Safe Eternally

By

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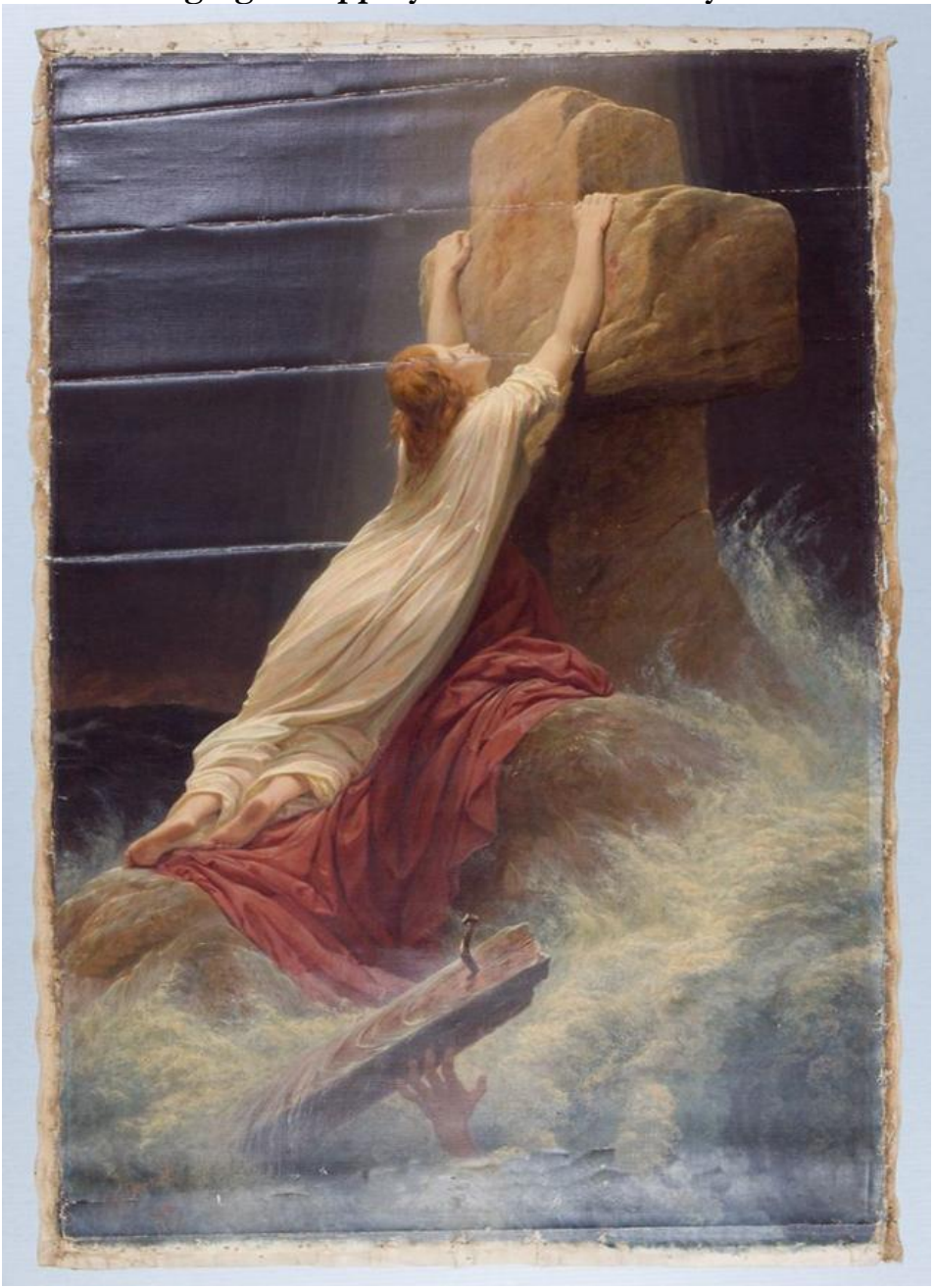
Contents

A Few Preliminary Questions Answered	**3**
Salvation Is Deliverance	**6**
How Is This Salvation Accomplished?	**7**
How Does Faith Come?	**9**
Can a Man Know for a Certainty That He Is Saved?	**10**
Evidences of The New Birth	**13**
Can a Child of God Fall Away and be Lost Eternally?	**17**
Spurious Conversions	**26**
Tortured Texts	**28**
Three Utter Impossibilities	**31**
A Grape Vine And A Pocket Knife	**45**
Roman Sports	**48**
Backsliding	**50**
Have You Joined The 'Oh-Buts'?	**57**
Final Appeal	**60**
Biography	**64**

I'm not hanging to slippery rocks—I'm twenty miles inland!



"The Rock of Ages" *by Johannes Adam Simon Oertel (1876)*

Prologue

What use is a **SALVATION** which does not make me **SAFE**, or an **ASSURANCE** of which I cannot be **SURE**?

We used to hold meetings in the cottage of old Mrs. B. Over her fireplace was a picture entitled 'Rock of Ages' representing a white-robed girl with hair hanging down her back. She was soaked with water, and clinging to a rock in the shape of a cross, while her feet still dangled beneath her in the wild waves. There was a threatening background of rough sea and stormy sky. The old lady was very proud of this picture and would refer to it as she exhorted her hearers to cling to the Cross. Much of her Christian life was directed to keeping herself saved — "*hanging on*" — as she expressed it. One evening, we went for the weekly cottage meeting in her house and found the picture gone. The faded wallpaper round the spot from which it had been taken showed that something was missing. What has happened to your picture, Mrs. B?" we asked. "I've smashed it" she said most emphatically. "Many's the time I've looked at that poor girl hanging on, till it fairly made my arms ache for her. One slip and she would have been back beneath the waves, worse off than when she first fell into the sea. I've often wished there were something more secure than this '*hanging on'* business. It seemed so risky with all those rocks, slippery with seaweed. I'd like to have got the girl home, and given her a change of clothes and a good hot cup o'tea. Today I was reading in First Peter chapter one, and when I came to the fifth verse: '*Kept by the power of God, through faith*' I thought to myself, '*The Lord Jesus is the Author and Finisher of my faith.*[Heb.12:2] Even the believing is *not for yourselves, lest any man should boast.*[Eph.2:8] It's the gift of God. I felt so safe with those Everlasting Arms underneath me, that when I looked up at the poor girl clinging there, it dawned on me suddenly—that picture is untrue. I'm not half in and half out, I'm saved with an everlasting salvation—saved from head to foot, seven days a week, from now on and for evermore. I'm not hanging to slippery rocks. I'm **TWENTY MILES INLAND!**

So I pulled down the old picture, smashed it over my knee and shouted '**Hallelujah**!' "

I trust that you too, who read this booklet with an honest heart, will end with a grateful recognition that you are as safe as your glorious Surety, there upon your Father's throne.

I am sure that you too will send up a Hallelujah! to the Saviour Who has not only lifted you from the waves, but Who has carried you TWENTY MILES INLAND.

The following pages are written with a deep desire to make plain God's plan of Salvation.

May we ask our readers to **LOOK UP THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE QUOTED**. It may prove helpful to underline verses that they may be referred to again. Where the Revised Version seemed clearer, we have not hesitated to use it.A Few Preliminary Questions Answered

Do We Need Saving?
What are we Saved From?

A lady once remarked to a gospel preacher:

"I hope that you don't think that I'm a sinner. I go to church. I care for my aged father. I am scrupulous in my business affairs. I do wrong to nobody. You surely cannot class me with drunkards and women of doubtful character."

"Certainly there are degrees of guilt, even as there will be degrees of punishment,"*Matt.23:14; Luke 12:47-48* replied the preacher. "Yet I am so sorry, Madam, that you can never hope for heaven. You have no part in Christ's sacrifice. Christ died for the ungodly and sinners.*Rom.5:6-9* Christ came, not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*Matt.9:12* Of course you are not a sinner! But He came to seek the lost,*Luke 19:10* and you do not recognise yourself as lost. In heaven they sing: Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.*Rev.5:9* but you need no such redemption. How could you join in singing: Unto Him that loved us and freed us from our sins in His blood?Rev.1:5 You would be right outside all that, for you have no sin."

Much prayer went up, that God would show the lady her sinful lost condition.

Then a few days later she returned to the preacher to say

"I come to Christ as a sinful wicked rebel, with nothing good about me. I have been filled with pride and self-complacency, but now I see from God's Word that I am a sinner. I receive the Lord Jesus as the sinner's Saviour and Substitute."

That woman found that she had been deceiving herself.*1Jn.1:8* What a deceitful thing the human heart can be!*Jer.17:9* It is strange that however bad we may be, we have two ways of blinding ourselves to our failure.

First—we make excuses, minimising our sin and magnifying our supposed goodness. Second—we endeavour to turn attention from ourselves to others, by showing how far worse they are than we. We have never seen our faces excepting as reflected in the looking-glass, and we are notoriously blind to our own shortcoming.

Almost any criminal behind prison walls excuses himself, and blames the other man. Hence our own estimate of ourselves is not likely to be a correct one. I once heard a blasphemous lecturer declare in public "I don't need saving. I never did anyone a wrong. If there were a God, He'd be unjust in condemning me." I was not surprised to see it in the newspapers a few months later, that this lecturer was sentenced to a term in gaol—that whatever God might think about him, at least an English jury had no compunctions in condemning him!

God has given every one of us a conscience, and if allowed to make itself heard it will show us right and wrong, but alas, some twist and warp their consciences, making excuses for themselves and calling wrong, right. They are like the country pedlar, who used his yard measure for a walking stick, wearing it down by inches. Yet he continued to measure his customers' material by it. When the conscience is *seared with a hot iron*[1Tim.4:2] by misrepresentation and excuse, it is no longer a reliable monitor of our behaviour, any more than the yardstick was a reliable measure.

You may say, "I am not so bad as Mrs. Jones", but that will neither condemn Mrs Jones nor save you. Hence rather than accept our own opinion of ourselves, it would be wise to accept God's.

Here it is: *None righteous, no not one. Every mouth stopped and all the world guilty before God. All have sinned. ...dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked in the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, (satan), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our manner of living (see margin) in time past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature children of wrath even as others.* Read all of *Rom.3:9-23. Eph.2:1-3.*

Perhaps the worst feature of our sinful condition is that we have got so used to it that we do not recognise it. **We need saving then, from sin**. We may say that we cannot help it—that it is natural. Yet that only shows what slaves we are to sin, and how universal it is. From this enquiry, then, two things emerge—our own sinful nature and our place in a sinful community. A third aspect of the situation now confronts us. The result of sin—God's punishment for sin. The wages of sin is death, both physical and spiritual.*Rom.6:23* You don't believe in God's punishing sin—in unbelievers being shut out of heaven. Surely, then, you have not given the matter serious consideration.

Here is a man coming down the street, desperately ill. His face and wrists show the characteristics of small-pox. What would you do? "*Poor fellow! He cannot be left outside. Come in. Sit at the table with my family, I will give you a good meal. You can share a bedroom with my bonny children.*" Never! You would be mad to bring such hideous contamination into your home. Yet sin is a far more horrible thing. Do you imagine, then, that God would permit an unrepentant sinner into those pearly gates? Why heaven would cease to be heaven. *There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.*[Rev.21:27; 22:15]

A hardened sinner, a wilful rebel against society and breaker of the laws of his land, is brought before a magistrate on a criminal charge. The jury hears the evidence and decides that the prisoner is guilty.

The magistrate then addresses him "*My man, it is evident that you are guilty, but I'm too kind to punish you. You've done wrong, but you could not help it. You were born that way. I couldn't think of being unkind to you. Policeman, let him go*." What would you think of such a judge? You would not tolerate him on the bench. The man must be mad or he would see that justice is done, not only in the acquittal of the innocent, but in the punishment of the guilty. Precisely so! And do you suppose the Eternal God to be guilty of the innate softness which you condemn in our imaginary magistrate? He will *by no means clear the guilty.*[Ex.34:7] *If I sin, then Thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me of mine iniquity.*[Job 10:14]

Sinful act and habit, sin on the conscience, and in a sinful community, punishment for sin—these are all summed up in: *who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*[Romans 1:32]

Salvation Is Deliverance

A man who still follows sinful habits, consorts with sinning companions, is condemned of his own conscience, and God's wrath still hangs over him. However loud his profession to the contrary, he is not saved, for he is not delivered. The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world expressly to save such.[John 1:29; Matt.1:21; 1Tim.1:15] Certainly you cannot blame a man for being a sinner. He was born a sinner. Nobody asked him whether he wanted it or no. But we are accountable to God for sinning, because He has made provision for deliverance. The damning sin of mankind is not that we are sinners, but that we have rejected, the sinners' Saviour. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*[John 3:19]

Salvation, then, is deliverance from:

a. the guilt of sin,

b. the power of sin, and

c. the punishment for sin, in the lake of fire.

How Is This Salvation Accomplished?

God's principle of working is not to patch up the old failure. He destroys it and starts afresh. The potter whose work does not prove a success, breaks up his lump of clay, and begins anew.[Jer.18:4] When that old original world was marred by sin, God condemned and destroyed it, fashioning a new world in its place.[2Pet.2:5]

Similarly sin in the flesh is condemned.[Rom. 8:3] The only way to a new life is by the crucifixion of the old. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.*[2Cor.5:17]

Forms and ceremonies count for nothing in God's salvation. Neither the big water of the baptistery nor the small water of the font can make bad folk good or sad people happy. The Jews were of all people the most addicted to ceremonial, yet Galatians 6:15 shows clearly that neither the ceremonial nor the lack of it avails anything, "*but a new creature.*" Christ died and rose again. That is the great central fact of the gospel of our salvation.[1Cor.15:1-4; Rom.5:10] In His dying He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.[1Pet.2:24] Suffering in our place.[Is.53:5-6] In his rising again He became our great High Priest, ministering on behalf of an ignorant, sinful straying people.[Heb.2:17-18; 5:2] He is the "*paraclete*", "*advocate*", "*comforter*" and One called along-side to help—for that is the meaning of the word in 1John 2:1. He is the originator of a new line of human beings.[Heb.2:10-15] Sin and death came to us in Adam's line, but all who are in Christ's line are given a new and eternal life.[Rom.5:19; 1Cor.15:22]

In the heart of a great city, were ranged about a square, some old buildings. By familiarity we had grown to love them. Thus we felt indignant when the breakers started to demolish them. For a time, the square was in chaos. A few months later we returned to find some magnificent new white stone buildings erected on the old site, and the gardens of the square tastefully laid out. The square was greatly improved and today we have no regrets that those antiquated houses were torn down.

