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# After Conversion

EXPECTATION, . . .  
WITH DIVINE . . .  
AUTHORITY, AND  
WITHOUT IT. . . .

BY  
GEO. CUTTING.

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# AFTER CONVERSION:

EXPECTATION, WITH DIVINE  
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BY conversion is meant the turning of a soul to God, brought about by the work of the Spirit. With this there is a sense of God's goodness that *attracts*; a sense of our sinfulness that *convicts*. The words of the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father," proved the attraction; "Father, I have sinned," the conviction.

Naturally we turn *from* God, as the prodigal from his father, and to idols of our own choice, as the Thessalonians. So that, to be turned *to* God involves a great change (1 Thess. i. 10). Such a change the Spirit only can produce. In Scripture it is the result of, and co-incident with, new birth; and this stands at the beginning of every

christian-history. Many and various exercises follow, and in these perhaps nothing has a greater place than *expectation*. It is, therefore, of deep importance to remember that there are two kinds of expectation: one which has the warrant of Scripture, and one which has not. Let us first briefly consider the former, namely,

#### Expectation, with Divine Authority.

The true *ground* of expectation for man really consists in what God Himself is toward him. "My expectation is from *Him*." "Hope thou in *God*," said David (Ps. lxii. 5; xl. 5).

*Authority* for expectation is found in the revelation of His mind in Scripture. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. xxiii. 19). That is, *reliable expectation* and *divine revelation* are inseparable.

Once our "expectation" was appalling. "The expectation of the

wicked is wrath " (Ps. xi. 23). But God interposed in mercy and sent His Son to take our just deserts, so that *new* expectations such as He only could conceive, might be held out to us ; yea, "*exceeding great and precious promises.*" But it is in Christ we really learn their true character, and not in self, however religious. CHRIST is the Spirit's theme. His adorable person, His precious death, His triumphant resurrection and ascension, His gracious offices, His relation to His cherished assembly, His glorious kingdom, His infinite and never-ending love, the Spirit brings before the soul. Then, with all that He is and all that He does, the *Father's* name is blessedly associated. His coming was the Father's sending ; His personal graces the Father's moral glories ; His precious death the Father's holy will ; His victorious resurrection was " by the glory of the Father ; " His heavenly intercession

is in the presence of the Father. Then His beloved and blood-bought church is the Father's gift to Him ; His coming again will be to take her to the Father's house ; and His public appearing will find her with Him in the glory of the Father's kingdom. All, all most eloquently proclaim, what we may expect from such a blessed God, and expect with full divine assurance : " He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things " (Rom. viii. 32).

In every feature of His work, in all the wealth of His acquired glories, we have a common interest, a God-given share. In Him we are loved and accepted. In Him we are chosen and blessed. To His image we shall all be conformed. With Him, as " joint-heirs," we shall together be glorified.

All that was *procured* through Christ's death has been *secured* in

Christ risen, and will be enjoyed with Christ glorified. All was planned by the Father *for the glory of the Son and for His own eternal pleasure*; and our true expectation only the consistent outcome! Marvellous it is!

But it is not the writer's purpose to dwell specially on these now, unspeakably blessed as they are. It is rather to try and put the young believer on his guard against *unwarranted* expectations; for such only discourage and disappoint.

#### **Expectations without Divine Authority.**

For the sake of greater definiteness, the writer proposes, with the Lord's help, to consider the matter under various heads.

**We have no authority for expecting to form a true judgment of what God feels about us by what we feel about ourselves.**

All such expectation springs from the thought that God's feelings

toward us are according to ours toward Him; that when we feel in a state *worthy* of His love, we may know He loves us; and when it is otherwise with *us*, it is otherwise with Him also. But the very opposite is the truth. For "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were *yet sinners*, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8). God makes use of the very penalty of sin to prove His love to the sinner.

To use the words of another: "The blood was as much the proof and witness of the love of God to the sinner, as it was of the justice and majesty of God against sin." In the light of the cross, and there only, can we form a true judgment of how God is disposed toward us.

"Upon the cross this record's graved,  
Let sin be judged, the sinner saved."

**We have no authority for regarding feelings of satisfaction as to ourselves as any solid ground of assurance.**

But some one may ask, Should,

then, our feelings in spiritual matters be entirely disregarded ?

