



ETERNAL SALVATION

AND

HOW THE KING DIED

AND

THE MURDERER WENT FREE.

BY



RICHARD JOHN MAHONY.



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ETERNAL SALVATION:

A Letter to His Friends

BY

A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

(The late Richard J. Mahony, D.L., Dromore Castle, Co. Kerry.)

“He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.”—HEB. v. 9.

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P R E F A C E .

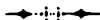


THE following pages were written during the Religious Revival in Ireland, when at its full strength in the early sixties, and were then very widely circulated. Now that the honoured writer has entered into his rest, it is thought desirable to issue an exact reprint of this most valuable pamphlet, setting forth as it does, in deeply earnest and affectionate language, the true faith of the Gospel, which produced at that time such remarkable effects in the changed life of large numbers—effects which to this day are manifest, both in them and others, and in the generally increased religious interest that to this day exists in all classes.





ETERNAL SALVATION.



THERE are, I suppose, very few persons in our country before whose notice the existence of an extraordinary religious awakening has not been brought, within the past few years. Intelligent people have considered the matter, as it has more or less attracted their attention, and have, doubtless, formed their own opinions upon it. Some imagine the persons concerned in it to be well-meaning, but misguided and enthusiastic—suffering themselves to be carried away by the excitement of novelty; and in their religious orgies overleaping the restraint, not only of conventional ritualism, but even of the reverence and order inseparable from true, intelligent worship.

Others have arrived at the conclusion that vanity and a spirit of innovation have misled some of the devotees; while hypocrisy and some undefined idea of self-advancement have added numbers to swell the ranks of the new religion.

To such as have not drawn their inferences from personal observation, it may not be uninteresting to receive a plain description of one great characteristic feature of this movement from one who has attentively studied it in all its phases. One great leading dogma is put forward by all these so-called enthusiasts, who hold that if there be an eternal heaven and an eternal hell, a living God and a judgment to come, it is the extreme of irrationality not to give Christianity the first place in their thoughts and estimation. It is no misty, uncertain theory; it is a downright, simple, unmistakable statement, suited to the practical mind of the nineteenth century; and it is this—that *eternal salvation is a free, present, attainable, inalienable, imperishable gift*. In other words, that any man or woman in this world, be he or she the blackest sinner in it, may, in one moment, through God's grace, be justified for ever from every charge of sin; and may know, beyond all doubt, that he is justified; and may rest as sure of eternal happiness as he is certain that, *in himself*, he never has deserved, and never will deserve, anything but eternal damnation.

There is no mistake about the meaning of this statement. It may appear presumptuous and blasphemous; but it is, at least, intelligible to any one of ordinary understanding.

Now, if it be not true, it is one of the most daring forms of blasphemy and high treason against the Divine Majesty; for, if it be false, it

is a doctrine which lays hold of the statute-book of heaven, and over-writes the laws of God's unalterable justice with rebellious words of human invention.

But, if it be true, you who read this paper may, by God's grace, be saved before you lay it down, and saved for ever.

Let us examine the authority on which this statement is put forth. Since the interests concerned in the subject pass through time, and touch all eternity, it cannot be judged by any standard less extensive than its own duration. This brings us at once to the only available test of the question upon earth, and limits us to that test alone; for it is written—“*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away ;*” and again—“*The Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you ;*” and again—“*To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.*” Here, then, we have God giving His own Word (which we call the Bible) as the only available standard on this earth wherewith to compare subjects connected with eternity. And it is a source of truth acknowledged to be divine by every body of professing Christians. It is the only extant revelation of God's character and His mind towards men. Whatever amount of truth, therefore, is contained in any religious doctrine must be traced to that source; and any doctrine which cannot be found therein cannot be of divine origin, and

must be a valueless forgery, and, so far as it is believed, a dangerous one. "*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them*" (Isa. viii. 20).

Shut out this revelation from man, and he has no fixed standard of right and wrong. Goodness, then, *necessarily* becomes with him a question of comparison. The profligate or the drunkard compares himself with the thief or the murderer, and considers himself so far guiltless. The man who mocks God to His face every time he reads his family prayers for decency and religion's sake (without remembering the heart-searching presence wherein he stands) thinks himself a respectable, religious man compared with his neighbour who never goes to church or to confession, and who never says his prayers; while the latter congratulates himself that he is, at any rate, no hypocrite, and does not even pretend to profess any religion, and will, at least, get credit from God for being an honest fellow, with all his faults.

Which of these is right? Can good and evil be shuffled and confounded with each other thus, like the shifting patterns of a kaleidoscope?

Will God dispense justice to men according to the common notion of intelligent heathen and many professing Christians? That is, will He reward the good intentions, and pass over the shortcomings, of every man who thinks he has tried to do his best? All these notions of right and wrong would do very well, if every man

could constitute himself the judge of the merits of his own case. But, since we know that every man must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, is it not common sense to pass from the region of these unfounded and uncertain conjectures, and examine for ourselves, in the unerring revelation of God, the standard whereby we shall be judged?

Here, then, in the first place, we find it written, "*All have sinned*"—a fact which, I suppose, all will admit readily. But, again, it is written, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" This concerns you, my friend. A man who is about to be tried for his own life has enough to occupy his attention without conjecturing the probable guilt or innocence of others; and, though all the preachers in Ireland were fools or hypocrites, the fact would not alter, by one hair's breadth, your own position under this sentence—" *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" This is plain speaking, and you cannot get out of it. You may say, "Oh, that means regular downright wickedness, not ordinary trifling sins." Let us look at the statute-book again:—" *The thought of foolishness is sin.*" Did you ever, in your whole life, think one foolish thought? Then that was sin, and your soul will die. Read again—" *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*" (Jas. ii. 10). On your own confession you are guilty of all. Did you ever read of a man who, in the short space of human life, had managed to commit blasphemy, idolatry, parricide, murder, adultery, theft, and

perjury? Do you think such an one deserved hell? Not more, really, than you do. If you have ever once broken one single command of God's law, you are as really guilty in the sight of God as if you had committed all these. God says so. If you deny it you make Him a liar. Do you still plead "not guilty?" Read God's own interpretation of His statute (Mark xii. 30)—"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment.*" With all these powers, remember, not with the greater part of them, or all you can spare, but positively with *all*, are you bound to love God. If any single one of these powers has been, at any moment in your whole life, taken up for one instant with anything but love to God, in that moment God's law was broken; all the rest of your service went for nothing; you became guilty before God, and justly deserving of hell. By what plea can you escape this indictment? Read again the summing up of your position (Rom. iii. 19)—"*That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*" Then, if you are of the world, you are guilty before God—guilty of sin; and the penalty of sin is death of soul and body—"the second death" (Rev. xx. 14, 15). Think of this, my friend, I beseech you. You, perhaps, avoid the thought of these subjects now, because they annoy and disturb you. If you knew for certain that the last ten years of your life were to

be spent in solitary confinement, shut off from all hearing and knowledge of the world, would not the dark shadow of such an end cast a terrible gloom over every day of your present life? How, then, can you spend a thousand lives in misery which no thought of man can fathom? and when a thousand lives of such misery shall have reached their lingering close, millions upon millions of fearful ages will spread before you still; "*for the smoke of your torment will ascend up for ever and ever.*"

