

HOLINESS.

ITS NATURE, HINDRANCES, DIFFICULTIES, AND ROOTS.

BEING

A SERIES OF PAPERS ON THE SUBJECT.

BY

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PREFACE TO ENLARGED EDITION.

THE volume now in the reader's hands is an enlarged edition of a small work which appeared several years ago, and has been kindly received by the Christian public. The present volume contains so much additional matter, that it is double the size of its predecessor. In fact, the work is half new.

I venture to think that the papers contained in this volume will be found helpful by all who take interest in the subject of Scriptural holiness. I am much mistaken if they do not throw broad light on the real nature of holiness, and the temptations and difficulties which all must expect who follow it. Above all, I hope they will help to bring forward the grand truth that union with Christ is the root of holiness, and will show young believers what immense encouragement Jesus Christ holds out to all who strive to be holy.

Concerning the present position of the whole subject of holiness among English Christians, I have little to add to the introductory essay which appeared in the original edition, and now follows this preface. The older I grow the more I am convinced that real practical holiness does not receive the attention it deserves, and that there is a most painfully low standard of living among many high professors of religion in the land. But, at the same time, I am increasingly convinced that the zealous efforts of some well-meaning persons to promote a higher standard of spiritual life are often not "according to knowledge," and are really calculated to do more harm than good. Let me explain what I mean.

It is easy to get crowds together for what are called "Higher life" and "Consecration" meetings. Any one knows that, who has watched human nature, and read descriptions of American camp-meetings, and studied the curious phenomena of the "Religious affections."* Sensational and exciting addresses by strange preachers or by women, loud singing, hot rooms, crowded tents, the constant sight of strong semi-religious feeling in the faces of all around you for several days, late hours, long protracted meetings, public profession of experience,—all this kind of thing is very interesting at the time, and seems to do good. But is the good real, deeply-rooted, solid, lasting? That is the point And I should like to ask a few questions about it

Do those who attend these meetings become more holy, meek, unselfish, kind, good tempered, self-denying, and Christ-like at home? Do they become more content with their position in life, and more free from restless craving after something different from that which God has given them? Do fathers, mothers, husbands, and other relatives and friends, find them more pleasant and easy to live with? Can they enjoy a quiet Sunday and quiet means of grace without noise, heat, and excitement? Above all, do they grow in charity, and especially in charity towards those who do not agree with them in every jot and tittle of their religion?

These are serious and searching questions, and deserve serious consideration. I hope I am as anxious to promote real practical holiness in the land as any one. I admire and willingly acknowledge the zeal and earnestness of many with whom I cannot co-operate who are trying to promote it. But I cannot withhold a growing suspicion that the great "mass-meetings" of the present day, for the ostensible object

* See the work of President Edwards on this subject.

of promoting spiritual life, do not tend to promote private home religion, private Bible-reading, private prayer, private usefulness, and private walking with God. If they are of any real value, they ought to make people better husbands, and wives, and fathers, and mothers, and sons, and daughters, and brothers, and sisters, and masters, and mistresses, and servants. But I should like to have clear proofs that they do. I only know it is far easier to be a Christian among singing, praying, sympathizing Christians in a public room, than to be a consistent Christian in a quiet, retired, out-of-the-way, uncongenial home. The first position is one in which there is a deal of *nature* to help us: the second is one which can not be well filled without *grace*. But, alas, many talk now-a-days about "*Consecration*," who seem to be ignorant of the "first principles of the oracles of God" about "*Conversion*."

I close this preface with the sorrowful feeling that probably some who read it will not agree with me. To the young especially I can see that the great gatherings of the so-called "spiritual life" movement are sure to be attractive. They naturally like zeal, and stir, and enthusiasm, and they say, "Where is the harm?" Be it so: we must agree to differ. When I was as young as they are, perhaps I should have thought as they do. When they are as old as I am, they will very likely agree with me.

To each and all of my readers, I say in conclusion, let us exercise charity in our judgments of one another. Towards those who think holiness is to be promoted by the modern, so-called "spiritual life" movement, I feel nothing but charity. If they do good, I am thankful. Towards myself and those who agree with me, I ask them to feel charity in return. The last day will show who is right and who is wrong. In the meantime, I am quite certain that to exhibit bitterness and coldness toward those who cannot conscientiously work with us, is to prove ourselves very ignorant of real holiness.

