

THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with
truth.”—Eph. vi.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
A SERIES	
No. 1. The Condition of Man by Nature	289
2. Regeneration and its Characteristics	339
3. Adoption or Sonship	353
Aphorisms	349
Charity (1 Corinthians xiii.)	33
Communion... ..	129
Divine Intercourse	161
Divine Remedy for Earthly Hindrances and Discouragements	1
Extract	160
Fragments	29, 125, 158, 192, 318
God's Instruments for bringing His People through the Wilderness	47
Heaven	76
How the Believer is made Superior to Everything	19
How the Understanding is Enlightened	172
Intimacy with the Lord	182

Notes on Psalm i.	286, 376
Notes on Revelation iv.	314
Peter	321
Philippians ii., iii., J. N. D.	300
POETRY	
The Golden Word	32
The Watchers... ..	127
Our Hope... ..	191
1 Corinthians xiii. 12	223
Farewell to Life	224
Desire	288
One thing I do	319
Retribution, Chastening, and Purging...	65
Sanctification	202
The Assembly at Corinth and the Apostle	
Paul—a Contrast	362
The Law	97
The Path of Life	193
The Pre-eminence of Christ	273
The Resurrection	236
The Resurrection (<i>continued</i>)	257
The Success of Faith	225
The Walk of a Believer	140
The Walk of Faith	113

THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

DIVINE REMEDY FOR EARTHLY
HINDRANCES AND DISCOURAGE-
MENTS.

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our
profession, Christ Jesus.”

(Read Hebrews i.—iii. 1—4.)

THERE is only one divine way of raising the hearts of the children of God above the depressions that arise from the circumstances of trial and sorrow, which are the necessary accompaniments of their journey through this world. It is to have their thoughts filled with Christ; or, as the apostle expresses it in Ephesians, (iii. 17,) “to have Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith.”

This changes the aspect of everything.

The Hebrews were discouraged in their course through its varied trials

and difficulties, and needed to be stimulated to a "patient continuance in well doing," that they might become "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." This is the practical bearing of the whole epistle; and is the occasion of its being designated, in its entirety, by the apostle, "the word of exhortation." (Chap. xiii. 22.)

Wonderful are its disclosures of the glory of Christ—of His person, His offices, His work—but wonderful and far-reaching as they are, they are, *in their practical bearing*, but the revelations of a God of grace to tried and beleaguered hearts, as a resource against the trials and exercises of their course. They are the basis of the exhortations, and warnings, and encouragements, with which the epistle abounds, and which are designed in their effect to sustain the Hebrews in the position to which they had been introduced by grace and by a reception of the testimony of Christ. They had become, through Christ, "partakers of the

heavenly calling," and they needed sustainment against all that was contrary to it in their earthly path. They needed *more*, it is true. They needed to be raised, in faith and in soul, to the true apprehension of their calling in Christ Jesus; but then this, in its reflex, of necessity acted on their practical position, in detaching them from every claim of Judaism, and in raising them above the trials and temptations of the world by the moral leverage of an object of trust and confidence, and by resources of grace and help, without a limit and without a question, out of the world.

They might have been exhorted on many grounds to patience under trials, and difficulties, and discouragements; but, in having the thoughts thus filled with Christ, they at once find the power of the displacement of them all.

For what is it, I may ask, that occupies the two chapters of this epistle, of which this exhortation, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," forms the brief summing up? It is the glory of the

person of Christ. But how is this glory, in which we have so deep a stake and interest, and which is the only divine formative power of our hearts and hopes, our lives and characters, presented? I know not how to speak of it. But as my eye rests on these heavenly pages—where I pray my reader to let his for a moment rest—I see this glory unfold and expand until the whole sphere of heaven and earth is imbedded with the brightness of its heavenly light. In the hands of God's Spirit it glows, and brightens, and extends, until time past, time present, and time future, with all eternity to boot, stand out gilded and irradiated with its wondrous beams! But there is no power in the thoughts of man, in his witless imaginings, to rise to the height of the glory of Christ! It is only by the rising of the sun itself that we can discover its glorious light!

If I listen to the exhortation, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," it is to no excogitation of the mind that I am

called; but with a reverent heart to contemplate, as they are disclosed by the light of a divine revelation, the lineaments of Him who, as "the word made flesh," is the central sun of the christian system. Here I behold a divine Person, so truly man that the affections of the human heart can lay hold upon Him; and so truly God, that the mind through faith, can at all times and in all places be brought into direct contact with Him. Christ, the divine Man, is the great attractive centre—the sole gravitating point of a system which owes to Him all its coherence, and which would be but a chaos were He away.

In "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," it is true our thoughts are directed to the *offices* which the Lord sustains. But it must be remembered that his official glory hangs on the glory of His person as divine. His offices owe their proper dignity to Him by whom they are borne, and the value of His work results from the value of the person by whom it was accomplished. What he *is* imparts its character to what he *does*.

The bearing and importance of His offices are fully unfolded in the subsequent parts of the epistle, but in these chapters (chap. i., ii.) His full personal glory is brought out.

This, however, is taken up from the opposite point to that in the Gospel or the Epistle of John. It is not a statement of what He was from eternity, before He was manifested in time—what He was “In the beginning with God,” before He was “the word made flesh and dwelt among us.” He is here presented simply as the continuator of God’s communications to Israel, as of old time He had spoken to “the fathers by the prophets.” He now in these last days has *spoken to us* by his Son, or, “in the Son.” Having thus introduced Messiah as “*the Son*,” he of necessity supersedes every other, inasmuch as His dignity and claims are paramount. As “*the Son*” He is at once presented to us as “heir of all things”—Lord and Possessor of that boundless universe which displays the wisdom and the eternal power of God. But this presents

Him only in the position of imparted glory. He is "*appointed* heir of all things." To this heirship and dominion He accedes through worthiness and humiliation and death; however His claims to it are based on the deep foundation that creation, in its widest extent, with all its suns and systems, its order and harmony, reaching out to the vast abysses of worlds and systems yet unexplored, owes its existence to that Messiah—"the Son"—by whom God was now speaking to the Hebrews! It is what He *was* that gives the only adequate foundation for what he was *constituted*. The *mystery* of His person must be known in order to understand the possibility of His being the holder of these dignities.

This is taken up in verse 3 and is expressed in a few brief words, which seem to dazzle by their brightness and overwhelm by their illimitable force. "By whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of

his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." This is the condensed statement of what is unfolded in the remaining parts of the chapter. Beyond it no *statement* can go; but confirmation of its various parts is now to be drawn from those testimonies which of old had been recognized by the Jews as the oracles of God. "God had spoken"—the Hebrews admitted it—"to the fathers by the prophets," and now these declarations are given in attestation of the claims of Messiah and of His proper glory.

He is exalted, not above prophets, but above angels—the highest order of created beings, and who held so conspicuous a place in connexion with that dispensation which was now passing away by the introduction of Messiah, "the Son." "He is made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." In divine relationship He holds a place to which no angel could ever aspire. He *inherits* the name

and relationship of "Son." "He *makes* his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire." But he does not make the Son anything. He attests that relationship which could alone be His. "Thou art *my Son*, this day have I begotten thee." And again, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a *Son*."

These quotations have a double aspect. The first presents Messiah as God's King, set on his holy hill of Zion." (Psalm ii.) "His Son," born into the world, in accordance with Jehovah's ancient decree:—and, so presented, having an inherent title to the name of "Son." Still the title seems only to be fully vindicated in *resurrection*, as in Romans i. 4, "Declared the Son of God with power . . . by resurrection from the dead."

The second presents Him, with more directness, as the heir of David's throne. (2 Samuel vii. 14; 1 Chron. xvii. 13.) In both aspects there was the testimony of the prophets—the attestation of God to Messiah as His Son. His Son, too, in such sense that, as no angel ever

sustained the relationship, so He could never be called by the name. "To which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son?"

So much more exalted than angels is the Son, that when, as the "firstbegotten" God brings Him into the world, He is presented as the object of angels' worship: "Let all the angels of God worship him."

The same divine testimony is rendered also to His intrinsic glory, as God, as before to His divine relationship of Son.

If Messiah's kingdom is spoken of, its sceptre is declared to be in the hands of the Son. But, then, how is the Son addressed in these oracles which speak of his anointing and the perpetuity and glory of his reign? "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom," &c.

And, further, if it be as to His claim as Creator, "upholding all things by the word of his power," these oracles are not silent. It is to one who, in humiliation and sorrow, and conscious rejection,

when in contemplation of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, said, (Ps. cii.,) "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days," that the oracle replies, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

The title, then, of Son, in this most exalted sense, as belonging alone to Messiah, is thus sustained. His being the perfect manifestation of the being of God—"the effulgence of his glory, and the exact impression of his subsistence"—His power in creation, and His sustainment of all things that exist by His powerful word, are by these quotations in a most wonderful manner sustained. In the last, especially, His eternal duration and absolute power, in contrast with the decay and mutation of all created things, is, in the most touching

manner conceivable, brought out to view.

But there is another point in which Messiah is contrasted with angels, presented in these verses, (ver. 2, 3,) that is taken up: it is the exalted position He assumed on the accomplishment of His work. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

This place at the right hand of God, where no angel ever sat; this exalted position in dispensation, which no angel ever filled, Messiah has taken—as our Lord showed to the Jews by His quotation of Psalm cx—as being at once both David's son and David's Lord. But it is not nakedly His title to this exalted position that is here in question, but the proof of the actuality of His having taken it for Himself—seated Himself

there; "when he had by himself," in infinite grace, and love, and power, "accomplished a purification for our sins." The work of redemption accomplished, He is seated at God's right hand until His enemies be made His footstool. But angels are only servants to do His bidding in regard to them who shall be "heirs of salvation."

In the exhortation, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed," &c., which is interjected between the two latter points of contrast, between Messiah and angels, it is impossible not to notice the divinely living, flexile, character of God's most precious word. Here, as in a moment, all the rays of that glory which is being unfolded are made to converge and concentrate upon the conscience; without a break in the continuity—the divine continuity—of the subject! For it will be seen that this exhortation looks back for its basis to the statement, "God hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son," and to the majesty and authority of his word by which all creation is upheld. If,

then, the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every dereliction of the law which they delivered met with its just retribution, what would be the inevitable consequence of a neglect of the salvation which began to be spoken by "*the Lord*," and which these Hebrews had seen confirmed by the witness of God and by the concurrent testimony of the Holy Ghost?

But Messiah, "the Son," whose glory is never for a moment lost sight of, unites in the mystery of His person, the Son of God and "Son of man;" and this latter title, with its distinctive honour, remains to be taken up and vindicated. "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak," &c.

There is a "world to come"—a future dominion of the habitable earth—that is not to be administered by angels, but by the "Son of man." Power, universal power, is to be in the hands of *man*. But there is only one man to whom universal dominion can be accorded. For the Son of man, who was made a little

lower than the angels for the suffering of death, this dominion waits. All things are to be put under His feet; concerning which Psalm viii. is cited as the appropriate witness.

How vast and varied are the glories of that Christ whose grace and love are the daily, only, resting place of our souls! If exalted above angels in glory, he has taken a place below them in humiliation that He might, as the "captain of our salvation," bring all this glory into association with ourselves! For though we see not yet, as the apostle argues, all this dominion subjected to Christ, we see in His being "crowned with glory and honour," when He quitted the field of conflict—a conqueror through death—the certain pledge that ere long "nothing shall be left that is not put under him."

From this point onward it is another aspect in which Messiah is presented. It is His place in association with those who were the subjects of His delivering power—the many sons whom God, through Him, was bringing to glory.

His death was by "*the grace of God*"—its fruit and wondrous proof. As "the captain of their salvation," He was "made perfect through sufferings." It was becoming the majesty and holiness of God that it should be so. In the sanctification which He wrought, He so identifies Himself with them, and them with Him, that "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Into their condition He, in infinite grace, came down, and through death He brought deliverance, and destroyed him who wielded its power. And if angels again appear in the argument, it is only to declare that men, not angels, are the objects of the deliverance which Messiah, by His death and sufferings, conjoined with His power and glory, wrought. "He took not hold on angels, but on the *seed of Abraham* he did take hold."

Hence being made in all things like His brethren, the basis for the exercise of that priesthood which He exercises in grace and faithfulness is laid. So that, as we have said, the tried and beleaguered soul may find in Him, at all

times, a sure resource. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted."

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

It is easy to see what must be the effect on the minds of the Hebrews—those converts from Judaism—of this presentation of Christ, and also its beautiful and heavenly adaptation to their circumstances and position. But "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." And though it is impossible to read this epistle without being struck with the peculiarity of its character and bearing, it is at the same time as evident that none of the force or value of its revelations is lost, because the special circumstances of those to whom it was at first addressed have passed away.

Believers now are "partakers of the heavenly calling;" and though they are not viewed in the epistle to the Hebrews

as the church in its position of being "risen with Christ," they are urged by truths no less vital and important, and no less touching to the soul in regard to the infinite displays of divine grace, and the resources that are brought to bear on its exigencies, through the position which is now, through redemption, assumed by Christ.

Simple and effective is the "divine remedy for earthly hindrances and discouragements," which it presents: for if the heart be filled with thoughts of Christ, it becomes not only conscious of infinite help and grace, but at once care and anxiety and discouragement have lost their place.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession Christ Jesus." This is not effort; it is not the soul's chiding its own dulness; it is the simple occupation of the thoughts with Christ. But, then, it is not with the Christ of my fancy that I am to be occupied, nor of my reasonings, nor of my unbelief, but with the Christ whose

glory and grace, whose work and worth, whose infinite might and infinite love, we have just seen—though feebly—by the hand of the Spirit here unveiled. If I come forth from the shades and darkness to the sun, I find myself cheered by the warmth of its beams as well as irradiated with its light.

Christianity is a simpler thing than most believe. The resources of grace are more ample than our unbelief suggests, and nearer at hand than our habitual distance from the Lord allows us to perceive.

HOW THE BELIEVER IS MADE SUPERIOR TO EVERYTHING.

NOTES ON PHILIPPIANS IV.

The whole of this epistle brings before us, in a remarkable way, the superiority of the saint to *everything* around him. A person walking in the Spirit is superior to everything, whether it be the flesh, the world, persecutions, cares—*everything*.

If you look through the epistle, you will find that *whatever* it was, the mind of the apostle was above it. Be it life or death, he renounces himself—has one single object in view—viz., Christ—“to *win Christ.*” All the rest he passes by. I do not find anything about sins, the flesh, or forgiveness. He will not have his own righteousness; his *object* is Christ. What has struck me, particularly of late, in this epistle is the saint's entire superiority to *everything* while passing through this world in the power of the Spirit of God.

It is sweet to see the way in which the Lord gives Himself to us as the *source* of our joy and the object with which we can occupy ourselves. There can be no rising above the cares of the way, unless there is a *positive* joy to satisfy the heart. Jesus gives *Himself* to us as this; not only as the source, but as the *constant* spring of joy to our hearts. For it would be *uncertain*, unless He were *always* there and a *sure* fountain of joy. It is not only that we are saved by Him—that He has given

us glory with Himself at the end; but the love that was in Himself has gone out of Him into us, in the full perfect exercise of all that He is for us above. So the apostle speaks of the "Love of Christ that passeth knowledge." It is beyond all thought; still we can know it. It is blessed as regards the Lord Jesus to understand that He Himself has given to us all the love He can, to make us happy.

