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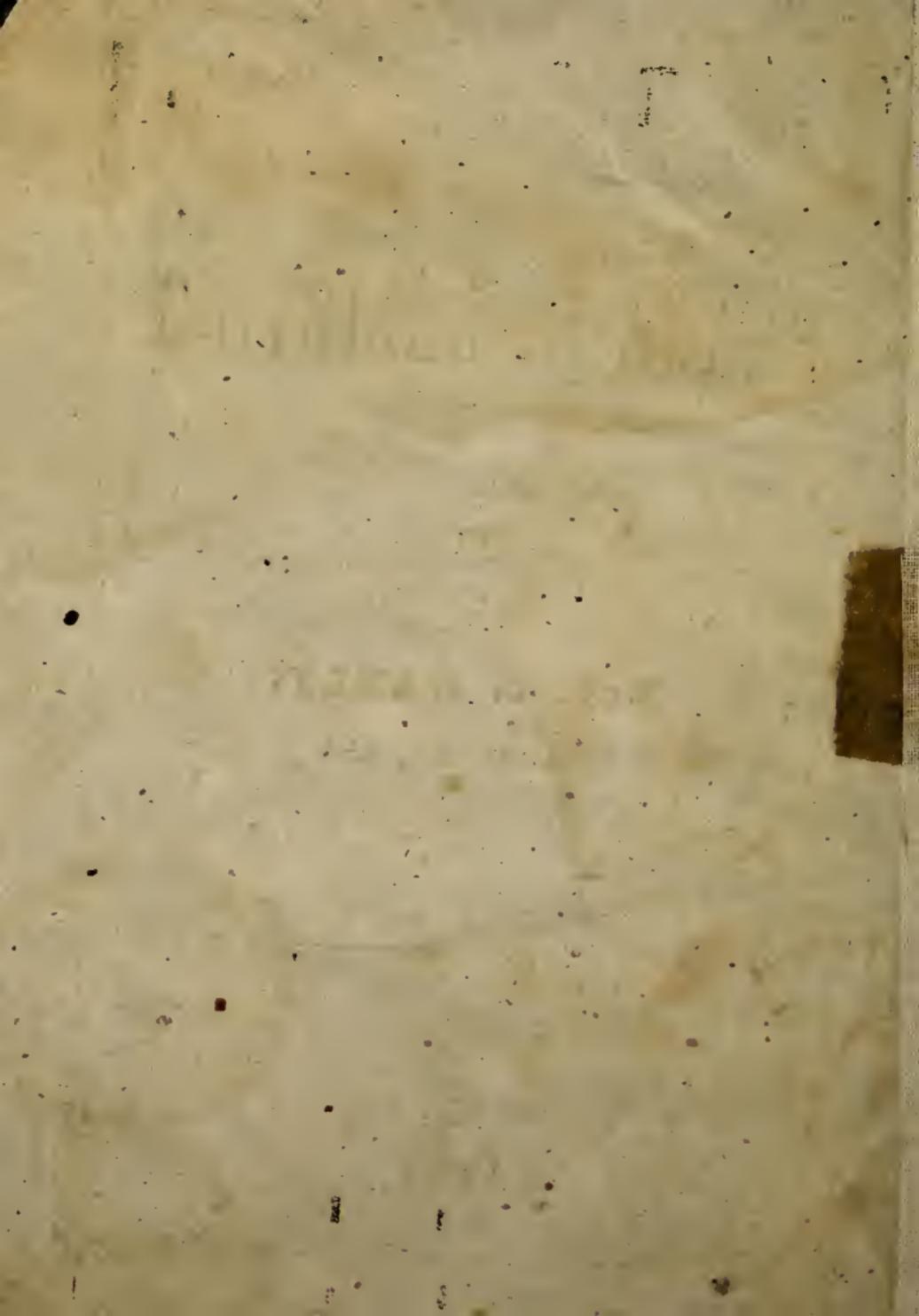
PEACE IN BELIEVING.

BY

Rev. C. MANLY,

TUSKALOOSA, ALA.

• 1863.



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PEACE IN BELIEVING.

BY REV. C. MANLY, *Tuscaloosa, Ala.*

LETTER I.

September 17th, 1861.

DEAR C.—A few days ago I received a letter from E. N. He had found an opportunity by some friends to write. But *such* a letter as it was! So cautious, every expression so carefully guarded, lest it should fall into the wrong hands, and his sentiments betrayed! It must be terrible to him to live among the avowed enemies of the only country he will ever claim as *home*—despising those by whom he is surrounded; loving, with all the ardor of a *passionate* nature, the South; and yet obliged to hear it abused and know that he cannot defend it. I pity him with all my heart.

But this is the least of his troubles. There is *one* shadow which hangs over his life blacker, more terrible than this; and that is the fate of poor H. He says, he has prayed earnestly for *death*, or for *strength* to bear this trial; and yet writes, "He is a *prayer-answering* God, and yet here I am still, with no strength, but rather greater weakness." I wish I could say any thing to comfort him:

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but what can I say, when—I know what I am going to say will shock you, but it is sadly true—when, so often the same conviction has forced itself on *my* mind. I know the Bible speaks of a *prayer-hearing* God; but that God I have never, then, truly found. He may be so to *others*, but to *me* he has never been so. I have prayed, often earnestly, and I thought, with faith, (for I believed those prayers would be answered), but I have prayed vainly. You tell me to pray for *resignation*: how can I, when *now I know* I pray without faith, without hope of any effect?

I am ashamed to make this confession—and would not if I did not hope that you might be able to tell me where the fault is, and point me some way of relief. I am *all* wrong—I know I am; and yet I do so long to be very good!—Sometimes, that is; but some times I fear I become despairingly indifferent, thinking it little-use to *try*. There now! I have said a great deal more than I intended. Hitherto I have kept all this to myself, and perhaps ought to have continued to do so. Only, when I read E.'s letter I longed to know something to say to him, and yet I felt I had nothing to offer.

