



On the Nature of Christian Influence

Anthony Norris Groves

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An Abridgement

Anthony Norris Groves

Assembly Bookshelf
Sacramento

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FORWARD

Anthony Norris Groves was a man of enduring stature, (although he would be the first to deny such a claim). He was one of the original brothers used by God in the late 1820's in, what many later would identify as, the "brethren movement." He was a man who learned to take the words of Christ in their plain and simple sense and then apply them to every aspect of Christian living.

Because of that simplicity, it was he who early on suggested those important assembly principles to J. G. Bellett of Dublin that Christians should "come together in all simplicity as disciples not waiting on any pulpit or minister," and "that believers, meeting together [as such] were free to break bread together as their Lord had admonished them; and that, in as far as the practice of the apostles could be a guide, every Lord's day should be set aside for thus remembering the Lord's death, and obeying his parting command."¹

Because of his simple devotion to Christ many other Christians were encouraged to also follow the Lord with that same simplicity. But, as was already mentioned, he was not one to claim such influence for himself. In fact, he even forgot that he was the first one to suggest another important assembly principle - that one's love for the Saviour should be the basis for fellowship together, not agreement on a multitude of minor issues.

¹ Rowdon, Harold H., *The Origins of the Brethren*, (Pickering & Inglis Ltd. London, 1967) pg. 40

He records the following in his journals,

“I was almost forgetting, till a letter from Mr. Bellett of Dublin reminded me, that I was the first to propose that simple principle of union, the love of Jesus, instead of oneness of judgment in minor things.”²

His whole focus was on his Lord and not on himself. He firmly believed it was only when one was fully focused on the living Lord and willing to follow His precepts, that one was truly fulfilling the heartfelt desire of the Heavenly Father. He was a man of much spiritual insight, willing to step out in faith on the bold promises of God's Word.

As such, he became a well known servant of God among the Christian circles of England and India in the early 19th century. His influence extended to many Christians of his day, such ones as George Muller, Henry Craik, J. G. Bellett, Robert Chapman, Lord Congleton, Alexander Duff, Karl Rhenius, to name just a few. He also indirectly influenced many Christians that were associated with those early brethren. For example, through the ministry of George Muller, he greatly influenced Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission.

However, today, in the 21st century, some minimize his influence, and others do not even remember his name.

It is most unfortunate that this is even happening among many assemblies today. Many among the

² Dann, Robert Bernard, *Father of Faith Missions, The Life and Times of Anthony Norris Groves*, (Authentic Media, Waynesboro, GA, 2004), pg. 500

younger generation do not even know the name of Anthony Norris Groves, let alone his influence among those early brethren.

And yet this should not surprise us, for Anthony Norris Groves believed that one's influence in the things of God would only be made known or remembered as it was deemed necessary by God. The carnal or soulical Christian, of course, will always desire to have one's influence known, but the spiritual man will always leave it in the hands of God.

Such was the case with Anthony Norris Groves. He was not concerned for his own reputation. He left all things for his Lord, leaving a promising career in England to be a missionary, first in Baghdad and then in India.

It was inconsequential to him whether he was known or unknown, remembered or forgotten. He came to realize that true influence, (even if it remains unknown), is found only in one who truly seeks the glory of God.

He reminds us of this when he speaks of King David, who, when "taking five smooth stones from the babbling brook," never knew "that that single stone slung in faith" would be remembered to the distant ages of the Church. He also reminds us of this when he speaks of that poor widow in the Gospels who threw in her last two mites. He reminds us that she did not know her influence would extend to millions of people around the world, even to the present day.

And so it should not surprise us that the name of Anthony Norris Groves has been forgotten today; he never tried to secure a place of influence for himself in

annals of Church History. He did not seek his own reputation, but only that of His Lord and his Master. He left everything in the hands of God.

And yet, if there was any time in the history of the Church that Christians could benefit from his influence, it would be the Christians of today. We are in such dire need to understand, once again, the principles the Lord first taught him - such assembly principles as living by faith, gathering in simplicity, abhorring worldly patronage and having an aversion to worldly methods and ways.

Oh, how we need to understand these principles today, at such a time when so much of the world's thinking is infiltrating the thinking of the Church. The *Christianizing of the things of the world* and the *secularizing of the things of Church* is more and more becoming the mainstay of many fellowships. A synergism between the marketing techniques of "Madison Avenue" and the eternal principles of God's Word is occurring within the Church at large, and is producing an Evangelicalism that thinks it has found a better way to spread the Gospel and maintain Christian influence in the world.

Worldly business principles - now mixed with the principles of God's Word - are causing many to measure success not with the mindset of Christ but with the mindset of a businessman. Members of the Church are now viewed as customers, the more you have the more successful you must be - and as a business will do whatever it takes to keep a "customer," so now the Church is doing whatever it takes to keep a "member" (even if it means compromising the principles of God's

Word). The Church is now viewed as one views a corporation, and the same techniques and *marketing strategies* that govern the corporation now govern the Church. And because this new marketing strategy has become successful in *gaining members and raising money*, it is being accepted as a more efficient way to influence the world and carry on the work of the Lord.

And the sad fact is, (because of the perceived success of this new partnership with the world), this mindset is now beginning to spread to many of the little flocks of Christians scattered throughout the world, who in the past have always attempted to follow only the Word of God and have nothing to do with the world or its principles.

Lack of growth and atrophy in many assemblies is making many wonder if perhaps there is a better way. The way of the Lord and the principles, which once were the mainstay of those early brethren and assemblies, are being abandoned and replaced with principles more to the liking of such ones who desire the external over the internal.

Through this false definition of “success,” many, who have always been “premillennial” in their thinking, are actually becoming “postmillennial” in their practice. Once again, in the history of the Christendom, the Church is trying to make the world subservient to its mission by utilizing its ways and principles, forgetting that Christ’s kingdom is not of this world.

This realignment of Evangelical thinking, in turn, is now changing our perception of what constitutes true Christian influence. For example, this synergistic mindset believes money will allow one to increase the

measure of one's influence. Therefore, the business mentality of obtaining capital through *the utilization of debt* is more and more becoming a commonplace practice among many assemblies and ministries. Many churches and Bible Colleges now routinely use this method to foster growth and expansion.

How different is this mindset from those brothers of long-ago, who would continue in prayer and simple faith, waiting on the Lord to provide the means for the Lord's work. They understood that the responsibility for growth belonged to the *Head* not to the *body*. We have lost their virtue of patience and faith.

Contrast, if you will, the example, of George Muller, who was willing, in one case, to wait seven years for the Lord to provide the money necessary to enlarge the work of helping destitute orphans in Bristol. He stood firm in his conviction never to indebt the work of God, knowing that it was God's responsibility to provide the funds necessary to carry on His work, not the responsibility of a mortgagee.

How impatient we have become today, not willing to wait upon our Lord. We have lost our faith, and need the affirmation of instant success to assuage our wavering hearts. We seek visible evidences to reassure ourselves that we are still being "influential" in the kingdom of God.

