

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

SINCERITY SEEKING THE WAY TO HEAVEN

BY BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

CHAPTER I.

SINCERITY, a young man of twenty-one years, awoke one morning, and soliloquized with himself thus: "I have now arrived at manhood, and feel surprised when I think that twenty-one years of my life have fled, and I have not made the first effort to seek God. I am astonished at myself that I have living this long without God, and without hope. I will remain in this condition no longer. If there is a man in this town who can show me the way to heaven, I will enter upon it before the setting of another sun. I will immediately cross the way to the residence of Mr. H., the Presiding Elder of the M. E. Church, an excellent man, who will readily show me the way to heaven. In a few minutes our young friend was rapping at the door of Mr. H. "Walk in," responded from within. "Good morning, Mr. S.," said the good man, "I trust I see you well." Quite well, Mr. H., in body, but I have much concern of mind. I am, so alarmed when I think that twenty-one years of my life are gone, and I am not *a Christian*. "I have, therefore, called upon you, as a friend, to show me what, I must do to be saved."

Honesty.—Do you desire that I should pray for you?

Sincerity.—I am ignorant of the way of salvation. I desire you to point out what the Lord requires me to do, that I may be saved. If it is for you to pray for me, for me to pray for myself, or anything else, I am ready to do it, that I may find salvation.

H.—I will cheerfully pray for you, if you desire it, *or* do anything else in my power for you.

S.—Thank you, sir; truly am I grateful for your kindness. You, no doubt, realize the importance of my pursuing the prop-

er course. I desire, above all things, to proceed according to the will of the Lord. I would not, for worlds, make any mistake where the salvation of my soul is in danger. If, therefore, the Lord requires me to be prayed for, that I may obtain the forgiveness of sins, I desire it to be done.

H.—I am truly rejoiced, my young friend, to find that you are anxious to seek the Lord. The Savior says, "He who seeks shall find." I trust, then, you will give up your whole heart, and never cease seeking till you find rest to your soul.

S.—That is now my intention; but you are aware that I am uninstructed, and do not know where or how to seek the Lord. Knowing, therefore, that you make it your business to teach "those ignorant and out of the way," I have, with the utmost confidence, come to you, to show me what the Scriptures require me to do, that I may obtain the forgiveness of sins.

H.—I would advise you, my dear young friend, to seek the Lord in prayer. Give Up your whole heart to the Lord, and I trust he will have mercy upon you. I would advise you to attend our prayer-meetings and the class. These are precious means of grace, through which thousands have been soundly converted to God.

S.—Mr. H., I have brought my Bible with me, and, if you *please*, turndown a leaf at the place where these instructions may be found, that I may read them when alone. I desire to proceed according to Scripture.

H.—I did not say that my advice was, in so many words, Scripture; but, after many years' reading and prayerful study, I give it to you as Scriptural advice.

S.—Of course there are Scriptures instructing persons, in my condition, how to come to God, from which you deduced this advice. Will you mark some of the places, that I may consider them when in retirement? You know it is important that I should seek according to Scripture. I desire to proceed in such a manner as to enable me to claim the promises *of God*.

H.—Yes, sir; but you need have no fears but you proceed correctly; for prayer is so frequently enjoined in Scripture, that you cannot fail to see that it is right. Besides the Scriptures

say, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

S.—I have no doubt that prayer is right, for I can recollect of reading of prayer in the Scriptures; but, not knowing where to find these passages, and especially where persons seeking the salvation of their souls were commanded to pray, or be prayed for, I desire you to turn down a leaf at a few places. Is the passage YOU quoted, "Blessed are they who mourn," etc., speaking of conversion?

H.—I cannot say it is; but, as you are what we call a "mourner," I thought the language applicable in your case. As to prayer, the Apostle says, "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere. "

S.—If that passage speaks of conversion, and is intended for men in my condition,! desire you to mark it here in my Bible. Was it addressed to persons seeking the Lord as I am, or Christians? I am desirous to have the Scripture that relates to my condition.

H.—You, my dear young friend, are a seeker, and the Lord says, "I will be sought unto by prayer," Besides, you are a *mourner*, in anguish on account of sin. It is right, therefore, that you should seek the Lord in prayer.

S.—No doubt you are correct. I have the utmost confidence that you will give me the proper instructions. I have heard of great numbers being converted in old times, but do not know where in the Bible to find the account of these cases. Will you, therefore, refer me to some place where the people came to the "mourner's bench," or the "altar of prayer," to pray and be prayed for? I desire to be certain that I am going according to Scripture.

H.—My dear sir, how can you have doubts about prayer, when it is commanded in so many places in Scripture?

S.—I have no doubt about it, but I simply desire you to point out some of those places where we read of such great numbers being converted, that I may read for myself where such great numbers were commanded to come to the mourner's bench, or the altar of prayer, to pray and be prayed for. I desire to read these passages, because there are several things about it I do not understand.

H.—Perhaps you are unwilling to take my word!

S.—Certainly, my dear sir, I am willing to take your word. If you tell me where I can find these passages, I have no doubt I shall find them as you say.

H.—*You* seem to doubt, when I tell you that it is your duty to seek the Lord in prayer, that I am right, and, consequently, keep calling for the Scriptures where prayer is required. I am afraid you will not be converted soon, if you continue to manifest such an unwillingness to pray.

S.—I trust, sir, you will have patience with me. I am aware that I am ignorant, but you are able to enlighten me. Besides, I have not doubted your veracity at all. I am desirous to pray or do anything the Lord requires. But you must perceive that it is of the utmost importance that, when seeking the salvation of my son], I should proceed according to the will of the Lord. Now, while I do not doubt that you *can* and *will* teach me correctly, and that it is my duty to pray, there are several things in regard to it that I consider indispensable for me to know.

1. I desire to know who is commanded to pray for me.

2. I desire to know whether there is any promise that I shall be heard if I pray for myself.

3. I desire to know how often I should be prayed for, before I have the promise of pardon. It has occurred to me that I may be required to do something else as well as pray, and I am anxious to do my whole duty. Will you, therefore, point out to me those passages where such great numbers are said to have been converted ?

H.—If you are not willing to use the means of grace which I recommend, and which have proved a blessing to so many thousand souls, I fear, sir, that I cannot be of any service to you.

S.—I am perfectly willing to use any means of grace, and desirous to do so, required in the Scriptures. But I am anxious to use the means of grace according to Scripture. Therefore, I desire you to refer me to those Scriptures which give us an account of so many thousands using the means of grace, that I might proceed as they did.

H.—I presume, sir, that you are acquainted with our practice

with those who seek salvation; and if you believe in our way, and will go with us, we will do you all the good and give you all the assistance in our power; but if you have no confidence in us, we can do you no good.

S.—I have the utmost confidence in you; but you have occasionally exhorted us to read the Scriptures, and I cannot understand why you refuse to refer me to those passages which speak of the conversion of such vast numbers, that I may read for myself where they were commanded to pray and be prayed for, and whatever else they were commanded to do, and do the same. You believe they were converted right, I presume?

H.—Certainly they were.

S.—Please then, sir, refer me to the passages, as I must now leave, that I may reflect upon them till I see you again.

H.—I would advise you to read the Psalms of David, and attend our prayer-meeting on next Thursday night.