I depart from S. about October 1st.

Your friend,

A.

LETTER 2.

Sept. 30th 1861.

DEAR A.—Sickness has prevented my replying to your last till now. But this will intercept you in your journey, and may relieve for a few moments, the tedium of the road you will have to travel.

I am glad you have confided in me enough to let me know your state of mind; even though I may be able to be of very little service to you. When I was too unwell to write, I thought of you again and again, and feared it would be long before I could write to you. What you say of yourself does not shock me as you supposed it would. Perhaps, but for the

experience I have myself had in a similar way, it would have had some such effect. But I am not a stranger to precisely the same distressing state that you describe as your own. Do not, therefore, conclude that your case is so peculiar as that there has never been one like it. You see, for yourself that there is at least one other in a similar condition, whom you would gladly have comforted. I wish you had tried it— it would have done you good. Indeed, I hope you did try. It certainly could do no harm.

I doubt not, if the history of every Christian's heart could be placed before our eyes, there would be but few who have not, at some period of their lives, been made to feel as though God were "angry against their prayer," (Ps. 80 : 4), and who have, with the Psalmist, cried out in bitterness of soul, "Will the Lord cast off forever? . And will He be favorable no more?— Is His mercy clean gone forever? Doth His promise fail forever more? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"— (Ps. 77 : 7—9.) Such an experience is not a *necessary* part of a Christian's life,—but it is not an uncommon one, if the truth were known. Sometimes doubtless, this is the direct effect of some temptation which Satan is allowed to bring to bear upon the soul; and no special cause, other than this, can be assigned for it. Of such a one our Saviour's language to Peter may be used; "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"—but it may also be added, as true, that Jesus says, "I have prayed for thee, *that thy faith fail not.*"— Most generally, however, it is the consequence of some sin indulged, in some way; if not some positive transgression, it is some gross neglect—as prayerlessness, indifference to duty, and to active service of God, some idol that dethrones God and grieves the Holy-Spirit. It is a state described in Scripture as "backsliding in heart;" and God makes the sin punish itself. Jer. 2 : 13—19.

Sometimes these feelings come in connection with some great distress or calamity that seems more bitter than death; and God allows it to be so, in order to develop the graces of His children and lead them to trust *implicitly* in Him. Often, because He does not grant them precisely what they wish, they conclude that He does not hear them at all. Perhaps what they wish would be an injury to them. Often they think He does not answer them, because He does not give them their

petitions in precisely the way they expect and in the degree they look for. That is evidently E.'s case. God has indeed sorely afflicted him. He says he prays for strength, but gets weaker day by day. Was not that precisely Paul's experience? (See 2 Cor. 12 : 7—10) reproduced a thousand times under similar circumstances? "As thy days (not more), so shall thy strength be." God purposely brings us low and makes us feel our weakness to be absolute and our strength to be nothing, that we may learn to trust and lean upon Him. "When I am weak, then am I strong." He will yet learn the meaning of 2 Cor. 4 : 8—10 as he has never before seen it. Light will arise out of his darkness.

But the question arises, *what must one who is in such a state do?* I cannot answer the question better than it is done in the Bible: see Isa. 50 : 10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? *Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*" The whole context is instructive. Of course, all known sin must be abandoned—that is indispensable. An earnest active devotion to some labor for Christ is often necessary to dispel the darkness. In trying to lead others to Him we ourselves find the way.

I know that it is often the case that one in such a condition (feeling that every service is imperfectly, not to say sinfully, performed), is tempted to give up prayer altogether and to abandon the reading of the Bible, with many other duties.—Such a temptation should be steadfastly resisted. It is our duty to pray, whether we feel like it or not. And the devil can wish for nothing more than to keep a child of God from prayer. As long as he can do that, he is satisfied. Now, dear A., remember his wiles—he will take every method to keep you from your Saviour—he will sift you as wheat; but remember, also, to take "the sword of the Spirit" and to use it in all your conflicts with him. I feel assured that such is your present condition; and while I deeply sympathize with you in your spiritual struggles, I am not sorry that you are enduring them; for I confidently believe that they will result in your deeper and more thorough acquaintance with the power and grace of Christ, and that you will yet bless God for them. The contest may be long, and as with a sword in your bones the cruel taunt may be suggested to you and flung at you, "Where is thy God?" and re-

peated efforts to take to God a soul "cast down" may seem to result for a long time in only making the load heavier; but never, while your soul pants after God as you now say yourself that it does, never will He leave you utterly, but He "will command His loving kindness in the day time, and the night His song will be with you and your prayer to the God of your life," whom you will realize as *your own God*—the health of your countenance. (See Ps. 42)

I know that sometimes the heart is almost crushed by the blinding doubt often suggested at such a time; viz. *Am I indeed, a child of God, at all; have I ever experienced His grace, have I not been deceived all along?* I KNOW THE AWFUL POWER OF SUCH A DOUBT. I will not attempt to answer that question for you—if indeed it has presented itself to you—further than to say, that I cannot conceive of a "longing to be good" proceeding from an unrenewed heart or from the suggestion of Satan. But, be that as it may, it still remains true, and no artifice of the devil can make it otherwise, that whosoever cometh to Jesus shall in no wise be cast out—and that He is able to save *unto the uttermost*, all that come to God by Him. Avail yourself of the "true sayings of God"—be not afraid to know the whole truth as to your condition; you can never get beyond "*the uttermost*"—you can never be beyond the power of His grace.

But, in truth, *do you not love Christ?* *Would you not, do you not choose Him;* and would you not account the manifestation of His presence and love as the greatest blessing you could now receive? Is there *anything* you would prefer to Him? I think I know what the answer of your heart is: it is Peter's—"Lord, thou knowest all things; *thou knowest I love thee.*" A magnet will discover the existence of particles of steel in a pile of dust, that a microscope will not detect. So, if there is grace in the heart at all, it will be made known by the real views one has of Christ, rather than by a search, be it ever so minute, into our motives and feelings, our frames and states of mind.

