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Was John Wesley a Pretender?

There is nothing more deadly than self-deception. An individual who has believed a lie of his or her own making has a vested interest in seeing to it that they are not shown to be a liar. That being the case, there can hardly be a more deadly self-deception than the belief that one has been born again when, in fact, one has not. Nonetheless, such is the mentality of a multitude who contentedly coast down that broad road to Hell.

Unfortunately, since these folks are the ones who have told themselves the BIG LIE, they can hardly be expected to readily admit their own deception. They would rather go on believing God will accept them for this reason or the other.

Jesus described the horror that awaits these poor deluded souls this way:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of

heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

(Matthew 7:21–23)

Notice what Jesus said: “I never knew you.” Most folks will not readily accept the fact that salvation has always been a matter of *WHO YOU KNOW* rather than *WHAT YOU DO* or *WHAT YOU SAY*. By that I *mean*, if you know the One Who is Truth, and you believe *in Him*, you will be saved. The question to be answered is two-fold: 1) Where can you find the Truth; and 2) How can you be found *in Him*?

I’ll leave it up to you to decide where you think you can find the Truth this side of the Abyss. Here I want to draw attention to the fact that the first condition of salvation has nothing to do with what you do or say, it has everything to do with whether you have repented and been born again. I am going to do that by showing you that part of John Wesley’s *Journal* that recounts his “conversion” experience. You can then compare his experience with your own experience and with that of Charles Finney. (See “Charles Finney: My Conversion to Christ,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1992.)

Before I do that, however, I want to focus on the second part of the question I

A Question for the Sleeper: Are You Aware You Are Snoring?

The things God has called me to teach are not meant for the ears of Pretenders. Therefore, I believe He has taught me—over the past decade—many of the characteristic signs Pretenders exhibit so that I might be better able to recognize and avoid them. Under those circumstances, I thought it only right in this issue to give Pretenders an opportunity to recognize themselves for what they are. That is, I thought I should at least try to awaken them to the point where they might understand that, although they do not themselves know they are sleeping, their state is quite obvious to those who are fully awake. It is, after all, generally acknowledged that snoring indicates sleep.

Since I have not been called to evangelize the unsaved, I have chosen to use words originally spoken by John Wesley, a man who saw multitudes awakened under his ministry as an Evangelist in the 18th century. Although much of what Wesley has stated stands in need of some correction in the stark light of the things God has called me to *restore* and teach True Believers in these Last Days, I am certain the basic Truth of the Gospel message he preached will still soar like an arrow into the heart of one who has ears to hear. I am just as certain the Pretenders who are enjoying their sleep will reject any and all attempts to rouse them. Such is the folly of the wicked. Having said that, I should explain a few things for the benefit of those of you who, for one reason or another, have an interest in learning what I teach.

Jesus and the Apostles exhorted all who heard them to “repent and believe in

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Letters to the Editor

In September, we sent out a complimentary copy of *The Voice of Elijah Update* to all our current subscribers. Hopefully, you have had time to review it by now. Our goal was to provide each of you the opportunity to see firsthand the additional information that is available to our Monthly Contributors in the months between *The Voice of Elijah* newsletters. Many Monthly Contributors have commented on how much they enjoy having the added information to digest each month. Before participating in the Monthly Contributor program they, like you, had to wait three months between publications. And when one is hungry for the Truth, that can seem like an eternity. If you, like our Monthly Contributors, are hungry for more, I hope you will consider joining with them in supporting *The Voice of Elijah*. Not only will you receive *The Voice of Elijah Update* in those months between *The Voice of Elijah* newsletters, but you will also be helping this ministry produce the information that you hunger for at a faster rate and for a larger number of people.

Gift Ideas

The year is rapidly coming to a close and Christmas is not far off, believe it or not. That being the case, I want to encourage those of you who have benefited from what you read every quarter in the pages of this newsletter to offer that same opportunity to those you love by giving them a gift subscription to *The Voice of Elijah* this Christmas. What better gift is there than the gift of Truth? And what better way is there to show you care? That's why we are making available a special gift subscription offer this holiday season. See the display ad on the front of this issue for all the details.

Other great gift ideas include the recently released cassette tape series, *The Way, The Truth, The Life*. This 8-tape set with illustrated syllabus presents a dynamic series of lessons taught by Larry Harper that will lead the recipient through the biblical basis for *The Teaching* presented in *The Voice of Elijah* newsletter. *The Way, The Truth, The Life* is the most complete source available for anyone who wants to know what we believe, and it provides an excellent foundation for the information provided in *The Voice of Elijah*. See the display ad opposite the Order Form at the back of this issue for more details.

Any of the items listed in this publication will provide the people on your Christmas list with the opportunity to learn about the Truth of *The Teaching* and to receive the most precious gift of all—eternal life.

In closing, we at *The Voice of Elijah* thank you for your continued support of this ministry over the last four years and ask you to join with us in praying we will reach those who are searching for Truth in the years to come.

Sara Brooks

Wesley

From Page 1

posed above: How can you be “found in Him, not having a righteousness of” your “own derived from {the} Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which {comes} from God on the basis of faith” (Phil. 3:9)? Specifically, I want to discuss a singular prerequisite of that all-important experience—honest repentance that results in the new birth—without which no one can become a member of the Body of Jesus Christ and thereafter be found in Him.

Repent and Believe

Let’s begin by looking at how succinctly Mark describes the substance of the message Jesus preached:

And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

(Mark 1:14–15)

Concerning the repentance mentioned in this passage, Luke tells us Jesus said this on another occasion:

Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were {greater} sinners than all {other} Galileans, because they suffered this {fate}? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were {worse} culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

(Luke 13:1–5)

Luke also says that, when Jesus revealed the hidden message of the Old Testament to His disciples after His resurrection, He told them they were to preach the same message He had preached:

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

(Luke 24:44–48)

“The Greek word translated ‘repent’ actually has a meaning more or less the same as the English word apologize.”

Did you notice Jesus said “repentance for forgiveness of sins”? That phrase adds a bit to our understanding of the matter. Repentance is necessary to obtain God’s forgiveness so that one might be born again. Several passages in the Book of Acts indicate that 1) the Apostles did just as Jesus had commanded them, and 2) the purpose of repentance is to obtain God’s forgiveness:

And Peter {said} to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

(Acts 2:38)

“Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”

(Acts 3:19)

“Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.”

(Acts 8:22)

The following passage illustrates the meaning of the Greek term usually translated “repent”:

“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

(Luke 17:3–4)

That passage tells us the Greek word translated “repent” actually has a meaning more or less the same as the English word *apologize*. From that we can see God expects us to apologize for the sins we have committed against Him before He will forgive us. So now we know the original Gospel message emphasized the need for people to apologize in order to establish a friendly relationship with God. The difficulty in that regard for most “Christians” today lies in the fact that the “easy-believism” advocates have thoroughly convinced them they haven’t done anything all that bad, at least not anything for which they need to offer a sincere “apology” to the loving, all-caring God they preach.

You can easily understand why “repentance” is a mere formality for these deluded folks, if indeed it is even mentioned in connection with the new birth. They think the most one has to do to “become a Christian” is to say, “I’m sorry for my sins” and “presto!” you are a “Christian.” Unfortunately, there is a bit more than that to the new birth.

You see, God has us over that proverbial barrel. He “grants” an opportunity for repentance only to those who meet certain specific criteria. Lest some fool Pretender hasten to contradict that little bit of Truth, let me point out I didn’t say that God “grants” repentance. I merely said He “grants” an opportunity for repentance. However, the Apostles put that simple Truth more bluntly. They said God “grants” repentance. While standing before the Jewish Council in Jerusalem, Peter and the rest of the Apostles who followed Jesus put it this way:

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

(Acts 5:30–31)

The Apostle Paul said exactly the same thing in a letter to Timothy:

“‘Easy-believism’ advocates have thoroughly convinced them they haven’t done anything all that bad, at least not anything for which they need to offer a sincere ‘apology’ to the loving, all-caring God they preach.”

And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.

(2 Timothy 2:24–25)

We could talk at some length concerning the fact that the only way anyone is ever going to gain “the knowledge of the truth” that I teach is if God first “grants” them “repentance leading to” it. But that’s an entirely different subject, and since I have not been called to evangelize the unregenerate, I’ll let it go at that. However, as an introduction to the subject, I refer you to what John Calvin wrote. [See “The Natural Man Is an Idiot (When It Comes to the Truth)” *The Voice of Elijah*, October 1993.]

The verb translated “grant” in the two passages I quoted above is a very ordinary Greek verb meaning “to give.” So that makes it unanimous. The Apostles all knew that God “gives” repentance to whomsoever He deems worthy. Consequently, there should be little doubt that it is not sufficient for someone to casually decide they are going to say “I’m sorry.” They must first be “given” something that makes honest “repentance” possible. What do you think that might that be?

Well, Jesus said one of the works of the Holy Spirit is to “convict the world concerning sin”:

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment.”

(John 16:7–8)

The Greek word that Jesus used to describe the “conviction” of the Holy Spirit actually has the meaning of “confront” or “rebuke.” It is the same word He used when He said this:

“And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”

(Matthew 18:15)

The word translated “reprove” in that verse is the same word translated “convict” in John 16:8. That tells us one of the works of the Holy Spirit is to “confront” or “rebuke” the unregenerate so that they might be able to understand the magnitude of their sin, their total lack of righteousness, and the fact that they stand under the judgment of God. Only then can they “repent” with honest sorrow for sin rather than “repenting” because they are facing some difficult circumstance in life. Paul describes the difference between those two types of repentance this way:

For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—[for] I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to {the point of} repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to {the will of} God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to {the will of} God produces a repentance without regret, {leading} to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

(2 Corinthians 7:8–11)

“The Apostles all knew that God ‘gives’ repentance to whomsoever He deems worthy.”

At various times in the history of the Church the Holy Spirit has accomplished a sovereign work of God through a wholesale “convicting” people of sin and “giving” them the opportunity to honestly “repent.” In doing that, God was merely fulfilling what He had promised through the Prophet Joel:

“And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;

And your sons and daughters will prophesy,

Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.

And even on the male and female servants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,

Blood, fire, and columns of smoke.

The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood,

Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered;

For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape,

As the LORD has said,

Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.”

(Joel 2:28–32)

The widespread revivals that occurred during the First and Second Great Awakenings were the direct result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Great multitudes sought salvation by humbly repenting when God sovereignly convicted them of sin. John Wesley (1703–91) preached “hell-fire and damnation” during the First Great Awakening. Charles Finney (1792–1875) preached much the same message during the Second Great Awakening. However, the message these two men preached was secondary to the sovereign working of God’s Holy Spirit as He used the message they preached to “convict” people of their sin, thereby “giving” them opportunity for repentance.

“The widespread revivals that occurred during the First and Second Great Awakenings were the direct result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”

We are on the verge of witnessing the final awesome outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit on “mankind.” (The text in Joel 2:28 literally says “all flesh.”) That sovereign work of God should begin sometime within the next two decades. Keep in mind, however, I’m not *talking about* the giddy happiness and “Praise the Lord!” phoniness associated with the ignorant advocates of the “easy-believism” school of thought. I’m *talking about* the good “old-fashioned” sorrow for sin that was characteristic of those who were saved during the First and Second Great Awakenings.

Do you have doubts whether you have been born again? Let me encourage you to err on the side of caution. If you have already experienced the new birth, you understand exactly what I have explained here because you know all about the incredible conviction of the Holy Spirit that comes when He “rebukes” and the sudden release that follows when He has completed His work of regeneration. Nobody has to tell you that you have been born again. You have an abiding internal “witness” to the Truth. (See “A Question for the Sleeper: Are You Aware You Are Snoring?” in this issue.)

If you are seeking Truth, don’t settle for anything less than the genuine thing. Repentance comes easy to one who joyfully responds to the opportunity offered by the awesome conviction of the Holy Spirit. Repentance does not come at all to the one who has not experienced the heavenly rebuke or the one who has refused to agree with God’s assessment of his or her despicable character. So don’t pay any attention to the arrogant Pretenders who contradict what I have written here. They speak from total ignorance, not knowing anything at all about the new birth.

If you have been born again, you know beyond a shadow of all doubt that the Holy Spirit has accomplished a sovereign work of God in your life. After all, how can anyone apologize to God with a “broken and contrite heart” (Psalm 51:16–17) and not know that God has forgiven him/her?

As you read what John Wesley has

written in his *Journal* keep in mind that he preached to hundreds of thousands during his lifetime and saw great multitudes saved as the Holy Spirit sovereignly convicted them of their sin. Yet, amazingly, what Wesley has written may well indicate his own conversion experience lacked that single all-important ingredient: repentance. Be that as it may, God nevertheless used him to preach the Truth concerning salvation because he was willing to be used. Will John Wesley hear those horrifying words “I never knew you” when he meets Christ face to face? I don’t know. I’ll let you decide that question for yourself.

The portion of the *Journal* included here begins immediately after Wesley returned from Georgia, where he had served as an Anglican missionary for two years and three months. His work in the colony had been a failure, but during that time he had come under the influence of several Moravian missionaries from Herrnhut who taught him concerning the Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith. These, in turn, evidently put him in touch with Peter Böhler, a Moravian missionary to England.

Wesley’s *Journal* indicates he wasted no time in contacting Böhler upon his return to England. It also tells us he set out for Herrnhut less than five months later. It is clear from all this that he gained the things he preached concerning salvation by faith from the Moravians. It is not nearly as clear that he experienced the new birth personally. Did he “repent and believe in the Gospel” when he was rebuked by the Holy Spirit? Or did he decide that all he needed was to believe that he believed? That is, did he decide to believe a delusion? You decide.

John Wesley’s Journal

1738. February 1, *Wed.* —After reading prayers and explaining a portion of Scripture to a large company at the inn, I left Deal, and came in the evening to Faversham.

I here read prayers, and explained the Second Lesson to a few of those who

were called Christians, but were indeed more savage in their behaviour than the wildest Indians I have yet met with.

Fri. 3. —I came to Mr. Delamotte’s at Blendon, where I expected a cold reception. But God had prepared the way before me; and I no sooner mentioned my name, than I was welcomed in such a manner as constrained me to say, ‘Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not! Blessed be ye of the Lord! Ye have shown more kindness in the latter end than in the beginning.’

In the evening I came once more to London, whence I had been absent two years and near four months.

Many reasons I have to bless God, though the design I went upon did not take effect, for my having been carried into that strange land, contrary to all my preceding resolutions. Hereby I trust He hath in some measure ‘humbled me and proved me, and shown me what was in my heart.’ Hereby I have been taught to ‘beware of men.’ Hereby I am come to know assuredly that, if ‘in all our ways we acknowledge God,’ He will, where reason fails, ‘direct our path,’ by lot or by the other means which He knoweth. Hereby I am delivered from the fear of the sea, which I had both dreaded and abhorred from my youth.

Hereby God has given me to know many of His servants; particularly those of the church of Herrnhut.

Hereby my passage is opened to the writings of holy men in the German, Spanish, and Italian tongues. I hope, too, some good may come to others hereby. All in Georgia have heard the word of God. Some have believed, and begun to run well. A few steps have been taken towards publishing the glad tidings both to the African and American heathen. Many children have learned ‘how they ought to serve God,’ and to be useful to their neighbour. And those whom it most concerns have an opportunity of knowing the true state of their infant colony, and laying a firmer foundation of peace and happiness to many generations.

Sat. 4. —I told my friends some of the reasons which a little hastened my re-

turn to England. They all agreed it would be proper to relate them to the Trustees of Georgia.

Accordingly the next morning I waited on Mr. Oglethorpe, but had not time to speak on that head. In the afternoon I was desired to preach at St. John the Evangelist's. I did so on those strong words, 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' I was afterwards informed, many of the best in the parish were so offended, that I was not to preach there any more.

Mon. 6. —I visited many of my old friends, as well as most of my relations. **I find the time is not yet come when I am to be 'hated of all men.'** Oh may I be prepared for that day!

Tues. 7.—(A day much to be remembered.) **At the house of Mr. Weinantz, a Dutch merchant, I met Peter Böhler, Schulus, Richter, and Wensel Neisser, just then landed from Germany.** Finding they had no acquaintance in England, I offered to procure them a lodging, and did so near Mr. Hutton's, where I then was. **And from this time I did not willingly lose any opportunity of conversing with them, while I stayed in London.**

Wed. 8. —I went to Mr. Oglethorpe again, but had no opportunity of speaking as I designed. Afterwards I waited on the Board of Trustees, and gave them a short but plain account of the state of the colony: an account, I fear, not a little differing from those which they had frequently received before; and for which I have reason to believe some of them have not forgiven me to this day.

Sun. 12. —I preached at St. Andrew's, Holborn, on 'Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' Oh, hard sayings! Who can hear them? Here too, it seems, I am to preach no more.

Wed. 15. —I waited on the Trustees again, and gave them in writing the substance of what I had said at the last Board. Whatsoever further questions they asked concerning the state of the province, I likewise answered to the best of my knowledge.

Fri. 17. —**I set out for Oxford with Peter Böhler,** where we were kindly received by Mr. Sarney, the only one now remaining here of many who, at

our embarking for America, were used to 'take sweet counsel together,' and rejoice in 'bearing the reproach of Christ.'

Sat. 18. we went to Stanton Harcourt, to Mr. Gambold, and found my old friend recovered from his *mystic* delusion, and convinced that St. Paul was a better writer than either Tauler or Jacob Behmen. The next day I preached once more at the Castle (in Oxford) to a numerous and serious congregation.

All this time I conversed much with Peter Böhler; but I understood him not, and least of all when he said, *Mi frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia.* 'My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away.'

