



Assurance
Part Two
Appendix, Dialogues



A. W. Pink



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Appendix, Dialogues

The article which appeared in the last issue (which is included in booklet part one) really completed our present treatment of this theme. It has since occurred to us, though, that perhaps some would be helped were we to further explain and amplify one or two of the leading points. Really, this ought not to be necessary; yet Scripture tells us that it is “line *upon* line” (Isa. 28:10). Moreover, in view of the error which now so widely abounds, and the confusion which beclouds so many minds, it is hardly to be expected that one can unlearn in a few hours what he has been mistakenly receiving as God’s Truth for so many years. Doubtless not a few of our readers wish they had the opportunity for a personal conversation on the subject, so that they could state their difficulties and ask questions on anything that is not yet clear to them. We have therefore decided to write two further articles in the form of dialogues, introducing widely different characters, who express a desire to discuss the subject.

Dialogue 1

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Good morning, Mr. Editor, I wish to have a talk with you about those articles on ‘Assurance’ which you published in last year’s ‘Studies.’”

The Writer: “Be seated, please. First of all, may we courteously but frankly inform you that our time is already fully occupied in seeking to minister unto God’s dear children, yet we are never too busy to do all in our power to help a needy soul.”

Carnal Confidence: “O I am not seeking help, my purpose in calling is to point out some things in your articles where I am quite sure you erred.”

The Writer: “It is written, dear friend, ‘If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know’ (1 Cor. 8:2), therefore I trust that God will ever give me grace to willingly consider and weigh the views of others, and receive

through them anything *He* may have for me. Yet, on the other hand, I am not prepared to *debate* with any man upon Divine things.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Well, I am quite sure that I am right, and you are wrong, and I feel it my duty to tell you so.”

The Writer: “Very good, I am ready to listen unto what you have to say, only reminding you again that I cannot enter into a debate with you, for the things of God are too holy to *argue* about; though a friendly discussion, in the right spirit, may prove mutually helpful. Before beginning, shall we seek the help of the Holy Spirit, that He may graciously subdue the flesh in each of us, guide our conversation so that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts may be ‘acceptable’ in God’s sight (Psa. 19:14); remembering that for every idle word each of us will yet have to give an account.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I consider that in your articles you have made a very difficult and complicated matter out of what is really very simple. According to your ideas a person has to go to a lot of trouble in order to discover whether or not he is saved, whereas if a man believes God’s Word he may be sure in a moment.”

The Writer: “But are all those who believe God’s Word really *saved*? Did not the Jews of Christ’s day believe implicitly in the Divine authorship of the Old Testament? Do not Russellites and others today insist loudly upon their faith in the Divine inspiration of the Bible? does not the Devil himself believe the same?”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “That is not what I meant: my meaning is that, if I rest upon some verse of Holy Writ as God’s promise to me, then I know He cannot disappoint me.”

The Writer: “That is just the same in principle: does not the Romanist rest with full confidence upon that declaration of Christ’s ‘this is My body?’ Saving faith is not faith in the authenticity of any verse of Scripture, but rather faith in the Person of Him who gave us the Scriptures, faith in the Christ who is made known in the Scriptures.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Yes, I know that, and I *do* believe in God and in His Son, and I *know* that I am saved because He says so.”

The Writer: “Where in Scripture does God say that *you* are

saved?”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “In John 5:24, in Acts 16:31, and many other places.”

The Writer: “Let us turn to these passages please. In John 5:24 the Lord Jesus describes one who has ‘passed from death unto life.’ He tells us two things about that individual, which serve to *identify* him. First, ‘he that heareth My word.’ That is definite enough. But of course it means far more than simply listening to His Word with the outward ear.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Ah, right there you want to mystify what is simple, and perplex souls with what is quite clear.”

The Writer: “Pardon me, you are mistaken. I only wish to *rightly understand* the words God has used, and to do this it is necessary to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and discover how each word is *used* by the Spirit.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I object; that may be all right for you, but common people do not have the leisure for deep study: God knew this, and has written His word in plain language that ordinary folks can understand: ‘Hear’ means ‘hear,’ and that is all there is to it.”

The Writer: “I believe you are quite sincere in what you have said, and you have expressed the view which a great many hold today; but, if you will allow me to say so, it is a very defective one. God places no premium upon laziness. God has so ordered things that nothing is obtained without diligence and industry. Much work and care has to be devoted to a garden if anything is obtained from it. The same holds good every where else: what time and trouble is required in order to keep our bodies in working order! Can, then, the eternal concerns of our *souls* be more lightly dismissed, or more easily secured? Has not God bidden us ‘*Buy* the truth’ (Prov. 23:23)? Has He not plainly told us ‘If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures; then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God’ (Prov. 2:3-5)?”

The Writer: “Mark *how* the Israelites were fed of old in the wilderness: Exodus 16. God did not provide them with baked

loaves of bread ready to eat. No, instead, He gave them manna from Heaven, which was ‘a *small* round thing’ (verse 14). Work and patience were called for in order to ‘gather’ (verse 17) it. Note too ‘when the sun waxed hot, it melted’ (verse 21), so that they had to get up early to secure it! Moreover, the manna would not keep: ‘let no man leave of it till the morning:’ it ‘bred worms and stank’ (verses 19, 20) if they tried to preserve it for another day. Then, after it had been gathered, the manna had to be ‘ground in mills or beaten in a mortar,’ and baked in pans and made into cakes (Num. 11:8). All of this typified the fact that if a soul is to eat the Bread of Life, he must devote himself in earnest, and, as Christ says, ‘*Labour . . . for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life*’ (John 6:27).”

The Writer: “Thus it is in connection with the obtaining of a right understanding of any verse of Scripture: pains have to be taken with it, patience has to be exercised, and prayerful study engaged in. Returning to John 5:24: the one who has passed from death unto life, says Christ, is ‘He that *heareth* My word.’ Let us turn then to other passages where this term is found: ‘they are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refuse to *hear* My words’ (Jer. 11:10); ‘because ye have *not heard* My words, behold I will send and take all the families of the north’ etc. (Jer. 25:8, 9); and see 35:17, Zechariah 1:4, Matthew 7:24, John 10:27. In all of these verses, and in many others which might be given, to ‘hear’ means to *heed* what God says, to *act upon* it, to *obey* Him. So he who ‘hears’ the voice of Christ *heeds* His command to turn away from all that is opposed to God and become in subjection to Him.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Well, let us turn to Acts 16:31, that is simple enough. There is no room allowed there for any quibbling. God says ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved:’ God says that *to me*; I have believed on Christ, and so I must be saved.”

