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# Letters to Dr. Alderson: The Original and History of the Celebrated Tract on Redemption, Now First Printed from the Autograph Letters

Joseph John Gurney

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LETTERS ON REDEMPTION

J. J. GURNEY.

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283.6  
G-962

A. W. Townsend, a legacy  
of love from his office. Union

R. T. Updegraff,

# LETTERS TO DR. ALDERSON.

BY

JOSEPH JOHN GURNEY.

The Original and History of the Celebrated Tract on

REDEMPTION.

NOW FIRST PRINTED FROM THE AUTOGRAPH LETTERS.

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Compiled by WM. J. ALLINSON.

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PREFACE. G96e

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THE following letters, having been by permission contributed to a religious periodical, have caused such interest as to warrant an edition in the present form. It would be difficult to find in the range of Christian literature a more simple, lucid and convincing presentation of the glorious theme, "which," says Peter, "even the angels desire to look into."

In making public the original letters, it is not designed to supersede the popular tract on Redemption, which, having been prepared from them with some addition and considerable abridgment, has a wide and continuous circulation, both in Great Britain and in this country.

The writer is well known, not merely as an eminent and exemplary member of the religious

Society of Friends, but as one of the most prominent Christian ministers, writers and philanthropists of the present century. He was a "man greatly beloved," though not exempt from the lot predicted by Paul for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus." In him were beautifully illustrated the words of John: "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they were wrought in God." He was pre-eminently a man "full of faith and of good works." His memory is fragrant and blessed; and will be increasingly so, as, year after year, fresh evidences are brought into notice of the efficiency and fidelity with which he served the Lord Christ.

W. J. A.

# LETTERS

## ON

### REDEMPTION,

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A little book entitled, "A letter to a friend on the authority, purpose and effects of Christianity, and especially, on the doctrine of REDEMPTION," having been published in various forms, both in England and America, and hundreds of thousands of copies circulated, may fairly be considered as holding an established place in Christian literature. It is not generally known, however, that the tract is only a condensation from a series of letters written by our beloved friend, the late Joseph John Gurney, which have never appeared in print, or been put in circulation. The original autograph letters now lie before us, and as all the

individuals referred to therein have passed out of time, all reasons for privacy seem to be removed; and we propose to place them before our readers. The condensed tract has been blessed, it is believed, to the winning of souls to Christ, and we believe that the whole of the originals may be circulated with benefit.

It is proper to introduce the documents by the following extract from the MS. autobiography of J. J. G. :

“It was about this period [1821] that I became greatly interested in the case of Dr. Alderson, an eminent physician at Norwich, then an old man of 77 or 78, but still in much vigor as to his intellectual faculties. He was one of those in whom the evil heart of unbelief had long been predominant, and whom I had sometimes seen occupying ‘the seat of the scorner.’ I believed it would be right for me to go and pay him a religious visit, in the character of a gospel minister, but so weak was my faith that it seemed impossible, and I actually did not yield to the impression for a full month. Finding no peace, however, on any other terms, I at length called upon him, and, with his daughter’s\* help, induced him to allow me

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\* Amelia Opie.

to sit down with him in silence. It was an awkward occasion. He was very restless, and my ministration as weak as possible. However, in broken terms, I expressed my sense of the unutterable importance of simple faith in Christ. Some considerable time afterwards, he was exposed to great personal danger, on his way home from London, in consequence of the horses in the coach running away. He was alarmed. The Lord applied that alarm to the highest purposes, and he suddenly awoke to a painful solicitude respecting the state of his immortal soul.

“In this condition he desired his daughter to apply to me for a selection of passages from Scripture on the subject of the atonement. (O the importance of that only refuge for the awakened sinner!) Most willing was she to embrace the occasion; and I to avail myself of it; and without delay I sat down and wrote the original of my ‘Letter to a friend on the authority, importance and effect of Christianity.’ It contained a brief summary of the evidences and doctrines of our holy religion, and especially of the doctrine of Redemption by Christ; and pressed the subject home practically. I anxiously awaited the result, and soon

found, to my great joy, that it was well received. The Doctor placed the letter under the cushion of his arm-chair, and for several weeks read it daily. His ever-watchful daughter was always at hand to second every good impression. The Bible was read to him from time to time, and, in the course of a few weeks, his mind was changed. His opinions, his temper, his heart, had all undergone a revolution. The lion was become the lamb. It was the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes. On calling upon him one day, when about to leave Norwich, I expressed a desire for his preservation in the Truth. 'I do assure you,' he replied, 'I have not one sceptical feeling left.' He was much afflicted with a painful disease which he bore with patience, and allowed me to take away the following prayer, which he had just been writing and which I found lying on his table.

"Almighty God and most merciful Father! I humbly beseech thee to ease my pain, increase my patience, and lay upon me no more than I am able to bear, although I have deserved it all: and grant that when my soul is released from this prison of my body, it may be admitted into that rest which is appointed for all such as repent, amend, and believe; as I

trust does thy unworthy servant, who now lies prostrate before thee, in humble reliance on the atoning merits of thy beloved Son, who suffered death that we might enjoy life eternal, and to whom be all honor, dominion and power forever and ever, Amen!

“He continued steadfast in the Christian faith, until his death, which took place about two years afterwards. Though unhesitating in his belief, he was often in conflict respecting *himself*, but evidently kept his hold of Jesus. Standing by his bedside two or three days before his end, I said: ‘Ah, Doctor, what a comfort it is that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.’ ‘Oh yes,’ he replied, with intense feeling, ‘if it was not for that, I know not what would become of me!’ After his death, his countenance wore the calm, dignified expression, not of an unbelieving philosopher, but of some veteran apostle.”

Before introducing the letters which were thus blessed to the soul of this aged person, we will give an extract from a letter from Robert Hankinson, (a clergyman of the Church of England,) addressed to J. J. Gurney.

HAMPSTEAD, April 4th, 1839.

