

THE SOWER.

ETERNITY.

Eternity, Eternity,
How long art thou, Eternity.

Count the gold and silver blossoms
Spring has scattered o'er the lea ;
Count the softly sounding ripples
Sparkling in the summer sea.
Count the lightly flickering shadows
In the autumn forest glade ;
Count pale nature's scattered teardrops,
Icy gems by winter made.

Count the tiny blades that glitter
Early in the morning dew ;
Count the desert sand that stretches
Under noontide's vault of blue.
Count the notes that woodbirds warble
In the evening's fading light ;
Count the stars that gleam and twinkle
O'er the firmament of night.

When thy counting all is done,
Scarce eternity's begun.
Reader pause—where wilt thou be
During thine eternity ?

PEACE IN BELIEVING.

v.

DEAR Friend.—In considering your letter of —— I ask myself if the points which have especially struck me are actually those which express your state of soul. There are other things in what you have written, and I will now have a few words with you as to these.

“I had hoped,” you say, “to be able to tell you that I had found peace in my soul, through the blood of Christ; but it is more than a month since my conscience was awakened, and I am still in the same state.” You express anxiety, even fear, as to this. Whence proceeds this anxiety, my dear friend; this desire for peace and the consciousness that it is only by the blood of Christ that it can be found? Is not all this an indication of the work of the Spirit in you? Instead of being discouraged by these words, “It is by the Spirit that the truth is received,” be assured that it is by the Spirit you have already been taught and encouraged to hope for further light. Your desire to know Christ, to have peace by His blood is not a natural desire; God Himself has produced it and will certainly satisfy it.

In referring to the long years you have passed in sin, you draw some consolation and hope from the history of the woman in Luke xiii, who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and who at last was cured by Jesus. “Oh! if I was only able to put my

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trust in Him," you say. Why, dear friend, do you not put your trust in Him at once, and with all your heart! It is always the same Jesus, full of tenderness and compassion; the same Saviour whose power healed this poor woman. Of a truth it is concealed from our eyes, but what caused the power to go out of Him? It was faith, not sight; and faith can still take hold of Him, although He is invisible.

But do you not already confide in Him? Have you any confidence in His love, and in the efficacy of His precious blood? Why should you have this ardent desire to find peace by His blood if you were not convinced it had some value, some efficacy, some virtue which gives peace? This assurance that the blood of Christ purifies the soul is already a commencement of confidence in Him. You may only have it in a very small degree; your trust may be very feeble; but it is confidence. Now scripture does not make our salvation depend upon any particular degree of confidence or faith, but upon the measure, whatever it may be, that the Spirit of God has wrought in our soul. What did the poor woman say in the gospel? "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.—(Matt. ix. 21).

Again, I find in your letter these words, "Latterly, in reading or in hearing the gospel, I have come many times to think; Oh! now I see clearly that I have only to surrender myself to Jesus; but soon all becomes dark and my trouble and distraction return." Have you not then proved at such times

that it is only confidence in Jesus? If, subsequently, obscurity and trouble reappear, it is because you do not lay hold of what faith in Jesus is. Instead of sitting at His feet, and tranquilly seeing in His word what your happiness is in trusting Him, you begin again to examine your own heart, to find there some evidence of the reality of your faith. Look to Jesus, and to Him only. He will not reject any who come to Him. His blood has been shed for the ungodly, and cleanses from all sin.

You will find enclosed an extract from a letter recently written me by a beloved brother, who is engaged in the Lord's work. May these lines, by God's blessing, be of some help to your soul.

Yours, etc. ———

[EXTRACT]

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We have had here recently a touching instance of the grace of God. A poor woman, addicted to drink, died, and until the last few weeks would not receive any visitors. I saw her however about a month ago, and it was apparent that the Word had touched her conscience. From that time I visited her frequently; her heart softened little by little, and latterly she manifested a desire to hear of the grace of Jesus. I then had hope. A week before her end the light penetrated her heart and the shadow of death was quickly changed to a morning without clouds. In the intervals of quietness from her acute sufferings, after having read to her the last

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of the seventh chapter of the Revelation, I had her learn the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, so that she might think of them during the long and painful night watches. I hoped that the Lord would show her why the multitude in white robes were before "the throne of God." When I came again to see her I perceived that she also had been washed in this precious blood. "Oh!" she cried, "Is it not a wonderful thing? As white as snow, by the blood of the Lamb!" I sought then to direct her thoughts to the love of Him who had caused this fountain of living water to spring up in her, and I read to her the fourth chapter of John's gospel. Afterwards she told me that she had seen the Saviour so near her, that she could look in His face.