Our faith has dwindled and all but disappeared, being replaced, instead, with things we can see and things we can touch. The things of the soul have become paramount. The natural mind replaces the spiritual mind; psychology replaces theology; business acumen replaces spiritual discernment, and natural enthusiasm is confused

with fervency of the Spirit.

The taking up of one's cross and the denying of one's self has disappeared from our vocabulary and has been replaced with such phrases as "believe in yourself," "love yourself," and "be confident in yourself." Entertainment is replacing true spiritual worship and talent is confused with spiritual gift.

We need to be reminded, once again, by one like Anthony Norris Groves, that the Lord is not so powerless that He needs our worldly ways and natural talents to do His work. We need to realize, once again, that wool and linen must be kept separate, and that Christian influence is not gained by such natural means.

In the work of the Lord only the spiritual things of Christ will do, the natural things of Adam must be left on the cross.

Marketing strategies, organizational skills, natural talents, and business acumen may be fine, as brother Groves would say, for worldly occupations and employments, but for the work of the Lord, only the things of the Spirit will do. Our Lord desires us to take up our cross and deny ourselves, and leave upon that cross the things of Adam so that the things of Christ might shine forth in all their glory.

Only when we do that will Christians exercise true and lasting influence. And, even though, (because we refuse to use worldly means and methods), such influence might remain unknown to other Christians, or to the world at large, it will remain unto eternity because it will be the influence of the eternal Spirit of God.

However, to understand this takes true faith and many are not willing to forgo the lack of outward

assurance that such faith may entail.

We need to leave upon the cross the vain philosophies and strategies of the world. We need to leave upon the cross that human and innate desire to possess things now. We need to leave upon the cross the thought that the more we possess the greater will be our influence. And, most certainly, we need to leave upon the cross that new thinking that is gaining so much ascendancy today - that the original principles of the brethren are no longer effective in today's culture and society, and that, therefore, they need to be changed or modified in order to stop any waning of our influence.³

Only as we do this, leaving upon the cross all that we received from Adam, will the last Adam, the Firstborn from the dead, become the sole source for all that we say or do. Only if we do this, will we find true Christian influence that will extend beyond the current generation (if the Lord tarries), and bring the testimony of the Lord to the next generation. Only if we do this, will we gain the proper mindset that will cause us not to care if such influence is known or unknown, because it will be left by faith in the hands of God.

With such a mindset we will not fear that an assembly might grow old and close, because we know that the Lord will always have a faithful remnant, and if one assembly might close, he will raise up a new one in its place.

Remember, the Baghdad mission of Anthony Norris Groves was allowed by God to die. Many

³ Obviously, we only mean those principles that are in accordance with the Word of God. Principles that are based upon man-made traditions must always be done away with.

considered it a failure. But in the annals of eternity, I think one will find that if the Baghdad mission had not closed, the Chittoor mission, or the Godavari mission, would not have come into existence and a multitude of souls might never have been blessed.⁴ Anthony Norris Groves understood that one must be willing to go into death if the life of Jesus is to be manifested.

Our brother could have changed his principles and obtained the status and support of a mission organization. Perhaps, with such help, he might have made the Baghdad mission a “success” according to the standards of that day. But, if he had made the compromises such help would entail, I don’t think he would have had any where near the influence he subsequently had, and the book you are about to read would never have been written. He would have had his recognition, but it would have been the fleeting influence of one generation.

Therefore, to use this example for today - an assembly, (assuming it is not relying on man-made traditions, but is still relying on the living God), must never fear the death the Lord might ask it to go through, but must look to Jesus with eyes of faith and know that life comes out of death, and if He allows the doors of a faithful assembly to close, it is because He will somehow bring life and lasting influence out of its closure to others

⁴ Anthony Norris Groves did not utilize the word mission as we utilize it today. To him, it was a work of the Holy Spirit through chosen instruments - not an organization, board, or committee. Perhaps, it might be better understood as – the Baghdad work, or the Chittoor work.

in His Kingdom.

If we hold fast what was delivered to us from the beginning; if we maintain the principles those early brothers shared with us (as they agree with Scripture); if we hold fast to the Word of God, we will realize that such steadfastness will insure our greatest influence. *The problem today is that there are too many who desire instant success and are not willing to undergo death.* They think that if one really has the Lord's blessing, such a one would never be asked to die.

But who had more of the blessing of God than anyone else who has lived, or ever will live? Was it not the Lord Jesus Christ - and yet, did not the Father ask him to die? His work died. His mission died, and even the loyalty of His closest disciples died. They all forsook Him. And yet, who has ever had greater influence than He?

“Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”
Jn. 12:24 NASB

When we accept the idea of “change,” as the way to guarantee our share of Christian influence, (because we are afraid of dying, closing or remaining small), we will find ourselves falling into the trap of comparing ourselves with others (II Cor. 10:12), not knowing such comparison belies true faith and only leads to compromise and heartache - if not in this generation, then assuredly in the next.

When we accept the maxim that the bigger we are, the greater will be our influence, we have completely forgotten the lesson of Gideon and the lesson

that was repeated once again in modern times, through the example of our brother Anthony Norris Groves.

Change is good, if it means going back to the principles of God's Word - the principles of those early brethren - the principles of the early church. Change is detrimental, however, if it thinks those principles have to be modified and adapted to the current culture so that more people can be attracted to our assembly.

Such change comes from a lack of faith and a total misunderstanding of what constitutes true Christian influence.

And so it is with heartfelt desire that we offer this little booklet by Anthony Norris Groves written from India in 1833. Perhaps again, the Lord will use the spiritual influence of this godly man to admonish us to hold fast to that which was delivered to us in the beginning- to hold fast to the things of God's Word- to hold fast to the example of our Lord- to see things with eyes of faith - to realize that we are pilgrims on this earth and that the scope of our influence will depend on the Lord's will, and not, (as Anthony Norris Groves would say), on the "greatness of our apparatus."

And so, again, it is with this heartfelt desire that we offer the republication of this booklet.

BPH

Sacramento

Note from Editor

We have reworked some difficult phraseology in order to give the modern reader better ease of understanding. In some cases, archaic words have been replaced with those more modern.

As this is an abridged copy, certain words have been added for the purposes of continuity and understanding. In most cases, these have been incidental words necessary to smooth out transitions.

In some cases, where more than an incidental word was necessary to continue the flow of the text, we have added those words in italics so that the reader may know that they were not originally penned by the author. We have also done this in those cases where words may have been added to give current context.

All footnotes in this edition were not penned by the author, but are included for the explanation of certain terminologies and, in some cases, historical context. Some footnotes are also included for the purposes of present day application.

BPH

ON THE
NATURE
OF
CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

No man can have watched the movements of the religious world within the last few years, without being constantly struck with the recurrence of the word “influence,” whether applied to prestige, talent, or wealth. It is to dissect this term, and undeceive, perhaps some, that I purpose, with the Lord's blessing, to write the following little inquiry into the nature of Christian influence.

It has appeared to me that there has been a total misapprehension as to what the power of the Christian Church consist in, and that from this has sprung consequences that are most fatal to her interest in these latter and trying days.