J. C. RYLE.

XVIII.

“UNSEARCHABLE RICHES.”*

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”—EPHESIANS iii. 8.

IF we heard that sentence read for the first time, I think we should all feel it was a very remarkable one, even though we did not know by whom it was written. It is remarkable on account of the bold and striking figures of speech which it contains. “Less than the least of all saints;”—“Unsearchable riches of Christ;”—these are indeed “thoughts that breathe and words that burn.”

But the sentence is doubly remarkable when we consider the man who wrote it. The writer was none other than the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul—the leader of that noble little Jewish army which went forth from Palestine nineteen centuries ago, and turned the world upside down—that good soldier of Christ who left a deeper mark on mankind than any born of woman, except his sinless Master—a mark which abides to this very day. Surely such a sentence from the pen of such a man demands peculiar attention.

Let us fix our eyes steadily on this text, and notice in it three things:—

I. First, *what St. Paul says of himself*. He says, “I am less than the least of all saints.”

II. Secondly, *what St. Paul says of his ministerial office*. He says, “Grace is given unto me to preach.”

III. Thirdly, *what St. Paul says of the great subject of his preaching*. He calls it “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

I trust that a few words on each of these three points may help to fasten down the whole text in memories, consciences, hearts, and minds.

I. In the first place, let us notice *what St. Paul says of himself*.

The language he uses is singularly strong. The founder of famous Churches, the writer of fourteen inspired epistles, the man who was “not behind the very chiefest apostles,” “in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft,”—the man who “spent and was spent” for souls, and “counted all things but loss for Christ,”—the man who could truly say, “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,”—what do we find him saying of himself? He employs an emphatic comparative and

* This paper contains the substance of a sermon preached at St. James, Piccadilly, London, and Winchester Cathedral, in May, 1879.

superlative. He says, "I am less than the least of all saints." What a poor creature is the least saint! Yet St. Paul says, "I am less than that man."

Such language as this, I suspect, is almost unintelligible to many who profess and call themselves Christians. Ignorant alike of the Bible and their own hearts, they cannot understand what a saint means when he speaks so humbly of himself and his attainments. "It is a mere fashion of speaking," they will tell you; "it can only mean what St. Paul used to be, when he was a novice, and first began to serve Christ." So true it is that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) The prayers, the praises, the conflicts, the fears, the hopes, the joys, the sorrows of the true Christian, the whole experience of the seventh of Romans—all, all are "foolishness" to the man of the world. Just as the blind man is no judge of a Reynolds, or a Gainsborough, and the deaf cannot appreciate Handel's Messiah, so the unconverted man cannot fully understand an apostle's lowly estimate of himself.

But we may rest assured that what St. Paul *wrote* with his pen, he really *felt* in his heart. The language of our text does not stand alone, it is even exceeded in other places. To the Philippians he says, "I have not attained, nor am I already perfect: I follow after." To the Corinthians he says, "I am the least of the apostles, which am not meet to be called an apostle." To Timothy he says, "I am chief of sinners." To the Romans he cries, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Phil. iii. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 9; 1 Tim. i. 15; Rom. vii. 24.) The plain truth is that St. Paul saw in his own heart of hearts far more defects and infirmities than he saw in anyone else. The eyes of his understanding were so fully opened by the Holy Spirit of God that he detected a hundred things wrong in himself which the dull eyes of other men never observed at all. In short, possessing great spiritual light, he had great insight into his own natural corruption, and was clothed from head to foot with humility. (1 Peter v. 5.)

Now let us clearly understand that humility like St. Paul's was not a peculiar characteristic of the great apostle of the Gentiles. On the contrary, it is one leading mark of all the most eminent saints of God in every age. The more real grace men have in their hearts, the deeper is their sense of sin. The more light the Holy Ghost pours into their souls, the more do they discern their own infirmities, defilements, and darkness. The dead soul feels and sees nothing; with life comes clear vision, a tender conscience and spiritual sensibility. Observe what lowly expressions Abraham, and Jacob, and Job, and David, and John the Baptist, used about themselves. Study the biographies of modern saints like Bradford, and Hooker, and George Herbert, and Beveridge, and Baxter, and McCheyne. Mark how one common feature of character belongs to them all—a very deep sense of sin.