The next time I saw her I was struck by the change which had been wrought in her. An expression of heavenly intelligence illuminated her poor attenuated face; and her words and appearance indicated a gentleness which was the result of communion with Christ. From that time until her departure, on Sunday afternoon, one word was continually on her lips, it was asking for the living water. Even during her sleep the words "living water" were repeated. "Oh!" said she, to the nurse who attended her, "All last night I had such thirst for the living water. How gladly would I have drank it." The nurse, thinking she was speaking of ordinary water, said, "You cannot drink any water, my dear friend, the doctor has prohibited it." "Ah!" she replied, "it is the living water I

desire." The nurse had, up to that time, thought that all religion was only hypocrisy, but "I see very well now," said she, "that the religion of Christ is a reality." She had never seen anything like the two last nights of the life of this poor woman. Whenever any respite from her pain permitted, she did not cease speaking of the Saviour. She said she saw Him, and when she could not speak she made signs that He was coming for her. She wished to take her young son up in her arms and show him the glory that filled the room. "Look! Look!" she would say to those who were about her; but what God gave her to see was for herself and not for others.

I was with her an hour before her death. A heavenly smile overspread her face. One of her nieces, who was present, asked her if she was happy. "Yes, my dear, I am very happy," she replied. These were her last words. I had to leave her, and half an hour after, she fell asleep in the Lord.

If you know Christ, His light will show you what you are. You will be horrified at yourself, you will detest yourself; but in the knowledge of Christ you will rejoice in a conscience purified by the blood of the slain Lamb. God gives effect to His grace towards you by virtue of the shed blood, and He only who is able to estimate its value as Christ, who has given Himself to give effect to that grace, can estimate the extent of the riches of it.

BELIEVING YE REJOICE.

ONLY twenty-one years of age and the race was run. Yesterday one was sitting by his side reading the word he loved, and watching the joy shining out of the dying eyes. To-day they were closed forever. He had no need of the precious word of God; he had gone in to be with Him, "whom having not seen" he loved.

"Yes, mum," said his mother, as we arose from our knees together, "he *was* bright. He was only ill a year. Took ill with a chill, and came home so irritable and cross like, there was no doing anything with him. He could not bear anyone to speak to him even, and there was some did come and try to put it before him like. And before he was ill he was always such a cheerful lad. Never a cross word. Well, mum, this went on and he wasn't getting any better, and seemed so shut in to himself, that it made your heart ache to see him. And one day, about a month ago, I was in the back garden there, picking vegetables, and his little brother came running out to me, "Oh! mother, mother, come to Charlie; I don't know what's the matter with him."

"So I went in quick like; cause ye see mum, I thought it might be the bleeding again. And there he was, sitting up in bed singing, almost shouting at the top of his voice, and when I came in he says, 'I've got it, mother, I've got it. The Lord Jesus

died for *me.*' And ever since then he was like you seen him. Always singing when he could, and the poor face just shining like." And the mother wiped away her tears, which were falling fast, as she covered again the face which had been so bright in life. "And when he could not sing no more, he'd get the neighbors and his little brother to come and sing to him. All night it was just the same, spite of his cough and pain." He had been full of the joy of sins forgiven; the joy of seeing a living Christ as the substitute for sinners.

Can you picture the strong young frame, glorying in its strength, suddenly smitten; the heart having, without warning; to look death in the face at that early age? Can you fancy him watching the rapid footsteps of disease, knowing himself unprepared? What wonder he was irritable. Unable to do anything but think. He did not know God's thought towards him. "Thoughts of peace and not of evil." "Peace to him that is afar off." When we know Him we can say with David, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them! If I should count them,—they are more in number than the sand."—(Psalm cxxxix, 17-18).

He was brooding over that sore heart, and in that little cottage room, in the narrow street, *He revealed Himself*, by the Holy Spirit. Well might he sing and shout. What was disease and death now?