For while God has provided an avenue by which his love may find access to us in every variety and degree of blessing and honor, through the blood of his Only Begotten Son that was slain; he is also determined that no flesh, should glory in his presence, and to this end he has made Christ unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

He has done this in order that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord; and from this I would argue, that neither fame, fortune, nor intellectual preeminence, nor any of those sources of influence which brings respect and distinction, has any Christian influence except when they are dealt with after the example Christ has given us.

If we are rich, then by following His example - by laying our riches at his feet, as really as he did, when he lay down his life for us at the feet of the Father; who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.

If we be noble or distinguished among men, then by casting our crowns before him, and laying our glory by, as the Apostle says, Christ did his, when being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, he emptied himself and became of no reputation.

If we be wise in the things of the world, then by being willing to become as little children in our wisdom, yea fools that we may be wise indeed; knowing that it has pleased God to make the foolish the wisdom of this world, since the world by wisdom knew not God.

It is by relinquishment and renunciation of self that we both follow and glorify Christ in every respect and in every measure, even to the laying down of our life for the brethren.

This experience of “denying ourselves” - taking up our cross - crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts - mortifying the deeds of the body - mortifying our members that are upon the earth or loving not the world, nor the things of the world – will always direct our hearts to Christ. And when we undergo such experiences the whole New Testament will become at once the

directory and comfort of all who are suffering with Christ. *It will also cause us to focus on our* reigning with him, not here - but hereafter. In fact, *we will find*, the first line in St. Matthews Gospel to the last line in Revelation refers to, and was written for the consolation of sufferers and sufferers only.

Therefore, when some consider the allowable use of influence in the Church of God, the lamp of Scripture must be taken to show us the way where safety lies; and since some think that the Old Testament dispensation was peculiar *to Israel* and marked by differences that preclude their applications to us, it becomes the more necessary to consider how far this is true. For it appears to me that it will be a great mistake to adopt this opinion in its full extent.

The mistake arises from not rightly distinguishing between the dispensations. If, for instance, we were to expect miraculous help in subduing our enemies with the sword, I should be obliged to confess that no such promise is made to the *Church*: because she is appointed to suffer until he comes to whom vengeance belongeth.

If however we realize that the events recorded in the Old Testament, *show us*, that as the promises of miraculous interposition in behalf of Israel made to her in the beginning of the dispensation, were always fulfilled by God in direct *proportion to their faith* - even to the end of the dispensation; so by a parity of reason we will have encouragement to expect that whatever promises of miraculous help were made to the Church at the commencement of her institution, *will* remain in

force through out, if that faith to which they were promised be exercised.

The miraculous helps promised to the Jews were for the establishment and preservation of the temporal glory of a weak nation in the midst of powerful enemies. The miraculous helps promised to the Church were to preserve a humiliated and trampled people scattered throughout the earth, who, like their Lord, did not even have foxes' holes to hide them and who by not resisting evil, should witness, even to the ungodly, that Jehovah was around about their way and walked and worked in them.

Therefore, the moment *the Church solicits the world* to a participation in her work and a place in her counsels or gives them any preeminence in her deliberations, she betrays her trust and thus dishonours her Lord, *by not trusting in His promises and provisions.*

She blinds her eyes to the Spirit of the present and brings to our minds words that should astound the stoutest heart. “Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath⁵ in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in a salt land and not inhabited.*” (Jer. 17: 5-6).

Therefore, in referring to the Old Testament history, with such an object in mind a few illustrations out of a vast multitude will suffice. The great sin of Israel and Judah, next to idolatry, of which they were

⁵ The heath was thought to be a fruitless plant or bush.

continually warned, was trusting either Syria or Egypt for help against their enemies. Consider the contest between Jeroboam and Abijah in II Chronicles 13: 8-18.

And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye *be* a great multitude, and *there are* with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods. Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of *other* lands? So that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, *the same* may be a priest of *them that are* no gods.

But as for us, the LORD *is* our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, *are* the sons of Aaron, and the Levites *wait* upon *their* business: And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also *set they in order* upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him. And, behold, God himself *is* with us for *our* captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.

But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment *was* behind them. And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle *was* before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers.

Again in the next chapter 14, read from 11 - 13.

And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that *were* with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.

You see the Lord was standing for Asa on the same ground and overthrew his enemies putting fear into their hearts, simply because Asa trusted in him.

Again, read the 16th chapter 1 - 9.

In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There *is* a league between me and thee, as *there was* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard *it*, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of

the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

Here we *see* this very same king, by pursuing a different course, spent his own money, robbed the Lord's treasury, and yet obtained apparent "success." However, this misplaced trust blinded his eyes and hardened his heart and finally led to his ruin as the concluding verses of the chapter from the 10-13 prove.

Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time.

And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding *great*: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

Again, read in the 20th chapter from 1-23.

It came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they *be* in Hazazontamar, which *is* Engedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, and said, O LORD God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? And rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? And in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? *Art* not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, If, *when* evil cometh upon us, *as* the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, *I say*, *how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes *are* upon thee. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's. To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not *need* to fight in this *battle*: set yourselves, stand ye *still*, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD *will be* with you.

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy *them*: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

Here again, you see Jehoshaphat, is pleading a promise made to Solomon. God accepts him, and he conquerors, while praising the beauty of holiness and while standing still to see the salvation of God who had made the battle His own. And the result of such faith was seen in the 29th verse.

“The fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries. When they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.”

See how great their influence became. Here is means *for us* (the mighty power of God) which our weak faith fears to trust, yet when exerted, will bring glory to God and dignify the Church *in the same way it dignified*

Israel, to an extent that no accumulation of human means could ever do.

However, as with Asa, alliances with ungodly kings *will only lead to ruin*. After Jehoshaphat had returned from his visit to Ahab where he had been kindly and magnificently entertained, and with whom he had formed an alliance, hear what the Lord says in second Chronicles. If Jehoshaphat's son marries Ahab's daughter it will only lead him to idolatry.

So it is with the Church. *When she forgets and makes an alliance with a world* whose principles and whose practices are not the same as her own, she will be led to idolize the world and take into her bosom that serpent, whose pretended love she once was most careful to shun.

In fact, to allow *an alliance* with any worldly individual, or society of individuals, will, in proportion to the strength of the opposite party and the extent to which their principles prevail, destroy the power of the Spirit of life in the Church, and lead her to act on the same low views of expediency and human patronage, that the world considers essential in carrying on human schemes and plans.⁶

Consequently, in the Old Testament, we should recognize the failure of human confidences and be encouraged by the success of those things which were divine. All God's great deliverances and mighty works

⁶ May the Lord help us understand this spiritual principle, when the idea is proposed to Bible Colleges, or various ministries that worldly accreditation and/or patronage is a desirable aspect for the furtherance of the Lord's work.

for Israel were so effected that every Israelite should see it was the Lord, and such deliverances brought glory to his own great Name. But had He allowed his people to prosper by union with the ungodly, *they and their ungodly worldly principles* would have become the ones to receive the glory, and, thus, they would have respected them and not the Lord.

