ing of wonders along with the use of the name of Christ, according to His own statement in Matt. vii. 21-23, is not a sufficient proof that its mission is of a heavenly origin. Its spiritual fruits must be considered as well as its physical; and the former, according to the writer's observations, have been disastrous to the saving faith of many persons.

But aside from the consideration of any spiritual danger to be encountered in accepting the tenets of Christian Science, and which might have little weight with the credulous and curious to deter them from being captivated by inducement of physical healing, there are lengths of absurdity to which its methods of reasoning may legitimately lead, that ought to serve as a sufficient warning to the sober-minded to let its doctrines and its practices severely alone. An actual instance is therefore in point in closing, which is prophetic of the impracticable goal at which we shall arrive if the millennium of Christian Science ever comes, and we all learn to doubt our senses and sacrifice our common sense. It was given as an item of news in a Boston paper a few years ago, and was dated from a western city, and read as follows:

“The Christian Scientists of this city have petitioned the school board to excuse their children from attendance during the hours when physiology is taught. The petition declares that there is no material body, and objects to having children taught to believe there is anything so much in evidence as stomach and liver. It objects also to geography, on the score that it recognizes a material body. The petition was refused.”

“The Tibetans,” says the Missionary Alliance, are the most preeminent praying people on the face of the earth. They have praying-stones, praying-pyramids, praying-flags flying over every house, praying-wheels, praying-mills, and the universal prayer, ‘Om mani pad me haum,’ is never out of their mouths. A German writer on Lamaism says of this sentence, which literally means, ‘O, God! the jewel in the lotus,’ that these six syllables are, of all the prayers on earth, the one which is most frequently repeated, written, printed, and conveniently offered up by mechanical means. They constitute the only prayer which the common Mongols and Tibetans know; they are the first words which the stammering children learn, and are the last sighs of the dying.”

TRIUMPH THROUGH TRIAL.

BY A. C. GORDON. [A. J.]

“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me.”—Micah vii. 8.

HERE is one of those paradoxes of grace with which Scripture abounds. Man rarely advances in a straight line, but rather through repeated reactions and recoils. Many of us, after long experience, have to confess that downward is the directest way upward, and backward the shortest way forward, and inward the surest way outward.

I. Evaluation Through Humiliation.

“When I fall I shall arise.”—Deut. xi. 19.

One very wise and worthy saying has been handed down to us from Confucius: “It is not the question whether one never falls, but whether he rises every time he falls.” Most true is the statement. There are those who stand in such a condition of pride and self-confidence that they are always in peril of being cast down and destroyed; and there are those who are so cast down and broken through their sins that there is the greatest hope that they may be quickened and raised up to newness of life through Jesus Christ.

We must ever remember that a truly self-convicted sinner stands a far better chance of salvation than a self-conceited saint. Christ himself declares that he “came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matt. ix. 13). While this is a very compassionate saying, it seems, also, like a very perplexing one. If the Lord is no respecter of persons, why should he discriminate in favor of the bad and against the good? one might ask. But the simple fact is that grace has no field of operations where self-righteousness holds sway. “Where sin abounded grace did much more abound,” says Paul. But where righteousness abounds grace plainly cannot abound. Imagine a philanthropist going to a Vanderbilt or a Rockefeller and giv-
ing them twenty-five cents each to buy a dinner or to procure a night's lodging. Charity in such a case would be turned into caricature, and the would-be philanthropist would be set down as either a fool or a clown. Exactly so with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which bringeth salvation." It cannot be bestowed on one who professes to be righteous; for grace is free unmerited favor, and one who is meritorious has no place for that which is unmerited. This is clearly what the Apostle means in his words to the Galatians: "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." That is, if you can perfectly keep the commandments of God, what need have you of the atonement of the cross? Because Christ regarded the world as hopelessly in debt to the moral law, "He suffered the just for the unjust," that He might cancel our debt. But if you count yourself perfectly solvent before the claims of the decalogue, Christ's work is nothing to you, and is an impertinence! Then, too, it is in the nature of things that one cannot be enriched who is not first of all sensible of poverty. We say that there must be repentance in order to salvation. But the need is in us, as deeply as in God's plan of redemption. "The full soul loasteth the honeycomb," says the Scripture. It is a proverb of universal application. Who can pray very fervently who has nothing to ask for? Who can eat very heartily who is not hungry? Who can live very earnestly for his life who has no apprehension that an enemy is on his track? Need is the mother of desire, and danger is the incentive to flight.