Now, as sure as the sun is above your head and the solid earth beneath your feet, that time *will* come, and how soon you know not; and neither good resolutions, nor sorrow, nor penitence, nor penance, nor religious services, nor sacraments, can save you. Is this new doctrine to you? Do you think such things can save—can atone for the soul? Search God's book, and find it written there if you can. Nay, the recital of one plain statute will save you the trouble of looking further. It is written—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Now, neither prayers, nor good resolutions, nor penitence, nor sacraments, nor any religious duties, are shedding of blood; and so by nothing that you can do can you get pardon without the shedding of blood, "*which is the life.*" Will you, then, give your own life-blood for your sin, and so obtain remission? Why, that is not yours to give: it is forfeited already to its utmost value by your breach of God's laws. Besides, you may remember that in

the sacrifices of the Jews, wherein the mystery of this remission by blood-shedding was foreshadowed, it was distinctly set forth that the victim offered should be without spot or blemish—sinless. To gain remission of *your* sin, then, you need a *second* life besides your own, for that is already mortgaged to its utmost capacity of suffering; and a *different* life from your own, for yours is black and guilty; but the one offered for you must have nothing in itself requiring atonement: that all may go to your account, it must be “*without spot.*”

You stand, then, guilty before God, condemned and sentenced by Him to eternal death; and with no means of offering the smallest compensation, or putting forward the least plea in defence. It is a terrible position, but true, if the Bible is true. You cannot deny it without contradicting God to His face; and I beseech you, as a person of common sense and reason, to consider the folly of such a course.

What would you think of a man about to be tried for his life, in a court from whose jurisdiction there could be no appeal, who would resolutely persist in denying the fact of his indictment, and therefore determine to take no measures for his defence? Would you not think him mad? Not a whit more mad than you are; for you are ignoring God's authority, even while you stand before His bar.

But suppose that this man of whom we speak were to receive a letter from the judge, before whom he was about to be tried, pointing out to

him, in the statutes of his court, a plea which he might put forward; assuring him, on his own pledged word, that that plea would prove unanswerable, and would acquit him. What would you think of this man, if he should still persist in refusing to listen to the judge, or to give himself the trouble of examining the statute-book? Would you not say that such an one would have only his own stupid obstinacy to blame for his death? May God the Holy Spirit open your eyes, for Christ's sake, my friend, that you may escape such a retrospect in your own case!

The Judge, who has justly condemned you, has written to you; and He has told you, first, why He has thus shown and proved you to be guilty and condemned. It is written, "*The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*" (Gal. iii. 22). "*Hath concluded all under sin.*" Do you deem this sentence too severe in your case? Yet you would consider a physician incapable or criminal, who, if called in to see a man suffering under a disease betraying symptoms of the most fatal kind, should trifle with the case and under-rate the danger. God knows that the disease of your soul must end in death; and He tells you so honestly and plainly.

But you may say, "Did not God, who is the great First Cause of all things, Himself create this condition and necessity?" It does not come within the scope of this paper to trace the origin

of evil, or to defend the justice of God ; and yet I would hope, with the help and blessing of the Eternal Spirit, before you lay this letter down, to unfold to you that wondrous character of God, revealed in His Word, and witnessed in this world by attested facts, wherein you may see perfect justice—not neutralized by indulgent goodness, but, like some richly jewelled setting which encloses a gem of inestimable value, so enriching and adorning perfect mercy, that you may be led to submit, not only inevitably to omnipotent power, but also willingly and gratefully to immortal love.

But think again of your own case. Will you longer deny your position, and refuse God's testimony to your guilt ? Then you are deliberately and knowingly rejecting His authority ; even as did "the angels who kept not their first estate," and who are now "*reserved in chains under darkness ;*" even as did Korah and his company, who "*went down alive into the pit ;*" even as did Judas, who has gone "*to his own place.*" You cannot refuse the least item of the full charge against you without impugning His testimony ; and you cannot impugn the least word of His testimony without imputing falsehood to His character ; in whom there "*is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*" (James i. 17).

Will you, then, accept the other alternative, and acknowledge the likeness which the unerring hand of truth has drawn of your sinful soul ? Fear not to look upon it, though the ineffable light of God's righteousness falls full on every black plague-

spot. So Naaman looked, and saw his own scarred features mirrored in the deep, calm waters of Jordan ere he washed and was for ever clean.

Take your stand, then, in open court. Let your accusers stand around. There are enough of them; from your baby cry of passion to the last angry impulse that flushed your cheek, or the last vile, proud, envious, or selfish thought that crawled, unseen to man, like an impure reptile, through the hidden chambers of your heart. Read again the condemning words to which conscience points the accusing finger:—“*The thought of foolishness is sin.*” “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*”

But see—the Judge has sent you a letter. You may take it in open court. Read the superscription, that you may be sure it is intended for you. It is addressed “*to him that worketh not*” (Rom. iv. 5). That surely is yourself. You do not work, you cannot work; because you now know that no work can be of any avail to save you but the shedding of innocent blood, and that is a satisfaction utterly beyond your reach. Read again, and you will find it written that “*when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*” (Rom. v. 6). Are not you ungodly? You must be, unless you are righteous; there is no middle class. “*God is not in all his thoughts*” (Ps. x. 4). That is the description of the ungodly, and that is your description also. But are you “without strength,” too? Surely yes—utterly

without strength. As, in the old heathen story, the mountains lay piled on the helpless giants ; so, "*the wrath of God abideth on you*" (John iii. 36). You cannot move one hair's breadth towards God till that weight is removed ; and one power alone, in earth or heaven, can remove that weight ; and that power is the touch of innocent blood. *That blood cleanseth from all sin.* "*When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*" And you are "ungodly," and "without strength." There are some, then, exactly, in every respect, in your condition, who have, without any effort on their part, received, through the application of this wondrous, innocent blood, a complete release from all the condemnation due to them. God, it appears, accepted Christ's death instead of their death. One of them, who had been guilty of blasphemy and murder (Acts xxii. 4, 20 ; 1 Tim. i. 13), thus describes the manner of this trial and acquittal : "*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*" (Gal. iii. 13). These men, then, thus redeemed, did nothing ; they merely stepped aside, and their Substitute took their place, and received to the uttermost the full punishment due to all the guilt of all their lives. And so they went forth from that high court of equity perfectly free ; for God Himself told them before that it would be so, when He said, "*If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*" Consider the full force of that expression—"free indeed." A man may be

acquitted of a charge brought against him in a human court of justice, and may go forth free; but that sentence of acquittal extends not beyond the date of his release. He may yet be tried in that very court for some future crime, and may be justly condemned; he is only in a state of conditional freedom. But when a man stands before God's high bar, he has to do with an omniscient tribunal, which reads the future as easily as the past, and which leaves out of his indictment not even a single idle word of all his life, though yet unspoken. The whole is a faithful extract from that "*book wherein*," David says, "*all his members were written, when as yet there was none of them.*" The shortest minute of that life comes short of God's requirement, and condemns him; not one condemning moment is omitted.