He becomes a man—gives Himself up to death; but wondrous as this is, it is not all. He gives us *Himself*. The love which is in Him goes out from Him and into us. We get an analagous truth in John xvii., "The love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." This love dwelling in us, we have the power to apprehend the Father's love towards Jesus Himself. The love of Jesus is not only *set* on us, but flows out to us; in different degrees it may be, but still it is that we "may know the love of Christ—that is, the love that is *in* Him—divine and passing knowledge—but which flows down to

fill the heart. There is no straitening in the heart of God. There *was* straitening in the heart of Christ until His death, as He said, "How am I straitened." His heart could not flow out till atonement was made; now it can. There is no hindrance, because He is our life. He is our righteousness too, but that is immediately connected with the life of Christ in us. We "live by the faith of the Son of God." I have capacity, inasmuch as Christ is my life, to understand the love of Christ. The better I know Him, the more I can rejoice in Him; not in salvation, but in the Lord.

All Paul's trouble brought out more distinctly what it was to "rejoice in the Lord." It is more felt in trial and difficulty than if there were none, though it is the same love *always*. The first thing is to get Himself; that is the secret of our life. He does not speak of glory or anything else. It is "to win CHRIST." It was Himself that his heart was set on in the midst of all, and *without anything else*. Jesus was his joy—his heart could rest there—could find its home

and be satisfied. As the light of the sun excludes every other light, so, when Christ is before the heart, it is Himself that sets *everything* else aside. There may be many exercises for which we should thank Him; but when the Lord fills the heart, it is constant joy. Our spirituality is tried by the measure in which there is fixedness and constancy. Jesus Himself, in whom the love is perfect and infinite, is the blessing as well as the Blessor. The apostle at once feels it must be joy. Think of what you have got in Him *now*, that you may seek to know Him better. The first time the heart feels it is loved, there is joy—wondrous joy often; and the first feeling expresses itself in a peculiar way; but it may be far *deeper* afterwards. In the case of the apostle it was anything but “first love.” It was a joy entirely independent of circumstances. What he would have us do is, to rejoice in Christ Himself as if there were *nothing else in the world* besides.

The next thing I would notice is verse 5, “Let your moderation be known to

all." This is a relative thought. The first thing is Christ Himself. Now, He says you can bear other things. The heart has got its centre in Christ, and therefore it passes through circumstances lightly, meekly, yieldingly. But there is another thing—"the Lord is at hand." He is the spring of all my delights, whether I think of His glory or humiliation. "He is at hand," and that satisfies the soul. Other things have lost their character: all the rest is as nothing. The mind is possessed with Christ, and that is the state of the soul.

In passing through circumstances it needs power. "Be careful for NOTHING:" (verse 6 :) the world, Church, or circumstances—"nothing." Is it as if he were indifferent to it? No. Is it seeking to know what the will of God is? No; but "make your requests known to him." Is God, then, so near, so bending, so condescending? Tell them to Him. He wants to have your heart discharged and to be occupied with Himself. "With prayer and supplication"—there must be earnestness; and "with

thanksgiving," because you know you are heard. *Go to Him.* Do not be caring, reflecting, pondering, exercising your own mind, but "let your requests be made known."

And what is the consequence? "the peace of God will *keep* your heart;" not the peace *with* God, but the peace *of* God, that in which He dwells—peace which passeth understanding, just as we read of the "love of Christ which passeth knowledge." The love is divine, and the peace here is divine—He dwells in it. Nothing is a care to Him. He knows the end from the beginning, sees all things. Although the contrast is not needed, there is more *apprehension* of this peace in trial than any where else. All the mercies I get I can understand. Very well; but when I get into cares, I get a peace which passeth all understanding. He tells us to "rejoice in the Lord," and just as Christ's love is a source of ineffable joy, so that peace in which God dwells flows into the heart that casts its care on Him.

He traces all our path: He "with-

draweth not his eyes from the righteous." We come to Him as a child to its father, with EVERY thing, and the confidence of this is its beauty. All we ask for may not be *wise*, but He only gives us what is for our good. Just as we see in Paul, he asks for the thorn to be removed; but the Lord tells him He cannot remove it. It is for good to him and he is made to rejoice in it. This is the proper joy, constant and blessed, in which the soul delights; and it keeps the heart out of activity of *will*. But where did *he* learn it? Where *you* have to learn it every day. I know what He has been to me from the first. Very ignorant I may have been, but He was always the very thing my soul wanted. Paul had known Him thus, till He had made Him so happy in Himself that he did not know which to choose—whether to live or die. If left here, it was serving Christ. If he went away, it was to be with Christ Himself. If He had not thus found Christ all *through the way*, he could not speak of Him at the *close* as he does here. It is for you to find

your faith every day in this way resting on Him, that you may say at the end, "I *know* in whom I have believed." Is that what we are learning, young or old?

The first great thing is to rejoice in the Lord. When a person finds Christ his portion, his joy and blessing for Christ's own sake, he finds Him such when trial comes. We are all of us defective in this. We may be sincere in following Christ, but there is something else in the heart. He has not such possession of the soul that other things cannot get in. Whatever circumstances may be, if the heart be fixed on Christ for His own sake, I shall find Him what I want for my own concerns. This is the happy Christian. Christ has given Himself to be rejoiced in. I look at Christ as the one to find my delight in. He is the one in whom the Father delights, and He says, "I want you in fellowship with me." God draws us by this love into the enjoyment which He enjoys. He who is the joy of God takes His joy in us and brings us into this joy. We learn this love in seeing Christ in

all our circumstances on the earth; not merely in giving Himself on the cross, but brought home in detail to our hearts. We cannot get into any circumstances into which Christ has not been; and His love, while infinite in itself, has adapted itself to us, and besides gone through all the circumstances in which we may want Him. See how the apostle expresses the experience of this: ver. 19, "*My God.*" The God of the poor prisoner? Yes. He can say, "I know him to be faithful." I have known Him to the end. I undertake to answer for Him *for you.*

How little we believe in the love of God, in His care, His interest for us. If we only thought of Christ giving Himself for us, of His soul being wrapt up in us, we should know better what it is to live for Him.

First of all we are to rejoice in the Lord Himself. Christ personally is the object in which the heart is to rest and to find its present joy and blessing. How far are your hearts living Christ? how far rejoicing in the Lord

always? Do you think the apostle was telling the Philippians what could not be realized? How far is Christ your daily source and subject of joy? "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." That is the secret of the way in which Christ makes the heart happy. Remember, the source is in Him, dwelling in Himself. May the Lord give you so to think of, dwell on, live on, Christ, that all the rest may be only circumstances. It is *Himself* He has given us, and in a way that meets us where we are. The Lord give us to know it! All the rest will vanish—*that abides*; and it is joy, and sweetness, and comfort in all the circumstances through which we have to pass. It gives its own portion and its own preciousness, and all else is but the passage through which we have to pass, in going to "the rest which remaineth" for God's people.

FRAGMENT.

God's provisions of grace are perfect and infinite. Perfect and infinite are they, if looked at in their absoluteness

in Christ, as founding our happiness deeper than the deepest ruins of sin, and raising it in Him, in a life that is eternal, above all change, and time, and death, and so, allying the heart in its hopes, and prospects with all, that is timeless, permanent, and eternal.

This we see in God's meeting us in Christ, "when we were dead in trespasses and sins;" and, from that abyss, quickening us together with Him, and raising us up together, and "seating us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

But no less are these provisions of grace perfect and infinite, if viewed with regard to our present place in the world, and modified by the exigencies of our condition as the children of God, "in the world," but "not of the world," as Christ was not, and journeying toward our eternal inheritance in Him. God would have His children not only "kept from the evil that is in the world," but in intercourse with Himself. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." We are *now*—here

—in the world—“to walk in *the light*, as God is in the light;” and in order that this may be possible, and our fellowship be unbroken, His provision is “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son,” which “*cleanseth us from all sin.*” The blood is here seen in its cleansing power, as fitting us to dwell in the courts of heavenly light—light where God dwells—and not in its atoning efficacy as meeting the penalty of our guilt. But there is the *practical* cleansing also. This is attached to the act of confession—confession of all that is practically unfit for the light. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

But there is more than this: the very trials and vicissitudes of the wilderness through which we are passing, and which are often so sore a test of our patience, are in God’s purpose, and to our faith, but the occasions of the active communications of that grace, the provisions of which are perfect and infinite.

THE GOLDEN WORD.

There is a word that melts my heart,
No other moves me so ;
For me no other can impart
What this word doth bestow.

JESUS is my unrivalled word ;
A golden word to me ;
For in its sound all these I've heard,
Love, pardon, life for thee !

No mother's voice, grown soft to lull
Her weary, waking child,
Was e'er of tenderness so full,
So hushed, and deep, and mild.

This word is with me in the dark ;
I hear it on the wild ;
It sheds a light upon my path,
And I am reconciled.

In the loud storms it soundeth clear ;
And oft I bless this word ;
It tells me that my help is near,
That my faint cry is heard.

Would I exchange this word for ought
Of gold or costly gems ?
Ah, no ! a world to it were nought.
Though piled with diadems.

CHARITY.

“Yet show I unto you a more excellent way.”
“The end of the commandment is charity.”—

(Read 1 Cor. xiii.)

This way of surpassing excellence, so often missed, so little understood, it is the purpose of this paper, by the Lord's help, a little to unfold.

“The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” But nothing can be farther from a just apprehension of this “way,” nor anything much more remote from this “end of the commandment,” than that which is presented in the current thoughts and aims of those who are distinguished by the profession of Christianity in this day. In ordinary Christianity the root of charity is not seen, its divine nature is not known, and consequently its development is impossible and unsought. The utmost that is seen in the divine unfolding of this “incomparable way,” is but an attractive picture; a well-considered description; a hyperbolical ex-

hibition of some ideal that must never be expected to be realized in action; or if ever embodied at all, it is reduced to the outgoing of the kindness of mere human feeling, and attempted to be displayed by schooling the passions into subjection, and the subdual of the natural haughtiness of the temper and spirit under the menage of the bit and curb, or the influence of conventional restraint. I speak not here of the restriction of the term to the mere giving of alms, but of the meaning that lies beneath the current phrases, "in perfect charity," "universal charity," "living in charity," "dying in charity."

But "God is charity." Charity is "love;" and Christ on earth was the divine embodiment of love. Apart from this, men's thoughts of love and their results in natural men, are but a poor and worthless caricature of the divine original. This, surely, is not the display of that to the cultivation of which all the gifts of God's Spirit were to tend, and all faith and truth to foster, and all revelation to sustain; and beyond

which there lies no attainment in the heavenly life, either in this world or in that which is to come. Deeper, far than this, must we look for that whose essentiality enters into every true exercise of the soul towards God, and overlives all that ministers to its development; and is beyond the limit of all mysteries and knowledge, and the endurance of all the wonders that may be disclosed to faith and hope!

It is difficult in a day like this clearly to perceive *God's ends*, whether in the individual believer or in the collective body. And when they are discerned, it is still more difficult consistently to carry them out. This arises, not from any want of plainness and explicitness in the divine word, but from our views being so contorted by the false exhibitions of Christianity around us, and from the heart's estrangement from the moral power of the cross. It is hard to emancipate the spirit from those false influences that are at work, and bear upon us on every side, from a Christianity that, conjoined with the cross, may

be said, emphatically, to "mind earthly things;" and that we should be indebted for the moulding of our thoughts and desires only to the precious revelations of our God in His word.

The assertion ought not to surprise us that even as Christians we often miss God's ends, since it is on record before us that the Corinthians, with their apostolic constitution as a church, and with all their plenitude of spiritual gifts, had failed of discerning God's ends in two most striking points, (there were others too, and of a moral nature) to which they were obliged to be solemnly recalled by the Spirit of the Lord. They missed *God's end* in their gathering together at the table of the Lord, so that it was "not to eat *the Lord's Supper*," but *their own*: and they were so aside in their use of revealed truth and spiritual gifts, as to bring upon themselves the rebuke of being "carnal," and walking as men, and very children in their use and valuation of what they had received from God. It need not, therefore, be thought wonderful that indi-

vidual Christians now should often miss of discerning God's ends in them as His redeemed; nor that the assembly, however rightly constituted, and however full its ministrations of truth as truth, and perhaps secretly boasting in its knowledge, should need to be recalled to the solemn consideration, that "knowledge *puffeth up*, but charity *buildeth up*"—and to be warned in the language of the Spirit, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way!" Of this we may rest assured that no principles, however scriptural, nor truths, however deep, will keep the soul in God's paths, if "love," as the end of all, be not sought.

But what is this charity, without which all gift is but an idle clangor, and all knowledge but as childish amusement?

In Christ its exhibition was perfect, even in its *objective* character. Its exercise flowed from Him without any antagonistic power, and without any place for the negation of self. For as "God is love," so Christ was the perfect manifestation of this love, in a man, in

human circumstances. In truth He *was it*, inasmuch as He was "God manifest in the flesh." But in us it is the exactly opposite. It begins in us in the negation, the active negation, of all that is characteristic of nature, or of the old man. Its power stands in the new risen-man, in Christ. It is Christ in living power in the soul: "To me to live is Christ"—"Christ liveth in me." Hence it is impossible that this "more excellent way," this end of God in His saints, should be understood or sought, where the soul is not in possession of the confidence of acceptance, and where being "risen with Christ" is not practically laid hold of. It is a hopeless enigma where this is an enigma. For the manifestation of a thing cannot be where the thing itself does not exist. It is an energy of life that evolves its own appropriate form; and it cannot be but from the living spring which is within—the divine nature—"that which is born of God." It alone will bear the stress of days like these; for it overcomes and cannot be overcome. Love

asks no motive: it is its own motive. It depends not, in its exercise, on success, or estimation, or approval, from without. And He well understood its power who could say, "Be it so; though the more I love you, the less I *be loved*." But its perfect example is seen only in Jesus on the cross. Power was not there—sympathy was not there—the estimation of those who had known its exercise in life, in their sick being healed, or their lepers cleansed, or their dead raised up, was not there; nor was the estimation of those there, who were debtors to His love for life and salvation, and who were to know its abundant fruits after love had achieved its victory amidst rejection, and desertion, and sorrow, and death.

In the exposition of this chapter, the peculiar position of which the most careless cannot fail to notice, I take it to be so far plain in its practical bearing on the "husbandry of God," that he who exercises gift or ministry, of whatever character, does it in vain, as to himself, if it flows not from this spring of love. And I take it to be no less

plain that God's end is not accomplished in those that are ministered to if charity be not quickened and nurtured, and if its characteristic exercises be not awakened in the soul. The end of God in His saints—His "perfect way" for them—is "charity." And so love's ministry begins in love in him who exercises it, and issues in the nurture of love in those on whose behalf it is exercised; even as the apostle unfolds to Timothy, that "the end of the commandment (or charge) is charity."

If, therefore, it were the speaking with tongues—although they displayed in a wonderful manner the power, and even the goodness of God, in reaching men in their divisions and various languages, which were the fruits of sin—yet, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity,"—if love direct not their exercise, and if love be not awakened as their result, I am in the sight of God, and as to all divine results, a mere empty sound: "I am as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

But deeper than this. If it were the interest of the mind, which so often stops short of God's ends, and makes its own recreation and delight its end, even when dealing with the bright revelation of truth, it is worthless. Prophecy, and the penetration of all mysteries, and all knowledge, on which we build so much satisfaction for ourselves, and expect, with frequent disappointment, so much fruit from others, reach not the point. Love's husbandry is not advanced by instruments such as these. Even the "faith" that knows how to bring in the power of God, in its miraculous displays—the faith that could "remove mountains"—will falter in this "perfect way." If I have no more than this, and seek no more, still "*I am nothing.*"

But farther still. Benevolence in me may have its widest scope, and zeal may reach its final limit, yet may it never reach this heavenly way. Though I give all my goods in doles to feed the poor; and though I become a martyr in my zeal, if "love" be not the spring,

it nothing profits. Philanthropy may have its devotees, and zeal its martyrs: "love" only profits.

"Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John iv. 7, 8.) Herein the teaching of the Apostle Paul, and that of John, however widely they diverge in their general tenor, are found to coalesce. Indeed, it must needs be so when God's final end stands in the view of both.

"Love," then, "is of God;" and in order to love, we must be "born of God." It is the exercise and display of that which is essentially and characteristically divine. It is to be exercised in a world where trial of its energy will be found, and in circumstances where everything but itself must fail. But "love never fails." In the blessed example of the Lord Jesus we see how everything in a hostile world was but the occasion of the brightening display of love, until it reached its crowning manifestation in the death of the cross.

This love, then, can never differ from itself: so that if suffering is to be encountered in its exercise, or an occasion for kindness to be shown, love is girded for its work. "Love suffereth long, and is kind." Nay, further: is another to be advanced and myself thrown into the shade? Be it so: "Love envies not." It looks with an eye not emulous of others, and is not insolent or rash. As it seeks not to diminish another's praise, so it is not inflated with an estimation of attainments in itself. Love's carriage is ever in deepest modesty: there is nothing unseemly in her ways. Her own she does not seek; and is not resentful of the slights she meets. Evil she thinks not, nor imputes. "Rejoices not in iniquity;" but finds in the triumphs of the truth her joy. "Beareth all things" that must be borne; "believeth all things" that should be believed; "hopeth all things," while ever there is the possibility of hope; "endureth all things," while endurance is demanded.

"Love never fails." "Prophecy," though dealing with divine communica-

tions, "will be done away;" "tongues," though the bright witness of Christ as the ascended Lord, "will cease;" and "knowledge," such as the mind of man can grasp, though heavenly communicated, "will be done away." They are but steps by the way—the rudimental advances toward that, beyond which is no advance. When that is reached, these will have receded from the view, or will be looked back upon from the vantage-ground of that which is perfect and eternal, as manhood now looks back on the things of its childhood with a corrected and abated estimation of their worth.

But "now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." Deep and eternal as are the truths on which the assurance of faith is built, and apart from which there can be no onward progress for the soul in the paths of the Lord, still *His end* is onward. Even the assurance of hope is not God's end. There is something deeper still. The revelations which ally the soul to Him, "whom having not

seen we love," will cease, and be no longer the ground of "*faith*," when "we shall see Him as He is." Even the bright visions of hope, with all the sublimities and glories which it anticipates, will reach their issue, and be no more as hope; but love will still remain. Nor is it in an abstract manner that it is said love will remain, as characterizing the nature of God and therefore eternal as Himself: eternally blessed as is the thought—but it remains *now*, as the way that we have to pursue, a way that never fails. But how surely nothing that is of nature will enable us to pursue this way. Nay! how surely must that which is natural to us, as men, be put aside in order to make a step of progress here! It is the way of the cross; the way of death to the flesh. It is a path that lies only in the sight of God—a path which "the vulture's eye hath not seen," but still it is "the path of life." But a path that none but the "single eye" will find.

Unlike those gifts and ministrations of knowledge which bear the stamp and impress of power in their exercise, and

which man can covet and value, "love" looks only to the eye of God for approval of its labours, and can alone be estimated by those whose hearts are fashioned by its heavenly power.

Truth may be ministered and delighted in, but truth in its highest range or deepest character will not keep the soul, if, for himself and in the light of God, each one seeks not the ends of "love." Truth may be coveted, and right principles may be boasted in; but love only will stand the time of trial. All short of this will leave those that are attracted by it but as chaff before the winnowing-fan, when the stress of suffering for the truth may come.

"Love never fails," and "the foundation of God stands sure," and it may be added, "the Lord will keep his own;" still, he who in God's husbandry looks not to "love" as his spring of strength, and seeks it not as his final end in souls, is but laying the foundation for discomfiture and failure, and a result common to every previous revival amongst the church of God.

Charity respects, necessarily, all that God respects, for "God is charity." It cannot be exercised in maintaining anything that is contrary to God. Its essential character is unknown where such a thought concerning it possesses the mind. It seeks God's ends and these alone. And what are these but the glory of Christ, and that there should be a due estimation of his worth in those that are His?

GOD'S INSTRUMENTS FOR BRINGING HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.

THE WORD AND PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

(Read Hebrews iii. and iv.)

The argument of the Apostle in these connected chapters is plain, and the moral suggestions are obvious and of the most solemn import.

Having presented Christ to these Hebrews as the apostle and High Priest of their profession, of which Moses and Aaron were the types, as in his argument

he reasons about the faithfulness of the one and the appointment of the other, the parallel rises in his mind between Israel, in the wilderness, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and believers now in the world (their wilderness) under the leadership of Christ.

This is the ground of all the warnings drawn from Israel's history in the wilderness, and of the reiterated declarations concerning the fatal consequences of unbelief.

Having said of Israel (chap. iii. 19,) "So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief," he adds, in direct application, "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest any of you should seem to come short of it." In saying, "For unto us was *the gospel preached* as well as unto them," it must not be imagined that he intends anything like the common notions of a preached gospel, or that it referred to salvation at all. The term is used in its most general import of "*tidings*;" and the force of the passage is, "unto us *tidings of a rest* have been brought

as well as unto them," (Israel.) It is a reference to the tidings brought by Joshua and Caleb and the spies, about the land of Canaan, Israel's promised inheritance. And in adding, "But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it," he had simply, and alone, in view the report of the spies ("the word of the report") which was not believed by the congregation of Israel. From this he passes to the consequence of their unbelief, that they did not enter into Canaan; but "their carcasses fell in the wilderness." But to give it a still closer application to those to whom he was writing, he adds, "We who believe do enter into rest." This has nothing to do with rest of conscience or rest of heart, the rest of faith which believers undoubtedly have in Christ, or any other rest *by the way*. He simply asserts, "Believers are entering into rest," analogously to Israel when delivered from Egypt, who, if they had to go through the wilderness, were on their way to their *promised*

rest. Believers, he says, are now on their way to a rest, of which Canaan was a type, and Israel's history a warning. It is the same rest contemplated all through the chapter; and Canaan and the Sabbath are used as types. It is *God's rest*. It is yet future; and believers, by virtue of redemption, are called to labour towards it. Verse 11 shows that if believers had entered into this rest, they would have ceased from all their labours, as God did when the works of creation were finished. Consequently there would have been no ground for the exhortation, "Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

But it is to prevent this issue, and to sustain the confidence of the Hebrews, that verses 12 to 16 are added. It is by keeping the consciences of His people bright and their hearts reliant on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that God keeps His people from falling, and brings them to *His rest*: the word and priesthood of Christ being His two great provisions for this end.

The scope of these exhortations and warnings is this: in the apostle's mind believers are viewed as replacing Israel on the earth as a people in relationship with God; just as in Rom. xi., the Gentile profession is viewed as the channel of the continuance and on-flow of God's promises; a position which might be forfeited, as they stood by faith. Hence, failing their continuance in "God's goodness," they were threatened with "cutting off." In like manner, in chap. iii. of this Epistle it is said, "Christ is a son over his own house; whose house are we, *if*—" But why "*if*?" Because of the parallel position between these Hebrews, on the score of their profession of Christ, and Israel that fell. They had replaced Israel in relationship with God, but on higher grounds. They had spiritual sacrifices, a heavenly priesthood, and a heavenly city; while a "heavenly calling" put a heavenly Canaan, or God's rest, before them, and this world as a wilderness, in present experience, to go through. On this ground there is the utmost con-

sistency in these warnings and exhortations. They are the sign-posts of danger, which are planted along the pathway of the believer, as seen in the light of this epistle. Nay, more: they are the gracious provisions of the precious word, the means which God uses to prevent, on the part of His children, that which results to the mere professor. Both are addressed on the common ground of profession; but the saint uses these instruments for good, and heeds these warnings, while the mere professor goes on in security. Thus that Scripture is accomplished, "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."

We are in the wilderness actually; that is, it is no mere figure, but is the expression of a moral truth. We are also "risen with Christ" actually, for our life is in Him, and nowhere else. They are the two leading aspects of our position in grace.

"God is light," and "God is love." Blessed, infinitely blessed, revelation of

“Him with whom we have to do!” In redemption He has shown this, in having laid our sins upon His beloved Son that He might bear the judgment of them in the cross, and, in result, that we through that cross should be presented “holy and without blame before Him in love.” But He shows it also in every step of our pathway that is taken with Him through this present evil world, in having provided the light of His word to detect in us all that is contrary to Himself, and the grace of Christ’s priestly intervention to meet all that the light of the word detects.

We are not in the rest, as experience tells us, and the chapter shows, but are labouring towards it. Consequently, there is place for warning, lest the heart become “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” and lest we be overtaken by the fatal consequences of unbelief. Unbelief lost Israel Canaan; and the force of the apostle’s conclusion is that, unbelief would lose these Hebrews heaven, or the future rest. It is not the question of how grace is secretly

ministered to sustain the soul, but of conscience and responsibility. If Peter's faith had failed, his sin would have been fatal to him, as the sin of Judas was to him. But Jesus said to him, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Here we see the ground of his preservation from apostacy; as in his epistle he presents the truth, doctrinally, when he says, believers are "kept by the power of God, *through faith*, unto salvation," &c.

The same result is presented, in the passage before us, as accomplished by the searching power of "the word of God," and the intervention of Christ in unlimited priestly, or restoring grace. But here more than the result of final security is contemplated. That which detects and sets aside the latent grounds of apostacy brings into the soul the presence and power of God in his holiness and grace.

It is not indeed the "word of God" as *revealing* his grace and love that is here presented; but it is that word in its searching and *detecting* power. It is

declared to be "quick and powerful"—living and energetic! As a sword it pierces through every fold which might conceal the working of evil, or hide from our view the germs of unbelief. It is light, and detects not only evil in act, but penetrates to the heart, and lays bare every thought, and motive, and desire that is not in accordance with the character of God, and with the light into which by redemption we are brought. It is thus that apostacy, or departure from the Lord, is arrested in its secret springs, and the soul is brought under the restoring power of grace.

Now "the word of God" is *this*, whether I accept it or not. It flashes its light into the inmost recesses of the conscience and the heart, and uncompromisingly shows me to myself, not by its precepts and commands alone, but by presenting to me what God is without a veil. But above all, it shows me to myself by showing me what Christ was here in this world; and, by the very contrast of what I find within, I am

cast entirely and absolutely on Him for the exercise of His grace.

It is true that, if there were nothing but this searching and detecting light of the word, it would only induce the feelings of despair, and would lead to a surrender of all profession as hopeless. Darkness and distance from God would be sought, instead of light, as the only refuge from what the light disclosed. This is suggested in the exhortation, "Let us *hold fast our profession*; for we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," &c.

The business of the priest under the law is thus stated, (chap. v. 1, 2,) "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." For every sin and trespass, for every uncleanness and defilement, the intervention of the priest was provided; and nothing was excluded, except the high-

handed wickedness ("sinning presumptuously") which despised alike the commandments and the gracious ordinances of the Lord. So, in Christ's priestly grace, there is nothing that the word discovers which that grace does not meet, except it be the unbelief and presumption that will not come to Him for help. When it is said, "Seeing we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, *Jesus the Son of God,*" it is to show that there is nothing which our need may call for that He is not prepared to meet.

In the word of God so presented, and the priesthood of Christ, I see the blessed means of God's own providing, by which, as light and love, I may have Him with me in all the possible phases of my experience, and in all the exercises of my soul, as they are called into play by contact with the ever-varying and ever-trying scenes and circumstances of the wilderness of this world.

There is often, alas! in the soul even that has been brought into the liberty of the Gospel, and where the highest

truths may be current in the thoughts, such a want of practical self-judgment, such a laxity in the feelings and principles, and motives as to indicate a sad want of the practical power of the truths before us, in the conscience and the heart. It may not be that assurance has departed from the soul, or that the sense of acceptance in the Lord Jesus Christ is undermined; but there is a mass of things that lies unjudged in the heart, and consequently keeps it practically at a distance from the Lord. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth."

It is not all and everything to know, as is so often concluded in this day, that we have eternal life. It is, indeed, much to know it, and cause of joy when any are brought by the power of the Gospel out of darkness into God's "marvellous light." For the word remains true, and who can be thankful enough for it? "He that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into

condemnation; but *is passed from death unto life.*" But that eternal life is to be *lived*, and not to be counted merely as the ground of eternal safety. There is place for the apostle's exhortation to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, *lay hold on eternal life*, whereunto thou art also called." This mighty boon of infinite goodness is not only to be known as the ground of present rest to the soul, and of security for the future; it is to be grasped as a present possession, and used as a moral lever to lift us above all that would depress us to the level of things that are "seen and temporal," to the height of those things which are "not seen and are eternal."

It is not all and everything that I should know "Christ has loved me, and given himself for me," and that I am eternally united to Him through infinite grace—that I am, as is often said, "in resurrection-life" in Him. I have, in addition to this, communion with God in the light to be maintained. I have, with the apostle, to "exercise myself to

have always a *conscience void of offence* toward God and toward men." I ought, moreover, with the same apostle, to have Christ, through whom and in whom I have that eternal life, so the object of my affections and desires, as to be able to say with him, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This prize, to the apostle's mind, took the form of being with Jesus in the resurrection; and to reach this he was willing to be made conformable to His death. That is, he would pass through anything and everything to reach his object—the cross itself, if that were in the road to his attainment, "unto the resurrection of the dead."

Without this the soul becomes weakened in its apprehension of truths already learned. It requires to be in daily contact with God—to have the faith bright and the eye undimmed in its vision of eternal things. I must be

advancing in the knowledge of *God* if I would not go back.

In the wilderness Israel had the sanctions of the law and the exhibitions of judgment; but these were not sufficient to bring the people through. Judgment might destroy the golden calf, and hide, for the time, the outward tokens of the people's sin, and the earth might open and swallow the rebellious amongst them, or fire from the Lord consume the "sinners against their own souls." The *rod of power* might be ready to smite, enemies if opposed, and Israel if disobedient; but no exhibitions of power, or avengings of a broken covenant, would avail to bring them through the wilderness, and place them in the inheritance their sins had forfeited. Something other than power was needed for this. It was the rod of priesthood—"Aaron's rod that budded:" the rod which, in a figure, showed that, out of death, God would bring forth mercy and forgiveness, and present the ground for the exercise of long-suffering love.

So is it now. There is the searching

power of the word, and the eye of God, which cannot let any evil pass undetected and uncensured—no, not in thought nor in desire. “For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” (Heb. iv. 12, 13.) But, then, it is added, “Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Ver. 14—16.)

How often does the word assert its

character as here presented; and amidst the throes of a conscience, awakened, it may be, by sorrow or calamity, or by the apprehended approach of death, compel the soul to register its verdict against a thousand things that have been allowed to pass without a scrutiny, or that perhaps have been extenuated or defended at a distance from the light! And how do we tacitly own this power of the word by the consciousness that we must not turn to it for its sanction of anything that our pride may seek, or our love of the world may paint desirable; or that it should allow of the indulgence of dispositions that our self-love refuses to correct!