What do you think Mary thought of death when she saw the risen Lord before her, and heard His

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voice calling her by name? Charley saw Him, by faith, as clearly almost as Mary did, and by the Holy Spirit accepted Him as the substitute for sin; the conqueror of death. The Holy Spirit gave him life and united him to Christ; and as I sat with him the last day of his life, and heard his joyous words, and saw the light on his sunken face, I realized in a measure what the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" meant. Not joy in believing in a *creed*, but in a Person; the loving Saviour who wept over the city of Jerusalem, knowing what they were rejecting; the One who took the little ones up in His arms and blessed them; the One who bore the spitting and the shame, for you and me, dear readers; who was forsaken by God because He took the sinners place. God's holy eyes cannot look upon sin without judging it. But now He looks on Christ and sees Him, the Lamb, who bore the sins of believers. "In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet *believing*, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—(1 Peter i. 8.)

Dear reader, can you rejoice? Can you go singing all the day in the face of everything? There is no true song for the heart until we are redeemed, only groaning and sighing, like the children of Israel in Egypt. But God heard their groans; and the soul that really groans under the burden and bondage of sin, will ever be the singing heart, when by the Holy Spirit it sees Christ in all His beauty, and can say, "The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

NEW BIRTH AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS.

II.

THE terms quickened, and being born again, are used in scripture to express that change or new existence which is originated in a child of Adam when he is vitally, or from the heart, turned to God. We have seen in the paper on "Man's condition by nature," that man in the spirit of his mind is alienated from God, at enmity with Him; and still more, that he is unable, in the most convincing circumstances, to recognize or appreciate what is divinely good. All this being proved and admitted, it now becomes us to enquire and note, what is that change commonly called conversion, and which the scriptures designate as new birth; how it occurs, and by what it is characterized.

The new birth must be the introduction of a new principle into the soul of man, at once so distinct and effective that it maintains for itself not only its unique existence, but also its supremacy in spirit and intent over the old nature; often influencing it silently, where it does not control. The influence being a silent one, simply for this reason, that the new, on account of man's wilfulness and self-satisfaction, does not assert its superiority until the old is convinced of its necessity. But, notwithstanding, the new is there all the time, a positive reality, and a positive rein and awe to the conscience, though often for the moment there may be little or no

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evidence of it in the walk. If the change be not of this distinct and effective order, how could it be termed, as the Lord said to Nicodemus, "being born again?" We all know that in order to dislodge or master any power in actual possession, it requires a power greater than that by which the possession is maintained. Consequently, if man, by nature, alienated from God, and at enmity with Him, be vitally turned to Him, it must be by a power not only greater than the will of man, but also one proportionate to the service required, which service is nothing less than to establish happy relations with God in a soul hitherto in the terrible distance of ignorance and enmity. This is accomplished in the new birth by the first principle of its existence, even faith; a principle which is always propagated by the Spirit of God blowing where He listeth. Called into being by the Holy Ghost, the way in which it reaches man, is (as we read) "by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The word of God is deposited in the soul. The intelligence of that word is not so much the question as the effect of it; which effect is to convince the soul, in the first place that God *is*; and next, as to what His *nature* is, according as it has been revealed; though often a long period may intervene between these two, which *should* not be disunited; and in the end, and for peace and happiness of the soul, are not.

The first principle, then, of this new existence and its first utterance is *faith*. Faith is the first

characteristic of new birth. The old man is an unbeliever in every degree; the new is a believer in every degree. Adam's fall was in consequence of disobedience of God's word, the offspring of unbelief and distrust of God Himself. His nature thus became a prey to this adverse sentiment, which acting and re-acting on his fellow-men, has produced all the contumacy toward God of which man is guilty. The grace of God in every age has been above man's guilt, and therefore He has *compelled* many to come in; in one way or another awakening the soul to the sense of the existence of God, either as a relief or a correction to its ignorance; in a word, giving it faith in God, through the word of God.

The Spirit of God has always been the propagator of this new principle, so that where the smallest germ of it exists, there, blessed be God, the Holy Ghost has worked. The old man is utterly incapable of faith in God; therefore, wherever faith works, however feebly, new birth has taken place. And mark, it has been thus in *all* dispensations. The difference between the old testament times and the new, or the present, consists not in the principle of existence, for that is the same in both; and, moreover, it is begotten by the same Holy Spirit; but now eternal life is assured to us as God's gift, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel.