But the Judge, whose searching eye no hidden thought escapes, Himself permits the plea of substitution to the accused—nay, He commands him to accept it forthwith. But the punishment demanded by perfect justice must be fully equivalent to the crime. If, therefore, one single deviating thought from the King's standard of perfect righteousness should pass unpunished in the person of the substitute, that one omission condemns for ever: the substitution has been inadequate. There is, in fact, no substitution at all: the sentence of eternal death reverts upon the culprit. This substitution is the last, the only defence which you can plead in God's court; and

your all, for time and eternity, is risked on its completeness. If all the intelligence, then, and all the will, and all the love of the mightiest and noblest minds of men and angels were concentrated in one effort to effect a satisfactory compensation for every moment of your life wherein, in deed, word, or thought, you had been guilty of disloyalty towards God—though relying on the wondrous knowledge and unwearying love of these glorious intelligences, yet with what trembling hands would you submit the substitutional case which they had provided for you to the tremendous scrutiny of Jehovah's glance. It is written that "*He chargeth His angels with folly*:" they veil their glorious faces before His throne. Well, indeed, might you tremble in coming before Him with any substitution of their providing. But how stands the case in reality? It is Jehovah Himself who has provided the substitution which He demands. That which, under any other circumstances, would be your greatest danger—nay, your inevitable destruction—becomes now your unquestionable security. His all-seeing eye not only reviewed each open act of transgression, but fathomed to their lowest depths the sources and springs of evil in the hearts of His people. His unerring justice estimated, to the utmost fraction, the fearful punishment due to all; and He Himself measured out to the willing Substitute the tremendous compensation. His own proclamation of this vicarious expiation is the highest security in heaven for its

completeness. "*It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?*" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). "What, then, are you to do in order to obtain this justification? Nothing, but to believe in Jesus. You are to cease doing. For, "*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*" (Rom. iv. 5). Therefore he who is justified by God need have no fears for the future. He lives by the faith of the Son of God, and the future, like the past, was judged in the person of his Substitute. *It is the Son who has made him free, and he is free indeed* (John viii. 36).

Will you, my Reader, accept this freedom? We hear sometimes of good things in this world being so cheap that they are to be had for the asking. But this inestimable gift of life eternal *you are asked* to receive. It is offered; it is pressed upon your acceptance by One who knows the fearful position you are in while you are without it. Asking does not appropriate it—acceptance alone does this. God says *it is worthy the acceptance of all sinners* (1 Tim. i. 15). Will you accept it now where you stand, and be saved for ever? Perhaps you think this altogether too unceremonious and sudden a kind of salvation. You consider that God requires you to change your life, and to begin to become good, and to mortify your body by penance, or your mind by penitence or sorrow, before He will really give you what He offers so freely. While you hold these opinions about God you dishonour His goodness, and deny

His truth. You do not believe the character which He gives of Himself; and therefore you cannot accept a salvation which is in consistence with that character. But God, reading your heart, commands you to give up all these ideas—to change your mind altogether about Him, or (as we translate it in one word) to “*repent*” and *believe His Gospel*, which is nothing less than this message of free and complete salvation. All the tears and sufferings of this life—all the sorrow and self-abasement which you can offer, are utterly valueless as regards justification. You are justified, not by reason of anything great or small that you are in yourself, or can feel in yourself, but simply because the Son of God died in your place eighteen hundred years ago. If He was not your Substitute then, the sufferings of ten thousand worlds cannot save you now.

But you will say, “How am I to know that the Lord Jesus Christ was my Substitute then?” You may know it infinitely more surely than you know anything else in this world; and that simply by accepting Him now as your complete and only Saviour. God has commanded all men to change their unbelieving minds about Him, and to give up all such difficulties; and He has proclaimed this substitution to be “*worthy of all acceptance*” (1 Tim. i. 15). Therefore God has excluded none. If you are determined still to look to other ways of salvation, then you are excluding yourself from life eternal by refusing to take Christ as your

Substitute: and remember, I beseech you, the fearful alternative which you choose when, having thus received the "*knowledge of the truth*," you still persist in wilful sin by refusing to obey God's command, and to accept the complete atonement which He offers you. If you reject *this*, "*there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.*" God willeth not the death of any sinner (Ezek. xviii. 32; 2 Pet. iii. 9), and, therefore, in His Word He proclaims to all a complete salvation, transferable to any sinner who will have it, by the simplest and easiest act of which the human mind is capable.

Why, my Reader, will you not believe this? You would treat no man as you treat God in this matter. If a tried and esteemed friend came and warned you of some imminent danger which threatened your life or property, at the same time laying before you a certain plan of escape which he had, with infinite pains, arranged for you, would you hesitate to avail yourself of it? Or if you should hesitate, would not the feeling manifestly arise from some doubt of your friend's information or of his judgment? Would you, in fact, wait for any further reason previous to immediate action if there were perfect evidence of the wisdom and necessity of the step? Do you think it likely that you would take up such a line of reasoning as this?—"Well, the case is quite plain: to remain where I am is certain destruction,

and the way of escape is most clear and feasible; and by adopting it I can be safe beyond a doubt, and that at once. But I want to be sure if I believe it or not before I can act. There is, of course, no question but that my friend speaks the entire truth in this matter, but I can't find out whether I believe him or not."

Now, did you ever hear of such an absurd difficulty as this arising in the mind of a sane man as regards the things of this world? And yet this is the most common difficulty in the minds of men when the question of believing God is concerned. They say, "Oh, there is no doubt about the truth of the fact, that every one who believes God, and accepts Christ's finished work, will be saved; but I do not know whether I believe or not; I do not know whether I have accepted this salvation or not." This analysis of internal feelings—call it humility, or what you will—begins and ends in a refusal of God's pledged word as sufficient guarantee for the fulfilment of what He has promised. You are actually afraid to believe God, and you will find the end of the "*fearful and unbelieving*" in Rev. xxi. 8. In human matters the amount of belief accorded to a statement is measured by the evidence on which it rests, and by the character of the witness; and God Himself recognizes this axiom, and appeals directly to it; for He says—"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of His Son. He that believeth

on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son" (1 John v. 9-11). Will you accept this evidence of God Himself as to the full, free offer of eternal life which He proclaims to all men? Do you dare to say, I cannot believe it? God does not recognize any such incapacity. "*He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.*"