. . . . Some months ago, I called upon a lady

with whom I had a slight acquaintance, and whose inquiring state of mind had previously interested me. I found her very anxious about her father, who was in a declining state of health. His religious views were very unsatisfactory, and it was evident from her account that he had drank deeply of the poison of Socinianism. When I went home, I put a copy of your "Letter to a friend on the authority, purpose and effects of Christianity," as published by the Religious Tract Society, within a copy of your "Essays," and sent them to her. About a fortnight ago they were returned with a short note, and I have since called on her. Striking indeed was her report. After earnest prayer she went with the books to her father's bedroom. Not knowing in what way to introduce them, nor how far they were suited to the turn of his mind, she determined therefore, if possible, to induce him to disclose to her his religious sentiments; and after much earnest pressing he told her that many years ago he had been in the habit of associating with the friend to whom your letter was addressed, and some others in Norwich, and that from these he had taken his religious opinions. He had not wished that they should bias his family, and therefore had



refrained from communicating with them on the subject; but he was one who did not believe in the divinity of Christ. The opportunity had come. His daughter told him that she had in the room with her a letter which had been addressed to his friend, and had been the means of inducing him to change his opinion. He was incredulous about it, but said he should like to hear it. She began to read, and with growing interest he listened. The letter was read again and again, and from it they went to the *ESSAYS*, reading those portions that particularly interested him, and so was it all over-ruled and blessed, that it ended in his complete acknowledgment of the Saviour. The day before his death, when his family were around him, he said, spontaneously, "I wish to make this acknowledgment to you: I feel myself to be a miserable sinner, but my entire trust is in Christ my Saviour." May we not, my dear friend, be thankful for such a testimony, and may we not humbly believe that, in his 85th year, he was turned from his error, and is a monument of the all-saving power of Christ. (It will not be less interesting to you to know that this individual was the late Sir William ——.)

*Joseph John Gurney to Amelia Opie.*

EARLHAM, 4th month 15th, 1822.

*My Dear Friend,*—The subject of the great atonement made by the Son of God for the sins of mankind, is one in which we have both long felt the deepest interest. Conscious of our own sinfulness in the sight of an infinitely pure and Omnipresent Deity, we cannot but rejoice in the assurance that he has provided a *means* by which the deep stains of sin may be washed out, and we accepted with favor by the author of all true happiness. Nor is it wonderful that we should feel for all whom we love, an earnest and even a *painful* solicitude, that they also may be brought to a full discovery of this *way of escape*, and come to acknowledge Christ Jesus the Lord of life and glory to be the “propitiation for their sins.”

Knowing thy anxiety with reference to this subject respecting *one* dear to many, and dear above all other mortals to *thyself*, I am inclined to suggest a few considerations, and to advert to certain passages of the sacred volume, which may perhaps assist his reflections on this fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Thou and the doctor will forgive me if I prove tedious; but as I well know how useless it is to

attempt a superstructure without laying a foundation, I shall take the liberty of commencing *ab ovo*: and I must in the first place state two or three propositions which are indispensably necessary to the validity of my future observations, but from which it is far from my design to enter into any detailed argument.

I. Let me state in the first place that *Christianity is to be received, not as a moral science of human invention, but as a religion revealed to mankind by the Creator himself, and promulgated upon his authority.* On this primary point there are three particulars to which I am inclined *shortly* to advert. 1. God created all things, and has himself ordained *the order of nature.* *Miracles* are supernatural changes in that order of things which God ordained; and as the original order is to be traced to God, so, also, the *interruptions* of that order and the *changes*, which have on peculiar occasions been permitted to take place in it, can justly be attributed to *Him only.* Since then all *true* miracles must be the work of God himself, that revelation which is *attested* by *true* miracles, must be a revelation of an authority *really divine.* That the Christian miracles were *true* miracles, is proved by the clear and unsophisticated testi-

mony of several eye witnessess; the truth of whose story is confirmed by all the internal evidences of simplicity, honesty and goodness; by the sufferings unto death which they underwent for the sake of the truths they declared; by the cotemporary declarations of heathen writers; and by the prodigious effects which the introduction of Christianity produced in the world. 2. We may, secondly, presume that foreknowledge is an attribute *peculiar* to the Supreme Being. Hence it follows that all *true prophecies*, (I mean prophecies that have been, by the course of events, *proved* to have proceeded, not from human guessing or intellectual sagacity, but from a real foreknowledge of future events,) must have been dictated by God himself. Now, any one who compares the prophecies of the Old Testament respecting Jesus Christ, with the exact and orderly fulfilment of them in his birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection, must allow that these are *true prophecies*; that they could have arisen only from the *actual foreknowledge of events*; that therefore they came from God, and that the religion to which they bear testimony, must be—not the religion of human invention, but the religion of God himself. 3. All

who are not atheists will allow that God is not only all powerful and omniscient, but infinitely just, holy, pure and merciful. Now, as the face of a man is reflected in the water, so the character of God is reflected in the conduct and deportment of every *real* Christian. *Pretenders* to Christianity have nothing to do with my argument, but *real* Christians are, according to their measure, like God. In the *integrity* of their words and actions, in the justice of their dealings, in the purity of their hearts, in the conspicuous holiness of their lives, and in their kindness, love and mercy to all around them, *they represent God*. Now they do not derive this character from *themselves*. They derive it *from God*, as every one of them will freely acknowledge, and *Christianity* is the *means* by which they obtain it. Christianity is the *instrument* employed by God for this purpose. *Christianity is therefore the religion of God*, (for no other religion has ever produced these effects); and as it is inconceivable that in bringing the children of men into his *own* character, God should make use of a *lie*, we must confess that Christianity is true.

II. Well, then, Christianity being the religion of God, and the *only* true religion, how and when is it *revealed*?

It was revealed by a series of Prophets, from Abraham downwards, who were inspired by the Almighty to declare his truth; and who, by the miracles which God was pleased to work by their instrumentality, demonstrated the reality of their divine mission. The fullness of the revelation was, however, reserved for that period when the Son of God himself came into the world, and fulfilled those things of which the Prophets had spoken. *By him* the apostles were commissioned to promulgate the religion which he introduced,—or, rather, which he came to *confirm*. Now, these inspired prophets and apostles not only *preached* the *truth*, but *wrote* it. Their writings, like their preaching, were *given by inspiration of God*. The authenticity of these writings is proved by the most ample and satisfactory evidence; and they are contained in the BIBLE. If, then, I am asked where we are to find a full and sufficient record of that *Christianity* of which we have already noticed the divine authority, I answer, not in the schools of polemical divines,—not in the treatises of modern and uninspired theologians,—not in the dicta of any established hierarchy,—but in the well-authenticated compositions of men proved to have been inspired :

—in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

If I am told that there is much in the Bible which the learned are unable to comprehend,—much in it which the wicked have perverted to evil purposes,—I would observe, in reply, that there is much also in the science of nature itself which the wise have not comprehended, and the vicious have misapplied to evil; and I would further remark that the Bible is not intended to gratify the curiosity, or to illuminate the speculations of wordly wisdom, but to instruct the *humble* and *devotional* reader; and to such as *these*, the Bible, as to every main doctrine of religion and on every practical subject, is clear and intelligible. The law of God is so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot mistake it.

