

## Communicated.

Rocky Mount, N. C., July 14th, 1874.  
Elder P. D. Gold, Dear Sir:—

**P**LEASE excuse the liberty I am taking in thus addressing you. I have wished so much to talk with you—and that privilege being denied me, I have concluded to write and tell you what my feelings have been and are, and ask your opinion and advice.

From my earliest recollections I wished to be a christian. I looked on christians as superior beings and regarded them with reverence, but I suppose I was in my sixteenth or seventeenth year when I became sensible of my exceeding sinfulness. I commenced trying to pray—would read the Bible for instruction and also in hope of finding comfort—but only read my condemnation. One evening when in a great deal of trouble I took the Bible, thinking surely there must be something in here comforting, even for me, and if so I will find it, but had read only a few lines when suddenly I thought, How do I know this is a correct translation of the Bible? How do I know the Bible is the book of God? or, How do I know there is a God?—Immediately I thought, What have I done? I have doubted God's word, I have doubted his very existence, I have committed the unpardonable sin and he will never forgive me! For a while I seemed to be paralyzed and sat scarcely able to move and gasping for breath. As soon as I could, I arose and laid up the book and for sometime after I was afraid to touch it—I felt unworthy and was afraid that if I even so much as laid my hand upon it some awful judgment would be sent upon me. At last I thought my condition could not be much worse than it was, so I again commenced reading, but still found no relief. After a while my distress wore off. At times I would be troubled, at others more careless. I continued in this way about four years, I think, when I became so miserable that life itself was a burden. I felt that I could not live any longer as I was. I would look on the birds and beasts and wish I was like them—I thought they had no soul, they could not sin, while I could do nothing else. One evening I felt like giving up everything, and did not care much whether I lived or died, for I thought almost any change would be a relief. I took up a little book (think it was Allien's Alarm to the Unconverted) opened it and commenced reading, when every word seemed directed to me, and that also condemned me. I arose and went to my room and tried to pray, but all I could say was, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" I had often thought before that I tried so hard to do good and prayed so hard, God ought to forgive me, but then I saw that justice required that I should be cast off forever; but, oh! I could not bear the

thought—with every breath I begged for mercy, till at last, becoming exhausted, both physically and mentally, I lay helpless and nearly unconscious, when these words came into my mind: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." I then saw that I had never believed in Christ, had never understood any of his nature and office—I had been depending on my own works for my salvation, while I could do nothing at all—I must give up all to him, and I felt perfectly willing to do so. A calm quiet peace seemed to steal over me, I felt that I was in God's hands and he would do right. Thus I continued for several days: I seemed to be waiting to hear the final decision, and felt sure it would be right.—About that time my brother and sister came to visit us. That evening, father, as usual, commenced singing. I generally sang with him, but then I could not sing. I was thinking of God's mercies in sparing us all, and permitting us to have such pleasant reunions, and I felt so thankful. They commenced singing

"Drooping souls, no longer grieve.

From the first it affected me, but when they sang

"From his hands, his feet, his side,  
Runs the healing lotion."

I seemed to see Christ nailed to the cross bleeding and dying. He looked on me, but, oh! I can never describe that look, so full of love and pity, yet it seemed to say: I love thee! I die for thee!! I found that I could not control my feelings any longer, so I arose and left the room, as I thought, to pray, but my prayer was turned to praise. I saw how loving, kind and merciful he was to me and I loved him so much that I wanted to tell the whole world of it. I thought they would be obliged to understand me and love him too. Then I remembered how often I had heard of his loving kindness, but never felt it before, and I knew they too were blind, and he alone could open their eyes. But to me the whole face of nature was changed, everything looked lovely, every sound was sweet music, heaven seemed to open and I saw Christ ascending and looking down on me. Oh how I wished to go to him, to be with him and praise him forever with every breath. I begged sweet Jesus to take me! Oh, let me come! When he was shut out from my sight, I thought—This is wrong, I ought to be resigned to his will. I then felt that I was resigned, that I could bear anything that it was his will that I should. Yes, if I should become so poor and afflicted as to have to crawl about and beg my daily bread I should be happy for I know nothing could ever trouble me again, and for several days I was almost perfectly happy. I wanted to tell my parents of my great joy: I knew they would rejoice with me. So one evening when alone with mother I