Mon. 20. —I returned to London. On Tuesday I preached at Great St. Helen's on 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'

Wed. 22. —I was with the Trustees again, to whom I then gave a short account (and afterwards delivered it to them in writing) of the reasons why I left Georgia.

Sun. 26. —I preached at six at St. Lawrence's; at ten in St. Katherine Cree's church; and in the afternoon at St. John's, Wapping. **I believe it pleased God to bless the first sermon most, because it gave most offense;** being indeed an open defiance of that mystery of iniquity which the world calls prudence, grounded on those words of St. Paul to the Galatians, 'As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.'

Mon. 27. —I took coach for Salisbury, and had several opportunities of conversing seriously with my fellow travellers. But endeavouring to mend the wisdom of God by the worldly wisdom of prefacing serious with light conversation, and afterwards following that advice of the *Mystics*, 'Leave them to themselves,' all I had said was written on the sand. 'Lord, lay not this sin to' my 'charge!'

Tues. 28. —I saw my mother once more. The next day I prepared for my journey to my brother at Tiverton. But on Thursday morning, March 2, a message that my brother Charles was dying at Oxford obliged me to set out for that place immediately. Calling at an odd house in

the afternoon, I found several persons there who seemed well-wishers to religion, to whom I spake plainly; as I did in the evening, both to the servants and strangers at my inn.

With regard to my own behaviour, I now renewed and wrote down my former resolutions:

1. To use absolute openness and unreserve with all I should converse with.

2. To labour after continual seriousness, not willingly indulging myself in any the least levity of behaviour, or in laughter, —no, not for a moment.

3. To speak no word which does not tend to the glory of God; in particular, not to talk of worldly things. Others may, nay, must. But what is that to thee? And,

4. To take no pleasure which does not tend to the glory of God; thanking God every moment for all I do take, and therefore rejecting every sort and degree of it which I feel I cannot so thank Him in and for.

March 4, *Sat.* —I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy; and with him Peter Böhler, by whom (in the hand of the great God) **I was, on Sunday the 5th, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved.**

Immediately it struck into my mind, 'Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?' I asked Böhler whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, 'By no means.' I asked, 'But what can I preach?' He said, 'Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.'

Accordingly, Monday the 6th, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered salvation by faith alone was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford. Peter Böhler had many times desired me to speak to him before. But I could not prevail on myself so to do; being still (as I had been many years) a zealous assertor of the impossibility of a death-bed repentance.

Fri. 10. —**Peter Böhler returned to London.**

Tues. 14. —I set out for Manchester with Mr. Kinchin, Fellow of Corpus

Christi, and Mr. Fox, late a prisoner in the city prison. Between five and six we called at Chapel-on-the-Heath, where lived a poor man, sometime prisoner in the Castle of Oxford. He was not at home; but his wife came to us, to whom Mr. Kinchin spoke a few words, which so melted her heart that she burst out into tears, and we went on rejoicing and praising God.

About eight, it being rainy and very dark, we lost our way; but before nine came to Shipston [on Stour], having rode over, I know not how, a narrow foot-bridge, which lay across a deep ditch near the town. After supper I read prayers to the people of the inn, and explained the Second Lesson; I hope not in vain.

The next day we dined at Birmingham, and, soon after we left it, were reproved for our negligence there (in letting those who attended us go without either exhortation or instruction), by a severe shower of hail. At Hednesford, about five, we endeavoured to be more faithful; and all who heard seemed serious and affected.

In the evening we came to Stafford. The mistress of the house joined with us in family prayer. The next morning one of the servants appeared deeply affected, as did the ostler before we went. Soon after breakfast, stepping into the stable, I spake a few words to those who were there. A stranger who heard me said, 'Sir, I wish I was to travel with you'; and when I went into the house, followed me, and began abruptly, 'Sir, I believe you are a good man, and I come to tell you a little of my life.' The tears stood in his eyes all the time he spoke; and we hoped not a word which was said to him was lost.

At Newcastle, whither we came about ten, some to whom we spoke at our inn were very attentive; but a gay young woman waited on us, quite unconcerned. However, we spoke on. When we went away she fixed her eyes, and neither moved nor said one word, but appeared as much astonished as if she had seen one risen from the dead.

Coming to Holmes Chapel about three, we were surprised at being shown into a room where a cloth and plates were laid. Soon after two men came in to dinner. Mr. Kinchin told them, if they

pleased, that gentleman would ask a blessing for them. They stared, and, as it were, consented; but sat still while I did it, one of them with his hat on. We began to speak on turning to God, and went on, though they appeared utterly regardless. After a while their countenances changed, and one of them stole off his hat, and, laying it down behind him, said all we said was true; but he had been a grievous sinner, and not considered it as he ought; but he was resolved, with God's help, now to turn to Him in earnest. We exhorted him and his companion, who now likewise drank in every word, to cry mightily to God, that He would 'send them help from His holy place.'

Being faint in the evening, I called at Altrincham, and there lit upon a Quaker, well skilled in, and therefore (as I soon found) sufficiently fond of, controversy. After an hour spent therein (perhaps not in vain), I advised him to dispute as little as possible; but rather follow after holiness, and walk humbly with his God. Late at night we reached Manchester.

Fri. 17, we spent entirely with Mr. Clayton, by whom, and the rest of our friends here, we were much refreshed and strengthened. Mr. Hoole, the rector of St. Ann's Church, being taken ill the next day, on *Sunday* the 19th, Mr. Kinchin and I officiated at Salford Chapel in the morning, by which means Mr. Clayton was at liberty to perform the service of St. Ann's; and in the afternoon I preached there on those words of St. Paul, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.'

Early in the morning we left Manchester, taking with us Mr. Kinchin's brother, for whom we came, to be entered at Oxford. **We were fully determined to lose no opportunity of awakening, instructing, or exhorting any whom we might meet with in our journey.** At Knutsford, where we first stopped, all we spake to thankfully received the word of exhortation. But at Talk-o'-th'-Hill, where we dined, she with whom we were was so much of a gentlewoman that for near an hour our labour seemed to be in vain. However, we spoke on. Upon a sudden she looked as one just awaked out of a sleep. Every word sank into her heart. Nor have I seen so entire a change both in the

eyes, face, and manner of speaking of any one in so short a time.

About five, Mr. Kinchin riding by a man and woman double-horsed, the man said, 'Sir, you ought to thank God it is a fair day; for if it rained, you would be sadly dirty with your little horse.' Mr. Kinchin answered, 'True; and we ought to thank God for our life, and health, and food, and raiment, and all things.' He then rode on, Mr. Fox following; the man said, 'Sir, my mistress would be glad to have some more talk with that gentleman.' We stayed, and when they came up began to search one another's hearts. They came to us again in the evening at our inn at Stone, where I explained both to them and many of their acquaintance who were come together that great truth, Godliness hath the promise both of this life and of that which is to come.

Tues. 21. —Between nine and ten we came to Hednesford. Just then one was giving an account of a young woman who had dropped down dead there the day before. This gave us a fair occasion to exhort all that were present, 'so to number' their own 'days' that they might apply their 'hearts unto wisdom.'

In the afternoon one overtook us whom we soon found more inclined to speak than to hear. However, we spoke, and spared not. In the evening we overtook a young man, a Quaker, who afterwards came to us to our inn at Henley, whither he sent for the rest of his family to join with us in prayer; to which I added, as usual, the exposition of the Second Lesson. Our other companion went with us a mile or two in the morning; and then not only spoke less than the day before, but took in good part a serious caution against talkativeness and vanity.

An hour after we were overtook by an elderly gentleman, who said he was going to enter his son at Oxford. We asked, 'At what college?' He said he did not know, having no acquaintance there on whose recommendation he could depend. After some conversation, he expressed a deep sense of the good providence of God; and told us he knew God had cast us in his way in answer to his prayer. In the evening we reached Oxford, rejoicing in our having received so many fresh instances of that great truth, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'

Thur. 23. —I met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed me more and more by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith, —the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by ‘the law and the testimony’; and being confident that God would hereby show me whether this doctrine was of God.

Sun. 26. —I preached at Whitam on ‘the new creature,’ and went in the evening to a society in Oxford, where (as my manner then was at all societies), after using a collect or two and the Lord’s Prayer, I expounded a chapter in the New Testament, and concluded with three or four more collects and a psalm.

Mon. 27. —Mr. Kinchin went with me to the Castle, where, after reading prayers, and preaching on ‘It is appointed unto men once to die,’ we prayed with the condemned man, first in several forms of prayer, and then in such words as were given us in that hour. **He kneeled down in much heaviness and confusion, having ‘no rest in’ his ‘bones, by reason of’ his ‘sins.’ After a space he rose up, and eagerly said, ‘I am now ready to die. I know Christ has taken away my sins; and there is no more condemnation for me.’** The same composed cheerfulness he showed when he was carried to execution; and in his last moments he was the same, enjoying a perfect peace, in confidence that he was ‘accepted in the Beloved.’

April 1, **Sat.** —Being at Mr. Fox’s society, my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of prayer which we were accustomed to use there. Neither do I purpose to be confined to them any more; but to pray indifferently, with a form or without, as I may find suitable to particular occasions.

Sun. 2. —Being Easter Day, I preached in our College chapel on ‘The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.’ I preached in the afternoon, first at the Castle, and then at Carfax, on the same words. ‘I see the promise; but it is afar off.’

Believing it would be better for me to wait for the accomplishment of it in silence and retirement, on **Monday** the 3rd I complied with Mr. Kinchin’s desire,

and went to him at Dummer, in Hampshire. But I was not suffered to stay here long; being earnestly pressed to come up to London, if it were only for a few days. Thither, therefore, I returned, on **Tuesday** the 18th.

Sat. 22. —I met Peter Böhler once more. **I had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith; namely, that it is (to use the words of our Church) ‘a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven and he reconciled to the favour of God.’**

Neither could I deny either the happiness or holiness which he described as fruits of this living faith. ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,’ and ‘He that believeth hath the witness in himself’ fully convinced me of the former; as ‘Whatsoever is born of God doth not commit sin,’ and ‘Whosoever believeth is born of God’ did of the latter. But I could not comprehend what he spoke of an *instantaneous work*.

I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment: how a man could *at once* be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. I searched the Scriptures again touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles: but, to my utter astonishment, found scarce any instances there of other than *instantaneous* conversions; scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth. I had but one retreat left; namely, ‘*Thus*, I grant, God wrought in the first ages of Christianity; but the times are changed. What reason have I to believe He works in the same manner now?’

But on **Sunday** the 23rd, I was beat out of this retreat too, by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses; who testified God had thus wrought in themselves, giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of His Son as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness. Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, ‘Lord, help Thou my unbelief!’

I asked Peter Böhler again whether I ought not to refrain from teaching others. He said, ‘No; do not

hide in the earth the talent God hath given you.’ Accordingly, on Tuesday the 25th, I spoke clearly and fully at Blendon to Mr. Delamotte’s family of the nature and fruits of faith. Mr. Broughton and my brother were there. Mr. Broughton’s great objection was, he could never think that I had not faith, who had done and suffered such things. My brother was very angry, and told me I did not know what mischief I had done by talking thus. And, indeed, it did please God then to kindle a fire which I trust shall never be extinguished.

On **Wednesday** the 26th, the day fixed for my return to Oxford, I once more waited on the Trustees for Georgia; but, being straitened for time, was obliged to leave the papers for them which I had designed to give into their own hands. One of these was the instrument whereby they had appointed me minister of Savannah; which, having no more place in those parts, I thought it not right to keep any longer.

Peter Böhler walked with me a few miles, and exhorted me not to stop short of the grace of God. At Gerrard’s Cross I plainly declared to those whom God gave into my hands the faith as it is in Jesus; as I did next day to a young man I overtook on the road, and in the evening to our friends at Oxford. A strange doctrine, which some, who did not care to contradict, yet knew not what to make of; but one or two, who were thoroughly bruised by sin, willingly heard and received it gladly.

In the day or two following I was much confirmed in the ‘truth that is after godliness’ by hearing the experiences of Mr. Hutchins, of Pembroke College, and Mrs. Fox; two living witnesses that God can (at least, if He *does* not always) give that faith whereof cometh salvation in a moment, as lightning falling from heaven.

May 1, **Mon.** —The return of my brother’s illness obliged me again to hasten to London. In the evening I found him at James Hutton’s, better as to his health than I expected; but strongly averse from what he called ‘the new faith.’

This evening our little society began, which afterwards met in Fetter Lane. Our fundamental rules were as follow:

In obedience to the command of God by St. James, and by the advice of Peter Böhler, it is agreed by us,

1. That we will meet together once a week to 'confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed.'

2. That the persons so meeting be divided into several *bands*, or little companies, none of them consisting of fewer than five or more than ten persons.

3. That every one in order speak as freely, plainly, and concisely as he can, the real state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances, since the last time of meeting.

4. That all the bands have a conference at eight every Wednesday evening, begun and ended with singing and prayer.

5. That any who desire to be admitted into the society be asked, 'What are your reasons for desiring this? Will you be entirely open; using no kind of reserve? Have you any objection to any of our orders?' (which may then be read).

6. That when any new member is proposed, every one present speak clearly and freely whatever objection he has to him.

7. That those against whom no reasonable objection appears be, in order for their trial, formed into one or more distinct bands, and some person agreed on to assist them.

8. That after two months' trial, if no objection then appear, they may be admitted into the society.

9. That every fourth Saturday be observed as a day of general intercession.

10. That on the Sunday seven-night following be a general lovefeast, from seven till ten in the evening.

11. That no particular member be allowed to act in anything contrary to any order of the society; and that if any persons, after being thrice admonished, do not conform thereto, they be not any longer esteemed as members.

Wed. 3. —My brother had a long and particular conversation with Peter Böhler. And it now pleased God to open his eyes; so that he also saw clearly what was the nature of that one true living faith, whereby alone, 'through grace, we are saved.'

Thur. 4. —**Peter Böhler left London, in order to embark for Carolina.**

Oh what a work hath God begun, since his coming into England! Such an one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth pass away. *Friday and Saturday* I was at Blendon. They now—believed our report.' Oh may 'the arm of the Lord' be speedily 'revealed unto them'!

Sun. 7. —I preached at St. Lawrence's in the morning, and afterwards at St. Katherine Cree's church. I was enabled to speak strong words at both, and was therefore the less surprised at being informed I was not to preach any more in either of those churches.

Tues. 9. —I preached at Great St. Helen's, to a very numerous congregation, on 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' My heart was now so enlarged to declare the love of God to all that were oppressed by the devil, that I did not wonder in the least when I was afterwards told, 'Sir, you must preach here no more.'

Wed. 10. —Mr. Stonehouse, vicar of Islington, was convinced of 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' From this time till *Saturday* the 13th, I was sorrowful and very heavy; being neither able to read, nor meditate, nor sing, nor pray, nor do any thing. Yet I was a little refreshed by Peter Böhler's letter, which I insert in his own words:

[I have omitted Böhler's letter as it was written in the original language.]

[Brother,]

I love you greatly, and think much of you in my journey, wishing and praying that the tender mercies of Jesus Christ the Crucified, whose bowels were moved towards you more than six thousand years ago, may be manifested to your soul: that you may taste, and then see, how exceedingly the Son of God has loved you, and loves you still; and that so you may continually trust in Him, and feel His life in yourself. Beware of the sin of unbelief; and if you have not conquered it yet, see that you conquer it this very day, through the blood of Jesus Christ. Delay not, I beseech you, to believe in your Jesus Christ; but so put Him in mind of His promises to poor sinners that He may not be able to refrain from doing for you what He hath done for so many others.

Oh how great, how inexpressible, how unexhausted is His love! Surely He is now ready to help; and nothing can offend Him but our unbelief. Believe, therefore. Greet in my name your brother Charles and Hall; and admonish one another to believe, and then to walk circumspectly in the sight of God, to fight lawfully against the devil and the world, and to crucify and to tread all sin under your feet, as far as you are permitted through the grace of the second Adam, whose life exceeds the death of the first Adam, and whose grace far surpasses the corruption and damnation of the first Adam. The Lord bless you! Abide in faith, love, teaching, the communion of saints; and briefly, in all which we have in the New Testament. I am,

Your unworthy brother,
PETER BÖHLER.

Sun. 14. —I preached in the morning at St. Ann's, Aldersgate, and in the afternoon at the Savoy chapel, free salvation by faith in the blood of Christ. I was quickly apprised that at St. Ann's likewise I am to preach no more.

So true did I find the words of a friend, wrote to my brother about this time:

I have seen upon this occasion more than ever I could have imagined, how intolerable the doctrine of faith is to the mind of man, and how peculiarly intolerable to religious men. One may say the most unchristian things, even down to Deism; the most enthusiastic things, so they proceed but upon mental raptures, lights, and unions; the most severe things, even the whole rigour of ascetic mortification; and all this will be forgiven. But if you speak of faith in such a manner as makes Christ a Saviour to the utmost, a most universal help and refuge; in such a manner as takes away glorying, but adds happiness to wretched man; as discovers a greater pollution in the best of us than we could before acknowledge, but brings a greater deliverance from it than we could before expect, —if any one offers to talk at this rate, he shall be heard with the same abhorrence as if he was going to rob mankind of their salvation, their Mediator, or their hopes of forgiveness. I am persuaded that a Montanist or a Novatian, who from the

height of his purity should look down with contempt upon poor sinners, and exclude them from all mercy, would not be thought such an overthrower of the gospel as he who should learn, from the Author of it, to be a friend of publicans and sinners, and to sit down upon the level with them as soon as they begin to repent. But this is not to be wondered at. For all religious people have such a quantity of righteousness, acquired by much painful exercise, and formed at last into current habits; which is their wealth, both for this world and the next. Now, all other schemes of religion are either so complaisant as to tell them they are very rich, and have enough to triumph in; or else only a little rough, but friendly in the main, by telling them their riches are not yet sufficient, but by such arts of self-denial and mental refinement they may enlarge the stock. But the doctrine of faith is a downright robber. It takes away all this wealth, and only tells us it is deposited for us with somebody else, upon whose bounty we must live like mere beggars. Indeed, they that are truly beggars, vile and filthy sinners till very lately, may stoop to live in this dependent condition—it suits them well enough. But they who have long distinguished themselves from the herd of vicious wretches, or have even gone beyond moral men,—for them to be told that they are either not so well, or but the same needy, impotent, insignificant vessels of mercy with the others, this is more shocking to reason than transubstantiation. For reason had rather resign its pretensions to judge what is bread or flesh, than have this honour wrested from it—to be the architect of virtue and righteousness. But where am I running? My design was only to give you warning that, wherever you go, this ‘foolishness of preaching’ will alienate hearts from you and open mouths against you.