The path by which God brings back His people to Him is often a dark and rugged one—it leads through the valley of Humiliation, as Bunyan calls it. Be it so—*ANYTHING*—if *we may but be brought back to Him.* The very tribulations we suffer may tend to keep us there, to stray no more.

Now, though I have written thus much, I have a kind of feeling that you may think that, after all, my effort has been in vain—because I have not pointed out to you (*I have not tried*) the particular fault. The relief, be assured, is to be found in a direct application to the Lord Jesus, as a poor, unworthy, undone sinner. You remember that beautiful hymn, “Just as I am.” That is the true sentiment. Make it your own.

As ever, yours,

C.

LETTER 3.

Oct. 8th, 1861.

DEAR C.—I thank you more than I can express, for your kindly sympathizing letter in return for mine, which I feared would be very wearisome to you. It not only relieved the tedium of the journey while reading it, but has given me much food for thought ever since. I trust, too, your effort to assist me has not been in vain altogether. Certainly there has been much comfort in the thought that, far as I *feel* I am from God, I may yet *perhaps* be His; for in all my wanderings I have never desired to *choose* any other save *Christ*. Still again and again has the question arisen, “Am I a child of God?” And reviewing my life since my public profession, I could not but answer, “No.” Long ago this doubt arose, and I often feared that I had too hastily attached myself to the church, when I was yet too much a child to know exactly what I did. At first, this gave me much pain; but soon that wore away, and I felt relieved to think that it was not necessary for me to struggle to be good. Still I despised myself as a hypocrite, and would have given worlds if I could have withdrawn from the church without the publicity which would attend such an act. I shrank from communion seasons with nervous dread; for the words, “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily,” were ever in my mind. This was the state of things when the last protracted meeting was held in our church; at which you were present. While *others* hailed it with joy, I *dreaded* it. At first I only attended when

it was absolutely impossible to find an excuse not to do so.— But I soon became interested and deeply affected. When others presented themselves for prayer, I felt that it would be fitter for me to be *there* than with the children of God. One night, I remember particularly, a number united with the church, and the members went forward to welcome them. I was among the last, for I could scarcely command myself sufficiently to appear composed. After service I met you, and almost asked that when you remembered these new converts in your prayers, you would not forget one who had more need of prayer than they. But my courage failed; or perhaps, to speak more truly, *pride* restrained me.

After this meeting, by degrees, I relapsed into my old state. When I felt that "sin had dominion over me," and that I had no strength to resist temptation, and that prayer seemed to bring no relief, I concluded that I was indeed a cast-away, and there was no balm in Gilead for *me*, that whatever of happiness there was left in this life for me, I would enjoy to my heart's content; and then—O! that *then* would indeed terrify me,—but I felt there was no help.

Still I have never neglected the *form* of prayer, even while I trembled to think of what a *mockery* it was. And, though I have had no faith to expect the answers to my *own* prayers, I have never doubted the promises of the Bible: only I felt I had failed in some way (I could not guess how) to lay hold of them. I could not "curse God and die," but I "cursed the day I was born." But when I found another in the same miserable case, and when, in his agony, he suggested doubts more terrible than my own, I trembled lest I too should learn to share them. This was many months ago. I answered E. at once, carefully concealing the state of my own heart, and urging him, by all he held dear, to return to the feet of Jesus. Strange it was that what had not shocked me in myself, should have terrified me in another! However, I had no power to help him, or even to advise, and he and I have alike wandered ever farther and farther from the fold of God.

You say that perhaps God does not grant our requests because they might be an *injury* to us. Now *can* it ever be wrong for us to pray for the spiritual welfare of *another*? O! this prayer has risen *so* often, *so earnestly* from my heart, that for a while I could not but believe that a prayer-answering God

would grant my petition. The prayers I offered up for *myself* may have been not sufficiently *heart felt*, but there *have* been prayers in which all the passionate earnestness of my heart was concentrated. And yet they are still unanswered! Can you wonder that I have no *faith* to ask for *any* thing else?

I fear I cannot even *now* claim to be "panting after God"—I fear I am generally very much too indifferent. And yet if "I know where I might find Him, I would go even to His seat." Some things, too, still affect me with a great longing to be a true Christian. For instance, there are two passages in the Bible that I can never hear without a strange thrill. One which you spoke of—"Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." The other, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". Both I feel to be the language of my heart. I have always longed for that *purity of heart*, and felt that, even without the promise attached, those who possessed it were indeed "blessed." But this only fills me with a deeper consciousness of my unworthiness to approach a holy God.

I fear you have so often heard from others confessions similar to these, that you are almost weary of them; but the kind interest you expressed, and willingness to hear further on this subject, has emboldened me to write thus much.

You would hardly believe what an effort it has cost me so far to reveal the state of my feelings; for you cannot know how jealously I have guarded any expression of *any emotion whatever*. However, I will not retract now. A.

LETTER 4.

Oct 29th, 1861.

DEAR A.—Your last note increased, if possible, my interest in your state of mind, as you described it. You may wonder, then, why an answer has been so long delayed. It is simply because my engagements have been such, since the receipt of your note, as absolutely to prevent me from writing. It may be that this has been providential for us both. I hope it may

prove so, and that *God's* hand may be more clearly seen in all the ways by which you may be led.

For my own part I cannot but believe that you are now, and have for some time been passing through the discipline of God's hands—and my prayer always for you is that God will carry on the work He has begun, to the preparing you better for useful service in His cause in the future.