Writer: “Not so fast, dear friend. How can you prove God says that *to you*? Those words were spoken under unusual circumstances, and to a particular individual. That individual had been brought to the end of himself; he was deeply convicted of his sins; he was in terrible anguish of soul; he had taken his place in

the dust, for we are told that he ‘came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas’ (Acts 16:29). Now is it fair to take the words of the Apostles to *such* a man and apply them indiscriminately to anybody? Are we justified in ignoring the whole setting of that verse, wrenching it from its context, and giving it to those who have not any of the characteristics which marked the Philippian jailer?”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I refuse to allow you to browbeat me, and move me from the simplicity of the Gospel. John 3:16 say, ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Now I *have* believed on the Son, and therefore am fully assured that I possess eternal life.”

Writer: “Are you aware of the fact that in this same Gospel of John we are told ‘Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them’ (John 2:23, 24)? There were many who ‘believed’ in Christ who were not saved by Him: see John 8:30 and note verse 59! John 12:42, 43! There is a believing in Christ which saves, and there is a believing in Him which does not save; and therefore it behooves every sincere and earnest soul to diligently examine *his* ‘faith’ by Scripture and ascertain *which* kind it is. There is too much at stake to take anything for granted. Where eternal destiny is involved surely no trouble can be too great for us to make sure.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I *am* sure, and no man can make me doubt.”

Writer: “Is your faith purifying your heart (Acts 15:9)? Is it evidenced by those works which God requires (James 2:17)? Is it causing you to overcome the world (1 John 5:4)?”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “O I don’t claim to be perfect, but I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

Writer: “We did not ask if you were perfect; but have you been made a new creature in Christ, have old things passed away, and all things become new (2 Cor. 5:17)? Are you treading the path of obedience, for God’s Word says, ‘He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar; and the truth is not in

him' (1 John 2:4).”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “I am not occupied with myself, but with Christ; I am not concerned about my walk, but with what He did for poor sinners.”

Writer: “To be ‘occupied with Christ’ is rather a vague expression. Are you occupied with His authority, have you surrendered to His Lordship, have you taken His yoke upon you, are you following the example which He has left His people? Christ cannot be *divided*: He is not only Priest to be trusted, but is also Prophet to be heeded, and King to be subject unto. Before He can be truly ‘received,’ the heart must be emptied of all those idols which stand in competition with Him. It is not the adulation of our lips, but the affection of our souls, which He requires; it is not an intellectual assent, but the heart’s surrender to Him which saves.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “You are departing from the simplicity of the Gospel; you are making additions unto its one and only stipulation. There is nothing that God requires from the sinner except that he believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Writer: “You are mistaken. The Lord Jesus said, ‘*Repent ye, and believe the Gospel*’ (Mark 1:15).”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “That was *before* the Cross, but in *this* dispensation repentance is not demanded.”

Writer: “Then according to your ideas God has changed the plan of salvation. But you err. *After* the Cross, Christ charged His disciples, ‘That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations’ (Luke 24:47). If we turn to the book of Acts we find that the Apostles preached repentance in this dispensation. On the day of Pentecost, Peter bade the convicted Jews to ‘repent’ (Acts 2:38). Reviewing his ministry at Ephesus Paul declared that he had testified both to Jews and also to the Greeks ‘repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’ (Acts 20:21); while in Acts 17:30 we are told that God ‘now commandeth *all* men every where to *repent*.’”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “Then do you insist that if a person has not repented, he is still unsaved?”

Writer: “Christ Himself says so: ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish’ (Luke 13:5). So too if a man has not been

converted, he is yet unsaved: ‘Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out’ (Acts 3:19). There must be a right-about-face: there must be a turning from Satan unto God, from the world unto Christ, from sin unto holiness. Where *that* has not taken place, all the believing in the world will save no one. Christ saves none who is still in love with sin; but He is ready to save those who are sick of sin, who long to be cleansed from its loathsome foulness, who yearn to be delivered from its tyrannizing power. Christ came here to save His people *from* their sins.”

Mr. Carnal Confidence: “You talk to me as though I were the helpless slave of strong drink or some other appetite, but I want you to know I was never the victim of any such thing.”

Writer: “There are other lusts in fallen man besides those which break forth in gross outward sins: such as pride, covetousness, selfishness, self-righteousness; and unless they be mortified, they will take a man to Hell as surely as will profanity, immorality, or murder. Nor is it enough to mortify these inordinate affections: the fruit of the Spirit, the graces of godliness, must also be brought forth in the heart and life; for it is written, ‘follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord’ (Heb. 12:14). And therefore it is a pressing duty for each of us to heed the Divine exhortation ‘examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?’ (2 Cor. 13:5).”

“Notice very carefully, dear friend, that the one point pressed upon the Corinthians was ‘that Jesus Christ is *in* you,’ and not their trusting that He died for them. Just as the Christian can only discover that his name was written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world, by discerning that God has written His laws in his heart (Heb. 10:16), so I can ascertain that Christ *died for me* only by making sure that He now *lives in me*. And it is obvious that if the Holy One indwells me that His presence must have wrought a radical change both in character and in conduct. *This*, above everything else, is what we sought to make clear and emphasized in our articles on ‘Assurance,’ namely the imperative necessity of our making sure that the Lord Jesus occupies the throne of our hearts, has the supreme place in our affections, and

regulates the details of our lives. Unless *this* be the case with us, then our profession is vain, and all our talk of trusting in Christ's finished work is but idle words."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I consider all you have said to be but the language of a Pharisee. You are occupied with your own fancied goodness and delighting in your own worthless righteousness."

Writer: "Pardon me, but I rather rejoice in what Christ's Spirit has wrought in me, and pray that He will carry forward that work of grace to the glory of His name. But we must bring our discussion to a close. I would respectfully urge you to attend unto that exhortation addressed to all professing Christians, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure' (2 Peter 1:10)."