S.—I will do so. Good-by.

CHAPTER II.

ACCORDING to promise, our young friend, *Sincerity*, read the Psalms of David through, and attended the prayer-meeting on Thursday night following the time of the preceding conversation. In the place of the prayer-meeting, (as Mr. *Honesty*, the Presiding Elder, had expected,) he found the church in the midst of a protracted meeting. He said to himself, "I am rejoiced to find such a meeting as this in progress, for I shall have the way to heaven clearly pointed out to me." On entering the house he was rejoiced to find Mr. H. in the pulpit, reading the following words, "He who seeks shall find." "What precious words to me," said young *Sincerity* to himself. "I will then seek the Lord with all my heart."

Mr. H. divided his discourse as follows:

1. To show that it is the duty of all to seek.
2. That the way is plain.
3. That the promise is unequivocal—that all who seek shall find.

Upon each of these heads he discoursed as follows:

1. It is the duty of all to seek the Lord. This is sustained by the clear language of Scripture: "He hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth, that they should *seek the Lord*, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us. " Again: "I will be sought unto by prayer." Thus we have shown, from God's written word, that all are commanded to seek the Lord.

2. The way is plain. This is proved by the word of the Lord. The prophet says, "The way is so plain, that the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein." The gospel was to be a lamp to our path, which shows that the path was to be very plain. Thus you discover the way is plain, so that man is left without excuse.

3. The promise is unequivocal. "To him who asks, it shall be given, to him who knocks it shall be opened; he who seeks *shall find*." And again: "He who cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." "Now is the accepted time: behold, *now* is the day of salvation." "Whosoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely. "

Having now proved from God's written word.

1. That it is the duty of all to seek.

2. That the way is plain.

3. That the promise is unequivocal—that they who seek *shall find*—the duty of all is manifest.

What then must be the perdition of those who refuse to seek God! Let me exhort you, then, to haste, as for life, to the altar of prayer, and seek God while it is called to-day. Come, now, all things are ready; come, and give us your hand, and we will do you good.

At the conclusion an invitation was given, and a number of persons rushed to the altar and fell upon their knees. But our young friend, *Sincerity*, kept his seat in the middle of the house, and showed, from his countenance, that deep trouble was upon his heart. He sat still, apparently in deep meditation, during some two hours, while the usual exercises of a mourner's bench scene transpired, and, at the close, withdrew in *great* sadness. As he walked away, he said to himself, "I

am afraid this matter of becoming a Christian is a dark subject. The more I think about it the thicker the gloom. What does it avail to hear a man argue that the way is *plain*, who does not show me this very plain way. "I will go to the residence of *Mr. Honesty* and have another conversation." In a few moments he raps at the door. "Walk in," responded from within. 'Good evening, Mr. S.; I am happy to see you, and Was greatly rejoiced to see you at our meeting to-night. Have you read the Psalms of David?" said Mr. H.

Sincerity.—Yes, sir, and find them extremely interesting, but could not find, as I expected, the way pointed out for me to become a Christian.

Honesty.—I labored to point out that to you in my discourse to-night. I hope I have satisfied you in regard to that matter.

S.—I am sorry to be compelled to say, Mr. H., that you shed no light on the main difficulty with me. I was satisfied before that it *was* my duty to seek God, and I had supposed, as you contended, that the way was plain. But, from all you have said, I could not see that you pointed out any way to come.

H.—Did you not see how those others came?

S.—Yes, sir, I saw how they came to the mourner's bench, but I did not see or hear any Scripture, as I hoped to do, requiring them to come *in* that way. If you had shown the Scripture requiring such procedure, I would have been ready, at any moment, to have done as they did. But seeing these come as they did, and observing the whole procedure, has involved my mind in such perplexities that I know not what to do.

H.—I don't see anything to perplex you, unless it is your own unbelief.

S.—It may be unbelief for anything I know, but so it is. I am a miserable being, and hoped that you might relieve me. I cannot rest in this condition.

H.—I cannot relieve you unless I know your difficulty. I trust, however, it is the work of conviction you feel, and, if so, I hope it may progress to complete regeneration.

S.—My difficulty is this: you argued that it was the sinner's duty to seek; that the way was plain; and that those who seek

shall find. A large number came forward *seeking*, and inquired what they should do to be saved. I anxiously listened to hear you tell them what to do. I heard the directions you gave them, and saw them do what you told them to do, in every particular, as it appeared to me, with the deepest anxiety. Am I not right? Did they not seek according to your directions?

H.—They did, and I think did right in so doing. You should have done the same.

S.—Well, sir, here is my difficulty: After they had sought according to your directions: had done all you directed, you recollect that you passed along among them, and inquired of them personally, after which you arose and reported that not one of them had got religion! Now I could not understand this. It was their duty to seek. You said the way was plain, and insisted upon the unequivocal promise, "They who seek shall find." These persons *did* seek, but, you *said, did not find!* How is this?

H.—Perhaps they may find peace to their souls on to-morrow night.

S.—My dear sir, am I in all this anxiety, and are all these persons, in their deep and intense solicitude, as I saw them tonight, to depend on a "*perhaps*" for the salvation of the soul? If this is where I am to be left, I am in a worse condition than if I had never heard the gospel.

H.—My young friend, you are entirely too impatient. I was a seeker six months before the Lord spoke peace to my soul. I have known many to seek for years, and not find peace with God. In some instances I have known persons to join on trial, and seek as high as ten, fifteen, and, in some few instances, as high as twenty years, without finding.

S.—And yet you tell them the *way is plain*, and they that seek *shall find.* Alas ! for your *plain way, and your Bible promises, if a man may seek* (if ten or twenty years and not find!

H.—Young man, I see that you have no adequate conception of Christianity.

S.—No, sir, I perceive I have not, and what is more mortifying than all, is that I am not likely to have any adequate un-

derstanding of the subject; for nothing but clouds of gloom and darkness rise before me. Am I to have no Scriptural directions to guide me? Is there no way laid down in the Bible, by which I can come to the Lord?

H.—I do not say that you must seek as great a length of time as some I have mentioned—many get through much sooner. You may get through, in a week, two weeks, or six month. You might get religion the first time you came to the mourner's bench. You should not despair nor become impatient.

S.—But, my dear sir, if the way is so plain, as you have represented, and we have the promise that they who seek *shall find*, how is it that you suspend the whole matter in doubt, saying, "I may get religion," on the first application, the *second*, etc? Is there no definite place where I can come to the unequivocal promise of God?

H.—I have already shown you the promise; and, if you have any faith, you cannot doubt the Lord's promise; but you must wait for the Lord's own good time.

S.—Does not the Scripture say, "*Now* is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation," some place? Does it not say, "*To-day*, if you will hear his voice," etc? Did not many thousands anciently come to the Lord in a single day?

H.—There are such passages as you refer to, and many did come, and obtain peace with God in a single day in olden times, but it is not so now.

S.—Why is it not so now? Who has changed the order?

H. —Times have changed. The Scripture says—, I—I—If you desire to go with us, we will do all for you we *can*; but, with your notions, I can do but little for you.

