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The Village in the Mountains; Conversion of Peter Bayssiere; and History of a Bible

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The Village in the Mountains; Conversion of Peter Bayssiere; and History of a Bible

THE VILLAGE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

M. ----, a merchant, at the head of one of the first commercial houses in Paris,[1] had occasion to visit the manufactories established in the mountainous tracts of the Departments of the Loire and the Puy de Dome. The road that conducted him back to Lyons traversed a country rich in natural productions, and glowing with all the charms of an advanced and promising spring. The nearer view was unusually diversified; not only by the fantastic forms of mountains, the uncertain course of small and tributary streams, and the varying hues of fields of pasture, corn, vines, and vegetables, but by the combinations and contrasts of nature and of art, and the occupations of rural and commercial industry. Factories and furnaces were seen rising amidst barns and sheep-cotes, peasants were digging, and ploughs gliding amidst forges and foundries; verdant slopes and graceful clumps of trees were scattered amidst the black and ugly mouths of exhausted coal-pits; and the gentle murmur of the stream was subdued by the loud rattle of the loom. Sometimes M. ---- and his friend halted amidst all that is delightful and soothing; and after a short advance, found themselves amidst barrenness, deformity, and confusion. The remoter scenery was not less impressive. Behind them were the rugged mountains of Puy de Dome; the lofty Tarare lifted its majestic head beside them, and far before appeared the brilliant summit of Mont Blanc.

[Footnote 1: An American gentleman then residing in that capital.]

In this state of mind he arrived at the skirts of a hamlet placed on the declivity of a mountain; and being desirous of finding a shorter and more retired track, he stopped at a decent-looking dwelling-house to inquire the way. From the windows several females were watching the movements of a little child; and just as M. ---- inquired for a road across the mountains, the infant was in danger of being crushed by a coal-cart which had entered the street. The cries and alarms of the females were met by the activity of the travellers, and the companion of M. ---- set off to snatch the infant from danger, and place him in security. An elderly female from the second story, gave M. ----, who was still on his horse, the directions he desired; and, at the same time, expressed her uneasiness that the gentleman should have had the trouble to seek the child.

"Madam," interrupted M. ----, "my friend is only performing his duty: we ought to do to another as we would that another should do to us; and in this wretched world we are bound to assist each other. You are kind enough to direct us travellers in the right road, and surely the least we can do is to rescue your child from danger. The Holy Scriptures teach us these duties, and the Gospel presents us the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were in ignorance and danger, came to our world to seek and to save that which was lost."

"Ah! sir," replied the good woman, "you are very condescending, and what you say is very true; but your language surprises me: it is so many years since in this village we have heard such truths, and especially from the lips of a stranger."

"Madam," resumed M. ----, "we are all strangers here, and sojourners bound to eternity; there is but one road, one guide, one Saviour, who can conduct us safely; if we feel this, young or old, rich or poor, we are all one in Christ; and however scattered on earth, shall all arrive at the heavenly city, to which he is gone to prepare mansions for us."

"These doctrines, sir," exclaimed the female, "support the hearts of many of us, who have scarcely travelled beyond our own neighbourhood; and it is so rare and so delightful to hear them from others, that, if it will not be an abuse of your Christian politeness, I would request you to alight and visit my humble apartment."

"I shall comply most cheerfully with your request," replied M. -----; "for though time is precious, I shall be thankful to spend a few minutes in these mountains, among those with whom I hope to dwell for ever on Mount Sion."

M. ----- mounted to the second story, followed by his companion. He found the female with whom he had conversed, surrounded by her daughters and her grand-daughters, all busily employed in five looms, filled with galloons and ribbons, destined for the capital and the most distant cities of the world. The good widow was between sixty and seventy years of age; her appearance was neat and clean; and all the arrangements of her apartment bespoke industry, frugality, and piety.

"Ah! sir," she exclaimed, as M. ----- entered, "how happy am I to receive such a visitor!"

"Madam," replied M. -----, "I am not worthy to enter under this roof."

"Why, sir," exclaimed the widow, "you talked to us of Jesus Christ and---"

"Yes, madam, but I am a poor guilty sinner and hope only for salvation through the cross. I was yesterday at St.-----, where they were planting a cross with great ceremony; were you there?"

"No, sir; for it is of little use to erect crosses in the streets, if we do not carry the cross in our hearts, and are not crucified to the world. But, sir, if you will not be offended, may I ask what you are called?"

M. -----, giving a general sense to the French phraseology, answered, "My name, madam, is M-----."

"Thank you, sir, I shall not forget; but this is not what I meant; I wished to know whether you are protestant or catholic, a pastor or a priest?"

"Madam, I have not the honour to be either; I am a merchant; I desire to be a Christian, and to have no other title but a disciple of Christ."

"That is exactly as we are here, sir," exclaimed the good widow, and added, "but, as you are so frank, are you, sir, catholic, or protestant?"

"Catholic," replied M. ----.

Madam looked confused, and observed, "that it was rare for the catholics to talk as her visitor had done."

"I am a catholic," resumed M. -----, "but not a member of the *Roman* Catholic church. I love all that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. I do not ask in what fold they feed, so that they are guided and nourished by the good Shepherd and Bishop of souls."

"O what a favour the Lord has granted us to meet with a Christian like ourselves," said the affected widow, looking round her: "we desire to live in charity with all mankind; but, to be frank also, sir, we do not go to mass, nor to confession, for we do not learn from our Testament, which is indeed almost worn out, that we are required to confess to sinners like ourselves, nor to worship the host, nor to perform penance for the salvation of our souls; and we believe we can serve God acceptably in a cave, or in a chamber, or on a mountain."

"I confess, madam, in my turn," said M. -----, "that I am exceedingly astonished to find such persons on such a spot; pray how many may there be of your sentiments?"

"Here, sir, and scattered over the mountains, there are from three to four hundred. We meet on Sabbath evenings, and as often as we can, to pray to Jesus, to read the Testament, and to converse about the salvation of our souls. We are so much persecuted by the clergy, that we cannot appear as publicly as we wish. We are called *beguines*[2] and fools; but I can bear this, and I hope a great deal more, for Him who has suffered so much for us."

[Footnote 2: Religious enthusiasts.]

While the conversation, of which this is a sketch; was passing, the rooms had filled; the neighbours had been informed and introduced, at the request of the worthy hostess, and as many as could quit their occupations pressed to hear of the things of the kingdom of God. M. ----- desired to see the New Testament. It was presented. The title page was gone, the leaves were almost worn to shreds by the fingers of the weavers and labourers, and M. ----- could not discover the edition. A female of respectable appearance approached M. -----, and said, "Sir, for several years I have sought every where a New Testament, and I have offered any price for one in all the neighbouring villages, but in vain. Could you, sir, possibly procure me a copy, I will gladly pay you any sum you demand---"

"Madam, I will not only procure you *one*," replied M. ----- eagerly, "but, in forty-eight hours I will send you half a dozen."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the astonished villagers. "May we, sir, believe the good news? May we rely on your promise? It appears too great---too good---we will pay for them now, sir, if you please."

"You may depend on receiving them," said M. -----, "if God prolongs my life. But I entreat you to do me the favour to accept them, as a proof of my Christian regard, and an expression of my gratitude for having been permitted to enjoy, in this unpromising spot, the refreshing company of the followers of Christ."

The conversation then turned on the value of the sacred volume, and the sinfulness of those who withhold it from perishing and dejected sinners. After some time, the hostess inquired, "Pray, sir, can you tell us if any thing extraordinary is passing in the world? We are shut out from all intercourse; but we have an impression that God is commencing a great work in the earth, and that wonderful events are coming to pass."

"Great events have taken place, and news is arriving every day," said M. -----, "from all parts of the world, of the progress of the Gospel, and the fulfilment of the Holy Scriptures. He then gave to his attentive and enraptured auditory an outline of the moral changes accomplished by the diffusion of the Bible, the labours of missionaries and the establishment of schools; but only such an outline as was suited to their general ignorance of the state of what is called the religious world. And when he had concluded, they all joined in the prayer: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven."

Anxious as was M. ----- to pursue his journey, he devoted three hours to this interview. He exhorted them to receive and practise only what they found in the Scriptures, and to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart.

The termination of this extraordinary meeting was most affecting: tears of pleasure, gratitude, and regret streamed from the eyes of the mountaineers; and the traveller, though more deeply moved by having seen the grace of God than by all the scenes through which he had passed, went on his way rejoicing, and following the directions of the good widow, he arrived at the town of S----. In this town he had correspondents among the principal inhabitants and authorities, and under the impression of all he had witnessed, he inquired, as if with the curiosity of a traveller, the name of the hamlet he had passed on the mountains, and the nature of the employments, and the character of its inhabitants.

"The men," said the mayor, "work in the mines, drive the teams, and labour in the fields; and the women and children weave. They are a very curious people, *ou res illumines*, (new lights,) but the most honest work-people in the country---probity itself. We have no occasion to weigh our silk, either when we give it out or take it in, for we are sure not to lose the value of a farthing; and the kindest creatures in the world: they will take their clothes off their backs to give to any one in distress: indeed, there is no wretchedness among them, for, though poor, they are industrious, temperate, charitable, and always assist each other; but touch them on their religion, and they are almost idiots. They never go to mass nor confession---in fact, they are not christians, though the most worthy people in the world; and so droll: imagine those poor people, after working all the week, instead of enjoying the Sunday, and going to a fete or a ball to amuse themselves, meeting in each other's houses, and sometimes in the mountains, to read some book, and pray, and sing hymns. They are very clever work-people, but they pass their Sundays and holidays stupidly enough."

This testimony, so honourable to his new acquaintance, was confirmed to M. ---- from several quarters; and he learned from others, what he had not been told by themselves, that, besides their honesty and charity, so great is their zeal, that they flock from the different hamlets, and meet in the mountains, in cold and bad weather, at eight or nine o'clock at night, to avoid the interruption of their enemies, and to sing and pray.

These accounts were not calculated to lessen the interest excited in the breast of M. ----, and immediately on his arrival at Lyons, he dispatched six copies of the New Testament, and some copies of the Tract entitled, "*Les Deux Vieillards*," (The Two Old Men.) Some time after his return to Paris, M. ---- received, through one of his correspondents at Lyons, a letter from the excellent widow with whom he had conversed. Of this letter a literal translation is subjoined, the modesty, dignity, and piety of which not only evince the influence of true religion, but will satisfy the reader, that in this narration no exaggerated statement has been made of the character of these mountaineers.

"Sir,--I have the honour to write you, to assure you of my very humble respects, and at the same time to acknowledge the reception of the six copies of the New Testament which you had the goodness and the generosity to send us. My family, myself, and my neighbours know not how, adequately, to express our sincere gratitude; for we have nothing in the world so precious as that sacred volume, which is the best food of our souls, and our certain guide to the heavenly Jerusalem.

"As we believe and are assured that the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ could alone have inspired you with the desire to distribute the sacred Scriptures to those who are disposed to make a holy use of them, we hope and believe that the Divine Saviour will be himself your recompense; and that he will give to you, as well as to all of us, the grace to understand and to seek a part in his second coming; for this ought to be our only and constant desire in the times of darkness and tribulation in which we live.

"It is with this view, sir, that I entreat you to have the goodness to send six more copies of the sacred volume for several of my friends, who are delighted, not only with the beauty of the type, but especially with the purity of the edition; for it is sufficient to see the name of Monsieur le Maitre de Sacy, to be assured that this edition is strictly conformable to the sacred text. Sir, as the persons who have charged me to entreat you to send six more copies of the New Testament would be sorry to abuse your generosity, they also charge me to say, that if you accomplish their wishes, as your truly Christian kindness induces them to hope, and will mark the price on the books, they shall feel it to be a pleasure and duty to remit you the amount, when I acknowledge the arrival of the parcel. Could you also add six copies of the little Tract, entitled '*Les Deux Vieillards*'?"

"I entreat you, sir, to excuse the liberty I have taken, and to believe that, while life remains, I am, in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

"Your very humble servant,"

"The Widow ----."