Mr. Carnal Confidence: "I shall do nothing of the sort: I *hate* the very word 'election.' I know that I am saved, though I do not measure up to the impossible standard you want to erect."

Writer: "Fare thee well; may it please the Lord to open your blind eyes, reveal to you His holiness, and bring you to His feet in godly fear and trembling."

Dialogue 2

Mr. Humble Heart: "Good morning, Sir. May I beg the favour of an hour of your valuable time?"

Editor: "Come in, and welcome. What can I do for you?"

Mr. Humble Heart "I am sore troubled in spirit: I long so much to be able to call God '*my* Father,' but I fear I might be guilty of lying were I to do so. There are many times when I have a little hope that He has begun a good work within me, but alas, for the most part, I find such a mass of corruption working within, that I feel sure that I have never been made a new creature in Christ. My heart is so cold and hard toward God, that it seems impossible the Holy Spirit could have shed abroad God's love in me; unbelief and doubtings so often master me, that it would be presumptuous to think I possess the faith of God's elect. Yet I *want* to love Him, trust Him, serve Him; but it seems I cannot."

Editor: "I am very glad you called. It is rare indeed to meet with an honest soul these days."

Mr. Humble Heart: “Excuse me, Sir, but I do not want you to form a wrong impression of me: an *honest* heart is the very blessing I crave, but I am painfully conscious, from much clear evidence, that I possess it not. *My* heart is deceitful above all things, and I am full of hypocrisy. I have often begged God to make me holy, and right after, my actions proved that I did not mean what I said. I have often thanked God for His mercies, and then have soon fretted and murmured when His providence crossed my will. I had quite a battle before I came here to see you tonight, as to whether I was really seeking help, or as to whether my secret desire was to win your esteem: and I am not sure now which was my real motive.”

Mr. Humble Heart: “To come to the point, Sir, if I am not intruding. I have read and reread your articles on ‘Assurance’ which appeared in last year’s magazines. Some things in those articles seemed to give me a little comfort, but other things almost drove me to despair. Sometimes your description of a born-again soul agreed with my own experience, but at other times I seemed as far from measuring up to it as the poles are asunder. So I do not know where I am. I have sought to heed 2 Corinthians 13:5 and ‘examine’ myself, and when I did so, I could see nothing but a mass of contradictions; or, it would be more accurate to say, for each one thing I found which seemed to show that I was regenerate, I found ten things to prove that I could not be so. And now, Sir, I’m mourning night and day, for I feel of all men the most miserable.”

Editor: “Hypocrites are not exercised about their motives, nor troubled over the deceitfulness of their hearts! At any rate, I am thankful to see you are so deeply concerned about your soul’s eternal interests.”

Mr. Humble Heart: “Alas, Sir, I am not half as much concerned about them as I ought to be. That is another thing which occasions me much anguish. When the Lord Jesus tells us that the human soul is worth more than the whole world put together (Mark 8:36), I feel that I must be thoroughly blinded by Satan and completely under the dominion of sin, seeing that I am so careless. It is true that at times I am alarmed about my state and fearful that I shall soon be in Hell; at times too, I seem to seek God more earnestly and read His Word more diligently; but alas, my goodness is ‘as a morning

cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away' (Hos. 6:4). The cares of this life so soon crowd out thoughts of the life to come. O, Sir, I want reality, not pretence; I want to make sure, yet cannot."

Editor: "That is not so simple a task as many would have us believe."

Mr. Humble Heart: "It certainly is not. I have consulted several Bible teachers, only to find them 'physicians of no value' (Job 13:4); I have also conferred with some who boasted that they never have a doubt, and they quoted to me Acts 16:31, and on telling them I did believe, they cried 'Peace, peace,' but there was no peace in my heart."

Editor: "Ah, dear friend, it is not without reason that God has bidden us '*give diligence* to make your calling and election sure' (2 Peter 1:10). And even after we have given diligence, we still need the Holy Spirit to 'bear witness with our spirit, that we *are* the children of God' (Rom. 8:16). Moreover, spiritual assurance may easily be lost, or at least be clouded, as is evident from the case of him who wrote the 23rd Psalm, for at a later date he had to cry unto God, 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.'"

Editor: "Before proceeding further, had we not better ask the help of the Lord: His Holy Word says, 'In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths' (Prov. 3:6). And now, dear Brother, for such I am assured you really are, What is it that most causes you to doubt that you have passed from death unto life?"

Mr. Humble Heart: "My inward experiences, the wickedness of my heart, the many defeats I encounter daily."

Editor: "Perhaps you are looking for perfection in the flesh."

Mr. Humble Heart: "No, hardly that, for I know the 'flesh' or old nature is still left in the Christian. But I have met with some who claim to be living 'the victorious life,' who say they never have a doubt, never a rising of anger, discontent, or any wicked feelings or desires; that Christ so controls them that unclouded peace and joy are theirs all the time."

Editor: "Bear with me if I speak plainly, but such people are either hypnotized by the Devil, or they are fearful liars. God's Word says, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us' (1 John 1:8). And again, 'There is not a

just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not' (Eccl. 7:20). And again, 'In many things we offend all' (James 3:2). The beloved Apostle Paul when well advanced in the Christian life, declared, 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members' (Rom. 7:21-23)."

Mr. Humble Heart: "That relieves my mind somewhat, yet it scarcely reaches the root of my difficulty. What troubles me so much is this: when God regenerates a man, he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus: the change wrought in him is so great that it is termed a 'passing from death unto life.' It is obvious that if God the Holy Spirit dwells in a person, that there must be a radical difference produced, both inwardly and outwardly, from what he was before. Now it is *this* which I *fail* to find in myself. Instead of being any better than I was a year ago, I feel I am worse. Instead of humility filling my heart, so often pride rules it; instead of lying passive like clay in the Potter's hand to be moulded by Him, I am like a wild ass' colt; instead of rejoicing in the Lord always, I am frequently filled with bitterness and repinings."

