

FOREWORD



In this new edition, no change of any importance has been made beyond the correction of errata, and extending the texts quoted. The object of the book is to draw more attention to the great subject of connecting at all times the Person of Christ with His work. This is a point which the experience of the most solid believers has testified to as of vast importance. Toplady quotes the following case from the diary of one who afterwards preached Christ, Mr Thomas Cole. Listen to his interesting statement:

I was convinced I could be saved no other way than by grace, if I could but find grace enough. But at that time I saw more in my own sin than in God's mercy. But this put me on a further inquiry after the grace of God, because my life lay upon it: and then I was brought to the Gospel. When, however, I came to the Gospel, I met with the law in it; that is, I was for turning the Gospel into law. I began to settle myself upon Gospel-duties, such as repentance,

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humiliation, believing, praying; and (I know not how) I forgot the promise of grace which first brought me to the Gospel. Soon, I found I could neither believe nor pray as the Gospel required. While I was in this plunge, it pleased the Lord to direct me to study the Person of Christ, whom I looked on as the great undertaker in the work of man's salvation! And truly here I may say, as Paul did, 'It pleased God to reveal His Son in me.' God overcame my heart with this. I saw so much mercy in His mercy, so much love in His love, so much grace in His grace, that I knew not what to liken it to. And here my heart broke, I knew not how! Before this faith came, I knew not how to secure myself against past, present, and future sins: but there was that largeness of grace, that all-sufficiency of mercy, that infinity of righteousness, discovered to me in Christ, that I found sufficient for all the days of my life.

GLASGOW, June, 1858.

I

STATEMENT OF THE FACT THAT THE PERSON OF CHRIST IS THE ESSENCE OF THE GLAD TIDINGS



From the beginning, the Gospel has come to the awakened sinner with the same consciousness of important news to tell, as that messenger who ran to David, after the battle of Mahanaim, exclaiming ‘All is well!’ But even as the burden of that message brought by Ahimaaz was simply victory, without any narrative of details, so was the Old Testament proclamation of the good news to our earth. There was still need of a Cushite to give details; and Cushite did come upon the heels of Ahimaaz, telling that the essence of the victory lay in the fact of the leader of the host being himself slain. It is thus the New Testament has overtaken the Old, proclaiming, ‘Tidings, O earth! Tidings! It is the Son of God who has died, satisfying the Law of His Father, and establishing His throne.’

In the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:32) Paul announced to the intently listening audience, ‘We declare unto you glad tidings!’ and forthwith added that

the promise made to the fathers was now fulfilled in Jesus risen. It was as if he had said, 'The voice from the excellent glory cries, Hear the beloved Son! and speaks of nothing but what He is, has, and has done.' That vessel which has endured all the storms of wrath, that ark which has borne unmoved the shock of cataracts from the opened windows of heaven, and depths breaking up below, contains everything fitted to meet the sinner's need; and in proportion as the Holy Ghost reveals this Person to the awakened sinner, there will come to light a store of all things suited to the cravings of an immortal soul.

When the sinner has got any clear discovery of this glorious Person, he is a saved man; for so we find written in Galatians 1:13-16, 'Ye have heard of my conversation in time past ... But it pleased God ... to reveal his Son in me.' Matthew 16:16-17, 'Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.'

Resting on this Person for salvation is called 'Faith in Jesus Christ'. In this faith, there is an intellectual act – namely, the apprehending of the meaning of what is stated concerning Jesus. But this apprehension of the meaning of what is stated, or testified, concerning Jesus, is but the avenue that leads on to the magnificent mansion. It leads the soul to the Person of whom these things are declared. It never is the belief of bare propositions that saves the soul; for these have to do only with the understanding. Propositions,

however weighty, must guide us onward to the Person who is the essence of the testimony; they are made use of for this end by the same Holy Spirit who enlightens our once carnal understanding to see the real truth.¹

The belief of the testimony, or record, concerning the Son of God, our Saviour, is the porch of the building, through which we pass into the audience-chamber and meet the Living Inhabitant, full of light, and life, and love.

There is a twofold remedy required to meet the exigencies of a fallen soul.

1. The soul must feel entirely delivered from that guilt which has compelled the Holy God to withdraw. The sinner's soul is by nature laden with guilt, the guilt of original and actual sin; and until this guilt is altogether taken away, there can be no freedom of access to God. But remove this barrier, and then the Holy God may meet the sinner, and the sinner may run to the open arms of the Holy God. This is the bringing of the conscience to solid rest.

2. The soul has feelings, emotions, affections, which constitute what we call in common language the heart of the man. The heart, then, must be brought to its rest, as

1. 'Though faith be radically in the understanding, yet it operates on the will which embraces the object' (FISHER'S Catechism). 'Faith is begun in the head, but not perfected till it comes into the heart' (ROGERS of Dedham). 'Faith is not so much a disposition of the mind toward the truth, as a disposition of the heart toward Christ, produced by means of the truth' (SIEVEWRIGHT). 'The soul in believing closes with the Person of Christ. He is the principal object, though not the immediate object of faith' (FRASER of Brae).

well as the conscience; and it will be brought to rest, if you can find for it an object vast enough, rich enough, and so accommodated to its frame as to give ample scope for the exercise of all its powers, and the play of all its feelings.