The reception of this letter revived in M. ---- that lively interest which he had been constrained to feel for the prosperity of these happy villagers. Often had he called to mind the Christian kindness with which they received him, and often had he presented his ardent prayer to the God of grace, that he who "had begun a good work in them," would carry it on to "the day of Jesus Christ."

Instead of complying with the request of this venerable woman to send her six copies of the New Testament, he sent her twenty, authorizing her to sell them to such as were able to pay; but to present them, at her own discretion, to those who were desirous of obtaining them, and had not the means to purchase, "without money and without price." With these he also presented to the widow, as a mark of his Christian affection, a Bible for her own use, together with a dozen copies of the Tract which she had requested, and several other religious books. In acknowledging this unexpected bounty, she thus replied, in a letter, dated July 17, 1821:

"Respected friend and brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,---It is impossible to describe the satisfaction that my heart experienced on the arrival of the kind communications which you have been pleased to send me. I could not help reading over and over again the letters enclosed, which afford fresh proof of the desire of yourself and your friends to contribute to the advancement of the reign of the Divine Redeemer. I cannot find words to express the happiness I have derived from perusing the entire copy of the Old and New Testament, which you beg me to accept as an expression of your christian affection. I was more gratified and edified by this mark of your regard, as it was my intention to have requested, in my last letter, some copies of the Old Testament; but I dared not execute my design, for fear of abusing your Christian kindness and charity. The Old and New Testament, properly understood, are but one Testament; such is the connection of the sacred books---for the New Testament is the key to the Old, and the Old the same to the New. In innumerable passages of the Old Testament, the birth, death, and glory of our Divine Redeemer are announced, in terms more or less distinct. In reading the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah, we perceive that those prophets spoke of our Saviour almost as though they had lived with him on the earth. His second coming is also foretold in many passages, especially in the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel.

"The box which your christian generosity has sent, has excited universal joy in the hearts of all our friends in this district. Immediately after they learned the agreeable news, they flocked to see me, and to have the happiness and advantage of procuring the Testament of our Redeemer; and in less than *five days* the box was emptied. I gave copies of the Gospel of St. Matthew to those who had not the satisfaction and consolation to procure a complete copy of the Testament. The whole was so soon distributed that many could have nothing; and there are also many who do not yet know of the arrival of the second box. I intend to lend the copy of the Bible, and of the books which I have reserved for myself, among our friends in the neighbourhood, in order that the books we have may be as useful as possible.

"As I hope you will do me the honour and the christian kindness to acknowledge the receipt of this, I request you to inform me how I can remit you sixty francs, which I have received for fifteen of the New Testaments. As our brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ, who, through his grace altogether free and unmerited, look for his second coming to salvation, are delighted and edified by the truly Christian salutation which you have sent through me, they desire me to express their gratitude, and to request you to accept theirs in the same spirit. I unite with them in beseeching you and your respectable friend ----, and all your friends, not to forget us in your prayers to the Father of Lights, that he may give us grace to persevere in the same sentiments, and grant us all the mercy to join the general assembly, the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen. Expecting that happy day, I entreat you to believe me your very humble servant and friend in Jesus Christ,"

"The Widow ----."

It may well be supposed that the reception of this interesting letter produced an effect on the mind of M. ----, as well as on the minds of many of his Christian friends at Paris, of the happiest kind. M. ---- informed the widow of the great satisfaction with which he had learned the eagerness of the villagers to obtain the word of God, and that he had directed his friend, the publisher of the New Testament of De Sacy, to send her fifty copies more; at the same time promising her a fresh supply, if they should be needed. He also expressed to her the hope, that, as he expected his business would, within a few months, call him again to S----, he should be able, Providence permitting, to avail himself of that opportunity and enjoy the happiness of another visit at her residence. To this communication she some time afterwards returned the following reply:

"Dear sir, and brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,---May the grace and unmerited mercy of our Divine Saviour be our single and only hope in our pilgrimage here below. I beseech you and your dear friends to pray for us, that the celestial Comforter promised in the Scriptures, would vouchsafe to visit our hearts and warm them with his love; for without the aid of this Divine Light, even though we should commit to memory the Old and New Testament, it would avail us nothing; but rather tend to our greater condemnation in the sight of our Sovereign Judge.

"I am now able to acknowledge the receipt of the box which you had the goodness and christian charity to send me, containing fifty copies of the Testament of our blessed Saviour, which did not arrive until the 25th of last month, on account of its having been detained in the public store at S---- for several days without my knowledge. As soon as I learned it was there, I sent one of my daughters to inquire for it, as I was then so ill as to keep my bed, and to induce a belief that I was about to quit this land of exile. I have felt myself so much better for a few days past, that I begin to think that my pilgrimage will be prolonged for some time, and that I may yet have the pleasure and consolation of again seeing you, and conversing with you upon the things which regard our eternal peace. It is with such feelings that I would beg an interest in your prayers, that the precious blood which the Divine Saviour has been willing to shed for us and other sinners, may be found efficacious to me in that moment when I shall depart from this vale of tears; for my age admonishes that this time is not far distant. Believe me, my dear brother in Christ, that I shall never forget you in my prayers, however feeble they may be; for I can never forget the day when, urged by Christian friendship, you entered my house, and imparted that truly spiritual nourishment which serves for time and eternity, and we discoursed together upon the second coming of our Divine Redeemer, and the restoration of the covenant people.

"I look forward to the happy moment when I shall have the honour and pleasure of seeing you again; and in the meantime beg you to believe me your very humble and affectionate friend and servant in Jesus Christ,

"The Widow----."

In a letter received soon after the above, M. ---- was informed that the Bibles and Testaments had all been disposed of within *two days* from the time of their arrival, and that many, who earnestly desired a copy, were yet unsupplied: the distribution having only created an increased demand. M. ---- resolved not to neglect their wants, as long as it was in his power to supply them; and the day being not far distant, when he proposed to repair to S----, and to make a second visit to the Village in the Mountains, he prepared a case of a hundred New Testaments and a hundred octavo Bibles, which he forwarded to Lyons by the *roulage accelere*, or baggage wagon, to meet his arrival there; and soon after took his departure from Paris.

There were some interesting incidents in the progress of this tour, which so delightfully point to the hand of God, that the reader may be gratified in becoming acquainted with them. On his arrival at Lyons, M. ----, finding no other way of transportation except the common *Diligence*, a public stage-coach, was obliged to resort to this conveyance. The case of Bibles and Testaments which he had forwarded was so large, that the only method by which it could be carried was to set it up on end in the basket attached to the back of the Diligence; and such was the weight and size of the box, that it was with no small difficulty, and by the assistance of several men, that it was safely adjusted. At first the passengers objected

to taking their seats with such a weight behind, lest they should meet with some accident, or be impeded in their progress. After much persuasion, however, and after presenting a number of Religious Tracts to each passenger, and requesting the conductor to drive slow, they were prevailed on to proceed on their journey. The course they were pursuing led through a part of the country solely inhabited by *Roman Catholics*, where, the year before, M. ----- had distributed a number of Bibles and Tracts, the reading of which, he had subsequently ascertained, had been forbidden by the priests, who had not only demanded them, but consigned most or all of them to the flames. M. ----- thought necessary, in this journey, to suspend his distributions in this immediate vicinity. But the providence of God had other views, and so ordered it, that, without the instrumentality of men, the sacred records should be scattered among that people. On reaching the place of his destination at the foot of the mountains, and alighting from the Diligence, M. ----- discovered that the case had opened at the top, and that not a few Bibles and Testaments had been scattered along the way. Travellers were soon seen coming up, some in wagons and some on horseback, some with a Bible and some with a New Testament under their arm. They informed him, that, for eight or ten miles back, the inhabitants had been supplied by the Diligence, as the books had fallen out whenever they descended a hill, or travelled over rocky and uneven ground.

While taking the case from the Diligence, several more persons came up, each bringing his Bible or Testament, which they most readily offered to return to M. -----, but which he as cheerfully requested them to accept, observing to them, that they had been destined for their perusal by that Providence whose unseen hand directs all human events. Though ignorant of the contents of the volume which God had thus given them, they expressed many thanks to M. ----- for his generosity, and were about to proceed on their way, apparently rejoicing, when M. ----- dismissed them by saying: "My friends, I feel peculiarly happy in thus being the instrument of putting into your hands that volume which contains the records of eternal life, and which points you to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' If you faithfully read it, and imbibe its glorious and precious truths, and obey its precepts, it will render you happy in this life, and happy during the endless ages of eternity."

Having opened the case, M. ----- found that forty-nine Bibles and Testaments had been thus distributed. Some of his fellow-passengers were ready to believe that the box had been intentionally left open, but M. ----- assured them that it had been carefully secured in the usual manner, and that not until his arrival at the spot where they alighted, had he known that any had fallen out. Having made arrangements to have the case forwarded to the widow, and having addressed to her a note informing her of his intention to proceed to the large village of S-----, where he proposed tarrying a few days, during which time he hoped once more to visit her and her friends, M. ----- resumed his seat in the Diligence, and arrived at S----- the same night. On the next day but one after his arrival, he was agreeably surprised, at an early hour in the morning, to find the hotel where he lodged surrounded by fifty or sixty persons, inquiring for the gentleman who had, a day or two before, presented to a number of their citizens THE BOOK, which, as they said, "contained a true history of the birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Others of them called it by its proper name, the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All of them were anxious to purchase a copy of it. As soon as M. ----- ascertained the object of their visit, he appeared on the balcony, and expressed his regret that he had no more of those interesting volumes with him; informing them that, if it pleased God he should return to Paris, he would forward a hundred to his correspondent in that place, that each of them might be furnished with a copy. This was accordingly done immediately after his return to Paris. And during his residence there, M. ----- had the satisfaction to see, that more or less individuals from S-----, who came to solicit orders for their manufacturing establishments, also brought orders for an additional supply of the sacred volume. And the number of Bibles and Testaments which were introduced into a dense catholic population, in consequence of the apparently trivial circumstance of the opening of the case in the Diligence, will probably never be ascertained until the great day of account; nor will it be known to what extent they have been instrumental in reclaiming and saving the souls of deluded men.

On the day following M. ----- received a deputation from the Village in the Mountains, anxiously desiring to hear on what day and hour they might hope to enjoy his long-expected visit. He proposed to be at the widow's house the following

morning, at 11 o'clock. Furnished with a carriage and horses by one of his friends, he set out accordingly; and, on reaching the foot of the mountain, was met by a deputation of twelve or fifteen of these faithful followers of the Lamb, who greeted his approach with demonstrations of joy. He immediately descended from the carriage, and was conducted to the house of the widow with every expression of the most sincere Christian affection, some taking him by the sleeve, and others by the skirts of his coat, some preceding and others following him. But what was his surprise, on arriving at the house, to find an assembly of from sixty to eighty, who, with one voice, desired him to *preach* to them! M. ----- observed to them, that he was an unworthy layman, and totally unqualified for such a responsible duty, and the more so at that time, as his mind had been occupied in his secular business; and he felt the need of himself receiving instruction, instead of attempting to impart it to others. But a chair had been placed for him in a suitable part of the room, and a small table, covered with a green cloth, placed before it, on which was laid the copy of the Bible which M. ----- had, some months before, presented to the widow. M. ----- saw he could not avoid saying something to this importunate company, and looking to God for assistance and a blessing, took the chair which had been set for him, and resolved to attempt to draw from the Bible, for their benefit, such instruction and consolation as he might be enabled to impart.

To the eye of M. ----- every thing gave beauty and solemnity to this unexpected scene. The room into which he was conducted was filled with the villagers, all conveniently accommodated on benches. A large door opened, in the rear of the house, and discovered the declivity of the mountain on which it stood, skirted also with listening auditors. While, at a distance, the flocks and herds were peacefully feeding, the trees, covered with beautiful foliage, were waving in the breeze, and all nature seemed to be in harmony with those sacred emotions which so obviously pervaded this rural assembly.