I will close these quotations from the Old Testament with a few remarks about Ezra's and Abraham's faith. When Artaxerxes permitted the Jews to return *to the land of Israel*, Ezra uses the following words (Ezra 8: 21-23) -

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all of our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the King a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the King, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good, that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us."

Here we perceive the workings of the soul of a holy man of God, reasoning within himself, that after having spoken such great things of his God before his conqueror, it would be dishonoring *to* Jehovah and the power of his arm, to ask the king for soldiers, and horsemen.

Therefore, we see Ezra resort to prayer, and God was entreated. Now I ask any simple minded child of God, what is the influence of such conduct on his own soul, and *I ask* whether Ezra's faith and God's preserving

love are not more manifested by such conduct, than by asking the King for royal protection on their journey to the promised land.

And I also ask, is not the tendency of this act of faith in God to lead us to go and do likewise? At least it appears to me that when we have said those wonderfully great things that we can say, nay are bound to say by every motion of love and gratitude to our Father, viz.⁷ that he redeemed us by Christ before the foundation of the world, wrote our names in his book of life, watched over us so that hitherto not a hair of our heads has fallen unnoticed to the ground, and so loved us as to gather us from the world, and make us joint heirs with Christ, - and to all which we may humbly yet confidently add that he will never leave us or forsake us, but walk in us and be with us overshadowing us with his wings, - and all this not for anything in us, but because he hath a special favor towards us and hath chosen us to be a peculiar people to himself to show forth his praise, dealing with us quite differently than He does with others, so that, in our lives, all things work together for our good - I say, after having as children of God said this, (and it is not the hundredth part that might be said of our present and eternal blessings in God throughout Christ), - have not those to whom we speak and exhort a right to expect from us a different line of conduct to that which they see pursued by others who disbelieve these promises altogether, or who doubt and *only* hope they are God's, and therefore take all "natural" precautions that their food may not fail, nor the enemy break in upon them?

⁷ Viz. - Latin, videlicet, meaning – namely.

Doubtless they should have *a right to expect such a different line of conduct from us!* And if our faith in God's grace and in his unconditional and assured salvation does not lead *us to such a different line of conduct in the world – a line of conduct perfectly distinct, more spiritual, and more relying upon God, -* then the character of our faith strangely differs from that of the Apostles and primitive Christians.

The last passage to which I will refer, relates to Abraham, when refusing the bounty of the king of Sodom. Gen.14:21-23:

“And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not *take* from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take any thing that *is* thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.”

Should not that be our heartfelt desire now? Wouldn't there now be that same beauty in Church, if she, like Abraham of old were afraid that the world should say we were made rich and successful by the adoption of its principles and practices?

I think I have now quoted enough to establish this point, that God honored the faith of the Jews by his miraculous interference in their behalf *so that He would receive the glory, rather than having that glory go the artful devices of man.* He did this not only in the time of Moses, but *also* for many centuries after; in which the prophets teach us, (and that it was to this very confidence the Jews were continually exhorted to return), that their influence on the surrounding nations was in exact

proportion to the exercise of their faith, which allowed Jehovah to make bare his holy arm for them, and show himself to be their God, and not at all in proportion to their natural and apparent advantages.

I will now pass on to the New Testament and consider the Gentile dispensation - the character in which our Blessed Lord came into the world, the circumstances by which he surrounded himself, and the reasons which he assigns for them, which I think should have considerable weight with us in determining the whole question of *Christian influence*, unless there be found something clearly limiting its application, either in principle or in fact.

Christ chose to appear among us as the Carpenter's Son of Galilee, although many may think that greater respect and regard would have been obtained for his people had he selected a more influential position. We know that his coming as a poor despised man was in the eyes of the Jews a great objection to his reception and that they could not endure that their Messiah should be a Nazarene, "an inhabitant of so mean a city as Nazareth." But God the Father, whose ways are not as our ways, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, had before appointed his dwelling place and circumstances in life, well knowing what a stumbling block it would be to the proud nation of Israel.

Again, in the choice of his companions, our Savior manifested the same disregard of human

influence. He selected not the wise, not the noble nor the learned! He passed by them all and took such unlearned and ignorant men as would bring upon him derision rather than respect. He chose also a publican whom they abhorred, and a woman whom they preeminently called a sinner, and thus in addition to the reproach of being a Carpenter's Son, they accused him of being the companion of publicans and sinners. But *see* how our adorable Lord rejoices in the Father's plan of salvation.

"I thank thee, Oh Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them unto babes - Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The means of our Lord's incarnation and the methods of his ministry was no mere accident but were the result of *the* premeditated design of God, the wisdom of which Christ could see, and which we should see also, if we were like-minded with Christ.

Let us next consider what influence our Lord exerted to gain converts. Was it by telling them how many great persons were his disciples and contributed to his support? When the rich came to him did he offer them a soft pillow? No - He gave them all but one bed to lie upon - "go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me."

Did *we find Him watering down the demands of the gospel or using worldly ways* to win the half-hearted or hesitating inquirer? No: these are his declarations. He that putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not fit for the kingdom of God; and again, he that hateth not father and mother, sister and brother, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple - He even taught us

that things of good report, (and in other circumstances lovely), should be disregarded when a soul was to be saved, as he said to one who would delay a little to bury his father, "Let the dead bury their dead, but follow thou me."

Moreover, does Christ teach us that riches *are* more influential in his kingdom than poverty? Certainly not. To human reason, I admit our Lord's words to the young man were doubly trying - it not only sent him away, but was naturally calculated to discourage all others of his class; but to those who see that the glory of this dispensation consists in the triumph of internal faith over a state of external humiliation, it is in harmony with all other parts of truth, and for an elect church, whose strength consists not in numbers but in purity, it was indeed a most precious ordeal, calculated to winnow away the chaff by its very principles, whereas *many methods today seek to embrace* the chaff, and so bury the wheat.

This disregard of all earthly influence was not accidental, as I have before observed, and to which I shall now proceed to shew, from the writings of the apostle Paul, who goes at length into the question.

Let us read attentively, his observations on the purposes of God, relative to human means, in his first epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 1:17; I Cor. 2:1-2; I Cor. 3:18 to the middle of the 21st verse).

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," ... "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men."

In these portions of the epistle, the apostle establishes the following positions.

1st. That he came to them intentionally without the wisdom of words; and for this reason, *for fear* the cross of Christ should become of none effect.

We see then the apostle's judgment concerning the value of that eloquence, which draws out large and crowded congregations of Greeks who revel in the wisdom of words. In his estimation, it would not *only* have been of no use, it would have rendered the preaching of the cross of Christ of none effect.

To have used such popular wisdom may have been "successful" - crowds may have thronged the door - the people may have come in multitudes - the Greeks may have had their food⁸ - indeed, the preacher *may have even had* his praise: but the children of that kingdom, which is not in word but in power, *would have*

⁸ In other words, the desired pleasure of hearing a new message encased in those beautiful words of wisdom which the Greek people so enjoyed.

vainly sought the bread of heaven or would have found it so *diluted* they would know it not.⁹

And I am not aware of one single circumstance in the present position of the Church that does not make the principles laid down by the Apostles equally essential to her real power and prosperity. For, however much we may argue and vehemently contend - God will bless only that which he has promised to bless! - And without his blessing, though Paul may plant and Apollos may water, it must, *ultimately*, come to nothing.