It may be taken as a moral axiom, that when we are desiring to walk in the Spirit, the searching light of the word is welcome to our hearts; and the reverse is no less certain.

But is it possible for me to walk by such a rule, and to allow my thoughts and desires even to be tried by a standard so uncompromising? Yes. And its uncompromisingness will be the stay of

my heart. For while it brings God so near to me, as "light," that it makes manifest "the thoughts and intents of the heart," it brings Him near to me as "love" too, and tells me how wonderful is the resource I have in Christ Jesus, to enable me thus to walk in the light as God is in the light. It makes me feel that it is not said in vagueness, but as presenting the immediate and necessary resource of the soul that is walking in the light, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

The night is almost spent,
The golden dawn is near;
I watch the firmament,
And wish the morning here.

Thou Morning Star, my Lord!
My every thought is thine;
Oh! think upon thy word,
And let thy glory shine.

All my desire's for thee,
My soul no more earth-bound,
Since thou hast set it free,
Is sad till thou art found.

RETRIBUTION, CHASTENING, AND PURGING.

The more we apply our hearts unto wisdom the better shall we understand God's dealings with us; and if we are attentive to the bearing and purpose of those dealings we shall find that most of them are comprised under these three heads, each of which is distinct in its character, intent, and the effect produced on the soul. It is a profitable subject to meditate on, and before tracing the examples of each action in Scripture I may state, in a few words, what I believe to be their respective characteristics.

Retribution I regard as distinctly belonging to God's government in the world, and the Lord's rule in the church; the principle of which is embodied in that passage, "With whatsoever measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again."

Chastening is of another order, and is more when we have neglected our calling, like Jacob at Shalem, the Lord comes in to remove the weight which

obstructs our course. Perhaps there is a position to be renounced, which we are *unwilling to renounce*, but which, being an obstacle to our progress, some sorrow is sent to effect the required correction.

Purging I understand to be the help one gets to detach oneself from an association at the moment, during service, which enables us the more effectually to carry out the purpose of the soul, which, *far* from being unwilling, gladly avails itself of the help or correction to right itself; the great characteristic of the action being, that the soul readily accepts it as expediting and enlarging it in the service it is engaged with. We may now examine these a little more closely.

Retribution is often very difficult to trace to its cause, although its occurrence may be manifest enough. One great reason of this is, that God in His mercy often allows such a time to elapse before He inflicts what His righteous government demands; "for there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Death

is the first and greatest retribution; "The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This is the first judicial penalty attached to an infraction of God's just law of government. The curse of Cain, is an instance of simple *retribution* very speedily instituted, while the suffering of both his sons was a *chastening* to Adam, and we see the fruit of it in his naming of Seth. All Abram suffered on account of Hagar was retribution, for had he not gone down into Egypt he would not have met with her. In David's history we find instances of each. When, in the matter of Bathsheba, he offends against the laws by which God governs man on the earth, he suffers retribution in the sentence that the sword was not to depart from his house; and he is also *chastened*, for his child dies. Retribution occurs apart from chastening, but the exercised soul may use it as chastening, though primarily inflicted, because God's laws have been outraged; not so much, perhaps, with reference to Himself, or the conscience of His servant, as with His

servant's dealings towards men on earth. "With whatsoever measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you again," will explain many a trial which God's people suffer from. For instance, if I speak unkindly of people, some one will speak unkindly of me; my resource is to go to the Lord with my sorrows, and He will avenge me, if I have been unduly dealt with, or unrighteously condemned, though I have met with a just retribution, and it is so far permitted; yet the executioner will always suffer at God's hand condign and signal punishment. The laws I have outraged are vindicated in my public sufferings; but the "Absalom" used by God to retribute me meets with signal and terrible judgment.

As to *Chastening*, many term that chastening which is not so, and vice versa. We are inclined to call all treatment which is irksome to our nature, chastening; but that is not the true definition of divine correction. Again: we very often designate interruptions to our plans as such, which, in reality,

have a very different object. To a certain extent they act as corrections, but their primary object is to save us from some sorrow to which we should have been exposed, if we had been allowed to prosecute our own plans; in fact, we are too much in the habit of associating the idea of penance and punishment with chastening. Now, the same word is used forty times in the Old Testament, and only ten times is it translated chastening. In all the rest it is correction. I think we may say there are three orders of correction: the first and happiest is that termed "purging," which we shall notice presently. The second is that correction which is sent to make us renounce what failure has led us into, and which is hindering our progress. For this purpose the soul is brought through sorrow and exercise; and while this process is going on, i.e. while it is passing through the sorrow, there is no fruit. It is "*afterwards*," that it yields the "peaceable fruits of righteousness." This is easily understood, for while one is very much occu-

pied with oneself, there is no power to perceive the necessity of the correction; for we never see anything distinctly till we are some distance from it; in fact, this order of chastening is always "grievous," and during its continuance there is more or less sense of distance between the Father and the soul; while in the first order, or "*purging*," there is NONE WHATEVER.

The third order of correction is when God chastens His people but they do not perceive it. Careless souls are often admonished, and never know why, nor seem to care to know. But the Lord does this to vindicate His own care, so that when their eyes are opened they may recall His correction.

This is, in one sense, unhappy work, and unwilling work, if I may so say, with the Lord; but He must vindicate Himself, His care, and His correction, however little appreciated. But I believe, in such cases as these, that He always corrects as little as possible; nay, that He always *corrects most where He finds most acceptance* of it. Abel's death I

regard as a chastening to himself,* and to Adam of the second order; and as giving us a character of the correction which a righteous man needs and is subject to. No doubt there was testimony in it, but we learn from Heb. xi., xii. that suffering for righteousness is used of God as a correction for ourselves, because "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The demand on Abram to offer up Isaac I regard as chastening, *until he entered on it*, and from that moment it was *purging*, because his soul became each moment more and more free to fulfil it, acquiring strength as it advanced.

Joseph met with much chastening. His repeating his dreams to those who could not apprehend them indicated very clearly how much he required to be humbled under the mighty hand of God: and all his history is one of correction, very graciously dealt out and profited by, and sometimes advancing into purging.

* i.e. if the principle stated in Hebrews xii. 6 in its apparent universality can be applied in such cases as the death of Abel or of Stephen. [Ed.]

A striking example of the *third order* of chastening may be found in Lot's earliest sufferings in Sodom—those recounted in Gen. xiv., from which Abram delivered him. We have there the Lord's dealings with an unexercised soul, in order to vindicate His own care. And though not accepted as correction at the time, Lot could not, when his eyes were opened by the final catastrophe, have charged God with neglecting to warn him.

Purging I have termed the *first order* of chastening or correction; but though it may be thus classed as a higher order of dealing, it is at the same time quite distinct, having this special feature, that the soul which is purged is in full sympathy with the Purger, and not only accepts, but gladly avails itself of the process (that which flails off, as it were, the hindrances to the nature of Christ having its full development, or whatever impedes its service.) This is what the Lord speaks of in John xv., where He tells us that the Father is the *purger*. "Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more

fruit." The convicted soul hails the means of righting itself, so to speak; like Peter when he abandoned the ship, and went to the Lord. (John ~~xx~~) I do not think he suffered at all at that moment, but that his heart grew happier the nearer he approached the Lord; and the more he did so, the more he renounced his wanderings, and condemned himself for engaging therein. He left them "*with a will*," as we say. And he, of all in the ship, is purged *first*; for he is first attracted from the ship to the Lord, thus proving what has been said, that the Lord corrects most where there is most acceptance of the correction; and the result of this in Peter was to "bring forth more fruit."

Moses was purged when told to put off his shoes, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. And Paul, when in prison, (the result of his own failure,) is relieved from fear by the vision at night.

I regard the blessing of Melchizedek as purging to Abraham, because it detached him from earthly expectations,

and fixed him on the future more distinctly, and thus enabled him, already a fruit-bearer, to "bring forth more fruit," by refusing all the offers of the king of Sodom. When Jacob corrects Joseph as to the position of his sons, it was purging to Joseph. Again, when David puts off Saul's armour after putting it on, his correction was of the order of purging, and gladly hailed by him. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace, it was clearly testimony; but I think the loosing of their bands gives us an illustration of purging; for they were thereby disembarrassed in their work and testimony, in order that they might execute more efficient service. When we really seek to serve, we are delivered from what would impede our service; and this is properly purging, which is not necessarily attended with suffering, its grand object being to disembarrass the soul from what it desires to be rid of; so that it becomes coadjutor with the Father in the process, at least as to *will*.

As to the effect produced by each of these dealings which we have noticed, we may add, I am inclined to think that, in cases of retribution, there is no elasticity of soul until the sorrow is past. Retributive sufferings, when accepted, will always lead us rather to humiliation and casting of ourselves on God than actual fruit-bearing. They may prepare us for the latter, but the tendency of the natural man under this class of sorrow is self-vindication; and we generally have to be taught to accept the punishment of our iniquity, not as a compensation for it, but a public satisfaction for God's offended laws, according as we have publicly offended. We may have "sought to do it secretly," as David did; but the enemies of the Lord blasphemed on account of it: and his experience, while suffering from the retribution, which is given in Psalm ~~liii.~~, shows us the true and proper condition of soul at such times, and the one which will lead to full deliverance. Thus will it be with Israel in the latter day. David's retributive sufferings were fol-

lowed by chastening—for Absalom dies; but he returns to the throne, bearing the “peaceable fruit of righteousness.”

Any suffering is chastening or correction, if the effect of it be to *lead us unto God*. And when we are in reality thus affected, i.e., when we have accepted it as leading us unto Him, knowing that it is necessary for us to this end, and therefore willingly retaining or sanctioning it, then the chastening has advanced to purging, which often follows the lower order of correction, but which is nevertheless distinct from it, and which always produces joy and vigour of soul, increased fruit-bearing, and freedom for service.

H E A V E N.

“No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven.”—John iii. 13.

“He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.”—Eph. iv. 10.

The only thing that attracts the heart divinely toward heaven is the affections being set on the Lord Jesus Christ, who

came from heaven as His home, and having died for us in infinite love and grace, returned to heaven again to make it our home.

When He was on earth He spoke to His disciples, in the simplest and directest manner, of His "Father's house" being *their* home, as it was His; adding, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Thus heaven becomes attractive just in proportion as our thoughts and affections are occupied with Him who has gone there, and has engaged in the end to bring us there in the power of that life which we have through Him and in Him. None has ever loved us like Himself; none has a claim to our confidence such as He has; none has ever proved Himself so worthy of it. I speak of *trust*, where all must be trust, and of the infinite moment of being able to say, "I know in whom I have believed," or, I *know* whom I have trusted. And supposing we have to pass through death, from which nature shrinks, to

our Father's house and our heavenly home, He has gone the way before us, and has opened to us "the path of life;" as He said, with death before Him, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Moreover, there is "the Father," too, who, as revealed to us by the Son, becomes, by His infinite grace and goodness, the attractive object of our hearts; and it is in His house that the Lord Jesus is preparing a place for us. Knowing God and being "born of God," and so possessing a nature that can delight itself in Him, the Lord Jesus has laid the grounds of our eternal confidence in His presence, in that wonderful expression, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Nothing so assures the heart as the certainty that we shall meet our God in heaven in this well-known relationship.

Heaven, doubtless, has its own peculiar glories, far transcending all that is bright

and glorious on earth; still, it is the stake and interest that our *affections* have in heaven that make it attractive to our hearts. Heaven is the dwelling-place of God, "who has loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and it is the home of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the apostle says, "he has loved me, and given himself for me:" and so contemplated, it alone has power to draw the heart thither. No descriptions of an unseen world, nor imaginative pictures of heavenly enjoyment were ever found to attract the spirit from earth where Christ was not the centre of its desires. Yet it is no uncommon thing to hear persons talking of heaven as their place, and of being there; but with the most this language means no more than that heaven is to be enjoyed when earth is done with—that this world is the place for the enjoyment of the body, and heaven will receive their departed spirits. Even believers, as to the great body of them, are Christians only in hope, and little better than Jews in practice. For

heaven, when contemplated by them, is seen only at the end of life's dim vista, while earth is the place of their busy thoughts and schemes; and it is well if its transient interests and fading associations be not in truth the home of their affections. Too little place, it is to be feared, with regard to the most of us, is found in our creed for that article, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"—and for its counterpart, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

But "we are saved *by hope*;" and there is no thought more patent in the scriptures of the New Testament than that the Church and individual believers *belong*, by their very calling, to heaven, and not to earth. The present citizenship of the Christian, his πολιτευμα, is in heaven, as well as his future hope. When Christ was rejected from the earth, blessing on earth became impossible, (not God's "long-suffering" toward it, "which is salvation,") unless men

were to be blessed there without God, or He should maintain them in happy possession of the inheritance after they had killed "*the heir.*" When He is received, at His coming again, by Israel, the earth will indeed be blessed: "Then truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." But when the darkness overspread the earth at the Lord's crucifixion, and the vail of the temple was rent, it was significantly taught that the earth was closed as to blessing, and heaven opened; and that he who would now be blessed must follow Jesus into heaven, "whither as forerunner he is for us entered."

Nothing can be more striking to a thoughtful mind than the contrast, which a perusal of the Scriptures will unfold, between the veiled condition in which heaven is presented in the Old Testament, and its un veiled state as presented in the New. To the Jew, for example, Jehovah was dwelling in the heavens, as Supreme Governor, there to maintain the right. He is seen walking in "the

circuit of heaven," ready to deliver by His power, and presenting the ground of confidence to those who trust in Him on earth; for "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." But there is no revealed *present relationship* with heaven, as now. Believers might look forward to it as their ultimate inheritance, as Abraham, who sought for a "heavenly country," and "looked for a city whose builder and maker is God." Still, in the Old Testament, God is presented in the height of heaven in the general aspect of the resource of those that dwell on earth.

But now believers, by virtue of redemption, and the revelation of God's purposes of grace in Christ, *belong to heaven*. It is not merely opened to them, so as to have the resources of their strength and confidence there, but their very life is there, and all their associations, as well as having "a hope laid up for them in heaven."

It is not indeed wonderful that there should be this contrast, if we reflect for

a moment on what hangs on the marvellous fact of God's own Son having come down from heaven in the accomplishment of redemption, and in our nature returned thither again; coupled with the relationship in which this work places us toward the Father and the Son; and, it may be added, toward the Holy Spirit too. It is no wonder, amidst the wonders of infinite grace, that heaven should be opened to those on whom God has thus expended the affluence of His love, or that it should be presented as their only proper home.

However, it is the heaven of revelation, and not of imagination, that is needed to attract the soul toward it; though how much it may be the heaven of imagination that possesses our thoughts, perhaps few of us can tell. Still, there is *the place* where God's honour dwells; and there is the glory into which Christ has entered, and into which He will introduce us; and there is the attractiveness of the Father's house, though one cannot help seeing that Paul's heaven was "to depart and

to be *with Christ* ;” and the heaven he presents to the Thessalonians is, “ so shall we be ever *with the Lord* .”