After addressing the throne of grace, M. ----- read a part of the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. He turned their attention more especially to that interesting passage in the twelfth verse: "*There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" He endeavoured to point out to them the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the awful consequences of violating the law of God, the inefficacy of all those expedients which the ignorance, the pride, or the self-righteousness of men had substituted for the "only name," Christ Jesus. He spoke of the necessity of this great sacrifice on the cross, of the love of God in sending his Son into the world, of the fullness and all-sufficiency of the mighty redemption, and of the duty of sinners to accept it and live. "It is through Christ alone," said he, "that you can have hope of pardon and salvation. You must take up the cross and follow Christ. You must renounce your sins and flee to Christ. You must renounce your own righteousness, and trust alone in Christ. You must renounce all other lords, and submit to Christ. If you had offended an earthly monarchy to whom you could have access only through his son, would you address yourselves to his *servants*, rather than his *son*? And will you then, in the great concerns of your souls, go to any other than the *Son*? Will you have recourse to the *Virgin Mary*, or some favoured *servant*, rather than address yourselves to Him who is 'the way, and the truth, and the life?' and when God himself assures us, that '*there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved?*'"

Having thus proceeded for the space of fifteen or twenty minutes, and at a moment when the greater part of his audience were in tears, the widow suddenly came running to M. -----, saying, with great agitation, "*Monsieur! Monsieur!*"

"What, madam, what?" said M. -----.

"I perceive," said she, "at a distance, the deputy mayor of a neighbouring village, in company with several women, approaching with a speedy step towards my house. These people are among our greatest persecutors---shall I not call in our little band of brothers and sisters, and fasten the doors?"

"No, madam," said M. -----; "on the contrary, if it be possible, open the doors still wider; trust in God our Saviour, and leave to me the direction of this matter." By this time considerable alarm seemed to pervade the whole assembly, and some confusion ensued, in consequence of several leaving their seats. M. ----- begged them to be composed, and to

resume their seats, saying, that the object for which they were assembled was one which God would accept of and approve, which angels would delight in, and at which Satan trembled; and that they had nothing to fear from the arm of flesh. By this time the mayor made his appearance at the threshold of the door, together with his attendants.

"Come in, sir," said M. -----, "and be seated," pointing to a chair placed near the table.

"No, sir," said he, "I prefer to remain here."

"But I prefer," said M. -----, "that you come in, and also your companions, and be seated."

Perceiving M. ----- to be firm in his determination, they complied, and were all seated among his nearest auditors.

M. ----- then, without any further remarks, having the Bible open before him, directed their attention to those words in Christ's Sermon on the Mount: "*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*" Matt. 5:10, 12.

M. ----- proceeded to set before them the sufferings of the apostles and primitive christians for the truth as it is in Jesus, and the constancy and firmness with which, in all circumstances, they endured these sufferings, on account of the love which they bore to their Saviour; that they had good reasons for so doing, for they were assured by Christ, in the words just read, that "great should be their reward in heaven." M. ----- then proceeded to show the immense responsibility which those assumed, and the enormity of their guilt, who, ignorantly or designedly, persecuted the followers of Christ. That they were but "heaping up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath." That the day was not far distant, when the awful realities of eternity would burst upon their view; and that every man would then be judged "according to the deeds done in the body."

When M. ----- had proceeded in this manner for ten or twelve minutes, bringing the truth to bear especially upon the minds of his new audience, he perceived the mayor wiping his eyes with the cuff of his sleeve, who, rising at that moment from his seat, exclaimed:

"Sir, I acknowledge that I have heretofore felt an enmity towards many of the people whom I here see before me; and have, as far as my influence extended in my official capacity, endeavoured to break up what I have considered their illegal assemblies, and to coerce them back within the pale of the mother church, which one after another of them have been abandoning for years past. But if all that you have expressed be true, and is in conformity with the sacred volume of God's word, and if the book which you hold in your hand is a correct translation of the original copy, I beg you to sell it me, that I may peruse it myself, and give the reading of it to others better able to judge of its contents: and if I there find the promises and threatening as stated by you to be correct, you may rely upon it that, so far from persecuting these in other respects harmless people, I will hereafter be their friend."

On hearing this, M. ----- immediately requested the widow to bring several Bibles from the case which he brought with him in the Diligence, and which had reached the house according to his direction; one of which he presented to the mayor, and one to each of his catholic associates. On the mayor's offering pay for the one put into his hand, M. ----- observed, that he had much pleasure in presenting it to him, as well as to his companions, in the hope that they would hereafter not only become the friends of this interesting people, but, what was of more importance, the friends of Jesus Christ, who is the "*only* Mediator between God and man."

With this they took their departure: M. ----- observing to them, that his heart's desire and prayer to God was, that, by a careful, humble, and prayerful perusal of that sacred volume, their understandings might become enlightened, and their hearts imbued with the riches of divine grace; that they might thereby be led hereafter to advocate the very cause which they had hitherto been attempting to destroy; and that, when they had done serving God their Saviour here below, they might find themselves among that happy number "whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

They left the house, all of them in tears, and as it appeared, deeply impressed with the truths which had been exhibited.

After he had concluded these remarks, M. ----- requested that some of the remaining Bibles and Testaments might be brought and laid before him on the table. These he distributed gratuitously to all present who had not before been supplied, and who were unable to purchase them. While he was doing this, many who had previously received the sacred volume, came forward and manifested their gratitude by laying upon the table their various donations of from two to ten francs^[3] each, till, in a few moments, the table was well nigh covered. M. ----- told them he was unwilling to receive money in that manner, and wished them to put their gifts into the hands of the widow, accompanied by the names of the donors, that they might be regularly accounted to the Bible Society. This they consented to with some reluctance, when the widow brought from her drawer a purse containing a hundred and seventy francs, saying to M. -----, that he could not refuse that money, as it was the proceeds of Bibles and Testaments which she had sold in compliance with his directions. M. ----- replied to her, that he had indeed requested her to sell these volumes to such as were able to purchase, that he might ascertain whether there were persons in that neighbourhood who sufficiently appreciated the word of God to be willing to pay for it; but, that object having been accomplished, it was now his privilege, on his own personal responsibility, to place the hundred and seventy francs in the hands of the widow, to be distributed, in equal portions, to the three unfortunate families whom they had mentioned as having recently lost their husbands and fathers by the caving in of a coal-pit.

[Footnote 3: Five francs are nearly equal to one dollar.]

On hearing this, they together, spontaneously as it were, surrounded M. -----, and with tears streaming from their eyes, loaded him with their expressions of gratitude and their blessings, rendering it the most touching scene which M. ----- ever witnessed.

Amidst all these tokens of their Christian affection, M. ----- was compelled to prepare for his departure, and imploring the richest of heaven's mercies upon them, bade them an affectionate farewell.

The whole company followed him to the carriage, and just as he had reached it, he once more addressed them, saying, "My dear friends, if any of you have not yet submitted yourselves to God, and are out of the ark of safety, I beseech you 'give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids,' until you flee to the Saviour. And those of you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, live near to God, bear cheerfully the cross of your Redeemer, follow on to know the Lord and do his will, and by his grace reigning in your hearts, you shall come off conquerors, and more than conquerors!"

When he had said this, and had again commended them to the God of all mercy through a crucified Redeemer, he drove off amid their prayers and blessings, to see them no more till that day when they shall meet in the kingdom of their Father, where sighs and farewells are sounds unknown, and where God shall wipe away all tears from every eye. After M. -----'s return to Paris, he had the pleasure to learn from the widow that all the Bibles he had left with her were disposed of, and that many, in various directions from the village, were earnest to obtain them, but could not be supplied. In the meantime a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of these villagers had diffused itself beyond the limits of Paris, or even of France. The first sixteen pages of this Tract having found its way to England, had been published by the Religious Tract Society of London, and had obtained a very wide circulation. A parish in one of the interior towns of England had forwarded to M. ----- twenty pounds sterling for the purchase of Bibles, to be presented to the widow for

gratuitous distribution; and a family of Friends from Wales, having read the narrative, visited M. ----- at Paris, and proceeded thence to the Village in the Mountains, where they tarried no less than three weeks, assuring M. -----, on their return to Paris, that it had been the most interesting three weeks of their lives.

As the proceeds of the twenty pounds, M. ----- forwarded to the widow fifty Bibles and fifty Testaments, with a selection of several other choice books and Tracts. These Bibles, Testaments, and Tracts, were all actually disposed of in *eight days*, of which the widow gave early information, accompanied by letters to M. -----, and to the benevolent donors in England, expressing, in the most cordial manner, her gratitude, and that of those who had thus been supplied with the word of life. She gave a particular statement of the eagerness with which they had been read; of their distribution in many Catholic families, and the conversion of some to the truth as it is in Jesus. She informed that many individuals and families were still unsupplied; and for herself, and those around her, expressed her thanksgivings to God for the wonders of his love in inspiring the hearts of his children to unite their efforts in Bible and other benevolent institutions, and to contribute of their substance to extend to the destitute a knowledge of the Gospel.

The last letter which M. ----- received from the widow, before he left the country, contained two hundred francs, which she and her children had contributed as a donation, in acknowledgment of the Bibles and Testaments which he had, from time to time, forwarded.

M. ----- replied to her that it gave him more joy than to have received twenty thousand francs from another source, as it testified their attachment to the word of God. He returned her the full amount of their donation in Bibles, with two hundred and fifty Testaments from the Society, together with fifty from himself, as his last present before his departure, and also six hundred Tracts and several other religious books. Pointing out to her an esteemed friend in Paris, to whom, if further supplies should be needed, she might apply with assurance that her requests would be faithfully regarded, and exhorting her to remain steadfast in the faith, and to fix her eye always upon the Saviour, M. ----- commended her to God, in the fervent hope, that, through the unsearchable riches of his grace, he should hereafter meet her, and her persecuted associates in that world where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

NOTE.---The original letters of the widow, in French, are deposited in the archives of the American Tract Society.

CONVERSION OF PETER BAYSSIÈRE

FROM THE ROMISH CHURCH

TO THE PROTESTANT FAITH.

IN A LETTER TO HIS CHILDREN.

* * * * *

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

CONVERSION OF PETER BAYSSIÈRE IN A LETTER TO HIS CHILDREN.[4]

[Footnote 4: This Narrative was originally entitled, "A letter to my children, on the subject of my conversion from the Romish church, in which I was born, to the Protestant, in which I hope to die. By Peter Bayssiere, Montaigut, Department Tarn and Garonne." (France.) "As much of the interest of this Narrative," says the preface to the London edition, "depends upon its authenticity, the reader is referred to the subjoined extract of a letter from the Rev. Francis Cunningham, Rector of Pakefield, dated May 20, 1829, which will probably remove any doubts on the subject.

".....The autograph of Bayssiere's letter I saw when I was in the South of France, in the year 1826. It had just then been received by M. Audebez, the minister of Nerac; who, as appears by the Tract, was well acquainted both with Bayssiere and his circumstances. Confident of the genuineness of the account, I am very glad it has been published in French, and translated into English. It cannot but be interesting and profitable to all lovers of the truth."

"FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM."]

MY DEAR CHILDREN---I purpose to give you, in this letter, an account of my conversion to the true Christian religion---that religion which was established by our Lord and his apostles, professed by their followers during the first two centuries of the church, and which is now followed by the protestant or reformed Christians. I am conscious that neither my abilities nor my education qualify me for this task. A mere mechanic, and possessing but few advantages of education, I find it very difficult to express, as I could wish, the thoughts and feelings which crowd upon my mind. But how great and numerous so ever may be the difficulties which I must encounter in such an undertaking, I am impelled to it by the tender affection I bear you, and by the earnest desire and hope of being useful to you. May God be my helper; may he not suffer me to be deterred by any obstacle; and may he grant me the blessing of accomplishing that which I consider as a sacred duty.

It is my imperative duty to make you acquainted with the real motives which have produced the most important, solemn, and decisive step in my life.