Now, both these ends are answered when the soul discovers the Person of the God-man. There it is that the twofold remedy is found. For now, the conscience, enabled by the Holy Spirit to discern and examine the treasures stored up in the God-man Mediator, finds all the materials needful to its pacification and rest, inasmuch as His obedience to the law and the satisfaction rendered by Him for dishonour done to it, are efficacious beyond measure. And next, when enabled by the same Spirit of truth to explore the wealth of sympathy, and tenderness, and brotherly feeling, wherewith the God-man is fraught, and which is given forth from the side of His humanity, the man finds therein such an object as his heart craved, an object on which his heart can repose.

It is now that he tastes 'The Bread of Life.' It is only now that he knows the meaning of making the Saviour his meat and drink (John 6:52); for it is now that he has found out the entire remedy for his case in the person of a Mediator, who unites the human nature with the Divine, and uses both in dealing with man. Finding flesh and blood (and, of course, all that is peculiar to a frame wherein flesh and blood are ingredients) in a Saviour, whose doing, dying, and rising again brought in everlasting righteousness, the man can say – 'Every part of my nature has been thought upon, and provision has been made for all my feelings

and faculties, as well as conscience: this is indeed meat and drink to me! His flesh is meat indeed! His blood is drink indeed!

Our purpose, then, is to enter into details whereby we may show that the Person of Christ is, and has always been, the essence of the Gospel. The glad tidings of great joy all cluster round that Person; invitations and calls draw us to Him; and warrants for believing the Gospel are in reality testimonies, the drift of which is mainly this – to fix our eye upon that Person's self, and assure us of the capabilities of His heart and arm.

And no wonder that it should be so; for He is GOD manifest in the flesh. To see Him is to see GOD in the attitude of redemption. To see Him is to see the GOD of holy love putting Himself in a position wherein He might be able, justly and honourably, to save sinners. To see Him is to see Godhead finding a way of coming to sinners with open arms, and yet remaining as holy, and just, and true, as from all eternity.

To show that this is the essence of the Gospel may be important alike to saints who already fear the Lord, and to sinners who are only groping for Him. Both are thus led directly to confront God, – 'God manifest in the flesh,' in 'whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' The saint finds that here he floats upon an ocean of grace, and that the more constantly he abides here, the more is he blessed. The seeking sinner finds that his perplexities are cleared away, when he is dealing, not with abstract

truth, nor with cold statements, but with a Person, and that person full of grace and truth.

‘Come, now’ (come, I pray you; come, I beseech you), ‘let us reason together, saith the LORD’ (Isa. 1:18). Here are two parties before us – not one party dealing with the words and declarations of another, but two parties confronting each other. It is a meeting of spirit with spirit – the spirit of man with God who is spirit. It is the living man coming to hear the living God tell His heart and ways.

Bunyan, in his *Pilgrim’s Progress*, represents Christian, when relieved of his burden at the cross, singing with joy –

Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be
THE MAN that there was put to shame for me.

And in his ‘Instruction for the Ignorant,’ the following dialogue occurs :

Question. If such a poor sinner as I am would be saved from the wrath to come, how must I believe?

Answer. Thy first question should be, on whom must I believe? John 9:35-36, ‘Dost thou believe on the Son of God?’ ‘Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?’

Q. On whom, then, must I believe?

A. On the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. Who is Jesus Christ, that I might believe on Him?

Statement of the Fact ...

A. He is the only-begotten Son of God.

Q. Why must I believe on Him?

A. Because He is the Saviour of the world.

Q. How is He the Saviour of the world?

A. By the Father's designation and sending; for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Q. How did He come into the world?

A. In man's flesh – in which flesh He fulfilled the law, died for our sins, conquered the devil and death, and obtained eternal redemption for us.

Q. But is there no other way to be saved but by believing in Jesus Christ?

A. There is no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved. And therefore he that believeth not shall be damned. Acts 4:12, 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' Mark 16:16, 'But he that believeth not shall be damned.' John 3:18, 36, 'He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.' 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting

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life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.’

Q. What is believing on Jesus Christ?

A. It is the receiving of Him, with what is in Him, as the gift of God to thee, a sinner. John 1:12, ‘To as many as receive him, even to them that believe on his name, he gave power to become sons of God.’

Q. What is in Jesus Christ to encourage me to receive Him?

A. Infinite righteousness to justify thee, and the Spirit without measure to sanctify thee.

Q. Is this made mine if I receive Christ?

A. Yes, if you receive Him as God offereth Him to thee.

Q. How doth God offer Him to me?

A. Even as a rich man freely offereth an alms to a beggar – and so must thou receive Him. John 6:32, 33, 34, 35, ‘My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.’ Then said they unto Him, ‘Lord, evermore give us this bread.’ And Jesus said unto them, ‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.’