By dying, the Lord Jesus did away with the terrible accumulation of our guilt and shame, and in His resurrection, He is making us living temples in which His Holy Spirit dwells.[1Cor.6:19-20] There can be no new life for us then, until the old is dealt with. No salvation apart from the cross of the Lord Jesus.[Gal.6:14; 1Cor.1:23] When however, we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and realise that it was for us He died, immediately there takes place a most amazing change. Paul's description of it is *I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.*[Gal.2:20]

The old life has been cut short, and a wonderful new, unending, supernatural life has begun. How does life start? In God's beautiful economy, He has planned that life should commence by the planting and reception of a seed. Each blade of grass, each mighty tree—in fact life in all its manifestations, from the simplest to the most complicated—commences with a seed.

Thus we read *The seed is the Word of God.*[Luke 8:11] *Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth.*[James 1:18] *Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.*[1Pet.1:23] By receiving God's record concerning His Son, we accept eternal life. Christ, the living Word, and the Bible, the written Word, are inseparably linked.[1John 5:9-12] *As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood (i.e. not because they belong to some certain family or nation) nor of the will of the flesh, (i.e. it is not a matter to be put off for when we ourselves desire it), nor of the will of man (i.e. nobody else can do it for us, either with a church ceremony or in any other way) but of God.*[John 1:12-13] Born of God? Yes! That is how we become children of God. *Ye are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*[Gal.3:26]

How Does Faith Come?

We are often told "*I would like to believe, but I cannot. I envy those who have faith, for I haven't a scrap of it myself.*" Yet it must be possible for anyone to have faith, for we read, *He ...will convict the world in respect of sin... because they believe not on Me.*[John 16:8-9] And again, *He that disbelieveth shall be condemned.*[Mark 16:16] Faith is not determination—*I will believe. I must believe. I'm determined to believe.*

No it is much simpler than that. Again, faith is not ecstatic feeling, or when we are weak and ill we should find faith entirely lacking. Faith is just taking God at His Word. Apart from the Bible there is no saving faith. It can even be confounded with credulity, but credulity is believing what man says, and faith is believing the promises of God.

Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.[Rom.10:17]

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name.[John 20:31]

Just as you go to a butcher for meat, or to a baker for bread, so you go to the Word of God for faith. Let me illustrate.

Finding myself in a strange town one Sunday, I turned into a little mission hall, where a brass band was much in evidence. After the preaching of the gospel a number of people came forward, kneeling at a "*penitent*" form seeking salvation. Workers prayed with them and helped them, until soon all but one had expressed the confidence that they had been forgiven and received by God, for Jesus' sake. The last man kneeling at the penitent form was evidently an outstanding sinner, and terribly in earnest to get right with God. Tears and perspiration flowed freely as he prayed. Occasionally the man in charge came forward and said,

"Well man? Are you right yet?"

"No! Not yet."

"Pray on!"

And the band got to work with swinging choruses. If anyone could save a soul by human energy, that band would certainly have brought the penitent to assurance of salvation.

I have not forgotten how the big drum dinned out "*The Lion of Judah shall break every chain," etc.* But all to no purpose. At last I asked the leader if he would mind silencing the instruments, and permit me to see if I could help the man. I was soon kneeling beside him, with my Bible open at Isaiah 53:5-6. *All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

"Have you gone astray? Have you turned to your own way?"

"I have, my life has been terrible," he answered.

"Then will you believe that God laid your sins on the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross of Calvary?"

"I must believe, for it is written here."

"Then where are your sins? Are they on you or have they been laid on Him?" "They were laid on Jesus. Oh Thank God."

At that moment the leader of the meeting again came forward, asking "Is it right now?"

"Yes, thank God ! It's right now, for God. has laid my sins on Jesus. Oh I'm forgiven and right for heaven."

God's Word had brought faith. Faith and a neglected Bible do not go together. Moreover the task of the gospel preacher is not to tickle the fancy with eloquence and charm, but to *preach the Word.*[2Tim.4:2] Because *the entrance of that Word gives light.*[Ps.119:130] And it has *pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*[1Cor.1:21]

Can a Man Know for a Certainty That He Is Saved?

"*No man is sure of life"* [Job 24:22] may be very true of this earthly life, but it is by no means true of our spiritual and eternal life, for 1 John 5:13 says *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* Thus everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, has every right to **KNOW** that he has eternal life. That little word **KNOW** is repeated about thirty times in the one short first epistle of John. It does not say "*hope*", or "*long for*", or " *expect so*", but **KNOW**.

Is it presumption to know that we are saved? Why it would be presumption for a believer to think otherwise! Paul writes in 1Corinthians 1:18 *Unto us which are saved it, (the preaching of the cross), is the power of God. By grace* ***YE ARE SAVED.***[Eph.2:8] The Greek original is even more emphatic. (See Moffatt) *It is by grace you have been saved, as you had faith.* Hear the words of our Lord: *Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing.*[John 6:37-39]

Does not that make it clear that if I come to Him, He will never cast me out, and will never allow me to be lost? We often meet with four objections to a certainty of present salvation.

Let us look at them frankly.

1. You must not be too sure. It is written *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*[1Cor.10:12] To this we reply that the fact that a Christian may fall is no evidence that he may be lost.

Indeed for the comfort of a fallen saint we would point out that *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.*[1John 2:1] He is still our Father, even though we may have caused him grief, and He has provided an Advocate expressly for the fallen believer.

2. *Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches take heed lest He also spare not thee.*[Rom.11:20-22] People tell us "*You see Israel was cast away, and we may be the same.*" It is true that Israel is away from God for the time being, but God has not cast them away for good. His covenant still stands.[Rom.11:1-2 ;Isa.45:10] *For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.*

3. *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.*[Matt.26:41] From that, people presume that if we do not watch or pray enough, we may be lost after all. Indeed we knew one dear old saint who was so anxious not to lose his salvation that he spent from 11 p.m. till 1 a.m. every night in watching and praying to "*keep himself saved.*"

What a pity he could not realise that we are not kept by our own efforts, but by the power of God.[1Pet.1:5] Instead of resting safe in the arms of Jesus, he eventually lost his reason. By prayerlessness of lack of watchfulness, we may indeed enter into temptation, but temptation is very different from damnation.

4. Another verse which is misquoted, to shake our confidence in a present salvation, is *Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.*[Prov.16:18 Also Prov.28:14] Fear of sin is wholesome. May we always dread it. We would also fear to grieve a loving heavenly Father by our wilfulness or pride. Haughtiness and pride have certainly led thousands to Hell, but if God gives us the right to know that we are saved, it is no haughtiness or presumption to take Him at His Word. We were once preaching in the open air, when a woman shouted from a window "You are a lot of stuck-up prigs, pretending that you are better than somebody else."

We simply replied "We make no boast, Madam, of being anything but guilty sinners, deserving Hell and the wrath of God. Our one boast is that *the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, such as we and you."*[1Tim.1:15]

That surely is no pride or presumption. Just as certainly as you know your birthday, so you may know of a definite time and place when you were born again.

Paul wrote of two of his relatives in Romans 16:7, that they "*were in Christ before me*," so that there was a definite time when Andronicus aid Junia were in Christ, while at some subsequent time Paul too became "*in Christ*" that is, he was saved. We know when the great change took place by reading the 9th chapter of Acts.

A preacher had tried for some time to win poor old Ann to Christ. "You know, Ann, that God's Word says: *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*[Rom.10:13] Do you not ask God to save you?"

"Many a time a day, Sir. Many a time a day."

"Then why do you not believe that you have received salvation"

"O I would not be so presumptuous as to say that I was saved."

He lifted his heart to God for the right word to give her. He saw a milliner's shop near, and noticed that Ann's bonnet was green with age. "Come inside, Ann."
Before she could recover from her surprise, she was fitted out in a new bonnet, paid for by the preacher.
A few days later, he met her again.
"Well, Ann, why don't you ask me for your bonnet" he questioned. She replied warmly, "Why should I ask for a thing when you have given it to me already. I've got it. I don't need to ask. Surely you're fooling an old body Sir!"
"No Ann! I'm not fooling. Christ says: *He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.*[John 5:24]
What does H-A-T-H mean, Ann?"
"H-A-T-H means got it—like I've got this bonnet."
"Well why do you go on asking for salvation when God says H-A-T-H?"
"Why, I see it now. God gives me salvation as sure as my bonnet is on my 'ead. I'll never ask Him for it anymore."
"What will you do then, Ann?"
"I'll just go on thanking Him!"
And old Ann went on her way chuckling to herself "*H-A-T-H means GOT IT*".

Evidences of The New Birth

We are told to make our calling and election sure.[2Pet.1:10] Is it not blessed to realise that this is possible? Paul urged the 'Corinthian believers to examine themselves as to whether they were in the faith.[2Cor.13:5] God has given us certain tests whereby we may prove the genuineness of our conversion. Many of them are being applied, albeit unconsciously, even by the unsaved.[1Tim.3:7; 1Pet.2:12] They will say "That man is a real Christian, but so-and-so's religion I have no time for."

Those who are without are constantly being drawn to Christ, or repulsed, by our lives.[1Pet.3:1; 1Cor.7:16]
The Chemist, the textile specialist, the engineer, have the most elaborate tests to assure the purity and suitability of their materials, but no tests are more simple or more sure than those of God's Word.

A. The Test Of Family Likeness

If a white father and mother claimed a black baby as their own nobody would believe them, for a child bears the nature of its parents. Similarly if we are made partakers of the divine nature,[2Pet.1:4] by being born into God's family, we shall most certainly bear a family resemblance.
In John 8 :41 the Pharisees claimed to be God's children, but Jesus showed them that their lust, lying and hate belied their profession. Their family likeness proved that they were of their father the devil.[See verses 42-44] **Apply the test. Do you resemble God?**

B. The Test Of Righteous Living

He who practises righteousness is righteous, He who practises sin is of the Devil.[1John 3:7-8] *By their fruits ye shall know them.*[Matt.7:15-20] True, a child of God may fall. Indeed not one of us can say *I am sinless.*[1John 1:8-10] The general trend of a child of God is toward righteousness. His character, his outlook, his private and public life are right. A white man may get black in cleaning a chimney, or a black man may become white in whitewashing a room, but that is not their accustomed shade, any more than it is customary for Christians to sin. The born again person ceases to practise unrighteousness, and starts to practise righteousness.[1John 3:10] If you are sinning deliberately, habitually, you not only have no right to say that you are saved now. You have no right to say that you ever were saved. *Whosoever habitually sinneth hath not seen Him neither known Him.*[1John 3:6; 1John 5:4-5; 1John 5:18] **Apply the test. Can you say with David**: *I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way?*[Psalm 119:128]

C. The Test Of Love

Jesus said: *If God were your Father, you would love Me.*[John 8:42] Every real Christian loves Jesus, and we can only know the reality of our love by our obedience to His will. *If a man love Me he will keep My words.*[John 14:23]

A wholehearted love embraces not only the loved one, but all about him. We have heard the lover declare "*I love her face, her voice, I love her clothes and hair. I love the books she reads, the chair she sits in and the very ground she treads on.*" If we really love the Lord Jesus, then we love His Word, His assembly, His table.

His name is as Ointment poured forth. His gospel message is the passion of our souls. His cross is our glory, and to be accounted nothing for His sake is greater honour than all that the world can offer.

Apply the test. **Is the Lord Jesus the chief object of our love'?**

I used to visit a home where thirteen sons and daughters were growing into manhood and womanhood. Twelve were out and out for God. Tom, the eldest, clearly only professed to be a Christian in order to avoid being annoyed by the subject of religion. One day I called him aside privately and said

"Tom, we love you and long for you, but none of us is deceived by your profession. When I bring out my Bible for a talk, all the others gather around the table, but you always have a friend to meet, a letter to post, or some other excuse. Why do you not get saved? Then you will love God's Word."

Later he too made a decision to receive the Lord Jesus. The change was immediate and remarkable, for from that time on he was among the most eager for prayer and the study of the Scripture. **Do you love God's Word? Apply the test.** *He that is of God heareth God's Words.*[John 8:47] *My sheep hear My voice... They follow Me.... A stranger will they not follow.*[John 10:5, 27]

If we really love God, then we will love His children too. We knew a young believer who was much exercised as to whether he was really saved. He did want to be sure.

After praying about the matter, he came across the following passage in his daily reading: *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*[1John 3:14] This set his mind at rest, for he said to himself, "*I am at peace and happy with God's children, whereas with the world I am uncomfortable."*[1John 4:7,11;5:1] **Teach the same truth.** A man is known by the company he keeps, for birds of a feather flock together.

