

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"I AND THE CHILDREN."

A Sermon

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"Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion."—Isaiah viii. 18.

WE might possibly have had some difficulty in explaining this verse, or we might have referred it to the prophet Isaiah and his sons, had not inspiration been its own expositor. Turn to the New Testament and the text will be no mystery to you; its key hangs on its proper nail. In the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and at the eleventh verse, we read—"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." We have thus from divine revelation assured evidence that it is our Lord who speaks, and speaks of his people as his children. This clue we will follow.

The context sets forth, as is most common throughout the whole of Scripture, the different results which result from the appearance of the Saviour. He is rejected by many, and accepted by others. He was set for the fall and rise of many in Israel. To those who received him he is a glory and a defence, but to others "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." Even now his gospel is a "savour of death unto death" as well as a "savour of life unto life." The election of grace is always being worked out, the separating process continues, and will continue, until the eternal purpose has been completely fulfilled. Those whom the Lord has chosen feel the attractions of the Saviour, and come to him; while others wilfully and wickedly close their eyes to his brightness and reject him, and he leaves them in their willing unbelief. "He came unto his own and his own received him not, but to as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name."

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Of those who received the Lord, we find it written that the testimony of God would be left in their charge. "Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples." The outside world rejects the testimony of God; its own thoughts and opinions are much more pleasant to it; but among the Lord's disciples his commands are prized, and his teachings sacredly preserved. They see the seal of the living God upon the gospel, and they also set to it their seal that God is true; they accept the gospel of Jesus as very truth, and hold it, and mean to hold it against all comers.

To the true disciples of Jesus there may come times of darkness; it has been so with the church of old, and will be so still, but they have this star to gild their midnight—that Christ their Master and representative is waiting upon the Lord, and expecting and pleading for brighter and happier times. "I will wait," saith he, "upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." Christ in the dark ages of Judaism looked for the dawn of gospel day, and even now he sets himself upon his watch-tower and looks for a golden age for his redeemed people. So interested is he in their welfare that he will not rest till their brightness shines forth as a lamp that burneth.

Having thus noted the context we will come closely to the text. On this earth a people exist who have accepted the Messiah, and have become his disciples, and look for all from their Lord. Of these people the text says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me."

Here we shall notice, first, *a remarkable relationship ascribed to Christ*; secondly, *a spontaneous avowal of it*—"Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me;" and, thirdly, *a common function*, common to the Lord and to his disciples: they are appointed to be "signs" and "wonders" in Israel from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in mount Zion.

I. First, here is A REMARKABLE RELATIONSHIP. Jesus is called a father. Now, this is not according to precise theology, or according to the more formal doctrinal statements of Scripture, and we must, therefore, take care that we do not make confusion in our minds. Jesus is not "the Father," and we must always carefully maintain the distinction of persons in the Godhead. The Son of God is one with the Father, but he is not *the* Father; and we must take care we do not ascribe to the Son acts which are peculiar to the Father. According to correct speech, it is the first person of the divine Trinity whom we call the Father, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; and when we say, "Abba, Father," "Our Father which art in heaven," and "Thanks be unto the Father," we do not refer to the Lord Jesus, but to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Still, the title of Father is very applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ for many reasons. And first, because *he is our federal Head*. We speak correctly of "father Adam," and Jesus is the second Adam who heads up our race anew, and is the representative man of redeemed mankind. He only of mankind stands to others as Adam stood, head of a covenant, involving others in his acts. The second Adam, therefore, may

well regard us as his children, in whom the covenant promise is fulfilled, "His seed also will I make to endure for ever." As the first Adam looking down the ages upon us all may well cry with astonishment, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me!" so Jesus, viewing the vast company of the faithful, sees in them his seed, and finds in them a sacred satisfaction for the travail of his soul. We are in him, he stands for us, and we are in this sense his children.

Our Lord is also Father of the golden age of grace and glory. Isaiah calls him the "son born," and the "child given," and yet "the everlasting Father," and our hymn has well translated that expression.