It is my duty to give glory to God for the unspeakable mercy which he has deigned to show me, in calling me from darkness into his marvellous light; in opening to me the treasures of his infinite compassion, and in giving me the hope of salvation by faith in his Son, who only "has the words of eternal life," being alone "the way, the truth, and the life."

It is my duty to endeavour to render my experience profitable to you, to show you the path by which it has pleased God to lead me to truth, and to the fountain of living waters; and, above all, to labour in prayer for you, that you may be partakers of the peace and joy with which my spirit is filled under the influence of his blessed word.

May this paper, my dear children, by the blessing of God, contribute to the triumph of the Gospel, and to the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, by filling your hearts with the love of truth, and by leading you in the way of true religion.

It was in the thirty-third year of my age, in the present year, (1826,) that I openly embraced and professed the Protestant religion, after having given it the most serious and attentive examination, and being convinced that it was indeed the true religion of Christ, agreeable, in every respect, to the revelations of his Gospel.

Like you, my dear children, I was born in the Romish church; but birth has, in fact, very little to do with religion; the utmost that it can effect is to predispose the mind, or to serve as a pretext to timid, interested, or indifferent persons, to justify their external adherence to a form of worship in which their hearts do not unite.

As our Saviour declares to his disciple Peter, it is not flesh or blood that can make known to us the true God, the Creator, Preserver, and Saviour of men. Faith, through which alone we can become children of God, and true members of the church of Christ, is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and by no means transmitted to us with our existence by our parents. St. John teaches us this when he says, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of

God." John, 1: 12, 13.

Thus you see that we are neither Catholics nor Protestants by birth; and it is a great error for any one to feel himself bound to either church, because he has been born within its pale. Religion, like every thing else, must be studied and examined; and no one is truly a member of a church, further than as he understands and acknowledges its doctrines. His adherence on any other ground only proves him credulous, ignorant, and superstitious; the slave of prejudice and habit.

As for me, my children, although born in the Romish church, I can assure you that I never participated in its belief. It would be foreign to the end I have in view, to relate here the various circumstances of my childhood and youth, which preserved me from being brought into the bosom of the Catholic church by the usual rites and ceremonies. God so ordered it, that I made no vow by which *I might*[5] have afterwards felt myself bound to the church of Rome.

[Footnote 5: "*I might have*," but I am far from supposing that I *ought* to have felt myself indissolubly tied to the Roman Catholic church by any sacrament that I might have received, or by any engagement that I might have entered into: on the contrary, I lay it down as an incontestable principle, that every vow and every oath are null, and neither can nor ought to bind any one to a church in which he has discovered errors, or doctrines and habits opposed to the word of God, and contrary to his own conscience. Truth alone, and the full conviction of truth, constitute a tie which can inviolably connect us with any church whatever. From the moment that this conviction no longer exists, and that error is discovered, it is an imperative duty to abandon a mode of worship which does not accord with our true sentiments; and he who perseveres against this conviction becomes a hypocrite, contemptible in the eyes of men, and condemned before God.]

Unknown to me, that is, at an age when I could have no idea of what was done to me, I was doubtless received into the church by the usual ceremony; but as this act was performed without any consent or co-operation on my part, I have never regarded it in the light of an engagement to the Catholic church.

With regard to what is called "the first communion," (which is considered as the public ratification and confirmation of the vow of my parents,) this I never received in the Romish church, nor did I receive what is called the Sacrament of confirmation.

Before I could be united by the sacred bond of marriage to your virtuous and beloved mother, it was necessary that I should confess. This I did with extreme reluctance, feeling that nothing could be at once more absurd, more tyrannical, or more degrading, than to oblige a man to prostrate himself at the feet of a priest, a mortal, a sinner, a child of corruption like himself, and there to make confessions to him, which offended Deity alone could have a right to require: and to receive absolution from him for faults with which he had no concern. I could not, however, marry without confession, and therefore I was obliged to submit; but no power on earth could have constrained me to go further. The Sacrament, as the Roman Catholics receive it, had, from infancy, excited in me feelings of disgust. My mind had always revolted at the idea, that the great God of heaven could allow himself to be *eaten* by his creatures in the form of a little flour. Under various pretences, therefore, I contrived to avoid the ceremony, and obtained the nuptial benediction without it.

The Lord, who never leaves himself without the witness of his numerous mercies to us, even when we are offending him in so many ways, was pleased to bless our marriage. Your birth, my dear children, crowned our joy, and left us nothing to wish but to see you grow and prosper, and to devote ourselves to your happiness. Alas! little did we suspect, whilst thus delightfully engaged, that this joy was to be so soon disturbed, and that death would deprive us of her who had given you birth. But our great God, whose ways and whose designs, though often inscrutable, are always full of wisdom, saw good to separate us; you from a tender and excellent mother, and me from a beloved companion and inestimable friend. She died February 11, 1821, after a few days' illness, leaving me in a state of affliction which it would be in vain to attempt to describe.

Nevertheless, terrible as was the stroke, and heart-rending as was the separation, I can now acknowledge, my children, that it was a salutary chastisement, sent by sovereign love; and one of the links of that chain of Providence by which the Lord saw good to deliver me from the miserable state in which I was then living; and to lead me to the fountain of grace and true peace.

In fact, the death of your poor mother gave rise to a train of circumstances, which, by drawing my attention to subjects that I had hitherto totally disregarded, and by exciting in my mind a degree of energy of which I could not have supposed myself capable, ended by engaging me most unexpectedly in the serious study of religion. The particulars I am about to give you respecting these things, will convince you that God can overrule the wickedness of men for good, and will show you that a Romish priest was the means of directing me to *the way*, (I mean the perusal and free examination of the word of God,) which led me, eventually, to the Protestant church.

Your mother's funeral was conducted with Catholic ceremonies, and, according to my means, I spared nothing to honour her remains. I likewise consented, either from conformity to custom, or from a wish to please my relatives, who were influenced by the fear of purgatory, or perhaps from participating myself in the false notion that bought prayers can mitigate the sufferings of the dead---from one or all of these causes, aggravated by the sorrow which filled my heart and inflamed my imagination, I consented to the performance of the nine customary masses for the rest of the soul.

The priest to whom I first went, told me that he was too busy to undertake the whole, but that I might depend upon him for three. From him I went to another, who engaged to say the remaining six, and did so without delay. Sunday after Sunday, for a considerable time, I went to the first, to inquire whether my three masses would be said in the following week. He always found some excuse, saying that "there were others more urgent than myself---that he was previously engaged---that he had undertaken more than was in his power to perform,". From February to June, I was thus put off under various pretexts. Worn out, at length, by so many fruitless efforts, I resolved to put an end to them, and mentioned the subject to your aunt, your mother's sister, expressing to her my extreme annoyance. She asked me if I had offered the priest the amount of the masses which he had promised to say? "No," I said, "the idea never occurred to me; but even if it had, I should not have dared to do it, for fear of offending him. It is not usual", I added scornfully, "to pay before one is served. No one ever pays me for a saddle before I make it." "No matter," replied your aunt, "my advice to you is to return to the priest, and offer to pay for the masses which you have ordered."

I did as she advised me, and this time my request was favourably received. The priest seized the six-franc piece which I laid on the table, looked at me and said, "Do you wish me to say six?" "No," I replied, with a feeling of indignation which I could hardly repress---"No, sir, I only want three. Return to me the rest of the money; poor folks cannot afford to spend so much at once."

I left the priest, thoroughly ashamed of having contributed to gratify his cupidity, and very much disposed to think the religion we were taught was nothing but a tissue of fables and impostures, to which the thirst of gold and silver had given birth. I cannot tell you all the sad and painful reflections that occupied my mind during the remainder of that day; I was overcome by them, and rejoiced to see the night, hoping to find relief in sleep. I went to bed, but could not close my eyes. Still haunted by the remembrance of what had so disgusted me, a multitude of thoughts crowded on my imagination. I knew that the priests claimed the word of God as their authority for all their doctrines and ceremonies, which word I also knew was contained in the Old and New Testaments, although, to my misfortune, I did not then regard them as a divine revelation. In fact, I believed no more in the Holy Bible *as the word of God*, than I did in the doctrine of purgatory; still I felt a desire to search and to ascertain whether this *lucrative* doctrine was contained in the Gospel, and in what manner it was there established: at the same moment I recollected that there was, on the chimney-piece of my room, a New Testament, in which I had learnt to read, but which I had never opened since I was nine or ten years old. I jumped out of bed, and hastily dressing myself, resolved to begin, without delay, my researches on the subject of purgatory.

With this sole object in view, I read through the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John; confining my attention exclusively to those points that tended either to establish or controvert this doctrine. This perusal of the New Testament, which, from my eagerness to satisfy my curiosity and resolve my doubts, I accomplished without once stopping, except for refreshment, proved to me that the doctrine of purgatory was not to be found in the Gospel, but must have been derived from some other source.

Indeed, my dear children, I did not find a single passage which established it, either directly or indirectly: on the contrary, I was struck with many declarations completely opposed to it. Thus I read in St. Matthew: "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. 25:46. This absolutely destroys the idea of any intermediate abode between heaven and hell.

I read the song of Simeon, by which it clearly appears that the good old man had no idea that he was to stop in the road to heaven, or that he would have to undergo any *purging fire* before he could get there; for he exclaims, holding the infant Jesus in his arms, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." &c. Luke, 2:29, 30.

I read the promises which Jesus made to the thief on the cross, when he said to him, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Luke, 23:42, 43. If there were such a place as purgatory, and if any one were likely to be subjected to its fires, surely it would have been this malefactor, condemned by human laws, and probably guilty of many crimes: yet our Saviour replies, "Verily, I say unto thee, *to-day* thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

I read in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, that "there is now *no* condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1. A doctrine altogether opposed to that of purgatory, which teaches that Christians are, after this life, subjected to a process of torments before they are free from condemnation.

I read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that "it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment," Heb. 9: 27, which clearly proves that the destiny, both of the bad and good, is irrevocably fixed from the moment of their death; and that there is no purgatory, from which masses, prayers, or rather gold and silver, can deliver any one.

I read also in the first Epistle of St. John, that "the blood of Jesus Christ," the Son of God, "cleanseth us from *all* sin," 1 John, 1:7, which excludes all other kinds of purification, and formally contradicts the doctrine of purgatory. Finally, I read in the book of Revelation, that "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Here is another declaration which confirms what the preceding and many other passages establish in so convincing a manner. Not having discovered a single text of the New Testament which told in favour of purgatory; but, on the contrary, having observed and meditated on those which I have quoted, and many other equally opposed to this doctrine, I was fully persuaded that it never had been thought of by the writers of the Gospel. You may easily believe, my dear children, that this discovery in no way tended to strengthen the bonds which held me to the Romish church, nor to confirm me in their faith.

Still, however, I was dissatisfied, and still longed to know positively *from whence* the priests had derived their vain system. This desire filled my mind for some days, and at last it struck me that *the Pope* must have been the inventor of it. I then naturally began to wish to discover *who* the Pope was, and what right he had to impose such a doctrine. I had often read and heard, both in conversation and from the pulpit, that St. Peter was the chief and head of the Apostles; that he had been the first pope at Rome; and that all succeeding popes had inherited his rights and prerogatives.

I conceived a wish to know what the New Testament said upon this subject, and I immediately undertook a second perusal of it; in the same state of mind as before, that is to say, absorbed by one sole object, and having nothing in view but to find out whether St. Peter had really been set over all the other apostles, and placed at Rome as head of all the churches.

This examination, which was pursued with a degree of attention of which I should now be scarcely capable, ended in convincing me that the supremacy of St. Peter was no better established by the New Testament than the first doctrine which I had sought for, and that undoubtedly the papacy was without scriptural authority.

I found in St. Matthew the *calling of Simon*, who was afterwards called Peter; Matt. 4:18, 19,20; but it did not appear to me to differ from that addressed to Andrew his brother, and all the other apostles.