thought I would tell her; then I thought, I may be deceived and shall I deceive my darling mother? No, not for the whole world! So I was silent. From that time I thought I was mistaken, was afraid I had imagined a great deal. A few weeks after that one evening I was walking in the garden, thinking of my condition, and wishing that I could recall the past, when suddenly I thought, There is no God! It shocked me so that to prevent falling I sat down. For a while it appeared that I could not live. I seemed then to know that my former feelings were real, not imaginary, and I thought if after all that I then doubted his existence there could be no hope for me. I could not even ask for mercy. As soon as I could walk I arose and went to the house and into my room and thought I would try to pray again when I thought: If there is no God to whom shall I pray? and everything seemed a blank, without God there could be nothing. I then felt that there was a God and if I perished I would perish at his feet; and, I again found peace. Soon after that I seemed to be drawn to the church: I loved christians and wished to be with them. I attended one of their meetings thinking I would talk with them, and if they were satisfied with me I would be baptized; but, before the time arrived, the same which had prevented my speaking to my mother, again arose. I felt that I would rather die than deceive God's people or dishonor his church. After that I was generally cold, almost indifferent. I didn't fear eternal punishment, yet I could not bear the thought of dying: I loved life, my family and friends, and did not want to leave them. Thus time passed till a few months before my father's death. My health was dreadful, I didn't think I could live long, and when taking on as I sometimes did, he would talk to and try to lead me to trust in God. Oh, how I wished I could have such hope and faith as he had. I knew he loved me and prayed for me: perhaps God will spare him to me to be my guide and counselor while I live, and when I am dead he (pa) is too good to die—perhaps God will take him to heaven. When I heard of his death (he died suddenly) I thought I could not bear it—then I thought, He is not dead, or if he is God will save him. I was not able to go up that night, so I listened for some one to come and tell me that he lived.—Sometime through the night they gave me an opiate which put me to sleep. Next morning when I awoke I again listened to hear some one say he lived. When I knew he was certainly dead I began to accuse God of cruelty and injustice. Then I thought that cannot be, there cannot be a cruel or unjust God—perhaps after all there is not any God. It is useless to attempt to describe my feelings, for had I perfect command of

language it would be inadequate.—The third day Mr. Purvis preached the funeral. He and pa had been together a short time previous. He spoke of their having such a happy time, and said: He thought if man's prayers were ever answered his (pa's) were, for he had described such a death as that to him as the one he had long prayed for. Then I thought, Surely there must be a God to hear and answer prayer. Yes, pa was more righteous than I: his prayers were received—mine were rejected. After that, at times I was very skeptical, till my mother's death; which was March 9th, 1874. She died of a very painful and lingering disease yet bore it patiently and seemed to have such a strong hope, such a full assurance of rest beyond the grave, that I thought, Is not this enough to convince me? Shall I ever doubt again? I do not know that I have really doubted since, but at times would think of the possibility of such a thing, till last Fall, when I hope skepticism left me never to return.

Mr. Gold, please pray for me if you can! Oh, ask God to spare me for have I not suffered enough? How long, how anxiously have I looked for a christian experience similar to mine, but failed to find it till the second Sunday in May 1874. On Saturday I heard you and Elder Vanmeter preach and enjoyed it very much. Sunday I was sick and could not attend. The disappointment was great. At first I was very impatient and strongly inclined to murmur—then I remembered that we had just received the LANDMARKS, I also felt like reading the Bible so I was reconciled to remain at home. When I took up the paper the first I saw was from Elder J. R. Respass, and there I found what I had so looked for in vain. I thought, Oh, if I could only see that man I could express myself fully and freely to him, for he would not scorn but would sympathize with me. But to return: During all those long weary years, I seldom heard preaching; I often wished to hear it but my health was bad and I didn't feel like going in company.—About April 1st, 1872 I felt that I must go. The next meeting I went and again felt much love for christians. I felt it was my duty to join them; and if they received me, how could I be baptized in God's name when I was not at all times certain there was such a being. I also thought as long as I was out of the church my conduct could not affect it, if I was in it it would, and I did not want to bring reproach upon it. I did not attend another meeting till September—I again felt that it was my duty to offer to the church. When Conference was opened, the wish to go was almost irresistible but didn't feel that I could speak a word. On Sunday evening, death, a miserable death, presented itself, I then promised God if he would spare me till the next meeting I would go;