III. Christianity, then, being true,—the Bible being the genuine and authorized record of all its truths,—*what does that sacred volume declare respecting God, ourselves, and Jesus Christ?*

Respecting God, it, in the first place, confirms those truths which we derive from natural religion; that he is a Being of infinite power, knowledge and wisdom, the first great cause of

all things; the Maker, Ruler and Protector of the universe—ONE GOD. And, in the second place, it fully reveals those his attributes of *justice* on the one hand and *mercy* on the other, which are of the highest importance as affecting our own relations with Him, and which form the principal features in the system of Christianity. It is more particularly to our present purpose to observe, that the Bible reveals God as a Being of absolute purity, in whose sight every species of iniquity, whether in thought or deed, is *abominable*; so that he will by no means acquit the guilty (unless redeemed from their sins)—and so that “*without holiness none can see God.*”

Of *ourselves*, the Bible says many things of awful consequence:—that we are endued, not only with a frail body, but with immortal souls; that when the body perishes, the soul must continue to live; that *this* is a life of probation; that in a future life we are to be rewarded with unspeakable happiness, or punished with unspeakable misery, *according to our works*. The Bible declares, moreover, *that which all experience confirms*, that man is a *fallen* creature; that he is naturally prone to evil; that his iniquities are more than the hairs of his head



that all have sinned; that there is not one absolutely righteous: "*no, not one!*" Such are the declarations of the Bible respecting *ourselves*. Where, then, is there any hope for us who are, *in the first place*, naturally prone to sin, and in so many particulars sinners, and who are, therefore, *in the second place*, liable to the wrath of God,—his *just* wrath in the eternal world to come? Truly our hope is in a Saviour and in Him alone.

What, then, lastly, does the Bible teach us respecting Jesus Christ?

It declares that, *before his appearance in the earth*,—in the beginning—when the world was created, and *from everlasting* (John i. 1, Mark v. 2.) he was "*with God*;" that he was in some manner, which we cannot comprehend, the SON of the Father Almighty, (John i. 14, Prov. xxx. 4., &c.;) that He and His Father are *one*, (John x. 30;) that he is therefore with the Father *one God*, (John i. 1, Isa. ix. 6, Rom. ix. 5;) that "by him all things were made"—that "without him was not any thing made that was made." (John i. 3, Col. i. 16, Heb. i. 2.) Thus in his pre-existent character he was the source of eternal life to all true believers, (John i. 1, 2,) the spiritual governor

and illuminator of the children of men, (John i. 4, 5;) and that all these divine attributes are perpetual. They cease not. He is declared to be "the same yesterday and to-day and forever." (Heb. xiii. 8.)

[*Note.*—In the *italicising* in this and the subsequent letters, we follow the original.]

The Bible further declares that, when the fulness of time was come, the Word (that is, the Son of God pre-existent) became *man*; that he was born a child into the world, and really took our frail nature upon him; being made in all points like unto his brethren, *sin* excepted; for "in him was no sin." (See John i. 14; Gal. iv. 4; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. ii. 14—18, x. 5—10;) that he dwelt, during the period of a short life, (about 32 years,) amongst men: that by his own power he wrought many miracles—healing the sick, restoring the lame, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead to life: that he preached a system of perfect righteousness: exemplified that system in his own life: and, at length, resigned himself, without a murmur, to the ignominious and painful death of the cross: that he rose again from the dead amongst *many* witnesses: that

he ascended into heaven and sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, being restored to that state of infinite and unsearchable glory, which he possessed in the Father's presence before the world was. (John xvii. 5.)

Now, what could be the mighty and *equivalent* purpose for which this glorious and Divine Person—the Eternal Son of God—condescended so to humble himself as to take our nature upon him, to become a man, and a man of low condition, to undergo every species of contumely and persecution, and at last to die a cruel and shameful death?

It is not surely to be supposed that *such an one* should come into the world for the *mere* purpose of *revealing* the truth. Any inspired prophet, whose divine mission was attested by miracles, was sufficient to *reveal* the truth; and it is well known that Jesus left to his apostles, after his death, the office of developing to mankind the doctrines of Christianity. That it was one of the offices of the Lord Jesus to *reveal* the truth to mankind, cannot be denied; nor are we to forget that it was *another* of his offices, by his holy and merciful life and conversation on earth, to set that *pattern*, after which the conduct of his disciples in all future

ages was to be formed and regulated. But, important as these offices were, the whole circumstances of the case plainly lead us to believe that, in humbling himself from the height of his divine glory, and in assuming our frail and suffering nature, he had yet higher, nobler and more comprehensive purposes in his view. Now, on this subject, as on every other connected with religion, we are not left to depend upon our own fallible conclusions. This is a point on which the testimony of Scripture is, in the greatest degree, decisive and explicit.

“God so loved the world,” says John, “that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in him might have everlasting life.” (John iii.)

“Herein is Love,” says the same Apostle, “not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* (or sacrifice) for our sins.” (1 John iv. 10.) “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. *And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world.*” (1 John ii. 1, 2.) “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. *For this purpose* was the Son of God manifest-

ed, that he might *destroy the works of the devil.*" (1 John iii. 8.)

"He took part of flesh and blood," says the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "that *through death* he might destroy him that hath the power of death, even the devil; and *deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*" (Heb. ii. 15.)

When the angel announced to the Virgin Mary the approaching birth of her son, he said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall *save his people from their sins.*" (Matt. i. 21.) This declaration is perfectly consistent with the words of John the Baptist, who, when he saw Jesus coming to him to be baptized, cried out, saying, "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*" (John i. 29.)

The Apostles Peter and Paul have repeatedly declared the same doctrine. Peter says, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but by the *precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, who, verily, was fore ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for*

*you."* (1 Pet. i. 18—20.) Again, speaking of Jesus, he says : " Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, who *his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree*, that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness ; *by whose stripes ye are healed* ; for ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." (1 Pet. ii. 23, 25.) The Apostle Paul says : " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*" (1 Tim. i. 15.)

" But when the fulness of time was come, God *sent forth his son*, made of a woman, made under the law, to *redeem* them that were under the law, that we might receive the *adoption of sons.*" (Gal. iv. 4, 5.)

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified (or pardoned) *freely* by his grace through the *redemption which is in Christ Jesus*, whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation through faith in his blood* ; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time,

his righteousness, that he *might be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*" (Rom. iii. 23—26.)

"For he hath made *him* to be sin (that is, a sin-offering) for us, *who knew no sin*, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

"God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, *in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*" (Col. i. 12—14.)

"As it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment, so Christ *was once offered to bear the sins of many*, and unto them that look for him shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 27, 28.)

To the inquiry, for what mighty and equivalent purpose did the *Son of God* himself come into the world and die on the cross? these passages of Scripture give a clear answer. Our Lord, himself, has, moreover, answered that inquiry in the following short but explicit declarations: "The Son of man is come *to seek and to save that which was lost.*" (Luke xix. 10.) "The Son of man came not to be minis-

tered unto, but to minister, and *to give his life a ransom for many.*" (Matt. xx. 28.)