2nd. Paul calls the attention of the Corinthians to another most important feature in God's plan of carrying on His kingdom.

"You see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," -

and for this reason

- God has chosen the foolish things of this world that they may confound the wise, the weak things that they may confound the things are mighty, and base things of the world, and things that are despised, yea things that are not, to bring to nought things that are."

⁹ May the Lord allow us to understand this spiritual principle when people today use such a rationale to justify the use of all sorts of worldly means to draw out crowds to hear the gospel - whether it be a particular genre of music, or whether it be some worldly attraction or game. We need to once more have faith in the power of Christ to draw all men to himself through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 6:44; 12:32; 16:7-8). This will insure that the glory goes to Him and insure that the message of the cross will not be nullified by our own thoughts, means and actions.

Dwell for a moment upon the end proposed in this, and ask yourselves honestly, if this end could only really be for the days of the early church, since the reason for this means, was that no flesh may glory in His presence. God chooses the things that man naturally rejects, and rejects those things which man naturally chooses, *so* that whatever influence there is in the Church, may be traced to Him, *and not to the world or to its principles, and this, in order* that He may receive all the glory.

There is no conquering power in the Church but God; follow his path, and you must succeed; pursue a counter one and you must *ultimately* fail. If there be any conclusion which a Christian cannot fail to draw from these portions of Scripture which have led to these observations, it is this, that the Apostle is setting forth God's plan of establishing his Church, as directly opposed to the plans and principles that rule in the world.

But if you say that, other things being equal, that man will possess the most influence, which has the most intellectual power [i.e. natural talent], most wealth, or most *prestige*, you cause Christian influence to be propelled onward by precisely the same powers and principles that prevail in the world. Whereas the Lord puts his treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power, may be of God and not of men.

I know that ten thousand arguments, plausible and powerful in various degrees, may be brought against this view of the subject; but my simple answer is, the Lord hath spoken, what can I say? - The Lord hath acted, what can I do? Shall men be wiser than his Maker? Let us be content with our true dignity of being made

children of God in Christ, who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Now, *let me state*, I give no opinion *as to* how far the cultivation of "natural talent" may be allowable or desirable for a Christian in the pursuit of a worldly vocation; but the moment he approaches "the burning bush," let him lay aside these shoes, for it is holy ground -Jehovah is there!

However, it may be objected, that although the apostles *laid aside these shoes*, being poor and illiterate, they possessed miraculous power. This is true - but St. Paul declares that the ground of a minister's reception was, not his miracles, but the truth that he preached - so that if he or an angel from heaven came without this stamp to his Mission, he was to be rejected and held accursed.

And do we not have the same, nay better, means of proving the truth of our religion than the primitive Christians, who had but parts of the New Testament, whereas we have the whole? Yet if we go forth in our spiritual warfare, clothed in the armor of Saul, the power of the slaying and the power of the stone will not be manifested.

In the second epistle of Corinthians, the Apostle frequently alludes to his presence being base and his speech contemptible, although his letters were powerful. *He alludes* to the intense uneasiness with which this fact occasioned him, until God declared, "That his strength was made perfect in weakness," which enabled the apostle to "glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him."

And it is further remarkable that all authors, in proving the divine origin and progress of Christianity, have felt the power of this argument; viz. that the work has been effected, throughout, by weak and despised means; and that the learning, talent, and a wealth of man were, for some time at least, consistently opposed to it; that Christians conquered simply by preaching the truth and suffering for the truth under every external circumstance of degradation, temporal ruin, and weakness; thereby making it evident that God alone could have established such a religion, and, as such, all the glory went to Him.

Therefore, I trust that a fair and candid consideration of the subject, from the portion of God's Word already quoted, will at once shew that the question is not between miracles and ordinary means. It was no more a miraculous manifestation of the arm of the Lord to give power and victory by the sword to the weak, (that is to Jehoshaphat, Asa, David, and Gideon), than, by a different manifestation of his Almighty power, to give victory over all that was great and intellectual and glorious among men by the weak, despised, and base things of the gospel.

Both shewed his arm uplifted for his people. Both precluded them from boasting, while their invincible position was made manifest to themselves and to their enemies. They were enabled to say alike under both dispensations, "the Lord only is my Rock and my salvation. He is my defense;" - or with the Apostle, "the Lord is my helper, therefore I will not fear what man can do unto me."

The whole question, *beloved*, is between one class of miraculous means and another; both having simply the same object, the exaltation of Jehovah and the humiliation of the pride of man.

The wisdom of God's plan is apparent; but even if it were difficult to see the beauty, fitness, and correspondence between these *two different methods* [i.e. the Old Testament method and the New Testament method], still there should not be a moments anxiety about casting ourselves upon Jehovah's power alone, since He has declared that it is the stay and support of His people. If the Lord promises us victory by smiting upon the ground, we have nothing to do but smite; and if we stop from unbelief, a restricted blessing will be the consequence.

According to God's plan the Jewish nation was to have been the head; but they pursued their own plan and thus became the tail, until finally the glory of the Lord departed from them, and they became a byword and a proverb among all their neighbors. Woe be to the *Church*, if after their example, we incur the tenfold guilt of following in their footsteps!

May this thought give us pause. Have we not rejected the design of Jehovah, which was that we should conquer by base things, as the apostle says, that all who glory might glory in the Lord? Have we not endeavored to promote God's cause by the power of nations and the principles of the world?¹⁰ - I feel persuaded the Lord

¹⁰ We should take this exhortation to heart. Would this not include such things today as the mixture of politics with the mission of the Church, as well as, the mixture of psychology with the truths of God's Word? Both, today, are considered a necessary and desired

never more fully developed to the Jews the course they should pursue in order to prevail against their enemies - never did he more strongly impress upon them, than he has upon us, the danger of refusing to cease from *the wisdom, talents, and strengths of man*. Never did he tell them more fully that his glory should be manifest through the abasement of the creature, and his power through the weakness of the creature, than he has told us that important truth – and never did he present to them so splendid a realization of all they were to be, as he has presented to us, in the personal life and walk of our Lord Jesus Christ in his mysterious humiliation. And yet how we abandon the means which has conquered the most powerful of men – how we forsake the good old way - we depend upon the broken cistern of man's intellect, wisdom, and contrivances, which can never hold the living water of Jehovah's Spirit!

Consequently, God becomes more and more excluded from our system. Our hopes of success increasingly rest upon those natural things, rather than rest upon the need for God's *intervention*. And the world, *which can only* judge from what it sees, would never have reason to acknowledge that God is certainly in our midst. They no longer wonder at the mountain formed without hands – *nor are they amazed* by the greatness of our work, *having already known* the smallness of our means.

Where is our holy dread, lest excellency of speech should destroy the efficacy of the cross? Where

ingredient for ministry, yet nothing could be further from the truth. The intellect or power of the mind is replacing the power of the Spirit and the churches are suffering for it.

is that holy fear that the faith of converts might stand in the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God?