Superficial and shallow professors in the warmth of their first love may talk, if they will, of *perfection*. The great saints, in every era of Church

history, from St. Paul down to this day, have always been “clothed with humility.”

He that desires to be saved, among the readers of this paper, let him know this day that the first steps towards heaven are a deep sense of sin and a lowly estimate of ourselves. Let him cast away that weak and silly tradition that the beginning of religion is to feel ourselves “*good*.” Let him rather grasp that grand Scriptural principle, that we must begin by feeling “*bad*”; and that until we really feel “*bad*” we know nothing of true goodness or saving Christianity. Happy is he who has learned to draw near to God with the prayer of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke xviii. 13.)

Let us all *seek humility*. No grace suits man so well. What are we that we should be proud? Of all creatures born into the world, none is so dependent as the child of Adam. *Physically* looked at, what body requires such care and attention, and is such a daily debtor to half creation for food and clothing, as the body of man? *Mentally* looked at, how little do the wisest men know (and they are but few), and how ignorant the vast majority of mankind are, and what misery do they create by their own folly! “We are but of yesterday,” says the book of Job, “and know nothing.” (Job viii. 9.) Surely there is no created being on earth or in heaven that ought to be so humble as man.

Let us *seek humility*. There is no grace which so befits an English churchman. Our matchless Prayer-book, from first to last, puts the humblest language into the mouths of all who use it. The sentences at the beginning of morning and evening prayer, the General Confession, the Litany, the Communion Service—all, all are replete with lowly-minded and self-abasing expressions. All, with one harmonious voice, supply Church of England worshippers with clear teaching about our right position in the sight of God.

Let us all *seek more humility*, if we know anything of it now. The more we have of it, the more Christlike we shall be. It is written of our blessed Master (though in Him there was no sin) that “being in the form of God He thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. ii. 6-8.) And let us remember the words which precede that passage “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Depend on it, the nearer men draw to heaven, the more humble do they become. In the hour of death, with one foot in the grave, with something of the light of heaven shining down upon them, hundreds of great saints and Church dignitaries—such men as Selden, Bishop Butler, Archbishop Longley—have left on record their confession, that never till that hour did they see their sins so clearly and feel so deeply their debt to mercy and grace. Heaven alone, I suppose, will fully teach us how humble we ought to be. Then only, when we stand within the veil, and look back on all the way of life by which we were led, then only shall we

completely understand the need and beauty of humility. Strong language like St. Paul's will not appear to us too strong in that day. No: indeed! We shall cast our crowns before the throne, and realize what a great divine meant when he said, "The anthem in heaven will be, What hath God wrought."

II. In the second place, let us notice *what St. Paul says of his ministerial office.*

There is a grand simplicity in the Apostle's words about this subject. He says, "Grace is given unto me that I should preach." The meaning of the sentence is plain: "To me is granted the privilege of being a messenger of good news. I have been commissioned to be a herald of glad tidings."—Of course we cannot doubt that St. Paul's conception of the minister's office included the administration of the sacraments, and the doing all other things needful for the edifying of the body of Christ. But here, as in other places, it is evident that the leading idea continually before his mind was that the chief business of a minister of the New Testament is to be a preacher, an evangelist, God's ambassador, God's messenger, and the proclaimer of God's good news to a fallen world. He says in another place, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." (1 Cor. i. 17.)

I fail to see that St. Paul ever supports the favourite theory that there was intended to be a *sacerdotal* ministry, a *sacrificing priesthood* in the Church of Christ. There is not a word in the Acts or in his Epistles to the Churches to warrant such a notion. It is nowhere written, "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, then *priests*." (1 Cor. xii. 28.) There is a conspicuous absence of the theory in the Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus, where, if anywhere, we might have expected to find it. On the contrary, in these very Epistles, we read such expressions as these, "God hath manifested His Word through preaching," "I am appointed a preacher." "I am ordained a preacher." "That by me the preaching might be fully known." (1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 17; Tit. i. 3.) And, to crown all, one of his last injunctions to his friend Timothy, when he leaves him in charge of an organized Church, is this pithy sentence, "Preach the Word." (2 Tim. iv. 2.) In short, I believe St. Paul would have us understand that, however various the works for which the Christian minister is set apart, his first, foremost, and principal work is to be the preacher and proclaimer of God's Word.