Fri. 19. —My brother had a second return of his pleurisy. A few of us spent Saturday night in prayer. The next day, being Whit Sunday, after hearing Dr. Heylyn preach a truly Christian sermon (on ‘They were all filled with the Holy Ghost’; ‘and so,’ said he, ‘may all you be, if it is not your own fault’), and assisting him at the Holy Communion (his curate being taken ill in the church), I received

the surprising news that my brother had found rest to his soul. His bodily strength returned also from that hour. ‘Who is so great a God as our God?’

I preached at St. John’s, Wapping, at three, and at St. Benet’s, Paul’s Wharf, in the evening. At these churches likewise I am to preach no more. At St. Antholin’s I preached on the Thursday following.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, I had continual sorrow and heaviness’ in my ‘heart’; something of which I described, in the broken manner I was able, in the following letter to a friend:

Oh, why is it that so great, so wise, so holy a God will use such an instrument as me! Lord, ‘let the dead bury their dead!’ But wilt Thou send the dead to raise the dead? Yea, Thou sendest whom Thou wilt send, and showest mercy by whom Thou wilt show mercy! Amen! Be it then according to Thy will! If Thou speak the word, Judas shall cast out devils. I feel what you say (though not enough), for I am under the same condemnation. I see that the whole law of God is holy, just, and good. I know every thought, every temper of my soul, ought to bear God’s image and superscription. But how am I fallen from the glory of God! I feel that ‘I am sold under sin.’ I know that I too deserve nothing but wrath, being full of all abominations; and having no good thing in me to atone for them, or to remove the wrath of God. All my works, my righteousness, my prayers, need an atonement for themselves. So that my mouth is stopped. I have nothing to plead. God is holy, I am unholy. God is a consuming fire; I am altogether a sinner, meet to be consumed. Yet I hear a voice (and is it not the voice of God?) saying, ‘Believe, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is passed from death unto life. God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Oh let no one deceive us by vain words, as if we had already attained this faith! By its fruits we shall know. Do we already feel ‘peace with God’ and ‘joy in the Holy Ghost’? Does ‘His Spirit bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?’ Alas! With mine He does not. Nor, I fear, with yours. O Thou

Saviour of men, save us from trusting in anything but Thee! Draw us after Thee! Let us be emptied of ourselves, and then fill us with all peace and joy in believing; and let nothing separate us from Thy love, in time or in eternity.

What occurred on Wednesday the 24th, I think best to relate at large, after premissing what may make it the better understood. Let him that cannot receive it ask of the Father of lights that He would give more light to him and me.

1. **I believe, till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that ‘washing of the Holy Ghost’ which was given me in baptism; having been strictly educated and carefully taught that I could only be saved ‘by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God’; in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed.** And those instructions, so far as they respected outward duties and sins, I gladly received and often thought of. But all that was said to me of inward obedience or holiness I neither understood nor remembered. So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the law as I was of the gospel of Christ.

2. The next six or seven years were spent at school; where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by, was, (1) not being so bad as other people; (2) having still a kindness for religion; and (3) reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.

3. Being removed to the University for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and for the most part very contentedly, in some or other known sin: indeed, with some intermission and short struggles, especially before and after the Holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be

saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many divines taught me to call repentance.

4. **When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter into holy orders.** At the same time, the providence of God directing me to Kempis's *Christian Pattern*, I began to see, that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis for being too strict; though I read him only in Dean Stanhope's translation. Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before; and meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, 'doing so much, and living so good a life,' I doubted not but I was a good Christian.

5. Removing soon after to another College, I executed a resolution which I was before convinced was of the utmost importance, shaking off at once all my trifling acquaintance. I began to see more and more the value of time. I applied myself closer to study. I watched more carefully against actual sins; I advised others to be religious, according to that scheme of religion by which I modelled my own life. But meeting now with Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call*, although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying Him as I had never done before. And by my continued endeavour to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.

6. In 1730 I began visiting the prisons; assisting the poor and sick in town;

and doing what other good I could, by my presence or my little fortune, to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessaries of life. I soon became a by-word for so doing, and I rejoiced that my name was cast out as evil. The next spring I began observing the *Wednesday* and *Friday* Fasts, commonly observed in the ancient Church; tasting no food till three in the afternoon. And now I knew not how to go any further. I diligently strove against all sin. I omitted no sort of self-denial which I thought lawful; I carefully used, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. I omitted no occasion of doing good; I for that reason suffered evil. And all this I knew to be nothing, unless as it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly this, the image of God, was what I aimed at in all, by doing His will, not my own. Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort or any assurance of acceptance with God. At this I was then not a little surprised; not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand, nor considering that 'other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid' by God, 'even Christ Jesus.'

7. Soon after, a contemplative man convinced me still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and in several conversations instructed me how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God. But even of his instructions (though I then received them as the words of God) I cannot but now observe (1) that he spoke so incautiously against trusting in outward works, that he discouraged me from doing them at all; (2) that he recommended (as it were, to supply what was wanting in them) *mental prayer*, and the like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul and uniting it with God. Now these were, in truth, as much my own works as visiting the sick or clothing the naked; and the union with God thus pursued was as really my own righteousness as any I had before pursued under another name.

8. In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness (so zealously inculcated by the

Mystic writers), I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein till the time of my leaving England. **On ship-board, however, I was again active in outward works; where it pleased God of His free mercy to give me twenty-six of the Moravian brethren for companions, who endeavoured to show me 'a more excellent way.' But I understood it not at first. I was too learned and too wise. So that it seemed foolishness unto me.** And I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified.

9. All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which, by a living faith in Him, bringeth salvation 'to every one that believeth.' I sought to establish my own righteousness; and so laboured in the fire all my days. I was now properly 'under the law'; I knew that 'the law' of God was 'spiritual; I consented to it that it was good.' Yea, 'I delighted in it, after the inner man.' Yet was I 'carnal, sold under sin.' Every day was I constrained to cry out, 'What I do, I allow not: for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do. To will is' indeed 'present with me: but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me': even 'the law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,' and still 'bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.'

10. In this vile, abject state of bondage to sin, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before, I had willingly served sin: now it was unwillingly; but still I served it. I fell, and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness: sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. For as in the former state I had some foretastes of the terrors of the law; so had I in this, of the comforts of the gospel. During this whole struggle between nature and grace, which had now continued above ten years, I had many remarkable returns to prayer, especially when I was in trouble; I had many sensible comforts, which are indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith. But I was still 'under the law,' not 'under grace' (the

state most who are called Christians are content to live and die in); for I was only striving with, not freed from, sin. Neither had I the witness of the Spirit with my spirit, and indeed could not; for I 'sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.'

11. In my return to England, January 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief; and that the gaining a true, living faith was the 'one thing needful' for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I knew not that I was wholly void of this faith; but only thought I had not enough of it. So that when Peter Böhler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ (which is but one) that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, 'dominion over sin and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness,' I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new gospel. If this was so, it was clear I had not faith. But I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore I disputed with all my might, and laboured to prove that faith might be where these were not: for all the scriptures relating to this I had been long since taught to construe away; and to call all Presbyterians who spoke otherwise. Besides, I well saw no one could, in the nature of things, have such a sense of forgiveness, and not 'feel it.' But I felt it not. If, then, there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once.

12. When I met Peter Böhler again, he consented to put the dispute upon the issue which I desired, namely, Scripture and experience. I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the glosses of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavouring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages, I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold, 'that experience would never agree with the *literal interpretation* of those scriptures. Nor could I therefore allow it to be true, till I found some living witnesses of it.' He replied, he could show me such at any time; if I desired it, the next day. **And ac-**

cordingly the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified, of their own personal experience, that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past and freedom from all present sins. They added with one mouth that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God; and that He would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it. I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end, (1) By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon *my own* works or righteousness; on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up; (2) by adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for *me*; a trust in Him, as *my* Christ, as *my* sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.

13. I continued thus to seek it (though with strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin) till *Wednesday*, May 24. I think it was about five this morning, that I opened my Testament on those words, Τὰ μέγιστα ἡμῖν καὶ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα δεδώρηται, ἵνα γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ θύσεως. 'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. i. 4).

Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, 'Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.'

14. **In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he**

was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.

15. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, 'This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy!' Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of His own will.

16. After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He 'sent me help from His holy place.' And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.

17. *Thur.* 25. —The moment I awakened, 'Jesus, Master,' was in my heart and in my mouth; and I found all my strength lay in keeping my eye fixed upon Him, and my soul waiting on Him continually. Being again at St. Paul's in the afternoon, I could taste the good word of God in the anthem, which began, 'My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be showing forth Thy truth from one generation to another.' Yet the enemy injected a fear, 'If thou dost believe, why is there not a more sensible change?' I answered (yet not I), 'That I know not. But this I know, I have "now peace with God." And I sin not to-day, and Jesus my Master has forbid me to take thought for the morrow.'

18. 'But is not any sort of fear,' continued the tempter, 'a proof that thou dost not believe?' I desired my Master to

answer for me, and opened His Book upon those words of St. Paul, 'Without were fightings, within were fears.' Then, inferred I, well may fears be within me; but I must go on, and tread them under my feet.

Fri. 26. —My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness because of manifold temptations. I asked Mr. Töltshig, the Moravian, what to do. He said, 'You must not fight with them, as you did before, but flee from them the moment they appear, and take shelter in the wounds of Jesus.' The same I learned also from the afternoon anthem, which was, 'My soul truly waiteth still upon God: for of Him cometh my salvation; He verily is my strength and my salvation, He is my defence, so that I shall not greatly fall. O put your trust in Him always, ye people; pour out your hearts before Him; for God is our hope.'

Sat. 27. —Believing one reason of my want of joy was want of time for prayer, I resolved to do no business till I went to church in the morning, but to continue pouring out my heart before Him. And this day my spirit was enlarged; so that though I was now also assaulted by many temptations, I was more than conqueror, gaining more power thereby to trust and to rejoice in God my Saviour.

Sun. 28. —I walked in peace, but not in joy. In the same even, quiet state I was till the evening, when I was roughly attacked in a large company as an enthusiast, a seducer, and a setter-forth of new doctrines. By the blessing of God, I was not moved to anger, but after a calm and short reply went away; though not with so tender a concern as was due to those who were seeking death in the error of their life.

This day I preached in the morning at St. George's, Bloomsbury, on 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' and in the afternoon at the chapel in Long Acre on God's justifying the ungodly; the last time (I understand) I am to preach at either. 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'

Mon. 29. —I set out for Dummer with Mr. Wolf, one of the first-fruits of Peter Böhler's ministry in England. I was much strengthened by the grace of God in him: yet was his state so far above mine, that I was often tempted to doubt

whether we had one faith. But, without much reasoning about it, I held here: 'Though his be strong and mine weak, yet that God hath given some degree of faith even to me, I know by its fruits. For I have constant peace; not one uneasy thought. And I have freedom from sin; not one unholy desire.'

Yet on *Wednesday* did I grieve the Spirit of God, not only by not watching unto prayer, but likewise by speaking with sharpness instead of tender love of one that was not sound in the faith. Immediately God hid His face, and I was troubled; and in this heaviness I continued till the next morning, June 1, when it pleased God, while I was exhorting another, to give comfort to my soul, and, after I had spent some time in prayer, to direct me to those gracious words, 'Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for He is faithful that promised); and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.'

June 3, *Sat.* —I was so strongly assaulted by one of my old enemies, that I had scarce strength to open my lips, or even to look up for help. But after I had prayed, faintly, as I could, the temptation vanished away.

Sun. 4. —Was indeed a feast-day. For from the time of my rising till past one in the afternoon, I was praying, reading the Scriptures, singing praise, or calling sinners to repentance. All these days I scarce remember to have opened the Testament, but upon some 'great and precious promise.' And I saw more than ever that the gospel is in truth but one great promise, from the beginning of it to the end.

Tues. 6. —I had still more comfort, and peace, and joy; on which I fear I began to presume: for in the evening I received a letter from Oxford which threw me into much perplexity. It was asserted therein, 'That no doubting could consist with the least degree of true faith; that whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear was not weak in faith, but had no faith at all; and that none hath any faith till the law of the Spirit of life has made him wholly free from the law of sin and death.'

Begging of God to direct me, I opened my Testament on 1 Cor. iii. 1, &c., where St. Paul speaks of those whom he terms 'babes in Christ,' who were 'not able to bear strong meat,' nay (in a sense) 'carnal'; to whom nevertheless he says, 'ye are God's building, ye are the temple of God.' Surely, then, these men had some degree of faith; though, it is plain, their faith was but weak.

After some hours spent in the Scripture and prayer, I was much comforted. Yet I felt a kind of soreness in my heart, so that I found my wound was not fully healed. O God, save Thou me, and all that are 'weak in the faith,' from 'doubtful disputations!'

Wed. 7. —I determined, if God should permit, to retire for a short time into Germany. I had fully proposed, before I left Georgia, so to do, if it should please God to bring me back to Europe. And I now clearly saw the time was come. My weak mind could not bear to be thus sawn asunder. And I hoped the conversing with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means, under God, of so establishing my soul, that I might go on from faith to faith and 'from strength to strength.'

Thur. 8. —I went to Salisbury, to take leave of my mother. The next day I left Sarum, and on *Saturday* came to Stanton Harcourt. Having preached faith in Christ there on *Sunday* the 11th, I went on to Oxford; and thence on *Monday* to London, where I found Mr. Ingham just setting out. We went on board the next day, *Tuesday* the 13th, and fell down to Gravesend that night.

Conclusion

John Wesley was obviously a complex personality with an inherent bent toward "godliness." The journal entries included here disclose he spent the first years of his life trying to do all he possibly could to be worthy of salvation. The entry of February 6 (p. 6) indicates he may have found the idea of being "hated by all men" attractive. Indeed, the entry of February 26 (p. 7) conveys the notion he judged his effectiveness by whether or not "it gave most offense."

The list of resolutions he made on March 2 (February 28 entry, p. 7) reveal a man totally consumed with the idea he could somehow do something to make himself worthy. A mere three days later, however, he is convinced his central problem is he lacks "faith." If you read him closely, he seems to identify believing with the born-again experience.

When he questions whether he should continue preaching, others encourage him to continue, telling him to "preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." To my way of thinking, that was a mistake—a mistake on the part of those who would give him such advice, and a mistake on Wesley's part to follow it. He should have devoted himself immediately to seeking salvation. As it was, he was later reproached for having preached concerning something he had never experienced. That could only have increased the pressure on him to attain the experience at all costs—even at the cost of self-delusion.

The entry for March 17 (p. 8) clearly reveals the mind of a man consumed by the idea of leading people to Christ even though just two weeks earlier he had decided he was himself not saved. He writes, "We were fully determined to lose no opportunity of awakening, instructing, or exhorting any whom we might meet with in our journey." He then recounts the effect his preaching had on a woman at the inn. You can see from that one entry alone how he might have continued unsaved throughout his entire life doing just as he was already doing.

Wesley tells us that, on March 27 (p. 9), the message he preached resulted in the conversion of a condemned prisoner. However, he clearly reveals where he got that message in what he writes for the entry of April 22 (p. 9). If you compare the statements made there with the things he preached twenty years later, you will find an exact equivalent. (See "A Question for the Sleeper: Are You Aware You Are Snoring?" in this issue.)

It can hardly be denied that Wesley was merely preaching the message he gained from Peter Böhler and the Moravians. Neither can one deny that 1) he was preaching that message before he

was himself "converted," and 2) his preaching was resulting in people being saved.

Wesley tells us his own conversion came after three days of "'continual sorrow and heaviness' in my 'heart.'" That statement could aptly describe the feelings one has while under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. However, if you read what he writes as a preface to the experience he had on May 24 (p. 12), you can only be left to wonder whether his understanding of what was necessary for him to be saved may well have been the very thing that prevented his salvation. That is, he may have been so firmly convinced that belief was the only thing he lacked that he could not see himself as a sinner. He could have thereby overlooked the singular importance of repentance as a prerequisite to the new birth experience.

As evidence of that fact it should be noted he indicates that, as a good Anglican, he believed he gained a "washing of the Holy Ghost" by being baptized as an infant. He tells us he was seriously religious and legalistically sought to adhere to the moral law. Although he readily admits he was ignorant of "the gospel of Christ," that is not necessarily an admission that he saw himself as unsaved.

He says he entered the ministry at twenty-two at his father's urging and shortly thereafter began to seek a deeper Christian life by reading what others had written. He made resolutions to do this and do that, and to deny himself in various ways. Yet he found nothing that gave him any assurance he was pleasing God.

