

sense stopping places, much less the all in all aimed at and expected by journeyers to A.? Are they not mere stages in the journey, new and nearer starting points for home? You do not believe in conversion perhaps?"

"Oh yes, *indeed I do*; and teach it too. I believe in it, and urge it with all my might upon everybody as a distinct experience, the privilege and necessity of all, known by signs before and signs following, clear and easy distinguishable."

"Well, is the new birth a final stopping place?"

"Oh, no indeed! Too many, it is to be feared, think they have gained all, when once they have gained clear evidence that they have been born again, until they are afterwards reluctantly taught better; but it is only the *starting point* of the Christian race."

"Well, may there not be another period as well, the new starting point of a higher progress, just as distinctly marked as conversion itself, and the second no more a stopping place than the first?"

The young gentleman was interested—not convinced—and eager and more eager, as they rushed on toward the moment and place of separation, to have his car companion unfold his ideas of the unfolding Christian life.

Willing rather to put his young friend upon the permanent track of a higher happiness and of a nobler usefulness than merely to gratify any momentary curiosity, the servant of Jesus graphically delineated the two stages of experience as they have been given to the world by eminent men from their own personal history, Luther and D'Aubigne amongst the number. Each stage he described as the definite attainment of an actual progress—the first as the victory conquering peace, and the second as a new start, both in a richer peace and a more expansive wisdom and beneficence.

As the conversation went on, and the point of separation drew near, the fire kindled in the ingenuous heart of the young man, and shone forth in his noble face.

Hope—a *new* hope of gaining for himself, Luther like, a deeper, stronger vital union with the True Vine, and a more generous fruitage in the vineyard of his Lord, just now opening out before him, sprang up in his soul. He frankly confessed his fruitless struggles and sad disappointments in the past, and as frankly owned his now newly awakened hope for the future. Many things said by his companion struck deep into the generous soil of his ardent young heart, and clear and active mind: nothing however more deeply than the twofold significance of the text which became the Reformer's watchword and talisman, "*The just shall live by faith.*" The just shall be *made alive* first, and *afterwards learn to live* by faith. The just shall be *justified before God* first, and afterwards learn the way to *become just also in heart and life*, by faith. This twofold significance of the text, illustrated by its suggestion the first and the second times in the Reformer's heart, as by a celestial voice within, with the interval of years between the two, and meeting in each case a want so different, caused the young man to exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches of the Word of God! What hidden force it contains! We get but half of it at most, and then too often think we have all!"

Was it not just such conversations, in just such places, that the prophet Malachi referred to, when he said, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. And I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him?"

While upon this subject of stages and starting points, there are yet two or three questions to be answered.

*First*, Why speak of stages in the Christian life at all? Is it not a thing