In my unconverted days an old Christian put his hand on my head and prayed for me. I resented it and hated him for it. If I saw him coming down the street, I would go up a side road, or stoop to tie my boot-lace, in order to avoid him. When I was converted, however, he was among the first whom I sought out, and he remained my warm friend till the day of his death. Make no mistake. If you delight in the company of the godless, and shun the company of God's children, then you have every reason to doubt your conversion. **Apply the test. Do you love God's children, or do you shun them?** *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us" but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*[1John 2:19]

D. Test Of Godly Conversation

Thy speech betrayeth thee,[Matt.26:73] is not only true of Galileans. It is a test applicable to all men. *They are of the World; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.*[1John 4:5-6]

How simple, yet how comprehensive such a test is! We are in a full railway carriage. All are complete strangers to me. Conversation ranges from football and politics to farms and the stock-market. Nobody is worried or annoyed by these matters. Now I commence to speak of the Lord Jesus; of His desire to save sinners, and of His death for us on Calvary. Immediately some show open opposition. "*Oh shut up, can't you*!" Others turn to look out of the window, with an uncomfortable smirk.

If, however, there is a child of God in the carriage, he will smile, grip my hand, show his delight, and possibly make room for me to sit beside him, that we may enjoy further godly conversation. This simple test has brought to light those who are God's children and those who are not. *Then they that feared the Lord spake one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.*[Malachi.3:16] Do you enjoy godly conversation, or do you object to it? The foregoing tests are something that may be seen by others. They are external. There is something more personal, however, which every real believer experiences in some degree—something entirely internal. David prayed: *Say unto my soul I am thy salvation.*[Ps.35:3] That is exactly what God does. He gives us that realisation of oneness with Himself which is equivalent to His whispering in our souls
"It is alright. The transaction is settled. I am thy salvation."
It is not a thrill nor an ecstasy: nothing that appeals to the senses or that may be stirred up by excitement and emotion. It is just God's Spirit witnessing with our spirits that we are sons of God.[Rom.8:14-16] Salvation is accepted on the grounds of bare simple confidence in the promises of God's Word, apart from any feelings. Yet *Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba Father'*[Gal.4:6]

Feelings, joys, ecstasies there doubtless will be, yet these are very uncertain criterions in the matter of a soul's eternal salvation, but there is a confidence, born of the Holy Spirit, which comes to us as intangibly yet as definitely as the wind,[John3:8] whispering into our hearts that God is really our Father and that we are really His born-again children.[1John 5:10]

Can a Child of God Fall Away and be Lost Eternally?

To my unbiased person, we believe that the following fourteen reasons will give final and complete proof that no one really born again can be lost.

We do not expect to convince those whose minds have been made up to the contrary, but after reading the following, surely those who want with all their hearts to know the truth at all costs, can have no doubts on this all-important subject.

1. Consider The Nature Of The New Birth

The seed of which we are born is **incorruptible**.*1Pet.1:23-25* The new life born within us is **devil-proof**.*1John 5:18* We are partakers of the **divine nature**.*2Pet.1:4* And since God is eternal in His very nature, the life which is imparted to us is the same.*1John 5:11-12* One of the essentials on sonship is that the son is a permanent member of the family.*John 8:35*

Imagine a judge asking a witness,

"Are you the son of so-an-so?" and receiving the reply,

"I was last year and I may be again in the future, but I am not so at present."

The court would laugh, for though such a condition is possible of service it is quite impossible of sonship.

2. Consider The Permanence Of God's Gifts

He knows the end from the beginning.*Isa.46:10* So He knew the worst about our whole course, past and future, when He saved us. God never repents of what He gives. Now salvation is a gift *Luke 1:77* Eternal life is a gift.*Rom.6:23* To the very end our hope will not be based on the righteousness which we have attained, but on the gift of righteousness.*Rom.5:17* Eternal life is a present possession, and could it by any means, at any time be terminated, the "HATH" in John 5:24 would be a mockery.

3. Consider God's Foreknowledge

Since He knew the worst about us, and still chose us,*Rom.8:29-30* since our names were placed in His book before the world's foundation,*Rev.13:8;17:8* He will not cast away those He fore-knew.*Rom.11:1-2* Can you imagine God, after all these thousands of years since He ordained that we should be His own, saying, "*Oh I made a mistake, I've changed My Mind?"*

God has elected us to be separated by the Spirit, to obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ Jesus.[1Pet.1:2] It is for us to make our calling and election sure.[2Pet.1:10]

4. Consider The Nature Of God's Grace

Grace is something entirely apart from deserts. If it is of grace then works have no part whatever in it.[Rom.11:6] We are saved by Grace.[Eph.2:8] We have believed through grace.[Acts 18:27]

We stand in grace.[Rom.5:2] Shall we fall from grace to a lower standard, and try to maintain ourselves in God's favour by our own efforts?[Gal.5:1-4; 3:1-12; Heb.12:15]

We do not cease sinning to remain in grace, because we ARE in grace.[Rom.6:14-15] For it is grace that teaches us to live the godly life.[Tit.2:11-12] Through eternity we shall be examples of His grace.[Eph.1:5-6] Hearts are not established by being goaded to effort, but by grace,[Heb.13:9] and when we meet Him in the air, it will not be because of what we have done. It will still be by grace alone.[1Pet.1:18] It is love and not the fear of a lost salvation, that induces us to keep His law.[John 14:15,23]

5. Consider The Permanence Of God's Decision

His salvation is an eternal salvation.[Heb.5:9] We are sanctified by the offering of the *body of Jesus Christ ONCE FOR ALL.*[Heb.10:10] That expression ONCE FOR ALL occurs no less than nine times in the epistle of Hebrews. How then, can we tolerate a teaching that one can be in and out, of salvation. Moody rightly remarked, "I have heard of a person being born again, but never once of his being born again and again. I know regeneration but I know nothing of re-regeneration." It is expressly stated that *He has perfected* ***FOR EVER*** *those whom He has thus sanctified.*[Heb.10:14] We are His workmanship.[Eph.2:10] We even reproach an earthly craftsman if he does a job which comes undone. Shall we ever be able to reproach God on that score? Never, for: *I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him.*[Eccl.3:14]

6. Consider The Undertaking Of A Surety

The Lord Jesus is expressly said to be the Surety of those who are parties to the New Covenant.*Heb.7:22* Now there is only one place in the Scriptures where the work of a surety is described.*Gen.43:8-9; 44:32-33* Judah became surety for Benjamin, and when the unknown Egyptian lord wished to seize Benjamin, Judah was prepared to go into slavery himself rather than allow Benjamin to be taken. Apply this to yourself, to me and to the weakest of real believers.

Can satan claim us, or Hell take hold upon us? Never until it has first claimed our Surety, for He has made Himself responsible for us, and we are as safe as He.

7. Consider The Manner In Which. We Are Kept

We are kept by God's power,*1Pet.1:5* and the very faith that we exercise comes from Him.*2Pet.1:1; Heb.12:2* A straying sheep is the shepherd's responsibility, and He goes after it TILL HE FINDS IT.*Luke15:4,8* Many were the friendly chats between a dear old Nonconformist minister and some young fellows who attended an upper-room Bible-class in a Lancashire town. He thought that these lads were very much astray on the subject of eternal security, and endeavoured to convince them that a saint can lose his salvation. At last he suggested a friendly debate. He would give them a quarter of an hour's talk on the subject and then allow them a quarter of an hour. A big blackboard was a prominent feature of that Bible-class, and when the afternoon for the debate arrived, the blackboard was covered by a cloth.

The old gentleman most graciously, but with much emphasis, quoted such texts as "*Whosoever shall endure to the end", "Hold fast... that no man take thy crown", etc.*, and after a quarter of an hour he sat down. Then one of the young fellows stepped to the blackboard and uncovering it, he said,

"*Sir, we do not need a quarter of an hour. We think that this board will say all that is needed.*"

Across it were written in bold letters:

JESUS SAID

MY SHEEP SHALL NEVER PERISH.*John 10:28*

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

For a while the minister stood before that board with his head on one side thinking deeply. Then he turned up the reference in his Bible, and thought it over. After that he dropped on his knees, and it may be assured that the young men were praying too.

Finally he rose, took the chalk and wrote in large letters at the foot of the blackboard: "**AMEN**" followed by his signature.

That was the end of the debate. How could it be anything else?

That minister now preaches eternal security. Even the Christian who had fallen into the grossest sin was to be punished here, that he should not suffer hereafter.*1Cor.5:5; 11:30-32* Christ acknowledges His responsibility to keep His own,*Jn.17:11-12* and takes it most seriously.*Jn.6:39-40*

8. Consider The Purpose Of The Judgment-Seat Of Christ.

The Christian can never come into judgment as to his standing in 'Christ. That is settled.*John 5:24; Rom.8:1* But all the saints will be gathered to review their works while they were here on earth.*2Cor.5:10-11; Rom.14:10-12* Their works will be reviewed for reward or failure.*1Cor.3:12-15; Col.3:24-25* Salvation is compared to a secure foundation,*1Cor.3:11; 2Tim.2:19* upon which the superstructure may be either permanent or destroyed.*1Cor.3:12* Thus the erring saint cannot lose the strong foundation of eternal life, but he will certainly meet a terrible loss in failing to gain his reward. He will be as a rejected one at the races.*1Cor.9:27* *(See Chapter on Roman Games.)*

9. Consider The Nature Of The New Covenant

A person who occupies or possesses property is rightly most careful as to the correctness of his title deeds. He studies every clause and comma, every provision and technical term.

If he is unacquainted with legal phraseology, he will go to a creditable lawyer and find out exactly what are his rights and obligations. Now in the scripture are eight most amazingly important documents. All are different and no one can be made any criterion as to the value of another. You cannot judge as to the validity of your title to copyhold property, or your neighbour's freehold property on the ground of what happens in case of the lease-hold property across the road. Each document is different.

If this is the case in earthly property, which in any case must pass out of our hands within a few short years, how very careful we should be in the matter of that which is of infinite worth and must continue throughout eternity. Yet actually we find people mixing law and grace, applying the Old Covenant today and not taking the least interest in *the covenants of promise.*[Eph.2:12] Some covenants are conditional, some are partly conditional, but the new covenant, which we celebrate every time we sit at the Lord's table, is absolutely without condition. The terms are set forth in Heb.8:8-13. Notice God says, "*I will... I will... I will*". The great difference between this covenant and all that went before is that it not only tells us what to do but GIVES US A HEART TO DO IT.[Heb.8:10] Under the law Israel undertook to do God's law, but in their own strength.[Ex.19:8] Thus God told them what to do but DID NOT GIVE THEM A HEART TO DO IT. (See Deut.29:4 *The Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive.)* Even at the time He gave them the law, God said regretfully, *Oh that there were such an heart in them.*[Deut.5:29] (Read from the beginning of the chapter.) In the new Covenant, they are given a HEART TO DO GOD'S WILL.[Deut.30:6] Of course the New Covenant is essentially a Jewish covenant.[Rom.9:4]

Yet we Gentiles are introduced into it,[Eph.3:11-19] and this wonderful New Covenant not only includes what we are expected to do but the guarantee that we will do it.[Jer. 32:37-40] Though good works are an evidence of its reality in us, yet they are neither a condition of our entrance into, nor of our maintenance in the new covenant.

Again and again it is said to be *NOT of WORKS*.[Rom.4:5-6; Eph.2:9; Tit.3-5] Thus is one endeavour to interpose a condition of works, where God has already accepted the finished work of Christ, then that one is frustrating the grace of God.[Gal.2:21]

10. Consider The Nature Of The New And Eternal Life

Christ himself is our life.[Col.3:4] This life is not an "*it*" but a "*Him*" and He dieth no more.[Rom.6:9] 1John 4:17 declares that "*as He is, so are we in this world*".

If words convey any meaning at all, surely that implies that we, here and now, are as secure as Christ is, where He shares the Father's throne. Mark! It does not say "*As He was...*" a homeless, wandering stranger, but "*As He is...*" in all His risen power, with death behind and triumph before, reigning supreme. *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*[Eph.2:6.] Let me say then to the weakest and most wavering true believer, *Your life is hid with Christ in God.*[Col.3:3] Let who can pluck the Son of God from the Father's throne. Only then can he touch the life of the frailest of those who trust in the Lord Jesus.

11. Consider The Evidence Of Cognate Relationships

It has been said truly that one cannot press similes and parables too far. At some point they are bound to break down. A man is not a sheep. Christ is not a door or a vine. Nevertheless, these similes are clearly spoken to teach us some direct truth, and it would be wrong to reject the evidence of such because they are merely metaphorical.

(a) We are to Christ, as members of a body to its head.[Eph.5:30-32; 1Cor.12:12-27; Col.2:19; Eph.1:22-23] That body, the church will never be presented to the Father incomplete.

(b) We are as much one with the Father as Christ Himself is. The relationship of Father and Son is permanent even if the father does so unnatural a thing as to disinherit his son.[John 8:35]

But will the Father ever cast off Christ? No? Then He will never cast off us.*John 17:21*

(c) The husband and wife are indissolubly joined till death.*Gen.2:24; Eph.5:31-32; 1Cor.6:16-17; Rom.7:2-3* And God hates putting away.*Mal.2:16* Will Christ repudiate His bride? Never!

(d) The food you eat becomes a very part of you. Could you ever dissociate from yourself the breakfast you had yesterday morning? Never, for it is a very part of you. So is Christ to those who have spiritually eaten His flesh and drunk His blood.*John 6 :53-54*

11. Consider Christ's Intercession

He does not pray for the world.*John 17:9* That is why He did not pray for Judas. He knew him from the start.*John 6:64; 13:11* His intercession is for the saints.*John 17:9,20; Rom.8:34* He is able to save them to the farthest degree of place, time or circumstance, to perfection, to completeness, (for that is the meaning of the word "*uttermost*") *seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.*[Heb.7:25] For whom is this high-priestly intercession available ? Is it for those who have attained a high degree of spiritual perfection? No. It is for the ignorant, the tempted, the infirm and those who are out of the way.*Heb.4:1-5:2* See how this is worked in the case of Peter. He had sinned grievously in denying his Lord. Satan has tried to get him, but the most mighty force in the world was interposed: the intercession of Him who spoke the worlds into being *I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.*[Luke 22:31-32] Even in the saddest lapse, Peter's faith could not fail after that, for it was upheld by the faith of the Lord Jesus. Christ said to His Father, *Thou hearest Me always.*[John 11:42]

Struggling, failing, erring saint, take courage. You will overcome for you are upheld by the unfailing intercession of the Lord Jesus. *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.*[Mic.7 :8]

13. Consider The Earnest And Seal Of The Spirit

What is an earnest? I go into the shop of a strange tailor, and ask him to measure me for a suit of clothes. I select a cloth and leave orders that it is to be completed on a certain day. As I am about to leave he says,

"You'll excuse me, but since we are perfect strangers to each other, you will not consider me as taking liberties if I request a small deposit; say a pound, as an earnest that you will return to claim your suit when it is complete".