The difficulty I feel in writing to you is two-fold: on the one hand, I do not wish to "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" and on the other, I would not wish to excite within you any hopes that may prove the source of confusion, or which subsequent experience will prove to be groundless. What you have said in regard to E. N. in your note, only confirms my opinion, expressed in my last note to you, in regard to his case. I do not doubt that God will finally "make darkness light before him." I am not surprised at the *chilling, crushing* doubts he expresses. Thank God if you have thus far escaped them; and never consider that *all is lost*, if they should at any time overtake you. Such cases are more common than many suppose. I have myself been tossed on that dark, stormy sea—"and," like Paul, "when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on me, all hope that I should be saved was then taken away." May God spare you that bitter anguish! Though, we do not know *what is best*. His will be done.

I do not think it uncommon nor unaccountable that those who, having been converted, are accustomed to rely on their *feelings* for spiritual comfort, (young persons, especially), and who decide on their spiritual condition by their feelings, should, when these have lost some of their *freshness* doubt the reality of their piety and write "bitter things" against themselves.—And this is especially the case if there is the consciousness of neglect of plain duties. For then an accusing conscience drives away all comfortable feelings, and nothing is left to give hope; having before derived all comfort from feelings. This whole business of trusting to feelings has more of self-righteousness mingled with it than many suspect. And God often takes severe means to rid the soul of it. He leaves his people, "to prove all that is in their heart"—and that, when recovered, they may not only strengthen their brethren, but that they may remember and be confounded and never open their mouth any

more because of their shame, when He is pacified toward them for all that they have done. Luke 22: 31—32; Ezek. 16: 63; Deut. 8: 2. It is true that Christians should expect comfortable feelings—there is something wrong if they are long without them—but to make them the ground of our confidence, as to the reality and measure of our piety, is equally wrong. For not only do we, then, mingle self too much with Jesus' work, but our feelings are often despondent on bodily changes, health, &c.; and surely *that* is not a safe criterion of our state in God's sight, which an east wind or a tooth-ache may affect.

I mention these things, not to persuade you that your state of mind is attributable to any such causes, (for I am sure there are other and more serious ones; though these may have operated to some extent;) but that you may see one error, at least, that is not uncommon. I would like to know, sometime, more of the history of your early doubts. But that is not important now.

Let me say these things:

You have long time been in the frame of mind you describe—there has, therefore, something of a *habit* of doubt, gloom, despair been formed. This habit of mind is itself sinful: you have, of course, as you say, “wandered ever farther and farther from the fold of God.” The distance may be very great—God, alone, can tell how great.

Be profoundly convinced of the value of your soul. Remember that no work can be compared, in importance, with that of securing your everlasting salvation.

“Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how I may escape the death
That never, never dies!
How make mine own election sure;
And when I fail on earth, secure
A mansion in the skies.”

Be willing to know the *truth* as to your state in God's sight. *Be not afraid of it.* The sooner you know it the better—whatever it may be. And with the earnest self-examination you may institute, seek divine search also. “Search me O God,” &c. Ps. 139: 23—24. If you say that you have already instituted as strict and impartial a self-examination as you know how, and can arrive at no certain conclusion, or if the result

inclines you to the conviction that you are not a child of God, then I would say,—

Remember that Jesus is able and willing to save you, though you were the chief of sinners; and *thank him for showing his love to you in awaking you to a sense of your true condition.* And if indeed you find that you do not have any love for His name, His cause, His hope, His word; but on the contrary, care nothing about these things, then be in earnest in seeking His forgiving grace; never, under any circumstances, lose sight of the truth that He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come to God by Him, and that He will cast out none who come.

But, if you find that you can solemnly appeal to the omniscient God for the truth of your love to Him—if, notwithstanding all its imperfections, you can say, “*Thou knowest that I love thee,*” if filled with a sense of prevailing corruption, that which you long for more than any possession on earth besides, is a *pure heart*—if you do “hunger and thirst after righteousness” O! however far you may have wandered, however much backslidden, remember that Jesus says, “*Return unto me.*”—Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, “Take away all iniquity and receive me graciously; so will I render praise. Hos. 14:

“Just as I am, without one plea,” &c.

I would earnestly advise you to engage in some *work for Christ.* The S. School may need you—doubtless *you need it.* Do what you can for Him, at all events. You have abundant reason to consecrate every power to His service, in trying to benefit others—*though you yourself should perish.* I own that that is a sad conclusion; but it is a true one. And remember that Christ’s blood, His atonement, is the only ground of hope of salvation. And we “joy in God” when we “*receive the atonement.*” Rom. 5: 11 and 3: 20—26 and 5: 1.

I do not wonder that you “shrank from communion seasons with nervous dread”—and that while others hailed the protracted meeting with joy, you dreaded it. How could it be otherwise, with your state of mind? I was going to say, I wish you had told me your condition a year ago—but perhaps it is all best as it is. God help you now to get out of it as soon

as possible. Your case is far from being a hopeless one, but it ought to excite intense concern.

You ask, "Can it ever be wrong to pray for the spiritual welfare of another?" Certainly not; even as it can never be wrong to pray for our own spiritual welfare. Nay, we sin if we do not pray. But as God often, for wise purposes, delays answers to prayers for such blessings, or answers them in a way altogether unlooked for, so He may and often does, delay to grant our prayers for the spiritual welfare of others, or answers them in such a way that we can hardly persuade ourselves that He is answering them at all. See how Job judges, 9: 16—18. Is not that the feeling of every one of us? We call for the physician; and when he comes we cannot believe that it is he that has come, or we wish him away, because he gives us bitter medicine. "But this," you will say, "has been for so long a time, is it not time for Him to hear, if He intends to hear at all?" I do not know—you do not know. Perhaps He *does* hear; perhaps *is* answering, though you are ignorant of it. You remember Newton's hymn

"I asked the Lord that I might grow," &c.

That is the history of more than one case. See Isa. 42: 16.

Among other sins, be sure to confess that of unbelief. And "take heed, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." No possession is so sad as "an evil heart of unbelief."

I have a little book called "Grace magnified," which is an account given by a living minister of some of his deep spiritual troubles. If you would like to see it, I will send it to you.