There is one more passage of the sacred volume, which, amongst a multitude of others not here noticed, must be adduced with reference to this subject. It is a passage so clear, so strong, so fraught with consolation to the poor, heavy-laden sinner, whatever and whoever he may be, that I cannot withhold it. I mean the prophecy of Isaiah respecting the humble character, vicarious sufferings, and atoning death of Jesus Christ—a prophecy applicable to none but Jesus, and repeatedly applied *to him* by the inspired authors of the New Testament. (See Acts viii. 32—35; 1 Pet. ii. 24.) “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him there is no beauty in him that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; we despised and esteemed him not. *Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.* But he



was *wounded for our transgressions*; he was *bruised for our iniquities*; the chastisement of our peace (or the chastisement whereby we obtain peace) was *upon Him*; and *with his stripes we are healed*. All we like sheep have gone astray, and *the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all*. He was oppressed and he was afflicted"—these last words ought rather to be rendered, "*It was exacted, and he was made answerable*—yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a *lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so openeth he not his mouth*." (Isaiah liii. Compare Matt. xxvi. 63, &c.)

Here we have a plain account of the humility of our Saviour's life on earth, of the obscurity and poverty of his outward condition, of his many sorrows and humiliations, and of his cruel death; also, of the purpose for which he suffered—that he might bear *our* iniquities, and be made answerable for *our* sins. Such was the *means* which an all-wise God appointed, whereby he might display at once his abhorrence of sin, and his mercy to the sinner. It was not in the *wrath*, but the love of God, that this mighty scheme of salvation originated. "God so *loved* the world that he sent his Son,"

&c. "Herein was *Love*, that God sent his son,"

&c. Christ "*loved* the Church and *gave himself* for it." (Eph. v. 25.)

It appears, then, with the utmost plainness, that God hath provided for poor fallen sinful man—man, who, for his many transgressions, is so plainly liable to his wrath and to the awful punishments of the world to come—a way of *escape*; and Christ is *that way*. "God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 9.)

In order to avail ourselves of the means which God, in his *unsearchable* wisdom, hath thus ordained for our salvation, we must *believe* (not merely with the understanding, but with the *heart*) in his Son Jesus Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth *not* the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth (or continueth) on him." (John iii. 36.)

We are mortally diseased—the fatal malady of sin rankles in our veins. How are we to experience the *cure* if we refuse to accept the *appointed* remedy? "He that hath the son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John v. 12.) "I am the Resurrection and the Life," said our Saviour;

“He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.” (John xi. 25—27.) Are we not aware of our own many iniquities? Doth not the burthen of sin oppress us? Are we not weary of that burthen? Then let us open the ear of the soul to the blessed invitation of Jesus Christ, “Come unto *me* all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest.” (Matt. xi. 28.) Let us not only assent to the historical truth of the gospel, but let us freely, earnestly and affectionately accept Jesus Christ as our only Saviour. Let him enter into our hearts and *rule* there! This is true, saving faith. This is the faith which bears the precious fruits of holiness, righteousness and peace.

One observation only remains,—and my long, *very* long letter will be concluded. Christ is our Redeemer, not only because he died to reconcile us to the Father, and to procure for us, by his own blood-shedding, the forgiveness of our sins, but also because he prepares us for heaven by his *Spirit*. He redeems us *from* our sins. It remains to be eternally true, *that without holiness none shall see God or enter into his kingdom:* but Christ is an all-suf-

ficient Saviour for us. He procures us the free pardon of all our past transgressions, and by his sanctifying power, light and life within us, he purifies and changes our vile sinful hearts, imparts to us his own holy nature, enables us to walk before Him in righteousness, love, purity and peace: and thus prepares us for the *enjoyment* of that heavenly inheritance which he has, by his own meritorious sufferings and death, *purchased* for us.

How infinitely desirable, my dear friend, does it appear, for ourselves and for all whom we love, that we should not, *through the evil heart of unbelief*, miss that glory and happiness which is prepared for us; that we should no longer amuse and deceive ourselves with sceptical speculations on the theory of religion; but rather that we should, with all diligence, lay hold of its *substance*, and FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME:—that with reverence, humility, gratitude and joyfulness, we should accept “the unspeakable gift of God”—even His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ!

It is the prayer of my heart that it may be so *with us all*.

Farewell. I am thy affectionate friend,

J. J. GURNEY.

Of the convicting impression produced by the above letter we are already apprized. Placed by Dr. Alderson under the cushion of his easy chair, it was daily perused for several weeks, with careful references to the sacred text as quoted; his daughter, Amelia Opie, often reading the Bible to him, and gladly aiding him, as, like the noble Bereans, he searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so. About five months subsequent to the date of this invaluable Christian manual, Joseph John Gurney received, at the close of a religious meeting at Norwich, a note from Dr. A., which, as will be seen by the following response written on the same day, evinced a deep solicitude to prove himself, whether he was truly "in the faith," and whether his feet were turned into the way of salvation.

Those who have been privileged to know this great and good man will readily appreciate the benignant glow—the deep thankfulness to God who giveth the increase—with which he regarded this evidence that the seed of the Kingdom, sown in trembling faith, was beginning to yield fruit to the glory of the good Husbandman. It is, perhaps, in a large majority of cases, all that is permitted to the faithful am-

bassador for Christ, to know that "the word of the Lord shall not return unto him void," and to feel the flowing peace which is graciously vouchsafed as a *reward* to the humble instrument who, so far from claiming reward, profoundly feels that after having done all he is an unprofitable servant, having done only what it was his duty to do. But it is sometimes permitted to the minister of Christ, to see that the message sent by him has been blessed to the accomplishment of that whereto it was sent. And then, with gushing thankfulness, the language of his heart is that of our beloved friend's lips on the present occasion: "The Lord alone be praised!" His promptitude in responding to the cry of an anxious, seeking soul illustrates the Psalmist's words: "I will *run* the way of thy commandments, when thou shall enlarge my heart."

To DR. JAMES ALDERSON.

NORWICH, Ninth month 6th, 1822.

*My very dear friend:*—After our meeting had broken up this morning, a lady, whom we both dearly love, slipped into my hands thy interesting little note: interesting I must call it, both because the inquiry it contains is of so much importance, and because the dear in-

quirer himself is so cordially in earnest. I must say, that in the very question which he puts to me, he affords me *some* good reason to believe that his faith in the Redeemer of men is of the *heart* as well as of the head.

I think in my last letter I observed, amongst other things, that we are indeed to be saved by *faith* in Jesus Christ. When the jailer at Philippi so anxiously inquired of Paul, "What shall I do to be saved?"—the inspired apostle was at no loss to answer him. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," said he, "and thou *shalt* be saved." "God sent His only begotten Son into the world," said our Saviour, "that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In the epistles there are also many passages which plainly prove that we are justified—that is, that we are *acquitted* and *accepted of the Father as innocent* (δικαιώμεθα) through *faith* in the Son of God.