By no means. Man is not a mere machine. Feelings of joy and sorrow, like and dislike, attraction and repulsion, with many others, have their necessary place. But it is not on the feelings *themselves* that we can place any real dependence.

Take an illustration. A sea captain has his moments of anxiety as well as conscious satisfaction about the course of his vessel ; but he would never dream of *relying* on his feelings of satisfaction, or enter them in his log book as dependable evidence. By the *chart* on board (speed and direction taken into account), he judges where he *ought* to be ; by the sun in the heavens, he judges where he *is*. And these tests may either confirm his feelings or reverse them.

In like manner, we have our one Great Indispensable in the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, Jesus

the crucified, Jesus the risen, the glorified; and our one dependable chart on earth, the Holy Scriptures. But beside these we have the Holy Spirit, who imparts the sense of comfort when we rightly regard these assurances, and rebukes us when we do not. He came from a glorified Christ, and what greater witness could we have that our sins have been put away from God's eye, than the fact that He who bore them and was "forsaken" on the Cross because of them, is now in the presence of God without them?

**We have no authority for expecting new birth to change what we are naturally, so that evil will cease and only good remain.**

One of our first shocks of disappointment after conversion was to find that *sin* was still within us. The breaking out of some old habit, the discovery of wrong thoughts and bad feelings, all bore witness to this.

Through early defective teaching many of us ignorantly imagined that new birth meant a change of the old and evil into the new and good. To use a figure, that the wolf became the lamb. When, therefore, we experimentally discovered that this was not the case, that positive bad was still there, we could only come to the conclusion that we had not been *properly* converted after all, and that the only thing now left was to make another and a better start. But with every such good intention, we only found worse disappointment. True, the thought of a new beginning was gratifying ; but the result was so painfully disheartening, that at last we felt ready to give up in despair and doubt everything !

Such a crisis is all too good an opportunity for the enemy, as many can sadly witness. Behind religious ignorance he hides and works. In the light of God's revealed mind he is exposed and defeated.

In that light the notion just referred to is found to be totally false. That which is old is *not* changed. Something entirely new is imparted which has no affinity whatever with the old. It is another *birth* which takes place—another *kind* of birth,—not as Nicodemus thought, of a natural order, but of a spiritual. Jesus Himself stated this clearly when He said, “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 thee, Ye must be born again” (John iii. 6, 7): “It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing” (John vi. 63).

In the light of these words, it is clear that there are two distinct springs of action in every converted man, two diverse principles. One is the product of “corruptible seed,” and retains the corrupt qualities of the seed from which it sprang, yields fruit “after its kind” (Gen. i. 11, 12).

The other is *not* born of the flesh, and not of man, but "of God" (John i. 13); not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23). It is absolutely "*of God*" as to origin, and *for God* as to result.

We have no divine authority for regarding the flesh as capable of any improvement acceptable to God.

The fig tree which Jesus cursed is a striking figure of man naturally. Its case was pronounced to be utterly hopeless. The terms of the sentence effectually excluded any further expectation, "*Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever*" (Matt. xxi. 19). It was doomed as a professed fruit-bearer. Neither enriching the soil, nor digging about it to admit more air to the roots, nor pruning the branches to admit more sunshine, would have been the slightest use. It could not avail

itself of any such advantages ; it could not *receive* them. So with " the flesh." On the one side it cannot *produce* spiritual good ; on the other, cannot *receive* it. " The natural man *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God " (1 Cor. ii. 14). " They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God " (Rom. viii. 8) ; so that in Christian teaching every thought of improving the flesh is entirely excluded. It is declared to be corrupt and beyond it.

Twenty-one days of the most diligent sitting of a good hen will not improve a bad egg, though surrounded by good ones in the same nest ; and a life-time of religious diligence, with the best of surroundings, will not improve the flesh. Even the Apostle Paul, when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, would have had more than twenty-one *years* of disappointment if he had expected that his conversion would improve the flesh. Mark his

words, " I know that in me (*that is in my flesh*) dwelleth no good thing " (Rom. vii. 18).

Scripture sets forth, in the most unmistakable way, the desperately sinful character of the flesh. It is opposed to God—enmity itself (Rom. viii. 7) ; it resists the Spirit of God. " The flesh lusteth against the Spirit ; " it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be " (Rom. viii. 7).

Looking back at our unconverted days, it is not hard to see that " we turned every one to his *own* way." We lived to please ourselves. If such a course had pleased God, well and good ; but if not, our defiant hearts proudly said, It shall be *our* way all the same !

