. They were broken off; but was it ever their duty savingly to believe in Christ? As I said in my last to you, I say now—it is mere mockery upon the misery of man so to say; and as to some celebrated but uninspired men having contended for this duty-faith, what, my good Theophilus, have you to do with that? Luther believed in transubstantiation; but that is no authority for us; Mr. Huntington was not a Baptist; but that is no guide for us. We must not be followers of men, but of God; and if some men have, in spite of the errors they have held, been great and useful men, that is no argument for error. We see their errors—let us avoid them; while those who come after us, having more life, and experience, and light than we have, will no doubt see a few motes in our eyes, though we do not ourselves see them.

But as you have obtained mercy, you, I am sure, wish rightly to understand the Holy Scriptures, and to honor the Word of God, and glorify the God of the Scriptures; and over so fair a beauty as is the Morning Star, you would not willfully bring a cloud, nor bring a law of bondage into the land of liberty; you will therefore ever wish rightly to divide the Word of truth, and ever wish so to speak and so to do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

You will therefore know how to account for those exhortations which men bring forward to advocate the doctrine of duty-faith—general invitation; such, for instance, as Simon Magus. This man lost, through the preaching of the gospel by Philip, his followers. Simon thus, having lost his followers, thought his best policy would be to follow them, as they had now ceased to follow him; and so Simon professionally believed, and he was also baptized—not with any sense of his state as a sinner before God, but with a view of carrying out other objects; he therefore watched his opportunity, and went on wondering at the miracles wrought by Philip. Now he knew that he was acting hypocritically and wickedly; he knew that his object was to turn the gospel into a means of mere worldly traffic, and would, if he could, have drawn Peter into the same spirit with himself; but when he offered them money to get them to betray their trust, or to deal unfaithfully with the same, he met with a just rebuke, and exhortation to desist from such a course, to repent thereof, and pray God if perhaps such a wicked attempt may be forgiven him—that is, that the same judgment may not overtake him that overtook Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira. This is the kind of forgiveness here spoken of; and so Simon himself understood it, and therefore said, "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things of which ye have spoken come upon me." But what in the world has this to do with matters that are spiritual? Why, the repentance here exhorted to is nothing more than that repentance of reformation which the Ninevites humbled themselves to; and so because Simon Magus was rebuked for what he knew to be wrong, and exhorted to pray that he may not there and then be cut down by the judgment of God, so this is to be an authority for exhorting all men savingly to believe in Jesus Christ. Stupendous logic! But, my good Theophilus, you have not so learned Christ as this, to confound the new covenant work of the Holy Ghost with the moral capabilities and responsibilities of man.

Peter, therefore, appealed to Simon Magus, not as a quickened sinner, but as a rational, responsible being. Peter did not appeal to capabilities which Simon Magus did not possess, but only to those natural powers of conscience and of reason which he did possess.

But while some are appealed to, like Belshazzar, upon this ground of human responsibility, others are appealed to and exhorted, as I have shown in my 18th letter to you, on the ground of the profession they make. Hence in John xii. 35, 36. Now the people there spoken of were professed people of God; they were Jews, and held that God was their Father; and they were even enquiring after the meaning of the Scriptures, and said to the Saviour, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, the Son of Man shall be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" Well, now, on the ground of the profession they made, He said to them, "While ye have the light! Believe in the light, that you may be the children of light." As though he should say, you profess to be children of Abraham, and therefore in contrast to the Gentile children of darkness; you profess to be the children of light; but to make your profession good, and to become in reality the children of light, you must believe in the light. Though the Saviour knew what they were in reality, yet he takes them on this occasion, on the profession they make. Hence said the apostle to the Ephesians, "Ye were sometimes darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." So these Jews, they professed to be children of light, and were, on the ground of this their profession, exhorted to make their profession good. This is in accordance with the apostle's rule—"warning every man." That is, everyone to whom he was then writing, and knowing the terrors of the Lord which must overtake deluded professors, he persuaded, men professing godliness to examine

themselves, whether they be in the faith. Thus you will be able to understand these Scriptures much better without a yea and nay gospel, than with it.

I cannot say everything to you in the space of one or two letters; and there are yet three or four more strongholds of duty-faith which I have not yet touched; but we hope before we close to demolish the whole. These yea and nay Jebusites are already somewhat disturbed, but still they are not yet discouraged; for they still think that the weakest among them is too much for us; and so they are still boasting, saying, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither." 2 Sam. v. 6. But David did come in hither; and I am sure a seeing gospel ought to overcome a blind gospel; and a gospel whose legs are equal, certainly ought to overcome a gospel whose legs are not equal; for though a poor lame believer takes the prey, yet a lame gospel does not take the prey. Let us "patch up no inglorious peace; but still go on by the amour of righteousness on the right hand and the left, meaning harm to none, but good to all. Such is the sincere and humble aim of A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 24 - pages 128ff 1856

More against Duty-Faith: Many are called but few are chosen

My Good Theophilus—you know that it is written that many he called, but few chosen. Upon this solemn and discriminating Scripture I wish to say a few words, both that you may understand the same and be stirred up to seek more and more to make your calling and election sure.

Now it is a self-evident and solemn truth that the Word of God takes, without the special grace of the Holy Ghost, such a strong hold upon the consciences of thousands as to turn them religious, and they delude themselves into the notion that they are born of God, when at the same time they are not born of God. They enter in at the wide gate of general profession, and walk in the broad way of professed universal charity. The doctrine of duty-faith is just that doctrine which sets men down for Christians that are not Christians; and you, my good Theophilus, will find that these duty-faith men, when they go a little way with you in your tribulatory experiences, "soon contradict it all again, and thus show their ignorance of the new covenant ministry of the Holy Ghost. These men tell us that all is of grace that God alone can quicken the soul, and often in the same sermon tell us, that if a man be lost it is his own fault, thus holding that there is a chosen people, and the rest might be saved if they would; whereas nobody wishes to be lost. All are willing to be saved; but it is not that kind of willingness that accompanies salvation.

Now, my good Theophilus, such men make the Word of God contradict itself; and then say they are not bound to reconcile it; but where, in all the Word, is their authority for making the Holy Spirit of God contradict Himself?

What kind of a Will would that be which should contradict itself? What attorney would risk his credit in drawing up such a Will? Would it not be utterly impossible for executors to act upon such a Will? and is not eternal salvation a matter entirely of God's good-will? and is not his will called his testament, or covenant? and is not this testamental will, or covenant, ordered in all things, and sure? and yet these

duty-faith men advocate what they themselves acknowledge to be a contradiction; and then my they are not bound to reconcile it. This is what they say; but the general tone of the Word of God is quite after another order of things. The Apostle Paul felt bound to reconcile Law and Gospel, and to show that so far from faith making void the Law, it (faith) receives the Saviour as the end of the Law for righteousness, Christ having fulfilled and established the Law. Here is no contradiction—all is harmonious; and so with the attributes of God, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; as also between the Old and the New Testament dispensation. There exists no contradiction—the one being taken away that the other may be established; but if the two dispensations attempted to exist together, then there would be contradictions; but one no longer exists as a dispensation, but only as a testimony; and the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, shows how, as a testimony, but not as a dispensation—but how as a testimony it accorded with the New Testament dispensation.

Fly, my good Theophilus, fly from such preachers and doctrines as make the Word of God self-contradictory; and do thou still sacredly hold that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and gives not an uncertain, but a certain, sound. But so it is. It is the many—not the few, but the many—who are called, but not chosen; it is not the few, but the many, that shall come in Christ's name, and shall deceive, not the few, but shall deceive many; for many are called, but few chosen.

I must, then, again remind you that the Word of God has great power upon the consciences and fears and hopes of men, even where there is no spiritual life in the soul or grace in the heart; and some become enlightened preachers, as Balaam was. Balaam belonged to the self-contradiction tribe, only he could not get his contradiction into his sermon, so he left it to bring it into his practice instead; and so, instead of preaching it, he practiced it, by getting the Israelites to worship the Midianitiah gods, a part of which worship consisted in prostitution; and so zealous was one of the princes of Israel for this new religion, that he brought Midianitish woman into the camp of Israel, openly in the sight of all Israel, just to make a beginning. But judgment was at once ministered to these presumptuous importers of other gods (Numb. xxv. 6,7); thus was Balaam a yea and nay man. The nay parts of our modern systems are certainly not as gross as Balaam's nay department; but they are equally, and in some respects more, deceptive.