On his way to America as a missionary, Wesley heard the message of salvation by faith from a group of twenty-six Moravian missionaries. Two years and three months later, on his return to England, he was convinced he lacked the faith they preached. Less than four months later he had his "conversion experience" in which his central focus was not repentance but rather whether or not he believed.

Perhaps it is nothing more than the language Wesley used to describe his conversion that makes me question whether or not he understood he had to repent of his sins and ask forgiveness. Yet I cannot ignore the possibility that something sinister is lurking behind his existential description of what is actually

a very down-to-earth experience. He says, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." That sounds like he suddenly decided to believe he believed.

I can see Wesley had a strong concern for whether or not he believed, but where does he mention he repented? I don't see it. In what he says immediately following, I also see he had a concern for those who had wronged him. But that could be a "holier-than-thou" response. Moreover, I find his lack of joy disturbing. If you have just asked God's forgiveness and you know He has granted it because you honestly believe, you should at the very least experience a huge sense of relief that you no longer have to carry a heavy load of guilt.

All these things make his account of his "conversion" seem more than a little suspect to my way of thinking. The statement that "I felt my heart strangely warmed" tends more to mysticism than to the reality of the new-birth experience in one who has gone through the honest soul-searching—the weeping and wailing—that accompanied the conversion of the thousands who heard the Gospel message John Wesley preached.

Was John Wesley a Pretender? I can't say one way or the other. On the basis of available evidence, I could go either way. What do you think? Just so that we leave no obvious stone unturned, however, I've included in this issue the transcript of several of the sermons John Wesley preached. One of them is the sermon he preached at Stanton Harcourt on Sunday, June 11th, two days before he embarked for Germany where he soaked up the theological beliefs of the Moravians.

I have no doubt many of the Moravians knew all about what God requires for one to be born again. The only question I have is whether John Wesley intellectually understood something he had never experienced personally. Did his life-long reliance on good works prevent him from actually seeing himself as a sinner in desperate need of forgiveness? I can't honestly say what I think, one way or the other. God knows. ■

Sleeper

From Page 1

the gospel” (Mark 1:15) so that they might escape the wrath of God. The Greek word translated “gospel” in the New Testament literally *means* “good news.” The “good news” these men preached was that God had fulfilled in Jesus Christ all that He had **promised** through Moses and the Prophets, thereby providing a means whereby all men—Jew and Gentile alike—could be saved.

Don’t let that seemingly simple Truth mislead you. It packs a potent power to totally transform the one who believes it. Yet one can be delivered from the wrath of God by believing and clinging to that central Truth with little, if any, knowledge at all of the things God **promised** through Moses and the Prophets. The history of the Church over the past 1,800 years since the loss of *The Apostolic Teaching* will ultimately stand as mute testimony to that fact.

What I am saying is this: *The Teaching of Moses* and *The Teaching of the Prophets* existed long before it became the basis for the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*. That is, Moses and the Prophets made specific statements concerning the Messiah Who would one day come to save Israel from sin long before it became known that Jesus Christ was the One of Whom they spoke. That is why you can today be born again and still have little or no knowledge whatsoever of *The Apostolic Teaching* God has called me to *restore* and teach.

Since I am not an Evangelist, I do not seek to “convert” anyone. On the contrary, as I have explained elsewhere, my calling demands that I strive to teach only those who have already been born again. That is, my ministry as a Teacher begins where the ministry of the Evangelist leaves off. That is why I commend to you the words of John Wesley, a man who ministered as an Evangelist and saw a phenomenal outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit wherever he preached in his own day.

The evidence indicates John Wesley accurately preached the basics of the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*. Multiplied thousands heard that simple message and believed it. Consequently, they repented and were born again—that is, they became True Believers. Millions more have responded in

like fashion to that same simple message over the years since.

I readily admit John Wesley erred greatly in emphasizing experiential evidence as a logical means of validating Truth. However, that error hardly cancels out the basic Truth of the Gospel message he preached. I’m sure those who want to continue in their pretense will also find fault with his incipient mysticism. Let Pretenders seek cover where they will. They will discover too late it provides no protection at all against the wrath of God. Those who have been born again can see that Wesley understood the essential Truth of the Gospel message and that he has stated it more or less accurately here.

First, Wesley has emphasized that saving faith (belief) must have a definite content. He has also explained that the content of saving faith (belief) must be the foundational belief according to which one conducts his or her life. That should put True Believers on to the lie of the cliché-spouting Pretenders who are strutting around in the Church today, saying one thing and living another.

Second, he has emphasized it is possible for a person to say and do all the right things without having produced the paramount thing God requires: repentance. Perhaps that will enlighten some Pretenders who are counting on their own good “godliness” to provide favorable evidence when they finally stand before the Lord of all Creation.

Third, Wesley has emphasized that all those who have been born again have a definite “witness” within themselves. Here he has erred in his understanding of the Hebrew idiom “keep the commandments.” That is, he assumes it pertains to outward activity. But he has hit the nail squarely on the head in affirming that the purpose of the “witness” within the True Believer is for the Believer’s own benefit, not for the benefit of others.

His explanation of the nature of that internal “witness” is also somewhat misleading. That is because born-again Believers in his day knew only the existential element in the new-birth experience. Therefore, his explanation tends toward mysticism. But that is only because he lacked crucial information concerning the objective/subjective nature of the Truth that the Church lost when it lost *The Apostolic Teaching*.

The Truth of the Gospel message that men like John Calvin, John Wesley, and Charles Finney preached can still be heard in some segments of the Church to this very day. For that reason, True Believers are still coming to a saving knowledge of the Truth. Those are the “Christians” I have been called to reach with *The Apostolic Teaching*. But I do not expect that task to be easy.

True Believers who have responded to the Gospel message by repenting and begging God’s forgiveness face a dauntingly unprecedented circumstance: Pretenders have managed to so thoroughly distort the Truth of the Gospel message that most “Christians” who think they have been born again are actually nothing more than Pretenders who believe a lie that is more to their liking than the Truth. Most are also completely unaware of the historic understanding of what it actually *means* to be “born again.”

It is not for the benefit of Pretenders that I have chosen to provide the following information. God has not called me to dispel their delusion. I do it to provide True Believers an opportunity to see through the various forms of idiocy one finds in the Church today so that they might respond by seeking a greater knowledge of the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching*.

It is not my responsibility to urge anyone to believe my message, nor is my concern whether anyone chooses to do so. I have no doubt those who love the Truth will hear. But on the off chance that a few Pretenders might also cease snoring long enough to contemplate the desperate nature of their dire circumstances before the wrath of God falls, here are the words of a man God used to preach the Truth to an earlier generation of Believers.

Salvation By Faith: June 11, 1738

*“By grace are ye saved through faith.”
Eph. ii. 8.*

1. All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man, are of his mere grace, bounty, or favour; his free, undeserved favour; favour altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of his mercies. It was free grace that “formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul,” and stamped on that soul the

image of God, and “put all things under his feet.” The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God’s hand. “All our works, thou, O God! hast wrought in us.” These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy: And whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.

2. Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins? with his own works? No. Were they ever so many, or holy, they are not his own, but God’s. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree. And his heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; being “come short of the glory of God,” the glorious righteousness at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator. Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works, to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God.

3. If then sinful men find favour with God, it is “grace upon grace!” If God vouchsafe still to pour fresh blessings upon us, yea, the greatest of all blessings, salvation; what can we say to these things, but, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!” And thus it is. Herein “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died” to save us. “By grace,” then, “are ye saved through faith.” Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.

Now, that we fall not short of the grace of God, it concerns us carefully to inquire,

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

II. What is the salvation which is through faith.

III. How we may answer some objections.

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

1. And, First, it is not barely the faith of a Heathen.

Now, God requireth of a Heathen to believe, “that God is; that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;” and that he is to be sought by glorifying him as God, by giving him thanks for all things, and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy, and truth, toward their fellow-creatures. A Greek or Roman, there-

fore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much: The being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a Heathen.

2. Nor, Secondly, is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much farther than that of a Heathen. For the devil believes, not only that there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward, and just to punish; but also, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. So we find him declaring, in express terms, (Luke iv. 34,) “I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.” Nor can we doubt but that unhappy spirit believes all those words which came out of the mouth of the Holy One; yea, and whatsoever else was written by those holy men of old, of two of whom he was compelled to give that glorious testimony, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who show unto you the way of salvation.”

Thus much, then, the great enemy of God and man believes and trembles in believing,—that God was made manifest in the flesh; that he will “tread all enemies under his feet;” and that “all Scripture was given by inspiration of God.” Thus far goeth the faith of a devil.

3. Thirdly. The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to leave all and follow him; although they had then power to work miracles, to “heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;” yea, they had then “power and authority over all devils;” and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to “preach the kingdom of God.”

4. What faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered, First, in general, it is a faith in Christ: Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it.

Herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern Heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this, —it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, “With the heart man believeth unto righ-

teousness,” and, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. It acknowledges his death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and his resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as he “was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification.” **Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” or, in one word, our salvation.**

II. What salvation it is, which is through this faith, is the Second thing to be considered.

1. And, First, whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, *Ye shall be*, (though that also is true,) but, *Ye are saved* through faith.”

2. *Ye are saved* (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is that great salvation foretold by the angel, before God brought his First-begotten into the world: “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: For he shall save his people from their sins.” And neither here, nor in other parts of holy writ, is there any limitation or restriction. All his people, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, “all that believe in him,” he will save from all their sins; from original and actual, past and present sin, “of the flesh and of the spirit.” Through faith that is in him, they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it.

3. First. From the guilt of all past sin: For, whereas all the world is guilty before God, insomuch that should he “be extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is none

that could abide it;" and whereas, "by the law is" only "the knowledge of sin," but no deliverance from it, so that, "by fulfilling the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in his sight;" now "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is manifested unto all that believe." Now "they are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." "Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for (or by) the remission of the sins that are past." Now hath Christ taken away "the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He hath "blotted out the handwriting that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." "There is, therefore, no condemnation now, to them which" believe "in Christ Jesus."

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of punishment; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they now no longer regard as a severe Master, but as an indulgent Father. "They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: The Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility, of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises. Thus have they "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." And hereby they are persuaded, (though perhaps not at all times, nor with the same fulness of persuasion,) that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. Again, through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the Apostle declares, "ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not." (1 John iii. 5, &c.) Again, "little children, let no man deceive you. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever

believeth, is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him: And he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Once more, "We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: But he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 John v. 18.)

6. He that is, by faith, born of God, sinneth not (1.) By any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning: But sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor (2.) By any willful sin; for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor (3.) By any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God; and any tendency to an unholy desire, he, by the grace of God, stiflth in the birth. Nor (4.) Doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will; and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, "he that is born of God doth not commit sin." And though he cannot say, he hath not sinned, yet now "he sinneth not."

7. **This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: A salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification*; which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him, and a deliverance from the power of sin, through Christ *formed in his heart*. So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed *born again*. He is *born again of the Spirit unto a new life, which "is hid with Christ in God."*** And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the $\alpha\delta\omicron\lambda\omicron\nu$, "*sincere* milk of the word, and grows thereby;" going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until at length, he come unto "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

III. The First usual objection to this is,

1. That "to preach salvation, or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works." To which a short answer might be given: "It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these: But we

speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness."

2. But it may be of use to consider it more at large; especially since it is no new objection, but as old as St. Paul's time: For even then it was asked, "Do we not make void the law through faith?" We answer, First, all who preach not faith, do manifestly make void the law; either directly and grossly, by limitations and comments that eat out all the spirit of the text; or, indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, Secondly, "we establish the law," both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning; and by calling all to that living way, whereby "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them." These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which he hath appointed, do all the "good works which he had before prepared that they should walk therein," and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

3. "But does not preaching this faith lead men into pride?" We answer, Accidentally it may: Therefore ought every believer to be earnestly cautioned, in the words of the great Apostle, "Because of unbelief" the first branches "were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God! On them which fell severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." And while he continues therein, he will remember those words of St. Paul, foreseeing and answering this very objection, (Rom. iii. 27.) "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: But by the law of faith." If a man were justified by his works, he would have whereof to glory. But there is no glorying for him "that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." (Rom. iv. 5.) To the same effect are the words both preceding and following the text: (Eph. ii. 4, &c.) "God, who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For, by

grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: "It is the gift of God;" the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation, which he of his own good pleasure, his mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of his grace; that, believing, ye are saved, another. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." For all our works, all our righteousness, which were before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation: So far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not of works. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe: For it is then God that worketh in us: And, therefore, that he giveth us a reward for what he himself worketh, only commendeth the riches of his mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.

4. "However, may not the speaking thus of the mercy of God, as saving or justifying freely by faith only, encourage men in sin?" Indeed it may and will: Many will "continue in sin that grace may abound:" But their blood is upon their own head. **The goodness of God ought to lead them to repentance; and so it will those who are sincere of heart. When they know there is yet forgiveness with him, they will cry aloud that he would blot out their sins also, through faith which is in Jesus. And if they earnestly cry, and faint not; if they seek him in all the means he hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till he come; "he will come, and will not tarry."** And he can do much work in a short time. Many are the examples, in the Acts of the Apostles, of God's working this faith in men's hearts, even like lightning falling from heaven. So in the same hour that Paul and Silas began to preach, the jailor repented, believed, and was baptized; as were three thousand, by St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, who all repented and believed at his first preaching. And, blessed be God, there are now many living proofs that he is still "mighty to save."

5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made: "If a man cannot be saved by all that he can do, this will drive men to despair." True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits, or righteousness. And so it ought; for none can trust in

the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own. He that "goeth about to establish his own righteousness," cannot receive the righteousness of God. The righteousness which is of faith cannot be given him while he trusteth in that which is of the law.

6. "But this," it is said, "is an uncomfortable doctrine." The devil spoke like himself, that is, without either truth or shame, when he dared to suggest to men that it is such. It is the only comfortable one, it is "very full of comfort," to all self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners. That "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed: That the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him:" Here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death! What! Mercy for all? for Zaccheus, a public robber? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot? Methinks I hear one say, "Then I, even I, may hope for mercy!" And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps, he may say the next hour, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" so forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more; yea, and that "the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God." O glad tidings! Tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: Come ye, and buy, without money and without price." Whatsoever your sins be, "though red, like crimson," though more than the hairs of your head, "return ye unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

7. When no more objections occur, then we are simply told, that "salvation by faith only ought not to be preached as the first doctrine, or, at least, not to be preached to all." But what saith the Holy Ghost? "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." So then, that "whosoever believeth on him shall be saved," is, and must be, the foundation of all our preaching; that is, must be preached first. "Well, but not to all." To whom, then, are we not to Preach it? Whom shall we except? the poor? Nay; they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached unto them. The unlearned? No. God hath revealed these things unto unlearned and ignorant men from the beginning. The young? By no means. "Suf-

fer these," in anywise, to come unto Christ, "and forbid them not." The sinners? Least of all. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why then, if any, we are to except the rich, the learned, the reputable, the moral men. And, it is true, they too often except themselves from hearing; yet we must speak the words of our Lord. For thus the tenor of our commission runs, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature." If any man wrest it, or any part of it, to his destruction, he must bear his own burden. But still, "as the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto us, that we will speak."

8. At this time, more especially, will we speak, that "by grace are ye saved through faith:" Because, never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls *the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion*, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms; and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality which hath "overspread the land as a flood." Can you empty the great deep, drop by drop? Then you may reform us by dissuasives from particular vices. But let the "righteousness which is of God by faith" be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who "glory in their shame, and openly deny the Lord that bought them." They can talk as sublimely of the law, as he that hath it written, by God, in his heart. To hear them speak on this head might incline one to think they were not far from the kingdom of God: But take them out of the law into the gospel; begin with the righteousness of faith; with Christ, "the end of the law to every one that believeth;" and those who but now appeared almost, if not altogether Christians, stand confessed the sons of perdition; as far from life and salvation (God be merciful unto them!) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.

9. For this reason the adversary so rages whenever "salvation by faith" is declared to the world: For this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those

who first preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundations of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright Martin Luther from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for, as that man of God observes, "How would it enrage a proud strong man armed, to be stopped and set at nought by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand!" especially, when he knew that little child would surely overthrow him and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! Thus hath thy strength been ever "made perfect in weakness!" Go forth, then, thou little child that believest in him, and his "right hand shall teach thee terrible things!" Though thou be as helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him, and trample him under thy feet. Thou shalt march on, under the great Captain of thy salvation, "conquering and to conquer," until all thine enemies are destroyed, and "death is swallowed up in victory."

Now, "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Almost Christian: July 25, 1741

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts xxvi. 28.

And many there are who go thus far: Ever since the Christian religion was in the world, there have been many, in every age and nation, who were almost persuaded to be Christians. But seeing it avails nothing before God to go *only thus far*, it highly imports us to consider,

First. What is implied in being *almost*,

Secondly. What in being *altogether*, a *Christian*.

I. (I.) 1. Now in the being *almost a Christian* is implied, First, heathen honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this; especially, since by heathen honesty here, I mean not that which

is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common Heathens expected one of another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught, that they ought not to be unjust; not to take away their neighbour's goods, either by robbery or theft; not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any; not to cheat, or over-reach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had with them; to defraud no man of his right; and, if it were possible, to owe no man anything.

2. Again: The common Heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to truth, as well as to justice. And accordingly, not only held him in abomination who was forsworn, who called God to witness to a lie; but him also who was known to be a slanderer of his neighbour, who falsely accused any man. And, indeed, little better did they esteem wilful liars of any sort; accounting them the disgrace of human kind, and the pests of society.