But, while we refuse to allow that a sacrificing priesthood has any warrant of Scripture, let us beware in these days that we do not rush into the extreme of undervaluing the office which the minister of Christ holds. There is some danger in this direction. Let us grasp firmly certain fixed principles about the Christian ministry, and, however strong our dislike of priesthood and aversion to Romanism, let nothing tempt us to let these principles slip out of our hands. Surely there is solid middle ground between a grovelling idolatry of sacerdotalism on one hand, and a disorderly anarchy on the other.

Surely it does not follow, because we will not be Papists *in this matter* of the ministry, that we must needs be Quakers or Plymouth Brethren.* This, at any rate, was not in the mind of St. Paul.

(a) For one thing, let us settle it firmly in our minds that the ministerial office is a *Scriptural Institution*. I need not weary you with quotations to prove this point. I will simply advise you to read the Epistles to Timothy and Titus and judge for yourselves. If these Epistles do not authorize a ministry, there is, to my mind, no meaning in words. Take a jury of the first twelve intelligent, honest, disinterested, unprejudiced men you can find, and set them down with a New Testament to examine this question by themselves: "Is the Christian ministry a Scriptural thing or not?" I have no doubt what their verdict would be.

(b) For another thing, let us settle it in our minds that the ministerial office is *a most wise and useful provision of God*. It secures the regular maintenance of all Christ's ordinances and means of grace. It provides an undying machinery for promoting the awakening of sinners and the edification of saints. All experience proves that everybody's business soon becomes nobody's business; and if this is true in other matters, it is no less true in the matter of religion. Our God is a God of order, and a God who works by means, and we have no right to expect His cause to be kept up by constant miraculous interpositions, while His servants stand idle. For the uninterrupted preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, no better plan can be devised than the appointment of a regular order of men who shall give themselves wholly to Christ's business.

(c) For another thing, let us settle it firmly in our minds that the ministerial office is an *honourable privilege*. It is an honour to be the Ambassador of a King: the very PERSON of such an officer of state is respected, and called legally sacred. It is an honour to bear the tidings of a victory such as Trafalgar and Waterloo: before the invention of telegraphs it was a highly coveted distinction. But how much greater honour is it to be the ambassador of the King of kings, and to proclaim the good news of the conquest achieved on Calvary! To serve directly such a Master, to carry such a message, to know that the results of our work, if God shall bless it, are eternal, this is indeed a privilege. Other labourers may work for a corruptible crown, but the minister of Christ for an incorruptible. Never is a land in worse condition than when the ministers of religion have caused their office to be ridiculed and despised. It is a tremendous word in Malachi: "I have made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways." (Malachi ii. 9.) But, whether men will hear or forbear, the office of a faithful ambassador is honourable. It was a fine saying of an old missionary on his death-bed,

* Every well-informed person knows that, to the apprehension of most people, the Quakers and Plymouth Brethren appear to ignore the ministerial office altogether.

who died at the age of ninety-six, “The very best thing that a man can do is to preach the Gospel.”

Let me leave this branch of my subject with an earnest request that all who pray will never forget to make supplications and prayers and intercession for the ministers of Christ—that there never may be wanting a due supply of them at home and in the mission field— that they may be kept sound in the faith and holy in their lives, and that they make take heed to *themselves* as well as to the *doctrine*. (1 Tim. iv. 16.)

Oh, remember that while our office is honourable, useful, and Scriptural, it is also one of deep and painful responsibility! We watch for souls “as those who must give account” at the judgment day. (Heb. xiii. 17.) If souls are lost through unfaithfulness, their blood will be required at our hands. If we had only to read services and administer sacraments, to wear a peculiar dress and go through a round of ceremonies, and bodily exercises, and gestures, and postures, our position would be comparatively light. But this is not all. We have got to deliver our Master’s message—to keep back nothing that is profitable—to declare all the counsel of God. If we tell our congregations *less* than the truth or *more* than the truth, we may ruin for ever immortal souls. Life and death are in the power of the preacher’s tongue. “Woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel!” (1 Cor. ix. 16.)