S.—I have no notions, know nothing about what is right, but wish you would show me how so many turned to the Lord in a day. Good night.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER the conversation with Mr. H. in the previous chapter, our young friend, *Sincerity*, retired to his sleeping apartment, but not to sleep. He laid himself upon his bed, and soliloquized as follows:

"I see that I am awfully deluded. I had supposed it was a very plain matter to become a Christian, and, therefore, indifferently put off this important work, till, in all probability, a majority of my days are numbered. I am perfectly astonished and overwhelmed to find that now I am anxious to seek the salvation of my soul and this matter appears involved in obscurity. Is it possible that the salvation of the world is wrapped up in so much mystery and obscurity as this? Is it possible that a learned ministry, called and sent of God to preach the gospel, can throw no clearer light upon the subject than my friend, Mr. H., has given me? I supposed, when he advised me to read the Psalms of David, that I should there find the account of the conversion of those vast multitudes of whom I had heard the preachers speak so frequently, and *how* they were converted, but, to my utter astonishment I found nothing in regard to these matters, nor anything showing how I might become a disciple of Christ, I am equally astonished, that now I am resolved to read the Bible through, and have read the five books of Moses, I have been unable to find anything relating directly to myself, or showing me the way to heaven. I found these ancient records filled with matters of great interest; but how am I to know the way to heaven from these lengthy records of antiquity?

"I am perfectly confounded, and know not what to do. It is certainly true that I am a sinner, and must be lost if I am not pardoned. I am equally certain that Christ is the Lord and Redeemer of men; and that he invites all to come to him is equally true. Why is it, then, that no way is pointed out by which to come? Would (he Lord invite men to come to him, knowing that they would be lost if they did not come, and yet point out no way to come? He certainly would not. He could not do this, and then declare the way so plain that the "wayfaring men, though simpletons, need not err therein;" nor could he, if no way is pointed out, say that "he who seeks shall find." Why is it, then, that I cannot find the way? I certainly could see the way if it had been pointed out to me. I certainly desire to find the way, and know the truth. I cannot see, then, why I should be left in this state of despondency.

"I cannot understand Mr. H. He has always appeared to me to be a good man, and I have tried to treat him kindly. Yet he appeared to speak once or twice, in our conversation, as though he thought I was uncandid. I cannot see why he should be unwilling to refer me to the passages that speak of mourner's coming forward to pray and be prayed for. I recollect that he would not refer me to the place where I could find an account of the conversion of such vast multitudes. It appeared to me rational, as I desired to come to the Lord, to read the accounts of such vast numbers coming, and see for myself how they came. Why, then, did he evade, and fail to point out to me those passages? He certainly knew where they were. I cannot understand this."

Such were the meditations of Sincerity, after his retirement. Early in the morning, Mr. H. rapped at his door. "Good-morning," said Mr. H., "how do you do this morning?"

S.—My general health is good, but I could not rest last night. I am in much anxiety and greatly confounded in regard to my salvation. I was surprised and confounded, Mr. H., when you failed to point out to me, from the Scriptures, how I should come to the Lord. Can you my dear sir, give me the source to which I am to apply for the evidence of pardon?

H.—You must have the evidence of pardon within.

S.—How am I to know that it is within?

H.—You must *feel* that your sins are forgiven.

S.—What kind of feelings must I have, as an evidence of the pardon of sin?

H.—Good feelings—joyful feelings, as a matter of course. You must feel that your load of guilt is gone, and that the Lord has spoken peace to your soul.

S.—And that is the evidence of pardon!

H.—*Yes*, sir. —When the Lord converted my soul, it appeared to me that a mountain had been taken off me. It appeared to me that all nature changed, and that all the trees, the green fields, the fowls of heaven, and the fish of the sea—that everything in heaven and upon earth, praised God, and I was enabled to say, "I know that my Redeemer lives," and that "Je-

sus has power on earth to forgive sins." This, sir, is the evidence of pardon—the witness in myself that I am a child of God.

S.—What is the cause of your rejoicing?

H.—Because I have got religion, thank God!

S.—What is the evidence that you have got religion?

H.—My joyful feelings.

S.—Is that the way the matter stands in the Bible?

H.—My young friend, I am afraid you are skeptical. It appears to me that you are inclined to doubts. I would advise you to pray that you may be delivered from unbelief. The religion I have, of course is Scriptural.

S. I may be skeptical, but I do not think I am, At all events, I desire to believe and desire to be a Christian. But I cannot see how you make my inquiry, whether you make feeling the result of religion, or religion the result of feeling, an indication that I am skeptical. I simply desire to know whether feeling is the Scriptural *evidence* of pardon.

H.—My dear young friend, I must say to you candidly, that I have, from our first conversation, feared that you are skeptical, but shall be happy to find that you are not. But that *feeling* is the evidence of pardon, is manifested both from Scripture and reason. Seek the Lord, that you may find the salvation of your soul, and feel the power of pardoning love. I must see those *persons* who came to the mourner's bench last night, and see if they have found peace with God. Come to meeting tonight. Good-by.

While *Sincerity* was reflecting on this conversation a Romanist came in, to whom he said, "Where do you find Scripture to prove that the priest can forgive sins?"

Romanist. —I do not ask for Scripture to prove that the priest Can forgive sins; I know that *the* priest can forgive sins.

Sincerity. —How do you know it?

R.—How do I know that the priests can forgive sins? Why sir, when I am laded and pressed down with my numerous sins, I go to the priest and humbly confess—unbosom my whole soul to him, and the holy father forgives me. I know that lam

pardoned, because I feel that the great burden—my oppressive load of guilt—is gone. I feel that I am delivered, and return to my home happy.

S.—But where is the Scripture for that?"

R.—What need have I for Scripture? Don't I know when I am pardoned, when I *feel* that my load of sin and guilt is gone?

After the Romanist had gone, our young friend said to himself: "Is it possible that Romanists have the same evidence of pardon as other people? I am unable to understand how this is. If *feeling* is the evidence of pardon for anything I can see to the contrary, this Romanist has proved that a priest can pardon him, just as Mr. H. proved that the Lord pardoned him. Am I to have no evidence of pardon only such as a Romanist may have to prove that a priest can pardon him? Have Protestants no higher evidence of pardon than Romanists? This involves me in worse confusion than ever! Am I minded by unbelief, as Mr. H. seems to think, or what is the matter? I am perfectly astonished at the condition of religious matters. My confusion becomes worse and worse the more I think upon the subject.

Our young friend passed along up the street, and heard a man preaching in an old, dilapidated house, with some three small windows, and he seated himself in the house. It turned out to be an Anti-Means Baptist, preaching upon the words, "Whom He will, He hardeneth," to an audience of about fifteen persons, several of whom were soundly asleep. He was pretty much through his discourse when *Sincerity* entered. But in summing up his discourse, he insisted "that God passed by the non-elect, *made no* provision for them; that Christ did not die for them; that the Lord hardened them, blinded them, sent them strong delusions that they could not, in any event, turn to God, or be saved."

Sincerity walked away saying to himself, "Perhaps I am one of the non-elect and blinded. I cannot think that I am hardened, or that I am given over to believe a lie. If I know my own heart, I desire to know and believe the truth. I thought preachers were designed to enlighten the world, but if they are, I cannot understand them. I fear that I am lost!"

CHAPTER IV.