In the tenth chapter of the same Gospel, I also observed that the first *mission* which Jesus Christ gave to his apostles, was given to all, without any particular prerogative to Peter. It is true that Peter is the first named, but this is merely an accidental priority, which implies neither distinction nor superiority; one must have been mentioned first. I made the same observation on the last mission which they received on the day of their Master's ascension, and which is related by St. Matthew, 28:19, 20; by St. Mark, 16:15; and in the Acts of the Apostles, 1:8. This mission, though variously expressed in the three places, is the same in substance. It is given indiscriminately to all; the promises by which it is accompanied are for all; and on all, the same powers are, equally conferred.

The 18th and 19th verses of chapter 16 of St. Matthew, where it is said, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," startled me for a moment, and I was on the point of mistaking the true meaning of this declaration. But having reflected that Jesus Christ asked the question in the 15th verse, of *all* his disciples, and that Peter expressed the sentiment of *all* in his animated reply in the 16th verse, I considered that the words which Christ addressed to Peter, were applicable to all disciples; and that no supremacy could be attributed to him from this passage, more than from any of the preceding.

I was confirmed in this opinion, when I read in the Gospel of St. John, that Jesus, *speaking to all* had made them nearly the same promise: "Whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose so ever sins ye retain, they are retained," (John, 20:23;) and also by what St. Paul says to the Ephesians, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Ephes. 2:20, 21.

I was still more strengthened, when I found in the Revelation, that St. John says, "the wall of the city had *twelve foundations*, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Rev. 21:14.

By these passages, and many others which I think it unnecessary to quote, I discerned that Jesus Christ is the true *foundation*, the *corner stone* on which the Christian church rests: that all the apostles and prophets are indeed mentioned as its foundation, but only because all their doctrines refer to Him; and I was convinced that St. Peter was in no degree more distinguished or more elevated than his fellow-labourers. Although I did not then understand, at least not so fully as I do now, the evangelical meaning of the 18th and 19th verses of chapter 16 of St. Matthew, yet I was persuaded that the papacy or sovereignty of St. Peter could not reasonably be deduced from them. Finally my conviction that St. Peter was not above the other apostles, was completed by observing what he says himself in his first epistle, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am *also an elder*" 1 Pet. 5:1; by what St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," 2 Cor. 11:5; by noticing that St. Paul, according to his own account, "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed;" Gal. 2:11; and that he severely and publicly reprehended him, because "he constrained the Gentiles to be circumcised;" by seeing how the common disciples of the church of Jerusalem made no scruple of reproving Peter, because "he went in unto men uncircumcised, and did eat with them," Acts, 11:3; how they

required from him an explanation of his conduct, and how the apostle hastened to justify himself, by relating to them exactly how the thing had happened. Finally, by observing that "when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, *they sent* unto them Peter and John." Acts, 8:14.

"There can be no doubt," thought I, as I perused and re-perused all these testimonies, "that Peter was in every respect equal to the other apostles; that he had no superiority nor jurisdiction over them. Had he been, had he thought himself, or had others thought him, the prince of the apostles and sovereign pastor of the church, would he have called himself an elder like unto the other elders? Is it possible that St. Paul would have declared himself to be 'not a whit behind him;' that he would have 'withstood him to his face,' and blamed him publicly? Is it probable that mere believers, common members of the church, should have ventured to dispute with him, to require an explanation of his conduct, or that he should have thought it necessary to satisfy them by giving one?[6] Is it likely that he would have been sent by the other apostles, or have received their orders, when it would have been his part, had he been their chief, to command and to send them?"

[Footnote 6: The popes, his pretended successors, have not been so obliging; they have been always solicitous to make their authority felt.]

I needed no more evidence to be thoroughly convinced that all which is taught by the Romish church of the supremacy of St. Peter, and of the sovereignty of the popes, his pretended successors, was a fable destitute of the slightest foundation; at all events, a doctrine no more to be found in the Gospel than that of purgatory.

If I were surprised at this, I was no less so when I observed, that in the whole New Testament there was not one word which gave reason to imagine that St. Peter had ever preached, or had even ever been, at Rome, where the Roman Catholics assert, and believe as an article of faith, that he was the first pope. The Acts of the Apostles maintains the most profound silence on this subject, and affords no ground whatever for the supposition. All the Epistles leave it equally in darkness. Those of St. Paul to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, the second to Timothy, and the Epistle to Philemon, all written from Rome at different periods, and that to the Hebrews, written from Italy, make no mention of Peter's being there. In the last four, the apostle speaks of his companions in suffering, in labour, and in the work of the Lord, but says not a word of Peter as being with him. Undoubtedly he would have mentioned him, as he mentions Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Demas, Prudens, Livius, Claudia, &c. had he been at Rome; but neither his name, nor any allusion to his abode in the capital of the world, is to be discovered in any part of St. Paul's Epistles. In my opinion, there is no proof of his ever having been there, much less of his having held the bishopric. Finally, his own two Epistles furnish no evidence for such a supposition: the first, and in all probability, the second also, is written from Babylon, 1 Peter, 5:13, and addressed, not to the Romans, but "to the strangers (that is to say, the converted Jews) scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," 1 Peter, 1:1, countries where, it would appear, that he exercised his ministry, after having for some years preached to the church at Antioch.

Thus, my children, I discovered that these two primary doctrines of the Romish church, *viz.* purgatory and the supremacy of St. Peter, had not, at any rate, been inculcated by the writers of the Gospel. I cannot tell you what interest I felt in the new ideas I had acquired. The New Testament, which I was still far from regarding as a divine revelation, appeared to me a collection of precious documents, in whose authority I then began to feel some degree of confidence. Though I found this study novel and difficult to a poor uneducated artisan like myself, it was at the same time so attractive to me, that I was induced to continue my researches.

I have already mentioned to you, my dear children, the invincible repugnance which I had always felt to receiving the sacrament as administered in the Romish church. I have said that nothing in the world could have forced me to this act, by which it is profanely pretended that the *creature* EATS *his* *Creator*!! I could never even think of it without shuddering. This doctrine, which asserts that Jesus Christ is present, in body and in spirit, in the consecrated wafer, and

that every communicant is actually nourished by his flesh and blood, is, of all the tenets of popery, that which contributed the most to alienate me from the Christian religion, to which I attached it, and to drive me to infidelity.

This, therefore, now attracted all my attention; and again I began to read the New Testament, entirely occupied, as previously, by the one object which I had in view.

I found nothing in the three Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke, which gave me the least reason to suppose that their author had recognized the real and corporeal presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the holy supper. The words of the institution, as related by the first, Matt. 26:26, 27, 28, by the second, Mark, 14:22, 23, 24, and by the third, Luke, 22:19, 20, reported with slight variations by the three Evangelists, and which I took great pains to collate and compare, conveyed no other idea than that of a *commemorative ceremony*, designed to preserve and call to remembrance the sufferings, the passion, and the death of Christ. In my then wretched condition of unbelief, the magnitude, the sanctity, and the power of the sacrament did not strike my mind; but, excepting that, I imbibed from the consideration of these passages the views which I still hold. So far, then, I had not discovered the doctrine of the real presence; but I thought I *had* indeed found it specifically established when I read these words: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, we have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." John, 6:51-56. These words appeared to me to be undoubtedly the foundation of the Romish faith on this head. I even thought that the writer of them had the establishment of this doctrine especially in view. At that moment I was tempted to stop, and to carry no further my researches on a doctrine which I thought I had found clearly set forth, but the absurdity of which had never appeared to me so palpable. I then felt an utter disgust towards the Gospel; nevertheless, internally spurred on by an invisible power, which was then unknown to me, but which I now recognize to have been the Holy Spirit, the author of all divine revelation; and attracted, as it were, in spite of myself, by the Spirit of God, who graciously purposed to teach me to appreciate, and in time to receive, the truth of his word, I resumed my New Testament, which I had for a moment thrown aside, and recommencing the perusal of the sixth chapter of St. John, I read it to the end, which I had not done before.

When I reached the sixty-third verse, I was struck as by a flash of light, which instantaneously discovered to me the mistake that I had at first made in the meaning of the six verses transcribed above, and imparted a new value to the Gospel. When I read "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing---the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are Life," John, 6:63, I had, as it were, the key of the chapter, and no longer discerned in it the doctrine of the real presence. I perceived that it in no way referred to swallowing and digesting, with our corporeal organs, the body and blood of Christ: I saw that the expressions of eating and drinking were used figuratively, and that they really signified nothing but knowing Christ, coming to him, and believing in him, as it is explained in the thirty-fifth verse of the same chapter, where Jesus Christ says, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

It was, then, as clear to me as the day, that Jesus Christ used the terms *eating* and *drinking* only in a spiritual manner; and (as I now understand them) as referring to that faith, which, while it is living and active in our hearts, unites us to him in an inexplicable manner, and clothes us in his merits at the same time that it purifies and sanctifies our views, our sentiments, and our desires. After having thus discovered my error, I found myself more than ever inclined to persevere in my reading, and to search and see whether the doctrine of the real presence would not be better established in the subsequent parts of the book. The further I advanced, my dear children, the more reason I had to be convinced that neither Jesus nor his apostles ever intended to convey such an idea. I should be too tedious were I to point out to you all the passages which I found expressly contradictory to this revolting tenet; it will be sufficient to quote a few.

I found in the Acts, that the apostles saw Jesus Christ ascend on high, carried upward by a cloud which concealed him from their sight, and that two angels appeared and said unto them, "Men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in *like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts, 1:9, 11. "There never was a priest," said I, "there never was a Roman Catholic, administering or receiving the sacrament, that ever saw Christ descending from heaven, in this manner, to enter into the bread. Nevertheless, the angels declared that he should descend from heaven in the same manner as he went up into heaven."

I found, in the same book, "that the heavens must receive Jesus Christ till the time of the restitution of all things." Acts, 3:21. "He is then," said I, "no longer corporeally on the earth." I found, in the Epistle to the Colossians, that "Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;" chap. 3:1; from whence I drew the inference that he certainly cannot be actually present on so many altars, or in so great a number of wafers, as the doctrine of the real presence necessarily supposes.

I found, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapters 9 and 10, the strongest declarations, not only against the real presence, but against the whole system of the mass, by which it is pretended daily to renew the passion and sacrifice of our Saviour. When the apostle says that "Christ is entered into heaven itself;" Heb. 9:24; when he says that "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation;" ver. 28; lastly, when he says it is the will of God to sanctify us "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once made," chap. 10:10, and that "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God," ver. 12, having "by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified," ver. 14, it appeared to me to prove, with the most unanswerable evidence, that the doctrine of the real presence, and all connected with it, was as far removed from the creed of the apostle as the east is from the west, or as heaven from hell.

Finally, my dear children, the very words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, related by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 11, and to which I paid particular and repeated attention, did not leave a shadow of doubt on my mind that the doctrine of the Romish church, on the subject of the Eucharist, is utterly devoid of any foundation in the Gospel, and must, consequently, have been derived from some other source. In fact, all that our Saviour says on the occasion of instituting the Lord's Supper, clearly shows that it was a *memorial of himself* which he established, and which he wished to leave behind him. After having taken, blessed, and broken the bread, he commands that it should be eaten *in remembrance of him*. Having given them the cup to drink, he adds, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, *in remembrance of me*." The words, "this is my body--this cup is the New Testament in my blood," appeared to me only what they really are, figurative expressions, signifying that the bread *represented* his body, and the wine his blood. These words do in no degree change or modify the principal idea, that of *commemoration*, which runs throughout this action of our Lord.

Had it even been possible that these words had deceived me; had I taken them in their literal meaning, I should soon have been undeceived by those which immediately follow, which in themselves utterly overthrow the doctrine of the real presence, and the whole system of the mass. These are the words: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do *show* the Lord's death *till he come*." 1 Cor. 11:26. After this declaration, connected with so many others, what further proof was wanting that St. Paul never believed that the bread and wine contained the actual body of Christ? I clearly saw that in this passage he meant that it is really bread we eat, and wine we drink, in the sacrament, and not the actual body and blood of the Son of God. I perceived that he taught that the Lord is not actually present in that ceremony according to the sense of the Romish church, because he distinctly says, "that by participating in it, we do *show* the Lord's death *till he come*"

In short, I was convinced that, according to St. Paul, it is not the body and blood of Jesus Christ that the priests hold in their hands, and which they offer as a sacrifice in the mass.