Now, if you really wish to be saved, and are willing to be saved in God's way, you have but to accept this substitution of Christ for yourself individually; and if you do willingly and deliberately choose this plea now, to the utter exclusion of any other claim whatsoever, then, in that case, you have God's solemn, written declaration for authority, that you are now—this moment—saved, and saved for ever:—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). There is no effort in being thus saved. It consists in a total ceasing from effort; and as no work of your own can give you any claim to the obtaining of this blessing, so the preserving of it is not to be effected by any act of yours. "*It is the gift of God; not [the result] of works, lest any man should boast*" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). Since, therefore, your own incapacity to meet the least of God's righteous requirements is the sole

qualification on your part to entitle you to this salvation, it follows that the same insolvency places utterly beyond your reach the means of purchasing the continuance of it. Suppose you were to take a starving beggar from the streets and present him with an insurance certificate which would entitle him to a very large sum of money on the death of some one; warning him at the same time to be careful to keep up the insurance by paying every premium as it became due. Would not such an act be a mere mockery rather than a kindness? And yet you attribute just such an act to God when you imagine His gift of salvation to consist in a pardon only of *past* offences. How can you call that *salvation* (that is to say, *safety*) of which the future tenure is not guaranteed to you, but is left entirely contingent upon the success of your own efforts to retain it? God says His gift is "*eternal life*." Can language speak more plainly? To believe a part of this statement, and to reserve a doubt concerning the remainder, is to destroy the principle of faith; for you cannot believe and doubt a fact at the same time. Remember that the righteousness which God gives comes "*by one Man's obedience*" (Rom. v. 19): not by a subscription of two persons' obedience—*Christ's* up to a certain point of time, and *yours* for all the remainder of your life.

Beware, I beseech you, how you hesitate to accept this gift on account of the easy and simple terms on which it is proclaimed. To do so would

be to give way to the most daring of the devil's lying fallacies, by which he would tempt men to distort the very perfection of God's wondrous love into an argument against the possibility of its own existence. As long as you remain in this state of mind, you only hold the devil's opinion of God. To believe His goodness to be anything less than He tells you in His Word, is to lie in your heart against Him; for "*who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*" (1 John ii. 22).

God entreats you by His goodness to accept His glorious gift, while He commands you by the authority of His sovereignty to obey Him. Will you add to the folly of resisting Omnipotent Power, the base hatefulness of insulting Immortal Love? In human matters we sometimes see a whole life devoted to the obtaining of some object—it may be wealth, or power, or fame; but in proportion to the difficulties encountered, and the qualities evidenced in overcoming them, will be the estimate formed of the strength of the man's character, and also of the power of his motives. And if we bring this rule of measurement as a means whereby to estimate the extent and motive of God's work in Christ for man, we have indeed ample materials for such investigation, in a life of thirty-three years' duration, whereof every moment was devoted to this one sole object. This life belonged to Him who was "*the wisdom of God and the power of God.*" He walked this earth in sorrow and in poverty, yet "*in Him dwelt all the*

fulness of the Godhead bodily." He was "*the power of God.*" He created this mighty universe by the word of his mouth. He was "*the wisdom of God.*" He framed the laws which govern all its wondrous machinery. If such mighty results were effected by the mere utterance of His mouth, how transcendantly great must that work be which should call forth an exertion of His strength; and yet, for man's salvation, this Mighty One—the mightiest and the lowliest upon earth—laboured in deadly contest, till "*His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*" Who can measure the elements of that awful struggle with all that hell could send forth of hatred and of power? Who can describe the courage, the patience, the obedience, the suffering, the sorrow? And if each of these severally pass the utmost limits of our comprehension, how shall we fathom *the love* which is the beginning and the end—the sum of all? We fail in our estimate—not through want of materials, but on account of the very extent and completeness of the materials before us, and our own utter inability to compute them. It is "*the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge*" (Eph. iii. 19). That love would exalt you to His own throne—would make you *now* an heir to glories beyond the utmost conception of your present understanding—would ensure all to you, beyond alienation, upon the instant of your acceptance of this free salvation.

Do you willingly and deliberately reject this

offer of full, free, complete pardon, and eternal reconciliation? of an inheritance, to which the accumulated titles and kingdoms of this earth are but as dust in the balance? Then understand, your crime is *rejection*, not ignorance. You are "*sinning wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth.*" You are treading under foot the Son of God. You have turned away from unutterable love. You are defying omnipotent power. "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" You have chosen the lot of the "*fearful*" (those who are afraid to trust God, and therefore afraid to meet Him) "*and the unbelieving, who shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (Rev. xxi. 8). Remember! "*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly*" (Rev. xxii. 20).

May God the Eternal Spirit carry home to your heart some word of His own in this letter. Whatever be the outward denomination of professing Christianity to which you belong, may He show you out of His own Book your free admission to "*that general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven*" (Heb. xii. 23).

"I call Heaven and Earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose *Life*, that thou mayest live."

I am your faithful servant for Christ's sake,
March 1st, 1863.

R. M.

POSTSCRIPT.

THOSE who reject God's sovereign proclamation of free pardon, "*worthy of all acceptation*," need read no farther. The few observations subjoined do not concern them. The subject of them is beyond their experience. They are addressed to others. "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Cor. iii. 14). But if any one have, in simple reliance upon God's pledged word, accepted Christ's work for him in all its completeness, to the utter exclusion of any thought or hope of worthiness in himself, then blessed is such an one ; for "*flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto him, but his Father which is in heaven.*" Such an one has God's express declaration that he has already "*passed from death unto life ;*" that he is one with Christ ; from henceforth inseparable from him (Eph. ii. 5-7 ; Rom. viii. 35, 39). He may be humble and unnoticed in this world ; but unseen angels attend his steps and minister to him as an heir of salvation (Heb. i. 14). He waits but for Christ's appearing, to be manifested with him in everlasting glory (1 John iii. 2), and to "*inherit the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world.*" But ere that time arrives, days, months,

even years may elapse. It is only delayed that souls may be saved; for the "*longsuffering of our God is salvation*" (2 Pet. iii. 15). And to us who believe is committed this word of reconciliation (Rev. xxii. 17; 1 Cor. v. 19). Therefore it is the privilege and the duty of every believer to employ this interval for the glory of his God by making the word of this salvation known, in all its fulness, and all its simplicity, to those who are ignorant and out of the way (Acts viii. 1, 4). Satan will do all in his power to prevent him from serving God thus; and in his own evil nature, which remains unchanged till death or the coming of the Lord, there will always be a ready response to Satan's efforts to draw him from allegiance to his Lord. But let him remember that Satan has been overcome *for* him already. He cannot touch his soul, neither can he touch the new life which was given to him at his conversion; for that is "*hid with Christ in God*" (Col. iii. 3). But he can and will destroy his peace of mind if he find him negligent in his service, or forgetful of his position. Let the believer, therefore, remember that his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in him (1 Cor. vi. 19). His King has come to be his guest—the "*guest of a man that is a sinner.*" Will he not set before Him the best of all that he has—his time, his strength, his will? To estimate any other object before His service is to offer a direct insult to His presence. To frequent society where His holy name is not honoured, and where it