Now it is certainly very true, that the *faith* or *belief* by which we are thus saved and justified is not a bare assent of the understanding to the reality of the mission and sufferings of Jesus. The evil spirits "*believe* and tremble;" and whilst, as we read in the Gospels, they recognized the Lord Jesus, saying, "We know

who thou art—the *Holy One* of God,”—they were also heard to cry out: “What have *we* to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of the Most High!” Now our knowledge may not be equal to theirs, yet we are as men of *understanding*, furnished with abundant evidence that Jesus who appeared in the world nearly two thousand years ago, was indeed the Holy One of Israel, and the Son of God: and whilst, with our rational faculty, we fully assent to this truth, we may nevertheless have *nothing to do* with him, or with the hopes of his salvation! This *bare* assent of the understanding to the truth of Christianity—an assent unaccompanied by the *fruits* of righteousness—is called by the apostle James *dead faith*. “Faith without works,” says he, “is *dead*.” And this *dead* faith can save no one.

Let us then have recourse to its *opposite*, and observe that the faith which is to save us is *living faith*. Whilst the convictions of the understanding in favor of true religion are of unspeakable value as a preparation for the work of Grace, thou art plainly right in thy notion that this *living* faith is the operation of the *heart*. The apostle Paul declares that “in Christ Jesus, (or with reference to the religion of



Christ Jesus,) neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision," but "*faith that worketh by LOVE.*" Living faith is that active principle in our minds by which we *willingly* receive and *earnestly* strive after the truth of God; and by which the affections of our hearts are engaged in *loving him who first loved us*. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. *We love him because he first loved us.*" How wonderfully are the doctrines of the gospel adapted to our real condition! How plainly are they calculated to engage our natural affections on the side of truth and righteousness! Do we not show gratitude one to another? And shall we not—are we not almost constrained to—love and serve God, who "spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all?" Shall we not love and serve the blessed Jesus, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself (for our sakes) 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, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? Shall we not love and serve

him, who bare in his own body the unutterable weight of our transgressions,—who groaned, who bled, who died *for us*? Shall we not love and serve him, who is “*touched* with a feeling of our infirmities,” and who “*ever liveth to make intercession for us.*”

I feel persuaded, my dear friend, that with thy present views of the adorable mercies of our God and Saviour, thy affections must be engaged towards him—that thou canst not fail to love him who first loved thee. And if this be the case with thee, be encouraged: thy faith in Christ is not *dead*. It is a living faith—a “*faith which worketh by love.*”

Thou wilt perceive that my observations have at least a *tendency* towards the answering of thy question, “*By what symptoms the sinner is to know whether the faith he has lately acquired comes from his head or his heart?*” But I must reply to that question still more plainly and directly:—“*The tree is known by its fruits.*” True, living, heartfelt faith is to be distinguished by no other symptoms than by *the fruits which it produces*. Perhaps thou wilt tell me that thou art no longer able to bear the fruits of true faith—that the eleventh hour is come—that thy day for *working the works of*

righteousness is gone by—that the opportunity for active usefulness in the service of thy God is exchanged for infirmity, sickness and seclusion. But be assured that the old man, the sick man, the secluded man, may bear “the fruits of the Spirit,” to the praise of his God.

One of these fruits I have already adverted to,—*Love*. Mayest thou indeed be enabled to “love thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself.” May no enmity towards any fellow creature find a resting place in thy bosom! Mayest thou be taught of the Lord heartily to forgive all those who at any time have injured thee—to bless them—to pray for them—to live under the sweet influences of Christian charity towards all mankind!

Shall I venture to touch upon one or two *more* of those fruits of the Spirit, which are sure symptoms that our faith is genuine, and the absence of which is as certain a proof that our faith is spurious?

*Humility*. The sinner who is brought to a living faith in Jesus Christ never fails to be deeply humbled in the sight of his Creator; *because of his sins*. He knows that God is per-

fectly holy, perfectly just, perfectly merciful; and when he reflects in how many particulars of thought, word and deed he has broken the law of his God—how often he has been unholy, selfish, impure, uncharitable—he is indeed laid low as in the very dust; and earnestly does he pray with the poor publican: “Lord have mercy upon me *a sinner*.” The load of his sins oppresses him; he can no longer lay the flattering unction to his soul, and say that “he has been as good as other men”—“tolerably good”—“good enough.”—O! no—he now has a view of the perfect purity of God; of the excellence, holiness and justice of the Divine law; and, on the other hand, of the vileness and iniquity of his own heart; and he cries out in deep penitence and humility of soul: “A Redeemer, or I die! A Saviour; or I perish forever!” May this fruit of the Spirit—*even a broken and a contrite heart*—be found more and more in my dear and honored friend! Acceptable is such a sacrifice in the sight of God.

*Submission.*—The true Christian, however he may be tried, however deeply and anxiously afflicted, is nevertheless enabled to say with sincerity and even with cheerfulness, “Thy

will, O God, and not mine, be done!" Nay, he is so assured that "all things work together for good unto those who love God," and that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," that he *gives thanks*, even from the midst of the furnace. Mayest thou, then, during thy heavy and painful affliction, be *submissive* and *thankful*. Mayest thou, under a sense of the *spiritual* mercies of thy God, cry out with the inspired David, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies!"

Again, with submission come *meekness*, *gentleness* and *patience*. Ah! mayest thou be clothed with what the apostle calls the "gentleness of Christ;" mayest thou, like *him*, be meek as the lamb that is led to the slaughter; and mayest thou *patiently* and cheerfully bear every pain, in the happy remembrance that those "who *suffer* with Christ shall also reign with him!"

These and such as these, dearest Doctor, are the fruits of the spirit, and the symptoms of a faith in Christ, which springs from the *heart*.

I have only to observe in conclusion that the Grace of God is able to make these fruits abound in us ; nor will they ever be produced without it. Now, this Grace is offered to us all—old or young, sick or well, worthy or unworthy. “The Grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to *all* men ;” to all it teaches the same lesson—“teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ;” and on all, also, it impresses the same hopes ; “looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us *unto himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. ii. Seek this Grace, my dear friend, with sincere, earnest and fervent prayer, and thou wilt not seek it in vain. The fruits of love, humility, submission, thankfulness, meekness, gentleness and patience will be increasingly produced in thee ; and thou wilt have to rejoice in the persuasion that thy faith is the gift of God—a true and living faith—the faith not of the head, but *of the heart*. Thus wilt thou know

that the Lord Jesus is, *indeed*, and in *truth*, thy resurrection and thy life.