New birth then is a new existence. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," of which faith in God is its very principle, its first and simplest

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characteristic, and eternal life its portion. How evident, then, is it that they who judge of, or describe it as an improvement in morals and tastes, wholly misapprehend the simple quality and radical nature of the new birth. Man in the old nature was characterized by unbelief; the new man is characterized by exactly the opposite, which it declares as just and compensatory; and thus faith is its peculiar mark, and the proof of its existence. New birth exists wherever faith exists, and *vice versa*. If I be ever so changed or improved and have no faith in God, there can be no conscious new birth for the first utterance of the newly born soul is that of faith. It knows that God is to be trusted, and let its trust be ever so feeble, the response returned to it from God, is *eternal life*—he that believes hath eternal life. And this eternal life is the second characteristic, the inalienable possession of new birth. In all times, as I have remarked, faith in God was the first expression and utterance of the quickened soul, and this single fact clears away much of the confusion and uncertainty with which the subject has been surrounded. Both teachers and souls have been diverted from the plain and true ground by looking for an improvement in feelings and manners, instead of first insisting on the necessity of the existence of faith, from which in true power the other would follow. A remarkable change and improvement may be wrought in me from many other causes; but faith in God in my soul is proof positive that it is newly born; for nothing but His Spirit

could have produced it, and this entitles me to nothing less than eternal life.

Now I may find many a newly-born soul, who, though he believes in God, does not apprehend that, as born of God, he has received eternal life. I do not question his being born again, because he is not sensibly enjoying the highest privileges of it; but it is evident that such an one is inadvertently ignoring the legitimate portion of his new existence, without which new birth must be unsatisfactory to himself, and defective in expression toward God.

In all dispensations there has been an enlightenment corresponding to the revelation made of God to the soul. That which is conferred *now* is eternal life; and if I am not assured of that which God has assured *to me*, I am not apprehending His revelation in its range and scope—*nay*, in its very essence.

Life, the sense of living by Christ and with Him, belongs *now* to new birth. Christ died for our sins; but having risen from among the dead, and the power of death being destroyed, He is head of the new creation in everlasting life; and we who were dead in trespasses and sins are quickened together with Him, being by grace, through faith, made partakers of His life; and that on the ground of righteousness, inasmuch as He has borne death for us, and made us thereby, the righteousness of God in Him. It is most important that we should see that eternal life is *now* co-existent with new birth. However, God in past ages accepted the sinner, and linked his soul to Himself by faith in a new existence—eternal life

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was not manifested until Christ came. "The life was manifested," says the Apostle John, "and we have seen it, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." The Son was the manifestation of the eternal life that was with the Father, and "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." He came here to do the will of God, in a body prepared for Him, and in that body to bear our sins on the accursed tree; God laying on Him the iniquity of us all; made sin for us who knew no sin, in order that God might be just and the justifier of everyone who believeth in Jesus. What would any gift from God be to me if I did not believe in the source of it, even in His Son? God can now do what He never could do before. He can give His love full scope; and therefore the moment faith in Him is engendered in any soul, (the action of which faith is to look at God's revelation of His grace in Christ), the blessing—the portion—the gift of God to that soul is eternal life. Nothing less would answer to the love of God, now at liberty to indulge itself (if I may so say) through the righteousness established for the sinner by His own Son, and to express the full range and purpose of itself. Therefore it meets the sinner at the very start and threshold with this wondrous truth.—(See John iii). "He that believeth hath everlasting life." Other blessings and great glories follow; but God meets the condemned lost sinner at the point at which He had met the serpent-bitten Israelite afore-

time; and He says to him, "I have so loved you that I gave my Son to bear the judgment of sin; and in Him is manifested the eternal life which He has with Me, so everyone that believes in Him shall share it with Him."

In fine, I would lay stress on this important point of our subject, that the essence of the old nature being unbelief, the soul that has a particle of faith in God has entered on a new existence. That existence is re-generation; the characteristics and essential properties of which are faith and eternal life.

"ALL HAVE SINNED."—(Rom. iii. 23).

"THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."—(Rom. vi. 23).

"CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS."—(1 Tim. i. 15).

"*What must I do to be saved?*"

"BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED, AND THY HOUSE.—(Acts xvi. 31).

"WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE.—(John xi. 26).

"*Believest thou this?*"

"YEA, LORD: I BELIEVE THAT THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.—(John xi. 27).

CHRIST SAID, "VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT ME, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SHALL NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT; BUT IS PASSED FROM DEATH INTO LIFE.

"*DO ye now believe?*"