Many, then, are called, and become enlightened, and have very great semblances to the real children of God; but they are but bastards after all: though they are partakers of the Holy Ghost, yet it is only in the letter of his testimony, and though they taste of the heavenly gift, and the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, it is only as the stony-ground hearer did.

Now, so far as the Word of God takes hold of men and makes them better members of society, so far so good: but when this is set down for the new birth and vital godliness, then it is deception; yet in this way, merely by the moral working of the Word, what numbers are called, but not chosen, for there are but few chosen.

You will, my good Theophilus, meet with some who hold a lie in their right hand, and either know it not, or if they know it, are careful not to confess it; and you will see that the yea and nay held by such is much more implied than expressed. They dare not clearly express what they covertly imply. Beware then, I say, of these false prophets, that come to you in sheep's clothing, but their hearts are not truly with the sheep, but with yea and nay professors. Such hearts they have, for they deceive both themselves and others. You shall know them by their fruits; and though they speak much truth, yet if that be embittered by grapes of gall, by clusters that are bitter (Deut. xxxii. 32), you, if you wish to avoid being poisoned, must turn away from them; and I am sure you do not think it a light thing for the mind to be poisoned against the liberty you have in Christ. You must be careful to distinguish between a fiery flying serpent (Deut. viii. 13; Isa. xiv.

J9) and the fiery flying seraphim (Isa. vi.); the one will bewitch you from, and poison you against, the truth, and the true Church; but the other comes with a live coal from off the altar where the sacrifice is, and finds out the truly convinced and self-despairing sinner, and by the power of God ministers that forgiveness which accords with the sacrifice of the altar. That sacrifice has cleared, on behalf of such convinced sinners, both time and eternity; the atonement of Immanuel having infinitely and eternally more power to pardon, than sin, however deep in dye, has to condemn. No truth short of this can enable a truly convinced sinner to hope in the mercy of God.

Serpents are very cunning, wise, and capable of all sorts of shapes and forms; and they burn with zeal too; they are determined to make Christians of almost everybody, whether they are Christians or not; and they are very active, too, for they are flying serpents, and will compass sea and land to make proselytes; thus you will see that these fiery flying serpents have some strong likenesses to the seraphim's; the very word seraphim signifies fiery, and so, while the Lord makes his angels spirits, he makes his ministers as a flame of fire. The living Word they preach is as fire, to enter the conscience, to burn up the hay, wood, straw, and stubble in which the sinner may be sheltering himself, and to minister in due time unto such a one a sense of pardoned sin.

The minister, also, himself, is to be a burning and shining light, shining with the light of eternal life, and burning with the eternal love of God; he has also his six wings; with twain he covers his feet when he goes in to speak with God, thus keeping his foot when he comes before God, treading with care such hallowed ground; and with twain he covers his face, wrapped in holy awe and humility before the high and the lofty One who inhabits eternity; and with twain he does fly. Here is their willingness and activity in serving the blessed God, and often it is that by them, as heavenly messengers, the Word runs very swiftly.

Thus, you will need not only grace, whereby to serve the Lord acceptably with reverence and godly fear, but you will need also wisdom and knowledge from on high, and in the hidden parts and experiences of your soul; that you may know to refuse the evil and choose the good, and that you may have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of a yea and nay Gospel, but rather reprove them; evil communications corrupt good manners; and I wish your good gospel manners, as well as your other good manners, not to be corrupted: you must be content to be among the few, and, however, the many may forsake you, you still have the lamp of truth and trumpet of the Gospel, and by the light of the one, and the sound of the oilier, you will be more than a conqueror through Him who hath loved you; and if in yourself you are like a broken vessel, the light will shine the brighter, while you must still keep to your watchword, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon: the sword of the Lord, to denote it is not the sword of man; and the sword of Gideon, to denote the character of the God who wields the sword of truth.

You see, in the case of Gideon's army, what numbers, even thirty-two thousand, felt that they ought to come, yet, out of this thirty-two thousand, only three hundred were chosen; these were all that had true faith in God's holy Word; all the rest were yea and nay men, and the name of such in our day certainly is Legion; but the foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knows them that are his, and from this yea and nay, as well as from every other iniquitous system, those who are taught of God shall depart.

I hope in my next to you, to set before you some of those tests by which the few are distinguished from the many. I must close my present letter by again reminding you of the self-accordance of the Word of God. Remember that Jesus Christ is the mediator of the New Testament; here you see (Heb. ix. 1) the Gospel is called a testament, that is, a Will, and that Jesus atoned for those sins of his people which were committed under the first testament, that is, the old covenant; now this new testament willed to all the election of grace an eternal inheritance, and these in due time are called from death to life to receive,

first, the promise of eternal inheritance (Heb. ix. 15), and then, afterwards, the inheritance itself. Now, a man whilst he lives, may alter his Will; his death is necessary to make the Will unalterable; and so it is that Christ died, and the Will is confirmed and settled for ever, while He Himself is risen from the dead, to carry out all the parts and clauses of the said Will. Our God would not entrust this Will even to angelic, much less to human hands, but He has trusted in Christ; He hath given all things into his hands, and his language is, ought not Christ to suffer? and as to the sheep, his language is, "them also I must bring.'

My good Theophilus, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant or will, yet if it be confirmed (by the testator's death), "no man dis-annuls or adds thereto " (Gal. iii.); the Apostle, in this 3rd of Galatians, shows the strongest feeling against a self-contradictory system; he repudiates the notion of one part of the Word of God contradicting, and so, in effect, disannulling another. He, in his 1st chapter to the Galatians, calls such a system another Gospel, and anathematises an angel from heaven who should dare to advocate such a Gospel.

Why, even Satan has more sense than to be divided against himself; and yet the Holy Spirit of God, who is a sworn witness of truth, is to be represented as giving self-contradictory evidence, such as, for want of harmony, could not be received even in human courts of justice. But the Holy Spirit of God has never so done; all his testimonies are eternally sure, and herein is the rejoicing even of A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 25 - pages 157ff 1856

More against Duty-Faith: Nothing good in ourselves. The character of God

Host Excellent Theophilus, — in my last I reminded you that many are called, but few chosen. I trust you are one of that few, therefore, you must be content to belong to the few. Let me, then, here point out to you some of those divine teachings by which you have been, and by which you are, and by which you will be kept firm in the truth and faithful unto death, that you may receive the crown of life.

First: a soul-humblng knowledge of your own heart. Such will be the workings thereof, that you will feel that, after the flesh, you have no fear of God before your eyes. Your experience will confirm the testimony of Him who alone, altogether and entirely, knows the heart—that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Now, what, with such a heart as this, can the natural man do acceptably in the sight of God? Does the man dead in sin attempt at justification by the works of the Law? What has he in possession by which to obtain it?—A heart "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Now all the workings of such a heart are like itself, and savor of itself. However such workings may be gilded off, or under whatever form, or disguise, or mask they may appear, they are still nothing but the workings of old, fallen, corrupt nature, and so saith the Apostle (Rom. vii. 5), "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." The motions of sins did work; there was nothing else to work; so that if anything moved at all, it must be sin; for in the flesh, even of the regenerated man, dwelleth no good thing. But the natural man is all of a piece; he is unclean throughout; but sees it not, feels it not, and, therefore, mourns it not. And does the natural man meddle with the Gospel? Every touch, as it were, of his finger is unclean; his very prayers are sin. So, then,

they that are in the flesh cannot please God. This deceitfulness of your heart you will be every day learning, and will be a plague, a burden, a hindering, a drawback everywhere with you; but nowhere so much as in the house of God, at the Throne of Grace, in reading the holy Scriptures, and striving for communion and fellowship with the blessed God. This heart of yours will put the worst possible construction upon all the Lord's dealings with you, laboring to make you forget his mercies, and to fill you with hard thoughts of Him; and instead of looking to Him as a father, pitiful and of tender mercy, it will make you think of Him as a lion, or a bear, intending to tear you to pieces. These wild beasts within will overrun everything, and make your soul like the very wilderness; and under a consciousness of this you will see that if one thing towards your salvation depended upon yourself, you, having nothing but a sinning nature, must have been eternally lost.