I am thy affectionate friend,

J. J. GURNEY.

Although Joseph John Gurney made repeated visits to his aged physician, in which, at times, they reverently sat under the solemn covering of Divine Goodness, and the visitor was enabled to minister to the spiritual condition of one who had often prescribed for him in bodily sickness; yet it appears that the venerable doctor preferred the use of the pen in telling of his secret conflicts, and in asking counsel and instruction from his friend, to whom, though so much his junior, he looked up as to a father, who "in Christ Jesus had begotten him through the gospel."

*J. J. Gurney to Dr. Alderson.*

EARLHAM, Seventh month 8th, 1823.

*My Dear Friend*:—The pressure of many occupations prevents my answering thy interesting note of inquiry at such length as the subjects proposed might suggest; but I have pleasure in offering to thy attention a few plain hints.

I remember on a former occasion thou ad-

dressedst to me the query, by what *symptoms* it might be known, that thy faith in Christ was truly a *saving faith*? To that query I answered that the tree must be known by its fruits; and that if thy faith in Christ was accompanied by repentance and amendment—by a real contrition for past sins, and by a thorough change in disposition, heart and conduct—these accompaniments afforded a proper and legitimate evidence that thy faith was not dead but living, not nominal but saving.

Thy present inquiry is, “by what symptoms he who repents, amends and believes can know that he is accepted and may hope for salvation?” To such an inquiry I must reply to my beloved and honored medical friend that this is not an *affair of symptoms*, (a description which properly applied to the former query,) but one in which we have nothing to do but to rest on the simple declarations and promises of that God who cannot lie.

The whole subject is one, respecting which the knowledge and wisdom of man is of little or no avail. In these matters God must be his teacher; and however we may prize the information which he permits us to derive even from *natural religion*, we must have recourse



principally to the *authentic records of his revealed will*, which, as a means of correct information on religious subjects, as compared with any subordinate means, are as the bright shining of the noonday sun compared with the shadows of twilight.

Through the instrumentality, then, of the inspired writers, God has declared in the plainest manner, and on a great variety of occasions, that they who repent, amend and *believe are safe*; that they are accepted of him; and that being accepted they shall be saved.

First, with regard to repentance, the *essence* and vital substance of it are poverty, humility and contrition of heart; that such a condition of the heart is accepted of the Lord, who believe, who will not allow?"

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." James iv. 10.

"Surely the Lord scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly." Prov. iii. 34.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Ps. li. 17.

"Thus saith the Lord; the Heaven is my throne and the Earth is my footstool: where is

the house that ye build for me? And where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath my hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord: but unto this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."

Many more passages might be cited in reference to this true and essential grace—the root of life and repentance—tenderness and abasement of soul; but I need only add the comprehensive and forcible words of the Redeemer himself: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. v. 3.

Repentance is valuable chiefly for this reason—that it leads to *amendment*.

The *amended* sinner—the sinner who has put off "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," and who has put on "the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness"—is surely the object of abundant and unutterable mercy; for such a one is delivered from "the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the dear Son of God." It is wholly needless to quote largely on such a subject. Suffice it that "God willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wick-

edness and live." Suffice it that he even condescends to beseech his people to turn from their sins, that they may live, saying, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel." Two or three passages, however, from the exquisitely beautiful writings of the Hebrew prophets, I must venture to throw before thee :

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 16—18.

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his paths; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7.

"Come and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the

rain, as the latter and former rain upon the earth." Hos. vi. 1—3.

"I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Hos. xiv. 4, 5.

I have considered the promises attached in Scripture to repentance and amendment in the first place, because they are first mentioned in thy note of inquiry; but both one and the other are symptoms, (as I have already stated.) and not only symptoms, but fruits and consequences of a *true and living faith*.

We cannot repent without, in the first place, believing in God, against whom we have sinned; and wonderfully, indeed, is our repentance deepened, and our humility and contrition of heart enlarged, when, with the eye of faith, we have beheld that crucified Redeemer, that divine and all-merciful Emanuel, who bore, in his own body, the unspeakable weight of our transgressions, who groaned, and bled, and died *for us*. Much less can we truly amend our lives or alter the *frame* of our hearts and dispositions, until we have taken refuge in Christ; to whom all power is given in heaven and in

earth—who “searcheth the reins of the heart,” (Rev. ii. 23,) and who “gave himself for us” for this especial purpose—that, by the power and sanctifying influence of his Holy Spirit, “he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. ii. 14.

Without this precious faith our morals (however we may strive) will be nothing better than the morals of the philosopher. They will be inseparably connected with the pride of our own hearts. They will be directed to our own glory, and not to the glory of God. They will be hard, and high, and assuming, destitute of that deep humiliation, that childlike submission, that tender love which will ever be found the leading characteristics of the disciple of Jesus.

These observations premised, I may proceed to cite a few plain and invaluable promises and declarations, which are amply sufficient to satisfy the humble inquirer, that he who believeth is accepted of God, and shall be saved.

“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Rom. iv. 3.

“Kiss *the Son* lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled

but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Ps. ii. 12.

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever." Ps. cxxv. 1.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of droughts, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer. xvii. 7, 8.

"By grace ye are saved *through faith*, and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God." Eph. ii. 8.

"We are kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5.

"He [Christ] came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the *Sons of God*, even to them that *believe* on his name." John i. 11, 12.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER (mark that word) *believeth* on him should *not* perish, but have *everlasting life*." John iii. 16.

What *more* canst thou then require? Many such passages, as thou knowest, are scattered over the New Testament, of which sacred volume this *salvation* through faith may be described as the *leading sentiment*. I add only the words of Christ on another occasion: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, SHALL NEVER DIE."—John xi. 25, 26. Glorious and blessed promise! Receive it—believe in it—with all willingness, thankfulness and joy.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus—by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God—let us *draw near* with a true heart, in *full assurance* of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience [by the blood of Christ,] and our bodies washed with pure water: [by the power of the spirit,] and let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised."—Heb. x. 19, 23.

So, my dear friend, thou wilt perceive that

the volume of Holy Writ has again been the means of helping us over our difficulties. I would therefore, in the first place, take the present opportunity of earnestly advising thee to devote part of thy time to the perusal of *Scripture itself*, with *meditation and prayer*. Thou wilt find such a practice helpful, salutary, delightful! It will be the means of deepening thy repentance, of enlarging thy views, and of animating thy hopes.

Secondly, as the promises and declarations of the Most High God afford so explicit an answer to thy query; as they so plainly show, that he who repents, amends and believes, shall be saved—remember that it is thy *duty*, as well as thy *privilege*, to receive these promises and declarations with the simplicity of a little child, and with a perfect confidence that they are *true and cannot fail*. The promises of God in Christ Jesus, to use the forcible expressions of an apostle, are “yea and amen forever.”