"Sire of ages ne'er to cease,
Prince of life and Prince of peace."

There is an age of silver in which we now live, which Christ has produced by his first advent and the consequent proclamation of the gospel, and there is an age of gold yet to come, delightfully anticipated by the saints, of which Christ will be the Father and Lord. Then in him, and in his seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Indeed, I might say, that the eternity of blessedness in which the sanctified shall dwell is an age which owns Christ for its Father; and so he may well be called "the Father of eternity," or "the everlasting Father."

Again, there is a sense in which Christ is our father, *because by his teaching we are born unto God*. Just as the minister who brings a soul to Christ is said to be the spiritual parent to such a soul, and is, indeed, instrumentally so, so the Lord Jesus, as the author of our faith, is our spiritual Father in the family of God, and of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Our Lord, in bringing many sons unto glory, is truly their Father, for he it is who calls them into spiritual life, and puts them among the children of God. He is that "corn of wheat" which, except it fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, inasmuch as he has died, he bringeth forth much fruit, and we—we all of us, who have believed in him—are the living fruit of our dying and risen Saviour, and we speak not incorrectly when we call him Father. He is our elder brother, but he is also "over his own house, whose house are we." The word which quickened us came to us by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Now, let us see whether there is not much of teaching in this metaphor by which we are called children of the Lord Jesus. The expression denotes, first, that we derive our spiritual life from him as children take their *origin* from their father. Of him are we. If he had not created us we had not been in the world; if he had not redeemed us, we had not possessed a portion in the world to come. If he had not called us, we had still been in darkness and in death. If he had not quickened us—for he quickeneth whom he will—we had still lain among the dry bones of the valley of sin. That we are we owe to the Father's providence; but that we are born again we owe to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from that matchless scheme of which Christ is the sum and substance, there had been no pardoned sinners, no believers, no children adopted into the family of God, no heirs of God, no priests and kings to reign with Christ for ever and

ever. As we look at the dear wounds of Jesus we see the rock whence we were hewn, when we gaze upon his precious blood, we see the life blood of our souls. He is the root that beareth us, the stem of which we are the branches.

Children do not merely take their origin from their father, but they have a *likeness* to his nature ; and this is most true in the case of our Lord and his regenerated people, for he has become like to us, and on the other hand he has made us like to him. Note how the apostle puts it, " Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same ; " " Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one ; " " It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." As a father feels for his children because they are of the same flesh and blood as himself, so doth the Lord sympathise with his people, for they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. No father can be so thoroughly one with his offspring as Jesus is with us.

Moreover our divine Lord is bringing us into his likeness, and making us partakers of his nature. True believers are as like their Lord as little children are like their father. As I said last Thursday night, the likeness may be in some points a caricature, so that we smile to see ourselves represented and misrepresented in our children, yet there it is, we see our image in them ; and so the image of Christ is upon all his believing people, it is much marred and very miniature, but still it is the true image of his love. As on the prepared glass of the photographer the likeness is present, but needs to be brought out by means best known to himself, so it is with us ; the image of God has been renewed in us, but it lies somewhat hidden, and the Holy Spirit has it in hand to develop in us the life of Christ, and his work will be complete at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour, " for when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

I believe that the text has in it very clearly the idea of *charge and responsibility*. Children are a charge always ; a comfort sometimes. No parent has a child without lying under obligations to God to take care of it, and to nurse it for him. Sometimes the responsibility becomes very heavy, and involves us in much anxiety. Wherever conscience is lively, fatherhood is regarded as a solemn thing. Now, Jesus Christ, when looking upon his people, calls them " children whom God has given him ; " as if he recognised the charge laid upon him to keep, instruct, and perfect his own people. Remember his last words to his Father before he went to his passion : " I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word. While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name : those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition ; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Like Jacob with Laban's sheep, our Lord looked upon his elect as a charge for which he was responsible ; and ere he departed out of this life he rendered in an account to his heavenly Father. Even now also that great Shepherd of the sheep charges himself with the preservation of his own ransomed ones, and when he, at the last, shall gather all his redeemed people around him, there will not be one missing, and he

will say, "Behold, I and the children that thou hast given me." We call him Father, then, because as a father has charge of his family, and is before God responsible for their training and up-bringing, so Christ himself is surety for his people, and is under bond to bring the many sons unto glory.