Here, my children, I suspended my researches, convinced, as much as it is possible to be convinced of any thing, that the doctrine of transubstantiation is not to be found in the New Testament. I concluded that it must have the same origin as

those of the papacy and of purgatory.

Diverted as I had been from my usual occupation, during the time that I had thus devoted to study and meditation; obliged to maintain myself and you by the sweat of my brow, and having no other immediate subject of perplexity, I returned to my daily labour, and discontinued the perusal of the Gospel. My New Testament had certainly gained much in my esteem; but without stopping to consider exactly in what way I valued it, I think I may say that it was *not* as containing the Word of God, and the knowledge which is unto salvation.

Thus not being really or heartily interested in it, I replaced it a second time on the spot it had so long occupied on the chimney-piece of my room, and eighteen months or two years passed without my thinking of consulting it anew.

During this period I married again: your tender age, and the care you required, which my business and absence prevented my giving you, were the motives which induced me to take this step. God in his fatherly kindness mercifully directed my choice, though I had never thought of asking him to do so; and you have found a second mother in her who has ever been to me the most estimable and best of friends. During this period also, I thought more of religion than ever before. Though I had read the Gospel only to satisfy my curiosity on the three points of doctrine that I have mentioned, and although my attention had been exclusively directed to these points, it is probable, notwithstanding, that I had almost unconsciously imbibed some of the impressions which the word of God is calculated to produce, and that even then I was in some measure under its secret influence. One thing I am sure of, that from that time some idea of religion, although then comparatively vague and confused, never left me; I frequently caught myself musing on the origin of the universe, on the vicissitudes of nature, and on the future condition of those numerous beings, who are seen for a short time on the earth and then disappear. My own destiny, also, frequently engaged my thoughts. But I was far from referring it to Him, on whom I now see that it entirely depends. In all these thoughts God was excluded from the place he ought to have held. With nothing but false and uncertain notions of him, I was far indeed from regarding him as the vivifying principle, which, to the eye of the Christian, animates and embellishes every thing, and as that pure light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

I am bound to tell you, my children, what was the real state of my soul at that time. I was in so deplorable a condition of blindness and ignorance, that sometimes I thought there was no God, but that he was an imaginary being; and sometimes confounding him with the works of his almighty hands, I attributed divinity to the material world. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," and I dare not deny that these words of David were for a long time, and even perhaps at the period of which I am speaking, applicable to me. But while I acknowledge that the natural corruption of my heart, and the bad books I had read, were in part the causes of the sad state I have described, I cannot help also attributing the greatest part of them to the *abuses*, the *superstition*, and the *errors* which disfigure Christianity in the Romish church, and which had so disgusted me that they had driven me into total infidelity.

Such, then, being in fact my religious state, you may well believe, my children, that I was not happy; for it is impossible to be so without trusting in God, who is the source of supreme good and true peace. I was assiduous in my occupation; I frequented the society of my friends; but, my heart empty and incessantly craving after something which I could not obtain, was never content. My mind, restless and agitated, could no where find an object to fix and satisfy it. Listlessness followed me every where, and seemed to increase upon me. O how unhappy, and how pitiable are those, who are, as was then, without God, without Christ, without hope in the world!

I was in this wretched state when it pleased God to have pity upon me, and to cause a ray of light to penetrate my mind. One evening, after the labours of the day, instead of going as usual to the club which I frequented, I went alone upon the public walk, where I remained till the night was far advanced: the moon shone clear and bright: I had never before been so struck by the magnificence of the heavens, and I felt unusually disposed to reflection. "No," I said, (after contemplating for a long time the impressive scene before me,) "no, nature is not God," (for till then I had entertained

this opinion.) "God is certainly distinct from nature: in all this I can only recognise a *work* replete with harmony, order, and beauty. Although I cannot perceive the Author, whose power, intelligence, and wisdom are every where so strongly imprinted on it; still, both my reason and my feeling combine to convince me of his existence."

This conclusion, which I sincerely adopted, was the result of the reflections in which I had been that evening absorbed.

Some days after this, the examination of a watch, its springs, its various wheels, and its motions, brought me afresh to the same conclusion, and for ever confirmed me in the belief of a God, the Creator of all things. "If this watch," I argued, "could not make itself, and necessarily leads us to suppose an artist who made each part, and so arranged the whole as to produce these movements---how much stronger reasons have we for concluding that the universe has a Contriver and Maker?"

I was no sooner fully satisfied of the existence of a God, than I trembled at the thought of his attributes, and my relationship to him. The sense of my unworthiness and sinfulness deeply affected me. When I called to mind the many years I had passed in forgetfulness of this great God; in indifference to, or in a culpable unbelief of his existence; I felt that I must indeed be, in his sight, the most ungrateful, and the most sinful of his creatures. My next feeling was an anxious desire to amend my conduct, and I determined to lay down such a plan for my future life, as I hoped might not be unworthy of that Being whose eye I then felt was upon me. After having made many efforts to recall the best maxims of wisdom and rules of virtue that I had met with in the course of my reading, I at length came to a resolution of examining what moral precepts the New Testament might contain, and whether it might not afford me the rules I was seeking for the regulation of my conduct.

This was the motive which brought me again to the New Testament, and induced me to undertake a fourth time the perusal of it. I wish it were in my power to recount to you, my dear children, all the effects that the eternal word of God produced upon my heart; for from that time I recognised it to be, what it is in fact, the revelation of sovereign wisdom; the genuine expression of the Divine will; the message of a tender and compassionate Father, addressed to his ungrateful and rebellious children, soliciting them to return and find happiness in him. I wish I could retrace all the impressions that this divine message produced on my mind, the vivid emotions I experienced, and the thoughts and feelings (never, I trust, to be forgotten) excited by that reading.

I was like a man born blind, who should suddenly recover his sight in a magnificent apartment, splendidly illuminated. My feelings at least corresponded with those of a man under such circumstances, were they possible. How glorious was the light of the Gospel to me! I sought for morality, and I found *there* the most simple, clear, complete, and perfect system of morality that could be conceived; and *there* I found precepts suited to every circumstance that could present itself in life, as a son, a brother, a father, a friend, a subject, a servant, a labourer, a man, a reasonable creature: my duty in every relation of life I there found inculcated in the most admirable manner. I could not imagine one moral duty for which I did not there find a precept; not one precept unaccompanied by a motive; and no motive that did not appear to me to be dictated by reason, or enforced by an authority against which I felt that I had nothing to object. I observed two kinds of precepts which, though tending to the same end, *i.e.* perfection, produced a different effect upon me. The *positive* precepts presented to my mind an idea of the high degree of holiness at which that man would arrive who could keep them without a single violation. The *negative* precepts, by leading me to a close self-examination, impressed me with a deep sense of my corruption, and convinced me that the authors of them must have possessed a profound knowledge of the human heart in general, and of my heart individually.

"Who then," said I, "were the writers of this book?" And when I reflected that they were poor, uneducated mechanics like myself, the question immediately presented itself---how could fishermen, tax-gatherers, and tent-makers, acquire such extraordinary sagacity, penetration, wisdom, and knowledge? "Ah!" I exclaimed, "this is indeed a problem, which can only be solved by admitting their own assertion, that the Spirit of God directed their pens, and that all they wrote was

divinely inspired." Such, my children, was my conclusion after this examination of the morality laid down in the Gospel.

Thus I recognised the divine origin of the New Testament, and took my first step toward Christianity.

When I had once acknowledged the divine origin of the *morality* of the Gospel, reason and personal experience combined to convince me of the truth and divine source of the *doctrines* on which it was founded.

"If God inspired the apostles, and enabled them to give to the world the purest and most perfect system of morality that can be conceived, is it to be supposed that in the remainder of their writings he would leave them to themselves, and permit error or imposture to be mixed and confounded with truth?" No: from the same source cannot proceed sweet waters and bitter. As the moral precepts of the Gospel are divinely inspired, so, likewise, *must* be its doctrines. This reasoning appeared to me incontrovertible, and I received with full conviction the whole contents of the New Testament, as dictated by the Spirit of truth.

From that time Jesus Christ, his history, his divine character, his miracles, the end for which he came into the world, his sufferings and death, attracted and absorbed my whole attention. At the account of his passion, which, till then, I had read with indifference, my heart was melted, and my eyes overflowed with tears. In short, I found and felt such a suitableness between the wants of my sinful soul, destitute as it was of all peace and comfort, and the work which the Saviour had accomplished by his death on the cross, that I no longer doubted that the promises of the Gospel were personally addressed to me. I believed that Jesus Christ had offered himself a sacrifice for me, to expiate my sins, and to reconcile me unto God; and from that moment I have enjoyed an inward peace, the source of which I believe to be faith in Christ alone---a peace which the world can neither give nor take away, and which, as I myself have frequently experienced, is alone able to support and strengthen us through all the sufferings and afflictions of life.

In this manner you see how, a sinner and prodigal as I was, our heavenly Father met me, and received me to the arms of his mercy; how he made known to me his free grace and heavenly gift, of which I was utterly unworthy. It is his grace that has accomplished all in me. He it was who began, who carried on, and who, I trust, will perfect this work of salvation.

Without his intervention, that is to say, without the aid of his Spirit operating upon my heart, it never could have experienced a *real* conversion. To him also do I ascribe, with gratitude, my admission into the protestant church, of which I have now the privilege of being a member---as I shall proceed to tell you.

Having found, as I have already said, peace and joy in that word of God which I had received with my whole heart, I immediately felt the desire and the need of intercourse with gospel Christians; I was convinced that such there were, because the Saviour had promised "that the powers of hell should never prevail against his church." But not finding them in the Roman Catholic church, which presented to me nothing but a religion of tradition, equally degenerate in doctrine and worship, I was greatly at a loss where to find the real Christians for whom I was in search.

For the first time in my life the thought occurred, Is it possible they may be among the protestants? But instantly I repelled an idea which early prejudice had rendered revolting to me. In places inhabited exclusively by Roman Catholics, where the doctrines and worship of the protestant Christians are little known, the term protestant is regarded by most as synonymous with heretic, blasphemer, and reprobate. The people generally are imbued with these prejudices, which are diligently kept up and disseminated by some among them, and I myself was at that time too much under their influence to admit, at once, that the protestants could be the true Christians for whom I was seeking.

Soon, however, the thought returned; and as I reflected on that declaration of St. Paul, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. 3:12, possibly, said I, these protestants may be calumniated on the very ground of

their religion being more in accordance with the Gospel. Many other passages of Scripture presented themselves to my mind, which led me to believe that this supposition might be correct. I therefore determined to lose no opportunity of clearing my doubts upon this point.

As there were no protestants either in our town or neighbourhood, whom I could consult, I determined to write to the only one I knew; and though but little acquainted with her, I ventured to request that I might be apprised of, her pastor's next visit, signifying that I was anxious to consult him on a subject of importance. Either she did not understand my letter, or from some other motive, her answer, though obliging was not satisfactory on that point which most interested me.

I waited patiently for some time, and applied myself diligently to reading and meditating on the word of God, which had become like necessary food to my soul. In all my prayers I entreated the Lord that he would condescend to direct me to those true Christians of whom his church was composed, and permit me to become one of their number. I felt a confidence, from all that I had experienced, that my divine Benefactor would grant my request whenever he saw it good for me; this confidence quieted me, but could not remove my desire to ascertain what the protestant religion really was.

One day, particularly, this anxiety became stronger than ever, and degenerated, I acknowledge, into real impatience. I was unhappy at my lonely and isolated situation, without a friend to whom I could communicate my dearest interests; I believe I could have gone a hundred miles to have found any one who thought and felt as I did. It was at this moment of perplexity and weariness, on my return home, at the close of a day's work, that the thought struck me of consulting my wife, your present mother, and I had a presentiment that through her I should discover what I so long wished to know. She is, as you know, a native of Libos, and I remembered having heard her say that there were protestants residing in that town and neighbourhood.