May the Lord who is rich in mercy do all things needful for thee! May he visit thee in thy solitary moments with the tendering impressions of his paternal love! May he *establish* thy faith on the Rock of Ages! May he deepen thy conviction of the perfect purity of



his own nature, and of the sinfulness of *all* transgression—more especially of that worldly, careless, scornful and irreligious mind, in which myriads of believers have long lived! May he show thee that the low valley of humiliation is the place of all waters! May he pacify thy uneasiness, regulate thy tempers, and shed his love abroad in thy heart. May he bind up all thy wounds, preserve thee patient through all thy sufferings, and comfort thee in every sorrow! Finally, may he teach thee to trust implicitly in his holy word, and to look forward with childlike affiance and cheerful expectation to the interminable and unutterable joys of his GREAT SALVATION!

I am thy affectionate friend,  
J. J. GURNEY.

In the following letter, as in preceding ones, the reader must be impressed not merely with the Christian tenderness, but with the unflattering and pastoral honesty with which the writer applies the probe, so that every lurking place of sin might be searched, and the work fully completed, that after casting down every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, every thought might be brought into cap-

tivity to the obedience of Christ. J. J. G. left his home for a few days for service in Upton, London, &c. "May the Lord condescend to bless me," he notes in his diary, "in my going out and in my coming in, and to bless the dear children and others whom I leave behind! I feel some sweet confidence that it will be so." On the very date of the letter, we find that he attended a large meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, at which the speakers were Lords Harrowby, Bexley, Roden, Barham, Teynmouth, Charles Grant, Sir H. Inglis, Sir Geo. Rose, Morrison, J. J. Gurney, Wardlaw, John Cunningham, &c. J. J. G. spoke at considerable length, to which he thus refers in his diary. "I revived the consideration of the main original principles of the Bible Society,—that all Scripture is given by inspiration;—that divine truth is to be trusted by itself; and that sectarian distinctions sink into almost nothing, when Christians are engaged in promulgating their common gospel. It was well received, though, possibly, a little too strong for some persons, as it related to that fundamental error of Popery—that divine truth is *not* to be trusted by itself."

Labor enough for one day, we might think :—

and truly the family of Christ might profitably contemplate the example of one thus "fervent in spirit, *not* slothful in business, serving the Lord." Bearing on his heart his aged friend, whose sands, he felt certain, were nearly run, he wrote, on that very evening, what appears to be his last epistle to him.

*Joseph John Gurney to James Alderson, M. D.*

HAMPSTEAD, Fifth mo. 6th, 1824.

*My dear friend.*—Such is the warmth and constancy of the Christian regard which I feel for thee, that I cannot leave home without bearing thee on my mind ; and believing that I can minister to thee more effectually by letter than by word of mouth, I do not hesitate to address thee. In looking at thy present condition both of body and of mind, I think those who really love thee cannot fail to perceive matter for *thankfulness*. Advanced to so great an age, thou art still permitted to preserve a clear and vigorous mental power ; and although a considerable degree of weakness and pain are thy allotment, yet thou wilt gratefully confess that the weakness is not extreme, and the pain not intolerable. When, however, we turn our view from the frail tabernacle of clay to the inner

man—to the immortal spirit which is still permitted to dwell within it—and when we consider that this immortal spirit has been taught in a great degree to rely upon the Lamb of God who taketh away all sin : then indeed may we celebrate the praises of that gracious Redeemer, who is ever ready to act as the good Samaritan did—graciously to regard us—to say to us when we are in our blood, *LIVE*. Indeed, my beloved friend, thou hast cause for unutterable gratitude, that God has been pleased to give a new direction to the whole current of thy thoughts, thy feelings, thy opinions, thy intentions, thy prospects. The first introduction of the gospel dispensation was distinguished by the voice of exhortation : *REPENT*—for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Thy divine Master beheld thee advancing towards the conclusion of thy mortal pilgrimage—He knew that the hour of retribution was approaching ; and he graciously condescended to answer the prayers which were offered for thee by a pious daughter and affectionate friends, to say, *REPENT*. The word is very comprehensive. The repentance of the New Testament is *μετάνοια*—not only a sorrow for past transgressions, but a radical change of *mind*. It constitutes the new birth :

—and no birth, no creation is more wonderful! When the darkened mind becomes enlightened; when the sinner becomes the penitent; when the unbeliever of former days acknowledges Christ to be his only hope of glory—when the scorner of Divine truth learns to value it as the pearl of great price—then, truly, there is produced, by the wonderful working of the grace of God, and out of materials apparently the most unfavorable for such a work,—the *NEW man*—the child of the Lord—the dear object of divine regard, tenderness and condescension.

This great change is sometimes *very* gradual. On the one hand we behold a child educated in the fear of the Lord, and enabled, with the increase of his stature, and by slow degrees, to overcome the evil principles *ALWAYS* inherent in our nature, until the young man—the middle-aged man—the old man, into whom he successively grows—is found to be strong in the Lord,—the word of God abiding in him,—and teaching him to overcome the wicked one; on the other hand, we trace the course of an apostle who is suddenly turned from the wicked violence of a senseless persecutor to the child-like condition of those who are willing to follow *the Lamb* whithersoever he goeth.

Whether the change of which I speak be gradual or sudden, it is necessary; it is absolutely essential. No man can be the heir of glory without it. Except a man be born again, he *cannot* enter the kingdom of God.

Now, my dear doctor, it is impossible to deny with any justice, that this mighty change has been *commenced*, and has been materially *carried forward*, in thy own soul. The difference, the *contrast*, are not to be concealed from thyself or from others. It has on the whole been a work of a rapid and unexpected nature, and (awful and interesting thought) it has been wrought in the *eleventh hour*!

Such a gracious interposition in thy favor is, as I said before, a *loud* call for unfeigned gratitude. But I feel very anxious that this holy, all-important work, may not be impeded, but may go on to COMPLETION.

The tree is to be tried by its fruits; and I beseech thee never to feel satisfied till every evil temper is *subdued*—till *entire* resignation to the divine will is obtained—till all is gentleness, patience, forbearance and love! Ah, thou hast cause to believe that Christ will do all things well for thee, as thou art enabled to cast all thy care upon him! Pray—pray earnestly—

for the HOLY SPIRIT, that the inward shrine of the heart may be sanctified, and that the Prince of Peace may reign there without a rival. Thus shalt thou be ready, when he shall be pleased to cut short the thread of life and to call thee HOME.

In order to promote this greatest of objects, we must not neglect the outward means which Divine Providence has placed within our power.

The first of these I have already alluded to—*prayer*; if that can be called an outward means which must spring from the inmost recesses of the heart. Let thy secret aspirations to the throne of Grace be frequent; let thy mind habitually turn to God; let the spirit of thy petitions be: Lord, bring me more fully to Christ! Lord, make me *all* that thou wouldst have me to be!