Now, my good Theophilus, mind this one thing, that what you now feel yourself to be after the flesh, you were when in a state of nature altogether. So here then there was no good thing in you. Your very soul was but a sink of sin, loathsome and filthy in the sight of a holy God.

As soon may a dunghill turn itself into a heap of wheat; as soon may a dog turn itself into a sheep; as soon the leopard get rid of his spots; as soon may the Ethiopian change his skin; as soon may dry bones turn themselves into living men—as the natural man do one thing to forward his eternal welfare.

Now, what does all this do for you? Does it not make you at times tremble at yourself? Does it not make you at times fear that, after all, you will prove to be a Magor Missabid- a terror to yourself? Does it not make you loathe yourself in your own sight, and repent in dust and ashes? and does it not make you feel, that except you are born of incorruptible seed, born of God, your religion is nothing but a most awful deception to your own soul? and does it not make you look well to your goings, and try yourself by the Word of God, whether or not you are truly in the footsteps of the flock? and does it not make you cling with earnestness to the testimony of Christ that it is finished? and docs it not account to you for where David was when he said, " He hath made with me a covenant eternal, with no one uncertainty in it,"—and all his salvation was here, and that he did not desire ever to add anything thereto or to take anything therefrom? He was satisfied with it just as it was; it answered to all his desire; and even when the dew thereof was not resting upon his branch—yes, even when it was yielding him no fruit—even then he would not have it altered; he knew that it was his security in the dark, as well as his joy in the light.

Take away, then, the incorruptible seed of which you are born, what would you be but a child of wrath, a thorn, a bramble, upon which the fire of hell must forever prey?

Take away the substitutional sacrifice of the Saviour, where would you be, but under the Law and its bitter but righteous curse?

Take away the new covenant, and what would be, or could be, your security? Would not even the travail of the Saviour be floating about (as to its results) upon uncertainties?

Take away the Holy Spirit's care of you in carrying on his work; take away the Good Shepherd's care of you; take away the care of that Father, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, and how long would you watch and pray? how long would you seek the green pastures and the still waters? how long would you, or could you, say, " I love the habitation of thy house, and' the place where thine honor dwelleth"? and if all your springs were not in God, would they not very soon run dry?

Yet, but for this plague of the heart, there would not be in you that cleaving unto the truth which there now is. You therefore have the witness in your own soul's experience, that it is by grace, through faith, that you must be saved; herein then lies your necessity.

Forsake the truth—alter the truth—throw the doctrine of duty-faith in its face—make a confederacy with those who exhort dead men to do what God alone can, instead of preaching the truth to those dead men, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, and so becoming a sweet savor of Christ unto God, by telling them the truth in them that perish, and in them that are saved; telling the truth faithfully both ways. What then, I say, forsake the truth, or make a confederacy with its perverters? Never! No! the sympathies between the truth and the truly poor and needy are too strong for them ever to part; the rich, that is, the Pharisee—the Pharisee in whole or in part—sends the truth empty away, and so the truth will by-and-bye send them empty and yet blessed are such, for the Saviour comes to open the prison-house to them that are bound, and theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. This is what the Lord says of such, and He will, in his own time, say so to such.

But the chief matter we have in these remarks to do with is, the Name of the blessed God—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.

In ancient times the difficulty was to maintain the unity of God, men being constantly tending to a plurality of gods; now, on the other hand, men have gone over into error another way, and so maintain the unity of the one God as to deny that distinction of personalities in which He is revealed in the Word.

Now, the blessed God is not one in the same sense that He is three; nor three in the same sense that He is one. So that although the doctrine of the Trinity be an infinite mystery, yet there is no self-contradiction in it; nor must we use any metaphor or simile whatever to set forth this mystery, therefore we cannot follow those who have tried to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity by the three leading faculties of the soul,—the understanding, the will, and the affections; nor those who have tried to do the same thing by the three celestial fluids of light, air, and heat; and many other trinities of nature which men have pointed us to; but all more tending to obscure than to illustrate the mystery.

Let us, then, be content with the Word of the Lord; and there we shall find, in a very early part of the Bible, a plurality in God: "the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters." "Let us make man." And from after parts of the Bible we learn that this is a trinal plurality —that there are three. We need not, indeed our space does not allow us, here to demonstrate both from the Old and New Testament, and this trinal plurality of persons, and these three are one. This doctrine of the Trinity is of infinite and essential importance; with this doctrine stands or falls the Godhead of Christ, consequently the atonement, and everything else pertaining to eternal salvation; but not even upon this attractive department must we now dwell.

We again, then, say that the blessed God is not one in the same sense that He is three, nor three in the same sense that He is one, for this would be a self-contradiction; He is but one as to existence. There is not in the Godhead a succession of existences, for this would make three Gods, and would give a priority and minority, a superiority and inferiority, in the Godhead; for one divine person—a purely divine person—to be begotten by another divine person, is a figment of human imagination; for Jesus Christ our Lord is never once in all the Bible called the Son of God without reference to his complexity. If, therefore, He had not stood as the promised Seed, and in the fullness of time become man, He never would have been called the Son of God. There is not, then, in the Godhead any succession of existences. There is but

one existence. The one eternal I Am, not we are, for that would imply a plurality of existences; but I Am That I Am. Here, then, is the unity of one existence. "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

So there is but one nature. He is divine; God is a spirit. But then this nature is infinite and eternal in all its attributes, immortal and blessed for evermore.

And there is also perfect oneness of mind and purpose: one Divine Person has no mind or purpose out of the other, because each being infinite and eternal, they dwell in each other, mind in mind. Were it not so, there must be three infinities, and which, from the very nature of things, is impossible, for infinity is infinity, and it is that kind of thing that there cannot be more than one infinity; but while the-blessed God is in existence, in nature, in greatness, and duration, One, He is in the mode of his existence three, so that He is not in Himself a solitary, but a social being. Both the oneness and the plurality are infinitely delightful truths.

The Father is one person in the Godhead. The term Father, when used in a Gospel sense, is to be taken as a personal and relative term. The Divine Word, the "Logos," is also a personal and relative term. The term Holy Spirit is, as explained by Him who never erred, a personal and relative term. "He shall take of mine; He shall guide; He (not it but he) shall testify of me," &c. Thus we see Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, are new covenant personal and relative terms.

We may here just observe that one of these names is both interchangeable and universal to the Eternal Three. Hence (Isa. ix. 6), the Saviour is called the "everlasting Father;" so the Holy Ghost: "Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" and this is especially the work of the Holy Ghost. And then the term Father sometimes includes the blessed Three in one, as when the Saviour says, "My Father is greater than I." He here speaks merely as man, but immediately after as God-man: "I and my Father are ONE."

"There are three that bear record in heaven, these three are one," is a clearly-declared truth. It is an infinite mystery, but it is only a mystery; it does not, as we before said, involve in it any self-contradiction; as there is in this mystery room both for the oneness and plurality of the Godhead. We have then the Father in oneness with the Word; and the Word was made flesh, and thus appeared among us as the only begotten Son of God; then we have the Holy Ghost in oneness with the Father and the Son. Take away the distinct personality and equality, then away goes eternal redemption, for no mere man can redeem his brother. Take away the oneness, then we make a schism in God, and shall become Polytheists, worshipping many gods. But while we have three divine persons, they are all in one existence, one nature, one in mind and will, and one in greatness, duration, and immutability; and thus what is done to the one is done to the other; in a word, He is one God, and yet so delightfully is He three persons, that one could take our nature, meet all the claims of law and justice, and establish eternal oneness between God and man. Upon this much might be said, but we must forbear.