I am aware that in denying the influence of human intellect and learning, many will think that the principle laid down is pushed too far, - if they do not think it all together unsound. If, however, the text already quoted or alluded to (Zech. 4; II Cor. 4 & 5, &c.) - where might and *human* wisdom are contrasted, rather than being coupled together with the Spirit, and where the former are purposely rejected, lest the latter should prove of none effect - do not themselves carry enough conviction *to convince the doubting heart*, I would appeal to facts drawn from the history of the Church of Christ in all ages *starting with our Lord himself*.

What was our Savior himself after the flesh? - *An uneducated man according to the religious standards of His day*. How does this man letters, said the Jews, having never learned?

What were the apostles and primitive teachers of Christianity? With the exception of Paul, (who probably was skilled only in the Jewish law), will any maintain that they were learned or eloquent men, or did the success of their ministry depend upon their talent or intellect? On the contrary, when their countrymen saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned ignorant men, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. The power was made manifest by the weakness of the creature not *by the intellect or natural talent of the creature*.

Again, after the apostolate times, when Justin Martyr, Origen, and a host of learned men joined the Church, they spoiled her with their philosophy and vain

deceit. They corrupted the pure milk of the Word, because they would not become fools for Christ's sake, and, thus, they paved the way for Romish idolatries and universal spiritual darkness.

Is not the power of the gospel the most strikingly manifested in the poor and in children? Were not the Waldenses, Moravians, and Methodists, chiefly, illiterate men? It is true that Luther, Melancthon, Leighton, and others, who possessed learning, were eminent Christians and teachers; but did they shine in consequence of their learning?

Did it contribute to their boldness, or to their meek and quiet spirit, or to the spirituality of mind for which these three saints were respectively distinguished?

The Church should look to her Lord alone for power; so that "no flesh might glory in His presence."

I now pass on to a more particular consideration of influence and to the renunciation of that which is Christian and that which is not.

Christian influence may be defined to be a Christian's power of leading the saints on to a full conformity with God's will, and of inducing sinners to inquire and to seek after God.

It is universally felt in natural things that the man who is influential in one department may be wholly devoid of influence in another: the most influential merchant may have no influence among agriculturalists,

nor again the latter among mathematicians. This is so plain, that in these cases it neither requires enforcement nor illustration.

Yet it is surprising with what freedom it is assumed that those who are great, *charismatic*, rich, or wise in the things of the world, will *always* have more influence in *Christian work* than others. However, the difference of the sources from whence these two things spring, and the objects to which they naturally tend, are as wide apart as heaven and earth.

On the one hand you have earthly wisdom, earthly riches, earthly nobility; on the other, heavenly wisdom, (the true riches), and heavenly royalty, (being kings and priests to God). The one *is* the offspring of human *endeavor*; the other is the offspring of Jehovah's power.

The things of the world absolutely appear to me, by their own nature, to be incapable of any Christian influence, and their only possible use to a Christian is that, by renouncing them for Christ's kingdom, he has a means, in proportion to the extent of his renunciation, of explaining to the world, in a language they understand, the reality of his conviction of the *true* treasure he has found.

But even if this irreconcilable difference of source did not exist between these two classes of influence, I think I have shown that God has clearly chosen to do His work by certain means that to a *carnal or soulical* man seems inadequate for *the task required*.

Therefore, *we* can conclude that Christian influence is not in proportion to a Christian's *natural talent*, riches, wisdom, or power. And if it does not

consist in this, let us inquire *as to* what it does consist, and according to what proportion *it* is regulated.

If we call to mind what Christian influence was defined to be, we shall see at once it depends on the measure in which a Christian proves himself, by his life and actions, to be controlled by Christian principles, and therefore, that the greatest Christian influence belongs to that man, who makes the most striking exhibition of these principles, of which the most powerful, most heavenly, and most universal *is - unconditional* love.

Now, no one would probably argue with this, but the point of dispute is about how this love is to be carried out. Our Lord himself answers the question, "he that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me" and his commandment is that, "we should love each other as he has loved us. *And so the question must be asked, "How did He love us?"*

This is how He loved us. It was He, who in love, descended from the glory of God to be a beggar in his own world, and to be reviled for so becoming. It was He, who to the *enquiring* Jews confessed, that he had never learned *according to their standards*, but that his wisdom was from God. And it was He, who though the wealth of all the universe was His, submitted to be fed from the loving contributions of a few poor women, and finally to die.

If the display of a little of that glory *that was His from all eternity would have increased His influence*, why did he renounce it all? If the display of a little of His wisdom and insight into the moral and physical system of the world would have added to his weight as a teacher sent from God, why did he not manifest it? - For

the creation was the work of his hands, and he could call all the stars by names. He could have explained the bands of Orion, and influences of Pleiades. He also knew moral disorder in all its monstrous deformity, for He came on that very account. And so, since all the world was his, why did he not take it, and stamp a value upon it, as good for the cause of God?

And if it is said, he had infinitely wise reasons for this path *of renunciation*, but we are not to follow him in it, I would ask, how do we know this? And why did he say to his disciples, as a condition of following him, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head?"

According to the view of *many* this would be their position. *They would have the Lord say*, "Though this be my case, you may follow me on a very different terms; I will teach you who follow me, a different way *that will allow you to spend your riches on yourself.*" *If this was true*, this way would neither have made the rich young man sorrowful, nor those who now with this salvo,¹¹ take up the profession of the cross.

My brethren, if *you* have so learned Christ, it is not from the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, or the Revelation. For he that follows Christ must take up his cross and follow him. He that would be Christ's must walk as he also walked. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, much more they of the household. Should not a Christian feel shocked to propose *such a way* to himself, *or* to act on principles which would lead him to be accepted where his Master would be rejected?

¹¹ Salvo- a word meaning salve for the conscience.

If you say you *lessen* the example and precepts of Christ and his Apostles, *so that you can increase your influence, in order to* win certain persons, I would observe that, it is the height of folly to suppose that God will make bare his holy arm, and give His stamp of *approval* on mitigated obedience rather than a whole hearted obedience.

It appears to me to be not only a foolish hope, but also a faithless hope, for what can be the impression made *to the world of* such a *half-hearted* Christian, except that he has the power of making Christianity so compatible with *what* a worldly man desires, that it would be absurd for such a one not to secure those advantages at so small a cost.

And if this line of conduct would be wise in a member *of the body of Christ*, why was it not so for the Head *of the body* - the Master? Did *Christ follow this line of conduct* to win the rich? Did He smooth the way for the religious leaders among the Jews?

I am sure no one who loves his Lord will say He did, and no *one who understands the teachings of the Lord*, could wish He had.

Or consider our Lord's example in washing the feet of his disciples. *Did He say this is my way, but your way will be different?* Did He not exhort them to do as he has done to them? Did He not impress on them, that the lowest place is the place of honor; for, says He, "though I am your Lord and Master, I am among you as he that serveth."