That pound is an earnest, an assurance that at the proper time I will complete the contract. Were I to default, and never return to claim my suit, I would be a deceiver. Now God has given us the earnest of the Spirit as an assurance that we shall come into all that He has purchased for us.*Eph.1:13-14* Child of God have you any misgivings; can you fear that after giving the earnest, God may by some unhappy chance fail to give the whole. Do you think He will deceive you? The Roman seal was set on the tomb of Christ, but the powers of a risen Christ set at nought the seal of Rome. He burst the tomb and came forth. Who, however, has power to break the seal that God has set upon the faith of His elect? Do not fear. That seal will stand secure *"Until the redemption of the purchased possession when He comes to claim His own"*.

14. Consider The Express Promises Of Our Perfection

No "if-s" or "provided that-s", but clear unequivocal promises. *Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*[Phil.1:6] *We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him.*[1John 3:2] The Corinthian saints had much of which to be ashamed, yet Paul says of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*[1Cor.1:8]

If you have been chosen to salvation from the beginning,[2Thess.2:13] then God is not going to turn back on that after all these

millenniums, and lose you after all. Someone remarked to a police inspector:
"What a curious looking fellow that is who stands on point duty in the market. His clothes never seem to fit, he seems all angles and would appear more suitable for a comedian that for a policeman".
The inspector replied:
"His appearances are against the man, it is true, but I will tell you this. When once that man puts his hand on a criminal, however cunning or dangerous, he never fails to land him safe in the cells".
Now dear fellow-believer, you have been arrested, apprehended*Phil.3:12* by One Who has never been known to release His hold. Do not worry about reaching heaven safely, but rather give your concern to apprehending all the glories for which He has arrested you. You may fail, but how far do you think you will fall with the everlasting arms beneath you?*Deut.33:27; Heb.13:5* Do you think that God would punish again the sins He has once punished in the Lord Jesus?*Rom.4:25; 1Pet.2:24*

Spurious Conversions

Some have an intellectual understanding of salvation, a mere head knowledge, which has never wrought a change of heart. Thus in Acts 8:13 Simon the sorcerer had to all appearances believed. He had even been baptised, but Peter showed (verse 21) that this man's heart was not right. Later in the same chapter, Philip emphasized to the eunuch that if he would be baptised, he must believe with ALL HIS HEART (verse 37). The confusion between understanding and faith is responsible for much apparent failure in conversions. In 2Peter 2:20-22 there are those who escape for a while from worldly pollution, by a knowledge of the Lord, but who, never having experienced a change of heart, drift back to the old life like a washed sow to her wallowing in the mire. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and all things are new.*2Cor.5:17*

But a washed sow is not a sheep. It still has a sow's nature. The sheep may indeed get into the mire, but she will bleat till someone gets her out. A sow on the other hand, loves the mire. A sheep may stray, but it is still, and inevitably, a sheep.

There were four sowings in Matthew 13:19-23; Mark 4:15-20; Luke 8:11-15 but the seeming converts had not believed and been saved. There was some external show but no fruit. *By their fruit ye shall know them.*[Luke 8:12] Only one of the four classes received the Word *in an honest and good heart.*[Luke 8:15] There is a dead and worthless faith, which merely amounts to an external profession.[Jas.2:14, 17-26] It is simply mental illumination.[Heb.6:4] Real faith is from the heart.[Rom.10:9-10; Prov.4:23] There is a loveless, profitless profession of faith,[1Cor.13:2] but it does nothing. *Faith to the saving of the soul*, is very different because it does not *draw back.*[Heb.10:39] (see context). The three fruitless growths of Matthew 13:19-23 are all marked by their temporary character. The seed in "*an honest and good heart*" continued. This shows the real test of the new birth. Do those who once seemed so real and earnest finally fall away? *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all (or "altogether") of us.*[1John 2:19] Thus permanence is one of the outstanding marks of a real new birth. *The servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth ever.*[John 8:35] A son may be far from satisfactory, but that can never alter the fact that that man is his father and that he is that man's son. *If ye continue in my Word then are ye my disciples indeed.*[Jn.8:31; Job 17:9] Judas was with the apostolic band for a time and even did miracles,[Matt.10:1; Luke 9:1] but he was not of them.- After fulfilling God's purpose in betraying Christ, he left them to *go to his own place.*[Acts 1:25] We must not be deceived even by the most outstanding appearances. Some are prophesying, casting out demons and working miracles, to whom the Lord will one day say "*I never knew you*". Mark well—He will not say, "*I do not know you now, though I once did*", but "*I* ***NEVER*** *knew you".*[Matt.7:23]

2Corinthians 13:5-7 shows that these reprobates, (disapproved or rejected ones) are recognisable, in that they are not in the faith and Christ is not in them. Similarly those who are in the true faith may be recognised by their certainty of being God's children.*1Jn.5:19* True faith is permanent, and it results in a godly life.*Jn.5:24; 6:35-37; Jas.2:17; Tit.2:11-12*

Tortured Texts

There is no scripture which teaches that a child of God can lose his salvation. The Word of God does not contradict itself, and the whole testimony of the Bible is to the effect that God not only saves but keeps His own elect. There are many passages however, containing *some things hard to be understood, which they that are (literally) uninstructed and unstable wrest, (put to torture) unto their own destruction.*2Pet.3:16

This they do,

(a) By applying scriptures to others than those whom, or about whom they were written.

(b) By failing to find the correct meaning of words.

(c) By not comparing spiritual things with spiritual, or text with context.

(d) By deciding on a theory first and then going to the scriptures to substantiate it, instead of going to the word with an open mind.

(e) By interpreting Scripture in the light of experience, instead of interpreting experience in the light of Scripture.

Hebrews 6:4-9

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned. Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation.

Since this passage seems to be the central fortress of those who teach that a believer may lose his salvation, we take it first. Strangely neither faith nor salvation is mentioned.

Indeed it is clear that the whole passage refers to something less than salvation, for verse 9 continues, *But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.* It is sad that those who build up wrong doctrine on this passage fail to consider the beautiful little illustration by which it is accompanied. Two pieces of land are before us. Both receive the same treatment from God: sunshine, frost and rain. Yet one produces herbs meet for those who dress it, while the other bears briars and thorns, is nigh unto cursing and will finally be burned. There is no suggestion that the bad land was once good but has turned bad. Rather the inference is that it always has been, and always would be bad, despite the frequent drinking in of rain. If this represented a backslider falling from salvation, it would be a terrible passage, for in such a case he could never hope for restoration. Happy would be the man converted on his death-bed, for only so could he be sure of not backsliding. But the passage before us does not say it is impossible to renew him again to salvation. "*It is impossible to renew him again to* ***REPENTANCE***", and repentance is just a change of mind.

Five blessings had fallen on those represented by the unfruitful ground.

1. They were enlightened. Anyone who has light is enlightened even though he resists that light.
2. They have tasted the heavenly gift.
3. They have tasted the good word of God.
4. They have tasted the powers of the world to come. Note that in all these three expressions it is "*tasted, tasted, tasted*". They have nibbled, sampled. They know the terrors of an eternal Hell and the joys of an eternal heaven. They have as good a grasp of God's Word as many a believer, yet they have never eaten or drunk. (C.f. Matt. 27:34. *When He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.*)

5. The last privilege which these enlightened ones have is, according to the Authorised Version, they "*were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*". The Holy Spirit is mentioned 93 times in the New Testament, yet this is the only place where this expression is used. It will be seen that the definite article is in italics. Actually it reads "*Who participated in, or went along with, Holy Spirit*". Apart from the article, "*pneuma*" may indicate the working, rather than the person of the Holy Spirit. *See note on divine titles in Newberry's New Testament.* All that is here indicated is that the enlightened has been drawn and constrained of the Spirit, but has not yielded. Like the Pharisees and Herod he rejoiced for a season in the Light, but did not accept it personally. C.f. John 5:35 with Luke 7:30. There is no mention of his being born of the Spirit, or sealed with the Spirit. The word heard was not *mixed with faith.*[Heb.4:2] The word "*for*" at the beginning of Heb.6:4, links it with what has gone before. It is an encouragement to go on into real living faith. Heb.5:11 to the end of Heb.6 might be paraphrased, *Instead of going on into living faith in Christ, you have become incapable of understanding the Word. Do not be half-hearted, but go on into that faith which is like an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.* We have seen that if Heb.6:4-6 taught that a saved one could be lost, then he could never be restored. Praise God, however, passages like Ps.89:30-37; Luke 15:4; Hosea 14:1-4; Jer.3:12-14, show how readily God welcomes the backslider's return. Actually no chapter in the Bible teaches eternal security more strongly than Heb.6. Verses 16 to 19 show that though man may change, yet God's promise to His heirs remains immutable, and He has confirmed it by an oath. A child of God can never be lost until God has broken His covenant promise and His oath.

Matthew 5:13

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

Savourless salt. Real salt will always have the taste of salt. We have seen sacksful, salt-pans, oceans of salt water, but strangely it every bit tasted what it was. If a housewife were to try some white powder and to find that it did not taste salt, she would have every reason to reject it. She would not say, "*It is tasteless salt*" but, "*It is not salt at all*". That is the very point of the parable. It is not a matter of acceptance of a Christian by God, but the rejection of a false testimony by men. A professing Christian can only be recognised by his Christian conduct.

Three Utter Impossibilities

In the sermon on the Mount the Lord used the most graphic illustrations to impress His lessons on the disciples.

1. He spoke of the impossibility of gathering grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. Of course you cannot get grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. Our Lord used the pictures to show that it is equally impossible to expect Christian behaviour from unconverted man.

2. Similarly He said, *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.*[Matt.6:23] Light stands for truth, while darkness pictures ignorance and falsity. But who ever heard of dark light or light darkness. Light can never be darkness. A man either embraces truth or error. Call it '*Truth*'. Profess to believe that it is truth, but it still remains error if it is untrue.

3. Again the Lord Jesus spoke of an impossibility when He said, *If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted "It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.*[Matt.5:13] Savourless salt! Why there is no such thing. In order to satisfy myself on this point I applied to one of the biggest salt producers in the world. He has 121 modern windmills constantly pumping up the brine from below ground. There are miles of great drying vats, where the water is evaporated and the salt remains.

I saw mountains of salt and a railway siding where rows of trucks were being loaded with salt for transport to all parts of the world. This salt-producer was owner and manager of the salt-pans, as his father had been before him; an intelligent well-educated man, who could tell me more about salt in an hour than I had known in a life-time. I asked him,
"Mr. C. have you ever come across salt that has lost its savour".
He replied,
"Never, Sir! So long as it is salt, it will taste salt, and if it has not the savour of salt, then it is not salt at all. There are other chemicals that look like salt, but if they have not the taste of salt, then analysis will prove that they are not salt at all. Sometimes grocers will adulterate salt with cornflour and other things, to make it pour better and to keep it from becoming lumpy. Naturally this mixture seems less tasty than 100% salt, but really the salt that is in it is just as salt as ever".
In other words, if a man is a child of God, he will have the savour of a child of God, he will speak like a child of God and act like a child of God. If he has not the savour of a child of God, then he is not a child of God at all. Not only will he be rejected of God, but men, who see and hear his godless savour, will scorn and repudiate him, declaring, "*He is not a Christian at all*" — He is NOT SALT, or he would taste salt.

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

God has to chastise the unforgiving. They will suffer for their hardness of heart, but this does not imply eternal punishment.[Heb.12:6] Note in Matt.6:15 that God is still their Father, even if He has to punish them. If the Sermon on the Mount were God's condition of salvation for sinners, then we would be worse off than under the law of Moses.

(*See Chapter 5 verses 21,27,33,38,43 with contexts.*) The Sermon on the Mount, however, is addressed to disciples, to show them how to live.[Matt.5:1-2]

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts… Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

The Debtor. Salvation is not of works. The debtor, moreover, could only be sold for six years. On the 7th he must be freed.[Lev.25:40; Neh.5:8]

Exodus 32:33

The LORD replied to Moses: Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. Under the law the sinner was blotted out, but under grace it is the sin that is blotted out.

Deuteronomy 28; Ezekiel 18:24; 33:11-19

But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die. Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?' …And if a wicked person turns away from their wickedness and does what is just and right, they will live by doing so.

The law could do nothing but convince us of our sinfulness.[Rom.3:19-20] That was a covenant of works and no man can come to Christ on that ground. Otherwise Christ would not have needed to die.

Now, however, He is our righteousness.[1Cor.1:30] The life mentioned in these three Old Testament scriptures is not eternal life, but life here on earth.

Matthew 24:13

But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. Endurance to the end. The disciples had asked Christ about the end of the age. The whole of chapters 24 and 25 are an answer to the questions in Matthew 24:3. Thus verse 13 is a picture of those who will be enduring the great tribulation. (*See context.*) If we were saved by enduring, then we could not know whether we were saved until the end came. We are saved by trusting.[Acts 16:31] Matthew 24:24 shows how safe are God's elect. What a mistake it is to wrest texts from their contexts and to jump to a wrong conclusion that "the end" must necessarily mean the end of one's natural life, when it is nothing of the sort. It seems so strange that people should seize upon such passages to support an utterly unscriptural theory about losing one's eternal salvation. Precisely the same word for "*saved*" is used in Acts 27:20 of salvation from shipwreck and in 1Timothy 2:15 of salvation during childbirth.