It is this lawless principle of self-will that characterises every man until conversion ; and the will of the flesh is unchanged in its character afterwards. True it may be held in check by the Spirit, for we read,

“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. v. 16). But the flesh *itself* is absolutely irreconcilable (see Rom. viii. 7-12; Gal. v. 17).

Near to the Kaiser's palace in Berlin stands a massive monument. Upon it is set a figure representing the German nation; and on its side a very significant inscription to this effect:—

*“From my youth up I have often been put down, but never conquered.”*

Now in whatever degree that sentence sets forth the determined character of the German nation, it thoroughly sets forth the incurable character of “the flesh.” Suppress it you may; improve it you cannot. Muzzle a vicious dog to-day, and it cannot bite you; but remove the muzzle to-morrow and provoke the dog, and you may prove to your cost that muzzling a savage beast does not change its nature. Washing a sow will no more remove its taste

for wallowing, than polishing a base coin will make it genuine.

But it may be asked, If the new birth does not remove a sinful nature; if even the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself does not improve it; if God must *judge* what is sinful because it *is* sinful, how can we, with the flesh still in us, stand clear of that judgment ?

The beginning of the Gospel by John gives heavenly light about it. Notice three things :

1. With His knowledge of man naturally, " Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, for He knew what was in man."

2. To meet God's desires, a new spiritual being in man was necessary. " Ye must be born again "—" born of the Spirit." But this *new* thing is not enough. There must be the judgment of the *old*. Hence " The Son of Man must be lifted up."

3. If Jesus knew what was in *man*, He knew what was in *God* also ; and

had come from heaven to make it known. If man was not to be trusted, God was. The Son's presence in this world was the witness of God's interference, on man's behalf, in grace and love." For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

We shall do well, then, to look more closely at the illustration the Lord here uses (comp. John iii. 14, Num. xxi. 8). If a dying Israelite looked where God directed him, he would see, in the uplifted "fiery serpent," the "likeness" of what was doing the deadly work in himself. In our case the source of the mischief is "sin in the flesh." Sin in the flesh, then, must certainly be judged, or bring absolute and eternal condemnation. But (oh welcome revelation for the believer!) it *has been* judged. "God sending His own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh,*

*and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*" (Rom. viii. 3). Hence the Lord's application of the figure, "Even so MUST the Son of man be lifted up." If man *deserved* the judgment, "the Son of Man" would come and take it; and the real secret, "GOD SENDING"—"GOD SO LOVED."

Here is consolation indeed, solid and blessed! What I find to condemn in myself personally, God has condemned in Christ sacrificially. If Christ on the cross was *under* sin's judgment, Christ risen from the dead is *beyond* sin's judgment, and on Him risen the eye of faith rests. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). Christ is ours, and all our blessing is in Him. His "*fulness*" is our "*completeness*" (Col. ii. 9, 10). Nothing better could God Himself desire *for* us than that which He finds in Christ; and nothing more pleasing could He ever discover *in* us than when He sees

that we have found all we want in Christ. Our *rejoicing in Christ Jesus* is bound up with *worshipping God in the Spirit*; and “*no confidence in the flesh*” goes with both (Phil. iii. 3).

We have no divine ground for supposing that God unites that which is “born of the Spirit” with that which is “born of the flesh.”

Such a thought is totally inconsistent with God Himself. If God regards what is “born of the flesh” as *evil*, because of sin in it, how could He unite with it that which is *good*—that which is “born of the Spirit”? The very holiness of His nature would forbid such a union. Between the two there can be no spiritual relationship whatever. “That which is born of the flesh” has no part in believing on Christ; and “that which is born of the Spirit” no part in rejecting Him (see John i. 10-13; 2 Cor. vi. 15).

But perhaps some troubled believer may say, I feel the evil thing to be part of *myself*. Yes. But only part of what you are *naturally*. The Spirit of God has produced something *new*, and it is no part of *that*. Just as the Lord regards believers as "*in* the world," but "*not of* the world ;" so God regards the flesh. It is *in* us, but not *of* us as believers.