In our relationship towards our children there is involved very often a great deal of *care and grief*. Happy parents who can say of a child, "He never caused me anxiety"! Happy father who can say of all his household, "I have had no sorrow from one of them"! I fear the case is rare. I know that this father of whom we are speaking had care and grief enough for his household; yea, for their sakes he bore a weight of woe which crushed him to the ground. Oh, you sorrowing parents! take comfort as you remember the greater griefs of the head of the chosen family, for all their infirmities and sins and wilful wanderings were laid upon him, and, for his children's sake, his "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The pangs of his sacred fatherhood brought him to Gethsemane and its bloody sweat; ay, to Calvary, and its shameful doom: what are our griefs compared with these? Jesus must needs die for his family that he might be able to say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." Count it not, therefore, a strange thing, since you cost your Lord so much anguish, if sometimes your children should pour coals of fire into your bosoms.

But, brethren, the possession of children involves a very *near and dear love*. You may try to love other people's children, but I think there will always be a loving tenderness to your own which you cannot give to a stranger's child, however much you try. Your own children after all, it is natural, and it is right, must have the warmest place in your heart. Even thus the Lord Jesus has a special love for his own, he is the Saviour of all men, but specially of them that believe: he manifests himself to them and not unto the world. It is almost a degradation of the love of Christ to compare it to anything human; it is so amazing, so divine, that it transcends comparison. If all the loves of parents could be piled up together in one vast mound—the love of fathers, and the still tenderer love of mothers—yet the whole of that Alp would not equal the immeasurable love of Jesus Christ to his own people. Who understands its heights and depths, its lengths and breadths? Oh, thou dear Lord and Saviour! because of thy dear love to us we call thee not only Rabbi, but Father; and as we hear thee say to us, "Children, have ye any meat?" we answer, "Yes, thou Father of thy church, thy table feasts us to the full."

Children, however, when they behave aright, bring to the heart of their parent sweet solace and *dear delight*. Oh, I love the thought, and I long to bring it out before you, that as a father is pleased when he sees his children growing up in the fear of God, when he observes their good character and qualities, when he marks their struggles for that which is right, and their attempts to curb themselves in that which is wrong—so is Jesus pleased with us. He speaks with great delight in our text, "Behold, I and the children." He is evidently gratified with them. The sight of them gives him content. We readily see anything that is good in our children; we have a quick

eye for their beauties ; sometimes, perhaps, we do not sufficiently see that which is deficient or wrong : but assuredly our Lord must have a very keen eye for his people's loveliness, for he says of his church, "Thou art all fair, my love ; there is no spot in thee." We can see many spots in ourselves, but he looks at us with other eyes. I suppose he looks at us through the glass of his own righteousness, with eyes full of perfect love. His delights are with the sons of men, he rejoices over us with singing. Never does a prayer of penitence rise from a breaking heart without rejoicing the soul of Jesus, for "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Never does a believer struggle against wrong, endure oppression patiently, or conquer sin, but Jesus is glad. Each budding grace and growing virtue charms him, even as parents are charmed with their hopeful little ones.

Our joy in our sons and our daughters looks forward and refreshes us with the prospect of what they will be. How many bright hopes light up a mother's heart as she thinks of her son or daughter ! She reckons upon comfort from them in her declining years. Our Lord knows what his people are to be, and he rejoices therein. Oh, if you could see yourselves as you will be in futurity, you would not know yourselves. If you could only have a photograph of your future glory, and could study it, you would say, "Shall I ever be like that ? Shall I ever be so fair, and bright, and pure as that ?" Now, the Lord Jesus sees you as you shall be, and he takes delight in you, and says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me."