3. Yet again: There was a sort of love and assistance which they expected one from another. They expected whatever assistance any one could give another, without prejudice to himself. And this they extended not only to those little offices of humanity which are performed without any expense or labour, but likewise to the feeding the hungry, if they had food to spare; the clothing the naked with their own superfluous raiment; and, in general, the giving, to any that needed, such things as they needed not themselves. Thus far, in the lowest account of it, heathen honesty went; the first thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*.

(II.) 4. A **Second thing implied in the being almost a Christian, is, the having a form of godliness, of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ; the having the outside of a real Christian. Accordingly, the Almost Christian does nothing which the gospel forbids.** He taketh not the name of God in vain; he blesseth and curseth not; he sweareth not at all, but his communication is, Yea, yea; Nay, nay. He profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates.

He not only avoids all actual adultery, fornication, and uncleanness, but every word, or look, that either directly or

indirectly tends thereto; nay, and all idle words, abstaining both from detraction, backbiting, tale-bearing, evil speaking, and from "all foolish talking and jesting," — *εὐτραπέλια*, a kind of virtue in the heathen moralist's account; — briefly, from all conversation that is not "good to the use of edifying," and that, consequently, "grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption."

5. He abstains from "wine wherein is excess;" from revellings and gluttony. He avoids, as much as in him lies, all strife and contention, continually endeavouring to live peaceably with all men. And, if he suffer wrong, he avengeth not himself, neither returns evil for evil. He is no railer, no brawler, no scoffer, either at the faults or infirmities of his neighbour. He does not willingly wrong, hurt, or grieve any man; but in all things acts and speaks by that plain rule, "Whatsoever thou wouldst not he should do unto thee, that do not thou to another."

6. And in doing good, he does not confine himself to cheap and easy offices of kindness, but labours and suffers for the profit of many, that by all means he may help some. In spite of toil or pain, "whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with his might;" whether it be for his friends or for his enemies, for the evil or for the good. For, being "not slothful" in this or in any "business," as he "hath opportunity" he doeth "good," all manner of good, "to all men;" and to their souls as well as their bodies. He reproveth the wicked, instructs the ignorant, confirms the wavering, quickens the good, and comforts the afflicted. He labours to awaken those that sleep, to lead those whom God hath already awakened to the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," that they may wash therein and be clean; and to stir up those who are saved, through faith, to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things.

7. He that hath the form of godliness, uses also the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities. He constantly frequents the house of God; and that, not as the manner of some is, who come into the presence of the Most High, either loaded with gold and costly apparel, or in all the gaudy vanity of dress, and either by their unseasonable civilities to each other, or the impertinent gaiety of their behaviour, disclaim all

pretensions to the form as well as to the power of godliness. Would to God there were none even among ourselves who fall under the same condemnation! who come into this house, it may be, gazing about, or with all the signs of the most listless, careless indifference, though sometimes they may *seem* to use a prayer to God for his blessing on what they are entering upon; who, during that awful service, are either asleep, or reclined in the most convenient posture for it; or, as though they supposed God was asleep, talking with one another, or looking round, as utterly void of employment: Neither let these be accused of the form of godliness. No; he who has even this behaves with seriousness and attention in every part of that solemn service. More especially when he approaches the table of the Lord, it is not with a light or careless behaviour, but with an air, gesture, and deportment, which speaks nothing else but, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

8. To this, if we add the constant use of family prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour; he who uniformly practises this outward religion, has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being almost a Christian, and that is, sincerity.

(III.) 9. By sincerity I mean, a real, inward principle of religion, from whence these outward actions flow. And, indeed, if we have not this, we have not heathen honesty; no, not so much of it as will answer the demand of a heathen Epicurean poet. Even this poor wretch, in his sober intervals, is able to testify,

*Oderunt peccare boni, virtutis amore;
Oderunt peccare mali, formidine
poenae.*

[Translation: Good men avoid sin from love of virtue; Wicked men avoid sin from fear of punishment.]

So that, if a man only abstains from doing evil in order to avoid punishment, *Non pasces in cruce corvos*, [Translation: You will not be hanged.] saith the Pagan;

there, "thou hast thy reward." But even he will not allow such a harmless man as this to be so much as a *good Hea-*

then. If, then, any man, from the same motive, viz., to avoid punishment, to avoid the loss of his friends, or his gain, or his reputation, should not only abstain from doing evil, but also do ever so much good; yea, and use all the means of grace; yet we could not, with any propriety, say, this man is even *almost a Christian*. If he has no better principle in his heart, he is only a hypocrite altogether.

10. Sincerity, therefore, is necessarily implied in the being *almost a Christian*; a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do his will. It is necessarily implied, that a man have a sincere view of pleasing God in all things; in all his conversation; in all his actions; in all he does, or leaves undone. This design, if any man be *almost a Christian*, runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle, both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God.

11. But here it will probably be inquired, "Is it possible that any man living should go so far as this, and, nevertheless, be *only almost a Christian*? What more than this can be implied in the being *a Christian altogether*?" I answer, First, that it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but *almost a Christian*, I learn, not only from the oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience.

12. Brethren, great is "my boldness towards you in this behalf." And "forgive me this wrong," if I declare my own folly upon the house-top, for yours and the gospel's sake. —Suffer me, then, to speak freely of myself, even as of another man. I am content to be abased, so ye may be exalted, and to be yet more vile for the glory of my Lord.

13. I did go thus far for many years, as many of this place can testify; using diligence to eschew all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence; redeeming the time; buying up every opportunity of doing all good to all men; constantly and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace; endeavouring after a steady seriousness of behaviour, at all times, and in all places; and, God is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity; having a real design to serve God; a hearty desire to do his will in all things; to please him who had called me to "fight the good fight," and to "lay hold of eternal life." Yet my own

conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but *almost a Christian*.

II. If it be inquired, "What more than this is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*?" I answer,

(I.) 1. First. The love of God. For thus saith his word "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Such a love is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. He that thus loves the Lord his God, his spirit continually "rejoiceth in God his Saviour." His delight is in the Lord, his Lord and his All, to whom "in everything he giveth thanks. All his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name." His heart is ever crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Indeed, what can he desire beside God? Not the world, or the things of the world: For he is "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." He is crucified to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life." Yea, he is dead to pride of every kind: For "love is not puffed up;" but he that dwelling in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," is less than nothing in his own eyes.

(II.) 2. The Second thing implied in the being *altogether a Christian*, is, the love of our neighbour. For thus said our Lord, in the following words, is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." If any man ask, "Who is my neighbour?" we reply, Every man in the world; every child of His who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Nor may we in anywise except our enemies, or the enemies of God and their own souls.

But every Christian loveth these also as himself, yea, "as Christ loved us." He that would more fully understand what manner of love this is, may consider St. Paul's description of it. It is "long-suffering and kind." It "envieth not." It is not rash or hasty in judging. It "is not puffed up;" but maketh him that loves, the least, the servant of all. Love "doth not behave itself unseemly;" but becometh "all things to all men." She "seeketh not her own;" but only the good of others, that they may be saved. "Love is not provoked." It casteth out wrath, which he who hath is wanting in

love. "It thinketh no evil. It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

(III.) 3. **There is yet one thing more that may be separately considered, though it cannot actually be separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*; and that is the ground of all, even faith.** Very excellent things are spoken of this throughout the oracles of God. "Every one," saith the beloved disciple, "that believeth, is born of God." "To as many as received him, gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." And, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Yea, our Lord himself declares, "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

4. **But here let no man deceive his own soul. "It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance, and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith, but a dead and devilish one.** For, even the devils believe that Christ was born of a virgin; that he wrought all kinds of miracles, declaring himself very God; that, for our sakes, he suffered a most painful death, to redeem us from death everlasting; that he rose again the third day; that he ascended into heaven; and sitteth at the right hand of the Father, and at the end of the world shall come again to judge both the quick and dead. These articles of our faith the devils believe, and so they believe all that is written in the Old and New Testament. And yet for all this faith, they be but devils. They remain still in their damnable estate, lacking the very true Christian faith."

5. "The right and true Christian faith is," (to go on in the words of our own Church,) "not only to believe that holy Scripture and the articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey his commandments."

6. Now, whosoever has this faith, which "purifies the heart" (by the power

of God, who dwelleth therein) from pride, anger, desire, "from all unrighteousness," from "all filthiness of flesh and spirit;" which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind; love that doeth the works of God, glorying to spend and to be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised, and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict; whosoever has this faith, thus working by love, is not almost only, but altogether, a Christian.

7. But who are the living witnesses of these things? I beseech you, brethren, as in the presence of that God before whom "hell and destruction are without a covering, —how much more the hearts of the children of men!" —that each of you would ask his own heart, "Am I of that number? Do I so far practise justice, mercy, and truth, as even the rules of heathen honesty require? If so, have I the very *outside* of a Christian? the form of godliness? Do I abstain from evil,—from whatsoever is forbidden in the written word of God? Do I, whatever good my hand findeth to do, do it with my might? Do I seriously use all the ordinances of God at all opportunities? And, is all this done with a sincere design and desire to please God in all things?"

8. Are not many of you conscious, that you never came thus far; that you have not been even *almost a Christian*; that you have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty; at least, not to the form of Christian godliness? —Much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works, your business, studies, diversions, to his glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did should be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and as such should be "a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ."

9. But, supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian? By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. "Hell is paved," saith one, "with good intentions." The great question of all, then, still remains. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out, "My God, and

my All?" Do you desire nothing but him? Are you happy in God? Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, "That he who loveth God love his brother also?" Do you then love your neighbour as yourself? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul? as Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave himself for thee? Hast thou faith in his blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sins, and cast there as a stone into the depth of the sea? that he hath blotted out the handwriting that was against thee, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross? Hast thou indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of thy sins? And doth his Spirit bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God?

10. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born. Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God: Call in the day when he may be found. Let him not rest, till he make "his goodness to pass before thee," till he proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." Let no man persuade thee, by vain words, to rest short of this prize of thy high calling. But cry unto Him day and night, who, "while we were without strength, died for the ungodly," until thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and canst say, "My Lord, and my God!" Remember, "always to pray, and not to faint," till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto heaven, and declare to Him that liveth for ever and ever, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

11. May we all thus experience what it is to be, not almost only, but altogether Christians; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus; knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ; rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us!

Awake, Thou That Sleepest: April 4, 1742

“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Ephesians v. 14.

In discoursing on these words, I shall, with the help of God, First. Describe the sleepers, to whom they are spoken:

Secondly. Enforce the exhortation, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead:” And,

Thirdly. Explain the promise made to such as do awake and arise: “Christ shall give thee light.”

I. 1. And, First as to the sleepers here spoken to. By sleep is signified the natural state of man; that deep sleep of the soul, into which the sin of Adam hath cast all who spring from his loins; that supineness, indolence, and stupidity, that insensibility of his real condition, wherein every man comes into the world, and continues till the voice of God awakes him.

2. Now, “they that sleep, sleep in the night.” The state of nature is a state of utter darkness; a state wherein “darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.” **The poor unawakened sinner, how much knowledge soever he may have as to other things, has no knowledge of himself: In this respect “he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” He knows not that he is a fallen spirit, whose only business in the present world is, to recover from his fall, to regain that image of God wherein he was created. He sees no necessity for the one thing needful, even that inward universal change, that “birth from above,” figured out by baptism, which is the beginning of that total renovation, that sanctification of spirit, soul, and body, “without which no man shall see the Lord.”**

3. Full of all diseases as he is, he fancies himself in perfect health. Fast bound in misery and iron, he dreams that he is at liberty. He says, “Peace! Peace!” while the devil, as “a strong man armed,” is in full possession of his soul. He sleeps on still, and takes his rest, though hell is moved from beneath to meet him; though the pit, from whence there is no return, hath opened its mouth to swallow

him up. A fire is kindled around him, yet he knoweth it not; yea, it burns him, yet he lays it not to heart.

4. By one who sleeps, we are, therefore, to understand (and would to God we might all understand it!) a sinner satisfied in his sins; contented to remain in his fallen state, to live and die without the image of God; one who is ignorant both of his disease, and of the only remedy for it; one who never was warned, or never regarded the warning voice of God, “to flee from the wrath to come;” one that never yet saw he was in danger of hell-fire, or cried out in the earnestness of his soul, “What must I do to be saved?”

5. If this sleeper be not outwardly vicious, his sleep is usually the deepest of all: Whether he be of the Laodicean spirit, in “neither cold nor hot,” but a quiet, rational, inoffensive, good-natured professor of the religion of his fathers; or whether he be zealous and orthodox, and, “after the most straitest sect of our religion,” live “a Pharisee;” that is, according to the scriptural account, one that justifies himself; one that labours to establish his own righteousness, as the ground of his acceptance with God.

6. This is he, who, “having a form of godliness, denies the power thereof;” yea, and probably reviles it, wheresoever it is found, as mere extravagance and delusion. Meanwhile, the wretched self-deceiver thanks God, that he is “not as other men are; adulterers, unjust, extortioners:” No, he doeth no wrong to any man. He “fasts twice in a week,” uses all the means of grace, is constant at church and sacrament; yea, and “gives tithes of all that he has;” does all the good that he can: “Touching the righteousness of the law,” he is “blameless:” He wants nothing of godliness, but the power; nothing of religion, but the spirit; nothing of Christianity, but the truth and the life.

7. But know ye not, that, however highly esteemed among men such a Christian as this may be, he is an abomination in the sight of God, and an heir of every woe which the Son of God, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, denounces against “Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites?” He hath “made clean the outside of the cup and the platter,” but within is full of all filthiness. “An evil disease

cleaveth still unto him, so that his inward parts are very wickedness.” Our Lord fitly compares him to a “painted sepulchre,” which “appears beautiful without;” but, nevertheless, is “full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.” The bones, indeed, are no longer dry; the sinews and flesh are come upon them, and the skin covers them above: But there is no breath in them, no Spirit of the living God. And, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” “Ye are Christ’s, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you:” But, if not, God knoweth that ye abide in death, even until now.

8. This is another character of the sleeper here spoken to. He abides in death, though he knows it not. He is dead unto God, “dead in trespasses and sins.” For, “to be carnally minded is death.” Even as it is written, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men,” not only temporal death, but likewise spiritual and eternal. “In that day that thou eatest,” said God to Adam, “thou shalt surely die:” Not bodily, (unless as he then became mortal,) but spiritually: Thou shalt lose the life of thy soul; thou shalt die to God; shalt be separated from him, thy essential life and happiness.

9. Thus first was dissolved the vital union of our soul with God; insomuch that “in the midst of” natural “life, we are” now in spiritual “death.” And herein we remain till the Second Adam becomes a quickening Spirit to us, till he raises the dead, the dead in sin, in pleasure, riches, or honours. But, before any dead soul can live, he “hears” (hearkens to) “the voice of the Son of God:” He is made sensible of his lost estate, and receives the sentence of death in himself. He knows himself to be “dead while he liveth;” dead to God, and all the things of God; having no more power to perform the actions of a living Christian, than a dead body to perform the functions of a living man.

10. And most certain it is, that one dead in sin has not “senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil.” “Having eyes, he sees not; he hath ears, and hears not.” He doth not “taste and see that the Lord is gracious.” He “hath not seen God at any time,” nor “heard his voice,” nor “handled the word of life.” In vain is the name of Jesus “like ointment poured forth, and all his garments smell of

myrrh, aloes, and cassia." The soul that sleepeth in death, hath no perception of any objects of this kind. His heart is "past feeling," and understandeth none of these things.

11. **And hence, having no spiritual senses, no inlets of spiritual knowledge, the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; nay, he is so far from receiving them, that whatsoever is spiritually discerned is mere foolishness unto him. He is not content with being utterly ignorant of spiritual things, but he denies the very existence of them.** And spiritual sensation itself is to him the foolishness of folly. "How," saith he, "can these things be? How can any man *know* that he is alive to God?" Even as you know that your body is now alive. Faith is the life of the soul; and if ye have this life abiding in you, ye want no marks to evidence it *to yourself*, but *ελεγχος Πνευματος*, that divine consciousness, that *witness of God*, which is more and greater than ten thousand human witnesses.

12. If he doth not now bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God, O that he might convince thee, thou poor unawakened sinner, by his demonstration and power, that thou art a child of the devil! O that, as I prophesy, there Might now be "a noise and a shaking;" and may "the bones come together, bone to his bone!" Then, "come from the four winds, O Breath! and breathe on these slain, that they may live!" And do not ye harden your hearts, and resist the Holy Ghost, who even now is come to convince you of sin, "because you believe not on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

II. 1. Wherefore, "awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." God calleth thee now by my mouth; and bids thee know thyself, thou fallen spirit, thy true state and only concern below. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise! Call upon thy God, if so be thy God will think upon thee, that thou perish not. A mighty tempest is stirred up round about thee, and thou art sinking into the depths of perdition, the gulf of God's judgments. If thou wouldest escape them, cast thyself into them. "Judge thyself, and thou shalt not be judged of the Lord."

2. Awake, awake! Stand up this moment, lest thou "drink at the Lord's hand the cup of his fury." Stir up thyself

to lay hold on the Lord, the Lord thy Righteousness, mighty to save! "Shake thyself from the dust." At least, let the earthquake of God's threatenings shake thee. Awake, and cry out with the trembling Jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" And never rest till thou believest on the Lord Jesus, with a faith which is his gift, by the operation of his Spirit.