Permit me to refer to an incident in my own early history by way of illustration. While playing with other children at the entrance of a nobleman's grounds, the end of one finger got severely crushed by the violent closing of one of the iron gates. Loving aid was near at hand, and with suitable remedies the wounded finger speedily healed. But when, in due course, the bandage was finally removed, I felt greatly disappointed ; for the nail looked sadly disfigured. In my childish ignorance, however, I fondly hoped that it

would, some day, grow into a white one like the others ; but each day only renewed my disappointment, for it rather grew blacker than whiter.

At last a complete change took place, and took place instantly—not in the nail itself, but in my thoughts about it. Just between the skin and the black nail I had suddenly discovered the presence of a new *white* one ! All my disappointment in connection with the non-improvement of the old was at an end. I could well afford to give it up in the satisfaction of the new ; and give it up I did. As a matter of fact the old was still there, still clinging to me ; but I did not, after that, *reckon* it as part of myself. Had you asked me how many finger-nails I had, I should not have said eleven, reckoning the black as one. I should have entirely disregarded its presence in the reckoning, and said, *ten*.

Every week I saw more of the new, and, with pleasure, looked forward to the day when the old would be entirely dropped, and nothing be seen but the new. An experienced surgeon would have condemned the old from the first. But it was not until I saw the *new* that I did so. Nor should I have had much comfort, even then, if I had regarded the new as united to the old as a means of improving it.

As with that black nail, so with the evil nature in us. As we have seen, God has condemned it in Christ's death (Rom. viii. 3); and with our eye upon Christ risen, *we* can afford to condemn it also. We can then listen with new ears to what the Spirit has enjoined, " Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus " (Rom. vi. 11, New Trans.).

Now take an illustration from Scripture. Ishmael and Isaac were

in Abraham's house together, yet it was very evident that there was no sort of moral accord between them. Ishmael, "born after the flesh," only "mocked" and "persecuted" the child of promise. (Compare Gen. xxi. 9 with Gal. iv. 29.) But what is so noteworthy is, that after Isaac was born, Ishmael was no longer *reckoned*!

Let the reader carefully consider the import of this. Ishmael is no more reckoned as part of the family of "faithful Abraham" than if he had never existed at all; and the first to maintain that reckoning is God Himself." "Take now thy son, thine *only* son Isaac, whom thou lovest" (Gen. xxii. 2). Later on it is even more strongly expressed, for we read, that "Abraham offered up his *only begotten* son" (Heb. xi. 17).

True, Ishmael might become, and did become, a man of mark in the *world*, but in "the household of faith" he had no footing whatever.

The decree went forth, "The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman" (Gal. iv. 20).

In like manner, when the Apostle was made conscious of the working of the evil principle within him, he could say, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. vii. 17). But in Gal. ii. 20, he goes still further. The "I" that was once attached to indwelling sin is held as the "*Crucified*" I, and the "I" which, through the work of the Spirit and the soul's felt necessity, is attached to Christ, is held as the *converted* "I," the "I" that lives, the "I" that has faith in the Son of God (see verses 19 to 21):

This is not a matter of doctrine only. The converted "I" has a personal consciousness of its own, distinct and unmistakable. Every one knows where his sympathies are; and this is never more apparent than

when actual sin breaks out in a believer—say, a giving way to temper. Such an outburst makes him painfully conscious that the old propensity is still there. But where are his *sympathies*? With the good or with the evil? This is the vital question. Is he glad or is he grieved that the flesh has asserted itself? In his inner consciousness there is no mistake about it. Admitting his responsibility, he feels humbled and self-condemned. Is the *Spirit* grieved? So is he. But it was not always so. Once he would have excused himself by fixing the blame on the one who provoked him. Now he turns the keen edge of blame upon himself. What accounts for the change? It is the presence of a new moral being—the “inward man,” that accounts for such a complete revolution. The converted “I” is now the recognised man in charge, and indwelling sin only a culprit in the house, condemned to

*silence.* The converted "I" is responsible to see that this sentence is strictly carried out, and to make confession when it is not. What makes the change so marked is, that in this very same house (to use the figure) the culprit had once complete sway. Not so now; "sin shall not have dominion" (Rom. vi. 14). Did the culprit (the natural man with his will) bring about this extraordinary change? Impossible. His tastes and desires lean in the very opposite direction. He could no more produce such a change than the Ethiopian could change his skin or the leopard his spots. God Himself has brought it about. But in doing so He has not united the sinful with the holy, or established any connection between them. What in us is "born of the Spirit," is connected with Christ risen, and that which could *not* be connected with Christ risen—"sin in the flesh"—has been judged in Christ's death.