When the supper was ended, and we were seated by the fire, each in our chimney-corner, she took her work, and I began the conversation nearly in the following words:

"Annette," said I, "have I not heard you say that there are many protestants in Libos and the neighbourhood?"

"Yes, Bayssiere," she replied, "there are a great many, but they are a good deal scattered about the country. They belong to the church of Mont Flanquin, where their priest or minister resides."

"And do you know any of them? Have you ever spoken to them, or been at their houses?"

"O yes, I was acquainted with many families; I knew Mr. ----, and Mr. ----, &c. &c. (I suppress names.) I have been employed in their houses, and seen them frequently."

"Well, then, can you tell me what sort of people they are, and what their characters and habits?"

"O yes, I can assure you that they are the best set of people in the world. They are esteemed, loved, and respected by every one: I never heard any thing but good of those I knew, and they always appeared to me to conduct themselves irreproachably."

[Illustration: PETER BAYSSIÈRE]

I continued to question your mother on the manner in which the protestants brought up their children; how they treated their servants, strangers, and the poor. I asked if domestic harmony prevailed among them, and how they conducted themselves as parents and children, brothers and sisters.

All her answers tended to convince me that pious protestants lived under the influence of the word of God; and at each disclosure she made, (though unconscious of the value I attached to it,) I said to myself, "*This is* the morality of the Gospel."

Satisfied on this point, I turned to another:

"How do the protestants spend their Sabbaths and festivals," I asked, "separated as they are from each other and their church? Do they ever assemble for prayer, or do they live without worship?"

"O, no! they don't live without worship; they have their divine services; they are at too great a distance from their minister and each other to meet every Sunday, but they have a church in the country where they assemble many times in a year, I believe once a month; and at other times they meet for prayer at their own houses." "Oh! then they have a church near Libos? I should very much like to know," said I, "how they conduct their worship, and what they do at their church?"

"I can tell you perfectly," replied your mother, "for I was present at one of their assemblies. There is nothing grand or striking in their churches; they contain neither altar, chapel, images, nor any ornament whatever, but consist simply of four whitewashed walls. At the lower end is a pulpit, like that used by our priest, in front of which is a table, and around it are seats occupied by the elders. The rest of the church is fitted up with benches, placed in order, on which the congregation seat themselves as they enter.

"I observed that most of them, before they sat down, leaned upon the back of the seat before them, and seemed to be in the act of prayer. Their service was as simple as the building, devoid of ceremony. When the congregation had assembled, one of the elders ascended the pulpit and prayed aloud in French; then he gave notice that he was about to read the word of God; and having requested their attention, he did read, for some time, from a great book, which they told me was the Holy Bible. He then offered prayers, and preached a sermon, which gave me great pleasure at the time, but which I now forget. I well remember that throughout the service there was no noise nor disturbance of any kind in the church, and one feeling seemed to pervade the whole: this struck me forcibly."

In this description of the protestant worship, imperfect as it was, I thought I could recognise those traits of simplicity that characterized the worship of the primitive christians: and when your mother had finished, I said to myself, "This is indeed like the worship recorded in the Acts of the Apostles." But I added, without allowing her to perceive the extreme satisfaction that this information afforded me, "Is this all you know of the protestant worship? Did you never see them receive the sacrament?"

"Yes, I have," she replied, "on that same day, which was the only time I ever entered their church."

"Do tell me, then, how was it conducted?"

"I told you, if you remember, that there was a table in front of the pulpit: this table was their altar; it was covered with a very white cloth: in the middle of it were a plate of bread and two chalices of wine. When the minister had finished preaching, he took a book, and read from it some beautiful passages on the communion, sufferings, and death of Christ; he also spoke of the duty of communicants; then every one stood up while he prayed: after which he descended from the pulpit, and came in front of the holy table; he here repeated aloud some words which I have forgotten, and took a small piece of bread and ate it; this done, he took the two cups in his hands, and again saying something that I did not hear, he drank some of the wine. The elders then approached the table, and each received a piece of bread, which they ate, and drank a little of the wine from the cup which was presented to them. The rest of the congregation did the same, the women after the men; and when all had communicated, the minister re-ascended the pulpit, gave another exhortation,

offered a concluding prayer, and closed the whole by urging upon them the care of the poor."

"This," thought I, "is indeed the supper of the Lord!"

The conformity that I had already observed between the practices of the protestants and those of the primitive christians, created in me a feeling of joy which I had never before experienced. I desired, with renewed ardour, to search to the bottom of their doctrines, and from that time I anticipated that I might myself become a decided Protestant. This expectation, my children, soon increased into a certainty.

On the tenth of February last, two pamphlets fell into my hands; one was published by a Roman Catholic priest, and contained an attack on the protestant religion: the other was an answer, in defence of that religion, written by a protestant minister: these were the first words of religious controversy I had ever read, and eagerly did I devour these two little works. That of the first (which had been written on the occasion of a respectable family having recently embraced the Protestant faith) contained nothing that was solid, or that I could not have refuted in the very words of Christ and his Apostles; therefore I did not dwell upon it. But the second, under the title of *A Letter to Malanie*, was the very thing I wanted, and was so anxiously desiring to find---an exposition of the protestant creed, or at least of its most essential points. It taught me that the Gospel was their only rule of faith, worship, and conduct: that they admitted all that they found established by the Holy Scriptures, but rejected every thing else, and especially prohibited the invocation of saints, the worship of images, of relics, and of the holy Virgin. It taught me that they worshipped God alone, through Jesus Christ his Son; that their only hope of salvation was in his mercy, revealed in the sacrifice of the cross of Christ; that they recognised no other Mediator, no other Advocate, and no other Intercessor with God, than him who gave himself as such, and who alone has the right of saying to sinners, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." It taught me that they believed no more than myself in purgatory, in the supremacy of the pope, or in the real presence, &c. In short, it taught me that the protestants received and professed no other than primitive Christianity.

It would be impossible for me to tell you how rejoiced I was to find my most intimate feelings expressed by a minister of a religion founded on the Gospel. From this, and from all that your mother had told me, I clearly saw that the Protestants were unjustly accused and misrepresented by the wicked or the ignorant, and that they were in truth those christians, according to the word of God, to whom the promises of the Gospel are made. From that time I acknowledged them as my true brethren in Christ Jesus, and my chief desire was to be admitted into their communion.

I clearly foresaw, my children, that by making an open avowal of my religious principles, and by publicly declaring myself a Protestant, I should raise many violent passions against myself, and expose myself to a thousand trials; but the truth was dearer to me than life, and conscience spoke louder than the fear of man. I resolved, therefore, without hesitation, to confess my Saviour before men, let the result be what it might, and I immediately wrote to Mr. ----, the pastor at Nerac, and the author of the letter I had read, requesting the assistance of his experience and kind advice. In short, after I had been eleven months in correspondence with this excellent minister of the Lord; after I had visited him, in order to acquaint him more fully with the state of my mind, and to enjoy the privilege of his instruction; after I had frequently attended the performance of Protestant worship and their different religious ordinances; after I had carefully compared these, as well as their doctrines, with the only standard of truth, the word of God, and was fully convinced of their perfect accordance, I no longer saw a motive for delay, but requested admission, and was received as a member of the Protestant church.

On the twenty-third of the December following, I went to Nerac, and on Christmas day, in the presence of the whole congregation, having, as I trust, first given my heart unto the Lord, I became publicly united to his saints, and received the sacred *symbols* of the body and blood of my Saviour at the Lord's Supper, and pledged myself to remain faithful to him till death. I trust that he will vouchsafe to me his assistance for the fulfilment of this promise, and manifest his strength in my weakness.

Thus it was, my beloved children, that I became a member of the Reformed Church of Christ. I have now explained to you the circumstances and motives that have led me to its sanctuary. In the presence of God I attest the truth of all I have now written. The ranks of the true church are not recruited by means of bribery, deceit, fraud, false miracles, or compulsion; all means are rejected but *instruction, reason*, and persuasion. This church has been formed, and still exists, notwithstanding the blows that have been levelled at it; and it will for ever continue, in spite of all the rage of hell; sustained by the simple exhibition of that Gospel which is its only guide and support.

May it please that God whom I supplicate for the salvation of all men, and more especially for the conversion and prosperity of my enemies, to give his grace to you, my children, that you may be found among the number of those who shall be saved. Happy should I be, not only to be your natural father, but also your spiritual father! Happy, indeed, should I be, if at that great day, when we shall appear before God to receive the sentence of our eternal destiny, I might be able to present myself and you, without fear, and say, "Here, Lord, am I, and the children thou hast given me."

P. BAYSSIÈRE.

Montaigut, Dec. 31, 1826.

THE HISTORY

OF A

BIBLE.

HISTORY OF A BIBLE.

After remaining a close prisoner for some months in a bookseller's shop, I was liberated, and taken to the country to be a companion to a young gentleman who had lately become major. The moment I entered the parlour where he sat, he rose up and took me in his hands, expressing his surprise at the elegance of my dress, which was scarlet, embroidered with gold. The whole family seemed greatly pleased with my appearance; but they would not permit me to say one word. After their curiosity was satisfied they desired me to sit down upon a chair in the corner of the room. In the evening I was taken up stairs, and confined in the family prison, called by them the library. Several thousand prisoners were under the same sentence, standing in rows around the room; they had their names written upon their foreheads, but none of them were allowed to speak.

We all remained in this silent, inactive posture for some years. Now and then a stranger was admitted to see us: these generally wondered at our number, beauty, and the order in which we stood; but our young jailor would never allow a person to touch us, or take us from our cell.

A gentleman came in one morning and spoke in high commendation of some Arabians and Turks who stood at my right side; he said they would afford fine entertainment on a winter evening. Upon this recommendation they were all discharged from prison, and taken down stairs. After they had finished their fund of stories, and had not a word more to say, they were remanded back to prison, and one, who called himself Don Quixotte, was set at liberty. This man, being extremely witty, afforded fine sport for William, (for that was our proprietor's name.) Indeed, for more than a fortnight he kept the whole house in what is called good humour. After Quixotte had concluded his harangues, William chose a "Man of Feeling" for his companion, who wrought upon his passions in a way which pleased him vastly. William now began to put a higher value upon his prisoners, and to use them much more politely. Almost daily he held a little chit-chat with one prisoner or another. Mr. Hume related to him the history of England down to the Revolution, which he interspersed with a number of anecdotes about Germany, France, Italy, and various other kingdoms. Dr. Robertson

then described the state of South America when first discovered, and related the horrid barbarities committed by the Spaniards when they stole it from the natives. William wept when he heard of their savage treatment of Montezuma. Rollin next spoke; he related to him the rise and fall of ancient empires; he told him that God was supreme governor among the nations; that he raises up one to great power and splendour, and putteth down another. He told him, what he did not know before, that God had often revealed to some men events which were to happen hundreds of years afterwards, and directed him to converse with me, and I could fully inform him on that subject. William resolved to converse with me at a future period, but having heard some of his relations speak rather disrespectfully of me, he was in no hurry. At length my prison door was unlocked, and I was conducted to his bed-room.

[Illustration: HISTORY OF A BIBLE.]

My first salutation struck William. In the beginning, said I, God made the heavens and the earth; and then proceeded to make man, whom he placed in a garden, with permission to eat of every tree that was in it, except one. I then related the history of Adam, the first man: how he was urged and prevailed upon by the devil not to mind God's prohibition, but to eat of the forbidden tree; and how by this abominable act he had plunged himself and posterity into misery. William not relishing this conversation, closed my mouth, desiring me to say no more at that time.

A few days afterwards he allowed me to talk of the wickedness of the old world: how God sent Noah to reprove their iniquity, and to threaten the destruction of the whole world, if they did not repent and turn to the Lord; that the world were deaf to his remonstrances; and that God at last desired Noah to build an ark of wood, such as would contain himself and family; for he was soon to destroy the inhabitants of the earth by a deluge of water. This conversation was rather more relished than the former.