3. **If I speak to any one of you, more than to another, it is to thee who thinkest thyself unconcerned in this exhortation. "I have a message from God unto thee." In his name, I warn thee "to flee from the wrath to come."** Thou unholy soul, see thy picture in condemned Peter, lying in the dark dungeon, between the soldiers, bound with two chains, the keepers before the door keeping the prison. The night is far spent, the morning is at hand, when thou art to be brought forth to execution. And in these dreadful circumstances, thou art fast asleep; thou art fast asleep in the devil's arms, on the brink of the pit, in the jaws of everlasting destruction!

4. O may the Angel of the Lord come upon thee, and the light shine into thy prison! And mayest thou feel the stroke of an Almighty Hand, raising thee, with, "Arise up quickly, gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals, cast thy garments about thee, and follow me."

5. Awake, thou everlasting spirit, out of thy dream of worldly happiness! Did not God create thee for himself? Then thou canst not rest till thou restest in him. Return, thou wanderer! Fly back to thy ark. This is not thy home. Think not of building tabernacles here. Thou art but a stranger, a sojourner upon earth; a creature of a day, but just launching out into an unchangeable state. Make haste. Eternity is at hand. Eternity depends on this moment; an eternity of happiness or an eternity of misery!

6. In what state is thy soul? Was God, while I am yet speaking, to require it of thee, art thou ready to meet death and judgment? Canst thou stand in his sight, who is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" Art thou "meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Hast thou "fought a good fight, and kept the faith?" Hast thou secured the one thing needful? Hast thou recovered the image of God, even righteousness and true holiness? Hast thou put off

the old man, and put on the new? Art thou clothed upon with Christ?

7. Hast thou oil in thy lamp? grace in thy heart? Dost thou "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength?" Is that mind in thee which was also in Christ Jesus? Art thou a Christian indeed; that is, a new creature? Are old things passed away, and all things become new?

8. Art thou a "partaker of the divine nature?" Knowest thou not, that "Christ is in thee, except thou be reprobate?" Knowest thou, that God "dwelleth in thee, and thou in God, by his Spirit, which he hath given thee?" Knowest thou not that "thy body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which thou hast of God?" Hast thou the witness in thyself? the earnest of thine inheritance? Hast thou "received the Holy Ghost?" Or, dost thou start at the question, not knowing "whether there be any Holy Ghost?"

9. **If it offends thee, be thou assured, that thou neither art a Christian, nor desirest to be one. Nay, thy very prayer is turned into sin; and thou hast solemnly mocked God this very day, by praying for the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, when thou didst not believe there was any such thing to be received.**

10. Yet, on the authority of God's word, and our own Church, I must repeat the question, "Hast thou received the Holy Ghost?" If thou hast not, thou art not yet a Christian. For a Christian is a man that is "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power." Thou art not yet made a partaker of pure religion and undefiled. Dost thou know what religion is? that it is a participation of the divine nature; the life of God in the soul of man; Christ formed in the heart; "Christ in thee, the hope of glory?" happiness anal holiness; heaven begun upon earth? "a kingdom of God within thee; not meat and drink," no outward thing; "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy ghost?" an everlasting kingdom brought into thy soul; "peace of God, that passeth all understanding;" a "joy unspeakable, and full of glory?"

11. Knowest thou, that, "in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by love;" but a new cre-

ation? Seest thou the necessity of that inward change, that spiritual birth, that life from the dead, that holiness? And art thou thoroughly convinced, that without it no man shall see the Lord? Art thou labouring after it? “giving all diligence to make thy calling and election sure?” working out thy salvation with fear and trembling?” “agonizing to enter in at the strait gate?” Art thou in earnest about thy soul? And canst thou tell the Searcher of hearts, “Thou, O God, art the thing that I long for? Lord, thou knowest all things! Thou knowest that I *would* love thee!”

12. Thou hopest to be saved; but what reason hast thou to give of the hope that is in thee? Is it because thou hast done *no* harm? or, because thou hast done much good? or, because thou art not like other men; but wise, or learned, or honest, and morally good; esteemed of men, and of a fair reputation? Alas! All this will never bring thee to God. It is in his account lighter than vanity. Dost thou know Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent? Hath he taught thee, that “by grace we are saved through faith; and that not of ourselves: It is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast?” Hast thou received the faithful saying, as the whole foundation of thy hope, “that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? Hast thou learned what that meaneth, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep?” Art thou (he that heareth, let him understand!) lost, *dead, damned already*? Dost thou know thy deserts? Dost thou feel thy wants? Art thou “poor in spirit?” mourning for God, and refusing to be comforted? Is the prodigal “come to himself,” and well content to be therefore thought “beside himself, by those who are still feeding upon the husks which he hath left? Art thou willing to live godly in Christ Jesus? And dost thou therefore suffer persecution? Do men say all manner of evil against thee falsely, for the Son of Man’s sake?”

13. O that in all these questions ye may hear the voice that awakes the dead; and feel that hammer of the word, which breaketh the rocks in pieces!” If ye will hear his voice to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.” Now, “awake, thou that sleepest” in spiritual death; that thou sleep not in death eter-

nal! Feel thy lost estate, and “arise from the dead.” Leave thine old companions in sin and death. Follow thou Jesus, and let the dead bury their dead. “Save thyself from this untoward generation.” “Come out from among them, and be thou separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and the Lord shall receive thee.” “Christ shall give thee light.”

III. 1. This promise, I come, lastly, to explain. And how encouraging a consideration is this, that whosoever thou art, who obeyest his call, thou canst not seek his face in vain! If thou even now “awakest, and arisest from the dead,” he hath bound himself to “give thee light.” “The Lord shall give thee grace and glory;” the light of his grace here, and the light of his glory when thou receivest the crown that fadeth not away.” Thy light shall break forth as the morning, and thy darkness be as the noonday.” “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart; to give the knowledge of the glory of God ill the face of Jesus Christ.” “On them that fear the Lord shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing ill his wings.” And in that day it shall be said unto thee, rise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” For Christ shall reveal himself in thee: And he is the true Light.

2. God is light, and will give himself to every awakened sinner that waiteth for him: And thou shalt then be a temple of the living God, and Christ shall “dwell in thy heart by faith:” And, “being rooted and grounded in love, thou shalt be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

3. Ye see your calling, brethren. We are called to be “an habitation of God through his Spirit;” and through his Spirit dwelling in us, to be saints here, and partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. So exceeding great are the promises which are given unto us, actually given unto us who believe! For by faith “we receive, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God,” —the sum of all the promises, —“that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

4. The Spirit of Christ is that great gift of God, which, at sundry times, and

in divers manners, he hath promised to man, and hath fully bestowed since the time that Christ was glorified. Those promises, before made to the fathers, he hath thus fulfilled: “I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.” (Ezek xxxvi. 27.) “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” (Isaiah xlv. 3.)

5. Ye may all be living witnesses of these things; of remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” “Who among you is there that feareth the Lord; and” yet walketh on “in darkness, and hath no light?” I ask thee, in the name of Jesus, believest thou that his arm is not shortened at all? that he is still mighty to save? that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? that he hath now power on earth to forgive sins? Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven.’ God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven thee. Receive this, “not as the word of man; but as it is indeed the word of God;” and thou art justified freely through faith. Thou shalt be sanctified also through faith which is in Jesus, and shalt set to thy seal, even thine, that “God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

6. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you; and suffer ye the word of exhortation, even from one the least esteemed in the Church. **Your conscience beareth you witness in the Holy Ghost, that these things are so, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. “This is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” This experimental knowledge, and this alone, is true Christianity. He is a Christian who hath received the Spirit of Christ. He is not a Christian who hath not received him. Neither is it possible to have received him, and not know it. “For, at that day,” (when he cometh, saith our Lord,) “ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” This is that “Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: But ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John xiv. 17.)**

7. The world cannot receive him,

but utterly reject the Promise of the Father, contradicting and blaspheming. But every spirit which confessed not this is not of God. Yea, "this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come into the world: and even now it is in the world." He is Antichrist whosoever denies the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or that the indwelling Spirit of God is the common privilege of all believers, the blessing of the gospel, the unspeakable gift, the universal promise, the criterion of a real Christian.

8. It nothing helps them to say, "we do not deny the *assistance* of God's Spirit; but only this *inspiration*, this *receiving the Holy Ghost*, and being *sensible* of it. It is only this *feeling of the Spirit*? this being *moved* by the Spirit, or *filled* with it, which we deny to have any place in sound religion." But, in *only denying this*, you deny the whole Scriptures; the whole truth, and promise, and testimony of God.

9. Our own excellent Church knows nothing of this devilish distinction; but speaks plainly of "feeling the Spirit of Christ;" of being "moved by the Holy Ghost," and knowing and "feeling there is no other name than that of Jesus," whereby we can receive life and salvation. She teaches us all to pray for the "inspiration of the Holy Spirit;" yea, that we may be "filled with the Holy Ghost." Nay, and every Presbyter of hers professes to receive the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. Therefore, to deny any of these is, in effect, to renounce the Church of England, as well as the whole Christian Revelation.

10. But "the wisdom of God" was always "foolishness with men." No marvel, then, that the great mystery of the gospel should be now also "hid from the wise and prudent," as well as in the days of old; that it should be almost universally denied, ridiculed, and exploded, as mere frenzy; and that all who dare avow it still are branded with the names of madmen and enthusiasts! This is "that falling away" which was to come; that general apostasy, of all orders and degrees of men, which we even now find to have overspread the earth. "Run to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, and see if ye can find a man," a man that loveth the Lord his God with all his heart, and serveth him with all his strength. How does our own land mourn (that we look no

farther) under the overflowings of ungodliness! What villanies of every kind are committed day by day; yea, too often with impunity, by those who sin with a high hand, and glory in their shame! Who can reckon up the oaths, curses, profaneness, blasphemies; the lying, slandering, evil-speaking; the sabbath-breaking, gluttony, drunkenness, revenge; the whoredoms, adulteries, and various uncleanness; the frauds, injustice, oppression, extortion, which overspread our land as a flood?

11. And even among those who have kept themselves pure from those grosser abominations, how much anger and pride, how much sloth and idleness, how much softness and effeminacy, how much luxury and self-indulgence, how much covetousness and ambition, how much thirst of praise, how much love of the world, how much fear of man, is to be found! Meanwhile, how little of true religion! For, where is he that loveth either God or his neighbour, as he hath given us commandment? On the one hand, are those who have not so much as the form of godliness; on the other, those who have the form only: There stands the *open*, there the *painted*, sepulchre. So that in very deed, whosoever were earnestly to behold any public gathering together of the people, (I fear those in our churches are not to be excepted,) might easily Perceive, "that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees:" The one having almost as little concern about religion, as if there were "no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit;" and the other, making it a mere lifeless form, a dull round of external performances, without either true faith, or the love of God, or joy in the Holy Ghost!

12. Would to God I could except *us* of this place! "Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God, for you is, that ye may be saved" from this overflowing of ungodliness; and that here may its proud waves be stayed! But is it so indeed? God knoweth, yea, and our own consciences, it is not. Ye have not kept yourselves pure. Corrupt are we also and abominable; and few are there that understand any more; few that worship God in spirit and in truth. We, too, are "a generation that set not our hearts aright, and whose spirit cleaveth not steadfastly unto God:" He hath appointed us indeed to be "the

salt of the earth; but if the salt hath lost its savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden underfoot of men."

13. And "shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Yea, we know not how soon he may say to the sword, "Sword, go through this land!" He hath given us long space to repent. He lets us alone this year also: But he warns and awakens us by thunder. His judgments are abroad in the earth; and we have all reason to expect the heaviest of all, even that he should come unto us quickly, and remove our candlestick out of its place, except we repent and do the first works; unless we return to the principles of the Reformation, the truth and simplicity of the gospel. Perhaps we are now resisting the last effort of divine grace to save us. Perhaps we have well nigh "filled up the measure of our iniquities," by rejecting the counsel of God against ourselves, and casting out his messengers.

14. O God, "in the midst of wrath, remember mercy!" Be glorified in our reformation, not in our destruction! Let us "hear the rod, and him that appointed it!" Now, that thy "judgments are abroad in the earth," let the inhabitants of the world "learn righteousness!"

15. My brethren, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep; before the "great trumpet of the Lord be blown," and our land become a field of blood. O may we speedily see the things that make for our peace, before they are hid from our eyes! "Turn thou us, O good Lord, and let thine anger cease from us. O Lord, look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine;" and cause us to know "the time of our visitation." "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name! O deliver us, and be merciful to our sins, for thy name's sake! And so we will not go back from thee. O let us live, and we shall call upon thy name. Turn us, again, O Lord God of Hosts! Show the light of thy countenance, and we shall be whole."

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. —Amen!"

The Witness of the Spirit: Discourse I

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” — Romans viii. 16.

1. **How many vain men, not understanding what they spake, neither whereof they affirmed, have wrested this Scripture to the great loss, if not the destruction, of their souls! How many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination for this witness of the Spirit of God, and thence idly presumed they were the children of God, while they were doing the works of the devil!** These are truly and properly enthusiasts; and, indeed, in the worst sense of the word. But with what difficulty are they convinced thereof, especially if they have drank deep into that spirit of error! All endeavours to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, they will then account fighting against God; and that vehemence and impetuosity of spirit, which they call “contending earnestly for the faith,” sets them so far above all the usual methods of conviction, that we may well say, “With men it is impossible.”

2. Who can then be surprised, if many reasonable men, seeing the dreadful effects of this delusion, and labouring to keep at the utmost distance from it, should sometimes lean toward another extreme? —if they are not forward to believe any who speak of having this witness, concerning which others have so grievously erred? —if they are almost ready to set all down for enthusiasts, who use the expressions which have been so terribly abused? —yea, if they should question whether the witness or testimony here spoken of, be the privilege of *ordinary* Christians, and not, rather, one of those *extraordinary* gifts which they suppose belonged only to the apostolic age?

3. But is there any necessity laid upon us of running either into one extreme or the other? May we not steer a middle course, —keep a sufficient distance from that spirit of error and enthusiasm, without denying the gift of God, and giving up the great privilege of his children? Surely we may. In order thereto, let us consider, in the presence and fear of God,

First. What is this witness or testimony of our spirit; what is the testimony of God’s Spirit; and, how does he “bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?”

Secondly. How is this joint testimony of God’s Spirit and our own, clearly and solidly distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind, and from the delusion of the devil?

I. 1. Let us First consider, what is the witness or testimony of our spirit. But here I cannot but desire all those who are for swallowing up the testimony of the Spirit of God, in the rational testimony of our own spirit, to observe, that in this text the Apostle is so far from speaking of the testimony of our own spirit *only*, that it may be questioned whether he speaks of it at all, —whether he does not speak only of the testimony of God’s Spirit? It does not appear but the original text may be fairly understood thus. The Apostle had just said, in the preceding verse, “Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;” and immediately subjoins, *ΑΥΤΟ ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ* (some copies read, *ΤΟ ΑΥΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ*) *συμμαρτυρει τω πνευματι ημων, οτι εσμεν τεκνα Θεω* which may be translated, “The same Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (The preposition *νυν* only denoting, that he witnesses this *at the same time* that he enables us to cry Abba, Father.) **But I contend not; seeing so many other texts, with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently evince, that there is in every believer, both the testimony of God’s Spirit, and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God.**

2. With regard to the latter, the foundation thereof is laid in those numerous texts of Scripture which describe the marks of the children of God; and that so plain, that he which runneth may read them. These are also collected together, and placed in the strongest light, by many both ancient and modern writers. If any need farther light, he may receive it by attending on the ministry of God’s word; by meditating thereon before God in secret; and by conversing with those who have the knowledge of his ways. And by the reason or understanding that God has given him, which religion was designed not to extinguish, but to perfect; —ac-

ording to that of the Apostle, “Brethren, be not children in understanding; in malice” or wickedness “be ye children; but in understanding be ye men;” (1 Cor. xiv. 20;) —every man applying those Scriptural marks to himself, may know whether he is a child of God. Thus, if he know, First, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God,” into all holy tempers and actions, “they are the sons of God;” (for which he has the infallible assurance of holy writ;) Secondly, I am thus “led by the Spirit of God;” he will easily conclude, —“Therefore I am a son of God.”

3. Agreeable to this are all those plain declarations of St. John, in his First Epistle: “Hereby we know, that we do know him, if we keep his commandments.” (Chap. ii. 3.) “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: Hereby know we that we are in him;” that we are indeed the children of God. (Verse 5.) “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” (Verse 29.) “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” (Chap. iii. 14.) “Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him;” (verse 19;) namely, because we “love one another, not in word, neither in tongues but in deed and in truth.” “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his” loving “Spirit.” (Chap. iv. 13.) And, “hereby we know that he abideth in us by the” obedient “Spirit which he hath given us.” (Chap. iii. 24.)

4. It is highly probable there never were any children of God, from the beginning of the world unto this day, who were farther advanced in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, than the Apostle John, at the time when he wrote these words, and the fathers in Christ to whom he wrote. Notwithstanding which, it is evident, both the Apostle himself, and all those pillars in God’s temple, were very far from despising these marks of their being the children of God; and that they applied them to their own souls for the confirmation of their faith. Yet all this is no other than rational evidence, the witness of our spirit, our reason or understanding. It all resolves into this: Those who have these marks are children of God: But we have these marks: Therefore we are children of God.

5. **But how does it appear, that we have these marks? This is a question that still remains. How does it appear, that we do love God and our neighbour, and that we keep his commandments? Observe, that the meaning of the question is, How does it appear to ourselves, not to others?** I would ask him, then, that proposes this question, How does it appear to you, that you are alive, and that you are now in ease, and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it?

By the same immediate consciousness, you will know if your soul is alive to God; if you are saved from the pain of proud wrath, and have the ease of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same means you cannot but perceive if you love, rejoice, and delight in God. By the same you must be directly assured, if you love your neighbour as yourself; you are kindly affectioned to all mankind, and full of gentleness and longsuffering.