The responsibility of Abraham was not to *improve* Ishmael, but to *refuse* him. If it was *God's* pleasure to make everything of the son of promise, it was Abraham's also. In like manner the responsibility of the believer is to condemn and refuse in himself what God has condemned in Christ crucified ; and to enjoy by the Spirit his association with Christ risen.

**We have no authority for expecting that new birth, in itself, gives any power for walk.**

Right *desires*, and the power to carry them out, are two things.

Lift out of its nest a half-fledged bird, and you will find the greatest difficulty in getting it to settle down again. It will hop right out as often as you try to replace it. Why is this ? It has flying *instincts*, but no flying *powers*. Hop, it can ; fly, it cannot.

Now the man born again, before he learns experimentally the true secret of strength, may well be compared to that bird. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. vii. 22). "*To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not*" (ver. 18). That is, he has spiritual instincts, but no spiritual power.

Yet the marvellous fact remains, that when we are converted, God has no lower thought for us than that we should "live Christ"—"walk as He [Christ] walked." "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6).

One important question must therefore be asked: What marked the path of Jesus as man here below? There is no shadow of doubt about the answer. Two things in absolute perfection marked His whole course—OBEDIENCE and DEPENDENCE.

At every step He blessedly demonstrated this fact, that the path of humble obedience is the way of holiness; dependence the true secret of strength. One verse of Scripture is enough to show us what *His* path was: "I can of Mine own self do nothing; as I hear I judge, and My judgment is just, because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me" (John v. 30).

What absolute dependence is here! "*I can of Mine own self do nothing.*" What perfect obedience, too! "*I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me!*" "*It is written*" was His answer to the tempter. Beyond it he could not entice Him.

Now if these two qualities were essential to the life of the *Perfect Man* here below, they are surely necessary for the one who is exhorted to follow in His steps. Hence arises at once the question of *power*.

Every converted man knows something of right *desires*, but for the power to carry them out he needs the capabilities of Another. To live Christ he needs communion of heart by the Spirit with the all-sufficient fulness of Christ, and to remember that the only way of availing himself of His power is by being cast in conscious helplessness upon Him. Of this, the word of the blessed Saviour to the twelve has left no doubt. "*Without [or apart from] Me, ye can do nothing*" (John xv. 5). But after He was glorified, He said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." So the Apostle could add, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

It is true that when we receive the Holy Ghost we receive power. Jesus

promised this. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts. i. 8). But that does not mean that by receiving the Holy Ghost we are furnished with an independent store of our *own*, to use as occasion serves. Jesus Himself could say in prophetic language, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb" (Ps. xxii. 10). He was full of the Holy Ghost when tempted of the devil, and always: yet how perfectly dependent He was!

Of late years the law of England has provided that a married woman, if she pleases, can have full command of her personal property. She has no need to look to her *husband* for everything. She has independent resources of her own. Not so in spiritual things. Apart from Christ we *have* nothing, and can *do* nothing. Left to our own resources, we are not equal to the smallest of the demands that daily crowd upon us: *He* is more than equal to

the greatest. With that power Paul could say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Hence we are exhorted, "Be strong *in the Lord*, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10).

The modern "overhead" electric car carries no power of its own. Unless it is kept in touch with the flow of current from the central generating station, it is more useless than the hand-cart of some street-hawker pushed by himself. But there is another thing. Just as the driving power for the car is only available *on the route laid down*, so with the "power of Christ." It will only be available for us in the way of God's will; not in the way of our own. We may confidently expect, that coming to Scripture in an obedient and humble spirit, He will teach us what *His* will is (John vii. 17), and, depending on *Him*, all the power of His might will be at

our service to walk according to it.

Who could estimate the marvels that have been wrought on earth by the urgent cry expressed in those three words, "LORD, HELP ME." They have been the link between victorious power and despairing weakness times without number, and will be so again.

"They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed."

**We have good ground for fearing the world's friendship: none for fearing its frown.**

The world as *man's dwelling-place* is looked at in three ways in Scripture:—

As *Adam's* dominion in *innocence*, by God's appointment (Gen. i. 28). As *Satan's* dominion in *wickedness*, by usurpation (Luke iv. 5, 6). As *Christ's* dominion in *righteousness*, by redemption and conquest (Ps. ii. 8; Ps. lxxii. 8).