Editor: "Such experiences as you describe *are* very sad and humbling, and need to be mourned over and confessed to God. They must *never* be excused nor glossed over. Nevertheless, they are not incompatible with the Christian state. Rather are they so many proofs that he who is experimentally acquainted with the 'plague of his own heart' (1 Kings 8:38) is one in experience with the most eminent of God's saints. Abraham acknowledged he was 'dust and ashes' (Gen. 18:27). Job said, 'I abhor myself' (42:6). David prayed 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed' (Psa. 6:2). Isaiah exclaimed, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips' (6:5). In the anguish of his heart, Jeremiah asked, 'Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?' (20:18). Daniel once owned, 'There remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption' (10:8). Paul cried, 'O wretched

man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24)."

"One of the principal things which distinguishes a regenerate person from an unregenerate one may be likened unto two rooms which have been swept but not dusted. In one, the blinds are raised and the sunlight streams in, exposing the dust still lying on the furniture. In the other, the blinds are lowered, and one walking through the room would be unable to discern its real condition. Thus it is in the case of one who has been renewed by the Spirit: his eyes have been opened to *see* the awful filth which lurks in every corner of his heart. But in the case of the unregenerate, though they have occasional twinges of conscience when they act wrongly, they are very largely ignorant of the awful fact that they are a complete mass of corruption unto the pure eyes of the thrice holy God. It is true that an unregenerate person may be instructed in the truth of the total depravity of fallen man, and he may 'believe' the same, yet his belief does not humble his heart, fill him with anguish, make him loathe himself, and feel that Hell is the only place which is fit for him to dwell in. But it is far otherwise with one who sees light in *God's* light (Psa. 36:9); he will not so much as lift up his eyes to Heaven, but smites upon his leprous breast, crying, 'God be merciful to me the sinner.'"

Mr. Humble Heart: "Would you kindly turn to the positive side, and give me a brief description of what characterizes a genuine Christian?"

Editor: "Among other gifts, every real Christian has such a knowledge of God in Christ, as works by love, that he is stirred up to earnestly inquire after *the will of God*, and studies His Word to learn that will, having a sincere desire and making an honest endeavour to live in the faith and practice of it."

Mr. Humble Heart: "I cannot boast of my knowledge of God in Christ, yet by Divine grace this I may say: that I desire no other Heaven on earth than to know and to do God's will, and be assured that I have *His* approval."

Editor: "That is indeed a good sign that your soul has been actually renewed, and doubtless He who has begun a work of grace in your heart, will make the great change manifest in your life and

actions. No matter what he thinks or says, no unregenerate man *really* desires to live a life which is pleasing *to God*.”

Mr. Humble Heart: “God forbid that I should flatter myself, yet I hope I have often found delight when reading God’s Word or hearing it preached, and I do sincerely meditate upon it, and long that I may ‘grow in grace.’ Yet, at times, I am tempted with vain and vile thoughts, and I strive to banish them, my heart rising up against them; yet sometimes I yield to them. I loathe lying and cursing, and cannot endure the company of those who hate practical godliness; yet my withdrawal from them seems nothing but pharisaic hypocrisy, for I am such a miserable failure myself. I pray to God for deliverance from temptation and for grace to resist the Devil, but I fear that I do not have His ear, for more often than not I am defeated by sin and Satan.”

Editor: “When you thus fall in your duty, or fall into sin, what do you think of yourself and your ways? How are you affected therewith?”

Mr. Humble Heart: “When I am in this deplorable condition, my soul is grieved, my joy of heart and peace of conscience gone. But when I am a little recovered out of this sinful lethargy, my heart is melted with sorrow over my folly, and I address myself to God with great fear and shame, begging Him to forgive me, pleading 1 John 1:9, and humbly imploring Him to ‘renew a right spirit within me’”

Editor: “And *why* is it that you are so troubled when sin conquers you?”

Humble Heart: “Because I truly wish to please the Lord, and it is my greatest grief when I realize that I have dishonoured and displeased Him. His mercy has kept me, thus far, from breaking out into open and public sins, yet there is very much *within* which I know He hates.”

Editor: “Well my dear brother and companion in the path of tribulation, God has ordained that the Lamb shall be eaten with ‘*bitter* herbs’ (Exod. 12:8). So it was with the Apostle: ‘As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing’ (2 Cor. 6:10) summed up his dual experience: ‘sorrowful over his sinful failures, both of omission and commission;’ yet ‘rejoicing’ over the provisions which Divine

grace has made for us while we are in this dreary desert—the Mercy Seat ever open to us, whither we may draw near, unburden our heavy hearts, and pour out our tale of woe; the Fountain which has been ‘opened for sin and for uncleanness’ (Zech. 13:1), whither we may repair for cleansing. I am indeed thankful to learn that your conscience confirms what your tongue has uttered. You have expressed enough to clearly evidence that the Holy Spirit has begun a good work in your soul. But I trust you also have faith in the Lord Jesus, the Mediator, by whom alone any sinner can draw near unto God.”

Mr. Humble Heart: “By Divine grace I do desire to acknowledge and embrace the Lord Jesus upon the terms on which He is proclaimed in the Gospel: to believe all His doctrine as my Teacher, to trust in and depend upon the atoning sacrifice which He offered as the great High Priest, and to submit to His rule and government as King. But, alas, in connection with the last, ‘to *will* is present with me; but how to *perform* that which is good, I find not’ (Rom. 7:18).”

Editor: “No real Christian ever attains his ideal in this life; he never reaches that perfect standard which God has set before us in His Word, and which was so blessedly exemplified in the life of Christ. Even the Apostle Paul, near the close of his life, had to say, ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 3:12). But may I ask if you are sensible of how you arrived at the good desires you mentioned? Do you suppose that such a disposition is *natural* to you, or that it has resulted from your own improvement of your faculties?”

Mr. Humble Heart: “No, Sir, I dare not ascribe to nature that which is the effect and fruit of Divine grace. If I have any measure of sanctification (which is what I long to be assured of), then it can only be by the gift and operation of God. I am too well acquainted with my wretched self: I know too well that by nature I am alive to vanity and sin, but dead to God and all real goodness; that folly possesses my soul, darkness shrouds my understanding; that I am utterly unable to will or to do what is pleasing in God’s sight, and that my natural heart is set contrary to the way of salvation

proposed in the Gospel, rising up against its flesh—condemning precepts and commandments. I see, I know, I feel that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth *no* good thing.”