And with regard to the outward mark of the children of God, which is, according to St. John, the keeping his commandments, you undoubtedly know in your own breast, if, by the grace of God, it belongs to you. Your conscience informs you from day to day, if you do not take the name of God within your lips, unless with seriousness and devotion, with reverence and godly fear; if you remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy; if you honour your father and mother; if you do to all as you would they should do unto you; if you possess your body in sanctification and honour; and if, whether you eat or drink, you are temperate therein, and do all to the glory of God.

6. Now this is properly the testimony of our own spirit; even the testimony of our own conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation. It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to his adopted children; even a loving heart toward God, and toward all mankind; hanging with child-like confidence on God our Father, desiring nothing but him, casting all our care upon him, and embracing every child of man with earnest, tender affection:—A consciousness that we are inwardly conformed, by the Spirit of God, to the image of his Son, and

that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.

7. But what is that testimony of God's Spirit, which is super-added to, and conjoined with, this? How does he "bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?" It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain "the deep things of God." Indeed, there are none that will adequately express what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God to correct, to soften, or strengthen the expression,) **The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.**

8. That this testimony of the Spirit of God must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration: We must be holy of heart, and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the testimony of our spirit, that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know he loves us. "We love him, because he first loved us." And we cannot know his pardoning love to us, till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this testimony of his Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the testimony of our spirit concerning them.

9. Then, and not till then, —when the Spirit of God beareth that witness to our spirit, "God hath loved thee, and given his own Son to be the propitiation for thy sins; the Son of God hath loved thee, and hath washed thee from thy sins in his blood," —"we love God because he first loved us;" and, for his sake, we love our brother also. And of this we cannot but be conscious to ourselves: We "know the things that are freely given to us of God." We know that we love God, and keep his commandments; and "hereby also we know that we are of God." This is

that testimony of our own spirit, which, so long as we continue to love God and keep his commandments, continues joined with the testimony of God's Spirit, "that we are the children of God."

10. Not that I would by any means be understood, by any thing which has been spoken concerning it, to exclude the operation of the Spirit of God, even from the testimony of our own spirit. In no wise. It is he that not only worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, but also shines upon his own work, and clearly shows what he has wrought. Accordingly, this is spoken of by St. Paul, as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, "that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God:" That he may strengthen the testimony of our conscience, touching our "simplicity and godly sincerity;" and give us to discern, in a fuller and stronger light, that we now do the things which please him.

11. Should it still be inquired, "How does the Spirit of God 'bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,' so as to exclude all doubt, and evince the reality of our sonship?" —the answer is clear from what has been observed above. And, First, as to the witness of our spirit: The soul as intimately and evidently perceives when it loves, delights, and rejoices in God, as when it loves, and delights in anything on earth. And it can no more doubt, whether it loves, delights, and rejoices or no, than whether it exists or no. If, therefore, this be just reasoning,

He that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in him with an humble joy, and holy delight, and an obedient love, is a child of God: But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God; Therefore, I am a child of God: —Then a Christian can in no wise doubt of his being a child of God. Of the former proposition he has as full an assurance as he has that the Scriptures are of God; and of his thus loving God, he has an inward proof, which is nothing short of self-evidence. Thus, the testimony of our own spirit is with the most intimate conviction manifested to our hearts, in such a manner, as beyond all reasonable doubt to evince the reality of our sonship.

12. **The manner how the divine testimony is manifested to the heart, I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excel-**

lent for me: I cannot attain unto it. The wind bloweth, and I hear the sound thereof; but I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth. As no one knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him; so the *manner* of the things of God knoweth no one, save the Spirit of God. But the fact we know; namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, than he can doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams.

II. 1. How this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our spirit may be clearly and solidly distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind, and from the delusion of the devil, is the next thing to be considered. And it highly imports all who desire the salvation of God, to consider it with the deepest attention, as they would not deceive their own souls. An error in this is generally observed to have the most fatal consequences; the rather, because he that errs, seldom discovers his mistake, till it is too late to remedy it.

2. And, First, how is this testimony to be distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind? It is certain, one who was never convinced of sin, is always ready to flatter himself, and think of himself, especially in spiritual things, more highly than he ought to think. And hence, it is in no wise strange, one who is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, when he hears of this privilege of true Christians, among whom he undoubtedly ranks himself, should soon work himself up into a persuasion that he is already possessed thereof. Such instances now abound in the world, and have abounded in all ages. **How then may the real testimony of the Spirit with our spirit, be distinguished from this damning presumption?**

3. I answer, the Holy Scriptures abound with marks, whereby the one may be distinguished from the other. They describe, in the plainest manner, the circumstances which go before, which accompany, and which follow, the true, genuine testimony of the Spirit of God with the spirit of a believer. **Whoever carefully weighs and attends to these will not need to put darkness for light. He will perceive so wide a differ-**

ence, with respect to all these, between the real and the pretended witness of the Spirit, that there will be no danger, I might say, no possibility, of confounding the one with the other.

4. By these, one who vainly presumes on the gift of God might surely know, if he really desired it, that he hath been hitherto "given up to a strong delusion," and suffered to believe a lie. For the Scriptures lay down those clear, obvious marks, as preceding, accompanying, and following that gift, which a little reflection would convince him, beyond all doubt, were never found in his soul. For instance: The Scripture describes repentance, or conviction of sin, as constantly going before this witness of pardon. So, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iii. 2.) "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark i. 15.) "Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins." (Acts ii. 38.) "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii. 19.) In conformity whereto, our Church also continually places repentance before pardon, or the witness of it. "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." "Almighty God—hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them, who, with hearty repentance and true faith, turn unto him." **But he is a stranger even to this repentance: He hath never known a broken and a contrite heart: "The remembrance of his sins" was never "grievous unto him," nor "the burden of them intolerable." In repeating those words, he never meant what he said; he merely paid a compliment to God. And were it only from the want of this previous work of God, he hath too great reason to believe that he hath grasped a mere shadow, and never yet known the real privilege of the sons of God.**

5. Again, the Scriptures describe the being born of God, which must precede the witness that we are his children, as a vast and mighty change; a change "from darkness to light," as well as "from the power of Satan unto God;" as a "passing from death unto life," a resurrection from the dead. Thus the Apostle to the Ephesians: "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." (ii. 1.) And again, "When we were dead in sins, he

hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Verses 5, 6.) But what knoweth he, concerning whom we now speak, of any such change as this? He is altogether unacquainted with this whole matter. This is a language which he does not understand. He tells you he always was a Christian. He knows no time when he had need of such a change. By this also, if he give himself leave to think, may he know, that he is not born the Spirit; that he has never yet known God; but has taken the voice of nature for the voice of God.

6. **But waving the consideration of whatever he has or has not experienced in time past; by the present marks may we easily distinguish a child of God from a presumptuous self-deceiver.** The Scriptures describe that joy in the Lord which accompanies the witness of his Spirit, as a humble joy; a joy that abases to the dust, that makes a pardoned sinner cry out, "I am vile! What am I, or my father's house? Now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes!" And wherever lowliness is, there is meekness, patience, gentleness, long-suffering. There is a soft, yielding spirit; a mildness and sweetness, a tenderness of soul, which words cannot express. But do these fruits attend that *supposed* testimony of the Spirit in a presumptuous man? Just the reverse. The more confident he is of the favour of God, the more is he lifted up; the more does he exalt himself; the more haughty and assuming is his whole behaviour. The stronger witness he imagines himself to have, the more overbearing is he to all around him; the more incapable of receiving any reproof; the more impatient of contradiction. Instead of being more meek, and gentle, and teachable, more "swift to hear, and slow to speak," he is more slow to hear, and swift to speak; more unready to learn of any one; more fiery and vehement in his temper, and eager in his conversation. Yea, perhaps, there will sometimes appear a kind of fierceness in his air, his manner of speaking, his whole deportment, as if he were just going to take the matter out of God's hands, and himself to "devour the adversaries."

7. Once more: The Scriptures teach, "This is the love of God," the sure mark thereof, "that we keep his commandments." (1 John v. 3.) And our Lord him-

self saith, "He that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me." (John xiv. 21.) Love rejoices to obey; to do, in every point, whatever is acceptable to the beloved. A true lover of God hastens to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven. **But is this the character of the presumptuous pretender to the love of God? Nay, but his love gives him a liberty to disobey, to break, not keep, the commandments of God. Perhaps, when he was in fear of the wrath of God, he did labour to do his will. But now, looking on himself as "not under the law," he thinks he is no longer obliged to observe it. He is therefore less zealous of good works; less careful to abstain from evil; less watchful over his own heart; less jealous over his tongue. He is less earnest to deny himself, and to take up his cross daily. In a word, the whole form of his life is changed, since he has fancied himself to be *at liberty*. He is no longer "exercising himself unto godliness;" "wrestling not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers," enduring hardships, "agonizing to enter in at the strait gate." No; he has found an easier way to heaven; a broad, smooth, flowery path; in which he can say to his soul, "Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry." It follows, with undeniable evidence, that he has not the true testimony of his own spirit. He cannot be conscious of having those marks which he hath not; that lowliness, meekness, and obedience: Nor yet can the Spirit of the God of truth bear witness to a lie; or testify that he is a child of God, when he is manifestly a child of the devil.**

8. Discover thyself, thou poor self-deceiver! —thou who art confident of being a child of God; thou who sayest, "I have the witness in myself," and therefore defiest all thy enemies. Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting; even in the balance of the sanctuary. The word of the Lord hath tried thy soul, and proved thee to be reprobate silver. Thou art not lowly of heart; therefore thou hast not received the Spirit of Jesus unto this day. Thou art not gentle and meek; therefore thy joy is nothing worth: It is not joy in the Lord. Thou dost not keep his commandments; therefore thou lovest him not, neither art thou partaker of the Holy Ghost. It is consequently as certain and as evident,

as the Oracles of God can make it, his Spirit doth not bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God. O cry unto him, that the scales may fall off thine eyes; that thou mayest know thyself as thou art known; that thou mayest receive the sentence of death in thyself, till thou hear the voice that raises the dead, saying, "Be of good cheer: Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath made thee whole."

9. "But how may one who has the real witness in himself distinguish it from presumption?" How, I pray, do you distinguish day from night? How do you distinguish light from darkness; or the light of a star, or a glimmering taper, from the light of the noon-day sun? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other? And do you not immediately and directly perceive that difference, provided your senses are rightly disposed? In like manner, there is an inherent, essential difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness; and between the light wherewith the Sun of righteousness shines upon our heart, and that glimmering light which arises only from "sparks of our own kindling:" And this difference also is immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed.

10. To require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner whereby we distinguish these, and of the *criteria*, or intrinsic marks, whereby we know the voice of God, is to make a demand which can never be answered; no, not by one who has the deepest knowledge of God. Suppose when Paul answered before Agrippa, the wise Roman had said, "Thou talkest of hearing the voice of the Son of God. How dost thou know it was his voice? By what *criteria*, what intrinsic marks, dost thou know the voice of God? Explain to me the *manner* of distinguishing this from a human or angelic voice." Can you believe, the Apostle himself would have once attempted to answer so idle a demand? And yet, doubtless, the moment he heard that voice, he knew it was the voice of God. But *how* he knew this, who is able to explain? Perhaps neither man nor angel.

11. To come yet closer: Suppose God were now to speak to any soul, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," —he must be willing that soul should know his voice; otherwise he would speak in vain. And he is

able to effect this; for, whenever he wills, to do is present with him. And he does effect it: That soul is absolutely assured, "this voice is the voice of God." But yet he who hath that witness in himself, cannot explain it to one who hath it not: Nor indeed is it to be expected that he should. Were there any natural medium to prove, or natural method to explain, the things of God to unexperienced men, then the natural man might discern and know the things of the Spirit of God. But this is utterly contrary to the assertion of the Apostle, that "he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" even by spiritual senses, which the natural man hath not.

12. "But how shall I know that my spiritual senses are rightly disposed?" This also is a question of vast importance; for if a man mistake in this, he may run on in endless error and delusion. "And how am I assured that this is not my case; and that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit?" Even by the testimony of your own spirit; by "the answer of a good conscience toward God." By the fruits which he hath wrought in your spirit, you shall know the testimony of the Spirit of God. Hereby you shall know, that you are in no delusion, that you have not deceived your own soul. The immediate fruits of the Spirit, ruling in the heart, are "love, joy, peace, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering." And the outward fruits are, the doing good to all men; the doing no evil to any; and the walking in the light, —a zealous, uniform obedience to all the commandments of God.

13. By the same fruits shall you distinguish this voice of God, from any delusion of the devil. That proud spirit cannot humble thee before God. He neither can nor would soften thy heart, and melt it first into earnest mourning after God, and then into filial love. It is not the adversary of God and man that enables thee to love thy neighbour; or to put on meekness, gentleness, patience, temperance, and the whole armour of God. He is not divided against himself, or a destroyer of sin, his own work. No; it is none but the Son of God who cometh "to destroy the works of the devil." As surely therefore as holiness is of God, and as sin is the work of the devil, so surely the witness thou hast in thyself is not of Satan, but of God.

14. Well then mayest thou say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable

gift!" Thanks be unto God, who giveth me to "know in whom I have believed;" who hath "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into my heart, crying, Abba, Father," and even now, "bearing witness with my spirit that I am a child of God!" And see, that not only thy lips, but thy life, show forth his praise. He hath sealed thee for his own; glorify him then in thy body and thy spirit, which are his. Beloved, if thou hast this hope in thyself, purify thyself as he is pure. While thou beholdest what manner of love the Father hath given thee, that thou shouldst be called a child of God; cleanse thyself "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" and let all thy thoughts, words, and works be a spiritual sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God through Christ Jesus!

The Witness of the Spirit: Discourse II

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Romans viii. 16.

I. 1. None who believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, can doubt the importance of such a truth as this; —a truth revealed therein, not once only, not obscurely, not incidentally; but frequently, and that in express terms; but solemnly and of set purpose, as denoting one of the peculiar privileges of the children of God.

2. And it is the more necessary to explain and defend this truth, because there is a danger on the right hand and on the left. If we deny it, there is a danger lest our religion degenerate into a mere formality; lest, "having a form of godliness," we neglect, if not "deny, the power of it." If we allow it, but do not understand what we allow, we are liable to run into all the wildness of enthusiasm. It is therefore needful, in the highest degree, to guard those who fear God from both these dangers, by a scriptural and rational illustration and confirmation of this momentous truth.

3. It may seem, something of this kind is the more needful, because so little has been wrote on the subject with any clearness; unless some discourses on the wrong side of the question which explain it quite away. And it cannot be doubted, but these were occasioned, at least in a great measure, by the crude, unscriptural, irrational explication of others, who "knew

not what they spake, nor whereof they affirmed."

4. It more nearly concerns the Methodists, so called, clearly to understand, explain, and defend this doctrine; because it is one grand part of the testimony which God has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by his peculiar blessing upon them in searching the Scriptures, confirmed by the experience of his children, that this great evangelical truth has been recovered, which had been for many years well nigh lost and forgotten.

II. 1. But what is the witness of the Spirit? The original word μαρτυρια, may be rendered either (as it is in several places) *the witness*, or less ambiguously, *the testimony*, or *the record*: So it is rendered in our translation, (1 John v. 11.) "This is the record," the testimony, the sum of what God testifies in all the inspired writings, "that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." The testimony now under consideration is given by the Spirit of God to and with our spirit: He is the Person testifying. What he testifies to us is, "that we are the children of God." The immediate result of this testimony is, "the fruit of the Spirit;" namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness:" And without these, the testimony itself cannot continue. For it is inevitably destroyed, not only by the commission of any outward sin, or the omission of known duty, but by giving way to any inward sin; in a word, by whatever grieves the Holy Spirit of God.

2. I observed many years ago, "It is hard to find words in the language of men, to explain the deep things of God. Indeed there are none that will adequately express what the Spirit of God works in his children. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God, to correct, soften, or strengthen the expression.) By the testimony of the Spirit, I mean, an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."

3. After twenty years' further consideration, I see no cause to retract any part of this. Neither do I conceive how any of these expressions may be altered, so as to make them more intelligible. I can only

add, that if any of the children of God will point out any other expressions, which are more clear, or more agreeable to the word of God, I will readily lay these aside.

4. Meantime let it be observed, I do not mean hereby, that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice; no, nor always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose, that he always applies to the heart (though he often may) one or more texts of Scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong, though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm; the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his "iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered."

5. Now what is the matter of dispute concerning this? Not whether there be a witness or testimony of the Spirit. Not whether the Spirit does testify with our spirit, that we are the children of God. None can deny this, without flatly contradicting the Scriptures, and charging a lie upon the God of truth. Therefore, that there is a testimony of the Spirit is acknowledged by all parties.

6. Neither is it questioned, whether there is an *indirect* witness or testimony, that we are the children of God. This is nearly, if not exactly, the same with the testimony of a good conscience towards God; and is the result of reason, or reflection on what we feel in our own souls. Strictly speaking, it is a conclusion drawn partly from the word of God, and partly from our own experience. The word of God says, every one who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God; experience, or inward consciousness, tells me, that I have the fruit of the Spirit; and hence I rationally conclude, "Therefore I am a child of God." This is likewise allowed on all hands, and so is no matter of controversy.

7. Nor do we assert, that there can be any real testimony of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit. We assert, on the contrary, that the fruit of the Spirit immediately springs from this testimony; not always indeed in the same degree, even when the testimony is first given; and much less afterwards. Neither joy nor peace is always at one stay; no, nor love; as neither is the testimony itself always equally strong and clear.