AS our young friend returned home, after hearing the Calvinist Baptist, he met with a Universalist preacher in conversation with a lawyer of his acquaintance, a skeptic; when the following conversation took place.

Lawyer.—Mr. S., what is the matter that you are following the preachers up? You are sure to be deluded by the noise and pretenses of religion!

Sincerity.—I am greatly distressed in regard to my salvation. I had supposed that religion was a very plain matter, and that one could become a Christ, inn at any time; but the more I think about it the greater my perplexity.

L.—Yes, sir; and the more you try to understand it the more you will be perplexed. In my younger days I was in the same condition with yourself. I listened to the preachers several years, hut found that I could not understand them, that they disagree among themselves; and, having turned my attention to the law, I found something tangible, and that can be acted upon, and have, therefore, concluded to leave my salvation to God. I will try and look out for myself in this world, and leave God to take care of me in the next, if there be any.

S.—I am inclined to think—indeed I am compelled to admit —that so far as my experience goes, what you say about the preachers appears to be the case. But then they are good men certainly.

L.—I admit, freely, that they are good men. Here is our neighbor 11., the presiding elder; he is a good and a self-sacrificing man. He spends his whole time in preaching, and visiting the members of his church, and, I think, only receives some three hundred dollars a year for his services, while I make a thousand a year with far less labor. Yet I have listened to him trying to point out the way of salvation, and I could see no plan or system that any man of sense could act upon, or, in other words, I could see nothing tangible that I could take hold of. Not only so, but I have seen numbers of sincere persons come to him in the church, and inquire of him what to do, and have heard him tell them to pray and be prayed for, and have

seen him pray for them, and they would, still go away mourning and lamenting that they were not pardoned.

S.—I have seen the same, and have had several private conversations with Mr. H., in which he failed to give me any satisfaction in regard to the way of salvation; and, as you say, it does appear to me that he had no plan. I think that, though he is a good, an honest, and a sincere man, he does not understand the gospel.

L.—No, Mr. S., you do not apprehend the difficulty. He is, as you say, a good, an honest and sincere man, but he is deluded, and the preachers are all in the same predicament. None of them understand; and the reason is, religion is all a delusion; it has no understanding to it.

S.—If I thought all the preachers were as incapable of giving light as Mr. H., I should be even more miserable than I am. But it is mortifying and discouraging to me to hear you ascribe the blame to *religion itself*. My impression is, that the fault is in the incompetency of some men to set forth Christianity, and not in the obscurity in religion itself.

L.—There is where you are mistaken; the fault is not in the men, but in religion. If you desire to obtain relief from your despondency, you had better drive this gloomy subject from your mind. Turn your attention to your business, and try to take comfort of yourself, for if you do not take care of yourself, nobody will do it for you. Come over the way and let us get something to take, and not allow ourselves to fall into gloomy despondency.

Universalist.—Mr. L., I think you have passed but a poor compliment upon religion and ministers. If you will allow me to explain to you the blessed gospel of God's universal paternity, I can show you how you can find comfort to your mind, and how our mutual friend, Sincerity, may find relief from all his troubles. I see what it is, Mr. L., that has driven you, and will drive you, Mr. S., into unbelief, if you are not relieved. It is the Pagan notion of "everlasting punishment"—"eternal damnation." If you once understood the blessed doctrine of a world's salvation, your mind would be at rest.

S.—Your idea is then, if I understand you, that the source of my distress is in a *misapprehension of mind*, and not in any real danger.

U.—I think, sir, that you are actually in a dangerous condition, but the danger is not what you fear. The only thing that will afford you relief is the blessed doctrine of a *world's salvation*.

S.— You consider, then, that I am really safe if I only knew it, and all that is necessary is to show "me and your friend here, Mr. L., that we are in no danger, to make us happy.

U. —Yes, *sir*; that is, there is no danger of any "eternal damnation," or "everlasting punishment," as the orthodox teach.

L.—Did you say, sir, that the orthodox doctrine of "eternal damnation" and "everlasting punishment" is a "Pagan notion?"

U.—*Yes, sir*, I did, and can prove it.

L.—Well, then, sir, Jesus taught "Pagan notions," for he used this identical language. He spoke of persons whom he declared to be in danger of "eternal damnation," and others whom he declared should go into "everlasting punish merit." This is the teaching of your Master, and this you call "Pagan notions." Is this the respect you show to the teachings of Jesus?

U.—These passages do not mean that—the fact is—

L.—The fact is, you do not believe your Bible any more than I do, nor do you anymore honor Jesus. He says, "He who believeth not the Son, shall *not see life*." Do you believe this?

U.—That passage means—I—I—I can prove that all shall see life, and—

L.—And, as a matter of course, that your Master did not tell the truth when he said, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life." How is this?

U.—I can prove—I can show—the Bible says—

L.—The Bible says, that you "*strengthen the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life*." Still you will dishonor the Bible in promising the wicked life, and strengthen the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way, will you ?

U.—That means—I hold—I—I—if I talk any more it shall be

with a man who has some sense, and not with you, sir. Good-by.

L.—You may have some sense, but there is no sense in your doctrine. Friend *Sincerity*, let me say to you, before we separate, that this kind of treatment from preachers has convinced me that religion is all a delusion. None of their doctrine is true. As I said before, I shall try and take care of myself in this world, and trust to God to take care of me hereafter. I must go. Good-by.

Sincerity walked along homeward, ruminating in his mind as follows: "My trouble increases upon me every day. In the place of finding any relief, new difficulties rise before me. These unfortunate men with whom I have been conversing have not one ray of light. If there is nothing better than they can present, the world is lost. Is it possible that people in general have no better understanding in regard to these matters than those with whom I have conversed? I am perfectly confounded! Can it be that Mr. L. is right., and that religion is all a delusion? I hope he is not, for then all must be darkness and gloom. In this case, we must live in uncertainty, and die in doubt. The thought of giving up all hope of finding any better instruction is insupportable. I cannot endure it. I will go home and read my Bible through, at all events. I am wretched now, and certainly should be miserable to die in this condition. I have now found four classes of men, and neither of them has afforded me the least satisfaction:

1. Mr. H. insists upon the necessity of seeking the Lord. In this, he has satisfied me, that he is right; but he has shown me no directions from the Bible, pointing me the way to the Lord.

2. The Calvinist Baptist insists that I can do nothing, and that if I am of the non-elect, I can never come to the Lord, no matter how I seek. This I do not believe, for the Lord would not require me to seek him, knowing that I could do nothing.

3. My neighbor, the lawyer, has become disgusted with the whole matter, and has resolved to engross his mind with the affairs of the world, and leave the result with God, believing that religion is all a delusion.

4. As to this Universalist. preacher, he is trying to satisfy his own mind, and the minds of others, with the notion that man is safe wit bout any conversion, for there is no danger of being lost, as there is no hell or lake of fire. But this most ridiculous, absurd, and blasphemous doctrine gives the lie to the whole Bible, for its whole spirit is, "except ye repent, ye 'shall perish. "

In my opinion, these latter three doctrines, if they are doctrines, are useless, as neither proposes to make the world any better, or do anything for the world. I could see propriety in the position of Mr. H., if he could show what the Scriptures require me to do. But I must read my Bible through, and *see* if I can find something better.