Therefore, when the disciple of Jesus, in imitation of his Master, or in imitation of the Apostles, *decides to follow the Lord in obedience, by the*

renunciation of self and the renunciation of all that he possesses; let not such a one be told he is throwing away his influence. For his estates, wealth, *and, indeed, his own natural talent*, however influential and great in the world, we have shown God does not recognize for Christian ends. And, yet, the Christian, by imparting *his riches* to the church and to the poor, as his Lord desires, makes a striking exhibition of his love in obeying his Lord, and he encourages the saints to deeds of similar devotedness, which in turn calls out loud to the world to stop and examine what this wonderful thing is, which causes the Christian to act in such a manner so contrary to natural principles.

But many may say, "You still look to this surrendered wealth as a medium of influence." I contend, not at all, I look to it as an expression of an impartial love and simple obedience. And even that would be of no spiritual influence, if God did not bless it - but because He does and will, (and that this is really the case, you will see in an instant by this), the Church has universally felt the blood of the martyrs to be the seed of the Church because it speaks the language of disinterested love most intelligently, - most strongly as our Lord says, "greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends;" and this though there be neither wealth, learning, nor rank to surrender; but there is that which is dearer than them all to nature - life.

It is then, in proportion to the things we sacrifice, (things that are naturally dear to self, which we sacrifice cheerfully, because the Lord has declared such sacrifices tend to his glory and the Church's good), that we have

influence. It is not voluntary infliction without an object, but it is that for which a man can give a reason, originating in the denial of self, and tending by that to the blessing of others. As in the poor widow, it is not the amount, but the extent of the sacrifice.

Supposing, for instance, three individuals were engaged in any calling, one was a man of the world, and the other two were Christians, and each drew 1000 pounds¹² a year from their respective businesses. The first spends his thousands on himself, maintaining his family, - as he thinks respectable, - gives a little to benevolent objects, and lays by perhaps a little for future contingencies; the second spends very nearly as much on his own personal accommodations and comforts, but gives somewhat more to religious objects than his worldly neighbor, and lays by as much or more for future contingencies. The third feels that the question with him is to see whether he can most glorify his Lord by spending most of his income, either on present or future personal concerns, or by living on a minimum, distributing abundantly to the necessities of the saints, and alleviating the sorrows of a sin-sick world. He decides on the latter.

Instead of taking a *large* house like this Christian brethren, he takes a small one, and therefore little furniture will do; and this, as the home is small, will bear simplicity. And, perhaps, he will find at the end of the year he has at least 700 pounds for the cause of God's Church and a benighted world's welfare. This he sends forth from a heart full of affection and sympathy, sealed

¹² Approximately \$125,000 - \$150,000 in today's money.

to the Church with a brother's love, and to the world with a ransomed sinner's prayer, that they would come and dwell in Emmanuel's land, where love is the foundation, and love is the top stone.¹³

Now we must suppose that both of those act from Christian principle: the one in retaining or rather in *enriching* himself, the other in spending on the poor saints and a lost world. The one has to show how a supposed love for others, will lead him to spend it on himself. The other has to show how love constrained him to deny himself, that he may have the fruits of love to pour forth into the lap of the poor saints and destitute wanderers, whom he desires to draw under the shadow of Jehovah's wing, that they might share alike His present and eternal portion.

If ever their two cases come to a hearing before the judge, may I have the last and not the first to plead.

¹³ This was actually practiced by many brethren of the time. Listen to the words of George Muller that were given, not as a boast, but as a testimony of God's grace and faithfulness. "Oh, that Christian men would seek to cling to the Word of God, and to practice the blessed statements contained therein! – In the year 1843... my income amounted to 326 pounds... of which we gave away 140 pounds... In the year 1844 my income was 267 pounds... of which we gave away 100 pounds... In the year 1845 my income was 433 pounds... of which we gave away...220 pounds." George Muller, in the latter years of his life, continued this practice living on approximately the same amount year by year, so that in the year 1870 when his income from unsolicited gifts totaled 2067 pounds, he gave away 1713 pounds. (A Narrative of the Lord's Dealings with George Muller, Part V, Dust and Ashes Pub., Muskegon, MI, 2003, pg. 408, 412).

Another who sought to follow this precept was Lord Congleton. He made it a practice of giving away half of his yearly income.

Yet even this last is far below the Lord - even in this world's self denial.

But the other Christian brother is so like his worldly neighbor that his Christian influence is almost a minus quantity, as far as it regards *his* mode of manifesting it. For if a Christian shows that he neither loves the world, nor the things of the world, in plain and undoubted language, it will induce men to follow the same path. Contrariwise, if he is living in the enjoyment of what men naturally love and admire – prestige, splendor, and riches - let him talk as he please, with what ever sincerity he can muster, about his faith overcoming the world - the weight of his testimony is worse than neutralized.

It is a subject of mockery to an unbeliever to hear a man speaking against the love of those good things that he sees him enjoying. In fact, his conduct gives no testimony against the world. Both appear to love and enjoy the world alike, excepting in different environments; the Christian enjoys the world with his friends, and the worldling with his. So that, were these pious and noble persons mute, one would not be able to tell from their conduct *which one did not love the things of the world.*

I do not mean to deny that many Christians, *who are well to do*, have no Christian influence. But this influence arises not from their possessions, but on the contrary, from *their being content to do with much less than their peers do.* It is gained by what they renounce, not by what they retain; and their influence is in proportion to the degree in which it is perceived they descend for Christ's sake - *in other words, by learning to*

live with less than they can afford, whether by refusing to own magnificent houses and equipages,¹⁴ or by refraining from expenditures of every kind once lavished on their own indulgences and splendor, and now ministered to the cause of God.¹⁵

And if such a one were led – (not as a matter of duty because he must, but as an expression of love because he may) - to sell his estates, like Barnabas *of old*, and entirely like his Lord do away with what could give him distinction and prestige among men, or influence in the world for worldly ends; *this would give him great influence in directing* the minds of others to that simple regard for Christ and His kingdom as was made evident by his Spirit in primitive times. Whole hearted apostles caught whole hearted men, and we have sunk, sunk, till, instead of whole hearts we catch divided hearts - instead of their whole selves, *divided selves*, who give just a few gleanings of their superfluities (*i.e. the crumbs of the table*).

Should any now say, is this your plan? This is my answer - I have no plan nor purpose, but to show that the denying of self for the good of others, and not the gratification of self, is the path of a man's true Christian influence, and this devotedness is right for everyone,

¹⁴ An equipage was a luxurious horse drawn carriage, together with its horses and servants. In today's language, it might be considered a limousine or, perhaps, a most expensive car.

¹⁵ This was more of an issue in those days than today in America. While rank and status will always be a plague of human pride, in 19th century England it was even more so. Consequently, many early brethren, who came from the ranks of the upper classes, like John Parnell (later Lord Congleton) were willing to lower their status, like their Saviour, in order to minister among the saints.

even unto the extent that you come up to the example of your Lord.