Once more I say, Pray for us. Who is sufficient for these things? Remember the old saying of the Fathers: “None are in more spiritual danger than ministers.” It is easy to criticise and find fault with us. We have a treasure in earthen vessels. We are men of like passions with yourselves, and not infallible. Pray for us in these trying, tempting, controversial days, that our Church may never lack bishops, priests, and deacons who are sound in the faith, bold as lions, “wise as serpents, and yet harmless as doves.” (Matt, x. 16.) The very man who said “Grace is given me to preach,” is the same man who said, in another place, “Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.” (2 Thess. iii. 1, 2.)

III. Let us now notice, in the last place, *what St. Paul says of the great subject of his preaching*. He calls it “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

That the converted man of Tarsus should preach “*Christ*” is no more than we might expect from his antecedents. Having found peace through the blood of the cross himself, we may be sure he would always tell the story of the cross to others. He never wasted precious time in exalting a mere rootless morality, in descanting on vague abstractions and empty platitudes—such as “the true,” and “the noble,” and “the earnest,” and “the beautiful,” and “the germs of goodness in human nature,” and the like. He always went to the root of the matter, and showed men their great family disease, their desperate state as sinners, and the Great Physician needed by a sin-sick world.

That he should preach Christ among “*the Gentiles*” again, is in keeping with all we know of his line of action in all places and among all people. Wherever he travelled and stood up to preach—at Antioch, at Lystra, at Philippi, at Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus, among Greeks or Romans, among learned or unlearned, among Stoics and Epicureans, before rich or poor, barbarians, Scythians, bond, or free—Jesus and His vicarious death, Jesus and His resurrection, was the keynote of his sermons. Varying his mode of address according to his audience, as he wisely did, the pith and heart of his preaching was Christ crucified

But in the text before us, you will observe, he uses a very peculiar expression, an expression which unquestionably stands alone in his writings—“*the unsearchable riches of Christ.*” It is the strong, burning language of one who always remembered his debt to Christ’s mercy and grace, and loved to show how intensely he felt it by his words. St. Paul was not a man to act or speak by halves. (*Quicquid fecit valde fecit.*) He never forgot the road to Damascus, the house of Judas in the street called Strait, the visit of good Ananias, the scales falling from his eyes, and his own marvellous passage from death to life. These things are always fresh and green before his mind; and so he is not content to say, “Grace is given me to preach Christ.” No: he amplifies his subject. He calls it “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

But what did the Apostle mean when he spoke of “unsearchable riches”? This is a hard question to answer. No doubt he saw in Christ such a boundless provision for all the wants of man’s soul that he knew no other phrase to convey his meaning. From whatever standpoint he beheld Jesus, he saw in Him far more than mind could conceive, or tongue could tell. What he precisely intended must necessarily be matter of conjecture. But it may be useful to set down in detail some of the things which most probably were in his mind. It *may*, it *must*, it *ought* to be useful. For after all, let us remember, these “*riches of Christ*” are riches which you and I need in England just as much as St. Paul; and, best of all, these “*riches*” are treasured up in Christ for you and me as much as they were 1800 years ago. They are still there. They are still offered freely to all who are willing to have them. They are still the property of everyone who repents and believes. Let us glance briefly at some of them.

(a) Set down, first and foremost, in your minds that there are unsearchable riches in *Christ’s person*. That miraculous union of perfect Man and perfect God in our Lord Jesus Christ is a great mystery, no doubt, which we have no line to fathom. It is a high thing; and we cannot attain to it. But, mysterious as that union may be, it is a mine of comfort and consolation to all who can rightly regard it. Infinite power and infinite sympathy are met together and combined in our Saviour. If He had been only *Man* He could not have saved us. If He had been only *God* (I speak with reverence) He could not have been “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” nor

“suffered Himself being tempted.” (Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15.) As God, He is mighty to save; and as Man, He is exactly suited to be our Head, Representative, and Friend. Let those who never think deeply, taunt us, if they will, with squabbling about creeds and dogmatic theology. But let thoughtful Christians never be ashamed to believe and hold fast the neglected doctrine of the Incarnation, and the union of two natures in our Saviour. It is a rich and precious truth that our Lord Jesus Christ is both “God and Man.”