Putting, then, all these things together, you will not fail to see the fitness of the figure by which our Lord is represented as standing in the midst of his own redeemed, as father among his children.

II. Now we shall turn to the second point, and utter a few words upon it. There is a SPONTANEOUS AVOWAL. He says, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me." The Lord *owns* his children. Sometimes they are ashamed to own him, and he might always be ashamed to own them, but he never is : he speaks of them without hesitation. It is, "*I and the children.*" They are defiled and unworthy, they have been falling in the mire and have torn their clothes, and I know not what besides, but he says, "They are my children ;" and he never thinks of casting them off. I wonder he does so avow them, but it is his infinite love to them, and his boundless delight in them, which makes him still say, "I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine."

Not only does Jesus own them as his thus publicly, but he *glories in them* as being God's gift to him—"The children whom *thou* hast given me"; as if they were something more than ordinary children. They are the promised fruit of the "travail of his soul"; they are the reward which Jehovah covenanted to bestow on him for his agonies and death. He looks upon them as the spoil of his great life-battle, as the crown of his life's labour. Solomon gave to Hiram, the King of Tyre, certain cities, and he did not like them, but called them Cabul, or foul ; but our Redeemer is well pleased with his reward, he takes his purchased inheritance to his heart, and rejoices therein, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me."

Observe, that the Lord not only owns his people and delights in them, but he *challenges inspection*. He says, "Behold!—look at them—I am not ashamed of them. Look at them, my Father—look at them all glorious in thy Son, all washed in my blood, all robed in my righteousness—look at them, and see how glorified I am in them. Thine eye, though full of fire against sin, can see no sin in them. Thy hand, though it grasps the thunderbolt of vengeance against transgression, will not smite them, for I have made atonement." "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me" is a call to the whole world to look, "for these things were not done in a corner." Jesus did not come into the world that he and his children should be hidden under a bushel and should not be known; but standing right out, as a city set on a hill, Jesus says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." "Look at them, for they are meant to be looked at; they are set 'for signs and wonders' throughout all generations."

And do notice again—for it affects my mind much more powerfully than I can express, "*Behold, I and the children.*" I can understand a mother speaking thus about herself and children, but for Christ the Lord of glory to unite his glorious name with those of such poor worms of the dust is very wonderful. There! sit down and wonder and weep over it,—Jesus says, "I and the children." Well did old Rowland Hill sing,

"And when I shall die, receive me, I'll cry;
For Jesus has loved me—I cannot tell why.
But this thing I find, we two are so joined,
He won't be in heav'n and leave me behind."

Jesus will not be without us. He cannot bear it. You mothers do not think it enough to be indoors in bed yourselves when night comes on, you want the dear children to be safely housed too. If you were pursued by wolves on some snowy plain in Russia, you would not be satisfied to escape yourself, and leave your children to be devoured. Your motto would be, "I and the children." You would live or die with them. How often when mothers have been overtaken in snow-storms have they been found dead, with their little ones nestling in their bosoms still alive. The mother has often taken off her garments to wrap them around her babe, and even so Christ has stripped himself of every honour and comfort, and died to prove his infinite love for his own. It is no idle sentence in which he sets forth his union with his beloved in very deed, and of a truth he binds himself and them in one sacred bond. I cannot tell you how I rejoice in these words! I have them in my mouth and in my heart—"I and the children." Blessed be our Lord for speaking thus!

Now, beloved, if Jesus owns us so lovingly let us always own him: and if Christ takes us into partnership—"I and the children"—let us reply, "Christ is all." Let him stand first with us; and let our name be for ever joined with his name, let us be bound up in the bundle of life with him. It is plain that he delights in us: let us delight in him; it is clear he glories in us; let us glory in him. He invites others to look at us and him, let us invite all mankind to behold our glorious Lord. Let us get behind our Lord, and set him always before

us. Whoever visits us, let them not leave us without taking knowledge that we have been with Jesus. If we show our treasures, as Hezekiah did, let us begin with showing our Saviour, for no Babylonians will ever come and take him away from us. Our "soul shall make her boast in the Lord," and none shall ever stop us of this glorying here or hereafter. Enough, then, concerning the *spontaneous avowal*. Oh, may we be among the happy company of whom our Lord shall say, "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me"!