Let us now see how this matter stands in prayer to God. Now we lay down as a general rule, allowing the exceptions which we shall notice, that the usual custom, as seen in the Bible, is to approach unto God in his own Name, in the unity of his eternal existence. Hence it is we read so much of calling upon the Name of the Lord; and this Name must be the Name that He chooses—his own Name. Take Exodus iii., verse 15, as a guide in this matter: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob: this is my name and my memorial to all generations." Hence we find the Old Testament saints often saying, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;" and sometimes it is, "O Lord God of Israel," or "Lord of Hosts," but still keeping up the idea of the unity of God. He will never be forgotten as the God of Abraham. As He could swear by

no greater, He swore by Himself, and this oath belongs to all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now if Jesus be the mediator of the new covenant to confirm the sworn promises made unto the fathers, then Jesus takes up and establishes the memorial, or the oath and the promise by which He will be remembered in all generations.

Are we then to come in the Name of Jesus? What is this but coming in God's own Name? Jesus means Saviour, and this is the Name of our God. It is a Name by which He will be remembered for ever. The people of God have never in any age come near to God but by faith in the promised Seed, by faith in his atonement. This was, this is, this ever will be, God's own way; so that to come in the Name of Jesus to a throne of grace, is to come in the Name of Immanuel—God's own Name; the Name He has given us to come in; and He will not deny Himself. Now Jesus Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, and the Edenic and Jewish way to God being closed, Jesus is, as He always was, unto true believers, both of Old and New Testament times, the new and living way to God; so that we still come to God by the great High Priest of our profession: in a word, in God's own Name. Jesus Christ is God's own Son, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; therefore let us embody in the term Father, the Godhead—Father, Word, and Spirit; and let us come to God in and by his own Name. His Name is Saviour, his Name is Salvation; this Name, this Salvation, is in and by his dear Son, who is God and the Son of God; we thus come direct and at once to God by his own Name. His Sinai Name is a consuming fire, a Name of distance, the mount must not be touched; but his Salvation Name is a Name of nearness; here He comes, takes up his abode with us. Our God is one: the manhood of Christ makes another nature, but not another person, therefore it is still God's own Name in which we come; nevertheless, while we thus come to God in the unity of his essence, we do no wrong to pray distinctly to any one of the divine Three. "Awake, O North Wind, and come, thou South, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" The Holy Spirit is spoken of as the heavenly wind blowing where He listeth, and so we take the above words to be a direct appeal to the Holy Spirit. The North may, perhaps, refer to the humiliation and death of the dear Saviour, as He endured all the blasts of the Law which away. These easy, laughing professors, as well as the laughing ungodly, will yet have to weep, and if grace prevent not, they must weep far ever in hell: this is an awful thought, but not more awful than true, for none but the truly poor and needy will be suffered to remain (after death!) in Zion, and these shall be called holy (Isaiah iv.), and are written among the living in Jerusalem; they are one with eternal election and all its advantages.

So, my good Theophilus, does not this deep and daily necessity fire your soul for the new covenant truths of the Bible, and for every one of the good ointments by which Immanuel's name is as ointment poured forth? Fear not to come out from all half-way professors, let them be who they may; honor the Lord with your confidence, and he will honor you; be bold for Him, and He will be hold for you. Stand out for his blessed truth, and He will stand out for you; fear neither fiery furnaces nor lion's dens, nor Hainan's fifty cubit high gallows; hearken to no Pharaohs, who are saying, ye shall not go very far away; listen not to such, stay not in all the plain of Egypt, hasten to the promised land of freedom, the land, the gospel land, that flows with milk and honey.

But you have not only this deep necessity, you have also an unquenchable love to the truth; and can you easily leave what you so supremely love? And where and how can your love be kept up, increased, and made to abound? But just where God hath loved you. Did sin abound in the fall? Grace hath, in the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, much more abounded. Did sin abound in your personal origin? Grace did much more abound in and by the Babe of Bethlehem. His holy infancy has both taken away your unholy infancy, and established for you a heavenly infancy. Has sin abounded in your heart? His heart abounded only with perfect holiness and perfect love to God and man. Has sin abounded in your life? Grace has much more abounded by the life of Christ. Do infirmities still compass? He will be merciful to

your unrighteousness, and your sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Has sin abounded to corrupt you in every part? His blood cleanses from all sin. Has sin abounded to your condemnation? Grace shall much more abound to your justification. Does sin, in spite of all your strivings, often gain the mastery? Grace, when it does not abound by power, will abound by pardon. Does sin abound unto death? Much more shall grace abound unto the resurrection and eternal glory.

And although you often come short of conformity to the precept, yet you will neither come short of a single iota of the promise: the flesh is weak, the spirit is willing, and the Lord knows how, and when, and where to take the will for the deed. He is not an austere or hard man, but meek and lowly in heart, and his yoke is easy, and his burden light. You have been made to fear lest a promise being left—and there are certainly promises left to them that believe—now you I say have been made to fear, lest your faith should not be the faith of God's elect, and so you come short of the promise; but in your faith you do not come short of the promise, for you can truly say that you do embrace the Yea and Amen promise as your only hope; and as you do not come short in the faith of it, you will not come short of the fulfilment of it. But those who come short in the faith of the promise, who are not poor enough to need it, these certainly will come short in the fulfilment of it; these, not rightly believing God's truths, cannot enter in because of unbelief: thus the one gets possession by faith, the other comes short by unbelief, and faith is the gift of God.

You then, my good Theophilus, have that living love to new-covenant truth which no mere professor ever did, or ever can, possess; and these gospel endearments keep the soul alive and lively.

But you also fear God. You dare not deviate from the order of his covenant, but feel that you must seek Him after the due order. You shudder, you recoil at the thought of making yourself wiser than God, as though you knew better than He does what is proper for the conversion of sinners, and for the government and well-being of his people, his holy Word, therefore, has your most solemn reverence. Like Micaiah, your language is, "What my God saith, that will I speak;" and if ill so doing you get an evil name among men, rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

These, then, who are poor in spirit, and love and fear Him—these are the few that are chosen; they are chosen to be his witnesses, and they can be his witnesses, for they can, from their own souls experience, bear that testimony which justifies Him in all the transactions of saving grace; and so the Scriptures are fulfilled, which saith, "Wisdom is justified of her children." It is not very likely that the Lord would choose those to be his witnesses, who speak self-contradictorily, and mix up works and grace: such get their testimony from another quarter.

The few are chosen to be vessels of mercy, and how unitedly and gladly do they acknowledge that it is of the Lord's mercies that they are not consumed—that it is according to his mercy that He hath saved them!

They are chosen for the defense of the Gospel; and as they well know what that Gospel is, they are well fitted for this work. They know what they are contending for.

They are chosen to worship God in spirit and in truth, or in a true spirit, in contrast to a false, wavering, yea and nay spirit. And so, in the true spirit of the true Gospel, their souls do homage to God; yea, they praise Him with their whole heart, and thus glorify God.

They are chosen to walk in true unity to the true brethren, and in all those brotherly kindnesses by which they are to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

But the natural man cannot be a true witness, nor conform to new-covenant mercy, nor defend the true Gospel, nor worship God in a Gospel spirit, nor dwell in true union to the true brethren; but a few are chosen to be the Lord's servants, and He does not turn away even A Little One.