CHAPTER V.

OUR young friend was passing up Clinton street, Cincinnati, between Western Row and John streets, and he saw a Methodist minister, accompanied by some ten or a dozen persons, entering the basement of the chapel belonging to the "Christians," or "Disciples of Christ," as they call themselves, their regular preacher being present. Here a new subject presented itself to the consideration of young *Sincerity*. The little company approached the baptistery, the lids of which were folded back out of the way, and all eyes were directed down into an emblematic tomb, some ten feet in length, and four-feet wide. The water was some two and a half or three feet in depth. All stood in profound silence, with their eyes fixed upon this solemn-looking place. Presently the Methodist minister, and two respectable-looking ladies, all dressed in black, with countenances solemn as the grave, made their appearance near this lowly tomb, where the minister made the following address:

"Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, (and that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God, but live in sin, committing many actual transgressions;) and that our Savior, Christ, saith, None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerated, and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost,

and received into Christ's holy church, and be made lively members of the same." —Dis., p. 107. Old Edition.

The minister then made the following prayer:

"Almighty and immortal God, the and of all that need, the helper of all that floe to thee for succor, the life of them that believe, and the resurrection of the dead, we call upon thee for these persons, that they, coming to thy holy baptism, may receive remission of their *sins*, by spiritual regeneration. Receive them, O Lord, as thou hast promised by thy well-beloved Son, saying, Ask, and you shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; so give now unto us that ask, let us that seek find; open the gate unto us that knock, that these persons may enjoy the everlasting benediction of thy heavenly washing, and may come to the eternal kingdom which thou hast promised by Christ our Lord. Amen." Dis., p. 107.

He then descended, with one of the ladies, into the baptismal water, and lifting his eyes and hand toward heaven, uttered in a strong, clear, and solemn voice, the following most fearful and awful of all the formulas ever uttered by human lips: "I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." As he uttered this profoundly awful sentence, with the little company standing around, and breathing almost suspended, he lowered the candidate gently down, till the waters closed above, thus separating her from the visible world. In the next moment, she appeared again, as the waters parted from above her, in the form of a resurrection from the dead, and an actual resurrection to a new life, and she was joyfully received by those standing by. The other lady passed through the same sacred ceremony. The minister then ascended the steps, or, as the Scripture expresses it, "came up out of the Water," and lifting his hands and eyes toward heaven, said, "May grace, mercy and peace, from God, the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be with us all—now, henceforth, and forevermore. Amen."

The minister walked away, apparently conscious of having done his duty. Sincerity stood by trembling, and the tears imperceptibly trickling down his manly cheeks. As he walked

away he said to himself: "I thought Methodists did not believe in immersion! But this man seemed sincere in what he did— how is this? Beside, I have never witnessed any religious ceremonies that prod need such an effect upon my own sensibilities as this. Possibly it is my duty to be baptized! I certainly should delight to do so, if I understood the matter, and thought myself prepared. I will see my friend, Mr. H., once more, and have a conversation with him on baptism."

In a few moments he was in the studio of Mr. H., when the following conversation took place:

H.—Well, Mr. S., have you become any better reconciled in your mind?

S.—NO, sir; I am as much perplexed and confused as I have been at any former period. I have had several conversations, and heard some preaching, since I saw you, but all without affording me the least relief. Did you know of the baptizing by the Methodist preacher in charge on —street, in the baptistery of the "Campbellite" church, on Clinton street, this morning?

H.—Yes, sir; I know all about it. Were you present?

S.—Yes, sir; it was a solemn and interesting scene.

H.—The facts in the case are these: There were quite a number who joined our church, as you are aware, and, as our Discipline requires all to be baptized before they are received into full fellowship, it devolved upon myself to preach a sermon on baptism. This I did and satisfied all, except the two you saw dipped this morning, that sprinkling would do, and administered the ordinance to them in that way. But nothing would do these two, but they must be dipped; and, as my health is delicate, I cannot endure the least exposure to wet without imminent danger of violent cold, probably terminating in consumption, I would not consent to go into the water, at such a time as this, to gratify the weakness of anybody. The truth is, baptism is not a saving ordinance anyhow.

S.—I am surprised to hear you say that, for your preaching brother told us this morning that our Savior says that, "None can enter into the kingdom of God except he be regenerated,

and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost," and exhorted those present to call upon God to "Grant the persons to be baptized that which by nature they cannot have." He also prayed that they might receive remission of their sins, and that the Lord would receive them, from which, I thought, he regarded it as a saving ordinance. [The Discipliners now changed.]

H.—You must have misunderstood him—he did not mean that.

S.—But he had your book of Discipline in his hand, and I understood him. to be uttering the precise words of the Discipline.

H.— You do not understand this matter. We do not believe that baptism is essential.

S.—Is it true, as your preaching brother said this morning, that our Savior says that "None can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born of water and the "Holy Ghost?"

H.—Certainly it is; it is so stated in our Discipline.

S.—HOW can any be saved without it, then? If none can enter the kingdom of God without being "born of water and the Holy Ghost," and being born of water is baptism, as you admit your Discipline implies, how can any be saved without it? Can they be saved without entering into the kingdom of God?

H. —None can enter—none can enter—the kingdom of God there means—the fact is, the mode is not revealed.

S.—Am I to understand you, that the manner in which baptism is to be administered is not revealed?

H.—Yes, sir; no man can show from the Bible that any mode is revealed.

S.—If it is not revealed how a thing is to be *done*, how is a person to know how to do it? or how can any living man know whether it is done at all or not?

H.—I regard it as valid when performed either way, by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

S.—But, my dear sir, if the manner of obeying the command to be baptized is not revealed, it is wholly in the dark, and there is no evidence that either sprinkling, pouring, or immersion is baptism.

H.—I can prove sprinkling from Scripture. It says, "I will *sprinkle* many nations."

S.—I thought you said the mode is not revealed! If it is not revealed, how can you prove it to be sprinkling?

H.—I am, sir, afraid your condition is lamentable. I fear you will turn into skepticism. Yon produce nothing but difficulties. The mode of baptism is plainly taught in the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Lord said, "I will *pour* out my Spirit." This proves that pouring is the mode.

S.—Mr. H., I hope I shall not become a skeptic; but if I cannot find something more consistent, and that I can understand, better than what you have taught, I do not know where I shall land. Yon first tell me, of baptism, that no mode is revealed; then, in the next moment, you are trying to prove that sprinkling is baptism. Then, again, you are trying to prove pouring. In the place of no mode being revealed, you would have me believe that two or three modes are revealed!

As our young friend walked away, he said to himself: "Is this the way ministers are enlightening the world? Is there nothing in religion that I can understand? If there is no clearer light than this, I am a miserable man!"

CHAPTER VI.

Our young friend, *Sincerity*, shortly after his late conversation with Mr. H., was at a funeral, and, being detained by the failure of the undertaker to arrive in time, his attention was attracted by the conversation of a very grave, dignified, and thoughtful lady, in appearance, who sat near him, and directed her discourse to some ladies at her side. He soon found that her remarks were of a religious character, and of course was deeply interested in them. But he could not discover what religions party this venerable lady was of; yet he was struck with the sense and propriety of what she said. For the present, we shall call this distinguished and interesting lady, *Priscilla*. When the conversation had terminated between her and those to whom she directed her remarks, our young friend approached her as follows:

Sincerity.—May I ask, madam, to what denomination you belong?