would be unconventional to speak of His love, can only be painful to the heart of His faithful servant. But, lest he should be led away by the evil within and around him, and tempted thereby to grieve that Holy Spirit which dwells within him, let him remember that *he is not his own, that he is bought with a price* (1 Cor. vi. 20); and by virtue of that purchase he is God's—both soul and body. “*And God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given to us His Holy Spirit.*” If, therefore, he forgets his Father's love, and so neglects to testify for Him before men by life, word, and action, let him beware of his Father's discipline. All that is within him of the flesh is corrupt. If he obeys its tendencies or impulses, he can only expect estrangement from his Father's love, and a time of sad remorse, when he shall come again to himself, and see the time and opportunities which he has wasted, or worse than wasted—used for the devil's advantage rather than God's.

This solemn warning speaks plainly to believers in Galatians vi. 7, 8—“*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption*”—the corruption of all that he has thus sown. It will never bear fruit in the next world: it may bear sorrow to him in this. He will meet no happy face in heaven as the result of that sowing—no soul saved through the idle words or worldly practices of that time of sub-

mission to the wishes of the flesh within him. *"But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."* Not one effort made in weakness here, which has for its pure, unadulterated object God's glory, will be forgotten by Him who rewards the gift of a cup of cold water. He that sows to the Spirit—that yields his powers to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within every true believer—shall see the seed thus sown bear fruit in eternity. The tract given with a trembling hand, the word of warning or of love, forced forth from the cowardly and unwilling lips, may be recognised, in the harvest-time of eternity, as having been used to the saving of a soul from hell. Or if that feeble testimony thus borne has been rejected on earth, it is not lost: it is written in a book of remembrance above, and will be acknowledged in life everlasting by that rewarding sentence—*"Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things."* Such is the God whom we serve. He separates all believers from the world to be His children; signing and sealing to them their eternal sonship in the blood of the everlasting covenant. For them, therefore, hell has no terrors. Their Father's love has thrown open to their contemplation His purpose, before the world was, of bringing them to heights of inconceivable glory, and of uniting them, even here, with His own beloved Son, so inseparably, that He loves them as He loves Him; that He

cannot love Him without loving them, for they are a part of His body—and He cannot love Him without loving Him altogether (John xvii. 23; Eph. v. 30).

And when this world, with its sin, and sorrow, and death, shall have passed away, and the rags of its tinsel magnificence shall have shrivelled into dust in the light of Christ's coming—then, in that glorious world to come, wherein the lowest angel will reflect a glory that would dazzle this present earth—there, "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,*" shall the mystery of this union be revealed in the enthroned, ineffable glory of Christ and His blood-bought Church (Eph. i. 20, 23). "*This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord*" (Isa. liv. 17).



HOW THE KING DIED
AND
THE MURDERER WENT FREE.

BY
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P R E F A C E .

THE following pages are a reprint of the original publication, which appeared anonymously, and was extensively circulated. The writer, Richard John Mahony, D.L., Dromore Castle, Co. Kerry, has recently passed away, and it seems only what is due to such a precious and valuable exposition of the fundamental truths of the Gospel that it should be reproduced with little, if any, alteration, and in an improved form, for the more lasting help and benefit of all English-speaking people.





HOW THE KING DIED

AND

THE MURDERER WENT FREE.

IT was early dawn in Jerusalem, but the whole city was awake. For days past multitudes had been crowding in to attend the great feast of the Passover—caravans from the desert, rich cavalcades from the cities, troops of peasants from the plains. The Roman Governor had arrived from Cæsarea with a glittering escort ; and the King of Galilee, with his brilliant court, had filled the beautiful palace that rose proudly from the midst of the city.

It was to be a day of high solemnity at Jerusalem. From morning till evening the temple would be crowded with worshippers from every part of the world.

There was also to be a crucifixion. Some of the criminals who had been taken in the late insurrection were to be executed, and among them was Barabbas the murderer, one of the most desperate and blood-thirsty characters that ever had troubled the Roman Government in Judea. There was great curiosity to see how he would die, and how his desperate spirit would meet the lingering tortures of the cross and the taunts of the Roman soldiers.

There was a report also that Jesus of Nazareth, the great Galilean prophet, had been arrested during the night by the chief priests, on a charge of blasphemy against the holy temple. This had already created much commotion. The Galileans were in consternation. They had seen this man work manifest miracles among them. They were spectators of the holiness of his life, of his goodness to the sick and suffering, and of the wonderful power of his words. There were credible witnesses in the city who had, but a short time since, seen him raise a man from the dead after he had lain four days in the tomb.

Many had hoped that, long ere this, he would have raised the standard of liberty, like another Judas Maccabæus, and, calling on his countrymen to join him in expelling the Roman tyrants, would have accepted the crown from their hands, and have reigned as the people's king. Six days since multitudes had poured forth from the city gates to

welcome his arrival. They had received him with acclamations as the Messiah, the son of David, of whose lineage he claimed to come. They had heard him publicly, in words of awful rebuke, denounce the hypocrisy and concealed wickedness of the powerful religious orders who ruled the minds of the people. This was, doubtless, the cause of his arrest, if it were true. But, if it were true, where were his claims to divine origin and divine power? He had declared himself publicly to be the Son of God as well as the Messiah of Israel. Some of his followers had received him as such, and rendered him divine worship. Could it be possible that, with all these claims, and with the miraculous power which he undoubtedly possessed, he had been unable to protect himself against his deadly enemies? Would his pretensions prove, after all, to be false? Would he be shown to have been a deceiver or self-deceived? Or was he reserving his power for some great display in miraculously and publicly liberating himself from the hands of the chief priests and Pharisees?

"He saved others: himself he could not save."

THE INNOCENT CONVICTED.

SUCH were the thoughts that were passing through men's minds, as they crowded, in eager curiosity, towards the great square before the Governor's palace. Here all that they had heard was confirmed; and they found the chief priests and rulers

waiting in anxious groups round the gate of the Judgment Hall, those who stood nearest the entrance gathering up their garments lest they should be polluted by contact with the pavement of the Gentile tribunal. "They had proved this pretended prophet," said they to the people, "to be an impostor. He had been tried before the Sanhedrim, where he had been neither able to defend himself, nor to make use of his assumed miraculous power. And now he had been

"This is your hour and the power of darkness." brought to the Governor for sentence, that he might die a felon's death for deceiving the people."