The first, as we know, soon passed away. Adam fell and forfeited all. The third awaits the Messiah's reign in power. But the second still exists, and exists as a constant element of danger. The youngest convert is called to face that danger; the oldest saint cannot afford to ignore it; yet God's ends will all be gained in spite of it.

At the temptation we find the devil boasting that all the kingdoms of this world were at his disposal (Matt. iv. 9; Luke iv. 5, 6). Hence its *material* wealth is called the "*mammon of unrighteousness*" (Luke xvi. 9), and three times Jesus speaks of Satan as "the prince [or ruler] of this world" (John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11).

In this sense the world is looked at as a gigantic organization, opposed to God and to all who are born of God. Its *management* is unseen, but carried out with all the far-reaching subtlety of a master of deception.

Its *course* is according to influences set in motion by its "prince" and "god"—"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2). Its *character* is marked by determined hostility to Christ. When He came into it, He found hatred for His love; He was rejected from His inheritance, and crucified between two thieves (1 Cor. ii. 8).

What, then, is *the believer's position in it*? It is the place of *witnessing* and *waiting*; bearing witness, as Jesus did, to the blessedness of doing and accepting *God's will*, in the midst of men who are doing their own; and waiting until He returns to take the reins of government, and maintain *God's will* in power. Then will He expel the usurper, and completely change the world's course and character. Earth and heaven shall then be in perfect agreement that *God's holy will and man's true happiness* are bound up

together; and one precious Name—the Name of JESUS, “made LORD and CHRIST,” the uniting bond.

In the meantime we need to be alive to the *aims* and *methods* of the world’s *present* ruler.

To malign God, and ruin man, has been his aim from the beginning, and will be to the end. In deception has been his success. See 1 Tim. ii. 14; Rev. xx. 10.

His methods differ. He “*blinds* the minds of them that believe not” (2 Cor. iv. 4). He *beguiles* the believer where he can (2 Cor. xi. 3), and *buffets* where he cannot (2 Cor. xii. 7).

When the Apostle Peter speaks of him, he says, “Be sober, be vigilant.” And it is surely enough to sober us to be told that his aim is to “*devour*” (1 Pet. v. 8). Not only would he spoil our joy and cripple our service, he would, if he could, accomplish our *entire destruction*. He acts as though he

considers our profession to be only a sham, and that, in the long run, he will be able to prove it so. Blessed be God, though the Good Shepherd clearly indicates that the "destroyer" would *endeavour* to pluck us out of His hand, and even out of His Father's hand, yet we are distinctly assured that "no one is *able*" to do it. The purposes of eternal love cannot possibly be brought to nought by God's enemy! (see John x. 27-30; xvii. 12; Heb. ii. 13).

All along, he has been making mistakes to his own confusion, and will do so to the end. *He cannot read men's hearts.* "Thou only [O Lord God] knowest the hearts of all the children of men" (1 Kings viii. 39). He has no spiritual discernment, and can neither understand the purposes of God nor the spiritual exercises of the saints of God; but he can form his own judgment by men's actions, and closely does he

watch them. In Matt. iv. he is called "*the tempter*," and there is little doubt that, in order to provoke to some form of self-will, he studies the natural propensities and personal weaknesses of every saint on earth as closely as he once studied Job and his circumstances. If he finds a believer proof, for the time, against *self-gratification* in a carnal way, he may try to ensnare him by what will lead to *self-admiration* in a religious way, or to *self-exaltation* in a popular way (see 1 John ii. 16).

How wholesome, then, to remember, that neither special gift, nor success in service, nor biblical knowledge, nor grey-haired experience, nor all put together, can be any bar to the tempter's aim. Into each of these, self-will may creep; and where self-will gains entrance the enemy finds an effectual open door. *Force* the way, he cannot; but wherever he can either *allure* or *provoke* to the secret working of our

own wills, he can find ready access. And if *self-will opens the door for him, self-confidence keeps it open.*

On the other hand, we may with unwavering confidence expect that where there is willing-hearted obedience and conscious dependence, he can positively do nothing. *Obedience effectually shuts the door against him, and dependence keeps it shut.*

The perfectly Obedient One could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). And when the will of the flesh is held under the judgment of death, he finds nothing in us either.

Without doubt *the world's present course* is the way of *man's will*, with satanic subtlety behind the scenes watching for its opportunity.