But it may not be without its use, passingly to notice the notion of the Jews concerning *three heavens*, which is so far correct, for the scriptures speak, at least, of *three*. There are “ the fowls of heaven,” “ the dew of heaven,” “ the clouds of heaven,” “ the winds of heaven,” &c., which refer to the atmosphere that surrounds this earth—the *aërial heavens*. Then follow “ the firmament of His power,” “ the sun and moon,” and “ the host of heaven”—the *starry heavens*. Lastly, “ the heaven of heavens, which is the Lord’s,” or—“ *the third heaven* ;” if, indeed, the two designations can be thought to coincide. The lowest heaven is essential, in its influences, to this earth, as the rain, the dew, &c.; and the next heaven no less so, in its original order, as the lights of the firmament : “ the sun to rule the day,” &c., “ the precious things put forth by the moon,” “ the sweet influences of Pleiades,” and “ the

bands of Orion," &c. These are, as it is expressed, "the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained." There is the glory of these heavens; though "Jehovah has set his glory above the heavens," and the Lord Jesus "ascended up far above all heavens."

The mind of man is naturally attracted by the displays of material grandeur and magnificence, and these are scattered with so profuse a hand in the out-lying fields of God's glory in creation, that philosophers often fail to see anything more glorious beyond. But the heart that is guided by divine revelation perceives the moral to prevail over the material, the nearer it approaches to the place where God's honour dwells. The books of creation and providence and redemption are ill read by him who perceives not in them that the end of all is the display of the moral glory, the *character* of, Him, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things."

If I turn to Rev. iv., v., I see heaven presented in its governmental

character—the place of the throne; and here I see ranged around, the throne of Him who is supreme, the thrones of the elders who are crowned, and seated as a company of kings and priests. With the dignity of rule there is conjoined the ceaseless worship of Him who sits upon the throne; and the glow of adoration can never languish amidst the echoes of that solemn diapason, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!” But amidst the harps and golden vials and odours, and the myriads on myriads of angels which throng these heavenly courts, and join with the redeemed in the universal chorus, the eye instinctively rests on one whose presence and character alone form the spring of all this joy and praise. It is “the Lamb,” standing in the midst of these elders and this countless multitude, whose presence quiets the heart amidst the overwhelming majesty and grandeur of the scene. Even amidst the bright and glorious symbols by which “the holy Jerusalem” is presented to our view, the symmetry

of the city and its pearly gates, its glittering foundations and its golden streets, the nations of the saved walking in the light of it, and the kings of the earth bringing their glory unto it, there is one part of the description that alone fixes itself in the heart—"I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof!" What meaning does this give to the expression, "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!"

In the close of Hebrews xii., I think, I see not only a dispensational aspect of the position in which believers are set by the coming and accomplished sacrifice of the Son of God, but also the great constituents of the scene, in the midst of which their blessing will be found, when heaven and earth are linked together in millennial glory under Christ. It is said in verses 22—24,

“Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly, and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect: and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

These are now, doubtless, the unseen realities of *faith*; but on this very ground it is certain that they will by and by become the embodiments of heavenly happiness and glory. “Mount Sion” is, in simple contrast with Mount Sinai, the symbol of the law, and is the compendious symbol and expression of heavenly grace. Grace is the necessary foundation, the preliminary of all blessing in heaven or earth; for it is the question of bringing sinners, and not righteous persons, home to God. But “God will give grace and glory.” Glory, we learn, is the sure consequent and indissoluble result of grace. Hence it is said, “Ye

are come," not alone, "to Mount Sion," but, "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" and if Psalm cxxii. be here read, it will give the key to some apprehension of what, by the expression, is intended to be conveyed. In the Psalm it is the earthly Jerusalem; but here it is "the heavenly," and its glory, proportionally, is transcendent; for it is the metropolis, not of a single earthly kingdom, but of heaven and of the universe, and the place of its glorious throne. What the attractiveness of this "city of the living God," this "heavenly Jerusalem," is, we may catch, if we reflect that Jerusalem was the central point of meeting to all the chosen tribes of Israel, the scene of their holy solemnities. It was the gathering place of those joyous worshippers who were "glad when they said, Let us go into the house of the Lord;" for the crowning glory of Jerusalem was, that it was the place of the temple, where Jehovah dwelt enshrined. But of "the heavenly Jerusalem" it is said, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God

Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it;" so that as now the church is "builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit," when it is transferred to the heaven of its destination, it will be so surrounded by the blessed presence of God and of the Lamb, that that very presence will be its temple.

But the heaven to which we are going is not an unpeopled solitude. "The heavenly Jerusalem" is not a cold array of solitary grandeur, where palaces untenanted and streets untrodden might awaken the thought of "a city of the dead." It is the great place of congress of the universe. "Myriads of angels" are there. It is "a general assembly."*

"His state is various."

But within these ranks of angels, this "innumerable company," and nearer to the throne, is "the church of the first-born ones enrolled in heaven." They are here presented in their own place, the place assigned them in the riches of God's grace, as the predestined heirs of

* The term is used to indicate the festal assembly of *all* the states of Greece.

this glory—the acknowledged citizens of this “city of the living God.” On earth our Lord told His disciples to rejoice that their “names were *written in heaven.*” And amidst the seductions and trials of this world, believers are admonished that their “citizenship is in heaven.” This is presented as accomplished here; for it is the province of faith to see things as God sees them; though, at the same time, it may understand that what is first in counsel may be last in accomplishment. But what is heaven, or all the thronging hosts of angels and saints that people heaven, without the God whose presence alone gives its character to heaven? The effect of grace is to bring the soul to God, to find its resource in Him, to find life in His smile, and to know that “His lovingkindness is better than life.” Besides, Jesus “suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us *to God;*” and the effect of this *now*, through faith, is to give the soul a resting-place in God’s presence, a home there, such as it can find nowhere else.

If, therefore, one were in heaven, the heart, amidst its throbbings of wonder at heaven's magnificence, and happiness, and glory, would still be saying, Where is God? I *must* go unto "*God, my exceeding joy.*" It must be so. But it is added, "Ye are come to God, the Judge of all." He is here indeed presented in His majesty as the Supreme and Sovereign Arbiter of all. But He who judges, and awards to all their destiny and place, is no less the God who is the eternal spring of all the happiness that angels know, and the source of every stream of goodness that ever flowed to refresh this weary world; while to us He is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"—and that which follows, "*God our Father,*" through Him.

But God surrounds Himself in heaven with more than we have seen; hence it is added, "And to the spirits of just men made perfect." The saints of former ages, who lived on earth before the development of the Church, which we have already seen, is in its place, in

this "city of the living God." For let it not be supposed that, when these blessed constituents of heaven have ceased to be the moulding powers of faith and hope, that they are destined to fade away like the deceptive colourings of a dissolving view. "The things which are *seen* are temporal; but the things which are *not seen* are *eternal*." Resurrection will place these "spirits of just men made perfect" in this blissful scene; but, as it is said with regard to the resurrection, "every man in his own order," so these saints of earlier days are seen in their "own order," ("God, the Judge of all," has so awarded it,) as "the church of the first-born," are found in theirs. It is of them who formed the cloud of witnesses, who had finished their course in faith, which we have yet to run, that it is said, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some *better thing for us*, that they without us should not be made *perfect*."

But the complement of heaven's joy and heaven's attractiveness, is still,

by no means full. Its centre of unity, as the heaven of grace, cannot be wanting; as it would be if He were absent, or unseen, whose love and grace alone, and blood-shedding, have brought every poor sinner there. Jesus indeed is there; but He is there in special title, as in consonance with the immediate bearing of this scene on the faith of those who were especially to be stimulated and encouraged by it. "Ye are come . . . to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant;" to Him who, in this title, links earth and heaven together in the grounds of blessing, joining the risen saints in heaven with the accepted worshippers of earth; for it is with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" that this covenant will be made. Then will be accomplished the prophetic declaration, "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the *heavens*, and *they* shall hear the *earth*, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil, and *they* shall hear Jezreel"—the seed of God.

But it is added, "To the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things

than that of Abel," which completes the link with earth again. "Mount Zion" was the starting point in the upward path to heaven; but from thence we have reached in our journey "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" and have passed through the ranks of the "myriads of angels" that form a part of this "*general assembly*," up to the place of "the church of the first-born ones enrolled in heaven;" and have "come,"—Oh, wondrous thought!—"to God the judge of all."

Higher, even in heaven, *in thought*, it is impossible to go: and hence we must take a downward path. If "*downward*" may be used when it is only intended to show the range of that heavenly grace which can gather a church from amongst sinners "dead in trespasses and sins," and plant it in glory, "hard by the throne of God;" making "the last first and the first last;" apportioning, too, in heavenly glory, the place of all; and then, through Jesus, bending down to earth again, and presenting in the new covenant and "the blood of sprinkling, the point of contact with Israel, which

is yet destined to see "days of heaven upon earth," amidst the bright scenes of millennial blessing; and in Israel's blessing there shall be as "life from the dead" to this poor world. Men, and especially Israel, like Cain, had been guilty of the death of Him who came as the only righteous One, and in love had allied Himself to man; but whose blood is now heard, not in demands of vengeance on the murderers, crying from the ground, but in accents of mercy, where judgment and vengeance only were due.

But "the half has not been told." Completeness on such a subject, what pen can describe, though far more skilfully handled than his who presents this sketch? Still, the little that has been presented may set the heart athirst for more; though no skill in the descriptions of heaven is sufficient to raise the affections there. Attachment to Christ was the secret of such men's longing after heaven as Rutherford's, and the Lord grant that it may be ours.

THE LAW.

(Gen. xvi.—xxi.; Ex. xix.; Matt. xxvii.)

Wondrous are the premonitions we get in the Old Testament of the richer and fuller disclosures of the New. The old is the dawn or twilight of the noon-tide that shines in the new. Among other instances, or samples of this, I might mention "the law;" for we get in a section of the history of Abraham, that is, in Gen. xvi.—xxi., a short or miniature expression of the whole legal dispensation which lies between Ex. xix. and Matt. xxvii.

We may consider this great subject for a little while together.

The God of grace and glory had been dealing with Abraham from the very beginning of his history in Gen. xi.; and in chap. xv. a promise is given him that he should have a son. But he failed in confidence in God; and this, as I may say, brought Hagar and Ishmael into the house; and we know that that bondwoman and her son were, mystically, the law.

Hagar and Ishmael thus brought in through Abraham's unbelief or want of confidence in God, two things attach to them while in the house. They have title to be there, but they must be in subjection. The angel of the Lord thus instructs Hagar. (Gen. xvi.)

During this stay of Hagar and her child in Abraham's house, the God of grace, the God of the promise already made to Abraham, is true to Himself. He continues to make promises to His elect one. He ordains circumcision in the house of Abraham; and circumcision was the witness of grace, not of law. He visits Abraham, and distinguishes him in a very marked manner. He shelters him from the consequences of his own sad failures; and at last, He fulfils His promise, and gives him a child by Sarah. (Gen. xvii.—xxi.)

The birth of the promised child begins a new, but short, era in the story of Abraham. The two children are then in the house together for the little interval from the *birth* to the *weaning* of Isaac. Each, however, had his place in

the house, and neither could treat the other as an intruder. It was a strange time. It was difficult to manage matters, we may say; but so it was. The two mothers and their children, the bond-woman and the free-woman, with Isaac and Ishmael, were together in the house of Abraham.

The time, however, soon arrived for making a change. The two children get opportunity for manifesting their different tempers and their different relationships to the house; and this works a separation. Ishmael, the elder, the son of the bondwoman, a youth of fourteen years of age, strong in the flesh, despises the feeble infant when it was weaned, when it was just beginning to feed on strong meat, to know its relationship, as it were, and to cry, Father! All this marks a full moral divergence between the two children; and Sarah, the free-woman, demands the casting out of the mocking son of the bondwoman; and accordingly, though with some grief of heart, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael out of the house, and Sarah

and Isaac dwell there alone. And I may say this took place ere Isaac was old enough to make acquaintance with the child who had been now sent away. All that Isaac could have known of Ishmael must have been by family tradition, or what he had heard of him, as I may further say, through his mother.*

Thus, in these materials, thus lying in Gen. xvi.—xxi., we get the story of Hagar and Ishmael in the house of Abraham. We see their introduction there, and how they were to dwell there for a time, and then, their dismissal. This is the story of Hagar and Ishmael in the house of Abraham; but it is also the story, in mystic dress, of the law in the house of Israel, as between Ex. xix. and Matt. xxvii.

What wonders! What a miniature, and what a full-sized portrait! And we may now see that the miniature

* Isaac and Ishmael meeting together afterwards, to bury their father, as we see in chap. xxv. 9, makes no difference as to this. Isaac did not know Ishmael *in* the house of his father, Abraham.

bore all the features of the full-length figure.

Grace and salvation had visited Israel. The God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob had gone down to Egypt and delivered them out of that house of bondage, had then gone before them in a pillar of cloud and of fire, had made a passage for them through the Red Sea, and had guided them in safety and in honour to the mount of God—the pledge and earnest of the coming kingdom. (Ex. i. —xviii.)

But now, as Abraham had failed in confidence in God, after God had done such wonders in grace for him, so now Israel conceive confidence in themselves, after God had done all these wonders in grace and power for them. And this introduces the law into the midst of them, (Ex. xix.) as want of confidence in God had brought Ishmael into Abraham's house.* The law thus brought

* Want of confidence in God, and confidence in ourselves, thus betrayed by Abraham and by Israel severally, are the two sources of the

in by reason of Israel's self-confidence, the same two things attach to it there, as, by the voice of the angel of the Lord, were attached to Hagar in the house of Abraham. The law has title to be there, but it ought to be in subjection, or the one to serve the heirs of promise. The Lord Jesus decides this point in His argument with the Pharisees at the opening of Matt. xii.; and so I believe St. Paul does in his arguments in Rom. ii., and Gal. iii. iv.

But then, again, as during the stay of Hagar and Ishmael in Abraham's house, the God of grace, who had been there before them, was true to Himself and true to Abraham, nourishing, as we saw, the heart and the hope of His elect in various ways, so now, during the age of the law, the same God of grace nourishes the hearts and the hopes of His Israel. Among other things, we see this all through the Old Testament from Ex. xix. Ordinances were set among them, the shadows of good working of the legal mind in ourselves, as they introduced the law in Gen. xvi., and Ex. xix.

things to come. Long-suffering goodness was exercised towards them. Discipline was exercised. Pledges upon pledges that they had not been forgotten were given to them. Deliverances were wrought for them. Saviours were raised up to them. Prophecies of glories still to be displayed in the midst of them, with all the grace that was to prepare the way for those glories, were published from time to time. They were kept alive in spite of a thousand provocations, as they are to this day. And at the last, the promised Messiah is born to them, as the promised Isaac had been born to Abraham and Sarah.

Wondrous accuracy in the resemblance between the miniature of which we speak and this full-length portrait !

But as we compare them still further, it is only more of this we see.

The birth of Messiah, like the typical birth of Isaac, begins a new but short era in the course of the legal or Mosaic dispensation. The two children are then in the house together; as I may express it, Christ and Moses, like Isaac and

Ishmael. Each had title to be there. Neither could treat the other as an intruder. It was a strange time. It was, again I say, difficult to manage matters. This was the period of the four Evangelists. But the strangeness, the peculiarity of that season, the difficulty of ordering things duly while such divers elements were found in company with each other, only serves to set off the bright moral glory of the Lord Jesus, as we see Him tread His way during that season, the season of His sojourn here in flesh. For He was then, at one and the same time, the witness and minister of the Father, or of God in grace, and the perfect servant and fulfiller of all righteousness under the law.

The time, however, arrives for the making of a change. The Lord of salvation is offered up, a sacrifice for sin. By His death He destroys him that has the power of death, as well as makes reconciliation for sinners. But not only that. He cancels the law to all who believe on Him. He nails it to His cross. And the saints of God could

then say that they were dead to the law by the body of Christ. It had dominion over them as alive; but now, in the age of the resurrection of Christ, they were no longer as a *living*, but as a *dead and risen* generation.