But I leave every individual, with himself, and God, to determine his own place. Let everyone count the cost, and to whatever point he aims, let it be done cheerfully.¹⁶ On the Lord's side stands love guided by

¹⁶ In other words, each Christian must stand in the liberty of Christ - under the guidance of the Holy Spirit - to determine how great a sum he or she should contribute to the work of the Lord and benevolent causes. George Muller gives this example of a merchant in America who said, "In consecrating my life anew to God, aware of the ensnaring influence of riches and the necessity of deciding on a plan of charity, before wealth should bias my judgment, I adopted the following system: 'I decided to balance my accounts as nearly as I could every month, reserving such portion of profits as might appear adequate to cover probable losses, and to lay aside, by entry on a benevolent account, one tenth of the remaining profits, great or small, as a fund for benevolent expenditure, supporting myself and family on the remaining nine tenths. I further determined, that if at any time my net profits, that is profits from which clerk-hire and store expenses had been deducted, should exceed five hundred dollars in a month, I would give 12 ½ per cent; if over seven hundred dollars, 15 percent; if over nine hundred dollars 17 ½ per cent; if over thirteen hundred dollars, 22 ½ per cent - thus increasing the proportion of the whole as God should prosper me, until at fifteen hundred dollars I should give 25 percent or 375 dollars a month. As capital was of the utmost importance to my success in business, I decided not to increase the foregoing scale until I had acquired a certain capital, after which I would give one quarter of all net profits, great or small, and, on the acquisition of another certain amount of capital, I decided to give half, and, on acquiring what I determined would be a full sufficiency of capital, then to give the whole of my net profits.'" (Pierson, Arthur T. ,George Muller of Bristol, James Nisbet & Co., London 1902, page 444)

the Spirit. On the Devil's side stands self blinded by the things of the world.

This is not my doctrine, but God's. When a poor man speaks of the vanity of riches he is naturally suspected of being a leveler¹⁷: one who does not so much desire to lose them himself, but one who desires to induce others to abandon them, that he may himself stand higher, and one who would buy the same rope that would pull others down in order to hoist himself up.

The rich, however, and the poor, must alike descend, if they would be influential in the church of Christ. The influence of the rich is manifested in being willing to become poor, that others may be rich. The influence of the poor is manifested by his refusing to *seek* riches *for* himself, in order that he may be able to give to him that needeth. It is manifested by each one seeking how he may most entirely identify himself with a Church in all her interests, temporal and spiritual, and enable her to stand forth freed from the support of the world's patronage and simply clothed with Christ.

None is so ill off, as to have no means of self-denial; none is so mean that he cannot humble himself to something lower. In fact, the amount of self-denial obviously depends much less on what is sacrificed than what is retained. I dwell on this with the more delight, because it shows that the same measure of influence is common to both the rich and to the poor, in direct proportion to the intensity of *their faith*, not to the amount of *things sacrificed*.

¹⁷ A leveler is one who holds an egalitarian or socialistic outlook.

Now supposing there are two equally devoted *Christians*, the one rich and the other poor. The one, by his example, leads the rich saints to relinquish, and the other *leads* the poor saints to labor for the cause of God. I am absolutely at a loss to know which is most beautiful, or which would be most influential. The one would pour more into the treasury, perhaps, but the other *would* provide the soldiers for the warfare of truth against error *in the work of the gospel*.

Consequently, those who *remained* at home would be fellow helpers to the truth with those who went forth to minister the things of the kingdom, for they would supply their wants.

Poor or rich, noble or ignoble, wise or foolish in this world's attainments, we have all one way of influencing our brethren, our friends, our neighbors, and all that are far off; viz. by such conduct as shall most effectually manifest our self devotion to Christ our Lord. In other words, by such as shall most imitate His example. He is the inexhaustible fountain of all influence to His Church, being her head, her husband and Lord and in whose glory alone she may boast herself.

Any man whose path the Lord approves is influential. All we have to do, therefore, is to embrace His will, even though this may bring us trials and tribulations. Let faith triumph over all external appearances. Little did the boy David think, that the influence of a single stone slung in faith, could extend to the distant ages of the Church; or did the widow think the same of her two mites.

Christian influence, therefore, in its expression, is silent or active as the Lord wills. Natural influence feels, that if actions are not seen or known, they cannot influence. But that influence which is Christian says, though thy left-hand does not know what thy right hand doeth, it shall not fail of its end, nor lose its reward - the glory of God, and the blessing of the Church.

Our Lord says, "Ye call me Lord and Teacher, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." If our Lord really meant what his words imply, when he says, "I have set you an example that ye should do as I have done to you," - if he intended to mould his Church into his own likeness, that of a personally, humiliated, pilgrim in the world, and make every member of his body contented to be so, nothing could be more suited than his conduct to this end.

And I feel assured, that if we ourselves would ever be conformed to this character, or be fellow-workers with our Lord in stamping this character on the Church, it must be by realizing its truth in our own lives, and simply living it out.

Therefore, Christian influence and *eternal success* depends much less on immensity of effort than on the *application of these* principles. It was this that so preeminently distinguished the apostles and the early followers of the Lamb, and it was this, under God, which was the means of their success. Great physical apparatus *and resources* they had not; yet being first taught, they soon learned, *that by holding to these* principles they could extend their views beyond their own immediate

sphere, and without human power, or wisdom, they leavened in a short time a chief part of the earth!

True, they had miracles: and why have not we? If they are really to be desired; if God desires the propagation of his gospel; if Christ is still exalted at God's right hand to receive gifts for men, why are those most precious withholden? - Perhaps because his Church is too little devoted to him to be thus publicly acknowledged by Him, or too strong, as we have before observed, in this world's greatness, to wield the sword of the Lord and Gideon. Or perhaps so schismatical, that what the Lord designed to be the glory of the Church, if given, would only tend to the exaltation of a sect. At all events, whatever the cause may be that hinders, the Church must be in a very different state in what she now is in her works and ways - more like the Lord, whose name she bears - and those who were her master-builders - before it can ever be presumed that God does not intend again, thus publicly to honor her. Until we comprehend our false notions of influence, it cannot be expected that the Lord will vouchsafe the true.

Let none, however, imagine that *these words have been written because of some personal need. Such a thought has never been entertained by the writer.* His whole object is to discover from the example of our Lord, and from his precepts, the divine will concerning the conduct of a Christian's life. The whole design is to present principles to those who really wish to forget themselves in the Lord's glory and the Church's good, but who are yet deceived by the common *concept of success and* the use of the term "influence" - viz. *the*

idea that great physical apparatus or natural talent is needed to do the work of the Lord.

It is to unwrap the tissue of deception involved in *this concept*, and to show that the type of Christian conduct which disinterested love should lead us to, is that conduct which our Lord manifested and proposed to us; and that as we approach to that conduct, we approach *to the maximum of our Christian influence and to the eternal success that will survive testing fires to come.*

So again, if by any change of our circumstances, we can benefit the Church of God, and promote the interest of the kingdom of heaven – *let us freely* do so. All that can be demanded is, that we [seek only the glory of God] in the path we take.

Thus, I conclude these remarks, with an earnest and heartfelt desire, that according to their truth, and this measure only, these principles may find acceptance in the Church of God.

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