8. But the point in question is, whether there be any *direct* testimony of the Spirit at all; whether there be any other testimony of the Spirit, than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit.

III. 1. I believe there is; because that is the plain, natural meaning of the text, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." It is manifest, here are two witnesses mentioned, who together testify the same thing; the Spirit of God, and our own spirit. The late Bishop of London, in his sermon on this text, seems astonished that any one can doubt of this, which appears upon the very face of the words. Now, "The testimony of our own spirit," says the Bishop, "is one, which is the consciousness of our own sincerity;" or, to express the same thing a little more clearly, the consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit. When our spirit is conscious of this, of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, it easily infers from these premises, that we are the children of God.

2. It is true, that great man supposes the other witness to be "The consciousness of our own good works." This, he affirms, is the testimony of God's Spirit. But this is included in the testimony of our own spirit; yea, and in sincerity, even according to the common sense of the word. So the Apostle, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world:" Where it is plain, sincerity refers to our words and actions, at least as much as to our inward dispositions. So that this is not another witness, but the very same that he mentioned before; the consciousness of our good works being only one branch of the consciousness of our sincerity. Consequently here is only one witness still. If therefore the text speaks of two witnesses, one of these is not the consciousness of our good works, neither of our sincerity; all this being manifestly contained in the testimony of our spirit.

3. What then is the other witness? This might easily be learned, if the text itself were not sufficiently clear, from the verse immediately preceding: "Ye have received, not the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father:" It follows, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our

spirit, that we are the children of God."

4. This is farther explained by the parallel text, (Gal. iv. 6,) "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Is not this something *immediate* and *direct*, not the result of reflection or argumentation? Does not this Spirit cry, "Abba, Father," in our hearts the moment it is given, antecedently to any reflection upon our sincerity; yea, to any reasoning whatsoever? And is not this the plain natural sense of the words, which strikes any one as soon as he hears them? All these texts then, in their most obvious meaning, describe a direct testimony of the Spirit.

5. That the testimony of the Spirit of God must, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration: We must be holy in heart and life before we can be conscious that we are so. But we must love God before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know he loves us: "We love him, because he first loved us:" And we cannot know his love to us, till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Till then we cannot believe it; we cannot say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

*Then, only then we feel
Our interest in his blood,
And cry, with joy unspeakable,
Thou art my Lord, my God!*

Since, therefore, the testimony of his Spirit must precede the love of God, and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our consciousness thereof.

6. And here properly comes in, to confirm this scriptural doctrine, the experience of the children of God; the experience not of two or three, not of a few, but of a great multitude which no man can number. It has been confirmed, both in this, and in all ages, by "a cloud" of living and dying "witnesses." It is confirmed by *your* experience and *mine*. The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit that I was a child of God, gave me an evidence hereof, and I immediately cried, "Abba, Father!" And this I did, (and so did you,) before I reflected on, or was conscious of, any fruit of the Spirit. It

was from this testimony received, that love, joy, peace, and the whole fruit of the Spirit flowed. First, I heard,

*Thy sins are forgiven!
Accepted thou art!—
I listen'd,
and heaven sprung up in my heart.*

7. But this is confirmed, not only by the experience of the children of God;—thousands of whom can declare that they never did know themselves to be in the favour of God till it was directly witnessed to them by his Spirit;—but by all those who are convinced of sin, who feel the wrath of God abiding on them. These cannot be satisfied with any thing less than a direct testimony from his Spirit, that he is "merciful to their unrighteousness, and remembers their sins and iniquities no more." Tell any of these, "You are to know you are a child by reflecting on what he has wrought in you, on your love, joy and peace;" and will he not immediately reply, "By all this I know I am a child of the devil? I have no more love to God than the devil has; my carnal mind is enmity against God. I have no joy in the Holy Ghost; my soul is sorrowful even unto death. I have no peace; my heart is a troubled sea; I am all storm and tempest." And which way can these souls possibly be comforted, but by a divine testimony (not that they are good, or sincere, or conformable to the Scripture in heart and life, but) that God *justifieth the ungodly?*—him that, till the moment he is justified, is all ungodly, void of all true holiness; "him that worketh not," that worketh nothing that is truly good, till he is conscious that he is accepted, not for any "works of righteousness which he hath done," but by the mere, free mercy of God; wholly and solely for what the Son of God hath done and suffered for him. And can it be any otherwise, if "a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law?" If so, what inward or outward goodness can he be conscious of, antecedent to his justification? Nay, is not the having nothing to pay, that is, the being conscious that "there dwelleth in us no good thing," neither inward nor outward goodness, essentially, indispensably necessary, before we can be "justified freely, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ?" Was ever any man justified

since his coming into the world, or can any man ever be justified, till he is brought to that point,—

*I give up every plea beside, —
Lord, I am damn'd;
but Thou hast died?*

8. Every one, therefore, who denies the existence of such a testimony, does in effect deny justification by faith. It follows, that either he never experienced this, either he never was justified, or that he has forgotten, as St. Peter speaks, *τῷ καθαρῶσιν τῶν παλαιῶν αμαρτιῶν, the purification from his former sins*; the experience he then had himself; the manner wherein God wrought in his own soul, when his former sins were blotted out.

9. And the experience even of the children of the world here confirms that of the children of God. Many of these have a desire to please God: Some of them take much pains to please him: But do they not, one and all, count it the highest absurdity for any to talk of *knowing* his sins are forgiven? Which of *them* even pretends to any such thing? And yet many of them are conscious of their own sincerity. Many of them undoubtedly have, in a degree, the testimony of their own spirit, a consciousness of their own uprightness. But this brings them no consciousness that they are forgiven; no knowledge that they are the children of God. Yea, the more sincere they are, the more uneasy they generally are, for want of knowing it; plainly showing that this cannot be known, in a satisfactory manner, by the bare testimony of our own spirit, without God's directly testifying that we are his children.

IV. But abundance of objections have been made to this; the chief of which it may be well to consider.

1. It is objected, First, "Experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine which is not founded on Scripture." This is undoubtedly true; and it is an important truth; but it does not affect the present question; for it has been shown, that this doctrine is founded on Scripture: Therefore experience is properly alleged to confirm it.

2. "But madmen, French prophets, and enthusiasts of every kind, have imagined they experienced this witness." They have so; and perhaps not a

few of them did, although they did not retain it long: But if they did not, this is no proof at all that others have not experienced it; as a madman's imagining himself a king, does not prove that there are no *real* kings. "Nay, many who pleaded strongly for this, have utterly decried the Bible." Perhaps so; but this was no necessary sequence: Thousands plead for it who have the highest esteem for the Bible. "Yea, but many have fatally deceived themselves hereby, and got above all conviction." And yet a scriptural doctrine is no worse though men abuse it to their own destruction.

3. "But I lay it down as an undoubted truth, the fruit of the Spirit is the witness of the Spirit." Not undoubted; thousands doubt of, yea, flatly deny it: But let that pass. "If this witness be sufficient, there is no need of any other. But it is sufficient, unless in one of these cases, 1. The *total absence* of the fruit of the Spirit." And this is the case, when the direct witness is first given. 2. "*The not perceiving it.* But to contend for it in this case, is to contend for being in the favour of God, and not knowing it." True; not knowing it at that time any otherwise than by the testimony which is given for that end. And this we do contend for; we contend that the direct witness may shine clear, even while the indirect one is under a cloud.

4. It is objected, Secondly, "The design of the witness contended for is, to prove that the profession we make is genuine. But it does not prove this." I answer, the proving this is not the design of it. It is antecedent to our making any profession at all, but that of being lost, undone, guilty, helpless sinners. It is designed to assure those to whom it is given, that they are the children of God; that they are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And this does not suppose that their preceding thoughts, words, and actions, are conformable to the rule of Scripture; it supposes quite the reverse; namely, that they are sinners all over; sinners both in heart and life. Were it otherwise, God would *justify the godly*; and *their own works* would be *counted to them for righteousness*. And I cannot but fear that a supposition of our being justified by works is at the root of all these objections; for, whoever cordially believes that God *imputes* to all that are justified *righteousness without works*, will find no

difficulty in allowing the witness of his Spirit, preceding the fruit of it.

5. It is objected, Thirdly, "One Evangelist says, 'Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' The other Evangelist calls the same thing 'good gifts;' abundantly demonstrating that the Spirit's way of bearing witness is by giving good gifts." Nay, here is nothing at all about *bearing witness*, either in the one text or the other. Therefore till this demonstration is better demonstrated, I let it stand as it is.

6. It is objected, Fourthly, "The Scripture says, 'The tree is known by its fruits. Prove all things. Try the spirits. Examine yourselves.'" Most true: Therefore, let every man who believes he "hath the witness in himself," try whether it be of God; if the fruit follow, it is; otherwise it is not. For certainly "the tree is known by its fruit:" Hereby we *prove* if it be of God. "But the direct witness is never referred to in the Book of God." Not as standing alone; not as a single witness; but as connected with the other; as giving a *joint testimony*; testifying *with our spirit*, that we are children of God. And who is able to prove, that it is not *thus* referred to in this very Scripture? "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?" It is by no means clear, that they did not know this by a *direct* as well as a *remote* witness. How is it proved, that they did not know it, First, by an inward consciousness; and, Then, by love, joy, and peace?

7. "But the testimony arising from the internal and external change is constantly referred to in the Bible." It is so: And we constantly refer thereto, to confirm the testimony of the Spirit. "Nay, all the marks *you* have given, whereby to distinguish the operations of God's Spirit from delusion, refer to the change wrought in us and upon us." This, likewise, is undoubtedly true.

8. It is objected, Fifthly, that "the direct witness of the Spirit does not secure us from the greatest delusion. And is that a witness fit to be trusted, whose testimony cannot be depended on? that is forced to fly to something else, to prove what it asserts? I answer: To secure us from all delusion, God gives us two witnesses that we are his children. And this they testify conjointly. Therefore, "what

God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” And while they are joined, we cannot be deluded: Their testimony can be depended on. They are fit to be trusted in the highest degree, and need nothing else to prove what they assert. “Nay, the direct witness only asserts, but does not prove, any thing.” By two witnesses shall every word be established. And when the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, as God designs it to do, then it fully proves that we are children of God.

9. It is objected, Sixthly, “You own the change wrought is a sufficient testimony, unless in the case of severe trials, such as that of our Saviour upon the cross; but none of us can be tried in that manner.” But you or I may be tried in such a manner, and so may any other child of God, that it will be impossible for us to keep our filial confidence in God without the direct witness of his Spirit.

10. It is objected, Lastly, “The greatest contenders for it are some of the proudest and most uncharitable of men.” Perhaps some of the *hottest* contenders for it are both proud and uncharitable; but many of the *firmest* contenders for it are eminently meek and lowly in heart; and, indeed, in all other respects also, True followers of their lamb-like Lord.

The preceding objections are the most considerable that I have heard, and I believe contain the strength of the cause. Yet I apprehend whoever calmly and impartially considers those objections and the answers together, will easily see that they do not destroy, no, nor weaken, the evidence of that great truth, that the Spirit of God does *directly*, as well as *indirectly*, testify that we are children of God.

V. 1. The sum of all this is: The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit, that they are children of God. And it is not questioned, whether there is a testimony of the Spirit; but whether there is any *direct* testimony; whether there is any other than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit. We believe there is; because this is the plain natural meaning of the text, illustrated both by the preceding words, and by the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Galatians; because, in the nature of the thing, the testimony must precede the

fruit which springs from it; and because this plain meaning of the word of God is confirmed by the experience of innumerable children of God; yea, and by the experience of all who are convinced of sin, who can never rest till they have a direct witness; and even of the children of the world, who, not having the witness in themselves, one and all declare, none can *know* his sins forgiven.

2. And whereas it is objected, that experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine unsupported by Scripture; —that madmen and enthusiasts of every kind have imagined such a witness;

—that the design of that witness is to prove our profession genuine, which design it does not answer;

—that the Scripture says, “The tree is known by its fruit;” “examine yourselves; prove your own selves;” and, meantime, the direct witness is never referred to in all the Book of God; —that it does not secure us from the greatest delusions; —and, Lastly, that the change wrought in us a sufficient testimony, unless in such trials as Christ alone suffered:

—We answer, 1. Experience is sufficient to *confirm* a doctrine which is grounded on Scripture. 2. Though many fancy they experience what they do not, this is no prejudice to real experience. 3. The design of that witness is, to assure us we are children of God; and this design it does answer. 4. The true witness of the Spirit is known by its fruit, “love, peace, joy;” not indeed preceding, but following it. 5. It cannot be proved, that the direct as well as the indirect witness is referred to in that very text, “Know ye not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?” 6. The Spirit of God, witnessing with our spirit, does secure us from all delusion: And, Lastly, we are all liable to trials, wherein the testimony of our own spirit is not sufficient; wherein nothing less than the direct testimony of God’s Spirit can assure us that we are his children.

3. Two inferences may be drawn from the whole: The First, let none ever presume to rest in any supposed testimony of the Spirit which is separate from the fruit of it. If the Spirit of God does really testify that we are the children of God, the immediate consequence will be the fruit of the Spirit, even love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance.”

And however this fruit may be clouded for a while, during the time of strong temptation, so that it does not appear to the tempted person, while Satan is sifting him as wheat; yet the substantial part of it remains, even under the thickest cloud. It is true, joy in the Holy Ghost may be withdrawn, during the hour of trial; yea, the soul may be “exceeding sorrowful,” while “the hour and power of darkness” continue; but even this is generally restored with increase, till we rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

4. The Second inference is, let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, of love, and those not delusive, but really from God, long before we have the witness in ourselves; before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits that we have “redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.” Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance, (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the preventing grace of God,) before we “are accepted in the Beloved,” and, consequently, before we have a testimony of our acceptance: But it is by no means advisable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise, we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, “Abba, Father!” This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are his children. Without this we cannot retain a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears. But when we have once received this Spirit of adoption, this “peace which passeth all understanding,” and which expels all painful doubt and fear, will “keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” And when this has brought forth its genuine fruit, all inward and outward holiness, it is undoubtedly the will of him that calleth us, to give us always what he has once given; so that there is no need that we should ever more be deprived of either the testimony of God’s Spirit, or the testimony of our own, the consciousness of our walking in all righteousness and true holiness.

Newry, April 4, 1767.

[The preceding excerpts were taken from *The Works of John Wesley* (London: 1872).] ■

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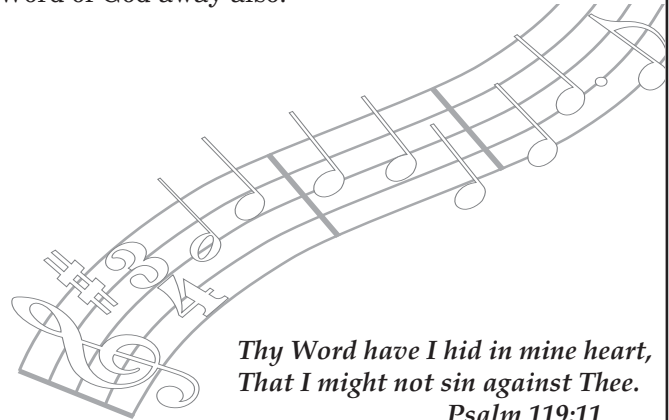
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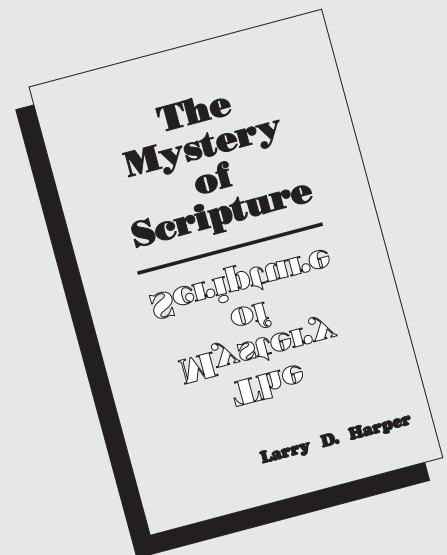
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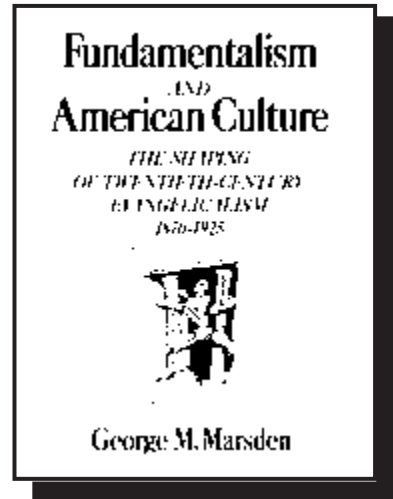


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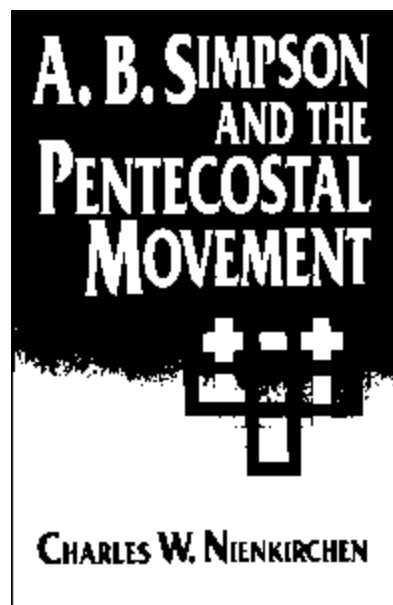
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