Matthew 24:45-51; 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27

Talents and unfaithful servant. Christ shows that a servant may represent a mere professor of religion, without ever knowing Him personally. Surely this man who beats his fellow-servants and calls his Master hard, is no picture of a child of God.[John 8:35] If such servants were believers, they would not have their portion with unbelievers.[Luke 12:46]

Matthew 26:41

An unwatchful, prayerless Christian will fall into temptation (hence this warning). But temptation is not perdition.

Matt.13:20-21; Mark 4:13-14; Luke 8:13-14; 9:61-62

The context shows clearly that only those likened to the good ground received the word in "an honest and good heart".[Luke 8:15]

How could those who are "*preserved in Christ Jesus*" fall away? *Jude 1 See chapter on "Spurious Conversions".* Salvation is of grace and does not depend on our fitness at all. Not one of us is fit. This, however, is a matter of discipleship, and not of salvation. See note on John 6:66-68. Loyal discipleship is of immense importance, but not as a ground of new birth.

Luke 11:33-36; John 12:35-36; 6:66-68

This is a warning against shutting out the light of God. The fact that many have had the light and have rejected it, is not sound proof of the eternal loss of those who have received it and believed in it. The word "*disciple*" simply means "*a learner*". Some who had been learning got to a hard place, and learned no longer, but a really born-again soul answers as in verse 68.

John 8:31

Continuance in His Word is not the condition of our salvation but the evidence of it. If we are "His disciples indeed", then we certainly will continue. Friend, if you were to be saved by continuing, how long would you have to continue before you were safe? *See notes on "Spurious Conversions".*

John 15:1-6

Anyone who has had to do with grafting will admit that it is one thing for a new branch to be grafted in, and another entirely for the graft to 'strike', or become embodied in the tree. The proof of its 'striking' and thus becoming part of the very vine is life, fruit.

If there is no growth then there is no life. Living faith always produces works.*Jas.2:12 See also chapter on "A Grape Vine and a Pocket Knife".* This parable deals with service. A real branch is so united to the vine that though to all outward appearances it is cut away, the base, the inward connection, cannot be removed without destroying the main stem. Our works may be fit only for fire.*1Cor.3:11-15* But our life in Christ is as secure as Christ Himself.

The verse 2 "*taketh away*" is the Greek word "*airo*", which is often translated "*lift up*". It is so used in John 11:41; Rev.10:5, while a cognate of the same verb is seen in Matt.12:11; Mk.1:31.
During the winter the vine is stripped and laid on the ground. In spring it is lifted up onto a trellis, for fruit bearing. God often has to abase His children lest they should be harmed by pride, but later He exalts them to higher realms of service.[2Cor.12:7-10]

John 17:12
While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. This is a perfectly simple and well-recognised Greek idiom, "*syllogismus*" equivalent to saying, *None of them is lost, but the son of perdition (is lost).*

1 Corinthians 3:13-15
If only the context is studied it will be clear that the passage, far from supporting the theory of losing one's salvation, actually teaches the very opposite. The WORKS of the failing Christian are burnt up, but he himself IS SAVED, yet so as by fire. Physical death may indeed result from a Christian harbouring sin.[Rom.8:13; 1Cor.11:30-32; 1Jn.5:16-17] This, however, is very different from condemnation with the world.[1Cor.5 :5; 11:32]

1 Corinthians 3:17
If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple [If any man corrupt the temple of God, him shall God corrupt.] (See Newberry margin) No Christian can tamper with this beautiful body which God has given him without suffering the consequences. A glutton gets a fat heart. A smoker will develop weak eyes, sore throat and possibly cancer. This however, is quite different from the eternal destruction of the unbeliever.

1Cor.9:24-27; Col.2:18; 2Jn.8; Rev.3:11
A castaway is a runner or wrestler who has not kept to the rules. He loses his prize at the sports: a fading wreath. Read from verse 24 and *see chapter on the Roman Games*. A Christian may lose his reward, which is gained, but never his eternal life, which is given.

1 Corinthians 10:5
A mixed multitude followed Israel from Egypt.[Exodus 12:38] Those who were destroyed were those who believed not.[Jude 5]

1 Corinthian 10:12
A Christian may fall from his steadfastness,[*2Pet.3:17*] but he cannot fall out of Christ. David said, *He restoreth my soul* and this restoration often comes through bitter experiences. Yet even for the fallen Christian, God is still his Father, and his Advocate will restore him.[*1John2:1*] He may grow cold,[*2Pet.1:9*] and need discipline,[1Cor.11:30-32] even to physical death,[*1Cor.5:5;8:11;Rom.14:15*] but he can never perish eternally.[*John 3:16; 5:24; 6:37*]

1 Corinthians 15:2; Galatians 3:4
By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? Is it really possible to believe in vain, to suffer in vain? Or is it simply a piece of oratorial irony? Will anyone ever look into God's face and say, "Thou didst promise to save those who trust in thee. I trusted and Thou didst not save me after all. I suffered for Thee but to no account"? Never! How can a real Christian forget or deny the truths of verse 1.

2 Thessalonians 2:2-3; 1 Timothy 4:1
And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

The falling away of apostasy is certainly here. False professors and bastard churches are giving up the fundamentals of our faith, but that does not affect the real church, or prove that those who are going back on God's Word were ever really born again.

The Whole Hebrew Epistle

To-day we can only approach God the Father through His Son.*Jn.14:6* In the case of those Jews who lived before Christ came to earth, it was different. Their approach was through parables or figures for the time then present, imposed only until Christ should come and rectify matters.*Heb.9:9-10* These figures included temple, priesthood, offerings etc., through all of which the Holy Spirit pointed to Christ and His work. After the Lord Jesus had come, these Hebrews must either go forward into real living faith in Him, or else they must go back even from the grasp of God which they already had. Priesthood and offerings were superseded, so that if Christ Himself were rejected, no other God-provided offering for sin remained.*Heb.10:26* *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.*1John *2:23* Thus by refusing Christ they relinquished their access to God. They must either go forward into salvation, or go back into perdition. Read in this light, the Epistle to the Hebrews offers no difficulty in such passages as, *We are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*Heb.10:35-39

Nothing could be plainer than the teaching of eternal security in the first eighteen verses of Hebrews 10. See for example verses 10 and 14. Indeed the whole epistle is full of such expressions as '*once for all*', '*perfected for ever*', etc.

Hebrews 3:6, 14; 6:11

Quite gratuitously 'the end' is made to mean the end of our lives. A little thought would show that it cannot mean any such thing. Were one to say, "Continue along that road to the end and you will find the house for which you are looking", what would he mean?

Would it imply that you must go along that road for the rest of your life until the end (*i.e.* death) comes? You laugh, yet it is just as foolish to make a passage like, *"...partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end*", to mean the end of our lives.[Heb.3:14] Indeed the next verse shows plainly that we should embrace that end, "*TO-DAY*". The word, '*telos'*, end, often means the object, aim or goal. The confidence of the Hebrew was in his law,[*Rom.2:17-20*] but Christ is the end, the goal, the object at which the law pointed.[*Rom.3:21, 10:4*] Thus a Hebrew who did not hold the beginning of his confidence (*i.e.* the Mosaic ritual) right on to his goal, (*i.e.* Christ) had no claim to be called a partaker of Christ, or of the household of God. *The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.*[*Gal.3:24*] Anyone who clings to the law, but refuses Christ, misses the end or goal for which the law was instituted. Nobody who reads such passages with an unprejudiced mind, and who carefully studies the context, can possibly make them mean that a believer must continue to the end of his life before he can be sure that he is finally and eternally safe. The difficulty is that people take such isolated texts to prove their theories WITHOUT STUDYING THE CONTEXT.—*See note Matthew 24:13*.

Hebrews 10:26-29

Israel was sanctified, or set apart, by a blood-covenant,[*Gal.3:10-11; Rom.9:4;10:5*] a covenant of works. Romans 10:11-12 brings to light a new covenant, applicable to Jew and Gentile alike. He who counts the blood of Christ as vile, while still professing to trust in the old covenant, is surely not a saved man. Faith in Christ is not mentioned in this passage. Sinners are not saved merely by knowing the truth, but by believing it.

The word 'adversaries' in verse 27 certainly cannot mean believers. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 would disprove that. Sanctify simply means 's*et apar*t'. It does not necessarily even imply salvation *c.f.* 1Cor.7:14. '*No more'* means '*No other'*, no further sacrifice for sin.

Christ is God's last word to a guilty world.[Heb.1:1-2] The Jew once trusted in the blood of bulls and rams, but now he knows these to be but pictures of Christ's death for the world.[John 6:51] Thus he cannot turn back to Jewish sacrifices. He must trust in Christ or perish. *By which he was sanctified*, can quite legitimately be translated, *in which it, (i.e. the covenant) was sanctified. c.f.* Heb.9:18-23. The inauguration if the old covenant was with the blood of calves and goats, but the new covenant, with the better sacrifice of the blood of Christ. Another reference to Heb.10:39 should surely satisfy the reader that the foregoing context as a whole cannot possibly infer the final perdition of a once saved soul.

Hebrews 12:14

How holy must one be before one is sure of salvation? Is one saved by personal perfection or by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Does one approach God on the ground of one's own holiness, or because of righteousness provided by Another?[Rom.10:3-4]

By turning confidence from Christ's finished work to our holiness, from grace to attainment, we are falling into the very pitfall of which the next verse warns us.[Heb.12:15]

We are failing of the grace of God, for if salvation is gained, or maintained by works, then Christ died in vain. Rather this verse like those in Matt.16:24; Rom.8:10-13; Gal.6:8; Rom.13:14; Rev.21:7, shows the evidence of faith and not the ground of faith. How many we have known who were lifted up into a sense of self-complacency, telling of how long they had lived without sinning, and resting their security upon a basis of their own degree of holiness. Any professor who does not follow peace and holiness is not really born again. A Christian **WILL** be holy. If he does not take up his cross, walk in the Spirit, deny himself and put on the Lord Jesus, then he is no Christian. A Christian **WILL** overcome.[1John5:4] A Christian *HAS* died and been buried with Christ.[Rom.6:1-4] His heart **IS** purified by faith.[Acts15:9]

Nothing **CAN** separate us from His love, and we **ARE** conquerors.[Rom.8:35-37] God will keep **US** blameless to the end.[1Cor.1:8] He **WILL** complete that which He has begun in us.[Phil.1:6]

1 Timothy 5:11-15

There is no wrong in a widow marrying again.[Rom.7:3] There **IS** wrong in a widow expecting support from church funds and then not being steadfast. (FOOTNOTE. Remember the word '*pistis'* means more than simply *believing*. It includes "*faithfulness*" and "*steadfastness*").
She wavers for a time, gadding about, and eventually marries out of Christ. She is bound to suffer.[2Cor.6:14-18] Satan may be allowed to afflict such an one,[1Cor.5:5] with a view to her restoration, but if such a woman is a real child of God, the Good Shepherd is pledged to follow His straying sheep *TILL HE FIND IT*.[Luke 15:4] She is condemned to suffer here, as thousands are suffering, but she will not be condemned with the world.[1Cor.11:32] A course of wilful and persistent sinning, however, would prove that she was never really a child of God at all.[1John 3:6]

2 Timothy 2:18

It is possible for any one of us to drift from sound doctrines so we should give the more earnest heed, lest we let them '*leak out*'.[Heb.2:1] Such wrong teaching can not only subvert our own faith, but that of those about us. Has the reader never had his faith shaken in some point of doctrine? The next verse shows plainly that such shaking of the superstructure can never affect the foundation fact that we are God's and He is ours.

2 Peter 1:10

The very idea of citing, '*make your calling and election sure*' to prove that we cannot be sure! It shows to what extent people can render the scriptures void through their own tradition.[Mark 7:13]

Jude 12

"*Twice dead*". There are those walking about on earth who have deliberately said, "*No*" to the Holy Spirit until He has ceased to strive with them, and they hear His voice no more.*Gen.6:3* They sin against the Holy Ghost until there is no return,*Heb.6:4-6* no remedy.*Prov.6:15* They can never be forgiven, so are as sure of the Lake of Fire as though they were already in its flames.*Mark 3:29* Since every unsaved person is dead in sin,*Eph.2:1; Col.2:13; 1Tim.5:6* these deliberate objectors of Christ are doubly so. Condemned already,*John 3:18* all that remains is the execution of the sentence.*Rev.20:14-15* Can one honestly read this passage and believe that the people here described as twice dead were ever really children of God?

Revelation 3:5

The question is often asked, "*Were all the seven churches of the Revelation composed of believers"*? Now in these seven churches one finds pictured every variety of visible church. They were real churches in real, existing cities.

EPHESUS the waning church
SMYRNA the persecuted church
PERGAMOS the false and persecuting church
THYATIRA the church astray in false doctrine
SARDIS the lifeless church
PHILADELPHIA the timid but faithful church and
LAODICEA the worldly church.

These churches are typical of your church, the little church down the road and the fashionable church round the corner. Can you be positive that everyone in your church, and in that other church, is a saved soul? Would you say that those who murdered Antipas, in the church at Pergamos were Christians, or that the idolatrous harlot, Jezebel, who took the Bible class in the Thyatira church was really born again? There is the nominally Christian church, dead and dying in Sardis. Do you think they were all saints?

