

their teaching, just as may appear to my limited range of knowledge and judgement to be quite reasonable. When, however, I bring this theory to the test of the Book itself, I am at once met by claims superior to my own reason. Thus, I find it stated, concerning some of the things written by Moses, that God spake them to him face to face. "That the Lord did let none of the words of Samuel fall to the ground." That David and others repeatedly enquired of the Lord and the Lord answered them; and God is said to have declared that he would speak to His prophets in visions and dreams. These and similar statements in the old Testament are summed up by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the statement.

"God who at sundy times and in divers manners "spake unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son."

Hence I feel constrained to suspend my own judgement in deference to the authority of those who profess to speak with the equivalent of "Thus saith the Lord." I must have very strong reason indeed for believing that any one of them had only a quite sure to sustain him, and having conceded that, I am constrained to reject his writings altogether as presumptuous or worse.

And so I reach the conclusion that while the authority of some parts of our English Bible may be an open question, other parts and especially those which teach the Divine plan of Redemption, come to me with the authority of a Divine Revelation; and further I find that this authority is hedged in by the further fact, that since the days of the apostles no good man has dared to preface his writings with the statement "Thus saith the Lord."

It is on this doctrine of the Divine authority of the Scriptures that rests the whole plan of Human Salvation, and because reason could never devise or account for it. I accept the teaching of the Word of God, and Faith becomes possible.

2nd. My next objection is to the views expressed in regard to the forgiveness of sin. In the second sermon I find the following:—

"I believe God forgives the penitent, and helps him to recover what he has lost. I believe that Christ died for men, and in some way to us unknown was their ransom. The prodigal returned home, but his goods and his health were gone. A drunkard recovers himself, but he cannot escape the penalty of what he has done; it is in every fibre of his body, and every faculty of his mind. It is well to be converted,—nay, it *must* be. You had better begin to think right and do right here and now; but I believe the sinner must bear the consequences of his sin; that no faith, no penitence, no prayers, no tears, no mercy of God, and no Cross of Christ can come between him and the penalty of his wrong-doing. There is a law in eternity as sure as in time, and law is inexorable: 'Whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap.'"

Here are paradoxes enough to test any man's reasonable faculties. On one side we have Christ ransoming and God forgiving the sinner, and on the other side, law is inexorable, punishment is unavoidable, and, as far as I can see, not even mitigable. But if so, of what avail is the ransom and forgiveness? For the interests of futurity it may be of almost infinite importance to be converted from a life of sin to a life of holiness, but, as regards past sins, I fail to see on this statement of Divine procedure that he who is forgiven is any better off than he who is not, or that he who is ransomed by Christ is to suffer less than he who is not.

What then becomes of the great doctrine of the New Testament,—*"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."* If that is not the central doctrine and the very foundation of the Divine plan for man's restoration to holiness, I fail to catch the first idea of what is. That plan finds man alienated from God and His service, and more than that, he is under sentence of death (whatever may be the true meaning of that), and that sentence must be taken away before aught else is attempted. But how can it be taken away? The law cannot be suspended, or dishonoured by a free forgiveness. Even man's own nature recognizes that; for sin to go unpunished would be saying to the universe that sin anywhere may go unpunished. No! that must not be; the rectitude of the Divine government must be vindicated at whatever cost to the sinner.

But, lo! a ransom is found. One who is infinite and above all law, makes Himself subject to the law, perfectly obeys all its requirements, and then perfectly submits to its penalty for sin,—not for Himself, but for guilty man. So now the universe may look and wonder, for it is the Son of God who has vindicated the law, and now God can be just and yet justify the guilty.

But how? Will He save man in his sinful state? That would be no salvation at all. The Divine purpose is to save man from sin itself, and restore him to holiness. When, therefore, we read that the Lord Jesus is "able to save even to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him," we understand that saving from hell is but *one aspect of a preliminary work*, not the work itself. It is but preparing a *foundation* for a glorious superstructure, not the superstructure itself. The universe being judge, God can now offer to man a new departure. He can offer to each one for himself a new probation.

Holding and treating as free from sin, He can promise him the aid—real and actual—of the Holy Spirit, not now to maintain his innocence, for that is gone, but to strive against and overcome the power of sin within, and so build up a holy character. And so Christ's ransom is a ransom indeed, worthy of Himself; and Divine forgiveness is an amazing reality. The sinner looks at the amazing exhibition of love in Christ, and with the emotion of love,

he recognizes the claim for loving service. And so we cling to the old fashioned doctrine of Christ's atonement, as not only true to Scripture and reason, but also as the greatest motives by which to reach the human heart, for it is the "power of God unto salvation."