This great event, the crucifixion of the Christ of God, takes place, as I may say, in the day of Matt. xxvii.; and then, in principle, the law had ended its course, as it began it in Ex. xix. The self-confidence of Israel had brought it in; the self-sacrifice of the Son of God now, as to the elect, puts it out. And when the Spirit of the Son was given, when the Holy Ghost, on the glorification of Jesus, came down, and was a spirit of adoption in the elect, forming Christ in them, making them the true Isaac, and breathing in them the mind of the children of the free-woman, then, as Paul teaches us, the true Ishmael, the spirit of the bond-woman must go at the bidding of the zealous, indignant demands of faith. They could not dwell together. The one who shares the spirit of adoption does not, cannot, know the

spirit of bondage. Isaac never knew Ishmael: the saint of this dispensation does not know the law. "If ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."*

The law still lives for the ungodly and for sinners. That I know. (1 Tim. i. 9.) But again I say, the Isaac of this dispensation does not know the law, or Ishmael. It left the house ere, I may say, he entered it.

Surely, then, after tracing these wondrous coincidences between the miniature of Gen. xvi.—xxi., and the full-sized painting of Ex. xix.—Matt. xxvii., we may stand and admire the divine harmonies which are found in the oracles of God, and see another vivid and brilliant ray of that self-evidencing light which shines in the whole volume from beginning to end. And we may afresh assure ourselves, how truly known unto God

* Of course I mean in principle. The saint may know too painfully the workings of the legal mind. But he treats it as unworthy of his calling of God in Christ Jesus. One has said, "The Church never has seen Christ in the flesh." True. I just add, neither has the Church ever known, personally, the law.

are all His works from the beginning of the creation.

But still further as to the law. Having been brought in through the self-confidence of Israel, God uses it. He makes it a test. "The man that doeth it shall live by it," He is willing to say. He causes the offence to abound by it. He makes sin by it to become exceeding sinful, and turns it into transgression. These and like uses He makes of it, causing it to serve some of the ends and purposes of His holy wisdom. But—blessed to tell it—*He never joins Himself with it, as though He were making it His witness or representative.* He left it in the hands of angels and a Mediator, keeping Himself, the rather, in company with the promises, or with the ministration of grace. (Gal. iii.) He will have it listened to as spoken by angels, while He speaks of salvation. (Heb. ii.) He is still in the midst of those counsels and secrets of grace which He was occupied with, when (as it were left to Himself,) He was dealing with the patriarchs. He was then like one at

home or at ease, as all His intercourses with His elect in the Book of Genesis show us; but when He appears in Ex. xix., about to take His place as in the law, He is as evidently not at home, not at ease; an expression of this is given to the whole occasion.

Again I say, wonderful—and as precious as it is marvellous! What secrets of the divine bosom disclose themselves through all these strokes and touches in the way and in the writing of God!

But I must say a little further as to this, and upon law generally.

Adam was put under law; for the God of all grace, and who is love, delighting in the exercise of His nature, leads His creature to stand, not in self-sufficiency, or on title of innocency, but in grace and on the ground of redemption. He tests him accordingly, prescribing a law to him by the observance of which he must stand, and by the breach of which he must fall. He fell—sin entered, and death followed.

In a great general sense, there was no need, after this, that law should be

applied to the creature, a second time. He had already broken it, and ruined himself; and immediately upon that, grace applied itself to his condition, and he was put into a blessed wondrous system of redemption, such a system of combined mercy and righteousness as was to cost God everything, and to secure to the sinner everything.

What a display of God was this; and we find it all produced immediately on the entrance of sin, in the words of the Lord to the serpent!

But, as we have seen, in the progress of this paper, though the Lord does not a second time apply law to the condition of the creature, yet, when either self-confidence in the creature, or his want of confidence in God brings it in, the Lord uses it for ends of His own wisdom, proving by it the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and by it causing the offence to abound. But it does not become His principle of action a second time. It had been that in Gen. ii., but it is not that in either Gen. xvi. or Ex. xix. It stole in, or came in, by the

bye, or incidentally then, (see Rom. v. 20, Greek,) and was not the principle of divine action, or the witness and expression of God Himself. It had already done its needed work when it had tested Adam, proved creature-insufficiency, and laid in ruined creation the basis of a displayed, glorious redemption.

And, again I may say, when it is thus brought in a second time, the Lord expresses His indisposedness to it. The very first time that He appears to Abraham after Ishmael had been brought into His house, He calls on Abraham to repent, and to walk before Him again. (Gen. xvii. 1.) This has a voice in it. And I have already noticed this same indisposedness, in the evident restlessness and want of ease and satisfaction that mark Him in Ex. xix.; and also in the Spirit in the apostle being careful to show the Lord in company with *promise*, while He left *law* to be ministered by angels and a Mediator. (Gal. iii., Heb. ii.)

All this, surely, gives us not only a clear, but a very significant history of

law. It tells us not only when it came in, but how it came in, and God's relationship to it. It was not His rest or dwelling-place; it was not His witness. And can I, after reading such a history of law as this, judge that it is simply in the righteousness of it God will have His saints to shine before Him in the courts of His glory in heaven? Most surely do I conclude, that it is in other and brighter robes, robes of His own preparing, and not of the law's preparing, that He will array them for His own eternity.

The Lord, in dwelling here on earth for a season, and in the midst of Israel, the circumcised, was made under the law as well as of a woman. He vindicated the excellency and perfections of that law which God gave when Israel, in self-confidence, challenged or accepted it. He rendered up to God a sheaf of untainted human fruit, and proved Himself also to be the true circumcision, the only Son of man who ever kept the whole law, as circumcision under Moses demanded. But even as a Jew, as made

under the law, the law had dominion over Him only as alive; when dead, and risen, and glorified, it had no title to Him, nor to His elect as dead and risen with Him. Let the law plead its own cause, and even then it must be dismissed upon its own showing, when it faces not a living but a dead and risen man.

The Galatians, I may add, exceeded Abraham in that which was contrary to God in this matter. He grieved at having to part with Hagar and Ishmael when the voice of the Lord, through Sarah, demanded this of him; but they were daring enough to bring the bond-woman and her son back and home again, after, by the voice of the Lord, they had been sent away. (Gen. xxi; Gal. iv.)

O we have much to watch against—the spirit of Abraham in Genesis xvi., the spirit of Israel at the foot of mount Sinai, and the spirit of the Galatians among the churches of the New Testament. The soul needs ever to have to do with God in grace; not dealing with

Him as a Judge but as a Saviour, apprehending Him in the exercise of a love that never wearies, and is from everlasting to everlasting. We have to live the life of faith in the love, the self-sacrificing love of the Son of God towards our very selves. (Gal. ii. 20.)

THE WALK OF FAITH.

(Heb. xi. 8—10, 17—19.)

The faith of Abraham, bearing as it does the very same characteristics as our own faith, is a study full of instruction for us; his difficulties, produced for the most part by his failure, are also such as we often have to encounter, whether in pursuing the path of faith or in our deviations therefrom.

What then was the object of Abraham's call? It was to be a witness for God against that independence which man had declared in the building of Babel. Noah had been the witness to the time of Abraham; but Abraham's call was altogether of faith, a witness for

God *against* the evil and in opposition *to* the evil. The first action of faith was to leave his country and all associations of the flesh. That was his starting point, and next he becomes a stranger in the land of promise, and is there by faith sustained of God.

Thus is it with the believer. He is called from the associations of nature, characterized only by human independence and is introduced into a region where he is as yet only a stranger, and where the most thorough and entire dependence on God is necessary. We have not yet got the inheritance, though the Spirit gives us the earnest of it, as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; but we are still strangers. A man in his own country would not be a stranger there. Abraham was not a stranger in the land of the Chaldees, but in Canaan he *was* such; and still further, he could only continue there by faith. If he lose his faith, for *one moment*, he is worse off than if he had never got there at all. So with us; God has done all for us—He has raised

us up and seated us in heavenly places with His own Son; but if we do not maintain that position in the power of faith, we shall be worse off, to all intents and purposes, than if we had not known it.

I am not only to leave my own country, but to go to my own place, that place where, so to speak, God has exhausted all the activity of His love. Love is never satisfied until it has done its utmost for its object, and human love knows the pain and distress which the inability to do this causes; but God, infinite in power as well as love, can and does the utmost. He has exhausted all the demands which love made on His heart, and He can do no more for us. He gave Christ; called us into fellowship with Him; raised us up with Him. What more *could* He do? In Ephesians the apostle does not pray for the saints to know the *activities* of love; he knew that it was there *exhausted*, as it were, that is, that it had done all its part, all that it *could* do for its object; but he prays that the souls of the saints

already called up into the heavenlies might *rest* there, that their eyes being opened practically to realize the position which love had brought them into, as recorded in Eph. i. ii., they might rest knowing this love. (Chap. iii.)

Every Christian knows, more or less, the love that has acted towards him, but it is another thing to know *where* that love has brought me to; and if I do not know this I shall be floundering. So the apostle prays that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened "to know what is the hope of *his calling*," &c. And what is this? Not that we *shall* be, but that we *ARE*, raised up with Christ. Am I, then, in heaven? Yes. God tells me that is my position. Is glory come? No; I must know very little of the pressure of the world if I think it has; but if not, we have heaven by faith, and if not maintained there practically by faith, I shall be worse off than ever; I shall become a Lot! A miserable spectacle was Abraham when he lost his faith. Seeing a difficulty, he was unprepared to meet it,

for never was a person prepared by faith for a difficulty found unable to meet it; and many have to encounter difficulties simply because they do not set themselves to meet them. Abraham's position in the land of Canaan was very different to that of Israel's. Israel was in possession, but Abraham dwelt in the land without possessing so much as a foot in it, and was sustained therein as long as his faith failed not; but whenever it does fail, he either wanders *from* it, or gets into trouble *in* it. Once he drops his faith and goes into Egypt, and what is the result? He has to come back, and begin *over again*: that was *one* character of failure. If the soul does not draw from the resources of God, it goes down elsewhere for help. Again he deviates from the path of faith, and falls into ordinances, or human arrangements, as in the case of Hagar and Ishmael: that was *another* order. The soul drops its living link with God; and how much sorrow and trouble did he thereby bring on himself! If a Christian drops from the walk of faith, he either

becomes worldly or engaged with his *own* works. Nature cannot depend on God doing better for us than we can do for ourselves; it will crave after plan and fret itself to accomplish its own way, all the while proving that we have lost our dependence on God. Abraham with shame has to retrace his steps, but God did not give him up, though he disciplined him. If He had, Abraham would have become a Lot, and there would have been no recovery or blessing, for Lot never again takes his place in Canaan.

But it is of Abraham's faith, rather than of his failures, that I desire to speak.

Let us turn and look at the action of faith, and the character of blessing which walking therein gives. Supposing, then, that while firmly treading this blessed path so happy for oneself, and so glorifying to God, I meet a Lot, who is looking about for something for nature, what shall I say to him? "Take what you like best: I want nothing. I can afford to give up all; for I know what I

have in God. His love is, as it were, exhausted on me. What more do I need?" But when trouble comes upon Lot, and he is taken prisoner in the meshes he had laid for himself, *then* is the moment for service, as far as I am concerned. Abraham puts his life in his hand, summoning together *all* the resources of his house for this one occasion to deliver his brother, just as we, when on firm footing ourselves, can turn round and pull another out of the mire. Could we do so if we were in the mire ourselves? No; but if walking in faith, we can come forth, armed and ready, using all our means to declare all God's goodness, in the power of having experienced it ourselves. And what is our reward? The *blessing of Melchizedek*.

What a place of service the path of faith puts us in! Lot knew neither the service nor the blessing. Instead of being on the sure ground and the firm position, which would have left him free to help others, he needed help for himself. We cannot wash the feet of another unless the Lord has washed our

feet. Neither can we do so *rightly* unless we follow the manner as well as the act of His service to us. Why is it that, when we wish to correct a fault in another, we only offend him? Because we do it not as the Lord has done it to ourselves; we have not learnt His manner: if we had, it would be rehearsing the blessedness of it to our own souls. It was thus with Abraham; and the result is, Melchizedek meets him in the way returning from his honourable service. God reveals His mind to the soul that is walking in faith. If I have not God's mind, it is because I am not walking where God can meet me. Nothing gratifies Him so much as for a soul to depend on Him; for it is to say to Him, "I look to you, because I *know* you care for me, and I can cast all my care on you."

To continue. God reveals Himself to Abraham in a special way after his rejecting the offers of the King of Sodom. "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." And Abraham replies, "What wilt thou give me, seeing I go

childless," &c. *He craved the promised seed.* "What were all else to me," he says, "if I have no son:" because God had made that the centre around which all His promises were to revolve. Position would be nothing to us without the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. All our blessings centre in Him. And whatever the scope of our blessing, we never could enjoy it solitarily. Heaven would not be happiness to us without Christ. Why is man alone down here? Because he cannot trust anybody. But we can trust the Lord Jesus entirely, knowing at the same time all the anxious tenderness of His love. He is the only one we can rest in. He is up there as the perpetuity of our blessing; and we are raised up to sit with Him in the heavenly places. Everything really from God to us in this world is through our Lord Jesus Christ. All God's mercies reach us through Him. The mercies or gifts may be removed from us; but *He*—never! Are we prepared for every mercy we possess to pass into death? Do we only enjoy it as received in a

figure from death? This is what faith teaches us, as it taught Abraham—to view everything, though existing, as akin to death. God takes away Jonah's gourd and he is angry; but if I am prepared to let all die, I am walking up to the mark, as Abraham did, when by faith he “offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.” The greater the mercy, the greater the death. What terrible rending of soul there is in the ascent of Mount Moriah! How one shrinks from it, and puts off the evil day; and when it does come, how we fret, like Jonah, that such a thing should come. Yet not so with Abraham, his faith bore him through it; and in the power of the like faith we, too, may ascend, and see Jesus all the way; and if we do, we shall be able to say, “My only son is dead, but I have lost nothing; Jesus is mine, and I shall receive what I have lost in resurrection.” What a thing to

be able to hold all as liable to death, but to have my own soul at the other side of death in life and joy. All we take up will have to pass through death; yea, even all that God gives us; the more perfect the gift, the more sorrow on account of its not being permanent; for we want permanency with perfection. "I do well to be angry," said Jonah, when he lost his gourd. But what had he to learn? The sympathies of God; His love and tenderness to His creation down here, which he never had, even for himself, an idea of before.

If the Lord brings to an end what we are resting in, He always conducts to a higher scene. Moses on Pisgah had a much brighter view of Canaan than if his thought of entering it had not come to an end; and he stepped from it to the mount of transfiguration. Was there ever so happy a man as Paul? We have the practical expression of the place he was in in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians, the position and the condition; and that was when all that his heart had been set on here

had come to an end. God will never keep His mercies back from us; but we know little of the manner of His love with us; and the very gourd that engages our affections may be that which must come down, in order to teach us His love.