In the seven there are five clear cases of lying profession. Chapter 2 verses 2, 9, and 20; Chapter 3 verses 9 and 17. Five of the seven churches were told to repent, and all the seven had something to overcome. What needed overcoming in Sardis? Was it not the deadness, the defiled garments of a religion without reality? Do you not know churches where it is doubtful if there is a single really born-again soul among them? Revelation 3:4 and 5 shows that there was indeed a little consecrated band, even in Sardis: "*a few names*". How the rest of the worldly members hate them! If our own experience proves anything, it will not be long before they are crossed from the church register, for they are a standing rebuke to the modernist minister and to his unbelieving flock. Never mind, you faithful ones! You may be erased from the church roll, but God will never wipe your names from His book. Those who are cleansed by the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus, and robed in His righteousness need never fear.

Advocates of '*falling away'* may tell you that your name may be blotted out, but God says, "*I will* ***N-O-T*** *blot out his name out of the books of life*". No name written there will ever be erased, and remember that in His foreknowledge, od put your name there before He laid the foundation of the World.[*Eph.1:4; Rev.17:8*] *See note on Rev. 22:19. See 'Books' Rev. 20:12.* One of these books is concerned with physical life.[*Ps.139:13-17*] Naturally names can be, and are, taken from this *Book of the living.*[*Ps.69:28*] In this connection it must be kept clearly in mind that punishment for sin, in Israel, was physical death, *c.f.* Ezekiel 33 (whole chapter). Thus in Ex.32:28 three thousand Israelites met death by the sword, as punishment for idolatry. Moses then asked that he might be blotted out of God's Book instead of the sinful people, but he was told, *Whatsoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.*[*Ex.32:32-33*] In other words physical death was the result of sin in Israel. It would be a great mistake, however, to build upon such warnings a doctrine that a born-again child of God can be blotted out from an altogether different book, *i.e.* the Lamb's Book of Life.

Revelation 3:11

It is sadly possible for a Christian to lose his crown, which is a reward for service. *(See chapter on Roman Games)* He cannot lose his eternal life, however, as that is not a reward but a gift.[Rom.6:23] God never changes His mind about gifts He has once given. *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*[Rom.11:29] *[God never goes back upon His gifts and call. Moffat's Translation]*

Revelation 22:18-19

This, the last objection that can be raised to the doctrine of eternal security, has puzzled many. If a name can be erased from that book, then the scriptures contradict themselves. However, a glance at Moffat, the Revised Version, or any one of the Variorum readings will show that the word should not be the '*book'* of life but the '*tree'* of life. Moreover in verse 14, Revised Version it will be seen that the ground of admittance to that tree is not keeping His commandments (for then not one of us could ever partake of it). *Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.* Unless and until a man is cleansed by the blood of the Cross he will be deprived of access to that tree. Quibblers, who add to, or taken from the book, therefore, will receive its plagues and forfeit its blessings.

We have seen by a careful impartial study of the scriptures that **THERE IS NOT ONE VERSE TO SUGGEST THAT A SAVED MAN 'CAN BE FINALLY LOST**. We would point out the solemn responsibility arising from this examination.

You reader, cannot honestly apply again, as supposed proofs of losing salvation, texts which you now see to teach no such thing.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Remember The teaching of a salvation that can be lost:
a. Robs God of His power to keep;
b. Casts an aspersion (though unintentional) upon the faithfulness of Christ the Good Shepherd.
c. Throws the weak Christian into despair.
The teacher of falling away, himself falls from Grace to a lower standard, by going back to the belief that he is maintained in salvation by his own works. He is *removed from grace to another gospel.*[Gal.1:6] Why not accept the plain statement of His Word: *The Lord loveth judgment and forsaketh not His saints: THEY ARE PRESERVED FOR EVER.*[Ps.37:28] Are you one of His saints; even the least? Then thank Him that you are **PRESERVED FOR EVER**.

A Grape Vine And A Pocket Knife
John 15:1-8 I am the Vine and ye are the branches.
The branch is so intimately joined to the vine that it is hard to say where one ends and the other begins. *Abide (dwell) , in me and I in you.* Before me is a vine with its branches. I have cut both the vine and its branches down the middle, that I may see what is in the heart of each.
1. Notice how absolutely the branch is dependent on the vine for its life and fruit. All fruit originates from the vine sap which is communicated to the branches. *Thou bearest not the root but the root thee.*[Rom.11:18] See how at the juncture, the vine is enlarged, specially to communicate its sap to the branch. A branch may abide (same word as '*dwell',*[Acts 28:30] anywhere else but in the vine, and it cannot bear fruit. If anyone does not live in Christ, that is, if he is not born again, he cannot produce the fruit of a Christian life. *Men gather them and they are burned.* Burning represents judgment.[1Cor.3:13] The world soon discriminates the unreality of such. a man. They say, "*There is a preacher who does not live the Christian life*"—or, "*He goes to church on Sunday but you should see how he lives for the rest of the week.*" Thus do men gather and burn them. How can he bear Christian fruit without being in Christ, the Vine?

2. In addition to the external branch, which one sees, there is the internal root to each branch—this goes to the very heart of the vine. One can cut off every vestige of the external branch (that is, the saints may die) , but one cannot cut off the internal part. It is hidden deep down in the vine. *Your life is hid with Christ in God.*[Col.3:3] That inner branch cannot be taken out without destroying the vine. *Because I live ye shall live also.*[John 14:19] Satan cannot destroy the weakest saint until he can destroy our Lord Himself. We are safe as our surety. *If it were possible the Enemy would deceive the very elect.*[Matt. 24:24] But he cannot. The flesh may be destroyed, but the spirit is still safe in God's keeping.[1Cor.5:5] To be '*chastened of the Lord'* is possible, but never to '*be condemned with the world'*.[1Cor.11:22; John 5:24] How safely we are preserved in Jesus Christ.[Jude 1]

3. In my sketch there is one root of a branch, in the heart of the vine, without any apparent external branch. A closer look will show that there is the tiniest bud just peeping out from the bark, yet the internal root is as big as those of larger branches. From this I learn that the newest and least noticed believer is as near to the heart of God, as secure and as well-eared-for as the most prominent and responsible saint.

4. Another lesson I learn from this bud is that your salvation did not start with you it began centuries ago in the heart of God.[John 6:37] *Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.*[John 15:16,19] The child does not decide on being born. That is the responsibility of its parents, and long before God made the world, He knew that you and I would trust in the Lord Jesus, so He chose us to be His Own.[Eph.1:4] The branch starts inside the vine. How absurd to think that millenniums after God chose us to be His Own, he would alter His mind and say, *"Oh! I made a mistake! He is not as good as I thought he would be*", and damn those whom He once decided to save.

5 Notice that whereas one branch hangs down, another juts straight out from the main stem of the vine. Do you see any difference in the condition of the branches?

Of course you do, for the pith is full and healthy in the upstanding branch. Its buds are fresh and strong. In the branch that hangs down, the pith is narrow and constricted, while its solitary little bud is withering and dying. The branch which grows upward is manifestly the healthier of the two.

That is why the Lord said, *Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He lifteth up.* The Greek word '*airo'* is the same as in *They lifted up their voices.*[Luke 17:13] *Jesus lifted up His eyes.*[John 11:41] *The angel lifted up his hand.*[Rev.10:5] The cognates of the verb are seen in, *Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up.*[Mark 9:27] *Lifting up holy hands.*[1Tim.2:8] One has only to substitute '*take away'* for '*lift up'* in these passages to see how unfitting it is in John 15:2. How would it do for example, to say that men must '*take away holy hands'* instead of '*Lift up holy hands'*. The Christian who '*minds earthly things'* has his head down.[Phil.3:19] He cannot expect abundant fruit. Look up my friend. *Set your affection on the things above.*[Col.3:2] So will you be abundantly fruitful.

6. Leonard T. Pearson, the writer on Jewish custom, tells me that in Palestine during the winter the vines are sometimes deliberately placed on the ground, with big stones on them, to prevent their being ripped and broken by the strong winds. Thus to be lifted is sometimes dangerous.[1Tim.3:6] Chastisement and abasing are wholesome.[Heb.12:8] With the coming of spring, the vine-dressers lift up these vines on a forked stick, standard or trellis thus encouraging the sap to flow. Life and fruit result. Fear not, precious saint, though love has humbled you in the dust. *He shall lift you up.*[Jas.4:10] He is only showing His care for you. Those times of humbling are for your good and in due time He will set you in a place of fruitfulness.[1Pet.5:6-7]

7. Neither vine nor branch, being hollow, is of use for anything but fruit-bearing. One cannot use them for planks, vessels, or even for a pin.[Judg.9:12-13; Ezek.15:2-3] Everything, then, must be planned to one end: the producing of grapes. The vine-dressers argue among themselves as to whether they should leave two or three buds on the branch, when they are pruning.

That lovely branch may have scores of buds, shoots, tendrils and leaves, but though they are so graceful, so natural and so attractive that it seems wrong to lay vandal hands upon them, yet they must be cut off ruthlessly for the sake of the fruit. Why am I deprived of those graces, pleasure and harmless pursuits that others enjoy.
The answer is: *Fruit*. Why must the pruning knife deprive me of so much that others regard as absolute necessity? Why does my Lord call for my crucifixion, for denial of Self? It is that I may produce more fruit. *Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*. May the Lord delight to come to me and find the fruit of love, joy, peace, and righteousness that so rejoice His heart.*Song of Sol.4:16; Gal.5:22-23*

Roman Sports

1. Christian Life A Contest

Wherever the Romans carried their civilising influence, they introduced physical culture. The Greeks too, cultivated the body, but with them the great thing was the intellect.*Acts.17:21; 1Cor.1:22* The Romans introduced the bath and the theatre, not as a place for dummy shows and oratory, but rather as a place where men wrestle, box and run. Thus when Paul says, *We are made a spectacle to the world,*1Cor.4:9 he is speaking of the '*theatron'*, where men fought to the death. *We are made a gazing stock,*Heb.10:33 is practically the same word. In the previous verse, *Ye endured a great fight of afflictions,* the word '*fight'* is *athlesin*, a contest, from which we get our word '*athletics'*. The same word of contending for championship is used in 2Timothy 2:5 *A competitor in the games is not crowned (garlanded) unless he observes the rules. (Moffatt's Translation).* Also in Philippians 1:27: *Fighting side by side.* The prime of Roman manhood put every ounce of strength and skill into these contests so that sometimes the word '*agonize'* is used. *Every man that agonizes for the mastery.*1Cor.9:25 *Agonizing according to His working.*Col.1:29 *Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving (agonizing) against sin.*Heb.12:4

The Greek for '*naked*' is '*gumnos*', and from the fact that the athlete stripped off all encumbering clothing,[Heb.12:1] running or wrestling naked, we get the word '*gymnasium*',[1Tim.4:8] *Gymnastic exercise profits little.*[1Tim.4:8] *Go into gymnastic training, strip yourself, for godliness.*[1Tim.4:7]
Just as Roman arenas are found in every part of the old empire, so reference to these games is frequent through all the New Testament, though in many cases obscured by translation.

2. Christians Only Are Eligible Competitors

Trusting in the Lord Jesus is the start of the contest, for that agonizing can only be carried on in His power.[Col.1:29-2:1; Heb.10:32] Only a full-blooded citizen could compete in the games. Thus one must distinguish between God's free gift and His rewards. Eternal life is a free gift,[Rom.6:23] and the rewards are for works done in one's subsequent Christian life. Paul writes to Titus that God saved us *not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy*, yet he continues, Tit.3:5-8, *that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works*. Works, that is, not to be saved, but because they are already saved. Similarly, in Ephesians 2:8-10, after declaring that salvation is by grace and not of works, Paul continues that we are *created unto good works that God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them*. (See also the distinction between the foundation and the subsequent building in 1Cor.3:10-15). Thus it is clear that only those who are born again already and citizens of heaven are eligible for this race and prize. Until faith in Christ, all efforts are vain.[Gal.3:10; Jn.6:28-29]

3. The Gain Or Loss Of Reward

Crowns are mentioned again and again in the New Testament, as a reward for faithful service. These are not the jewel-studded regal diadems, but the '*stephanos*' or victor's wreath, given at the Roman athletic contest. The '*fading wreath*' of parsley or laurel, which graced the brow of the champion boxer, wrestler or runner, will find its counterpart in the '*unfading wreath*' of Christian reward.[ICor.9.25; 1Pet.5:4; 1Thess.2:19; Phil.4:1; 2Tim.4:8; Jas.1:12; Rev.2:10]

The competitor in a contest would be disapproved (*adokimos*) if he did not keep to the rules.[2Tim.2:5] (The word used here is just the opposite of '*dokimos*' - *approved*, in 2Cor.10:18.) That is he would lose his right to a wreath.[Col.2:18; 2John 8; Rev.3:11] Some will have *run in vain.*[Phil.2:16] Thus a '*castaway*' in 1Cor.9:27, has nothing whatever to do with losing one's life in Christ, for that is a gift and it is eternal. Rather this word refers to being disapproved for a prize.

4. The Time Of Prize-Giving

The rewards will be given when the Lord Jesus comes again.[1Pet.5:4; Rev.22:12; Jas.5:7-9; Heb.10.35-37; 1Thess.2:19] There will be both praise and blame.[1Thess.5:23; Col.3:25; 1Pet.4:17; 2Cor.5:9-10] It is clear that no Christian will be judged at the Great White Throne. That is only for the dead in sin.[Rev.20:14-15]

For the child of God, judgment is past, for the Lord Jesus has borne it in our place.[John 5:24; Rom.8:1] Rather the '*bematos*' is the throne from which the Roman presiding official gave out the crowns to the best athletes. It is at this '*bematos*', with none but the saved present, that the Lord will reward His children.[Rom.14:10-13; 2Cor.5:10]

Backsliding

No matter how sound a doctrine, the "*Enemy of souls*" will certainly attempt to turn it to wrong account. That is most markedly the case with the teaching of eternal security. Thus we must be careful to avoid two dangers: that of allowing a Christian a license for sin and coldness of heart, and that of lulling sinners into a sense of false security. An honest examination of backsliding and what it involves should go far to correct these dangers.