(b) Set down, next, in your minds that there are unsearchable riches in the *work which Christ accomplished for us*, when He lived on earth, died, and rose again. Truly and indeed, “He finished the work which His Father gave Him to do” (John xvii. 4)—the work of *atonement* for sin, the work of *reconciliation*, the work of *redemption*, the work of *satisfaction*, the work of *substitution* as “the just for the unjust.” It pleases some men, I know, to call these short phrases “man-made theological terms, human dogmas,” and the like. But they will find it hard to prove that each of these much-abused phrases does not honestly contain the substance of plain texts of Scripture; which, for convenience sake, like the word Trinity, divines have packed into a single word. And each phrase is very rich.

(c) Set down, next, in your minds that there are unsearchable riches in the *offices which Christ at this moment fills*, as He lives for us at the right hand of God. He is at once our Mediator, our Advocate, our Priest, our Intercessor, our Shepherd, our Bishop, our Physician, our Captain, our King, our Master, our Head, our Forerunner, our Elder Brother, the Bridegroom of our souls. No doubt these offices are worthless to those who know nothing of vital religion. But to those who live the life of faith, and seek first the kingdom of God, each office is precious as gold.

(d) Set down, next, in your minds that there are unsearchable riches in the *names and titles which are applied to Christ* in the Scriptures. Their number is very great, every careful Bible-reader knows, and I cannot of course pretend to do more than select a few of them. Think for a moment of such titles as the Lamb of God—the bread of life—the fountain of living waters—the light of the world—the door—the way—the vine—the rock—the cornerstone—the Christian’s robe—the Christian’s altar. Think of all these names, I say, and consider how much they contain. To the careless, worldly man they are mere “words,” and nothing more; but to the true Christian each title, if beaten out and developed, will be found to have within its bosom a wealth of blessed truth.

(e) Set down, lastly, in your minds that there are unsearchable riches in the *characteristic qualities, attributes, dispositions, and intentions of Christ’s mind towards man*, as we find them revealed in the New Testament. In Him there are riches of mercy, love, and compassion for sinners—riches of power to cleanse, pardon, forgive, and to save to the uttermost—riches of willingness to receive all who come to Him repenting and believing—riches

of ability to change by His Spirit the hardest hearts and worst characters—riches of tender patience to bear with the weakest believer—riches of strength to help His people to the end, notwithstanding every foe without and within—riches of sympathy for all who are cast down and bring their troubles to Him—and last, but not least, riches of glory to reward, when He comes again to raise the dead and gather His people to be with Him in His kingdom. Who can estimate these riches? The children of this world may regard them with indifference, or turn away from them with disdain; but those who feel the value of their souls know better. They will say with one voice, “There are no riches like those which are laid up in Christ for His people.”

For, best of all, these riches are *unsearchable*. They are a mine which, however long it may be worked, is never exhausted. They are a fountain which, however many draw its waters, never runs dry. The sun in heaven has been shining for thousands of years, and giving light, and life, and warmth, and fertility to the whole surface of the globe. There is not a tree or a flower in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America which is not a debtor to the sun. And still the sun shines on for generation after generation, and season after season, rising and setting with unbroken regularity, giving to all, taking from none, and to all ordinary eyes the same in light and heat that it was in the day of creation, the great common benefactor of mankind. Just so it is, if any illustration can approach the reality, just so it is with Christ. He is still “the Sun of righteousness” to all mankind. (Malachi iv. 2.) Millions have drawn from Him in days gone by, and looking to Him have lived with comfort, and with comfort died. Myriads at this moment are drawing from Him daily supplies of mercy, grace, peace, strength, and help, and find “all fulness” dwelling in Him. And yet the half of the riches laid up in Him for mankind, I doubt not, is utterly unknown! Surely the Apostle might well use that phrase, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Let me now conclude this paper with three words of practical application. For convenience sake I shall put them in the form of questions, and I invite each reader of this volume to examine them quietly and try to give them an answer.

(1) First, then, let me ask you *what you think of yourself?* What St. Paul thought of himself you have seen and heard. Now, what are your thoughts about yourself? Have you found out that grand foundation-truth that you are a sinner, a guilty sinner in the sight of God?

The cry for more education in this day is loud and incessant. Ignorance is universally deplored. But, you may depend, there is no ignorance so common and so mischievous as ignorance of ourselves. Yes: men may know all arts, and sciences, and languages, and political economy, and state-craft, and yet be miserably ignorant of their own hearts and their own state before God.