All this happened, dear Reader. God, who cannot lie, has written the story of it. That night human justice had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. For once in the history of the world, an innocent man—innocent in thought, word, and deed—had been put on his trial, and that before a tribunal of the rulers of Israel, God's chosen nation, possessed of a code of laws given by Jehovah Himself. Had they acquitted their prisoner triumphantly, their sentence would have been for ever unimpeachable, and their integrity manifest. But what is the truth concerning their judgment? They examined many witnesses against him; the evidence of these witnesses was discordant and manifestly false; and the council found him guilty of death. Yet God gave human justice a farther trial.

Judæa was a Roman province, and in the Roman Governor alone rested the power of life and death. To him, therefore, the chief priests led Jesus of Nazareth, that final sentence might be passed and executed upon him. Here, then, again a righteous man stood prisoner, awaiting the decision of a human tribunal.

THE JUDGE TESTED.

It was not now a council of fanatical Jews who sat in judgment. It was the representative of the great Roman Empire, the centre of human civilisation, whose laws governed the world. Here, surely, justice would be shown, and the innocence of the prisoner triumphantly vindicated. The liberal and educated mind of the Roman Governor looked down with contempt on the narrow provincial pride and fierce bigotry of Jewish zealots. With the calm patience of authority he receives the tumultuous deputation. They bring a prisoner for condemnation; and their charge against him is sedition and rebellion against Cæsar. A strange accusation from seditious and rebellious Jews! He scorns the shallowness of such a device to deceive him. He has had long experience of their hypocrisy and intolerance, and he perceives that for envy they have delivered their prisoners. Nevertheless, the charge is a grave and important one, and he will examine him. And Jesus of

Nazareth stands before Pontius Pilate—to human eyes a weak prisoner before a mighty judge, a case of ordinary occurrence to be forgotten with the interest of the moment. But could the eyes of that multitude be opened, they would see Pontius Pilate himself standing before his Judge—human justice again on trial before the bar of God.

Some inward uneasiness respecting this mysterious personage reached the conscience of the Governor. Reckless of human life he has proved himself to be in his tenure of office. He could unrelentingly put down tumult by massacre; yet now, before one solitary man, he is filled with some strange awe. He hears that this persecuted, friendless prisoner claims to be the Son of God, and, despite his haughty Roman scepticism, he trembles. “When he heard this he was the more afraid.” Will he, then, vindicate human justice, and release this wronged and persecuted man, of whose innocence he is convinced, and whose more than human meekness so strangely overawes him?

THE JUDGE HESITATES.

ONE effort, indeed, he will make. In the Jewish Council not a voice had been raised in his favour. They feared his influence with the people. Hatred and self-interest prevailed.

But these narrow motives cannot touch the

noble Roman. He has read in human philosophy how excellent and beautiful a thing it is in a ruler to dispense impartial justice, and to protect the oppressed even at the risk of his own life; and now he will furnish an illustrious example of the principles which he has learned. "From that time Pilate sought to release Him." But there is an open joint in his polished armour, and through it the devil will slay human virtue, even at the first thrust. "Then cried out the Jews, saying, If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." Justice to a poor Jewish prisoner is weighed in the balance against the possible loss of Cæsar's favour, and Pontius Pilate feels that he must do violence to his conscience rather than risk the Emperor's good will.

THE LAST RESOURCE.

YET, though he gives his reluctant assent to this legal murder, he will make one effort more to release the innocent, or at least to shift from himself the guilt of finally pronouncing his condemnation. There was a custom at this feast of releasing any prisoner whom the people demanded by acclamation. To this custom he will appeal, and he leads his prisoner forth to the tribunal before which the waiting multitude is assembled.

VOX POPULI.

It is the third test of human justice. Jesus of Nazareth stands on trial for his life for the third time. The bigoted and cruel Sanhedrim condemned him without pity. The time-serving Roman Governor had not the moral courage to protect him. But, though base and interested motives may govern those in power, surely popular opinion is free, and the people's vote will triumphantly repeal the ruler's sentence. Let the nation speak, and let humanity be vindicated. The voice of the people is the voice of God!

There are other prisoners, indeed, under sentence of death, and the people may exercise this right of deliverance in favour of whomsoever they desire. Barabbas, the murderer, is among the condemned—a man of whose life and character we read but a very short account, but all we read of him is bad. Guilty of robbery and murder, he had been taken, red-handed, in a late insurrection in the city, and now lay bound, awaiting the doom to which the laws had condemned him—a painful and ignominious death, even the death of the cross.

Dark indeed must his thoughts be, whether they rest on the past or the future. Remorse and horror he may feel, as the many crimes of his life crowd upon his memory; but what can sorrow avail him

“Ye denied
the Holy One
and the Just,
and desired
a murderer
to be gran-
ted, unto
you.”

now? The law has been broken; sentence has been passed; execution alone remains. Nor can this be long deferred. The feast is close at hand, and the public execution of malefactors must take place before the coming Sabbath. Each moment may bring to his ears the sound of the executioner's footsteps, as he comes to drag him to his doom.

BARABBAS REPRESENTS THE SINNER.

HIS situation is indeed a miserable one. Dear Reader, does it resemble yours?

Have you not broken God's holy laws in thought, word, and deed? Is not sin the transgression of the law? Hath not "death passed upon all, for that all have sinned?" You may question the justice of the sentence, but you cannot deny the truth of the fact. Every generation from the days of Adam has proved it; and you will give testimony to it also, willing or unwilling, when your hour comes. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." Are you prepared for that judgment? If not, you are just in the condition in which Barabbas lay. You are under sentence of death, even eternal death; and each hour brings you nearer to execution. Perhaps you consider that your sin cannot merit so severe a sentence. Perhaps you calculate on your good deeds going far to lighten the balance against you. It may be that you rely upon the

value of sacramental grace, or the correct observance of other external ordinances.

So Barabbas may have slept in the condemned cell, and may have dreamed that he was innocent, or that he was free, or that he had found some plan of escape, or some strong plea to set forth in the bar of judgment. But his waking eyes rest on the walls of his prison, and the clank of his chain brings reality to his remembrance. As vain as his dreams are your unscriptural theories and your religion of ordinances. They may amuse your imagination or please your tastes. They cannot reverse the sentence recorded against you.*

Barabbas knew that many thousands would throng the streets of the holy city and the courts of the Temple at the great feast of the approaching Sabbath; but he knew also that before the dawn of that Sabbath morning his mangled body would be laid in a felon's grave.

And you may read in God's Book of a great Sabbath of rest soon to dawn on this sad world.

* Let it not be supposed that there is here the least intention to undervalue any command of our Lord, or any symbolic ordinance instituted by Him for His people's comfort. These are love tokens for the free and favoured. A condemned criminal waiting for execution cannot appropriate them. He must first obtain pardon and reconciliation. Food refreshes the living, but it cannot bring the dead to life. For them there are "no means of grace," except the preaching or reading of the Word. They cannot receive the Spirit except by the "hearing of faith" (Gal. iii. 2). Until they hear the voice of the Son of God they have no life.

