

AN OLD CHRISTIAN'S ESTIMATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

—1 Tim. iii. 16.

I have a profound, unfeigned (I believe divinely given) faith in the Bible. I have, through grace, been by it converted, enlightened, quickened, saved. I have received the knowledge of God by it, to adore His perfections—of Jesus,—the Saviour, joy, strength, comfort of my soul. Many have been indebted to others as the means of their being brought to God, to ministers of that Gospel which the Bible contains, or to friends who delight in it. This was not my case. That work, which is ever God's, was wrought in me through the means of the written word. He who knows what the value of Jesus is, will know what the Bible will be to such a one. If I have alas, failed it, in nearly thirty years' arduous and varied life and labour—at least such, as far as the service of an unknown and feeble individual usually leads, I have never found it fail me; if it has not for the poor and needy circumstances of time, through which we feebly pass, I am assured it never will for eternity. "The word of the Lord abideth for ever." If it reaches down to my low estate, it reaches up to God's height, because it comes thence: as the love that can reach even to me, and apply to every detail of my feebleness and failure, proves itself divine in doing so: none but God could, and hence it leads me up to Him. As

Jesus came from God and went to God, so does the book that divinely reveals Him come from and elevate to Him. If received, it has brought the soul to God, for He has revealed Himself in it. Its positive proofs are all in itself. The sun needs no light to see it by.

I beg to avow, in the fullest, clearest, and distinctest manner here, my deep, divinely-taught conviction of the inspiration of the Scriptures. That is, while of course allowing if need be, for defect in the translation and the like, when I read the Bible, I read it as absolute authority for my soul as God's Word. There is no higher privilege than to have communications direct from God Himself.

My joy, my comfort, my food, my strength for near thirty years, have been the Scriptures received implicitly as the Word of God. In the beginning of that period, I was put through the deepest exercise of soul on that point. Did heaven and earth, the visible church, and man himself crumble into nonentity, I should through grace, since that epoch, hold to the word as an unbreakable link between my soul and God. I am satisfied that God has given it me as such. I do not doubt that the grace of the Holy Spirit is needed to make it profitable, and to give it real authority to our souls, because of what we are; but that does not change what it is in itself. To be true when it is received, it must have been true before it was so. And here I will add, that although it requires the grace of God and the work of the Holy Ghost to give it

quicken power, yet divine truth, God's Word, has a hold on the natural conscience from which it cannot escape. The light detects the "breaker up," though he may hate it. And so the Word of God is adapted to man, though he be hostile to it—adapted in grace (blessed be God!) as well as in truth. This is exactly what shews the wickedness of man's will in rejecting it. And it has power thus in the conscience, even if the will be unchanged. This may increase the dislike of it; but it is disliked because conscience feels it cannot deny its truth. Men resist it because it is true. Did it not reach their conscience, they would not need to take such pains to get rid of and disprove it. Men do not arm themselves against straws, but against a sword whose edge is felt and feared.

Reader, it speaks of grace as well as truth. It speaks of God's grace and love, who gave His only-begotten Son that sinners like you and me might be with Him, know Him, deeply, intimately, truly know Him—and enjoy Him for ever, and enjoy Him now; that the conscience, perfectly purged, might be in joy in His presence, without a cloud, without a reproach, without fear. And to be there in His love, in such a way, is perfect joy. The Word will tell you the truth concerning yourself; but it will tell you the truth of a God of love, while unfolding the wisdom of His counsels. . . .

Let me add to my reader, that by far the best means of assuring himself of the truth and authority of the Word is to read the Word itself.

GOD IN EVERYTHING.

“Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

—Matthew xi. 26.

One of the great obstacles to living a life of peace and rest, is the difficulty of seeing God in everything. People say, “I can easily submit to things which come from God; but I cannot submit to man, and most of my trials and crosses come through human instrumentality.” Or they say, “It is all well enough to talk of trusting; but when I commit a matter to God, man is sure to come in and disarrange it all, and while I have no difficulty in trusting God, I see serious difficulties in the way of trusting men.”

This is no imaginary trouble, but it is of vital importance, and if it cannot be met, does seem to make the path of faith an impossible and visionary theory. For nearly everything in this life comes to us through human instrumentalities, and many of our trials are the result of some body's failure, or ignorance, or carelessness or sin. We know God cannot be the author of these things, and yet unless He overrules the matter, how can we say to Him about it, “Thy will be done?”

Moreover, things in which we can see God's hand always have a sweetness in them which consoles while it wounds. But the trials inflicted by man are full of bitterness.