Editor's Note: Letter 26 is missing

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 27 - pages 207ff 1856

More against Duty-Faith: various other scriptures examined

My Good Theophilus,—You know that it is written that the law entered that the offence might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Now you will it once see that this abounding of grace does not mean everywhere where sin hath abounded; sin hath abounded in the Fall, to the final condemnation of thousands, where neither grace nor mercy has ever come. What, then, is the conclusion? It is this, that where conviction, by the power of the Holy Ghost, enters the conscience, there it is, that the sin of the heart is brought to light (Rom. vii. 1), the conscience becomes burdened, and the spirit of such a one is broken down. He tastes the wormwood and the gall, and here, and here only, it is that grace abounds and reigns with unerring and infallible certainty unto eternal life. Do not, my good Theophilus, lose sight of that new covenant to which you belong, nor for one moment be moved by the jargon of those whose "arrogant humility leads them to boast of yielding themselves up to the letter of Scripture; that is, they are so arrogantly humble, that they content themselves with the sound of the Scriptures, but trouble not themselves about the sense and meaning of the Scriptures. Pity the poor simple Apostle Paul should, in his Epistle's, especially those to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews—pity he took so much trouble to give the sense and meaning of the Scriptures. If he had been but versed in the modern science of uniting free will and free grace, or rather of one time serving one master, namely, free grace, and another time serving another master, namely, free will. O Paul, you simpleton! If you had but known how to serve two masters, you would have had no occasion to say, wherefore serves the law? You would have had no occasion to say, if by grace it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. Oh no, the Simons, or rather Simons of modern times, would teach us to be good Catholics, and be content with the letter. There it is, and we must ask no questions for conscience sake, nor must we even ask our God and Saviour to open unto us the Scriptures. It is true the opening up of the Scriptures did make the hearts of the disciples burn within them; but I suppose we must not think much of that, because the poor simple disciples had no religion, except what they had from above, which perhaps may, in a measure, account for their being so anxious for many things to be explained to them; and indeed the great Teacher was, and is still, kind to us, even in our weaknesses; and so it was, that for this weakness, this incapacity in not being able to content themselves with the sound without the sense, he indulged them, encouraged this weakness in them, rather than not; for when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples (Mark iv. 31). Well, my good Theophilus, I am not at all sorry that you are the subject of this same incapacity, this same weakness. You may well glory in this infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

Well, these Simon-anything's happily do not practice all they profess, or not a man of them would have a right eye, a right hand, or a right foot, left; for if they took the letter just as it is, they must, if they practice

what they profess, part with at least some of their precious members. Yea, I know not how they could continue to live at all; for it is written, "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite (Prov. xxiii. 2); and I suppose they have such a feeling sometimes as that of appetite. I am sure even for their health's sake I hope they sometimes have this feeling, and I hope they always do their duty, and with heartfelt gratitude at all times thank the Lord for what they have.

But, my good Theophilus, as you belong to the incapacitated, and are so weak-minded that you like to know the sense of things, I must, for your profit as well as my own, just notice a few Scriptures.

"God said, Let there be light, and there was light;" and just so it is where God commands repentance,—He commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts xvii. 30). Now look at the explanation of this (Luke xxiv. 47), that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations; and He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins; and this Israel are a people out of all nations, for those that be Jews inwardly are the Israelites indeed. Unto these, one by one,—for you shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel,—unto one by one of these God commands repentance into the heart, as He did into the heart of Saul of Tarsus; and all such, and none but such, will stand well at the judgment day: and so all Israel shall be saved. . "All men everywhere,"—that is, wherever his people are: He knows where they are, and will search out his sheep. This command is like, "Lazarus, come forth!" It is not a mere letter command, but a living command; that is what the Lord is pleased to make it—a living command: no room for duty-repentance here.

Peter's exhortation to Simon Magus I have, as you know, disposed of in a former letter, and that in a manner that no one can gainsay.

Again: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Well, and "except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven;" but is it the duty of the creature to regenerate his own soul? And so a declaration of the necessity of repentance no more implies it was their duty than it was their duty to regenerate their own souls. It's being their duty to repent with a repentance which is unto life and salvation, is an inference that men unwarrantably and un-scripturally draw from such scriptures as these. The necessity of repentance, and fruits meet for repentance, is to be preached unto all men. It is a testimony which God will own and bless, only let that testimony rest upon right grounds. But these duty-faith men dare not admit the new covenant in its own order into their system;—it would spoil the flesh-pleasing, eloquent, Pelagian, part of their oratory. But, my good Theophilus, be not thou like unto them.

Again: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The wrath of God abideth on him! Of course it does; it came upon all men by their fall in Adam, and he who is not born of God is still under that wrath. None can savingly believe but those ordained to eternal life; is it, or was it, their duty to make their Creator before the foundation of the world ordain them to eternal life? The lost have no vital relationship to the new covenant, and, therefore, it is neither their duty nor their privilege savingly to believe. Again; "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Well, my good Theophilus, we have a very plain answer to this question—here it is, John x. 26: "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep;" but men infer that it was their duty savingly to believe: that is what men infer, but the Saviour does not say so; his explanation is, "ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." I am sure you, my good Theophilus, will prefer the wheat to the chaff, the duty faith doctrine is the chaff, the Saviour's explanation is the wheat; and what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.

"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins;" but they believe not, because they were not of his sheep: nor does the Saviour tell them that they could believe, or that it was their duty to savingly believe.

"And when he is come, he will reprove (convince) the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not on me." Does this mean the sin of unbelief merely? no, certainly not. Take the words in their proper connection, you then get the sense: of sin, because they believe not in me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. Now, then, no one can rightly, savingly believe in Christ unless he be convinced of his state as a sinner before God; and as no one does by nature, or can believe savingly in Christ, therefore, in order that they may believe in Him, the Holy Spirit convinces them of sin; of sin, because without this conviction they do not believe in me, and then being convinced of sin, they then become convinced of the perfection of the righteousness of Christ; of righteousness, because I go to my Father; and then they go on to be convinced of the final negative put upon the Prince of Darkness; but what has this beautiful order of the Holy Spirit's work to do with the soul-deceiving doctrine of duty faith? —Again: "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

The Scriptures bring home to every reasonable man's bosom a conviction of their truth; and it is the duty of every man to act according to the light thus brought to him; but if some be given up to a reprobate mind, and so deny the truth of the Scriptures, does it follow that, because they close their eyes to those convictions of which they are capable, that it is, therefore, their duty to be in possession of what God alone can bestow? But does the Apostle allude to the infidel at all? Does he not allude to professors who pervert the truth, and so in reality deny the true record, or witness, or testimony (for any one of these words will answer to the original, which God hath given of his Son? And this is the record, or testimony, that God Hath Given, not offered, but hath given to us eternal life, and this life is where it can never be lost, it is in his Son. Now he (as all freewillers do) that deny the certainty of this life, maketh God a liar.

Thus, my good Theophilus, you will understand the Scriptures much better without the doctrine of duty-faith than with it, as it is clear to you that if it be the duty of all men savingly to believe in Christ, then the new covenant loses its force and meaning. A testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no force at all while the testator liveth; but Jesus is risen to carry out every item of that testament which his death forever confirmed. And you know this is all our salvation and all our desire. But how shall those professors escape who neglect this great salvation? A poor sensible sinner will never fatally neglect this salvation. His language is, I am poor and sorrowful. Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high!

And you know also that the Apostles were unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are lost, because they have told the truth concerning them; and in them that are saved, because they have told the truth concerning them also; and the truth they have told concerning each is, that the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded; that the Lord had mercy on whom he would, and whom he would he hardened; that all by nature were alike; that it was grace that made men to differ. Thus were the Apostles unto God a sweet savor of Christ by telling out that truth which wins the election of grace to Christ, and conquers and confounds the others, and puts it out of their power to overthrow the truth or the counsel of God. His enemies shall be clothed with shame; but upon Himself shall his crown flourish.

"I gave her space to repent." This is the repentance of reformation which was her duty; but giving space to repent is one thing, to give repentance itself is another—quite another thing.

"How much sorer punishment!" Yes, certainly, apostate, malicious, persecuting professors, no doubt, treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. It was their duty to abstain from that willful conduct which they knew to be wrong. A Little One.