What fruitless work we have in preaching the Gospel in these days of ease and fullness! Down goes Sodom into the lake of fire and brimstone, though Abraham had prayed for it, and Lot had pleaded with it, and angels had been sent from heaven to warn it; down it goes to suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire." Ask the reason of its fall, and the answer of the prophet Ezekiel is: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom; pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her."

These same conditions prevail to-day to keep thousands away from Christ; pride which will not suffer one to bow the knee to Christ in penitence; fullness of bread which does not permit one to hunger and thirst after righteousness; and abundance of idleness which will allow no place for the serious and weighty concerns of Christ's great redemption. The same Christ who pronounced the beatitude of the mountain sermon, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," said also, "Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger." The atmosphere rushes to fill a vacuum, but you cannot force it into a full air-chamber. Fullness and emptiness need only to be introduced to run to each other's arms. But I can never persuade self-righteousness to make even the most distant friendship with the righteousness of Christ. When I see the throngs pressing to Christ in our rescue missions, I ask, "Is it so that men must become drunks and outcasts and moral wrecks before they will come to Christ? Is it so that Christ, looking upon many sober and honest and virtuous ones in this congregation, points to these castaways and says, 'these that are fallen shall enter in before you that stand on your feet?' and must men become drunks and outcasts before they are saved?" God forbid. But this I do say, that you will have to take the sinner's place before you can claim the sinner's Saviour. Many of the highest saints were once the lowest sinners—Augustine, Bunyan and Newton. As the ball-player flings the ball upon the ground with all his might that it may bound back into his hand, so God flung these, in bitter remorse and agony of soul upon their sins, that they might rebound into His hand. It is not necessary that one should be a moral reprobate in order to become an earnest Christian; but it is needful that we should recognize and acknowledge our true position in order that grace may abound in us.

The simple fact is that we are in a fallen condition by nature. Yes, worse than fallen, we are in a burdened condition. We bear the weight of inherited transgression in our bodies and souls. Every man carries his father and grandfather on his back. People sneer at the doctrine of original sin, but let them look at the facts of human life and be silent. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his notebook pub-
lished after his death, says: "I have been reading Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' What a strange figure Christian cuts, going through the country with that burden on his back. I wonder what he had in his pack!" Had the great novelist no dealings with his own conscience that he should ask such a question? Had he had no observation of human life and marked how men come into the world weighted down with hereditary tendencies to wrongdoing, under which they stagger to the grave? The Pilgrim carried his own sins and the burden of original sin inherited from his forefathers. And he could never get ease from that burden till he came in sight of the cross, where at one look of faith it rolled away to be seen no more.

What we need is a divine release and a divine reinforcement. We need to be rid of the old burden, and then to be subjects of the new birth. Christ gives both—a divine forgiveness and a divine heredity—His own blessed life comes into us to hold us up in right-doing after he has lifted us up; to give us an ancestral law which impels us to do right, as the old impelled us to do wrong.

II. Illumination Through Darkness.

"When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me."—Mic. vii. 8.

"Shut your eyes in order that you may see"—Isn't that strange advice to give? Yet this is what you do when you pray. You draw the curtains of the eyes, and enter into the closet of the soul, and shut to the doors that you may see God. You realize instinctively that you must exclude the world in order to commune with God. The inward eye, in other words, sees most clearly when the outward eye is shut.

The whole secret of the power of self-denial and fasting lies just here. Why does the gardener cut off half the branches of an apple tree in order to make it more fruitful? Because in this way he can concentrate the vital forces of the tree in fewer branches, and so nourish the bud and fruit of these as to double their capacity for fruit-bearing. So exactly you cut off the fleshy senses from indulgence in order to make the spiritual senses more active and keen. In other words, the same amount of vital force is more powerful when concentrated in one sense than when divided between two. Therefore it is that a blind man has often so much keener hearing and so much finer sense of touch than he who is not so afflicted.

