

COMMON GROUND.

If the experience of first love be closely examined it will be found that during that time we illustrated all that is said in the New Testament concerning the walk in the Spirit. We did not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, but walked in all God's commands with delight—as a matter of choice.

Out of the abundance of our heart our mouth spake, and as we witnessed for Christ, either in private or public, we were conscious of pleasing God in the act, and so, in harmony with James' teaching, we were "blessed in the deed."

The thought of the nearness of God at no time prompted involuntary confession of sin, but on the contrary, awakened our intensest delight, for

"With confidence we then drew nigh,
And, Father, Abba Father, cried."

We did not act from a sense of duty, or as carrying out any set of rules or regulations for holy living, but as following a holy instinct. Indeed, we illustrated the prophetic description of this spiritual kingdom. We were *all taught of God*, obeying the laws of God *written* in our heart by the Holy Ghost who was given unto us.

In short, the language of the following hymn, penned by Charles Wesley, as descriptive of the first hours of his converted life, is none too strong to describe our religious experience:—

O how happy are they
Who the Saviour obey,
And have laid up their treasures above !
Tongue can never express
The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love.

That sweet comfort was mine,
When the favour divine
I received through the blood of the Lamb ;
When my heart first believed,
What a joy I received,
What a heaven in Jesus's name !

Jesus all the day long
Was my joy and my song :
O that all his salvation might see ;
"He hath loved me," I cried,
"He hath suffered and died,
To redeem such a rebel as me."

O the rapturous height
Of that holy delight
Which I felt in the life-giving blood !

Of my Saviour possess,
I was perfectly blest
As if filled with the fulness of God.

Whosoever now has the experience portrayed in this hymn, occupies common ground with us, and whoever, at any time, had this experience, then, occupied common ground with us.

Again, when one has lost this experience through sin, when that sin, or those sins which destroyed the experience, were recognized or forsaken, and forgiveness and the Spirit's witness again obtained to regeneration, then, we have common ground. And if, after a thousand falls, the clear, unmistakable knowledge of God's favor is again received through the Spirit, then, again, have we common ground for experience-comparing.

Still again, if the professed follower of Christ, whatever be his failure in following God, submits any soul perplexities or trials of life to God and takes the course of conscious obedience to Him, in the settled peace and confidence which he secures concerning the way he takes, he occupies common ground with us.

Does a man after, mayhap, much hesitation, and unwillingness, set himself apart to spiritual work, either at home or abroad, simply because he believes he hears the call of the Spirit to that work ? In his act of confidence, and restful obedience, he occupies common ground with us.

Now prolong those experiences of first love through the years ; let those acts of obedience be but specimens of the whole life lived at any time after conversion, and our experience is fully portrayed to the apprehension of every converted, obedient child of God, no matter how short the joys or how fitful the obedience.

We maintain that the joys of converting grace, so vividly described by Charles Wesley, were connected with, and dependent upon, our walk in the Spirit as the one law of life, and our restful confidence of being on the right course when acting in obedience to decisions formed in the presence of God, was because of our walk in the Spirit, therefore, we reason that the same walk