III. Thirdly—and into this I would throw the strength of the discourse—there is A COMMON FUNCTION. Christ and his people "are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion."

Both Christ and his people are set for a purpose. First, they are to be "signs and wonders" by way of *testimony*. Our Lord is called the "Word of God." A word is the means of communication between one mind and another; God speaks to men by Christ, nay, Christ is his speech. If you want to know what God has to say to you, see what Christ was and is. In the same manner, only in an inferior degree, believers are God's voice to men: he speaks to the world through his people. In a happy Christian God says, "I will make you happy, too, as I have made this man, if you seek me in the same way as this man did." In the believing Christian who gets his prayers answered God says to men, "I will hear your prayer if you pray as this man does, with faith in my promise." All the world of nature reveals God, but the revelation is inarticulate, and rather resembles the teaching of a picture or a hieroglyph than a clear distinct voice; but we, my brethren, are to be God's mouth among the sons of men, and our conversation, our profession, our life in its entirety, is to be a witness from God to man; a testimony for truth, for righteousness, for holiness, and also for the power of the quickening Spirit, for the efficacy of redeeming blood, and for all the truths contained in divine revelation. We are not to be blank sheets, or papers with a blot on them, and nothing more; but letters written by God, and passed round among men that they may read in us what God has to say. Now, it is very clearly so in Christ, his holy life and blessed death are a wonderful witness to the people; and as to us, the Lord has said, "Ye are also my witnesses." I would inquire concerning many of you here who make a profession, whether you are really God's voice to men. If not, what is the use of your dumb religion?

We are, secondly, signs and wonders among sinners by way of *marvel*. Believers, by their declaration of God's testimony, become more and more singular in the judgment of men. No man but a Christian can understand a Christian. The spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man. Carnal minds cannot make us out, "for we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." The person who never strikes you as having anything singular about him, who is just like men of the world, is probably no Christian. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ yourself, the unregenerate will misunderstand and misrepresent you; but if everybody is pleased with you it is pretty clear that God is not, for "the friendship of this world is enmity with God." Genuine Christians will generally be reckoned

by the world to be singular people. For instance, they profess to have been converted, and so to have undergone a miraculous change; they profess to have a new life, compared with which they were dead before. The world calls this nonsense. Regeneration! What fanaticism! In the days of Whitfield and Wesley the loose spirits made rare fun of the idea of being born again, and the preacher of regeneration was dubbed Mr. Wildgoose, and his followers a set of enthusiasts. The world now practises the crafty device of using our terms and phrases, and meaning something else by them; thus talking of being regenerated by baptism, and all that nonsense. To be "born again" is still a marvel to the sons of men.

The real Christian is a man who has faith in providence, and believes in God, and therefore he is calm and unmoved in times of distress; he believes in the lilies which do not spin and yet are clothed, in the ravens which sow not and do not reap and yet are fed; and therefore, though using his utmost diligence, he is not anxious, but lives in peace. The world envies him, but cannot comprehend him. Moreover, the Christian is a man who has power in prayer: he asks and receives, knocks and it is opened unto him; and the outside world either disbelieves the fact or else looks upon it as a strange affair. It must be so, we must be wondered at. I do not say that some of you Christian people are any marvel or wonder at all for I do not think you are: the marvel is that you dare call yourselves Christians at all; but I do mean that the genuine Christian is in many points a singular person, so singular that others cannot read his riddle. When a man becomes converted in an ungodly family, he is like a young swan in a duck's nest: they cannot understand him. They say, "This is a strange bird! Where did he come from?" They count him ugly, because he is not like the rest. Frequently ungodly relatives consider the young convert to be going out of his mind, or as being naturally weak in the intellect. They put him down as insane while he is sorrowful, and as idiotic when he is joyous.