Priscilla, —The Church of Christ, sir.

S.—I supposed you belonged to the Church of Christ, but what branch?

P.—I do not belong to a *branch*, my good sir, but, am a branch myself. The Savior said to his disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." I trust, sir, that I am one of these branches, or a member of Christ's body—the church.

S.—Well, but what do you and your brethren call yourselves?

P.—Christians, sir; Disciples of Christ.

S.—Nothing else?

P.—Sometimes we call the members of the church "brethren," "friends," "children of God," "saints," etc., as they did in ancient times. We apply to ourselves none but Scripture designations.

S.—Why, I am astonished! How do you (distinguish yourselves from others?

P.—We do not wish to distinguish ourselves from others who are satisfied with the simple designations by which the people of God are called in the Scriptures. But those who are not satisfied with Scripture designations for the children of God, by calling themselves by other names, *distinguish themselves from us*. There is, therefore, a distinction kept up where there is a difference, and that is as far as there should be any distinction?

S.—Well, this is a new idea to me. You say you simply apply to yourselves Scripture names, as you find them in the Bible?

P.—No, sir, not exactly as we find them in the *Bible*, as *we* find them in the *New Testament*. We are not Jews, but Christians; not under Moses, but Jesus; not under the law, but the gospel; not under the letter, but, the Spirit.

S.—If I understand, then, you call yourselves Christians, Disciples, etc., as the followers of Christ did in New Testament times, and nothing else. Am I right?

P.—*Yes*, sir. Is that not sufficient? If you were about to die, and knew yourself to be a Christian, a Disciple of Christ, etc., would you not be satisfied?

S.—I must confess that I would. That is precisely what I

have been desiring to know and inquiring into for weeks.

What doctrine do you hold, madam?

P.—The; doctrine of Christ, or Christianity.

S. —Nothing else?

P.—No, sir, nothing else. The Lord has given nothing else. We need nothing else. Not only so, hut the Lord has pronounced a curse upon man or angel who shall preach anything else, or even pervert the gospel of Christ. Are you not satisfied to receive Christianity—pure and unadulterated Christianity, as the Lord gave it,, and nothing else?

S.—Yes, if I knew how to receive Christianity as God gave it, and nothing else, and how to become a Christian, or a disciple of Christ, as you seem to think one may, it would be a relief to me worth more than worlds. But this is where my trouble lies. I have had several conversations with Mr. H., but find it utterly impossible for *me* to understand him. He thinks I am blinded by unbelief. I confess I am blinded by some means; I do not understand.

P.—My dear sir, I have not an unkind feeling toward Mr. H. or a hard word to say of him. He is evidently a kind-hearted man, and is jest about sufficiently enlightened as to conduct a mourner's bench excitement, without Scripture or understanding, but he is as ignorant, as a new-born infant of the Bible plan of salvation, and what is worse in his case than that of an infant, he is so blinded by bigotry, sectarian partisan zeal and self-conceit, that there is even less hope of his ever being enlightened than an infant. The reason you could not understand him was that he presented nothing tangible that your mind could take hold of.

S.—That is what my friend, the lawyer, told me in a conversation the other day, hut he said the fault was In religion—that there is no understanding in it.

P. —I am acquainted with your friend, the gentleman of the legal profession, and consider him an honorable man of the world, but he has been confused with sectarian difficulties and absurdities, and is now *a* skeptic. But this want of intelligibility is not in religion itself, but in the confused minds of men,

who have never learned to take hold of religion at its beginning.

S.—Madam, will you tell me what, its beginning is?

P.—Its beginning and ending is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. He is revealed to the unconverted and unbelieving world in the four accounts of the gospel, Matthew. Mark, Luke and John. Hence, John says, "These things are written that you might believe." When the inquirer has examined these divine testimonies concerning Christ, and believes on him as a divine person, the .Savior and Redeemer, it leads him to inquire what he shall do to be saved.

S.—Allow me to say, madam, that that is precisely where I am now standing. I believe in the Savior, with all my heart, and love Him, but cannot find how I am to come to Him.

P.—You are then prepared to proceed to the second division of the New Testament, the Acts of Apostles, and read the inspired accounts of the numerous cases of conversion there recorded, that you may proceed in the same way they did, to obtain pardon and admission into the kingdom of God.

S.—That is precisely the part of the Bible I desired to find, but Mr. II. evaded and did not point it out to me. I was at the protracted meeting held by Mr. H., and saw a number of persons come forward to pray and be prayed for, and requested him to point out to me where the Scriptures mention such vast numbers turning to the Lord, that I might read for myself, and learn precisely what they were required to do; but, for some cause, he did not point out the place to me. Did you say I would find this in the Acts of the Apostles?

P.—Yes, sir; you will there find the account of all the conversions recorded in the Scriptures. But you will find nothing there, or any place in the Bible, about coming to the mourner's bench to pray and be prayed for. There was no such procedure in the Apostles' times.

S.—What then were they required to do?

P.—You will find, Acts 2:38, where a vast number inquired what they should do, and where the inspired apostles answered them. Read the case for yourself and the whole book of Acts through, against I see you again, and you can tell yourself what

they were required to do as well as any preacher in the city.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR young friend, *Sincerity*, after his conversation at the funeral with *Mrs. Priscilla*, returned to his room, and read the Acts of the Apostles through once every day for a week. Just as he had closed his seventh reading, the Presiding Elder, Mr. H., rapped at his door, and was soon seated with our young friend, by his pleasant lire. After the usual compliments, the following conversation ensued:

H.—Have you become any better reconciled in your mind in regard to the salvation of your soul?

S.—Yes, sir; I have had a conversation with *Mrs. Priscilla*, and——

H.—And she is about to make a *Campbellite* of you, is she?

S.—No, sir; she said nothing about making a *Campbellite*, or any other kind of an *ite*; but she gave me more satisfaction about becoming a Christian than all the other instructors I have had.

H.—I know her; she knows nothing about religion: she is a woman I cannot endure. Did she tell you that you would have to be (*lipped*, or you could not be saved?

S.—No, sir; she said nothing about being "dipped" as you call it.

H.—Well, that is surprising; she generally makes immersion the great essential, and contends that unless persons are immersed they cannot be saved.

S.—She did not mention immersion to me; and I think you are entirely too hasty thus to prejudge her.

H.—I have no patience with such women. It is ridiculous for them to sit up and discuss doctrinal matters.

S.—I never saw the lady before, but she appeared unassuming, and certainly showed an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures.

H.—I have seen such folks before, and found that, though they showed an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, they knew nothing about religion.

S.—Do not the Scriptures treat of religion? and if they do, how can a person have an intimate acquaintance with them and know nothing about religion?

H.—A person may understand the Scriptures—a person may know—the truth is—what did *Mrs. Priscilla* say that afforded you so much satisfaction?

S.—I cannot now repeat over all she said, but the main item from which I have derived satisfaction was the simple direction, where in the Bible I could find an account of conversions, and how sinners were converted.

H.—She told you to read the second chapter of Acts, I will vouch for; did she not?