What is needed, then, is to see *God in everything*,

and to receive everything directly from His hands with no intervention of second causes.

The question here confronts us at once—But is God in everything, and have we any warrant from the Scripture for receiving everything from His hands, without regarding the second causes which may have been instrumental in bringing it about? I answer to this, unhesitatingly, **YES!** To the children of God everything comes directly from their Father's hand, no matter who or what may have been the apparent agents. There are no "second causes" for them.

The whole teaching of Scripture asserts and implies this. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Matt. x. 29-30.) We are not to be careful about anything, because our Father cares for us. We are not to avenge ourselves, because our Father has charged Himself wit' our defence. We are not to fear, for the Lord is on our side. No one can be against us, because God is for us. We shall not want for the Lord is our Shepherd. When we pass through the rivers they shall not overflow us, and when we walk through the fire we shall not be burned, because He will be with us. He shuts the mouths of lions, that they cannot hurt us. "He delivereth and rescueth. He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings and setteth up kings." (Dan. ii. 21.) (2 Chron. xx. 6.) He ruleth the raging

of the sea: when the waves thereof arise He stilleth them." He "bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought! He maketh the devices of the people of none effect." (Ps. xxxiii. 10.) "Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that does He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."

And this "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." (Ps. xlv. 1, 2, 3.)

To my own mind, these Scriptures, and many others like them, settle for ever the question as to the power of second causes in the life of the children of God. And this is how the blessed Lord took things. (Matthew xi. 20, 25, 26.) They are all under the control of our Father, and nothing can touch us except with His knowledge, and by His permission. It may be the sin of man that originates the action, and therefore the thing itself cannot be said to be the will of God: but by the time it reaches us, it has become God's will *for us*, and must be accepted as directly from His hands. No man or company of men, no power in earth or heaven, can touch that soul which is abiding in Christ, without first passing through Him, and receiving the seal of His permission. If "God be for us," it matters not who may be against us; nothing can

disturb or harm us, except He shall see that it is best for us, and shall stand aside to let it pass.

An earthly parent's care for his helpless child is a feeble illustration of this. If the child is in its father's arms, nothing can touch it without that father's consent; unless he is too weak to prevent it. And even if this should be the case, he suffers the harm first in his own person, before he allows it to reach his child. And if an earthly parent would thus care for his little helpless one, how much more will our Heavenly Father, whose love is infinitely greater, and whose strength and wisdom can never be baffled? I am afraid there are some, even of God's own children, who scarcely think He is equal to themselves in tenderness, and love, and thoughtful care; and who, in their secret thoughts, charge Him with a neglect and indifference of which they would feel themselves incapable.

The truth really is that His care is infinitely superior to any possibility of human care; and that He who counts the very hairs of our heads, and suffers not a sparrow to fall without Him, takes note of the minutest matters that can affect the lives of His children, and regulates them according to His will, let their origin be what they may.

The instances of this are numberless. Take Joseph. What could have seemed more apparently on the face of it to be the result of sin, and utterly contrary to the will of God, than his being sold into slavery? And yet Joseph in speaking of it said,—
 “As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God

meant it unto good." (Gen. 1. 20.) Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. (Gen. xv. 5.) 'To the eye of sense it was surely Joseph's wicked brethren who had sent him into Egypt, and yet Joseph, looking at it with the eye of faith, could say, "God sent me." it had been undoubtedly a grievous sin in his brethren, but by the time it had reached Joseph, it had become God's will for him, and was in truth, though at first it did not look so, the greatest blessing of his whole life. And thus we see how the Lord can make even the wrath of man to praise Him, (Ps. lxxvi. 10,) and how all things, even the sins of others, shall work together for good to them that love Him. (Rom. viii. 28.)

If we look at the seen things we shall not be able to understand this. But the children of God are called to look "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) Could we but see with our bodily eyes His unseen forces surrounding us on every side, we would walk through this world in an impregnable fortress, which nothing could ever overthrow or penetrate, for "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." (Ps. xxxiv. 7.)

We have a striking illustration of this in the history of Elisha. The King of Syria was warring

against Israel, but his evil designs were continually frustrated by the prophet, and at last he sent his army to the Prophet's own city for the express purpose of taking him captive. We read, "He sent thither horses, and chariots, and a great host; and they came by night, and compassed the city about." This was the seen thing. And the servant of the prophet, whose eyes had not yet been opened to see the unseen things, was alarmed. And we read, "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold an host encompassed the city, both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, "Alas, my master! how shall we do!" But his master could see the unseen things, and he replied, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And then he prayed, saying, "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." 2 Kings vi 14-17.