Editor: “Then do you realize what must be the outcome if God were to leave you unto yourself?”

Mr. Humble Heart: “Yes, indeed. Without the assistance of His Holy Spirit, I should certainly make shipwreck of the faith. My daily prayer is ‘Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe’ (Psa. 119:117). My earnest desire is that I may watch and pray against every temptation. There is nothing I dread more than apostatising, relaxing in my duty, returning to wallow in the mire.”

Editor: “These are all *plain evidences of the saving grace of God at work within you*, which I beseech Him to continue, so that you may be preserved with a tender conscience, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, and obtain a full assurance of His love for you.”

Mr. Humble Heart: “I thank you kindly, Sir, for your patience and help. What you have said makes me feel lighter in heart, but I wish to go home and prayerfully ponder the same, for I dare not take no *man’s* word for it. I want God Himself ‘to say unto my soul, I am *thy* salvation’ (Psa. 35:3). Will you not pray that it may please Him so to do?”

Editor: “You shall certainly have a place in my feeble petitions. The Lord be very gracious unto you.”

In the communicating of His Word God was pleased to speak “at sundry times and in divers manners” (Heb. 1:1). In the Scriptures of Truth we have clear doctrinal instruction and plain precepts for the regulation of conduct, but we also find “dark parables” and mysterious symbols. Side by side is history and allegory, hymns of praise and practical proverbs, precious promises and intricate prophecies. Variety stamps all the works and ways of God. This illustrates a principle which should guide those whom the Lord has called to teach His Word: there should be variety both in the matter of their messages and the methods employed in delivering them. Many are unable to apprehend abstract statements, comparatively few have minds trained to follow a course of logical reasoning.

The teacher then, ought to adapt himself to the capacity of his hearers. Blessedly do we find this exemplified in the ministry of the perfect Teacher. The teaching of the Lord Jesus was largely by question and answer. Having this in mind, we feel it may be wise to follow the last two articles on “Assurance” by another one in dialogue form.

Dialogue 3

“Good evening, friend Humble Heart.”

“Good evening, Mr. Editor. This is a pleasant surprise, for I was not expecting to be favoured with a visit from one of God’s servants: I do not feel worthy of their notice.”

Editor: “According to my promise, I have been seeking to remember you before the Throne of Grace, and while in prayer this morning there was impressed on my mind those words, ‘Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees’ (Heb. 12:12). I have been impressed of late by that lovely prophetic picture of Christ found in Isaiah 40:11, ‘He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.’ The Saviour devotes special care and tenderness upon the weak of the flock, and in this He has left an example which the under-shepherds need to follow.”

Brother Humble Heart: “It is indeed kind of you, Sir, to bestow any trouble upon such a poor, worthless creature as I am: I should have thought your time had been more profitably employed in ministering to those who *can* take in the Truth quickly, and who grow in it by leaps and bounds; as for me, I am so dull and stupid, so full of doubtings and fears, that your labours on me are wasted.”

Editor: “Ah, my friend, all is not gold that glitters. The great majority of those who ‘take in the Truth quickly’ only do so intellectually—it has no power over the heart; and those who ‘grow by leaps and bounds,’ grow too swiftly for it to be real, or worth anything spiritually. Truth has to be ‘bought’ (Prov. 23:23): ‘bought’ by frequent meditation thereon, by taking it home unto ourselves, by deep exercises of conscience, by wrestling with God in prayer, that He would apply it in power to the soul.”

Brother Humble Heart: “Yes, I realize that, and it makes me feel so bad because God’s Word has not been written on *my* heart. I have gone over in my mind, again and again, all that you said at our last interview, and I am sure that I am unregenerate.”

Editor: “What leads you to such a conclusion?”

Brother Humble Heart: “This, if I had been regenerated the Holy Spirit would be dwelling within me, and in that case He would be producing His blessed fruit in my heart and life. It is written, ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance’ (self-control)—Galatians 5:22, 23; and as I have endeavoured to examine and search myself, I discover in me the very opposite of these heavenly graces.”

Editor: “God’s workings in grace and His ways in the material creation have much in common, and if we observe closely the latter, we may learn much about the former. Now in the natural realm the production of fruit is often a slow process. Glance out now at the trees, and how do they look? They are leafless, and seem to be dead. Yet they are not; the vital sap is still in their roots, even though no signs of it be apparent to us. But in a little while, under the genial warmth of the sun, those trees will be covered with blossoms. Then, after a few days, those pretty blossoms will all have disappeared—blown off by the winds. Nevertheless, if those trees be examined closely it will be found that where those blossoms were, are now little green buds. Many weeks have to pass before the owner of those trees is gladdened by seeing the buds develop into fruit.”

“A further lesson may be learned from our gardens. The orchard teaches us the need for patience: the garden instructs us to expect and overcome disappointments. Here is a bed, which has been carefully prepared, and sown with seed. Later, the seed springs up and the plants appear from which the flowers are to grow. But side by side there spring up many weeds too. The uninstructed gardener was not expecting this, and is apt to be discouraged. Before he sowed the flower seed, he thought he had carefully rooted up every nettle, thistle, and obnoxious plant; but now the bed has in it more weeds than flowers. So it is my Brother with the heart of the Christian. Though the incorruptible seed of God’s Word is planted

there (1 Peter 1:23), yet the heart—neglected all through the years of unregeneracy—is overgrown with weeds (the lusts of the flesh), and to the anointed eye the heart looks more like the Devil’s weed plot than ‘the King’s garden’ (2 Kings 25:4).”

Brother Humble Heart: “What you have just referred to in the natural realm is quite obvious, but I am not so clear about the spiritual application. Does not your last illustration belittle the work and power of the Holy Spirit? You have often quoted in your articles that Christ saves His people *‘from their sins’* (Matt. 1:21), how, then, can any person rightfully regard himself as saved, while he is conscious that many sins have dominion over him?”