May God bless you and be with you!

As ever, yours,

C.

LETTER 6.

Nov. 9th, 1861.

DEAR C.—I feel that I have much cause to thank God that I was led to apply to you, and to thank you for the interest you have manifested in my case. Nothing has given me more courage to continue to trouble you than what you tell me of having experienced these doubts yourself.

When I first wrote to you on this subject, it was with fear and trembling; for I dreaded lest you should crush out the little hope that remained, and condemn me for having *dared* so long to class myself with the people of God. Not that you had ever been otherwise than kind to me—kind as a *brother* could have been—but I thought your faith had never for one moment wavered, and that you would have little sympathy with one who had strayed so far; and I felt, too, that I did not deserve to be kindly dealt with. So it was more in desperation, than with any hope of help that I applied to you. I had struggled so long, alone, with my heavy burden, I felt as if it might be some relief to confess its existence; and perhaps, too, I thought this confession might be some atonement for the hypocrisy of which I had long, though unintentionally, been guilty. Now I feel that the hand of God was in it, as I have at last been led to feel that His mercy has directed every event of my life. I see now that, while I have been rebelling against Him and calling in question His loving-kindness, He has been directing all things for my best good. Now, it is with a feeling almost of *rest* that I acknowledge that I am entirely in His hands, and must be completely submissive to His will. And I have learned, too, to trust others for whom I have prayed entirely to His tender care. For this new feeling of trustfulness I must thank *you*, as having been the instrument of God in bringing it about.—Long before your note came I had experienced it—ever since two sermons you preached, about three or four Sabbaths ago, on “Jesus wept,” and “I will lead the blind,” &c. I never knew exactly how it came about, but from that time there stole into my heart a confidence in the goodness and mercy of God to which I had long been a stranger.

Still I fear I cannot answer, with entire satisfaction, the tests of a Christian, which you give me—“love for His name, His people, His cause, His word.” And here again I am puzzled

beyond measure at the state of my heart. I cannot help feeling that I love His name—it would grieve me greatly to think that I did not, and I feel as if in earnest I could exclaim “Thou knowest that I love thee.” Still He Himself hath said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” And this I feel I have not done. I am never conscious of performing a right action; for if the act itself is right, it is sure to be prompted by some wrong motive. To every temptation I yield readily; and moreover I have never done aught for the cause of Christ, and still feel utterly incapable of doing anything for Him. And so, as much as it pains me to think so, I must conclude that I do not love Him.

Again I am afraid I cannot say I love all Christians. When I already love a person, my love is much increased by the knowledge that the person is a Christian; but, at the same time, I must confess that I have an *antipathy* to many very good people. Often I cannot even give a reason for this.—Sometimes it arises from a species of *cant* to which they are given. From earliest childhood I have dreaded every manifestation of this kind; and this is still the case now, when I ought to be governed by very different principles.

Still more doubtfully must I answer when I come to speak of His *cause* and His *word*. I am afraid I do not love them as I ought. I do not enjoy the Bible as I have seen some Christians do. Many passages are very precious to me, but much of it I fear I do not appreciate nor understand; for now that the novelty has worn off, it *wearies* me like a “twice-told tale.” I know I ought to be ashamed of this confession, and I am sorry to make it, but it is nevertheless *true*. You tell me there is a remedy for all this—that Jesus is able and willing to save the chief of sinners. I *know* it—I could almost say I have felt it; but I am afraid I have no right to say so, after having acknowledged the failure of all these tests. Still, if I have not already gone to Him, I know not *how* to do it; for it does seem to me that I have believed in Him, and trusted only to Him for salvation. I long for a pure heart, and I cannot help feeling that I love Him!

I should be glad to see the book you speak of—“Grace Magnified”—and again I must thank you for your kind effort to help me. May God reward you as I never can.

Your friend,

A.

I had almost forgotten what you said about doing some work for Christ. I wish I knew what I *could* do. The S. School is now unfortunately out of the question. I never willingly gave it up, for I always enjoyed it, though I am afraid it was of more use to me than I was to my scholars.

This field of usefulness being removed, to what other can I look? I hope I am not ashamed of Jesus, but I never have been able to *spe ak* for Him. And thus I feel I am doing absolutely nothing for His cause.

LETTER 6.

Nov. 18th, 1861.

DEAR A.--Your letter, making me glad, came to me in M---n; but I was so busy while there, that I did not have time to reply. I may have as little reason to regret the delay in this instance as in the case of my last letter; for you must know that I have felt glad, since I received your last, that you were left for a time to be solely under God's tuition. He "teacheth to profit." I have all the time believed, that the hand of God could be clearly traced in this matter. I am glad that you have seen it. *To Him, the leader of the blind, be all the glory!*

And you thought that my faith "had never for one moment wavered." We little know what is going on in the hearts of those about us—we little know their struggles—we are often not aware of their being moved, even when agitated to their profoundest depths. Yes, I pray God to deliver others from the fearful darkness in which I have sometimes been enveloped—from the bitter, agonizing doubts, destroying all peace and happiness—unless it be that He intends, by such a training, to prepare them for helping some other fellow pilgrim out of the dark, deep sloughs which lie along life's pathway. And I doubt not that God intends that you shall be useful for Him in some such way; in a way, at least, for which your late experience will in some measure prepare you.

O when I look back at my past life, there are scenes in it of which even now it makes me *shudder* to think. Yet the Redeemer has been good and has, I think, by them brought me to trust more implicitly in *Him—in Him only*. I can despair of none, if I am saved; and I cannot but deal kindly with all, when I remember His great kindness and gentleness to me.