The presence of God is the fortress of His people. Nothing can withstand it. At His presence the wicked perish; the earth trembles; the hills melt like wax; the cities are broken down: "the heavens also dropped, and Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God." And in the secret of this presence He has promised to hide His people from the pride of man, and from the strife of tongues, "My presence shall go with thee," He says, "and I will give thee rest." Ex. xxxiii. 14.

I wish it were only possible to make every Christian see this truth as plainly as I see it. For I am convinced that this and being "careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 6, 7.) *is the clue to a restful life.* Nothing else will take all the risks and "supposes" out of a Christian's life, and enable him to say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Abiding in the light of God's presence we run no risks. And such a soul can triumphantly say—

"I know not what it is to doubt,
My heart is always gay;
I run no risks, for come what will,
God always has His way."

I once heard of a poor coloured woman, who earned a precarious living by daily labour, but who was a joyous triumphant Christian. "Ah, Nancy," said a gloomy Christian lady to her one day, who almost disapproved of her constant cheerfulness, and yet envied it,—*"Ah, Nancy, it is all well enough to be happy now; but I should think the thoughts of your future would sober you. Only suppose, for instance, you should have a spell of sickness, and be unable to work: or suppose your present employers should move away, and no one else should give you anything to do; or suppose—"* "stop!" cried Nancy, "I never supposes. De Lord

is my Shepherd, and I know, I shall not want. And honey," she added to her gloomy friend, "its all dem *supposes* as is makin' you so mis'able. You'd better give dem all up, and just trust de Lord."

There is one text that will take all the "supposes" out of a believer's life, if only it is received and acted on in childlike faith: it is in Heb. xiii. 5, 6,— "Be content, therefore, with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, **THE LORD IS MY HELPER AND I WILL NOT FEAR WHAT MAN SHALL DO UNTO ME.**" What if dangers of all sorts shall threaten you from every side, and the malice, or foolishness, or ignorance of men shall combine to do you harm? You may face every possible contingency with triumphant words, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." If the Lord is your helper, how *can* you fear what man may do unto you? There is no man in this world, nor company of men, that can touch you, unless your God in whom you trust shall please to let them. "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. . . . The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore." Ps. cxxi. 3, 7, 8.

Nothing else will completely put an end to all murmuring or rebelling thoughts. Christians often feel at liberty to murmur against man, when they

would not dare to murmur against God. But this way of receiving things would make it impossible ever to murmur. If our Father permits a trial to come, it must be because that trial is the very best thing that could happen to us, and we must accept it with thanks from His hand. The trial itself may be hard to flesh and blood, and I do not mean that we can like or enjoy the suffering of it. But we can and must love the will of God *in* the trial, for His will is always sweet whether it be in joy or in sorrow.

In short, this way of seeing our Father in everything makes life one long thanksgiving, and gives a rest of heart, and more than that, a joy that is unspeakable. Some one says, "God's will on earth is always joy, always tranquility." And since He must have His own way concerning His children into what wonderful green pastures of rest, and beside what blessedly still waters of refreshment is the soul led that learns this!

He who sides with the Lord cannot fail to win in every encounter! and whether the result shall be joy or sorrow, failure or success, death or life, we may, under all circumstances, join in the Apostle's shout of victory, "Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ!"

"If my soul has no home, my life as a Christian, however active, will not be happy. If my soul has a home in heaven to turn to, and *really now in spirit enjoy*, I shall not be restless and unhappy."

"A USEFUL WORD OF EXHORTATION."

What is your example? *Christ*. You must give yourself up entirely, because Christ did. If you are always grieving the Spirit, the Spirit must occupy you with your state. If I say I am in Christ, I say Christ is in me, and my business is to show Christ, and nothing else.

It is having Christ always before us, and really walking in the presence of God. The great secret is, *to be more with God than anybody*, and if not, we shall go astray. The moment I get away from the conscious presence of God, self has a certain place, whereas, if I am really in the presence of God, I am nothing, *I am more what I am before Him, than what I am in His power for others*. You are not competent to discern the will of God if you are not with Him. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

If power rests on me that does not put me in the presence of God, as to my conscience or heart. It may be for others, but we have to be before *God Himself*, or else we shall never keep straight; *and for that we must be in the path of God*, for Him to lead us. I cannot realize God's presence out of the path of His will. The instant we lose the sense of dependence we are in danger.