Editor: “I am glad you raised this point, for many dear souls are often troubled over it. Concerning the work and power of the Holy Spirit: light is thrown on this by various expressions which God has used in His Word. For example, in 2 Corinthians 1:22 (compare with Eph. 1:13, 14) we read that God has ‘given *the earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts.’ Now an ‘earnest’ means a part, and not the whole—an instalment, as it were; the fullness of the Spirit’s power and blessing is communicated to no Christian in this life. So again in Romans 8:23, ‘ourselves also, which have *the first fruits* of the Spirit’—a pledge, a sample only, of future greater abundance. Let me call your attention to the words which immediately follow those just quoted from Romans 8:23, namely, ‘even we ourselves groan within ourselves’ which is the more striking because this same thing is seen again in 2 Corinthians 5:4, 5. So those who *are* indwelt by the Spirit of God are a ‘groaning’ people! It is true that the unregenerate ‘groan’ at times: when suffering great bodily pain, or over some heavy loss; but the ‘groaning’ of the Christian is occasioned by something very different: he groans over the remains of depravity still left within him, over the flesh so often successfully resisting the Spirit, over seeing around him so much that is dishonouring to Christ. This is clear from Romans 7:24 and its context, Philippians 3:18, etc.”

Brother Humble Heart: “But only a few days ago I mentioned some of these very Scriptures to one whom I regard as an eminent saint, and he told me that he had ‘got out of Romans 7 into Romans 8’ long ago.”

Editor: “But as we have seen, the Christian in Romans 8 ‘groans’ (verse 23)!”

Brother Humble Heart: “The one I had reference to laughed at me, for my doubts and fears, told me I was dishonouring God by listening to the Devil.”

Editor: “It is much to be feared that he is a complete stranger to those exercises of heart which are experienced by every regenerate soul, and knows nothing of that heart-anguish and soul-travail which ever precedes *spiritual* assurance. The Lord Jesus did not laugh at fearing souls, but said, ‘Blessed are they that mourn.’ It is clear that your acquaintance does not understand your case.”

Brother Humble Heart: “But do you mean to say that all of God’s children are as wretched in soul as I am?”

Editor: “No, I would not say that. The Holy Spirit does not give the same degree of light on the exceeding sinfulness of sin to all alike, nor does He reveal so fully unto all, their own inward depravity. Moreover, just as God has appointed different seasons to the year, so no true Christian is always the same in his soul: there are cheerful days of spring and gloomy days of autumn, both in the natural and in the spiritual. ‘But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day’ (Prov. 4:18), nevertheless ‘We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God’ (Acts 14:22). Both are true, though we are not always conscious of them both.”

Brother Humble Heart: “I do not believe that any real Christian is ever plagued as I am: plagued so often with a spirit of rebellion, with unbelief, with pride, with such vile thoughts and desires that I would blush to mention them.”

Editor: “Ah, my Brother, few unregenerate souls would be honest enough to acknowledge as much! The very fact that these inward workings of sin plague you, is clear proof that you *are* regenerate, that there is within you a nature or principle of holiness which loathes all that is unholy. It is this which causes the Christian to ‘groan,’ nevertheless this brings him into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ. While here the Lord Jesus was ‘the Man of Sorrows,’ and that which occasioned all His grief was sin—not His own, for He had none; but the sins of others. This then is one

reason why God leaves the sinful nature in His people even after regeneration: that mourning over it they may be conformed to their suffering Head.”

Brother Humble Heart: “But how does this tally with Christ’s saving His people from their sins?”

Editor: “Matthew 1:21 in nowise clashes with what I have been saying. Christ saves His people from the guilt and punishment of their sins, because that was transferred to and vicariously suffered by Him. He saves us too from the pollution of sin: His Spirit moves us to see, grieve over, confess our sins, and plead the precious blood; and as this is done in faith, the conscience is cleansed. He also saves us from the reigning power of sin, so that the Christian is no longer the absolute and abject slave of sin and Satan. Moreover, the ultimate fulfilment of this blessed promise (like that of many others) is yet future: the time is coming when the Lord Jesus shall rid His people of the very presence of sin, so that they shall be done with it forever.”

Brother Humble Heart: “While on that point I wish you would explain to me those words ‘sin shall not have dominion over you’ (Rom. 6:14).”

Editor: “Observe first what that verse does not say: it is not ‘sin shall not haunt and harass you’ or ‘sin shall not trip you and occasion many a fall;’ had it said *that*, every Christian might well despair. To ‘have dominion over’ signifies the legal right to command another, such as a parent has over his child, or as one nation has over another which has been completely conquered in war. Such *legal* ‘dominion’ sin has not over any Christian: Christ alone is his rightful Lord. But sin oftentimes usurps authority over us, yet even experimentally it has not complete ‘dominion:’ it can lead no Christian to apostatize, that is, utterly and finally renounce Christ. It can never so dominate the believer that he is thoroughly in love with sin and repents not when he offends.”

Brother Humble Heart: “Thank you; but may I ask another question: Why is it that some of God’s children are not plagued by sin as I am?”

Editor: “How can you be sure that they are not? ‘The heart knoweth his own bitterness’ (Prov. 14:10.)”

Brother Humble Heart: “But I can tell from their peaceful countenances, their conversation, their joy in the Lord, that it cannot so be the case with them.”

Editor: “Some are blest with a more cheerful natural disposition than others. Some keep shorter accounts with God, making it a point of conscience to confess every known sin to Him. Some are more diligent in using the means of grace: they who neglect the reading of God’s Word, meditation thereon, and approach the Throne of Grace only occasionally and formally, cannot expect to have healthy souls.”

Brother Humble Heart: “I admit I cannot meet your arguments. What you say is doubtless true of God’s people, but my case is far worse than you realize: I have such a sink of iniquity within, and so often find myself listless toward all that is spiritual, that I greatly fear there can be no assurance for me.”

Editor: “It is the Devil who tells you that.”

Brother Humble Heart: “How can one distinguish between the harassing doubts which the Devil injects, and the convictions of sin and piercing of the conscience which the Holy Spirit produces?”

Editor: “*By the effects produced.* Satan will tell you that it is no use to resist indwelling sin any longer, that it is useless to pray any more. He seeks to produce despair, and tells many harassed souls they might as well commit suicide and put an end to their misery. But when the Holy Spirit convicts a Christian, He also works in his heart a godly sorrow, and moves him to acknowledge his transgressions to God: He leads to the Throne of Grace and gives again a sight of the cleansing blood of Christ; and this not once or twice, but to the end of our earthly lives. ‘For a just man falleth seven times, *and riseth up again*’ (Prov. 24:16). If then this agrees with your own experience, you must be a Christian.”