Theophilus will perceive that I have here run through those Scriptures quoted in a piece on page 194 of last month's "Vessel." The writer of that piece signs himself, "Let's have all the truth." As I cannot, in my letters to you, take any more notice of him, I hope someone signing himself "Let's have nothing but the Truth" will teach him the way of God more perfectly.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 28 - pages 3ff 1857

The Song of Solomon examined

My Good Theophilus.—I hope the Song of Songs still has a place in your heart; but deep and many will be your trials to make you know that song which none can learn but them that are redeemed from among men. This Song of Songs begins in the soul by the manifestations to it of Divine favor. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy love is better than wine." Thus you know that wherever sin and wrath have made wounds, there the love of Jesus shows effectually its sympathies, its interests, and its delights. Wrath is no more. What does my good Theophilus say to this? Are you brought to see the completeness there is of contrast between Law and Gospel?—that in the one there is nothing but wrath, in the other nothing but love; so that the change of state from wrath eternal to love everlasting is in greatness unspeakable. Now, if you are with Him in that love, and are not angry with Him because He loves onto the end, and because there is no separation from his love, and because its immutability is demonstrated and sealed by his atoning death—if, with these features of his love, you are not angry with Him, then you have on your side this his own testimony that "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me;" and if not offended, then you are pleased, and will seek the tokens of his love with—let Him "kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;" for not the literal purest blood of the grape can cheer us as his love can cheer us. His love thinketh no evil of us, nor ever thinks it does too much for us; and if you have in your heart an abiding place for the testimony of his love, then, if his love be not yet manifested, it surely will be; for if the law of love be thus written in your heart, then by that law you will dwell forever in his love, its language is, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

What, then, will be the path in which this love will constrain you to walk? It will be a path of increasing divine endearments; every relation of his name will be as a fragrant medicine poured forth. "Because of the savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth. Therefore the virgins (the hidden ones) love thee." You will, therefore, walk in his name; and this name will, in all ways, meet everything in all ways for you. It meets the holiness, and justice, and law of God for you; it has met the curse of the law for you; it has met sin and death for you; it meets every one of your needs; and will continue with you and bring you to all that Jesus Himself is come to; for you are to be like Him and with Him, and so continue forever, for his name shall endure forever. You need no other name under heaven, nor in heaven, but the name of Jesus.

Now, in this next, this fourth verse of the Song of Songs, we have a distinction between the staid experience of the established Christian and the glowing delight of the little one just brought into the liberty of the Gospel—the one, conscious of his weakness, and of the heavy hindrances hanging about him, and of the miry experiences into which he gets—the "waters of temptation and tribulation, like a flood, around him, sighs, "Draw me;" but the little ones not yet come into these depths, being already brought near, and their feet, made like hinds' feet, being thus free, they can run. "We will run after thee. We can run through hoops, and leap over walls. We can tread the world beneath our feet. We can run, and not be weary."

Then comes in the older Christian, just with a quiet sort of testimony; but hardly allowed to speak among these noisy little ones, but does just get a word in edgewise. "The King—and where the word of a king is, there is power—the King hath brought me into his chambers." This is a good solid testimony; but not half glowing and flourishing enough for the little ones. "We will be glad, and rejoice in Thee! We will remember thy love more than wine! The upright love Thee!" Almost calling in question the reality of the love of the steady and established Christian. The upright love Thee! Yes, it is a truth that the upright love Him, and these little children playing in the streets of Jerusalem, while the old fathers, with the staff of promise in their hand for very age, are just standing up under the city walls of salvation, and sunning themselves a little,— these little ones, I say, do not love the Lord so much as they think they do, and whereas these fathers in the faith love the Lord more than these little ones, perhaps, will give them credit for.

It would, perhaps, be difficult to decide which these little ones are most in love with, the truth itself, or their own comforts. Whereas the true fathers in the faith have undergone a weaning from the breasts of consolation, and the great feast of the Gospel is substituted for the mere sensible comforts of the Gospel, and so they are brought to live by and upon the fullness of the Saviour, the immutability of the counsel of God, and the strong meat of an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David, their hearts are fixed; the truth itself, God Himself, are the objects of their hope, their decision, their supreme affection. The truth enters into their understanding. There is stable judgment in their goings; their comforts come and go; but the truth abides with them, while their confidence in the truth is very great. "Though he slay me," says one, "yet will I trust in Him." "Though a host should encamp against me," says another. "My heart shall not fear: though war, should rise against me, in this will I be confident." In what would he be confident, but in that which he had just described (Psa. xxvii. 1): "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" But this is a state of things we little ones have yet to learn; for when our comforts are taken away we grow peevish, and, like Jonah, think we do well to be angry even unto death; but even this is one step towards a further knowledge of our own hearts, and towards a demonstration of the faithfulness of the Lord, and a proof of how much confidence can be put in the flesh. But we shall meet with these little ones again, if we should be favored to go on with this Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

As, then, you are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, you will walk in those paths which shall bring you thereto. Let me, then, in closing this letter, go on in that path a little further, where we have a twofold unmixed contrast "I am black, but comely as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon."

"Black." Here we have sin — black with sin; death—black with death and wrath. Are we, therefore, meet for any work?" Behold," saith the prophet (Ezek. xv. 4), "it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst thereof is burned." Is it meet for any work? Thus are we in the first Adam blackened by sin and death, and consumed by the righteous wrath of God, being by nature children of wrath even as others.

Black! alas, it is not mere skin-deep blackness, not mere personal blackness,— it is a blackness of person which stands connected with the blackness of darkness forever.

And what creature-power can alter any one of these four—sin, death, wrath, hell? Sin will be sin still; the deed is done; all have sinned; all are throughout corrupted. Death—who can stay its-hand, or say unto it, what doest thou?

Wrath—who can hold its winds in his fists? Who can bind its waters in a garment? Who can meet its devouring fire? Who can drive away its impenetrable clouds? and who can grasp and neutralize the thunderbolts of Heaven? I am black! and here, but for the mercy of our God, we must stop,—and that forever; but, blessings forever on the Lamb, it is also written, we are comely,— yes, in oneness with Jesus, in sacred relationship to, Him we are comely, free from sin, free from death, free from wrath, free from the bottomless pit.

And this blackness and this comeliness are contrary one to the other; and especially are the qualities of each as they dwell in us contrary one to the other. So that the blackness forming a large part of ourselves, we do still love (after the flesh) darkness rather than light, because its deeds are evil, and every kind of sin is perfectly natural to us. But then we have our comely as well as our uncomely parts. The comely, certainly, is stronger than the uncomely, so that our knowledge of Jesus prevails over our natural ignorance of Him, our love to Him prevails over our nature enmity against Him; and our decision for Him prevails over all the capriciousness of the flesh against Him. Faith cleaves unto Him, and that by the power of God; if this give way, we are gone, and are turned into infidels; therefore, knowing we stand by faith, we desire not to be high-minded, but to take heed lest we fall. Shall we not then still seek grace whereby to stand fast in the comeliness of Him in whom is all our completeness before God?

And I am sure, my good Theophilus, you must be delighted with that testimony which shows that in that oneness with the Saviour we are reckoned not according to our first Adam-self, but according to the second Adam-self; so that in this oneness with Jesus we can never die. Our real self, therefore, is in that comeliness we have in Jesus,—this is "our real, substantial, permanent self; the other, the old Adam-self, was crucified, and must die, and pass away, and be no more; and so far does the apostle carry this idea of our real self, consisting of what we are by regeneration and in Christ, that he says of that which is so perfectly natural to us after the flesh, that "It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me."

Most excellent Theophilus, what a sweet hope hast thou!—in a Father's love, in a Saviour's work, in the Holy Spirit's mighty power, and in the sure testimony of eternal truth. So lives A Little One

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 29 - pages 30ff 1857

More on the Song of Solomon – Warning against duty-faith

My Good Theophilus, let us again go on a little further with those excellent things which are written unto us. I closed my last letter to you with some remarks upon the contrast between our first and second Adam self, the one black, and the other comely: as the tents of Kedar and as the curtains of Solomon. Here we have a strong and beautiful illustration of the contrast; in the one we have the black, the goat's hair, and smoky shattered tents of the wilderness; in the other we have the royal pavilion of the Promised Land.

My good Theophilus, what a mercy complete and eternal is this; that while in the first Adam and ourselves, in nature, heart, lip, and life, we are but poor, sinful, benighted, mortal, dying creatures, that in our oneness with the King, we are all fair even as he is all fair, and have in this oneness with him conformity to him, to his royal and heavenly dwelling, and all things therein; and it is by what we are in him that we shall appear with acceptance before the judgment seat of Christ, for if we receive Christ Jesus we receive everything, and if we receive him not we receive nothing, and if we live in him and walk in him then our works are works of faith, and he that believeth hath everlasting life; and thus we must be rewarded according to the nature of our works, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be bad, and without faith it is impossible to please God, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin ; thus, then, they that have in the gospel sense of the word done good are they that have believed in Jesus and have received him after the due order, that is after the order of his eternal priesthood, after the order also of eternal election in him, and after the order of his quickening power, so that you have a living working faith.