Obedience and dependence, these are the two living principles of the new man; "Man shall not live by

bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

I do get another principle to help me through, and that is *confidence in God*. I cannot depend if I have not confidence. We do need confidence, or we have not courage to go through sacrifices, if I have not confidence in God's faithfulness. *It is everything*. Whatever I do, I ought to do it as serving Christ. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

DELIVERANCE AND STANDING.

(*Extract from a Letter.*)

I know well how few know deliverance, but it is a great thing to know that I, a poor worm, should be before God and the Father, in the same acceptance and favour that Christ is, loved even as He is loved.

But it is the greatness of infinite love. Then it is not generally preached with intelligence, next it is experimental, and above all we must be in earnest to have it.

Who is willing to be dead to what nature and flesh would desire, yet that is the only way of deliverance. People will tell you it is our standing in Christ. I admit it as in Col. iii., and as faith owns in Rom. vi. and Gal. ii.; but who is willing to be in the standing?* It is standing, or else we are in the effort of Rom. vii. or narrow monks' labour,

* *i.e.*, to be in it consciously.

which I have tried, and even if we have experimentally learned, as it must be learned, who is carrying out 2 Cor. iv., so as to have the conscience living in it, by an ungrieved Spirit; but if experimentally taught it is of the greatest use to souls, and the joy of being blameless in Christ before God is exceeding great, and one that is eternal and divine in its source and nature, a wonderful thing, "for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." The world is a terrible snare, and a subtle one, and greatly hinders this deliverance. A soul enjoying deliverance has its object elsewhere, see Rom. viii. Then we must remember "the diligent soul shall be made fat." I press when souls are in earnest, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in weakness." For we learn that we are without strength for deliverance, and walk in the sense of it if we can be used in service, but His grace is sufficient. Knowing we are nothing is the place of blessing, for then God is everything, and the place of strength, for then Christ can put forth His strength. In this, 2 Cor. xii., is a most instructive chapter.

EXTRACT FROM AN UNPUBLISHED
LETTER.

"MY LOVED BROTHER,—I think I have had my mind more occupied of late than ever with the subject which your letter suggests—the being with the Lord. I am sure it is deeper, happier, fuller acquaintance with Himself that our hearts need; and then we should long and desire and pant

after Him in such ways as nothing but His presence could satisfy. I know souls in this state; and yet it is not knowledge that gives it to them, but personal acquaintance with the blessed Saviour, through the Holy Ghost.

“I alighted, as by chance, the other day, on some fervent thoughts of an old writer, in connection with this dear and precious subject. In substance they were as follows, and almost so in terms, only I have somewhat condensed them:—“It is strange that we, who have such continual use of God, and His bounties and mercies, and are so perpetually beholden to Him, should after all be so little acquainted with Him. And from hence it comes that we are so loathe to think of our dissolution, and of our going to God. For, naturally, where we are not acquainted, we like not to hazard our welcome. We would rather spend our money at an inn, than turn in for a free lodging to an unknown host; whereas to an entire friend, whom we elsewhere have familiarly conversed with, we go boldly and willingly as to our home, knowing that no hour can be unseasonable to such an one. I will not live upon God and His daily bounties, without His acquaintance. By His grace I will not let one day pass without renewing my acquaintance with Him.

“Beautiful utterance this is. It expresses a character of mind which, in this day of busy inquiry *after knowledge*, we all need—personal longings after Christ. May the blessed Spirit in us give that direction to our hearts! It is a hard lesson for some of us to learn, to reach enjoyments which lie beyond and above the provisions of nature. We are still prone to know Christ Himself ‘after the flesh,’ and to desire to find Him in the midst of the relations and circumstances of human life, and there only.

“But this is not our calling—this is not the risen, heavenly life. It is hard to get beyond this, I know, but our calling calls us beyond it. We like the home, and the respect, and the security, and all the delights of our human relations and circumstances, and would have Christ in the midst of them, but to know Him, and to have Him in such a way as tells us that He is a stranger on earth, and that we are to be strangers with Him, ‘this is a hard saying’ to our poor fond hearts.”



CHRIST IS COMING.



He is coming, coming quickly!
Such the promise of His word;
Coming surely, coming quickly!
Even so, come, Jesus, Lord.

From the Father's throne He's coming,
Just to meet us in the air,
Then we shall be ever with Him,
All His glory we shall share.

Who is He that comes to meet us,
Comes with all the glory bright?
But the One who died to save us,
He who was this dark world's light.

Are you daily *watching* for Him,
Waiting for your Lord's return?
He is coming, coming quickly!
Let your lights then brightly burn.

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