S.—She told me to read the whole of Acts through, and see for myself what the apostles preached, and—

H.—I know her deception; do not let her deceive you with any of her novel notions.

S.—It cannot be possible that she was trying to deceive me, unless the Bible itself will deceive, for she showed me where to read and learn for myself. She claimed to be nothing but a Christian; to belong to no church but the Church of Christ, and did not attempt to explain to me, but advised me to read for myself.

H.—All that is quite specious; it is plausible enough, and well calculated to deceive the unsuspecting. But she did not come out fully. I have heard her preacher deliver some discourses that were unexceptionable, but it was at times when he did not come out fully.

S.—Well, sir, I cannot see how there can be any deception in her course. She instructed me to read the sermons of the Apostles; believe what they preached, precisely as those to whom they preached did; and when I came to where persons inquired what they must do to be saved, under the preaching of the apostles, I must notice what they were directed to do, how they did it; and do the same for the same purpose.

H.—I say, sir, it is all deception, and its great plausibility is calculated to delude and ruin men, and—

S. —There is *Mrs. Priscilla* now, passing through the hall; I

will invite her in, and have you explain this matter. *Mrs. Priscilla*, please walk in. My friend, Mr. H., has given me a friendly call, .and I have been relating our conversation to him, and wish to hear him and yourself converse upon the subject of our conversation at the funeral the other day.

H.—Madam, you are aware that I am no friend to controversy.

P.—I presume so, sir, and I do not set myself up as competent to dismiss doctrinal points with a gentleman who has made religion the study of his life.

S.—I was telling my friend, Mr. H., of *your* recommendation for me to read the Acts of Apostles through, which I have done seven times over since I saw you, with great satisfaction. But he thinks your instructions are deceptive.

P.—Mr. H., do you not believe that the same doctrine the Apostles preached should be preached *now*?

H.—Undoubtedly it should.

P.—Should it not have the same effect?

H.—Most assuredly it should.

P.—Therefore the same doctrine is preached, and the same effect is produced, will not people now, as they did then, cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

H. —Most certainly, and many have cried out the same way during our great revival.

P. —Should not the same answer given in such cases by the Apostles be given now to inquirers?

H.—They should be answered—I should tell them — the Scripture says—the fact is, I am not bound to answer *your* question.

P.—No, sir, but you are bound, as a gentleman, but more especially as a *Christian*, if you allege that I am a *deceiver*, to show wherein. You have granted that what the Apostles preached should be preached now; that what the first converts believed should be believed now; that it should have the same effect upon the heart now it did then, inducing the people to cry out, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" But when I ask you if the same answer should not be given to the inquiry now as giv-

en to it then, you say you are not bound to answer; but still allege that I am a deceiver. Am I deceiving when I insist on following the exact teachings of the Apostles?

H.—I do not reran that you designedly deceive.

P.—How can I be deceiving at all, either intentionally or unintentionally, when I insist on believing all the Apostles preached, doing exactly what they commanded, for the same purpose, that precisely the same effect may be prod need, and that the subject may have the same enjoyments? I simply desire everything as God gave it, nothing more, nothing less. Is this deceiving?

H.—Madam, I cannot subscribe to your views; they are disastrous to vital piety.

P.—I did not ask you to subscribe to *my views*, but desire you to show how it could deceive any person, to be directed to the first teachings and practice of the Apostles after the Lord ascended to heaven, to learn how persons were converted, and insist on their being converted in the same way now. Do you believe those converted on the day of Pentecost were converted right?

H.—I believe—I hold—I hold—the Scriptures say, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

P.—That is, if one man is persuaded to he a Mormon, another a Universalist, another a Romanist, etc., it is all right, is it?

H.—Madam, you have a peculiar method of turning everything your own way. That passage, you must know, can have no such signification as that.

P.—No, sir, nor does it have any such signification as you have given it, nor has it any reference to the conversion of sinners, but it has reference to things pertaining to our practice, wherein we are entirely free, or where there is no law binding in any way, as in reference to eating meat, where we are left entirely free to eat or not, as we may be persuaded in our own minds. But, sir, did Peter answer the three thousand on the day of Pentecost rightly, when they cried out, "What shall we do?"

H. —Mrs. P., why do you ask that question? You know that

we do not hold alike, and you can have your own opinion, and allow me to have mine.

P.—It is not a question of opinion, or whether we *hold alike*; but did the inspired Apostle answer rightly?

H.—I fell you, madam, we cannot see alike.

S.—Mrs. P., I have read the Acts of the Apostles through seven times since I saw you, and am satisfied that Peter answered correctly on the day of Pentecost, for he "preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into." I have been for weeks making inquiry what I should do to be saved; but I now believe all the Apostles preached, and am determined to do what they commanded.

H.—I saw from the beginning that you would have your own way. Good-bye.

S.—I intended to have the Lord's way, if it was to be found, and, having now found it, I am determined to walk in it.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SHORT time after the foregoing interview, Sincerity called to have another conversation with *Mrs. Priscilla*, which resulted in the following:

Sincerity.—I understood you to say that in the Acts of the Apostles we have the only historical accounts of conversions to Christianity found in the whole Bible. Am I right?

Priscilla.—You are right, when the statement is properly qualified. The Acts of the Apostles contains all the accounts of conversions to Christianity after the Christian institution was complete, and the full gospel, *in fact*, was preached.

S.—Let me interrupt you. What do you mean by the gospel being preached "in fact?"

P.—I find a distinction made in the Bible between the gospel preached *in promise* and the gospel preached *in fact*. The gospel may be preached in promise and be believed in promise, without being understood. Paul says, Gal. 3: 8, "The gospel was preached to Abraham, saying, In thee and thy seed shall all nations be blessed." This was the whole gospel, concentrated

in a promise—the promise that God made to Abraham. But Paul defines the gospel, 1 Cor. 15:3, to be "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." The language of the Almighty to Abraham is a promise. The death of Christ is the accomplishment of that promise *in fact*. The gospel in promise is the promise of Christ and the gospel in him many centuries before he came, but the gospel in fact is the death of Christ according to the Scriptures, and the full gospel developed through him, as Paul expresses it, "made manifest among all nations for the obedience of faith." In other words, the promise to Abraham preached the gospel prospectively, or as something good *to come*; but the Apostles, after the resurrection of Christ, preached it *in fact*, or as something good that *had come*.

All the good things which God had in store for the ages to come, or all included in the new institution, were embraced in the promise to Abraham, but hid from the world—even from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes—the Apostles, that they might preach to the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ. The whole history of the Bible—the dealings of God with the patriarchs, with the prophets, with the seed of Abraham, with all nations, and all the promises are clearly seen to be from the one same omniscient Ruler of the universe, all leading forward and pointing to the one great fact—the death of Christ. All the prophecies, all the promises, and all the revelations of God to man, concentrate upon the person of Christ. His death for our sins, his burial and resurrection from the dead, according to the Scriptures, for our justification, may be regarded as the center of the whole spiritual system. God has now exalted him to heaven, and demands the attention of the world to him, declaring that to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess.

S. —Allow me again to interrupt you in your interesting remarks. I am delighted with Christianity; it honors our Savior. But I am so surprised on reading the Acts of Apostles to find that they did not explain their views to their converts before baptizing them, nor do I find where any related their experiences or gave their views of the gospel.