But, ere that Sabbath morning breaks, account must be rendered by this rebellious earth for its great insurrection against the laws of God's empire, and for the murder committed in that insurrection, even the murder of the Son of God.

If you have not obtained your pardon before that day you will be found guilty of insurrection, and implicated in that murder. If you are not found in the kingdom of God's dear Son you will be found in the kingdom of the god of this age, even the usurper who murdered Him by the hands of wicked men, "the spirit who now worketh in the children of disobedience." Jesus says, "*He that is not with Me is against Me.*"

"This is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light."

HOPE OR ESCAPE.

BUT Barabbas might remember, in the midst of his despair, that it was the custom of the Roman Governor at this feast to release a prisoner to the people. Perhaps the shout of the multitudes without, falling on his ear, raises in his breast a faint hope of such a possible deliverance. But if, dragging himself to the barred window of his dungeon, he can look forth on the open space before the Prætorium, what a scene will meet his eye.

The great crowd is surging up towards the glittering line of spears that marks the Roman

guard before the tribunal. The Governor is leading forth his prisoner, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Jesus of Nazareth
 "Behold your King." stands before the people to receive life or death at their hands.* Perhaps there were among them many to whom his hands had given health and life. Can they hesitate one moment now to rescue him from death? Will not one universal cry for his release shake the very walls of the city?

Surely Barabbas thinks so, and turns back in bitterness and despair to his cell, when he perceives that the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the good and kind, must be sacrificed before the people can be

* Dear Reader, "turn aside" for a moment, and "see this great sight." He who stood thus, like a lamb before his shearers, might in a moment have had a guard of "more than twelve legions of angels," each as mighty as the heavenly warrior that smote the myriads of Sennacherib. One word from Him would have laid that city with its multitudes in the dust at His feet; would have laid this rebel world in ruins around Him. But no such word was spoken, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (Matt. xxvi. 54). He had undertaken, before the world was, to redeem His people, and now "the year of His redeemed was come." Therefore He
 "Herein is love." delivers Himself up into the hands of sinful men.

Therefore is human nature on its trial. God leaves man unrestrained, to give proof of what is in him; and man gives public evidence of his entire loss of capacity to hold the dominion once given him (Gen. i. 26). He openly proclaims his abdication of that trust by thrice condemning the Just. Consider this, ye who talk of man's innate goodness and power. This crime may have been planned in hell, but it could only be perpetrated on earth; and so Satan, who knew man's weakness and wickedness, made use of him as his willing instrument.

free to exert their prerogative in his favour, for the law will not permit *both* to go free. Nay, could the people even be so blind to justice and gratitude as to be doubtful in their decision? He knows that there is a God in heaven, who cannot permit such fearful wrong. He cannot suffer the innocent and the good to go forth to a death of lingering agony, that the blood-stained and guilty may go free.

DESPAIR.

THEN let Barabbas turn his face to the wall, and wait for his doom. No more fair sunshine for him. The cutting scourge, the cruel buffet from the fierce legionary, as he staggers down the crowded street under the burden of the cursed cross. No word of sympathy; no look of pity. The last instinctive struggle for life, overpowered amidst brutal jesting, while the clenched hands are strained open, and the piercing iron rends the quivering flesh. The strained and tortured body; the burning thirst; the gazing crowds; the glare of the noonday sun; the deadly weariness of the lingering night; and, most terrible of all, the fearful looking for of judgment to come—the awful, everlasting future.

Dark and gloomy as his dungeon looks, he seems to cling to its shelter now; but even this respite is denied him. The approach of footsteps falls on his ear. The heavy bars of his prison door

roll back ; the door grates on its hinges, and his gaoler enters. But where are his attendants ? Where the guards to drag him forth to execution ? The man is alone, and his look and his words amaze the prisoner. " You are free," he cries, and he loosens the fetters from his limbs. Barabbas hears them clank heavily at his feet ; yet he can scarce believe his senses. Can he in very deed be free ? And " Where is Jesus of Nazareth ? " " He has gone to the cross. The people demanded your release ; *his death has given you life.*"

Dear Reader, is not this a strange and wonderful occurrence ? God, who cannot lie, has written it in His book.

The innocent, the righteous, the holy, went forth to cruel torture and death.

The guilty, miserable murderer went forth to light, and life, and liberty.

The last type of substitution is set forth in the person of the great Substitute Himself. It is true that, as always, the illustration falls short of reality, for the crimes of Barabbas were not laid upon Jesus, nor did Pilate decree His execution as one answerable for another's actions. Besides, we know of no direct personal relations between the two which would have enabled Barabbas to say, as Paul did, " He gave Himself for me." And yet the deliverance of Barabbas fitly represents the salvation of every redeemed sinner. He could not take one step towards freedom ; he could not raise

a finger to help himself. But liberty was proclaimed to him in his cell, and he walked forth free.

NO HOPE OR HELP IN SELF.

Do you, dear Reader, know yourself a sinner in the full sense of the word, both guilty and helpless? "*Then be it known to you that by this man (the Lord Jesus Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.*" You may go forth, on accepting this message, as free as Barabbas. Have you seen your guilt and your condemnation? If you have, then "*to you is the word of this salvation sent.*" It was to Barabbas, the guilty and condemned, that the death of Jesus of Nazareth brought life; not to the religious Pharisee, not to the haughty Roman, not to the ordinance-observing Jew.*

It is of the utmost importance that you should perceive how God's message of salvation contemplates only helplessness and guilt in you. He has not told you to do your best and trust Him then for supplying your deficiency and pardoning your shortcomings. On the contrary, He has set before

* It must be remembered that Barabbas is used merely as a typical character. All that is said, therefore, of his deliverance is limited to his rescue from execution under human law. Though furnishing so wonderful an illustration of free pardon to sinners, he may yet have died in unbelief.

you your own utter ruin, and commanded you to accept, as individually addressed to you, this proclamation of full, free salvation resulting from the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not satisfied to rest on this as alone sufficient to present you faultless before the throne of God, you are still in rebellion against Him. You are clinging to your chain. You have not submitted yourself to the righteousness of God. Do you know what this expression means?

MORAL EXCELLENCE AT FAULT.

It means that, as man's intellect surpasses the mere instinct of the beast, so does God's requirement and standard of righteousness differ from the natural man's highest attribute of integrity or amiability. A man may admire the sagacity of his dog, but he cannot admit him to his table or to his council. For he is but a dog at best, and he will die like a dog. So between God's holiness and man's virtue there is a difference, not in *degree*, but in *kind*. Human excellence cannot raise man to heaven or give him eternal life. It dies in the disease of his moral corruption, if he is not healed by divine power.