And now let me say that you seem to have made another mistake, very common—especially among those who make early profession of religion and who do not remember the true ground of acceptance before God, and the true source of holiness. I infer that you made the mistake, from what you say of your “never being conscious of performing a purely right action; for if the act itself is right, it is sure to be prompted by some wrong motive.” Do you think that is peculiar to yourself? Alas! there is not a day passes over my head, not a service I perform, but I am obliged to confess the sins of even my best deeds: and I shall expect it to be so, to a greater or less extent, until it please God to bring me to His sinless abode. “*A purely right action.*” I know I ought to perform none other, but I have never performed the first one that I know of. *A purely right prayer*—did you ever pray one? I never did, that I can remember. And it is the deep, penetrating conviction of this, that make the gospel so precious to me in revealing a perfect righteousness which may be mine, and an accepted and glorious Mediator between God and man, who presents all our sacrifices, purifying them from all their imperfections and adding the incense of His own most Holy will to our poor, worthless prayer. And thus they become acceptable in His hands and for His merits. Eph. 3: 20. Heb. 13: 15. 1 Pet. 2: 4—5. You will wait a long time, if you wait to do a purely right action in order to conclude that you are a child of God. Jesus is our righteousness—He is our *all*.—1 Cor. 1: 30—31. We are *accepted in the Beloved*. Eph. 1: 6. And I will tell you that you will continue to “yield readily to every temptation,” until you distinctly apprehend the true source of holiness. It is not in faithful resolutions. These may and will be made and broken a thousand times, to the mortification and discouragement of whoever makes them, until it is received that the way to be holy is *to realize the fact of your forgiveness*—the blessed declaration of God that, whatever may be your personal unworthiness and guilt, if you do but

put your trust in His Son—if you will rely on Him, *alone*, for salvation—you are forever free from the guilt of sin and can never come into condemnation.

You cannot deny that you love the Saviour:—your love may be weak and imperfect, but it is *real*. This you admit. You can not deny that you trust in Him for salvation, and that if He fail you, then all is gone. Then, to be holy, to be happy, to serve God, to do what He commands you, “Reckon you,” &c. Rom. 6: 1—14. You have for long years been trying to make yourself worthy of acceptance before God.—You have tried the working plan long enough—now try the believing plan. Rom. 4: 4—5.

You find that you “have an antipathy to many very good people.” This is not because they are good, I know; but because of their faults. If they were free from these, your antipathy would cease. What you have an antipathy to, therefore, is their ways more than themselves. Now I have no idea that we are expected to love all the ways of even very good people—so long as they are not altogether perfect. We ought to do the contrary, very often. If you do not distinguish between persons and their ways, I do not wonder that you have an antipathy to some very good persons, even: especially, if they are given to a species of cant—a thing from which I shrink with perfect abhorrence, wherever found. I know a number of persons whom I believe to be Christians; but very many of whose ways I never can, never wish to like. But I am sure I desire to love piety wherever found, though in the humblest and lowest person in the land, and to love him for his piety. And I try to love these persons in spite of their imperfections, remembering my own—to avoid their errors and copy their virtues. I believe you do too.

I am not at all surprised that you have not relished God’s word, and that it has wearied you “like a twice-told tale.” How could it be otherwise, so long as you had that slavish spirit towards God? Ah! A——, you have been working up hill—and yours has been, for the most part, a *tread-mill progress*. You took many steps but made no advance. May God sanctify your tedious journey to you, in making you willing to be wholly saved by Christ alone. The moments of rest you may have occasionally had, were given you because God has loved you all along, and they were in spite of your constant

distrust of Him. Like Noah's weary dove, you have sought rest—you have found nothing perfectly satisfying, nor can you, out of Christ. It is through God's tender mercy that you have not been permitted to rest on a false ground of hope, which should finally prove to you the source of confusion. Now, cease this restless pursuit—Jesus calls you to save you, *all by Himself*. It is time, now to rest.

“Behold the ark of God,
Behold the open door;
O haste to gain that dear abode,
And rove, and rove no more.

There safe thou shalt abide,
There sweet shall be thy rest;
And every longing satisfied,
With full salvation blest”

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled,”

I send you “Grace Magnified.” It will do you good to read it. I do not know what to tell you to do, in the way of active service for Christ. If you ask Him, He will show you what you ought to do.

As ever, yours,

C.

LETTER 7.

Dec. 12th, 1861.

DEAR C.—I thank you for your little book, and am very glad you lent it to me. After what I have told you, you will probably see that it reminded me very forcibly of my own late experience; though I have not the presumption to think it an entirely analogous case. I fear I never suffered as deeply as the author describes himself to have done—never felt such keen anguish on account of my sins—never struggled so earnestly for light—never so yearned for holiness; for my natural impatience made me cast the whole subject from me when it became

too painful to be endured. And though I often suffered terribly, yet this was never a very protracted struggle, for I was always too ready to give it up as hopeless. Still, you may imagine, I was never very happy, and in my gayest moments there was a secret bitterness in my heart that turned all my pleasure into gall. I can truly sympathize with the author when he says, "I cannot pray in what I consider prayer; I cannot repent in what I regard to be repentance; I cannot believe in the Scriptural sense of that term; I cannot love God with my whole heart, as He should be loved by a rational being: I cannot feel, nor do anything that a Christian ought to do, to glorify God." (P. 65.) When, at last, this great darkness was dispelled, I did not find myself in the ecstasy which he describes; but doubtless, inasmuch as my sorrow was less acute, my joy was also less exquisite. Still, there stole into my heart a great peace and content—a feeling of infinite rest—and I well remember the occasion. It was while I was listening to a sermon from the words, "I will bring the blind," &c. (Isa. 42: 16.) I felt, then, that I had been indeed blind, not before to behold and acknowledge my Saviour's wonderful mercy towards me. I felt all that day again like the author. I prayed God to take me away to Him, while my love was yet fresh and ardent; for I dreaded again to fall into a state of coldness and indifference. And again and again, the words of that beautiful hymn occurred to me,

"I am weary of straying—O, fain would I rest
In the far distant land of the pure and the blest;
I am weary, my Saviour, of grieving thy love;
O when shall I rest in thy presence above.