Brother Humble Heart: “I cannot but be struck with the fact that *your* counsel and instruction are the very opposite of what was given to me by the last person I spoke to about my sorrows. He is a man very wise in the Scriptures, having scores of passages at his finger’s end. He told me that the only way to get rid of my doubting was to believe the Word, and that every time I felt miserable to lay hold of one of the promises.”

Editor: “I think I know the company to which that man belongs. All they believe in is a *natural* faith, which lies in the power of the creature; a faith which is merely the product of our own will-power. But *that* is not the ‘faith of God’s elect.’ Spiritual faith is the gift of God, and only the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit can call it forth into action in any of us. Shun such a people, my Brother. Avoid all who give no real place to the Holy Spirit, but would make you believe that the remedy lies in your own ‘free will.’ Seek more the company and communion of God Himself, and beg Him for Christ’s sake to increase your faith and stay your mind upon Himself.”

Dialogue 4

“Good evening, Mr. Editor, I trust I am not intruding.”

“No indeed, you are very welcome Brother Humble Heart, and I am thankful to see from your countenance that your heart is lighter (Prov. 15:13).”

Brother Humble Heart: “I am glad to say it is so at present, for the Lord has been very gracious to me, and I cannot but think that it is in answer to your prayers, for the Scriptures declare, ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much’ (James 5:16).”

Editor: “If the Lord has deigned to hear my feeble intercessions on your behalf, all praise alone to Him. But tell me something of His goodness towards you.”

Brother Humble Heart: “May it please the Lord to direct my thoughts, anoint my lips, and help me to do so. My story is rather a long one, but I will be as concise as the case allows. “A poor woman, known among the Lord’s people as Sister Fearing, was left a widow some months ago, and having buried all her children, I knew she had no one to spade her garden; so this spring I called on her, and asked if she would allow me to do it.”

Editor: “I am glad to hear that: if godliness be not intensely practical, then it is only a name without the reality. It is written ‘Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world’ (James 1:17). And did this poor

Sister avail herself of your kind offer?”

Brother Humble Heart: “Yes, with tears running down her face, she told me she was quite unable to express her gratitude. After a while she said, It was not so much my offer to help which moved her so deeply, but that it gave her a little hope she was not completely abandoned by God. “I asked her why she ever entertained the thought that God had cast her off? She told me that most of the time she felt herself to be such a vile and polluted creature that a holy God could not look with any complacency upon her. She said she was so constantly tormented by doubts and fears that God must have given her over to an evil heart of unbelief. She added that, in spite of all her reading of the Word and crying unto the Lord for strength, her case seemed to grow worse and worse, so that it appeared Heaven *must* be closed against her.”

Editor: “And what reply did you make to her sorrowful complaint?”

Brother Humble Heart: “Why, there flowed into my mind a verse which I had not thought of for a long time: I felt it was from the Lord, and looking to Him for wisdom and tenderness, I addressed the dear soul as follows: “Sister Fearing, I think you are too hasty in your conclusion. I have been just where you now are. I read in God’s Word, ‘the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power’ (1 Cor. 4:20), and I reasoned that if God had set up His kingdom in my heart, then the power of sin would be broken; and alas, I found sin in me stronger than ever. I read ‘he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him’ (1 John 4:16), but I could not believe He dwelt in me while I was in such bondage to slavish fear. I read ‘Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father’ (Rom. 8:15), but I could not cry ‘Abba, Father;’ so I was afraid God had nothing to do with me. I read, ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin’ (1 John 3:9), and though I was preserved from bringing public reproach upon the name of Christ, yet I found myself continually overcome by sin within. My guilty conscience daily condemned me, and unto peace I was a stranger.”

Sister Fearing: “You have accurately described my sad lot; but go on please.”

Brother Humble Heart: “Suffer me, then, to ask you a few honest

questions. Have you been chastised, rebuked, made tender and sore for sin? And after feeling God's reproofs, was your spirit revived and refreshed under the Word, so that you hoped for better days?"

Sister Fearing: "Yes, I have been conscious of God's rod upon me, and have owned with David, 'Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me' (Psa. 119:75). And there have been times, all too brief, when it seemed I was softened and revived, and had a little hope; but the sun was soon again hidden behind dark clouds."

Brother Humble Heart: "Well, *that* proves God *does* dwell within you, for He declares, 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to *revive* the spirit of the humble, and to *revive* the heart of the contrite ones' (Isa. 57:15)!"

Sister Fearing: "Yes, I am familiar with that verse, but it makes against *me*, for had God truly 'revived' me, the *effects* of it would remain; instead, I am dry and parched, lifeless and barren."

Brother Humble Heart: "Again you are too hasty in 'writing bitter things against' yourself (Job 13:26). Such 'revivings' of faith, hope, and love in the soul *are* evidences of the Spirit's indwelling. But let me now give you the verse which flowed into my mind at the beginning of our conversation: it exactly fits your case, 'And now *for a little space* grace hath been showed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us *a little reviving* in our bondage' (Ezra 9:8). Ah, dear Sister, do you not see that this 'little reviving,' even though it be for 'a little space' is a manifestation of God's dwelling in a broken and contrite heart?"

Editor: "That was indeed a word in season, and evidently given you by the Spirit. There are many hindered from enjoying assurance through unnecessary fears: because sin is in them as an active and restless principle, they imagine they have no contrary principle of holiness; and because in part they are carnal, judge that they are not spiritual. Because grace is but feebly active, they conclude they are void of it; and because for a long season they enjoy not strong consolation, suppose they have no title to it. They fail to distinguish between the motions of the flesh and the motions

of the Spirit: as surely as sin manifests the flesh to be in us, so does grieving over it, striving against it, repenting for it, and the confessing of it to God, show the Spirit or new nature indwells us. The Christian's sighs and groans are among his best evidences that he is regenerate."

Brother Humble Heart: "May I ask, exactly what you meant when you said, Many are hindered from enjoying assurance through *unnecessary fears*? My reason for asking is, because in Philippians 2:12 God bids His people work out their salvation *with fear and trembling*."