When Jesus came into it, absolutely devoted to the will of God, the opposition of man's will rose up against Him at once ; and man's final

decision branded the world with its true character. Consider for a moment the two men in question at the time.

In *Barabbas* we have a most striking representation of *man's* will ; in *Jesus* the perfect expression of *God's*. Barabbas carried out his own will with unscrupulous determination, no matter what the cost to others—authority defied (sedition), property plundered (robbery), life taken (murder). Jesus carried out God's will. But all the cost was *His* own, the eternal gain is *ours*. Now comes the test.

On which man will the world's choice rest? The public vote was demanded, and was declared with acclamation. Not the *gracious Giver* Who would lay down His life for others, but the *notable robber* who could take life itself to reach his selfish ends. Not the One Who expressed God's will in man's blessing, but the one who, to the last

extremity, had enforced his own will to God's dishonour and his neighbour's loss "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" was the cry. "We will not have this Man to reign over us"! Terrible decision, but the reason is apparent. The will of God was "THIS MAN'S" delight, and the bringing in of God's will involved the displacement of man's. This would have changed the whole course of things; and neither the world nor its "ruler" would tolerate it.

The *believer's position* in such a world is no small matter in a day when so many who profess to love the rejected One are in danger of *accepting*, if not actually courting, the friendship of the very world that cast Him out!

In time past we all walked "according to the course of this world." Self was our object. But when the great change was brought about by the Spirit's work in us,

and a new birth took place, a new object was set before us, Jesus the Son of God — Jesus the Christ, all-attractive in His excellences, Almighty in power, infinite in wisdom ; Jesus Who died to save us, lives to serve us, and will love us to the end. This blessed One is “ dis-allowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious.” Precious to God, He is precious to us also. “ Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ” (1 Pet. i. 8).

It is *love*—love responsive to *His* love—or the absence of it, that is the real secret of every man's attitude toward this world to-day. Could any consideration affect our heart more than this ? Does it not challenge writer and reader alike, and say, “ Where art *thou*, under such a test ? ”

Take an illustration. A man's

house is on the bank of some river. For his own pleasure he takes his boat and starts early one morning to go down the river. When at last he turns round to go home, he is made conscious at once, that the current which made it so easy to go down, is against him going up. But is he daunted? If his heart is set on reaching *home*, neither opposing currents, nor conflicting winds, nor newly discovered obstacles, nor the suggestion of an easier course *down-stream* will deter him. If *love* attracts, the attraction will be triumphant!

So with wisdom's children. The current of this world's course is against them, and so is its "ruler." To oppose *up-stream* progress, he may try to terrorize; to beguile to a *down-stream* course, he may seek to patronize; but with the goal in mind, they can joyfully sing:—

"Our hearts by Thee are set  
On brighter things above."

The Saviour is there, how can they turn back? Beside, they have been solemnly warned by the Spirit. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James iv. 4). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him." No worldliness could be more obnoxious to God than worldliness under a *religious* garb—worldliness cultivated *inside* the Church as an alleged preventive for worldliness outside the Church! "What shall the end be?"

We may suffer much spiritual loss from the world's *smile*, but we need fear none from its *frown*. His love, His presence, His approval, will be abundant compensation. What matter who frowns if He bids us, "Be of good cheer"? *Peter* had

His smile and was loosed from prison when Herod frowned. *John* had it at Patmos. Though the world pronounced his banishment, the Lord laid His right hand upon him. *Paul* had it in the prison at Philippi, and it made him and his companion sing at midnight. He heard, "Be of good cheer" from his Master's own lips, in the castle at Jerusalem; and in the prison at Rome he could say, "Rejoice, rejoice." *Samuel Rutherford* had it in the dungeon at St. Andrews, when he wrote, "I boast a God Who can feed me with hunger, and make me fat through wants and desertions!" Waiting in prison for the stake and the fiery faggots, many of the *English martyrs* had it, and counted themselves amongst the merriest in the land in consequence.

But the same voice which cheered all these, and thousands more, speaks to our hearts to-day. "In the world ye shall have tribulation;

but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." With the comfort of His love in our hearts, we may well "*be of good cheer.*" "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6).

*How* did this "good work" begin? With such a sense of sinful unworthiness, that *we desired Christ and dreaded missing Him.* How will it end? In an eternal weight of glory!

GEO. C.

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