Since that time there have been many hours of doubt and darkness, many times when I have exclaimed, "after all, I am not a Christian," many errors and misapprehensions, (some of which you kindly corrected in your last letter;) but still, when I do apply the test and call upon the heart-searching God, I can still cry, sincerely I think, "Lord Thou knowest all things; Thou *knowest* that I love thee!" Too often I feel "my love is weak and faint;" still I cannot, I *dare* not, give up this hope, and I know and feel that my only safety is at His feet. I am ignorant and weak as a child—I cannot take one step without

His aid. When I tried it, I wandered so far away that the journey back has been long and painful. O pray for me, that now that I have found Him again, I may ever *cling close* to Him and never resign my hold on Him, for one moment.

Do you remember some verses you once repeated, when preaching in our church, commencing (I think) "Cling close to the Holy One?" If, some leisure time, you would copy them off for me, I would be very much obliged. The late sad events in our family have drawn me closer to the Saviour's feet. I have learned the meaning of the Saviour's exhortation to "become as little children;" and wonder no longer that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Such trust, such unquestioning faith in God as J—— exhibited will, I hope, always be a lesson to me. Then, besides, I learned what consolation the promises of the Bible can afford in such an hour.

One thing more: the words "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," have many times lately occurred to me, and I have been wondering whether I was really as willing to work for Christ as I said I was. I complained that I did not know what He would have me to do; and now I much fear that, if I knew, I would not be ready to do it. I don't know what it is—I hope not false shame, but something has held me back a thousand times when I might have *spoken* for Jesus. Twice I remember being appealed to for counsel and direction on this subject, and instead of saying "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," I actually waived the subject, and *refused to speak!* Would you, can you believe it? And though, in bitter repentance I have prayed for those persons ever since, how can I hope for an answer to my prayers—I, who "quenched the smoking flax?" One of them is far away on a distant battle field, and daily I fear to hear that he has been summoned into the presence of his Judge. Do you wonder that after this I dare not trust myself—dare not believe that I am willing to do aught to help the cause of Christ?

Another thing I would like to ask you: and that is, why, when my stated hours for prayer arrive, my mind wanders to other subjects, my heart becomes cold as a stone, my prayers are lifeless and heartless, and I offer only *lip service?* Now, when you tell me of Jesus' dying love, my heart glows within me; and at other times, during the week, when I remember Him, my prayers ascend continually, and His name is sweet to my ear;

but when I come to pray, I become dull and insensible. Surely, something is very wrong about it, and yet I vainly struggle—vainly pray that I may learn to pray aright. • Won't you pray for me that this may cease to be so?

Your friend,

A.

I have written to E., to-night, and have tried to help him; but am much afraid that I did not know how to go about it aright. At any rate, I can try to pray for him.

LETTER 8.

Dec. 17, 1861.

DEAR A.—With this this, I send you a copy of the lines you asked for in your note of the 12th.

I, too, read "Grace Magnified" with much of the interest that would attach to a record of my own experience; for I found many things in it to remind me forcibly of my own exercises of mind. But, like you, I may say that they did not result in such an *ecstasy* as the author describes—my sorrow for sin being less acute, my joy was also less thrilling.—"Great peace and content—a feeling of infinite rest"—would better have described my state of mind. It appeared to me as if Jesus had come to me and spoken as He did to His disciples in the storm in which He slept, and said, "Peace, be still!" and my agitated, unquiet heart had dissolved into blessed repose.

I do not wonder that you have since been troubled sometimes with darkness and difficulties. I do know that it is a very common thing in the experience of God's children in similar circumstances. The author of "Grace Magnified," you remember, notes the return of that horrid darkness, even after his deliverance. In his case, however, it was soon dis-

sipated by "looking to Jesus" as "ever living to make intercession for us." God "teacheth us to profit"—when He begins a work, He carries it on. We would often be content with the knowledge we have at first gained; but He would make us know more of His fullness—and, to do this, He often leads us into great straits, where is horrible darkness. "Thou shalt remember all the way," &c. Deut. 8: 2—5. Read that whole passage; indeed, the whole chapter is pertinent.

After God has brought "the blind by a way they knew not," He often leads them "in paths they have not known;" nothing like it was ever known in their experience before. But He never forsakes. We must follow Him *clinging to Jesus*; all will be right in the end. I know it requires great trust to be able to realize that we are in the "right way," at such times. But that is God's method of teaching us to trust. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Ps. 56: 3. I know that you are "weary of straying"—take heed that you be sure to *follow* WHEREVER Jesus leads. He never leads to sin; but He does, sometimes, to Gethsemane—to Pilate's hall (where we may be tempted to betray Him)—to *the cross*. See Mark 8: 34—36 and 10: 35—40..

"Jesus, I my cross have taken
All to leave, and follow thee."

You ask why it is that, when your "stated hours for prayer arrive, your mind is filled with other subjects, your heart becomes cold as stone, your prayers are lifeless and heartless, and you offer only lip-service." Perhaps I cannot tell you, altogether; I only know that to be a frequent experience of many of God's children. I know that it often seems as if, when I retire for prayer, it is the signal for all the vanities of the world to come crowding into my mind so as to choke all utterance, even of *heart words*, I have not. I know one who can correct these things. I read, "Likewise the Spirit also

helpeth (literally, *helpeth against*) our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." Rom. 8 : 26-28. One unuttered groan—unuttered, because unutterable—tells more to our Heavenly Father than many loud cries; even as the moan of a poor, sick child attracts the mother's attention more than the cries of a well one. "Can a mother forget?" See Isa. 49 : 15. I think there are a great many christians who suffer much and long, because they do not believe in the Holy Ghost. He fills Christ's place on earth—"another comforter." When we pray, we must pray in the Holy Ghost. Jude 20. Whatever comes, let us not cease to try to pray. The Lord can "hear the desire of the humble." Ps. 10 : 17 and 38 : 9.