To conclude, if we know our position we shall be better prepared for service, and better prepared for glory. If we want to serve the Lots we must walk by faith, holding our position, because then we enjoy the climax of God's love; and if we want glory we must pass on to it through resurrection. For twenty-two years Abraham and Isaac were in the happy enjoyment of one another. God demanded him of Abraham in the full bloom of life, just to teach him the lesson of death and resurrection. Does God thus deprive us of mercies in order *that we may feel how dreary is the valley of the shadow of death?* Nay, but to make it the brighter. All these terrible breaks are but to show us more of our infinite resources in Jesus. Oh! if our hearts could reckon more on the

heart of Christ, and know so well the shelter of His love, that if a storm comes and sweeps away everything that comforts, (as a feather from God's wing,) we may know where to look, seeing Jesus everywhere, restoring it in resurrection, as Lazarus was restored to his sisters. Then the walk of faith is happy dependence on God.

FRAGMENTS.

The single eye is receiving everything in the light of God. To view it so transmits as God views it. It is an apprehension of the word and mind and counsels of God judging all that is presented. The soul thus receives nothing but as judged of by God, and the whole existence is in the light. It gives also "a quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," as if you were enlightened by a bright and sudden shining. If thine eye be evil, receiving a judgment that is morally the reverse of the word and counsel and judgment of God, thy

whole body is full of darkness. See therefore that the light that is in thee, and that you boast of, be not darkness.

Seeking first the kingdom of God—subject to Christ—practical obedience as immediate to Himself. To do so, creates such an interest in Christ as a charge on Him that He would not let you want for His own glory's sake. It is not that you should not eat and drink and clothe yourself; but belong to Him, consult Him, serve Him as His in a world that is not His. The world being considered as a thing never to be kept for itself, and parted with as that to which you are in no way bound; given away as future treasure; God supplying all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Seeking things for themselves is to do as the Gentiles do. It was the fault of the prodigal son to ask for his inheritance before the time.

Why cannot they pray? Prayer is a spiritual exercise—they are immersed in sense. Prayer lifts us above this world—they mind earthly things. With their eyes rivetted upon earth, how should they look up to heaven. May we by improvement of the grace already given, prevail upon God to pour upon us more and more abundantly the Spirit of grace and supplication, in sense of our need; for, be assured, if we would ever go to heaven ourselves, our hearts and desires must be there before us.

THE WATCHERS.

(Rev. xxii. 16, 17.)

Through the slow-rolling hours of the desolate
night,
There are watchers still watching to see
The star of the morning discover its light.
What a moment its dawning will be!

For their hopes are all centred in that single star;
And whenever its light shall appear,
They'll be caught, they'll be wrapt, in a moment,
far, far,
From the face of this sin-furrowed sphere.

'Tis Jesus their Saviour, who's coming, ere dawn,
From the darkness to catch them away :
To their eyes He'll appear as the herald of morn,
The golden forerunner of day.

With what hearts have they watched for His
coming again !
Through whole ages of darkness they've waited
for Him.
They have known what it is to have trouble and
pain,
Heavy hearts, and tired eyes growing dim.

But their star will arise: not a doubt but it will.
When the night's at the darkest their star will
appear.
Through the world-folding-clouds it will issue, to
fill
Their souls with its radiance clear.

With these watchers I'll join, for their hopes are
my own :
I've been washed in the Saviour's blood.
Of His Church I'm a part—of His fold I am
one :
I'm the child of His Father and God.

In the prayer of these watchers I'll heartily join,
When the Spirit and bride whisper, Come.
"Lord Jesus, come quickly" 's a cry that is mine.
When that's utter'd, how could I be dumb?

COMMUNION.

Read Exodus xxix.

It is often profitable and helpful to us that current expressions should take a defined form in our minds. Few expressions are more in vogue than those of communion and fellowship, and as the terms are scriptural and expressive of our highest calling and deepest spiritual feelings, they are well worth a little meditation and analysis.

What then is communion? It is the partaking in common with another of any given condition. The word *κοινωνία* (communion or fellowship) is used twenty times in the New Testament, and in every case bears this signification. In four of these passages (Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. viii. 4; ix. 13; Heb. xiii. 16;) it is communion of act rather than of feeling; the value of the act of course springing from the feeling, but the word is used to express the nature of the contribution of the saints, and fitly so, for they all had a common share in the act. It was the principle of

gathering the manna; each contributed to the common stock and thus they had fellowship in the work. In the other passages the word is applied to feeling rather than to act, and this determines more distinctly its moral meaning.

We first find it in Acts ii. 42: "They continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and *fellowship*, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" thus expressing the sense of participative feeling which each had with all in the religious exercise in which they were engaged; and for the first time in the history of God's people on the earth, showing how they had now a common sense together of distinct engagements before God; i. e., they felt that they were interchanging a collective feeling. This is still more fully conveyed in 1 Cor. x. 16, in the words "communion of the blood of Christ," which teaches us that we should have a feeling, weak and imperfect it may be, but yet a feeling absolutely in common with what the blood of Christ indicates and supplies. The contrast to this is shown by the use of the same word in

2 Cor. vi. 14: "What communion hath light with darkness"—what blending—what communicating of interest—what commingling of parts can such antagonistic elements have? Now 1 Cor. i. 9 instructs us as to what the saints are called unto, even, "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;" i. e., to share in common with Him; and though our apprehensions may be, and are very limited, yet every true apprehension we have is one in common with His. So also it is used in Phil. iii. 10, where it refers to sufferings, and not enjoyments; "the fellowship of His sufferings;" and in Phil. ii. 1 we find it in a very high sense, "fellowship of the Spirit," i. e. having a common feeling or purpose with the Spirit; and this is the sense in which the word is used in its very highest doctrinal enunciation in 1 John i. 3. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" thus announcing to us, that being partakers of the eternal life which was with the Father, through the Son, we are now sustained by the Spirit in fel-

lowship with the Father and the Son, i. e. in common feeling as to the enjoyment and activities of this eternal life which belongs to the Father and the Son and is ours as given by them. Our feeling therein may be weak and ambiguous; but still, the fact remains, that what *we* have *imperfectly* is in common with what the Father and the Son have *perfectly*.

So much for the general term communion; but we may find profit in analyzing the nature of it a little more closely in the light of Exodus xxix. which beautifully sets forth the whole subject of communion: our introduction thereinto, and progress onward to the highest order and experience of it. First there is atonement, and washing off all that the soul requires for acceptance, without which there could be no communion. And then there is consecration, or "filling" (in the Septuagint, perfection, *τελείωσις*, only used twice in the New Testament, Luke i.; Heb. vii.) all conveying that, as accepted, we are now to be introduced into a full, perfect

sense of our blessedness, and this as an essential preliminary to service or *co-operation*, which is communion of *act*, as interchange is of *feeling*. Now, there were two rams; one is wholly offered up, which, I consider, typifies our Lord gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God: the other is the ram of consecration, i. e. Himself, too; but *as apprehended by us*, and presented by us while possessing Him and holding Him in our hands; and this, in two distinct points, the fat and the right shoulder, one His excellency, and the glory declared in resurrection in consequence of His death; and the other, (the right shoulder) the power of His resurrection. These were presented in company with the high priest and taken up by God as a sweet savour, while the breast was waved by Moses (typifying Christ as the Son of God) and representing the affections of the heart of the sent one—*not burned*, but eternally waved for us. Thirdly, the residue of the ram was eaten by Aaron and his sons in the holy place.

Now I think there are three orders or divisions, so to speak, of our communion, which, though consequent on one another, are still quite distinct. 1st. We have communion with Christ *where He is*, even in the heavenlies. 2ndly. We apprehend and enter into His excellencies. 3rdly. We have the consciousness of strength and support derivative from Him and of Him; He imparting to us of Himself for our support down here: this is eating in the holy place. Each of these three divisions I regard as set forth in the first ram wholly offered up, and the two parts of the second, the ram of consecration.

I have said the first order is, communion with Christ where He is—that is to say, the soul has consciousness of participation with Him who is our life, and in that place to which He has gone; it has fellowship with Him in that position, and fellow-sentiments as to what that position is; but the second order is still higher—it is the consecration or filling: the fat, right shoulder, and breast of the ram, the apprehension of the ex-

cellency, power, and affections of Christ, which, according as they are vigorously and correctly apprehended, give strength and skill to our souls to judge of and ascertain all the ways of God on earth, and make a man what the apostle calls "spiritual, judging all things." The great interpreter and elucidation of all God's purposes is our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is according as we apprehend, know, and have common feeling with Him, that we are able to comprehend what the counsels and ways of God are tending towards; for God will glorify Him, and set Him forth in full manifestation in all the excellency which is now partially and feebly apprehended by us; but in proportion as it is apprehended, are we able to comprehend His ways and works, and to be practically in common feeling—in fellowship with Him. This is a partaking of His mind, as it were, an understanding and responding to it, a sharing of His judgment of things.

It is evident that these two orders of communion which I have adduced, and which the two rams present to us, are

very different and quite distinct. In both cases I am, so to speak, in the company of Christ, and in the region in which He now is; and I cannot be in His company without having more or less sense of it; but I may have a large measure of appreciation of my position and *identification with Him therein*, (which is fellowship,) without that apprehension of His *excellency* which makes me sensible of interchange and intimacy with His *mind*. We may illustrate the two in a lower sense by the example of Peter and John, in John xiii. Both were in the Lord's presence, both were conscious of participation with Him in position and association, but Peter was ignorant of His *mind*; and though in His presence, he was anxious; whereas John enjoyed intimacy; he leant on His bosom, and had free interchange as to any question that might arise. Communion with the Lord's *mind* comprises everything. Mere interpretation of Scripture falls very short of it, unless it be active at the time, suitable to the occasion, and in the sense

of His *presence*. Thus it was with the two disciples going to Emmaus, when their hearts "burned within them as He opened to them the Scriptures;" and thus, though unconsciously to themselves, they were in communion with both His presence and His mind, advancing deeper into it, the further He led them thereinto. These illustrations, though drawn from the Lord's sojourn *on earth* and His corporeal presence, serve to show the distinction between fellowship with the mere presence or company of another and that of the *mind* which is thus present with us. Now, of course, it is His spiritual presence, unseen save to faith; and the region of this communion must be *where He is*, even in the heavenlies; but many a soul is happily and blessedly conscious of its participation with Him there; and moreover, that its sentiments as to that position and portion are identical in *nature* though not in degree with His, who, nevertheless, does not know that intimacy which enables it to enter into His feelings, tastes, and judgments

of all things; and this is the difference between godliness (*εὐσέβεια*) and spirituality. Godliness refers everything to Him, spirituality feels and thinks *with* Him.

And now as to the third division of our communion, which is, however, part of the second, closely allied to it, and the effect of it. It is the *residue* of the ram of consecration, eaten by *Aaron and his sons in the holy place.* (Ver. 32.) This I regard as the strength and nourishment which accrue to the soul from the apprehension and communion typified by the other part of the ram, burned and waved. And here it is communion with one another, as well as with the High Priest. We feed on it together: "in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." It is the effect of being in apprehension with all saints of the "length, breadth, depth, and height;" and this effect is to be "filled in all the fulness of God." It is a consummation—a finishing up, as it were. David knew something in his measure (fettered,

of course, by his dispensational position) of each of these orders of communion when he "sat before the Lord" in the full sense of His presence, full intelligence of His mind and counsel respecting himself, His people, and all things; as well as full sympathy and *fellow-feeling* with Him, possessionally apprehending what God was for him, and in His own intrinsic excellency, and feeding thereon in meditation and tranquil enjoyment. *We* are called to it in a far higher sense, our fellowship being based on UNION with Him who is the object and centre of it.

In conclusion, this chapter (Ex. xxix.) sets forth to us in type the means by which we are introduced into this blessed position and experience in our priestly character. The first thing is acceptance; secondly, communion, of which we have three divisions—first, that of positional participation with Christ, the power of which the soul enters into in the offering up of the first ram—secondly, that of apprehension of His excellency, mental interchange of thought and feeling, as

set forth by the fat, shoulder, and breast of the ram of consecration—and thirdly, that of strength and nourishment derived therefrom, *with Him and with one another*: while *abiding* with Him in heaven, eating the residue in the holy place.

THE WALK OF A BELIEVER.

Phil. ii. 1—16.

That as believers we are “to walk and to please God” is a truth which none who have known the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ for themselves will be disposed to deny. But the admission of this truth in very few minds perhaps amounts to more than a vague and general impression that piety is to mark the conduct of a Christian; without any very definite reference to any rule or example to which his walk is to be conformed.

The design of this paper, by the Lord's help, is to give definiteness to

this rule, in statement at least; trusting to His grace to give it power in the heart.

The special subject of the Epistle to the Philippians is the walk of the believer here in this world, journeying toward heaven; and in consonance with this, it unfolds the springs of his energy and the final issue of his course; interweaving with it his true and proper experience by the way. It presents the practical and earthly side of the Christian's heavenly calling.

In chap. ii. 15, 16, the rule, the force of which we are seeking, is given. "Blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

The definiteness of this rule receives its illustration from what Christ Himself was in His walk down here in this world; though the apostle himself could add, with rare devotion, "Brethren, be followers together of *me*, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an

ensample." If this exhortation to be "blameless and harmless" is to be anything more with us than the words of a book, we must know that it is a tone of spirit that goes along with personal devotedness to Christ, and is never found apart from the soul's intimacy with Him who, having given it rest from its heavy burden, now says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am *meek and lowly in heart*:"—and who had just before said to His disciples, "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

But the relationship in which, through grace, we stand to God, comes into the force of the rule; for we are to walk as "sons of God," according to the exhortation in Eph. v. 1, "Be ye therefore imitators of God (*μιμηται*) as children beloved." The privilege (and who can estimate it highly enough?) and the responsibility are coupled together. It was what Christ *was* as Son of God that stamped its character on His whole walk through this world, and gave it its

entire contrariety to the world: as He said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." But, then, it is with no less definiteness said of believers, "Now are we *the sons of God*;" and it is added, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, *because it knew him not.*" The rule of our walk, then, in this part of it, has its force in us when we daily and habitually bear in mind what infinite grace has made us, and are found going on through the world as the sons of God to the home of glory, where Christ has gone before us.

But we are also to be "without rebuke"—or cause of blame or reproach—"in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Separated from the world, in its separation from God and its coming doom, is what every Christian will glory in being; but all will not, alas! allow the thought that there should now be a personal moral separation from its principles and aims, its habits and maxims, its character and course. But what is the meaning, then, of those words of our Lord and Master, (John xvii.,) "I

have given them thy word, and the world hath *hated them*, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." While in His own example He gives the ground of the world's hatred of Him, when He says, "*Me* it hateth, because I testify of it that its works are evil."

"What communion hath light with darkness?"

Hence, in our rule it is added, "among whom ye shine as lights in the world." The effect of grace is thus expressed in Eph. v. 8: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" and the exhortation founded on it is, "walk as children of light." And in the Epistle of Peter, "That ye should show forth the praises (virtues) of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." This also has its illustration in the walk of the Lord Jesus here on earth; as He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." There is no such thing

as being "lights in the world," except as we are practically living the life of Christ, and are walking in that path which He has marked out for us. To be "lights in the world," we must in spirit and act express, according to our feeble measure, what He was here in the world; as it is said, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." And hence the apostle could say, "Ye are *our* epistle, *known and read of all men.*" But it is well to be reminded that we are not true, or worthy, epistles of Christ, unless Christ can be livingly read in us by the world through which we are passing.

"Holding forth the word of life;" as the heavenly bodies hold out their light, and are only seen by the light they give. So here "the word of life" is looked at as reflected in the life and walk of the believer; as our Lord says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Such is the rule we are to walk by, such is to be our aim.