Now, my good Theophilus, be careful to follow me here, and mind what I say; it is this, that you will by and by have to leave the black part of your character, and all your tents of Kedar-like weaknesses, and then you will have no character left to be judged by but the character you have in Christ, because Jesus Christ hath taken all your sins away and redeemed you from the curse of the law, and swallowed up death in victory; but will he take away your works of faith and labors of love? no, but he will (however humble they are) own them and partly identify you by them, but more completely will he identify you by what you are in him, and by the book of life;" it is by these two that infants are identified; for if infants can die in Adam they can, through grace, live in Jesus, and their names are written in heaven, or there they could never enter. Is it not, then, delightful to see that our wilderness character, faulty as it is, must happily for us come to an end? a new name is given, and the former not to be remembered nor come into mind.

And as the tents of Kedar were but poor, weak, temporal dwellings, so are our poor bodies; as by the time those who travelled through the valley of Baca, to appear before God; as, by the time they arrived toward the end of their journey their tents were but poor, weather-beaten, shattered dwellings, and they would be glad of better dwellings, so it will be with us—we shall desire to "depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Well, then, here is not a house only in which the prodigal shall live; but while forgiveness meets him before he gets to the house, there are for him, when he arrives, the robe, the shoes, the ring, and everything to make him happy. He did not bring any of it with him, it was provided freely and specially for him. Well, look at him now; can you now take him for anything but the son of the noble, resembling the children of a king? But apart from his father's house he was black as the tents of Kedar, but now comely as the pavilion of Solomon, or the peaceful king. You may depend upon it, that there is no God like unto our God; and this true believers of old well knew, when they said, "Leave us not, neither forsake us, oh God of our salvation."

But I must come back again to my work, which is before me. Now, my good Theophilus, when you were first made to seek after eternal things, you ran about duty-doing, working, and slaving, until you were as black as an Ethiopian, and your mother's (Eve's) children were angry with you for not being better, and they made you keeper for a time of their duty-faith vineyard, but all their grapes —their doctrines— proved to be to you but sour grapes, and no wonder that you turned rather sour too; and no wonder that your teeth were rather set on edge. But you knew at that time very little of your own vineyard. You knew a little of it, but not enough clearly to distinguish and appreciate it as you now do. You now know what kind of vineyard yours is, and it is that which you cannot but keep; you would not, you could not give it up, but, like Naboth, you would not for all the Ahab's in the world give it up; and though Naboth was deprived of his earthly and typical vineyard, yet he was not deprived of the thing thereby signified.

Now, your vineyard is one into which the enemy cannot enter, yea, he is punished and as good as slain in the attempt (as you may see Isaiah xxvii.) It is a vineyard of red wine, the pure blood of the grape. Jehovah himself keeps it, and he waters it continually, and lest any should hurt it he keeps it night and day. Now, my good Theophilus, this is the vineyard for you to keep, for you may depend upon it that if you attempt to keep what the Lord does not keep, you will never succeed, for where the Lord is not with you, you must fail; but if you are aiming to keep in a free grace vineyard, and holding fast the title deed or testimony thereof, then no fatal evil can ever befall you; God is with you, and you with him; you must be a worker together with him, for without him you can do nothing. Well then, just suffer a word of exhortation; keep to your own vineyard, eat the first and full ripe grapes.—go not into another vineyard, for their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter, and they embitter the mind against God's truth, and salt the taste of none but such as are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Keep then, my good Theophilus, to your own vine and to your own fig-tree. You know it is written that whoso keepeth the fig-tree shall eat the fruit thereof, and he that waits on his Master shall he honored. No one knows the sweetness of abiding faithfully by the truth, but he who experiences and practices the same.

You may wish people, because you are rather dark, not to look upon you, but they will. The Pharisee will say to you, "stand by I am holier than thou," and the world will at times look rather coolly upon you, but you must put up with this. The children of God can receive your explanation of how it is you became so sunburnt. They can see that it not the Sun of Righteousness that has been shining upon you, but the sun of duty-faith tyranny (Rev. xvi. 9), and you will never be able to get your enemies to understand you, for the righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring. (Prov. xxv. 26.) Now there are two reasons for this; first, because every natural man is in some shape or another righteous in his own eyes, but for the righteous man, who knows his own heart, to make confession to the self-righteous wicked man, would quite shock (in presence) the natural man; and, secondly, the carnal mind is enmity against the truth, and, therefore, the truth is very distasteful to the same. It is to him as a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring. Well, then, what is to be done, but to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils? for wherein is he to be accounted of? Turn, then, from man, and look unto the Lord thy God, and see with what willingness he speaks to us; not by what we are in our sin, but by what we are by the substitutional work of that Bridegroom who "rejoiced as a strong man to run a race." Note his kind answer to real, heart-felt prayer:—"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest; where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by or from the flocks of thy companions" This is a prayer of love unfeigned, of hunger real, of weariness felt. "Whom my soul loveth;" here is the love. "Where thou feedest;" here is the hunger. "Where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon;" here is the weariness. "For why should I be as one that turneth aside?" here is the reasoning. Why should I despair? I love him, and I never should have loved him if he had not first loved me. "The flocks of thy companions;" here is the laudable envying. None can be so happy as those who are his companions, or so safe as those who are the flock of his companions.

My good Theophilus, if you have in your heart this prayer and this heavenly reasoning, then you are a member of that church to which belongs the recorded answer, "If thou know not, oh thou fairest among women!" No part of the answer is given with more emphasis or intensity than that which relates to what the church is in and by him. This is the part that cost him his life, tried his love to the very uttermost, and yet his love was the same at the end as at the beginning. "Oh, thou fairest." What does it mean? Is it mere granulation?—is it a passing expression of admiration?—is it something to flatter? No, it is not; it is a divine, a solid, an eternal truth; it will be the church's name, and state forever. Well may the church say, "Thou whom my soul loveth!" and in and with which joins humbly A Little One.

Epistles to Theophilus Letter 30 - pages 57ff 1857

Song continued: Solemn prayer, gospel government, judgment and love

My Good Theophilus.—What know you of soul weariness and of willingness to follow those footsteps of the ancients which lead to the rock that is higher than you? for so is the church directed: "Go thy way by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids (thy little ones) beside the shepherd's tents.¹"

I must not stop here to trace out the footsteps of the flock. Suffice it to say that in going from pasture to pasture, they often had to travel very rough and dangerous paths, and by which various lameness, diseases, broken bones, and frights befell them, but they have a good Shepherd who brings again that which is driven away, who heals the diseased, binds up that which is broken, and saves that which was lost; and he does hereby make the voice of his truth so well known to his sheep that they will follow no other, but will flee from them; and when they come to a shepherd's tent they soon find whether such shepherd has received his orders from the Chief Shepherd or not. When they meet with a shepherd of perverse mind not sparing the flock, but are, nevertheless, very pitiful to the bond children; and while they would spare Agag, would slay the true shepherds of Israel, what few there are, from such they flee.

These lovers of the bond children, but not of the free, tread down by the foot of reproach the green pastures of the new covenant, and with the same satanic foot they foul the still waters of living truth, but the sheep will not hear them.

I will, my good Theophilus, here just set before you two or three of the footsteps of the flock.