The next opportunity, I gave him a history of the ancient patriarchs, showing the simplicity, integrity, and holiness of their lives, extolling their faith in God, and promptness in obeying all his commandments. William became much more thoughtful than I had seen him upon any former occasion. What I told him he generally related to his friends at table. Their conversation was now more manly and rational; formerly they conversed only about horses, hounds, dress, &c. now about the history of the world, its creation, the remarkable men who had lived in it, the different changes which had taken place in empires, kingdoms, &c.

He was wonderfully taken with the account I gave of that nation whom God had chosen for his own people, *viz.* the Jews. I told him how wonderfully God had delivered them from captivity in Egypt; how he drowned in the Red Sea an army of Egyptians, with their king at their head, who were pursuing the Jews. But when I told him of the holy law of God, and expatiated a little upon it, he shrugged up his shoulders and said it was too strict for him. Well, William, said I, cursed is every one who continueth not in *all things* written or commanded in that law. He pushed me aside, ran down stairs, and soon became sick and feverish. His mother begged of him to tell her of his sudden distress. He said I had alarmed him exceedingly; that he found himself a great sinner, and saw no mercy for him in the world to come. His mother came running up stairs, and in the heat of passion locked me into my old cell, where I remained in close confinement for some days. But William could not dispense with my company; accordingly I was sent for. I found him very pale and pensive; however, I faithfully told him, that the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart are only evil, and that continually. He said he lately began to feel that; he had tried to make it better, but could not. Upon this a stranger entered the room, and I was hid at the back of a sofa, because the family were quite ashamed that I should be seen talking with William. The stranger remarked that he had seen him talking with me, assured him that I would do him much more harm than good: that I had occasioned great confusion in the world, by driving many people mad. On this, they all joined in scandalizing my character, and I was again confined to my old cell.

But when my God enables me to fix an arrow in any sinner's heart, the whole universe cannot draw it out. William was always uneasy when I was not with him; consequently he paid me many a stolen visit. I told him one day not to trust in

riches, for they often took to themselves wings, and flew from one man to another, as God directed them. Job once possessed houses, lands, sheep, a flourishing family, all of which were taken from him in a few hours; but God never forsook him.

William's friends got him persuaded to take a tour for a few weeks, to remove the gloom which hung upon his mind. He did so; but he returned more dejected than ever. The moment he arrived I was sent for to talk with him. I directed him to behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world: I said there was no other name given under heaven among men, but the name of Jesus, by which they could be saved; that God so loved the world as to send his Son into it, to save it by his death. I then went over the whole history of the Saviour, from his birth at Bethlehem to his death on Calvary; describing his resurrection, and pointing out the evidence of it; then led his attention to Bethany, describing the marvellous circumstances attending his ascension to his Father; and testified to him the wonderful effects which followed in the immense increase of conversions to the faith. I then enlarged upon Christ's commission to his apostles, commanding them to publish to every creature under heaven the glad news that Christ had died for the *ungodly*; had finished redemption, and ascended up on high to receive gifts for men, and to bestow them on all who believed God's testimony concerning him.

God opened the mind of William to perceive the importance and truth of these things. He began to hope in God, through the offering of his Son a sacrifice for sin. I advised him now to follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord in heaven, or can continue to see his glory on earth; to have no fellowship with wicked men; to be a faithful steward of whatever God had given him. I told him how Christ rewarded those who overcame all their enemies through faith in his blood, and by believing the word of his testimony. This conversation made him very happy, and he left me, rejoicing in the Lord.

Sometime after, he came with a sorrowful heart, complaining that he did not feel the Lord's presence; that God had forsaken him. I assured him that was impossible; for God expressly says he will *never* leave nor forsake his people; and that he changes not in his love to them. I warned him to be cautious how he spoke against God, for such language is calling God a liar. I told him likewise, that the church had once preferred a similar complaint against her God; upon which Jehovah protested that it was possible for a mother to forsake her infant child, but impossible for him ever to leave or to forsake his people; for he had pledged his *word* to the contrary. Wherefore I warned him to be no more faithless, but believing; and by doing so he would glorify God greatly before men: it would tend to make men think more favourably of God, and probably lead some to seek an interest in his favor, who otherwise would not. Upon this he cried out with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. I change in my love, but thou changest not. William left me, determined to rejoice evermore, and to pray without ceasing.

At first his friends thought religion had made him less happy than he was before; now they declared they had never seen him in such good spirits, and so truly happy. They began to wish they were like him. William longed for the coming of the Lord, while they trembled at the very thought of it: they rather wished he might never come. This was a great advantage he had over them by the grace and tender mercy of the Lord. He exhorted them to come to the same Saviour, and he would receive them also with open arms.

William was afterwards brought into great affliction. I told him God sent it to him for good, to make him more holy, humble, dead to sin and the world, and more fit for heaven. He believed me, and praised God for his attention to him, to send this messenger of affliction to do him good. A person who came in, expressed sorrow at seeing him so pained. William replied, don't sorrow for me; rejoice rather, because God has said that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. I am willing to be sick, or to die, or to recover, just as God pleases; whatever pleases him pleases me.

I was never from him during his sickness; he praised God daily that he had ever seen me. He was happy only when he talked with me or about me. He recommended me to all who came near him, declaring that my words created a heaven in his soul. He found me to be the mouth of God to him.

William was completely recovered from his indisposition, by which his knowledge of God, and experience of his faithfulness and love, was much increased. I continued his bosom companion for many years. He talked in the fear of God, and in the comforts of his Holy Spirit, till at length he entered, with triumph, into the eternal joy of his Lord.

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After conducting William to the gates of the New Jerusalem, I was sent for to reside with a young man in the middling ranks of life, who had received a liberal and religious education from his parents, lately removed from this poor world. The effects of their example and counsel were evident in all his conduct. He lived what men call a *good moral life*, his deportment was very agreeable, and his sobriety was commended by many. He regularly conversed with me twice every day, and prayed in his closet morning and evening. On Sabbath I talked to him from dinner to tea, and from tea to supper.

An old uncle of his perpetually exhorted him to go abroad to amass a fortune. He did not at first relish the advice. One day he consulted me. I bluntly told him to be content with such things as he had; not to hasten to be rich, for he would thereby pierce himself with many sorrows: that numbers were ruined through the deceitfulness of riches. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, said I, but for that which endureth to everlasting life. After this conversation, he reasoned with his uncle against leaving his country and friends merely to make money in a foreign land: he declared that the object was a pitiful one to an immortal creature, who must soon bid an eternal adieu to the affairs of time. However, after standing his ground for some months, he consented to go a voyage to the West Indies.

He set sail from Liverpool, and took me along with him. As there were several passengers in the ship, all of whom were profane sinners, he was ashamed to let me be seen; of course I was hid in a corner of the state-room, completely masked. On the first Sabbath morning, he took a single peep at me before the other passengers awoke. I hastily told him to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy; that God was every where present to witness the works of men. He resolved to abide by my advice, and to keep at as great a distance from those on board as he well could. They asked him to take a hand at cards, but he refused. Pho! said they, we have got one of your superstitious Christians along with us; we shall have nice sport with him. They teased him with his religion the whole day, and poor George could not well bear it. One bold sinner asserted, that before they reached their destination, they would have all his enthusiasm hammered out of him.

George having none to encourage or countenance him, and not possessing firmness sufficient for confessing me before men, resolved to dispense with his religion during the voyage, and to comply with their abandoned customs, while he continued in the ship. Thus he fell before temptation.

One day in the midst of his merriment, he recollected an advice which I had solemnly given him. It was this: When sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Immediately he rushed out of the cabin, threw himself on his bed, and wept bitterly. He cried out, (but not so loud as to be heard,) I have ruined my soul, O what would my worthy mother have said, had she witnessed my conduct for days past. On his return to the cabin, the sadness of his countenance was observed by the company; they laughed heartily and assured him that his reluctance to join them in what they termed sociality, arose from the prejudices of education: that he must endeavour to banish all his fears of futurity, and mind present enjoyment. These and similar observations gradually unhinged the principles of young George, and before reaching their destined port, his checks of conscience were almost gone. What a dreadful state, when man's conscience ceases to be his reprov-er! Men are often glad when they obtain this deliverance, but the infatuation is as shocking to a pious mind as to see a man in flames rejoicing in the heat which will infallibly consume him. After the arrival of the

ship, we all went ashore; and George was soon fixed in a very advantageous situation for money making. When the first Sabbath arrived, he protested against transacting business on that day, declaring that he had never been accustomed to any thing of that kind. They advised him to labour hard seven days in the week, that he might return sooner to the country from whence he came; and at length prevailed on him to conform to their infidel practices. I told him that for all these things God would bring him into judgment; that he was like the rest of the wicked, who waxed worse and worse; that he did not love Jesus Christ, else he would keep his commandments, notwithstanding all the raillery and reproach to which he was exposed. I warned him that whoever was ashamed to confess Christ before men, of him would he be ashamed in the presence of his Father and the holy angels.

In a few months he became as wicked and abandoned as any on the island. He made a present of me to a poor native, who could read a little English. I frequently conversed with him, but he could not understand what I said. He often desired me to speak to his companions. A few were greatly affected with what I said. They often called upon me. Sometimes they pleasantly said my words made them very happy, they desired to go to that happy world which I commended so highly. They fervently prayed to Jesus to take them to it. An old slave crept in one day, inquiring if Jesus could do any thing for very bad people. I replied, It is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. He is able to save unto the very uttermost all who come unto God through him. The black man, bathed in tears, exclaimed, Good book! tell me good news! Like the Ethiopian eunuch, he went away rejoicing.

After some years I was sent for in great haste to visit my old proprietor George, who by his intemperance was brought to the gates of death. In his affliction he remembered me. I told him fools make a mock at sin, but sin finds them out. God had been long angry with him every day. He confessed he had been a great sinner. He said that bad company had been his ruin: that by following their example he had destroyed a fine constitution; that in his distress his bottle companions had all forsaken him; they could not bear the thought of death. Had I my days to begin again, said he, I would flee from a swearer or a drunkard, as I would from the plague. He prayed fervently that God would forgive his iniquity for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ. His fever increased, and in a few days he went the way of all the earth.

After this I became the inmate of a respectable family which had long been on the island. The master and mistress were professors of religion, but during their residence in the island they had neglected many of its most important duties.

At length one of their children became ill and died. They came to me for consolation. I gave them to understand, that it was because they had gone astray that they were afflicted, and that their affliction was designed to call them back to duty. They were at length persuaded of their error, and praised God that he had loved them so much as to chastise them. They now strove to serve God with all their hearts. They listened to me when I told them that they should instruct their children in religion on every proper occasion, both when they sat in the house and when they walked by the way. The youth of that family became at length distinguished throughout the island for every virtuous and amiable quality.

But what did more to make religion respected in that house, was the practice of family prayer. I was brought out night and morning, and permitted to speak before all the family, which was seated around the room in a respectful and attentive attitude. I seldom spoke with more effect than on these occasions. I addressed every member of the family in their turn. I commanded the parents to treat their children with mildness, and the children to obey their parents. I told the little ones that Christ took little children in his arms and blessed them; and bade the servants do their duty to their master, and the master to be kind to his servants. And when my instructions were finished, all in the house united in singing a hymn to God; and I believe they sometimes made melody in their hearts. When they had sung, my master would kneel and offer up a humble prayer to God. These exercises caused harmony to prevail throughout a numerous family. I observed also that although the inhabitants of the island did not relish my master's piety, yet he every day obtained more and more of their respect, as his piety increased.

I have lived many years, and have seen all those children grown up (I believe through my instructions) in the fear of the Lord. I was by the bed-side of their parents when the messenger Death came to call them away. I spoke to them of the joys of heaven, and of its inhabitants, who sing praise to the Lamb, and cease not day nor night. They cried, "Lord Jesus, come quickly," and ascended to glory.

I have always been a faithful friend to all who have sought acquaintance with me. I will be faithful to thee, reader! I will show thee the only path that leads through this world to heaven. Follow my instructions, and you will arrive there in safety.

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