The world cannot understand a Christian's endurance of trial, but they set it down to hardheartedness. They see him calm and composed; he neither raves nor blasphemes, nor tears his hair, and if the worst comes to the worst, he still says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." This perplexes worldlings, and no wonder, for it puzzled the devil himself. He laid Job on a dunghill, covered with boils, scraping himself with a piece of potsherd, brought to poverty, his own wife tempting him, and his friends accusing him, and yet that man, who was a greater conqueror than Alexander or Napoleon, still said, "What! Shall we receive good from the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." When the Lord allows any of us to be similarly tried, and sustains us in the trial, we become "a wonder unto many."

One of the greatest wonders to the ungodly is a Christian's death-bed. Ungodly men, who have despised religion altogether, have been troubled in conscience and almost persuaded to be Christians through the holy triumphs of dying saints. Many an infidel remembers his

mother's holy life—how quiet, how loving she was, making the house always happy; and he remembers how grieved she was when her boy began to be sceptical about his mother's Saviour. That dying charge of hers will ring in his memory for ever; that dying look of joyful triumph from that eye which had no tear in it except for those that were left behind, that expiring song, that shout of victory, he cannot get over it. If a man wishes to be sceptical, he must not see true Christians either live or die; otherwise facts will convince him against his will, or make it hard to doubt.

When the believer's testimony for good becomes a marvel, it is not wonderful if he afterwards becomes *an object of contempt*. What did the world say of the Master? "They called the Master of the house Beelzebub"; he was despised and rejected of men, and, if you are one of his disciples, the world will despise you also. I will tell you what they say of us,—“They are all a parcel of dupes, led by the nose by a man. They will believe anything he tells them.” All this because you are true to your pastor and the word of God. Then, as soon as they see that you are not led by a man, but think for yourself, they cry, “Ah, you are one of those pig-headed ones, you will never be taught; why don't you believe as your fathers did, and keep to the old church?” If the world cannot wound us on one side, it tries the other. If they cannot accuse us of being black, our enemies will say that we are of a sickly white.

Readily do accusers change their sweet voices, and cry, “Ah! it is all a scheme for money getting.” If the minister is zealous, they say, “Self-interest is at the bottom. If it is not love of money, it is love of power and influence.” To the Christian people they say, “No doubt you increase your business by it; many a man puts his religion in his shop window, and finds it pay amazingly well.” They know in their own souls that you are free from any sinister motive, but they will not do you justice. Like Satan, they say, “Does Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not set a hedge about him, and all that he hath?” Meanwhile, if you were in poverty through religion, they would sing another tune, and say, “A pretty thing comes of being a Christian! Why, you will soon be without a shoe to your foot! Look what you bring yourself and your family to.” If God pays good wages, the devil says, “You only serve him for the wages.” If present mercies are small, the old accuser tauntingly exclaims, “A pretty master you serve. See how he starves you!” There is no pleasing the world, and we have no desire to please it! As Paul said, “The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

I know the kind of tone adopted by others; they plume themselves upon their intellect and set us down as behind our times. “We have no patience,” say they, “with this believing in prayer, this expectation of conversion, this reliance upon atonement and imputed righteousness. Why, it is downright stupidity! Such preaching is only an echo from the graves of Puritans. No doubt Puritanism was a power in the days of Cromwell, but it is out of date now. We require more advanced thought in this enlightened age when we have collisions on railways and other grand improvements, and have discovered that the universe made itself. We cannot afford to keep behind

these intelligent times, and must go in for a splendid smash like other people."

If this does not wound us they will say, "These people are not thinkers: they have no culture;" and so they set us down for fools. In which we greatly rejoice; being glad to be fools for Christ's sake. Christians in all ages have been considered fools. If you are travelling in Switzerland and see an idiot, he is a "cretin"—that is a Christian. Yes! Such was the byword—the fool was called a Christian, and the Christian was thought a fool. We are satisfied to bide our time, knowing that the day shall come in which the worldly wise will not only be called fools by others, but will confess themselves so in endless despair.