First. Solemn and heartfelt prayer; but the Lord alone can bring us, or suffer us to be brought, into that overwhelmed state which shall make us feel as though we were about to be buried alive; as though our destruction was nigh at hand; as though sin and circumstances and enemies would swallow us up, and refuge seem to fail us; then it is, with sighing deep, we breathe out, "from the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee, when I am overwhelmed lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Psalm li. 2.) This secret and earnest cry to God you will find to be one of your sweetest privileges on earth, "Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and who seeth in secret;" fellowship with the saints as far (but no further) as is spiritual is profitable, but nothing to be compared with direct fellowship with God. Hence you will prize the tent of that shepherd who feeds the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood; for in hearing such you do have direct fellowship (at such times) with God. The minister does not know; the people do not know; none but the Lord and you know what is going on in your own soul. Well, then, let your requests by prayer and supplication be made known to God, but beware of men, for in many of your troubles to which of the saints will you turn? Ah! turn to none, but turn unto the Lord thy God, and wait on him continually; he will hear you, and do you the needed good.

The righteousness of the Saviour's government is another footstep of the flock. (Isaiah xxxii.) A king shall reign in righteousness. He having atoned for sin, and having brought in eternal righteousness, has authority to reign by pardon. If the soul have but a grain of true faith in his atonement, that soul is safe for ever; for sin, awful as it is, cannot be infinite in the same absolute sense that his atonement is infinite;

the one has in it all the evil of creature doings; the other has in it all the excellency and power of Immanuel God with us. You cannot set sin in too bad a light, but neither must we, on the other hand, so contract the atonement as though it was not able, infinitely able, with certainty, eternal to compass, and more than compass, the innumerable sins of those for whom he died. Why, then, my good Theophilus, have you been so kept back from sheltering in the rock as you would? it is that you may first know the greatness of that atonement made for sin, and that in knowing much more of yourself, you may feel and see that you have work to be done, which nothing but this atonement can do; and that the very first law of the Saviour's righteous government consists in being infinitely more than a match for your mountainous guilt; that he reigns not to condemn you, but to justify you; not to hate you, but to love you; not to kill you, but to keep you alive; not to make you a slave, but to set you free; so that being free, you will use your freedom to serve and honor him, and so will have your fruit unto holiness. Now, mind this, and look closely to what I say to you here: you have your fruit unto holiness. That is as when the Israelites abode by the covenant they were under, their land yielded her increase, and God, even their own God, blessed them. They then had abundance of first fruits, which they brought to the temple of the Lord, thus making a holy use of what was given to them. They honored the Lord with their substance. Now, just so, spiritually, it will be with you; that just in proportion as you are kept under the government of pardoning and reigning grace, so just in proportion will you have much fruit, much prayer, much praise, much brotherly kindness, and much testimony to bring in to God; so that in this sense none shall appear before him empty; so that while this King reigns in righteousness, his people, by faith, walk in gospel righteousness with him.

Thus, then, solemn prayer and gospel government are two of the footsteps which lead not only to where the flock shall rest at noon, when the scorching rays of persecution or tribulation fall up on them, but where they shall also rest forever.

But the third and last step I will here mention is that implied in the words that "princes shall rule in judgment." This judgment is, he that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be judged (for so would be the more proper rendering of the original.)

Now, he that believeth. Why, what can be more delightful, what can be so suitable— he that believeth. You know that all the afflicted and needy who came to the Saviour in the days of his humiliation, came believing in his ability to do all that was needed to be done ; and you know, also, that everyone was heard and answered.

The princes (the apostles) ruled, not by any power or law of their own, but by the laws and powers committed unto them from on high, and they so ruled as to make the Saviour unto him that believeth an hiding place from the wind of false doctrine, a covert from the tempests of Sinai, and from everything adverse to our eternal welfare ; and that he is in his saving government as rivers of waters in a dry place, and what place can be more dry than your soul at times. And you know that whenever it is as a watered garden, it is so by Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit being in you as a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and this brings you to the rock where the weary may rest, for we who believe do enter into rest.

But he that believeth not shall be judged; that is, dealt with according to the nature and amount of his sins, and having no oneness with the Saviour, they must be judged apart from him, by those laws which they have transgressed; as for them there is no law of freedom, they must be judged by the law of bondage.

The scriptures assign several reasons for their being thus judged; one is, that all are sinners in Adam, so by the disobedience of one many are made sinners; another reason is, that their names were not written

from the foundation of the world in the Lamb's book of life ; another is, that the Saviour laid down his life for the sheep only; these, therefore, are to return and come to Zion; another reason is, that they were never anything else but enemies (some in one form and some in another) to the truth; and thus you see there is, on the one hand, no praise due to the saved that they are saved; neither is it any fault of the lost that they are not saved; their fault is, first, in original sin; secondly, in their personal acts; and so it is that he hath mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. And my good Theophilus, be you thankful that you are not now, though you once were, so hardened as to say if things be so then there is unrighteousness with God: but as I hope, in due time, to give you a letter on the last judgment, I will say no more upon this solemn subject at present. Look, then, back at the prayer, and then again at the answer— "tell me O thou whom my soul loveth," &c. If thou know not, O thou fairest among women: nothing but kindness will follow upon such a testimony as this, according to the answer to prayer, as here written, so will he do; when we are led thus to call upon him; and less then the least, as I am, I can well witness the truth of what I here say, that he is rich unto all those that call upon him—that call upon him in truth.

It is true there are some things I could never prevail with him to grant to me—such as to keep me constantly alive to him, to be reconciled to all the dispensations of his providence, and to be so given up to his service, that neither sin, nor Satan, nor the world, should have, in any sense, any power over me, but I still find the seventh chapter to the Romans holds me fast; yet, forever blessed be his holy name; even this is his way of shewing us what we are, and of setting our souls on fire for his heavenly name, and for that completeness we have in him, and for the sovereignty, almightiness, and certainty of the testimonies and operations of the Holy Spirit of God; seeing, then, that things are so, what can more tend to quench the comfort of the Holy Spirit, or to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, than putting anything in the place of that law of life in Christ Jesus, which makes us free from the law of sin and death. Again, then, I say, my good Theophilus, you must walk by faith, or you cannot walk with God; in yourself you are, you will be, a poor worse than nothing mortal, and can be honest only by contending for the faith delivered unto the saints, the faith which makes you in Christ Jesus your Lord and your God, free, forever free. You certainly will not sin, that grace may abound, but you certainly will confess your sin unto the Lord, with a desire that grace may abound, and you abound thereby in every good word and work.

I hardly dare in this letter, seeing I am nearly at the end thereof, to commence a few words to you upon the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses of the first chapter of Solomon's song, and especially as those verses are very difficult to understand. "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaohs chariots." Well, suppose I leave both the horses and chariots until my next, for I am sure we shall have no room for anything else next month; indeed, it will be pretty good work if I can get horses, chariots, and all their splendid caparison into the space of one letter.

There is, then, one little easy clause upon which we may, in conclusion, say just a word or two. "I have compared thee, O my love." I tailed this a little clause; well, as to words, it is, but as to meaning, what can be greater? "My love!" Why, there is not one new covenant truth in which this is not the language of the most high unto his church, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." What is eternal election? what ordination to eternal life? what the gift of his dear Son? what all the Saviour did, suffered, and accomplished? what effectual calling? what infallible long suffering: the Lord bearing with us what, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? what goodness and mercy following us all the days of our life or what, the very chastisements and afflictions he lays upon us? what are his dealings with us from first to last? what is all, and what will all be, but one infinite and endless carrying out of the Divine nomination, "O my love?" There is infinite intensity. Yes, his people have all his love; it has been settled upon them before the world began; he will not know them by any other name. "Thy Maker is thine

husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, thy Redeemer the holy one of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called." The church is his bride, and this is one of the names he gives her, and as might easily be shown; all the other names he puts upon her, accord entirely with this one—" O my love." The old covenant church was married to him after the law of a carnal commandment, apostatized from him, and became a harlot, for every apostatized church is a harlot, but the true church is married to him after the law of an endless life. "O my love," is a nomination she will never lose: unto her, God is love, nor could all her sin ever tempt the Lord to hate her. His whole heart and his whole soul is set upon her.

Now, my good Theophilus, it is very difficult to love what you cannot see; well, then, you must walk in love with something which you do see, as an evidence that you love him whom you have not yet seen, that is, you must walk in decision for the truth, and in practical love to the brethren, and then, by and by, you will get into the banqueting house, where his banner over you will be love, and when it is well with thee, remember A Little One.