

long way from Jerusalem of old. We can not yet afford to crystalize, and he who supposes that the work of restoration is completed needs to take a new survey of the real situation in the light of the Bible and our present needs. Most people feel that there is a lack of vital force and system somewhere, but few have succeeded in locating the weak places. Instead of going forward till we reach the desired end, like Israel of old, we are wont to set up gods of our own or turn back to the garlic and flesh-pots of former days.

We complain of the meagre results of our missionary efforts, and are constantly engaged in a discussion of plans, apparently never dreaming that the Church of Christ in its primitive completeness without a plan of missionary work and the ability spiritually, intellectually and financially to successfully operate that plan, is an idea too crude and absurd to be entertained for a moment by a thoughtful Bible student. We became alarmed at the uncontrolled whiskey traffic of our country and of the fearful intemperance which lies right at the doors of many churches and knocks for entrance, forgetting that the Church of Christ restored is the greatest and most successful temperance society the world has ever known. We talk of loose discipline in the churches, and fail to see that primitive Christianity would make fearful havoc of the abominations of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The present financial system in the churches is weighed in the New Testament balances and found wanting. The pastoral or clerical system of the day is the creation of the rankest ecclesiasticism. The primitive evangelist and his work are comparative strangers among us; and the office and work of the so-called elders and deacons in many places practically amount to nothing.

Now we believe that the remedy for all of these weaknesses and evils lies in the completion of our well begun work. There is no other remedy for them. We believe that the Church of Christ with her divinely appointed ministry restored is fully equal to the task of performing every good work within the pale of Christianity. When the Church thus restored shall have exhausted all her divinely appointed means in reforming the world and in saving souls, then and not till then, can we cry unprofitable servants.

THE GROUND OF DIRECT SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE.

We have been requested to write a few articles on the operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion. We propose to do so as time and opportunity will admit.

This question rightly understood and faithfully proclaimed would be a great blessing to thousands of honest men and women who may wish to become true Christians. But a misconception of it and its consequent wrong application have served as a kind of Pandora box out of which has come untold harm to Christendom. It is claimed by a respectable portion of the religious world that in conversion and regeneration the Holy Spirit operates independently of the word of God and directly on the heart of the sinner. We are glad to note however that this theory of spiritual influence is rapidly losing ground in the estimation of the abler and more thinking element of Bible students. A better understanding of some other questions has led to a clearer conception of this one, and *vice versa*. Like the houses of Palestine built up round after round on the sandy foundation so that the floods can easily sweep down the hill-sides and destroy the whole building, so has a good portion of Christendom built one erroneous theory upon another until the completed and rounded temple of unscriptural theories lifts its hoary head high into the air and threatens to overshadow the beauty and simplicity of New Testament Christianity. The most direct and effectual way of disposing of these air-castles is to remove the cornerstones and let the whole superstructure tumble to the ground. Hence, by way of introduction, we propose to examine the *ground* of abstract and direct spiritual influence.

The chief corner-stone of this temple is what is known as "hereditary total depravity." It is claimed that on account of the sin of our first parents the whole human race from infancy is totally depraved, so that "we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil"—that every faculty of the soul, mind and body is affected by this moral taint. Hence out of this total depravity and the consequent inability of the sinner to believe the gospel of Christ and obey it, grows the necessity of the direct, mysterious and irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit to enter his

heart, break up this old depravity, destroy sin and make the sinner "disposed," "inclined" and "willing" to believe in Christ and thus become a Christian! The preached gospel of Christ is not sufficient—in fact amounts to nothing unless the Holy Spirit thus goes before and prepares the ground for its reception. Of course the sinner must patiently await this miraculous manifestation of the Spirit, inasmuch as he possesses no power whatever to believe and do good works; and if it does not come at all, he will finally die in his depravity and go to the devil on account of the negligence, unwillingness or partiality of the Divine Spirit!! This theory naturally enough divides itself into two parts; first, the conversion and regeneration of adults; and second, the regeneration and salvation of dying infants.

1. As it respects adults.

Now so far as depravity in consequence of the Adamic transgression is concerned, we are willing to admit that the whole human race is, in a sense depraved. But does it follow therefore that a direct operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary to convert the sinner? Let it be remembered, once for all, that the question is not whether the sinner is hereditarily depraved, for this we fully believe; but it is simply, *How much is he depraved?* If his depravity does not seriously affect his accepting the ordained means of salvation, then we shall not stop to spend time in contradicting the theory. But if it be contended that his depravity renders him indisposed and disabled to such an extent that he can not believe in Christ and obey him on the simple authority of the word of God and that therefore a direct operation of the Spirit is necessary, then we are compelled to enter our protest. There is nothing more plainly and forcibly taught in the Scriptures than the fact that every man not only possesses the power, but is left perfectly free to accept the revealed terms of salvation on the one hand, or to reject them on the other. Every syllable of the word of God assumes the free moral agency of those addressed; otherwise, the Bible, in our estimation is a contradiction and a myth. Hence it is easy to be seen why the Scriptures, addressed to free and intelligent creatures, teach that faith in the Son of God grows out of the evidence submitted, and that obedience follows faith, and that salva-

tion is the natural consequence of both. This is in harmony with the language of the apostle John which says: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John 20:30,31.

It is through the written evidence concerning the sayings and doings of Jesus on earth that the sinner is to believe in him and have life through his name. "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God," says Paul. Now seeing that these things are true, what use have we for any spiritual influence *outside* of the word of God to go before and prepare the ground? Any theory which comes in direct conflict with these plain passages of holy Writ is not true. The theory of hereditary total depravity which we are combating does this. Therefore it can not be true. And as this theory of depravity is false, then it follows that the theory of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, evidently constructed to meet the demand of such a degree of depravity, is also false.

2. As it respects the salvation of dying infants.

While some of the creeds are satisfied to make provision for the *elect* infants which die, while the rest are to be consigned to eternal punishment, yet this doctrine is a little too strong for the greater portion of Christendom. But as all infants are totally depraved and can not enter heaven with this depravity, the Holy Spirit must be called in direct from heaven to regenerate them and save them! Here the Holy Spirit does all the work of salvation, for every body knows that the word of God can have nothing to do with regenerating infants. If they would only baptize these infants for the destruction of this depravity, there would be some more show of sense in infant baptism; but this they will not allow. They will have the Spirit to save all the dying ones; and they will sprinkle the living ones for—*nothing!*

If we are asked how infants are to be saved, we answer: In the first place we do not believe they are totally depraved. The Scriptures nowhere assert it. In the second place, the word regeneration, properly understood, is no more applicable to infants than it is to the stones beneath our feet. Rational