3rd. My next objection is to the limited aspect given to conversion. The reviewer says: "If the Bible can be said to have a doctrine of conversion at all it is simply this—a new birth, the beginning of a new life, a change of thought and purpose from the way of sin to the way of righteousness, God's love supplying the motive and the redemption." But as it appears to me, the Bible view of conversion goes much further and deeper. The reviewer's statement of it suggests the natural aspect of the change, and ignores the supernatural. We are surrounded on every side by great natural laws, and although we are in continuous contact with them, and the human mind has been endeavouring for thousands of years to solve the problem of their action and relations, we are conscious that we are yet only at the A B C of their solution. And if so, what can we know of the great laws of the spirit world? When, therefore, we have the claim put forth that everything in religion as well as nature must be subject to the test of reason, we say: Yes, so far as this—that there be in it nothing contrary to enlightened reason. But this is entirely compatible with the further statement that there may be, and actually are, spiritual laws and forces beyond the capacity of reason to appreciate, and it is only by recognizing this latter thought that we can know what the Scripture doctrine of conversion is. I have yet to discover any natural cause or motive sufficient to account for it. To say nothing of the claims of God as set forth in the Bible, man's natural conscience teaches him that he must please his gods, whoever or whatever they may be. And when we elevate our thought in the presence of an infinite Creator who knows our secret thoughts and measures our every motive, we instinctively feel that service to Him must be perfect. If, then, we remember that the sinner has been all his lifetime living in a state of alienation both mentally and morally, we look in vain for a natural cause sufficient to account for the change. But the missing link is supplied when we hear our Saviour saying:—

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Here then is a power working in the heart of the sinner, so entirely in harmony with the laws of his mind, that we fail to know where nature ceases and the Holy Spirit begins, but, in fact, nature does not cease to work, but grace works in it, and with it, and by it, works as really as nature herself, inducing an altered estimate of the aim and end of life, so that now he loves, where before he despised, and so the whole aim and motive of his existence is changed. He did seek to please self, now he seeks to please God. He was lead by his own carnal mind, he now seeks to conform his will to the will of God, and to be lead by the Holy Spirit, and we call it conversion, and so it is.

But the Bible calls it more. It calls it "being born again," "born of the Spirit," "born of God." He was "dead in trespasses and sin," now the power of moral and spiritual life is in him, and in his new life he serves God. But in an important sense the victory is not yet; he is but an infant in spiritual life, but he lives, and hence by grace he will grow; the warfare against sin is begun, but only begun. The Christian has to struggle onward through trials and temptations, learning now by failure and now by success. But he hears the voice of the Master say, "him that overcometh," and so he struggles on in the strength which Christ gives him, until at length he comes off "more than conqueror through Him that loved him." This then is the Divine following up of the work of Christ. Christ's atonement was a perfect satisfaction of the law, and a perfect remedy for guilt, and the converting work of the Holy Spirit is a perfect remedy for man's depraved tendency. Christ's work is the foundation. The Holy Spirit's work is the superstructure; a perfect moral restoration; a new creature in holiness; not by a Divine fiat, but by a Divine impulse to dormant faculties. The Holy Spirit linking Himself on to our moral nature, "dwelling in us," and leading us on until the work begun on earth is perfected in heaven.

What then of the Ingersoll story of the murderer and his victim? If the victim had in him the beginning of this Divine life, however he might manifest it, he would be saved, and so also the murderer. The story of the thief on the cross shows us that it is Divinely possible that even he may be saved from sin and all its penalty. But we must not mistake. The poor wretch clinging to life till the last moment and then "getting religion," is but an infamous parody of a Divine possibility. We thank God for the possibility, but we receive with deep caution the story of its repetition.

One word in conclusion upon the scorn thrown upon clergy and others who endeavoured to suppress Ingersoll's lectures. I have a garden, and by dint of a good deal of hoeing and pulling we succeed to some extent in keeping down the weeds in it. Horace Greeley said weeds were good things, because the effort to destroy them made men better farmers. That may be, but after all I prefer not to have my garden sown with thistles, &c., because by making