But then they say, "These people are too precise, they make life dreary!" We are in our own esteem the happiest people in the world, and could not be much happier this side of heaven; but because we do not care for their vain pleasures, their husks, and swines' meat, therefore we are austere and miserable. Only they think so who know nothing about us. We have meat to eat which they know not of, and like Daniel and his brethren, though we taste not of the world's dainties, we are in better case than those who do.

Men of the world are apt to say, "You are such a set of bigots; you think everybody wrong but yourselves." Is it wonderful that if we think we are right, we do not believe that those who are opposed to us can be right also? If we know that two and two make four we are intolerant enough to affirm that they cannot make five. It is a degradation to my intellect to expect me to believe that yes and no can be equally correct upon the same matter; triflers with religion may consent to such folly, but those who are in earnest cannot do so. If to be sure that what God says is true be bigotry, we confess that bigotry. Our Master says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned,"—we believe this, and the damnatory clause too, and are content to abide the judgment of the last great day as to whether such a belief will then be accounted bigotry or no.

Our despisers often cry, "See what conceit and pride! They think themselves God's elect, and that he has a special favour for them, and pardons their sins, and saves them." Just so! Call that conceit if you please, we are not ashamed to confess it. If you saw a rich man going down the street and were rude enough to say, "See how conceited a man he is; he thinks himself worth ten thousand pounds," he might quietly smile and say, "I do think so, and rightly too, for I am worth several hundred thousand pounds." They say we are conceited because we rejoice, when it is our fault not to rejoice more. The Lord has done great things for us, we dare not deny it, and have no wish to do so. He has made us to be his sons and daughters, and we must glory in his name. If others mistake our joy for pride we cannot help it, for we know right well that we give all the glory to God in our own souls.

When believers thus become, as they will be, objects of contempt, they will be assailed with ridicule, and bespattered with slander; bad motives will be imputed to them, and the truths for which they are

willing to die will be attacked, both in their persons and their testimonies. They must bear reproach, and if they do they will become wonders again. If they suffer but never retaliate, if they never return railing for railing, if they bear and forbear, their patience will make them wonders. As the ages shall roll on, the holy, and the godly, and the Christ-like, Jesus and his children, will go from victory to victory. In every coming age, even though persecution should rage as it did in former days, the church of God will bear it, and so defeat it; superstition, and heresy, and worldliness will come, but the church will pass through the storm; and at the last, when truth shall conquer, when Gethsemane shall be transfigured into Paradise, and the shame of the cross of Calvary shall be lost in the glory of the "great white throne;" when there shall be no more the crown of thorns, and nails, and sponge and vinegar, but when Jesus shall be proclaimed "King of kings and Lord of lords," and all his people shall reign with him, then will the saints be signs and wonders indeed. Know ye not that ye shall judge angels, sitting as assessors at the right hand of God? Know ye not that ye shall be the glory of Christ in that day? When the ungodly shall cry, "Rocks, hide us! mountains, on us fall!" "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Hold on, brother! and hold out to the end; be humbly and quietly faithful. Do not *try* to be a wonder, but *be* a wonder. Do not try to do some astonishing thing to attract attention; but "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Do not believe that the common Christianity of the present age will carry anybody to heaven. It is a counterfeit and a sham. It does not make men to differ from their fellows, it pretends to faith and has none, talks about love and does not show it, brags of truth and evaporates it into thin air in its latitudinarian charity. God give us back the real thing—staunch, strong belief in the gospel, real faith in Jesus, real prayer to him, real spiritual power. Then again there will be persecution, but it will only blow away the chaff, and leave the pure wheat! The world likes us better because we like the world better; it calls us friends because we doff our colours and sheathe our swords and play the craven; but if we preach and live the gospel in the old apostolic way, we shall soon have the devil roaring round the camp and the seed of the serpent hissing on all sides, but we fear not, for "the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah viii. 11—22;
ix. 1—7.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—Psalm 116 (Song II.),
255, 342.