What is backsliding?

It is an Old Testament word but alas it is also a New Testament experience. The frequent use of the word in Jeremiah, chapters 2 and 3 shows that it is forsaking of the Lord through sin.[Jer.2:19] We do not merely believe on Jesus, but on the Lord Jesus Christ[Acts16:31]

The acknowledging of Him as our Lord is embodied in all true repentance and salvation.[Rom.10:9] When the Father appointed His Son as Lord, it means that He gave Him authority.[Acts2:36] For us to call Him Lord and then to refuse His wishes is mere hypocrisy. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?*[Luke6:46] Thus sin inevitably separates one from God.[Isa.59:2] He is uncompromising in His hatred of sin.[Hab.1:13; Ps.5:4]

One cannot enjoy communion with the Father while allowing sin in the life. The first principle of His Kingdom is obedience. David in grieving over his fall, did not ask for a renewal of salvation, but he did cry in Psalm 51:12*, Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.* Sin had robbed him of that joy, as it will rob every sinning Christian. In my early days I took some birds' eggs from the college museum. Nobody knew of the theft, and after a time I had almost forgotten it. Later as a young engineer, I stole two bottles of draughtsman's ink, left in a disused room. Soon after this I was born again. In that transaction, by my bedside, alone with God, He revolutionized my whole life. I commenced witnessing for the Lord Jesus, and took a Sunday School Class. Much grieved when all the young men in the class were not immediately converted, I prayed most earnestly for them. There was no response to my prayers, and my attention was directed to 1John 3:21-23: *If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him.* "*God*", I cried, "*Is it possible that anything deprives me of the answer to my prayers? I have owned Thee as Lord. Direct me".* At once I was reminded of the Sparrow-hawk's eggs and the drawing ink. "*Lord, how can I restore those? My school-master and superior engineers will despise me".* But still He kept His finger on that spot and while I refused His voice, my joy and communion with Him waned. My father gave me that lovely book by S. D. Gordon, "*Quiet Talks on Prayer*", but I could not enjoy it, for every page seemed to say, "*Answer to prayer depends on obedience".* A dear old saint, who knew nothing of my struggle, wrote at the top of a letter, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.* [Ps.66:18]

As I read it I prayed, "*Lord, I will obey Thee. Help me"*. The eggs were packed and posted. Money was sent for the ink, and as soon as the letters of confession were written and dropped into the pillar box, I looked up to heaven with confidence, and said, "*Now Lord, Thou canst answer my cry and bless my Sunday School Class"*. Within a week the first three were saved and eventually I had clear evidence that all the 35 young men in that class were born-again.

How Does Backsliding Come?

Permitted, unconfessed sin destroys communion with God. But, *if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*[1John1:9] In conversation with thousands of backsliders, I find almost invariably that neglected prayer and Bible-study are among the first steps into coldness, backsliding and worldliness. The Psalmist cries, *Be not silent unto me, lest I become like them that go down into. the pit.*[Ps.28:1] A vigorous Christian life can only be sustained by the Word of God and prayer.[Matt.4:4] The next step is a cooling off in love for God's people. Godless companions, including unprofitable books, inevitably dull out joy in Christ. Conversely Christian prosperity can only flourish in uncompromising separation from the world.[Ps.1:1-3; 1Cor.5:11] The Lord Jesus must be an unrivalled first in our lives[Luke24:26-27] and wrong associations, such as marriage, business partnership and friendship with the unsaved, always result in a hindrance of one's fellowship with God.[Rev.2:4; 2Cor.6:12-7:1] The unsaved are quick to notice the slackening off of one's Christian life and such inconsistencies or luke-warm profession turn others from Christ.[2Pet.2:2; 3:17] Earthly success and love of this present world are frequent causes of backsliding.[Prov.30:8-9; 2Tim.4:10; Luke 8:14]

There was a time when I was enjoying a most fruitful witness among my fellow engineers, and God's power was resting upon both my public and private ministry. Then a most attractive design occurred to me, for a piece of machinery.

I went into the figures, got out drawings and models, and highly placed engineers, who looked into the matter predicted a very rosy future for my design. I could scarcely think of anything else. Turbine blades and homo-polar dynamos took the place of prayer and Bible study. I found myself getting cold and unhappy spiritually. As the conflict between Christ and my turbo-dynamo increased I lost my zeal for souls and my joy in communion with my Lord.

For a fortnight the battle raged, and the passage kept coming to mind, *If thy foot, hand, eye offend thee, cut it off, pluck it out, cast it from thee.*[Matt.5:29-30] At last one Saturday afternoon I was faced with two alternatives either a time with my Bible or a time with the dynamo calculations. The conflict was so fierce that it drove me to my knees. "*Lord"*, I called, "*I cannot go into powerless, prayerless indifference. Thou must be without a rival on my heart's throne"*. Then the devil brought to my mind the money I might use in God's' service, and the harmlessness of my invention. Again I cried, "*Lord, it might be perfectly legitimate for others but keep me from making any other terms than complete surrender to Thee."* At that moment I looked up and a fellow-believer was passing the window of my rooms. I called him in, asked him to pray for me, and then, up the models, figures and drawings, I asked him to drop the lot into the docks, without telling him what the contents were. Oh what â relief when my idol was dethroned and the Lord Jesus was again without rival in my heart! A "*No*" to Christ at that time might have ruined my life or entailed weary months in groping my way back into blessing. In the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, the bride heard her Beloved calling to her to open the door. She refused and verses 6 to 10 tell of the painful heart-breaking quest before she found Him again.

The Results Of Backsliding

Backsliding not only does grievous harm to ourselves. Think how Achan's hidden folly brought. defeat and shame on all Israel.[Josh.7]

It is impossible to estimate the wrong we do to the community at large when we grow cold toward God. As to one's own irreparable loss, Christ gives a sad picture in the story of the repentant prodigal. It was true that he returned home and that he was welcomed with joy, yet his part in the Father's estate had been squandered for good. He could never be anything but a pauper in his old home, for his father told his elder brother, "*All that I have is thine"*. The younger man was left with nothing.*Luke 15:31* As to the effect on the community, let me relate the following.

In the villages and farms of North Lancashire, I had met many old saints who had been converted to God through the anointed preaching of a Mr. H. some 40 years before. Then one day I was introduced to this very man; now an old gentleman, near the end of his earthly course. After the preliminary courtesies I said,

"Mr. H. I am delighted to meet you, for I know scores who were converted through your ministry".

He said sadly, "Yes, they were glorious days. I remember 80 conversions during a week-end at I. and 60 during a camp-meeting at St. M."

I asked: "Where are you preaching now-a-days?"

He seemed confused, but at last admitted that for more than 30 years he had not preached or won a soul. I asked him if, for my own sake, and for the benefit of others he would draw aside the veil of those fruitless years.

He said, "I made money. My account books and business letters took the place of prayer and the scriptures. I became so involved that I could not retrace my steps. I married a worldly wife, bought a horse and trap and we spent our Sundays in visiting friends."

"But Mr. H." I said, "Think of all the precious souls you might have won. There was a time when you moved North Lancashire for Christ".

He replied with terrible pathos:
"I've ruined my life, grasped at bubbles and thrown away eternal gold. In my old and broken days my Lord has forgiven me, but remorse for my folly almost breaks my heart. I go to meet the Saviour whom I love, but with a soul filled with shame and without the reward that I might have gained".
It was one of the saddest interviews I ever held.
No! Never for a moment allow the thought that coldness and sin are of minor importance. There is only one place of safety and blessing and that is one hundred per cent for God.
If we own Him as Lord, it infers that we will serve Him with all the intensity of our being.*Matt.22:37-39*

The Means Of Restoration

Those who would teach that Hebrews 6:4-6 refers to real Christians who lose their salvation, are responsible for a terrible evil, for it says, *it is impossible to renew them*. How many poor tortured souls have been driven to the insane asylums through that error! We have seen them wringing their hands in the throes of despair, and impervious to all reason, while they murmur ceaselessly, "*Impossible to renew me. I have committed the unpardonable sin. The Bible says IMPOSSIBLE".* Backslider, how wrong such teaching is may be seen from Jeremiah 3:12-14. *Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause My anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord . . . only acknowledge thine iniquity... Turn O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married to you.* The Hebrew word '*shub'* with its derivatives, as used for backsliding in the Old Testament, is represented by no less than 113 different words in the Authorised Version, but they all carry the thought of '*to turn, turn round, withdraw'*, and the same word, '*Be restored, be converted, repent, go home*'. What does one do on discovering that one has taken a wrong turn One retraces one's steps, for to continue on the wrong path would be folly. Recognise your error. Admit it and turn again.

The teaching of more than one new-birth is unscriptural, but more than one conversion is perfectly scriptural. The word, '*epistrepho*' '*turn again*' in Luke 17:4, shows that it can be done seven times in one day. If you find anything between your soul and God, let there be an immediate turning back. God is ready to forgive and cleanse the moment you confess your wrong.*1John1:9*
Otherwise it may call for chastisement.*Heb.12:4-10* One who fails God, forfeits eternal reward.*Col.2:18; 2John 8* Thus it is a mark of God's love that He chastises His children. May we walk in such tender obedience that chastisement will not be needed. He cannot use fouled vessels. It is true that the guilt of our sins was purged away at Calvary, yet there is a sense in which God cause us to purify ourselves, by deliberate turning from sin.*2Tim.2:21; Jas.4:8* And from all that would hinder His using us. Every year Israel had a house-cleaning and turned out every scrap of leaven.*Ex.12:16* Conformably to this we see Christ, as the feast of unleavened bread came round, going to His Father's house and turning out the leaven of greed and theft.*Jn.2:13-16; Matt.2.1:12-13* Similarly we, as Christians, are exhorted to make a clean sweep of the leaven of sin, because our Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus has been slain for us.*1Cor.5:6-8*

Pseudo-Backsliders And Spurious Conversions

It has been said, very justly, that many so-called backsliders have never really sudden forward. Let me give evidence of this. How many liars there were in John's first Epistle! Liars who said they had not sinned,*1:8* liars who declared they knew God, but did not keep His commandments,*2:4* liars who professed to have fellowship with Him, but walked in darkness,*1:6* liars who declared they were in the light but who had hatred toward their brethren.*2:9; 4:20* The church is still beset with such liars deceiving themselves and others. Simons who are baptised but whose hearts are not right.*Acts 8:13,21* Pigs washed and masquerading as sheep.*2Pet.2:20-22* Seeds that sprout but have no root.*Mk.4:17*

Then when these people drift back to their natural environment, they are supposed to have backslidden. Modern evangelism by high-pressure methods, appealing to emotion instead of trusting to the power of the Holy Spirit, are responsible for much of this. The counting of numbers is a frequent source of error.*1Chron.21:1*
God forbid that we should cast discredit upon any honest attempt to win souls, but when we find notorious evangelists publishing so many hundreds saved, and when a few weeks later the local churches are emptier even than before, **we cannot but surmise that these converts were born 'of the will of man'**.*John 1:13*
And were not *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.*Isa.61:3 Otherwise they would continue in His Word.*John 8:31* Some have relied on emotion, on ecstatic feelings, on having held up their hand at an evangelistic service, signed a decision card or gone through an enquiry room. Yet there had been no definite right-about-face to sin, no placing of their faith on the promises of God's Word. They had not a real new-birth but a superficial counterfeit, and it cannot last. Better one soul really born again than a thousand such deluded people who are so often counted as converts. Unless you are living here and now in happy victory over sin, and in fellowship with God's children, then we can only urge you to an immediate and thorough conversion, lest you be but deceiving yourself. Let me reiterate it: If a man is deliberately living in sin, then he has no right to say that he is saved now, or that he ever was saved.*1John 3:6*

Have You Joined The 'Oh-Buts'?

Who are the 'Oh-Buts'? Let it be clearly said that the devil is their leader, for when God told Adam: *Thou shalt surely die.*Gen.2:17 Satan inaugurated the society by declaring, *"Oh but, you will not die. You will be like gods"*. We read of another member of the sect in 1Kings 13:9-18. God had told the prophet, *Eat no bread nor drink water in this place.* One of the '*Oh-but'* fraternity sent after him, however, and said, "*Oh-but I too have a message from God. You are to eat bread with me."*

The prophet listened to the voice of man rather than that of God, and lost his life in consequence. We could multiply instances of their activities, for the first law and object of the '*Oh-but'* League is to make the Word of God of none effect by their tradition.[Matt.15:6]

If they cannot deny the validity of a passage of scripture they often hit below the belt, by saying, "*Oh-but that was for apostolic times. It is not for today*". It does not matter how they shake the faith of God's children in His word, so long as they accomplish it.

Of course, they have some very religious people among them, but their religion is not of the brand prescribed in God's Word. He says, "*A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law".*[Rom.5:28] They reply, "*Oh but, except you keep the law you cannot expect salvation".*[Acts 15:1] There is not an ordinance or promise of God's Word too sacred for them to trample with vandal feet. Of course, every Christian will exclaim with horror "*Surely you would not suggest that we belong to that company".* Be careful, brother. Jesus said, "*My sheep shall never perish".*[John 10:28] What do you say? ***Amen***—or— "***Oh-but***"? He said, "*neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand*". Do you say, "*Oh but they can pluck themselves out*". The word '*perish'* is in Greek middle voice, and can thus be rendered '*shall never destroy themselves'* So, Mr. Oh-but, they will not even pluck themselves out if they are really His! Poor David had some serious falls, yet he dared to declare, *I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*[Ps.23:6] He had no misgivings on the subject. Do you rejoice in the same blessed assurance, or—"*Oh-but*"? In Romans 8:38-39 Paul is persuaded that nothing whatever can separate us from God's love. Are you of the same persuasion, or have you joined the *"Oh-buts*"? Every promise of God's Word must be appropriated by a living faith. Are you appropriating or rejecting these precious promises?