Be very sure that self-knowledge is the first step towards heaven. To know God's unspeakable perfection, and our own immense imperfection—to see our own unspeakable defectiveness and corruption, is the A B C in saving religion. The more real inward light we have, the more humble and lowly-minded we shall be, and the more we shall understand the value of that despised thing, the Gospel of Christ. He that thinks worst of himself and his own doings is perhaps the best Christian before God. Well would it be for many if they would pray, night and day, this simple prayer —“Lord, show me myself.”

(2) Secondly, *what do you think of the ministers of Christ?* Strange as that question may seem, I verily believe that the kind of answer a man would give to it, if he speaks honestly, is very often a fair test of the state of his heart.

Observe, I am not asking what you think of an idle, worldly, inconsistent clergyman—a sleeping watchman and faithless shepherd. No! I ask what you think of the faithful minister of Christ, who honestly exposes sin, and pricks your conscience. Mind how you answer that question. Too many, nowadays, like only those ministers who prophesy smooth things and let their sins alone, who flatter their pride and amuse their intellectual taste, but who never sound an alarm, and never tell them of a wrath to come. When Ahab saw Elijah, he said, “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” (I Kings xxi. 20.) When Micaiah was named to Ahab, he cried, “I hate him because he doth not prophesy good of me, but evil.” (I Kings xxii. 8.) Alas, there are many like Ahab in the nineteenth century! They like a ministry which does not make them uncomfortable, and send them home ill at ease. How is it with you? Oh, believe me, he is the best friend who tells you the most truth! It is an evil sign in the Church when Christ's witnesses are silenced, or persecuted, and men hate him who reproveth. (Isaiah xxix. 21.) It was a solemn saying of the prophet to Amaziah: “Now I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou has done this, and not hearkened to my counsel.” (2 Chron. xxv. 16.)

(3) Last of all, *what do you think of Christ Himself?* Is He great or little in your eyes? Does He come first or second in your estimation? Is He before or behind His Church, His ministers, His sacraments, His ordinances? Where is He in your heart and your mind's eye?

After all, this is the question of questions! Pardon, peace, rest of conscience, hope in death, heaven itself—all hinge upon our answer. To know Christ is life eternal. To be without Christ is to be without God. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John v. 12.) The friends of purely secular education, the enthusiastic advocates of reform and progress, the worshippers of reason, and intellect, and mind, and science, may say what they please, and do all they can to mend the world. But they will find their labour in vain if they do not make allowance for the fall of man, if there is no place for Christ in their schemes. There is a sore

disease at the heart of mankind, which will baffle all their efforts, and defeat all their plans, and that disease is sin. Oh, that people would only see and recognize the corruption of human nature, and the uselessness of all efforts to improve man which are not based on the remedial system of the Gospel! Yes: the plague of sin is in the world, and no waters will ever heal that plague except those which flow from the fountain for all sin—a crucified Christ.

But, to wind up all, where is boasting? As a great divine said on his death-bed, “We are all of us only half awake.” The best Christian among us knows but little of his glorious Saviour, even after he had learned to believe. We see through a glass darkly. We do not realize the “unsearchable riches” there are in Him. When we wake up after His likeness in another world, we shall be amazed that we knew Him so imperfectly, and loved Him so little. Let us seek to know Him better now, and live in closer communion with Him. So living, we shall feel no need of human priests and earthly confessionals. We shall feel “I have all and abound: I want nothing more. Christ dying for me on the cross—Christ ever interceding for me at God’s right hand—Christ dwelling in my heart by faith—Christ soon coming again to gather me and all His people together to part no more, Christ is enough for me. Having Christ, I have ‘unsearchable riches.’”

“The good I have is from His stores supplied,
The ill is only what He deems the best;
He for my Friend, I’m rich with nought beside,
And poor without Him, though of all possess’d:
Changes may come, I take or I resign,
Content while I am His, and He is mine.

“While here, alas! I know but half His love,
But half discern Him, and but half adore;
But when I meet Him in the realms above,
I hope to love Him better, praise Him more,
And feel, and tell, amid the choir divine,
How fully I am His, and He is mine.”