Editor: "Your question is well taken. We must distinguish sharply between the fears of *godly jealousy* and the fears of *unbelief*: the one is a distrusting of self, the other is a doubting of God; the former is opposed to pride and carnal confidence, the latter is the enemy of true peace. The eleven Apostles manifested the fear of godly jealousy when the Saviour announced that one would betray Him, and each of them enquired, 'Lord, is it I?' David gave way to the fear of unbelief when he said, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul' (1 Sam. 27:1). But I have interrupted your narrative; tell me how Sister Fearing responded to your giving her Ezra 9:8."

Brother Humble Heart: "Really, it seemed to make little impression. She sighed deeply, and for a while said nothing. Then she continued, 'I fear it would be presumption for me to say that I have ever been *revived*, for a dead soul cannot be—he must first be quickened; probably the raising of my spirits under the reading or hearing of the Word, is nothing more than the joy of the stony-ground hearer' (Matt. 13:20, 21). To which I replied, But one who has never been quickened has *no* pantings after God, never seeks Him at all, but seeks to banish Him entirely from his thoughts. True, he may go to church, and keep up a form of godliness before others, but there is no diligent seeking after Him in private, no yearnings for communion with Him."

"Perhaps, dear Sister, it may be a day of 'small things' (Zech. 4:10) with you. Often there is life, where there is not strength. A child may breathe and cry, yet cannot talk or walk. If God be the object of your affection, if sin be the cause of your grief, if

conformity to Christ be the longing of your heart, then a good work *has* begun in you (Phil. 1:6). If it is indwelling sin which makes you so wretched from day to day, if it be deliverance from its polluting affects you yearn and pray for, if it be the lustings of the flesh you are struggling against, then it must be because a principle of holiness has been implanted in your heart. Such godly exercises are not in us by nature; they are the products of indwelling grace. Despair not, for it is written of Christ, ‘a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench’ (Matt. 12:20).”

Sister Fearing: “Yes, it is one thing to understand these things intellectually, but it is quite another for God to apply them in power to the heart: *that* is what I long for, and that is what I lack. My wound is far too deadly for any man to heal. O that I could be sure as to whether my disrelish of sin arises from mere natural convictions of conscience that every ungodly person feels more or less, whether they are suggestions from Satan for the purpose of deceiving me, or whether they actually are the strivings of the new nature against the old. Nothing short of the personal, mighty, and saving power of the Holy Spirit realized in my heart, will or can give me genuine relief.”

Brother Humble Heart: “I am thankful to hear you say this. Human comforts may satisfy an empty professor, but such a plaster will not heal one of the elect when stricken by God. It is His purpose to cut off *every* arm of flesh from them, to strip them and bring them, in their helplessness, as empty-handed beggars before the throne of His grace. As to whether or not the life of God be actually planted in the soul, *therein* lies the grand mystery: *that* is the pivot on which eternal destiny must turn. And no verdict from man can satisfy on that point. Only the Lord Himself can give such a testimony or witness as will satisfy one of His children. But when He *does* shine into the soul, when He applies His Word in power, when *He* says ‘thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace,’ then no word from a preacher is needed. The Lord keep you at His feet till He grants this.”

“Until very recently I too was much exercised over the great danger of Satan instilling a false peace, and making me believe that all was well, when it was not so; as I was also much perplexed to

know how to distinguish between the convictions of *natural* conscience and the exercises of a *renewed* conscience. But the Lord has shown me that as a tree is known by its fruits, so the nature of a cause may be determined by the *character of the effects* it produces. They who are deluded by the false peace which Satan bestows, are filled with conceit, presumption, and carnal confidence: they do not beg God to search them, being so sure of Heaven they consider it quite unnecessary. The convictions of natural conscience harden, stop the mouth of prayer, and lead to despair. The convictions of a renewed conscience produce penitent confession, lead to Christ, and issue in honesty and uprightness before God.”

“In conclusion, let me earnestly counsel you, dear Sister, to have nothing to do with those who profess their experience to be all peace and joy; and who, if you ask them whether they are tormented by the plague of their own heart, or whether they have *felt* the blood of Christ applied to their own conscience, laugh, and say they have nothing to do with feelings, but live above them. Such deluded creatures can be of no more help to a groaning saint, than one suffering anguish from bodily ills would receive any relief from the so-called Christian Scientists, who tell him his pains are mental delusions, and to think only of health and happiness: one and another are equally physicians of no value. Instead, pour out your woes into the ears of the Great Physician, and in His own perfect time He will pour oil and wine into your wounds, and put a new song into your mouth.”

Brother Humble Heart: “Since then I have said nothing more to her on the subject, believing it best to leave her alone with God.”

Editor: “I am glad to hear that: none but blind Arminians will attempt to do the Holy Spirit’s work for Him. Much damage is often done to souls by trying to force things: when God begins a work, we may safely leave it in *His* hands to continue and complete the same. And how happy I am, dear Brother, to perceive the dew of the Spirit upon your own soul. It appears that ‘the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear,’ and ‘the time of the singing of birds is come’ (Song. 2:11-12) with you.”

Brother Humble Heart: “Thanks be unto God for taking pity upon such a wretch: it is much better with me now. The strange

thing is, though I had little or no real assurance myself when I commenced speaking to Sister Fearing, but as she mentioned the different things which so sorely troubled her, God seemed to put into my mouth the very words most needed, and as I spake them to her, He sealed them into my own heart.”

Editor: “Yes, it is as we read in Proverbs 11:25, ‘The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself:’ in communicating the Word of God to His children, our own hearts are refreshed and our own faith is established. To him that useth what he hath shall more be given.”

“I have long perceived the truth of what the Apostle says in 2 Corinthians 1:4, ‘Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.’ It is God’s way to take His people, *and especially His servants*, through trying and painful experiences, in order that they may *use* to His glory the consolation wherewith He has comforted them. It is those who know most of the plague of their own heart, who are best fitted to speak a word in season to weary souls. It is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and it is he who has passed through the furnace who can best deal with those now in the fire. Let us pray that it may please God to be equally gracious unto Sister Fearing.”

The second of two booklets.