P.—I was going to set that matter forth when you stopped me. As Christ and all Christianity were included in the *promise* to Abraham, so Christ and all Christianity are included in the *fact* that he died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Therefore, he, who anciently received the promise received Christ; so he now who receives the fact, receives Christ and all that is contained in him. The Old Testament and the New center in him. God is in him. Heaven is in him. All the blessings that God bestows upon his children in this world are in him. The whole Christian revelation concentrates itself in him.

S.—I can now see what is meant by "preaching Christ," as mentioned in Scripture. It includes all that he authorizes.

P.—Precisely so; and on the other hand, when Paul determined to "know nothing but Christ, and him crucified," he determined to know nothing except what Christ authorizes. Hence, receiving Christ is receiving all that he teaches, and rejecting him is rejecting all his teachings.

S.—In that view of the subject I can see how people were converted immediately on hearing the gospel. They did not wait to understand the whole system, but simply received the Author of it, being assured that he was a divine person, and could teach nothing wrong.

P.—Yes, sir; and having such love for him and attachment to him, as to receive him with the determination to receive all he has revealed. The first converts of the Apostles were not converts to a long train of doctrines, but to the gracious and adorable person *of Christ*. After they had received him, it was the business of their lives to learn all they could of him and his doctrine, and do his will.

S.—This relieves my mind of what, for a time, was a difficulty. I could not see how Philip received the eunuch with so little ceremony. But I see now, that he received everything in Christ, when he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

P.—It explains every case of conversion in the New Testament. The conversions all took place at the time of the first interview the Apostles had with the penitents. They never

sent one away seeking. As a matter of course they did not indoctrinate them in any lengthy system, but presented them the system, as a whole, in the person of Christ, This *is* presenting the whole gospel in one proposition, so that a man may receive or reject it, by saying yes or no, and acting in conformity with that affirmation or denial. Your friend, Mr. H., has blamed us for receiving persons as Philip did the eunuch, upon his confession of his faith in Christ and baptized for remission of sin; but this covers the whole revelation of God to man—includes all that God has revealed to the world. He who makes confession, repents of his sins and is baptized in his name, receives him and all that he and his holy Apostles have taught, and binds himself, by the highest obligations, to do his commandments.

S.—Do we not receive remission of sins through the name of Christ?

P.—Most certainly, but. you must come into his name.

S.—Are we not justified by the Spirit of God ?

P.—Undoubtedly, when we come to his dwelling place.

S.—Are we not saved by his life?

P.—Beyond all doubt, when we come to his life.

S.—And yet his blood cleanses us from sin! How is this?

P.—If you will examine every case of baptism, you will find that it is always to be administered in the *name* of the Lord. In baptism, then, the penitent believer takes upon him the name of the Lord. The blood of Christ flowed in his death. When we come into his death, we come into his blood. Paul says, "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have been baptized *into* his *death*." Baptism, then, brings us into the name and into the death of Christ, and consequently to his blood. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you." This shows that the spirit dwells in the body, church, or temple of God. The life, also, has the same dwelling place. To come, then, to the Spirit and the life, we must come into the body, or into Christ. The Apostle says, we are "baptized in to Christ." The man, then, who believes with all his heart in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world, confesses that faith with the

mouth, and is solemnly baptized in the name of the Lord, comes into the name, to the blood, to the Spirit, and into the life of his Lord and Redeemer, who alone can save him.

Not only so, but it is here, and here *alone*, over the person who believes with all his heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, has repented of his sins, made confession of his faith in Christ, and is about to be buried with his Lord in baptism, that solemn and August formula is authorized to be pronounced: "I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Here, all Christianity concentrates itself in the great confession made by the penitent; and here, in his first act of obedience, he comes to the blood of the covenant, the Spirit of Christ and his life, and the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is called upon him, as if to concentrate the whole Divinity upon his poor soul, for its deliverance from sill.

S.—Mrs. P., what evidence will I have that I am pardoned?

P.—The Lord's own unequivocal promise: "He that believeth and is baptized *shall be saved.*" You have also the evidence of the Apostle, or the Holy Spirit speaking in him: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." His promise can never fail. are you not willing to rely upon the promise of God for your salvation?

S.—I certainly am, and truly thankful, too, that I have found how I could come to the promise of God, with assurance that I should be received. Where shall I go to make confession of my faith in Christ, and be baptized ?

P.—Attend our church on next Lord's day, and our preacher will baptize you without hesitation.

On the next Lord's day, at an early hour, *Sincerity* was in the Christian assembly, for the first time, to hear a man who preached nothing but Christ; no doctrine but Christianity, and no name but the name of the Lord. He listened, with intense interest, to a clear and satisfactory discourse on the great elementary principles of Christianity. At the close, he went forward, and in the presence of the assembly confessed the Savior

of the world. In a few minutes after, he and the preacher stood side by side in the water, some three feet deep, and the large audience standing in breathless silence, while the following words were pronounced: "I baptize you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit." When those words had been uttered, the preacher gently lowered his noble form beneath the yielding waters. As he raised him up, *the* audience sang,

"How happy are they who their Savior obey," etc.

Our young friend rejoiced, believing in the God of his salvation, and the Savior of the world.

At three o'clock, P.M., of the same day, "when the disciples met together to break bread," *Sincerity* was present. An elder of the congregation arose and read, in an impressive and solemn manner, the hymn commencing with the words:

"And is the gospel peace and love? Such let our conversation be," etc.

The whole congregation arose, and united in singing the hymn read. The audience was then seated, and the account of the Lord's death was read from John's testimony. The request was then made, that if there were any persons present who had confessed the Lord, and submitted to him as the Savior of the world, who desire to unite with, or take membership in this individual congregation, they would come forward while the disciples unite in singing the song beginning with the words:

"How sweet, how heav'nly is the sight,
When those; that love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfill the Word," etc.

During the singing, our young friend presented himself in front of the stand, and when the song was ended, the Elder stood before him, and addressed him as follows:

"My dear young brother, I am truly happy to have the privilege of receiving you into this congregation, and trust that the union we this day form will prove both a blessing to yourself and to the church. You have entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord, and are now bound by the highest and most im-

portant obligations that can rest upon a human being, to follow Jesus, to learn of him, to regard him as your infallible Teacher or Master, remembering that he has said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' He will grant *you* grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from you. He gave himself for you; he laid down his life for you; he made his life an offering for sin, and in this has evinced his love to you. In this great manifestation of his love to you he has laid you under eternal obligations to love and serve him. Your conversion consists not in receiving along train of speculative doctrines and notions, but in receiving him who came from heaven—in an identification with him in placing yourself, as we all are, under him, as our great Leader and the Captain of our salvation. Look to him, then; put your whole trust in him. Read his blessed Word, call upon him every day, and do his commandments, that you may enter by the gates into the city, and have access to the tree of life."

After this address, the church united in singing the song commencing with the words:

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love,
The fellowship of kindred minds,
Is like to that above," etc.

The members of the church all came forward, and gave him the hand, evincing his cordial and Christian reception, while tears of rejoicing flowed down his manly cheeks. May he serve God all the days of his life.