In Phil.1:6 Paul is confident that the saints' maintenance and perfection is by the risen Christ. He is confident. What did I hear you say? Was it "*Amen*" or "*Oh-but*"? Jude 1 says that we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

If we fail to reach that blissful shore, it will be because our Preserver has failed. Do you think He will fail? What did you say? "*Oh but we've got to...*" No! No ! Don't join the '*Oh-buts'*. Say "***Amen***"! *I'm kept by the power of God.*[1Pet.1:5]

Look at it in this way: In Matthew 8 :3 Christ says, *Except ye be converted ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Now you would be justly shocked were someone to suggest that after all there may be means of entrance into that Kingdom apart from conversion. You would point out that the Greek is even more emphatic than the English. It means *'Ye shall BY NO MEANS, AT NO TIME, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES enter that Kingdom'*. Precisely so, and the same emphatic word is used in Hebrews 13:5. *I will by no means leave thee, I will by no means forsake thee*. Thus under no possible circumstances will God ever forsake His own. Are you enjoying it or are you losing the blessing of it by joining the '*Oh-buts*'? God's Word [*Moffatt's Translation*] says, *To the very end He will guarantee that you are vindicated on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*[1Cor.1:8] Child of God, believe it and rejoice in it. Of course any doctrine in the Bible may be abused, but that does not justify denying or suppressing a doctrine which God has so fully clearly declared, and so often reiterated in His Word. God does not say that anyone can be saved apart from his continuing in the faith[John 8:31;10:4-5] But if he is really a child of God, he WILL continue in the FAITH. He does not offer hope of salvation for one who persists in sin [Rom.6:1-2] but a real child of God will NOT continue in sin.[1John 5:18] Those who are really His will NOT be drawn away by false doctrine and heresy.[1Cor.11:19; John 10:5]

I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.[Jer.32:40]

Final Appeal

Written to one who is teaching that a genuinely born-again Christian may finally lose his salvation and be damned.

Dear Brother in Christ, You say that the Bible teaches two contradictory things: that some scriptures show plainly that we are eternally secure, while others seem to indicate that we can fall out of salvation by sin, and be eternally lost after all.

You say that, lest a Convert should regard eternal security as a license to sin, you will teach him that he might perish in the end. He will carry that dread and uncertainty right to his death bed. I don't believe that the Bible can teach two contradictory things.

If it did, then we could never be certain of anything and might as well throw our Bibles away. In the Old Testament, salvation "*yeshua*" means "*safety*, *ease*". In the New Testament, *salvation*, "*soteria*" means "*safety, soundness*". But Brother, you preach that unless the convert maintains a certain degree of sinless conduct, he will be lost after all so it depends on him. Not on Christ. He is not safe and therefore cannot have rest of mind. Good works are not the ground of our salvation, but the result of it. We live to please God not in order to keep saved but out of gratitude because we love Him, and fear to grieve Him. Look at that sweet little baby. She is the very picture of contentment and joy. Surrounded by love watched over with most tender solicitude, fondled in loving parents' arms, she is at rest, for experience has already told her that she is safe, secure. Now that is salvation. It is safety. In the Congo such little mites are left to callous young brothers and sisters who think it great fun to scare the wee baby out of its wits, making it scream with fright. They pretend to drop it, throw it from one to another and roar with laughter at seeing its tiny hands clutch frantically trembling at empty air. It will carry the scars of that fear in a nervous apprehension all its life. That baby has a right to a sense of security and parental love.

Instead it will be a whining, puling, resentful youngster. Now that is what you are doing by teaching a convert that he is insecure and may

be lost after all. He knows no safety, no security, no ease. Do you not realise what a wicked thing such teaching is? At every evangelistic campaign there are hundreds who flock out to be saved. You say "*But I saw that man out at the penitent form in a previous campaign. And that woman has gone to the enquiry room half a dozen times.*" Of course! They want to be sure and if they fall into the slightest sin, they think they have lost their salvation and must start all over again.

One poor soul wailed, "*On Monday and Tuesday I was saved, but by Wednesday it had all gone and I cannot get it back."* That is all wrong, for we have ETERNAL redemption.*Heb.9:12*

We HAVE everlasting life, and SHALL NOT COME into condemnation. We ARE passed from death unto life.John 5:24 It is all of grace.*Rom.4:16* Abounding grace.*Rom.5:20* *If by grace, then it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then it is no more grace. Otherwise work is no more work.Rom.11:6* Of course there are some people who say that they never sin, but 1John 1:8 says that they deceive themselves and the truth is not in them. Paul wrote *Not as though... I were already perfect.Phil.3:12; In many things we offend all. James 3:2* Sin separates us from God*Isa.59:2* until it is confessed.*1John 1:9* God sometimes has to hide His face because of our iniquities.*Isa.64:7* But He is still our Father and we have an Advocate and a Mercy Seat.*1John 2:1-2* Then what sin, or what amount of sin can cause a saved man to lose his salvation? Remember: Just plucking and eating a fruit brought all this grief and woe into the world.*Gen.3:6* And picking up a few sticks to light a fire on the Sabbath merited death by stoning.*Num.15:35* Sin is not just a little, finite thing. It was sin that sent Christ to Calvary's cross. *The thought of foolishness is sin.Prov. 24:9* Do you never have a foolish thought? *Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.Matt.12:36* Do you never speak an idle word? *To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.Jas.4:17*

Do you never leave undone some good thing that you should have done? You may not realise your sinning but there are some honest souls who have more sensitive consciences.

They ask, "Have I then forfeited my salvation? How can I hold onto it? Let me go out and get saved over again in case I have lost it."
Their eyes are upon their own attainment instead of upon the Lord Jesus and His finished work.
"How can I keep good enough so that I shall not find myself in Hell after all?"
Thousands are jibbering and moping in insane asylums, thinking that they have committed the unpardonable sin. Yet you continue to hold precious blood-washed saints over the flames of Hell, lest by some slip they forfeit their security.
Others disappointed at their own shortcomings, give up the struggle in despair. Take count of this Brother. Doctrine produces conduct. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes[Rev.2:15] resulted in the deeds of the Nicolaitanes.[Rev.2:6] The Salvation Army teaches backsliding continually. They frantically exhort folk to "*hold on*". The fear of losing one's salvation is one of their major themes. The result is, one of their officers told me, that only one out of eight goes right on. The rest pull out. Seven eighths backslide. Against this I could tell of thousands of natives reared in savagery and heathenism, in Central Africa who have boldly faced the most hideous deaths for Christ's sake. Beaten to pieces with sharpened bicycle chains and barbed wire whips, slowly cut up with panga knives while still alive, old grannies impaled on spiked poles driven up into their bodies. There was no idea of recanting or backsliding. For weal or woe they were Christ's and Christ's eternally. They were saved and therefore safe.
Brother, by teaching that a man may lose his salvation you are falling from grace to a lower ground.[Gal.5:4] It is grace that teaches us to live godly lives, an outcome of love.[Tit.2:11-12]
Teach what the Bible declares: *They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*[John 10:28]
Teach: *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*[Heb.13:5]
Teach: *The Lord... forsaketh not His saints. They are preserved for ever.*[Ps.87:28]

I pray that God will grant you real repentance: a right-about face.
With sincere Christian greeting. Your brother in the Lord,
WILLIAM F. P. BURTON

Biography

William Burton was born in Liverpool in 1886 he came from a strong Christian background. His parents had dedicated him to God's work in Africa even before he was born and as he grew servants of the Lord had laid hands on him with a prayer that God would send him to preach the Gospel in Africa. It was under the preaching of R.A. Torrey at Evangelistic services in London that he first come under deep conviction of sin and came to the Lord in 1905. From the very beginning he was sold out. His new life started with regular Bible study and the winning of souls to Christ. He was one of Myerscough's young men who was blessed to be taught by him the Word of God for some five years continuously. It was only in 1909 or 1910 that they first heard of the outpouring at Los Angeles, until then he had not understood the meaning of the tongues he had heard back in 1906 in Welsh revival meetings. At the convention in 1910 at Preston he received his much sought for Baptism of fire. After this when the PMU Bible school opened he eagerly joined himself to it. This led to a life of living by faith. He spent the next three years travelling the countryside preaching in homes and the open-air as well as pastoring a little assembly at Lytham and helping Myerscough at the Preston Bible School.

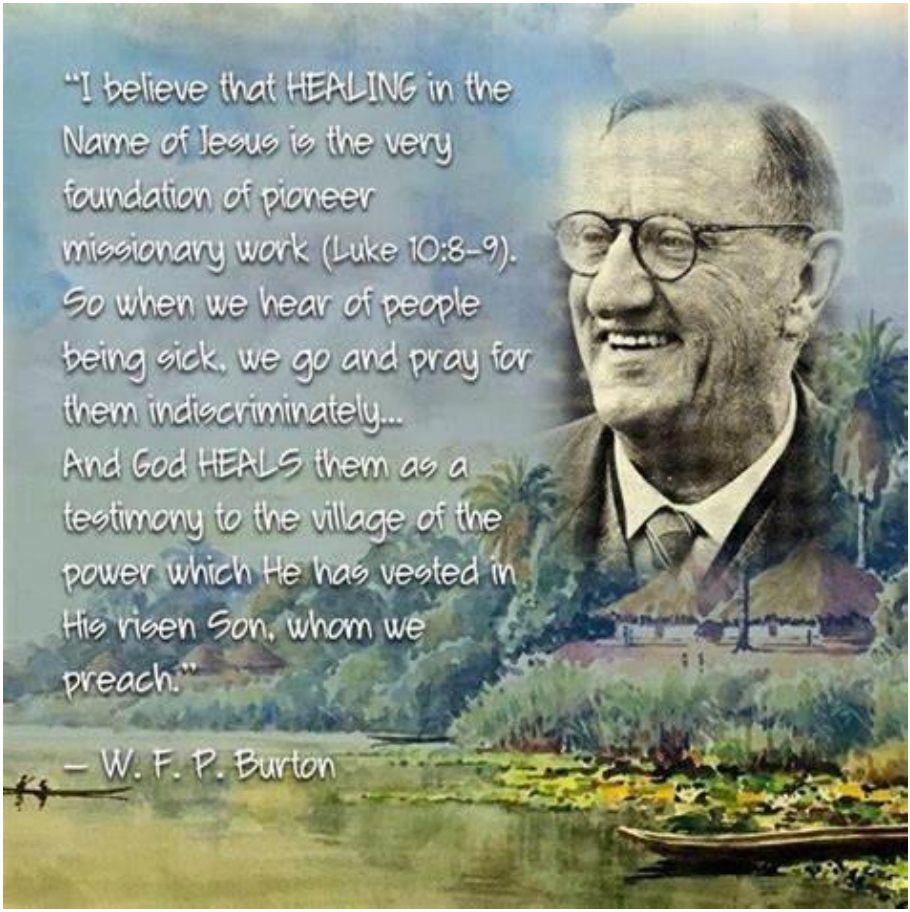
Once while standing in a butcher shop in a small English village, he was prompted of God to lay hands on a deaf lady in Jesus name and she was instantly healed. All the village quickly heard and this led to a revival in two quarrelling Methodist Churches, which had not seen one soul saved in 11 year between them. In confirming his missionary call, God answered prayer by miraculously giving him a third set of teeth. All this was great preparation for the mission field. During this time C.T.Studd was planning to go to Congo and suggested Willie go with him, but he had no witness that this was the Lord and so declined. He set sail for Africa in 1914, the following year he was joined by Jimmy Salter (who later married Wigglesworth's daughter).

This work would eventually be called the Congo Evangelistic Mission. These were early days of fighting sickness, encountering cannibal tribesmen, learning the language and making the first maps of the country. As they went forth preaching, God confirmed his word with signs following and souls saved. Just after their initial arrival in 1915 the work commenced in the healing of a local native who was badly bent over and walking with sticks, instantly he was healed and continued with a straight back for the next 33 years.

In 1918 Burton travelled to South Africa in order to recruit more missionaries, the first and most willing was Hettie who became his wife. A special week of meetings were called in 1920, 160 of the converts gathered. Divisions and disputes were coming in amongst the converts and as yet none had received the Holy Ghost. But at these meetings under strong preaching, great conviction of sin came amongst them and amidst brokenness and repentance the Spirit of God was outpoured, all were filled and empowered for service. The work grew quickly during the 20's and more missionaries came to help.

Over the next decades many missionaries were equipped and sent forth into this land. Many native evangelists were trained in the Word of God who went forth to reach their own people, and hundreds of new churches were planted amongst those who had never before heard the Gospel. Throughout these decades God confirmed His Word with real miracles following and a number of powerful outpourings of the Spirit. Every step of the way Catholic priests opposed and hindered them, but they prevailed in prayer at every hurdle. The Book of Acts came alive in the Congo through this God sent ministry. He was on the field until 1960 when independence for Congo and the following violence meant him leaving. He wondered how these 1000 assemblies would fare the storm. Over the next decade the number of churches doubled.

In some notes from 1962 he writes "*For 57 years I have been preaching and giving Bible talks. Since escaping from the Congo, two years ago, I have given bible-talks almost every night. I love feeding Gods flock, because I love Him. It is a passion with me to give out the blessed truths that I glean from His Word.*" By the time of his death in 1971 there had been about 2000 native churches raised up and he could have well said "*Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.*" It was on the very same day that both Burton and Howard Carter went to be with the Lord.



Note:
W.F.P. Burton was of an era when the King James Version of the Bible was the normal translation. Some of the issues covered in this booklet are no longer a concern today due to better translations but the assurance of eternal salvation is still as important as ever.

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