And you think that I can never believe that you refused to speak for Christ; to one, too, who appealed to you for counsel. I know it was very wrong and deeply to be deplored, as you say you have deplored it—but why should I not believe it? Ah, A——, you are not the first nor only person that ever did that same thing! may the Lord not lay this sin to our charge!—a kind of denial of our Lord, worse, perhaps, than Peter's; for he denied in the midst of cruel and powerful foes—we, to those who "would see Jesus." May God forgive us! Why do you say, "though, in bitter repentance, I have prayed for those persons ever since, how can I hope for an answer to my prayers, I, who 'quenched the smoking flax'?" Why shut yourself up in sorrow, when God has forgiven your sin? why quench your own prayer by doubting the efficacy of Christ's prevailing blood and intercession? "Fear not, only believe." There is, in this, an indication of the same legal spirit that has already cost you so much grief. Let not this sorrow have the power to work death. It ought to work repentance. The "sorrow of the world" leads either to an utter disregard of our actions and their consequences, or to despair—dark and sullen,—and so

the end is death: "godly sorrow," on the other hand, leads to a viewing of our sin as God, as Jesus views it; but it also points to pardon and a new life of hopefulness. "These things I write unto you that ye sin not," &c. 1 John 2: 1.

I have no idea who the friend is, to whom you refer as being on a distant battle-field. Why may you not write to him and endeavour yet to direct his mind to the Redeemer? But, at all events, do not let the consciousness of past sin shut up your prayers, so long as there is a throne of grace to which you are invited to come boldly, and a Saviour upon it who ever liveth to make intercession for you.

You can never know whether you are really willing to work for Christ, by simply questioning your heart. Do something, do everything, for His sake—out of love to Him. Let daily, domestic duty be thus consecrated. It is not by doing this or that *particular thing*, that we serve Christ, so much as by doing *all in the name of Christ*. A cup of cold water is a trifle, in itself; a kind word, a gentle expression of sympathy; a diligent, devoted spirit may cost but little—but if the water is given in the name of Christ, out of love to Him; if the kind and gentle word of sympathy is so spoken that His blessing is asked upon it; if our diligence in daily toil be with a heart constantly trying to please the Lord Jesus, we are serving Him as really, perhaps as effectually, as if we were preaching Him among the heathen. I never forget you in prayer.

As ever,

C.

LETTER 9.

Jan. 1st, 1862.

DEAR G.—I thank you for the words of “Clinging to Jesus.” I trust I may so learn to cling to Him. One thing you say strikes me very much. It is with reference to believing in the Holy Ghost. I am afraid, when I think of it, that I do not; that is, that my ideas on this subject are so obscure that I hardly know what I believe. I never *questioned* anything that was taught me on this subject, but I simply passed it by, and in prayer have thought only of God the Father and God the Son. I trust God will enlighten me here.

With reference to my friend on a distant battle-field, I don't think I could ever approach him on this subject, unless he himself led in some way to it, for when he spoke to me I had some reason to fear that he wanted to “prove me with hard questions.” I may have wronged him; but I thought his was less a desire to be taught than a wish to draw me into an argument, in which he was pretty certain to be triumphant; for I could only *believe*, and could not explain my belief. I repeat, I may have done him injustice, and I have never failed to pray for him since he left, though I fear I have hardly expected an answer. With respect to my other friend, the case was different. He was indeed an earnest inquirer. Still, I never knew exactly how to reply to his questions, and so I remained silent. Afterwards, when he went away, and I never expected to see him again. I bitterly repented of the injury I had done him and tried to repair it by writing to him. This much I accomplished, he promised to read the Bible every day. Then I felt satisfied to leave him in the hands of God who alone is able to make us wise unto salvation. Still, I feel and have felt all along, that this does not absolve me from the guilt of having “denied the Lord.” But I do not now mourn hopelessly, when I remember “if any man sin we

have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous." Your friend, A.

P. S.—Since writing the foregoing, we have just heard that P—— is considered dying. I leave at once on this sad journey.

LETTER 10.

Jan. 8th, 1862.

DEAR A—I am indeed sorry for the circumstances that caused you to leave home, but hope you will find P—— better than you feared. As your movements are uncertain,—to us, at least—I do not know that this will reach you; but I thought I would make the experiment. Sad as such journey necessarily is, you must know that the thoughts and prayers of some are following you; committing you all to the care of Him that keepeth Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps. He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will;” and “we know that all things work together *for good* to them that love God.”—Think not that God intends evil by causing your family so often lately to pass under the rod, and making dark, heavy clouds gather above you. Try, cheerfully, to wait on Him, and all will be well. He will give honey in the wilderness and springs in the desert; the pillar of fire and of cloud will not be taken away, nor the manna for daily need be removed, till you have passed the narrow stream that separates from the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Never fear, therefore; never lose courage nor hope.

As to those friends before whom you feel that you have denied your Lord, it seems to me that if, indeed, on- of

them intended simply to prove you with hard questions, silence was the best answer that could have been given. To have said anything would have been to "cast pearls before swine." There is a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak. As to the other--as to both indeed--consider what the Lord Jesus says--He who knows what reception prayers meet with on high--"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11: 24. To expect nothing, is to take away the life of prayer.

May you yet experience "the power of the Holy Ghost;" and may God direct you into the knowledge of Him and enlighten you more and more!

As ever, yours,

C.

I WILL COME TO JESUS.

Just as I am, without one plea
 But that thy blood was shed for me,
 And that thou bidst me come to thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
 To rid my soul of one dark blot—
 To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
 O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind—
 Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
 Yes, all I need, in thee to find,
 O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—though tossed about
 With many a conflict, many a doubt,
 Fightings within and fears without,
 O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
 Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
 Because thy promise I believe:
 O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am: thy love unknown
 Has broken every barrier down;
 Now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
 O Lamb of God, I come!



6