Another means, which I have often desired affectionately to recommend to thee is, the daily perusal of some portion of Scripture. Indeed, dear friend, it is a sacred duty, and ought never to be neglected; and let me advise thee always to use our own authorized version, which is unspeakably superior in point of truthfulness, as well as of taste, to the Wakefields, the Har-

woods, and such like. Socinian interpreters may sometimes be learned; but their whole system is marked with critical perversions and practical danger. I earnestly beg thee to banish them entirely from thy presence. It is for thee to cultivate, not the dry cavils and superficial reasoning of that awfully deluded school; but that *firm*, and *settled*, and *deep* reliance on the essential doctrines of Christianity, which will, alone, be found to rob death of its sting, the grave of its victory, and the judgment seat of its terrors!

Well, it only remains for me to express the earnest desire which I feel, that the angels of the Lord may ever encamp around thee, and deliver thee, that God may be about thy bed, and about thy ways—that a free access may be opened for thee to the fountain of living waters—that CHRIST MAY DWELL IN THY HEART BY FAITH—and that in the end thou mayest be numbered amongst that glorified host, who have forever ceased from all sorrow and sighing; and who enjoy those pleasures that are at the right hand of their God and Saviour.

Thou wilt be pleased to hear that I have been much interested by many things since I



left home. My journey up to London with F. Cunningham and a young clergyman and his wife, was very agreeable, and we found a warm-welcome at Upton, where I have a most affectionate and happy brother and sister, where eight children make them look, in spite of their own juvenility, quite patriarchal!

The next day I was engaged first by the Plaistow week-day meeting, and afterward by attending the funeral of a gentleman whose request was that he might be buried among Friends. The request was complied with. There were five Baptist and other ministers present, who seemed well pleased to discover the *orthodoxy* of Friends; and the clergyman of the parish (as I afterwards learned) was promised *his* fees from my services. What a singular arrangement!

Yesterday was the meeting of the Bible Society; a most animating and *extraordinary* occasion. Such a meeting as I never attended before. The progress of the cause is wonderful; and the tone of deep evangelical seriousness, which distinguished the speeches of many great people, was delightful. The Earl of Roden, with the utmost simplicity, honesty and apparent humility, described his own remarka-

ble conversion from worldly dissipation to a serious view of religion—a conversion of which a meeting of the Bible Society was the *occasion*. I had several important topics before me; and the words flowed easily. My subject was the *testimony* borne by the Bible Society to those great principles that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God—that divine truth is to be trusted by itself—and that the Church of Christ is composed not of the members of any particular sect, but of ALL who fear and love God, and believe in their Redeemer.

Pray ask Amelia (to whom, with thyself, I send my hearty salutation of love) to forward the *intelligence* conveyed in this long epistle to my sisters. I am, my dear friend,

Thy affectionate friend,

J. J. GURNEY.

P. S. I have written very hastily. Bear with all blunders.

It was stated, in the early part of this essay, that, after the Christian visit made to Dr. Alderson, he was “exposed to great personal danger.” He and his daughter, after a visit to Hudson Gurney, were returning in a coach to Norwich. “The horses took fright,” says Cecilia L. Brightwell, in her biography of

Amelia Opie, "the coachman and horses were thrown off the coach, and the leaders broke their traces." When Dr. Alderson, who was not at first aware of the peril they had incurred, was told by his daughter the particulars of the accident, he exclaimed, as he thanked God that they had reached Norwich in safety, "I have been mercifully spared, my dear child, and I wonder *why*."

It was after this peril and preservation that he applied, through his daughter, to J. J. Gurney for Scriptural instruction on the grand theme of Redemption, which had been the subject of the sermon preached to him under the constraint of the Divine Spirit, in the memorable visit which had been the means of awakening him. "Afterwards" (we quote again the biography of A. O.) he said, "O! my dear child, I know *now* why I was spared."

It was during the Doctor's life that the substance of the letters, with both enlargement and abridgement, was published as a tract. The present publication is by no means intended to *supersede* the other, which was given to the world in the form judged to be best by the gifted writer; but with a conviction that it will be acceptable to many, to see the simple

originals as they flowed, in confidential earnestness, from a heart yearning intensely for the salvation of a particular soul. It will interest the Christian reader to see exactly how so great an instrumentality for good was brought about: how it was that so many sinners were converted from the error of their thoughts and ways: how it was that, in their several cases, a multitude of sins were covered—hidden—blotted out. From A. Opie's memoranda it is found that the originals were repeatedly lent to persons whose need it was thought they would meet, and striking instances of conversion, not here recorded, are known to have resulted. We find in them no scholastic advocacy of a mere theory to be accepted by the understanding, but rather a presentation of the gracious terms: (Isa. i. 18.) "Come, now, let us reason together, saith Yahveh,—though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." They point unto HIM in whom there is mercy and plenteous REDEMPTION—to HIM "who gave himself for us that he might REDEEM us from all iniquity."

Dr. Alderson's appreciation of the sacred volume was evinced a very short time before

his death, by his copying on his note book this verse from Dr. Watts :

“ Let all the heathen writers join  
To form one perfect book ;  
Great God ! when once compared with thine  
How mean their writings look ! ”

At length, in his 83d year, in a peaceful, resigned state of mind, he “ sunk down into his last illness.” “ I look forward,” he wrote in his note book, “ to my being saved for happiness hereafter. How much I long for my last end ! but in this I act wrongly ; for a man ought to wait patiently till his end comes ; for I can live no longer than God pleases.” To him were applicable the consoling words, “ Fear not, for I have REDEEMED thee, ——— thou art mine.”

His daughter’s biographer tells us that it was his dying request to be buried in the Friends’ graveyard. And on the 28th of Tenth month, 1825, his purified spirit left its mortal casket.

“ Fifth-day,” says J. J. G. in his diary, “ amidst its full and eager pursuits, was saddened and solemnized by the death of dear old Dr. Alderson ; after a night of severe suffering, and after a struggle of a distressing character. I saw him the last time on Third-day afternoon,

when I took the opportunity of his awaking from his usual state of slumber, to pour forth a prayer by his bedside. For this he was very thankful; and the impression left on my own spirit by the circumstance was comforting, as it related to this beloved aged friend. Believing that the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea and amen forever, I cannot but believe that he is now at rest with the Lord of Glory. On the whole I have never known (that I remember) so remarkable a change of sentiment and disposition in any other person. He entered into the vineyard in the eleventh hour, and in good earnest. Dear A. O. is wonderfully helped and supported."

The parties concerned in the narrative now brought to a close have all passed away. "Redeemed without money"—"Justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" or if that *cannot* be, sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption—they have realized, we cannot doubt, that the High Priest of good things to come has obtained for them eternal redemption. To the writer of the letters has not been assigned a "starless crown." May the perusal of them be blessed to many souls.