During a heavy London fog, a few years since, so heavy that it was impossible for one to see anything a foot beyond his eyes, a merchant was lost in trying to find his way home. Running against another man in the dark, he told him his dilemma, when the latter replied, "O, come along, I will guide you home; the darkness does not trouble me, for I am blind." It is a significant story. The loss of one sense had strengthened the others, so that the sense of feeling had now come to fill the place of the sense of sight.

And what says the Scripture concerning the Christian? "For we walk by faith and not by sight." And faith looks "not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen." And the man of faith can lead the man of reason when the latter cannot find his way. "When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." If you are willing to choose the darkness of faith instead of the illumination of reason, wonderful light will break out upon you from the Word of God.

"The deepest things in Scripture can never be discovered by the natural understanding. This is what is meant by that saying, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him." The sense of sight, the sense of hearing, the sense of feeling—these cannot grasp the mysteries of God contained in the Bible. "But," it is immediately added, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." And the eye of faith is the organ by which we appropriate what the Spirit reveals. If you have been brought into darkness through trial or chastisement, be assured that God can use it for the clearer illumination of the soul. "Unto the upright there ariseth a light in the darkness," says the Psalmist; and we have to add, that unto the worldly there ariseth darkness out of the light.

Alas! it must be said, the happy, well-
to-do people of our time, as a rule, care little for that thing which God holds first and supreme,—the attainment of eternal life. This is why God has so often to hurt us before He can help us. "What is that man doing?" asked a little child in a frightened way as she sat for her photograph. He was pulling a black cloth over his head while he was adjusting his camera. And that was what God was doing for you when that black sorrow or trial came to you. He wants your picture. The great end of His redemption is that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son." And shame on us that it is so. He had to hide His face behind the pall of some dark providence before He could impress Christ's image upon our hearts and lives. We find plenty of desperate drunkards pressing forward to be saved in these days, plenty of Magdalenes; but a happy, well-bred and well-fed young man or woman reaching forth eager hands for salvation is a rarity indeed. Must Jesus say again to us, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.'"

Not only this, but respectable moralists take offence at us when we tell them that if they would enter the kingdom of heaven they must not depend upon their morality as the ground of acceptance with God, but be saved by grace alone. What, O preacher, will you force me into spiritual bankruptcy and compel me to take the poor debtor's oath, and set down all my assets of righteousness as filthy rags, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" I assure you, from my personal knowledge, they will not endure such doctrines from us. "Make the people think well of themselves if you would have them think well of you," said Chesterfield, the great master of etiquette. I would I could make men think meanly of themselves this morning, that thereby they might be led to think well of Christ, who came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Only those who have struck the deepest note of penitence can reach the highest note of praise. Only those who have confessed themselves the "chief of sinners" are able to worship Christ as the chief among ten thousand.

Mark what I am saying is fact. "Except a man be cast down he will not rise," is the sentence of the prophet. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," says Jesus. Doctrine and life answer each other literally. The Old Testament and the New are the stereotyped plates from which more human history is printed than can ever be bound up and catalogued. Listen! An aged man with whom I was a guest took me into his closed parlor one morning, and pointing to a sweet face hanging on the wall, said, "There she is; we lived together fifty years, and now she is gone; but I never knew what communion with Christ was till I lost her." A brilliant lawyer of fifty, keen and unscrupulous as a sword, said: "See those empty baby shoes hanging on the wall. Until the feet which once filled them were taken to walk in Paradise, I never prayed or believed in Jesus Christ; but now He is my all." "Oh, fools and slow of heart to believe," well may our Lord say to us again. Alas, that we have to be driven by the lash to care for those things which are highest and divinest! Must we be goaded into heaven? Must we be made sore and bleeding by being hurt upon the sharp point of affectionate providence before we will obey him? God forbid! Let the love of Christ constrain us ere the terror of the Lord shall overtake us.

The End

MISSIONARY VOLUNTEERS:
BY BISHOP THORBURN.

1. The first thing to settle is THE CALL. Are you called to foreign mission work? "Oh, yes," you reply, "I have been called." That is a hopeful sign, and yet many young men and young women go to the foreign field with a great deal of enthusiasm, thinking they are called, and when they get there the call seems gone, and in a few months they cool off. They were sincere, but they did not know what they were doing. You ask to be sent to foreign lands, do you know what you ask?

I had graduated at college, and stood at the head of the class, but no post of any kind was open to me, till a letter came from a presiding elder saying he