But he who has submitted himself to the righteousness of God knows well the truth of this. He knows that his own "righteousness is but as filthy rags." He gets to the edge, as it were, of his

own merit. He sees the fearful gulf that separates him from the happy region of God's favour, and, shuddering, he falls in the dust on the brink of that mighty precipice. But lo! he hears how that the great Jehovah has risen from His throne and descended into the measureless depths of that yawning chasm, and that, deep in the abyss, He has laid a sure foundation, cemented with blood, and on it reared a mighty arch that spans the distance from the convicted sinner to His own throne; and now, with trembling step on that firm highway, he passes safely into life and liberty.

Have you thus seen that the best thing which you can bring to God as a plea for pardon is an abomination in His sight? Have you seen that, unless God stoops from His throne to lift you from the dust, you have no wings whereon to raise yourself one hair's breadth towards him; that, if He interpose not His power to save you, the gravitation of your sinful nature must sink you in hell for ever? Then, having seen all this, what can you find to bar you now from passing into the assured joy of eternal salvation? Nothing, certainly, on God's side.

When Barabbas heard that Jesus of Nazareth had gone to death instead of him he might walk boldly up to Calvary. He might stand beneath the cross, and, as he saw the righteous hands and feet stretched forth, and pierced, and bleeding, he might recognise the full assurance of his own

safety in the sufferings of the Sinless One. He might look the rulers and the soldiers boldly in the face, and they could not lay a finger on him, for they knew that the Governor had "released him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, but had delivered Jesus to their will."

SUBSTITUTION.

So may you, knowing your guilt and condemnation, stand by faith beneath the cross of the Lord Jesus, and see Him crushed and broken, yet obedient unto death, under the wrath of God. And if, obeying God's command, you are looking to this atonement as absolutely necessary for your salvation, and resting upon it as alone all-sufficient for your complete justification, then, indeed, you may rest assured that He died in your place, "*the Just for the unjust.*" You are free, not because God has remitted the punishment of your sin—that He could not do, for He tells you that He can "*in no wise clear the guilty;*" but you are free, because your guilty life has been accounted for to its last breath. You are free for a reason not illustrated in the case of Barabbas, with whose crimes Jesus was not charged. In your case God charged Christ, His holy Son, with your sin, and condemned Him, and gave Him to death, a willing Substitute in your place.

God Himself, therefore, is your justifying Judge.

Satan, the great accuser, may bring the black book of your crimes before the throne. He may show death recorded there against every item. Death, everlasting death, sums up the whole. The Judge does not extenuate one single charge, but over against the last great total He writes in blood, "*Christ died ;*" and the account is balanced for ever. The simple, definite statement of this fact should meet all your fears. Scripture teaches that *that death* was something more than a manifestation of God's justice in condemning sin—more even than a compensation rendered to God for His insulted majesty. It was the result of an interchange of position between the Lord Jesus Christ and His people, whereby His merit passed to them—their sins to Him. "*He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*" The responsibility which He assumed as attaching to us was a debt of eternal punishment ; and when He cried, "*It is finished,*" it was the announcement that *that debt* had been paid in full equivalent. We can, therefore, now rejoice that "there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

FREELY SAVED, NOT FREE TO SIN.

YET this great gift of free salvation from God to all who accept it gives no licence to continue in sin, though it places the believer beyond the fear

of punishment. On the contrary, Scripture teaches that whosoever in humble faith receives this gift at God's hand is inspired with a new sin-hating principle, whereby he is led and enabled to struggle against his inherent corruption. God the Holy Ghost fulfils His great part in the everlasting covenant. If you, then, dear Reader, are resting now simply on the divine atonement as your only hope, be assured that God the Holy Spirit has revealed it to you. He has quickened you in the receiving of this truth. You are passed from death unto life. You are in the "new creation," which is beyond eternal death, and no longer liable to it. He who suffered for you is the Lord of that new creation, and "over Him death hath no more dominion. For in that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." He tells you who believe on Him that you have, in His substitution, gone through death, and thus passed for ever out of its dominion as regards the soul, and, should you be alive at His coming, as regards the body too, and that you are now with Him alive for ever unto God.

REGENERATION.

THIS is new birth into a new creation. As, when born of your parents into this world, you passed from darkness into existence, and became then irrevocably subject to the laws of that existence,

and incapable of ever again repassing the boundary, and returning to nonentity ; so, born of God into this new creation, you are henceforth subject to its laws, and cannot return to your old natural condition, for, "behold, all things are become new." Was ever such a thing heard of in the natural life as that a human being should be one day a lifeless corpse and the next a living man, and that he should go through such alternations many times during his bodily existence?

"If a man
die, shall he
live again?"

So is it impossible for one who is born of the Spirit into *eternal* life ever to pass out of it again. Regeneration is not a change of outward relations or an admission to any visible denomination of professing Christianity. Nor is it dependent on any external ordinance whatever. It is the resurrection of the soul, effected by the quickening power of God the Holy Spirit, through the hearing of faith. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

If you are now depending on any works or merits of your own as a means whereby to obtain salvation, instead of looking to that which Christ has wrought, you consider that His work is not finished, and, therefore, you do not believe His word, and, therefore, you are not born again. You may be enjoying health, and strength, and wealth, and the good opinion and esteem of all

around you ; you may be correct in your attendance at public worship, and you may be a subscriber to innumerable charities ; but you are "*dead in trespasses and sins,*" living without God in a doomed world.

Among those who crowded forth from Jerusalem to witness the crucifixion on Calvary, there were rulers, and chief priests, and councillors, great men, and wise men, and religious men, according to their own opinion. Many of them were, perhaps, amiable people, and generous people, and various were the opinions expressed concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Some reviled and blasphemed. Some condemned, some pitied, some lamented, and smote upon their breasts ; but all returned to their homes and occupations in the doomed city, to share the lot of those who cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"

"See, then, that you refuse not Him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

A MESSAGE OF PARDON.

CONSIDER another instance of the wonderful love and mercy of God. He who was crucified in weakness, in whose defence no hand was stretched forth from heaven or on earth, "was declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the

resurrection from the dead." "All power was given to Him in heaven and upon earth," and in the exercise of that power He sends a message to the city and people which had murdered Him. His delegates are not "angels that excel in strength," but the poor Galileans who had been his companions in His humiliation. The message is not an edict of vengeance, but a proclamation of free pardon to all who will accept it, and acknowledge His sovereignty. In the very courts of the "house which had been left unto them desolate" was that Gospel proclaimed. Among those who heard it on that day were three thousand who were saved while they listened. They heard, believed, and were regenerated where they stood. They were in the condemned city, but the word of pardon came to them, as the message of deliverance had come to Barabbas in his cell, and they passed from death unto life.

Many more also were added to this number during the day of grace, while the longsuffering of God deferred the fearful judgment of that guilty city.

And the rest—heard, indeed, and wondered, and then they despised (even as men wonder and despise now) and perished. They were blinded, even before the day of wrath came, because of their unbelief.

Dear Reader, if you are not saved, take heed lest your day of grace pass also.

"Hear ye, and give ear : be not proud ; for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