But let me ask the question, is this the definite conception that we have constantly before our minds of what a Christian should be in his walk? Is this the rule that I propose to myself for the daily, hourly regulation of my life? Is it with me a matter of definite thought (to say nothing of attainment) that I ought, as a Christian, as seen by others, and most seen by those who see me most, to be blameless and harmless, a son of God, without rebuke, shining as a light in the world, and holding forth the word of life? Do I recognize this as my standard? It is something to have the aim right. It is frightful to think how much truth we admit—that is, do not deny—and how little of its practical power we express! One looks at the example of Christ, at the course of the apostle, at the simple and unstrained statements of the legitimate effects of the principles of the Gospel, and what, in truth, were those effects, as seen in the Acts and in the Epistles; and then looks round on those who admit, and glory in admitting, that there is no

lower standard than the Scriptures for the ascertainment of what a Christian should be in standing and privilege, in hope and in walk; and the survey brings home a kind of aching into the soul, a chill of almost hopelessness upon the heart, at the thought of what once WAS, and what now IS, as to the practical legitimate effect of the same unaltered truths, professed and believed, and oftentimes believed, it may be, to be *adequately expressed!*

It may be want of faith in the writer, his infirmity; but with this thought before his mind, it is hardly possible for him to look at any exhortation or practical truth of the New Testament—at anything almost beyond the unmixed grace of Christ in the salvation of a sinner—without this feeling. It is, I admit, no part of the Spirit's work to produce despondency; for to the end will He be here to take of the things of Christ and show them to us: and whatever else may fail or decay, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." But, I repeat, it is

a great thing to have before our minds fairly and honestly *the true standard*. I may then come short and fail; but if the standard be corrupted or lost, all is gone; there is no hope. If it were always in the recollection that the *imitation of Christ* is the true rule of a believer's walk, while, as it may be readily supposed, it would abate any feelings of self-complacency, as if we had already attained, it would also elevate our *aim*; and that, I again repeat, is something gained. For as it has been quaintly said, "He will shoot higher who aims at the stars, than he who only makes a tree his mark."

But the rule, so far as it has been hitherto disclosed, is only the didactic expression of what is presented in the living example of our Lord in the previous part of the chapter. In whatever way the love of Christ is in truth brought home to our hearts, we get by it a lever that raises at once our aims and spirit and walk above this world. It was the kindness of the Philippians in supplying the apostle's necessities

during his imprisonment for the Gospel's sake, that awakened, as it were anew, his sense of the wonderful love of Christ, and set the springs of his admiration and gratitude flowing anew. Hence he says, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like minded," &c. This is the ground of his exhortation and entreaty, and it is according to the vividness of our apprehension of these heavenly motives that we are in possession of the secret springs of power to answer in any sense to this earnest entreaty. The more the heart is found dwelling on these things, the more the force of the moral exhortation is enhanced, and the greater the power to obey it.

In looking at the precepts of the divine word in contrast with the spirit of the world, and the temper and bearing that are so natural to us as men, how do they bear enstamped upon them the impress of heaven! The treasures

of grace which the Gospel unfolds, and the love by which redemption was wrought, are not more divine than the morality which it enjoins. And real subjection of heart to its wonderful, *yet simple*, precepts, however little estimated by man, is the way to bring the blessed temper of heaven into the soul and the witness of heaven into the walk. What blessed affections are these: "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." What channels are here opened for the flow of that living grace in the soul which a participation of the divine nature gives: "Let nothing be done through strife, or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." How fruitful of heavenly rest to our inner hearts, and how Christlike in its effects on others, if the every day principle of our action, were "look, not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

But we have yet to look at the marvellous summing up of all this in the

presentation of the mind which was manifested in the Lord, as the ground and exemplification of the exhortation, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Fundamental as are these truths, (ver. 6—11), to the divine person of the Lord, and much as they might detain the heart in the richness of their elucidation, they can only be taken up now, as they are presented, as furnishing the ground of the exhortation, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And O, if this were only our aim! If it were only the purpose of our hearts!—to say nothing of our attaining—if it were but present as a monition to our spirits, what fruits of peace would it bring, and what a correction of all that troubles a spiritual mind in its fellowship with others in the church of God would it afford! May I, for its own sake, possess and cultivate this mind, even if I were alone in the pursuit!

The exhortation having been given, it was necessary that the example, in which alone it could be seen in perfect-

ness, should be given also. It is, then, the self-renouncing, obedient, mind of the Lord Jesus which is presented as that which we are to cultivate.

As divine in His nature, as the Son of God, He had claim to perfect equality with God; but as appearing in this world for the accomplishment of redemption, as man, his condition in it was marked by entire and absolute self-renunciation. He humbled Himself to become man; and as man, He further humbled Himself in His obedience—obedience which reached even unto death—"the death of the cross." He came into the world to glorify God—His Father; and hence He came in such circumstances as to present to men nothing but the claims of perfect goodness. There could not have been a perfect test of men's hearts, as to God and goodness, if there had been anything adventitious in the Lord's circumstances as a man, anything that would have appealed to the pride of men, or their self-estimation, or their love of worldly distinctions. But, as we know,

the world—and it is unchanged in its estimates—had no heart for the claims of perfect goodness. It had no reverence nor love for the only perfect image of God in His moral character that it ever beheld! It had no place for that *lowly man*, on whom alone the heavens could open, and the voice of God acknowledge—for Him who is now enthroned at the right hand of God, and at whose humbled name—even the name of JESUS—“every knee shall bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father!”

On earth, as we know, His course began in a manger, and it was ended on a cross! Still in His whole course in the world there was the display of perfect goodness; and on the part of man nothing to prevent his treating it as he pleased; and how he treated it the cross must declare.

There were no worldly circumstances to commend to men this perfect goodness, and therefore it was rejected. There was no tinsel of human vanity to make

its appeal to their hearts, and therefore heavenly worth was frowned from their association. There was no savour of a lie to season this perfect truth to the world's taste, and therefore it would not believe it. Alas! for the spirit of the world!

To us, however, it is presented as a walk wholly according to God. The Spirit which was given to Him "without measure" led to no other. "He through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God."

But *how* shall we be able to show this mind which was in Christ? By always remembering the truth that "*Now are we the sons of God,*" and that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Need I add that, "Every man that hath this hope in *him* purifieth himself even as he is pure?"

There is no *natural* elevation of position that presents the ground for this self-humbling, self-renouncing, *obedient* mind of Christ. I say "*obedient mind,*" because, if it be not this, it will degenerate

into "voluntary humility," in which the flesh will take the lead. We must remember that we are "sanctified unto obedience," and that Christ is the example of our obedience, who humbled Himself that He might obey, and then humbled Himself in His obedience. This mind of Christ springs only from the knowledge of what God is—of what Christ is—what the Christian is—and what the world is. And this knowledge is alone fully presented in the cross.

The moral power of the cross must be known, as well as its power to salvation, or we can never be "crucified" to the world, or the world crucified to us. It is this which sometimes brings a thought of sadness in connexion with the preaching of the gospel, when conversion is viewed, as it often practically is, the *end*, instead of the *commencement*, of the Lord's dealing with souls. It needs but slight acquaintance with the epistles and the character of the church of God to perceive that where the anxiety referred to ends, the apostle's as plainly begins. It is true that "from

Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum he had fully preached the gospel;" but it is no less true that, in view of the church, his cares and fears, his tears and conflicts began at the point where the saving power of the gospel had taken effect. His "warning every man, and teaching every man, and desiring to present every man perfect in Christ," was with another object than the conversion of souls, precious and near to his heart as that confessedly was. The evangelist may find more excitement in his work, and see the effect of his labour more quickly and more palpably; but he who is feeding the flock of God, however unostentatiously, will no less surely, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, receive His approval in that "crown of glory which fadeth not away." But I close with a brief quotation, the wholesome words of which some of my readers will recognize as familiar to their minds.

"The danger of the office (i. e. of the evangelist) is, that it has to do with the world; there is much room for car-

nal excitement, and the office is in honour among men. Hence the reason that the character of the Christian ministry has more tended to this than that within the church, which is more unobtrusive, and is not of honour among men, though highly honoured in the sight of the great Head of the church." Among the evils which have arisen to the church from the attempt to unite the two departments of the ministry in one man, may be noticed, first of all, the undervaluing of the pastoral office. Almost all systems that have been formed by men, have been looked upon as a more or less extensive sphere for preaching the gospel; and hence almost all stated ministry has become properly that of the evangelist. The church is not fed; believers are not built up on their most holy faith, because the heart of a minister is more called forth in sympathy to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, than to those who are converted. If, indeed, there be a heart burning with love for souls, and God has given him wisdom to win them,

let him take the large sphere that is set before him—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." But it must not be forgotten that whilst the Lord Jesus would have the gospel preached to every creature, that He Himself "loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 26.)

FRAGMENTS.

Abraham staggered not at the promise. "He trusted in God, who quickeneth the dead. In this aspect of his service—in a scene much higher than that of Moses forsaking the court of Pharaoh—he becomes our pattern. It is ours to let God *choose our service*, though it might be to leave a sphere of public usefulness, where we hoped to win souls to Christ, to go to a sick bed or to a prison. We are at best but poor judges of what will most glorify God and serve our generation. *He knows* ;

and therefore we may well give up our wishes and our hopes for the accomplishment of His blessed will. May He give all His servants *grace* to do this !

Let our souls learn that to obey God is to renounce ourselves—to give up our own will, that we may do His. Let us not calculate that we shall be always able to expound or harmonize His ways. Verily “He is a God that hideth Himself.” Nothing but faith, implicit faith, can carry us through the path of trial. When He tries faith, He often confounds reason. He asks us to walk through the sea, to eat bread from the clouds, or to drink water from the rock of flint. “We must learn,” as one has said, “to trust Him where we cannot trace Him.” He sent Elijah to the brook, and the brook dried up; then to be sustained by a widow, who had only a meal to eat, and die. He gave a son to the Shunamite, and afterwards took him away. But even to reason, in due time He made it all plain. He would have faith, first of all, to hold her empire unwaveringly; and then it often happens that

reason gets the exposition, that patience may work experience, and experience hope.

Keeping the testimony, and not keeping things together, is the proper work of those who would now be found in God's path, and advancing. That which has wrought so much confusion and scattering is, that people have been more concerned to keep things together than to keep the testimony.

“Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

EXTRACT.

Remember, there is a difference between form as proceeding, and that as superinduced; the latter is the death or imprisonment of the thing—the former is self-witnessing, and has a sphere of agency.

DIVINE INTERCOURSE.

How finely the voice from heaven varies its tone in the story of Saul's conversion, as given to us in Acts ix.!

When it *challenges the persecutor*, how peremptory it is! how loudly it speaks! *When it addresses itself to the disciple*, (Ananias) how it approaches him as with the accents of a well-known voice, and in the style of full personal intimacy! When it *rebukes the servant*, (this same Ananias) how decisive! and yet giving witness that love was undisturbed, unchanged, because the rebuked servant was still, and immediately put into further service as one trusted and valued.

Precious are these various ways of Him with whom we have to do. How ought we to trust the one whose love can thus array itself in these its different suits and styles! He will challenge us when our condition demands it; rebuke us, or speak intimately to us; and His love approves itself equally

in each, for our good and blessing is the end proposed and accomplished.

And man, under the drawing and teaching of the Spirit, answers this voice in beauty and fitness also.

The persecutor fell under it at once. He could not but do so. It was as Adam behind the trees of the garden. Saul could not help calling Jesus "Lord" at that moment. It was the necessary utterance of one in such a condition. But as this one is led of God, he follows in beauty and fitness. I mean this: when called by the voice from the glory that had laid the sentence of death in him, to arise and stand on his feet, he did so, and appears from that moment as one separated to that voice, or to what had now happened to him. Like Peter, in a kindred moment of conviction, he thought not of the sinking boat, so occupied was his soul with the impressions of the glory or of God upon his spirit; and so Paul now. The three days' want of food and the loss of sight, were, I believe, as nothing to him. He had been separated

to that moment in its full power. He had looked on Him whom he had pierced, and was apart; as in another kindred moment, the house of David and of Shimei will be, husbands and wives. (Zech. xii.)

But there is another answer which the voice from heaven gets in this striking scene. Ananias answers it as well as Saul; and according to the relations in which he stood to it answers it likewise in beauty and fitness.

The voice, as we have seen, addressed him in all blessed, gracious intimacy. Ananias' style shews that (Abraham-like) his spirit was at home in the presence of it—in the presence of the glory from whence it came. He takes his place instinctively before it. "Behold, I am here, Lord," he says; and then, the voice giving its orders and revealing its secrets, Ananias replies, (Jeremiah-like, or Peter-like in such cases,) intimating that the Lord seemed to be making some mistake, that these directions needed some correction, or at least, interpretation. And surely, this

was answering the intimacies of grace with the confidence of faith. This was like Moses speaking face to face, as a man would speak with his friend. And this was indeed beautiful in its place. Such a spirit of faith, being of divine operation, was acceptable to God, and sweet to us. It was as Jonah in chap. iv. 1, though not so marked; and, like Jonah, Ananias has then to be rebuked and corrected, and is given to know that the error was all his own, and not the Lord's.

When Ananias had questioned the orders he had received to go to Saul of Tarsus, "Go thy way," says the Lord to him. This was a third voice from heaven, as we have already seen; and this voice, like the earlier voices, is answered in all beautiful fitness. Ananias at once goes, and the moment he sees Saul, he addresses him on the sole authority of the voice he had now heard, and in the spirit which that voice inspired. The Lord had said, "he is a chosen vessel unto me;" and Ananias now addresses him "brother Saul."

How perfect, like all the rest, this is!

The first voice, convicting the sinner, is answered by the sinner separating himself to it. The second voice, addressing the saint, is answered by the saint in like confidential intimacy. The third voice, rebuking and arresting the servant, is answered, not only by an act of obedience, but by that act being conducted and carried out in the very style and spirit which that voice was inspiring, in fullest concord with the mind which had directed and awakened it.

This scene gives us, then, in the person of Ananias, an instance of that intimacy with the Lord which faith has reached, and deems itself entitled to. And, let me say, faith has not, in this, over calculated its rights. Grace warranted this intimacy at the very beginning, at the creation. God then, as we know, delighted in the work of his hand as it grew up and came forth day by day, and when all was completed at the close of the sixth day, looking on all, He tasted rich delight, and consecrated the seventh day in memory of this His rest and refreshment.

But in addition to this, man becomes the source of special delight. Man had been signalized as the chief point in the whole workmanship, and the head of the whole scene. Peculiar care was used in setting him in the garden, enriched and blest, crowned and espoused, and altogether satisfied. And then the Lord seeks his company. "The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?" He was seeking companionship with that chiefest and most excellent work of His hands, as though companionship with him was to complete His enjoyments. The Lord sought man. "Adam, where art thou?" "His delights were with the sons of men," as He says in another place; and then, as at the very beginning, He gave warrant and title to man to know this intimacy. I need not say how Adam disappointed this divine desire towards him. But the desire survives, and it is still said, "My delights are with the sons of men."

Among those of the people of God

who have specially illustrated this personal intimacy with the Lord we might first notice *Abraham*. The Lord, in deep and full grace, warranted this, and drew Abraham into it; but Abraham, in faith, read his title to it, and used it. I need not notice the occasions; they shew themselves clearly in the progress of the story. Moses afterwards is seen in the same place. He converses with the Lord as a man with his friend. He debated matters with the Lord, as one that would know divine secrets and reasons, and give his own mind, and express his own difficulties and sorrows.

As we advance we find *Jeremiah* of this same class. He would speak to the Lord about His doings and judgments, and enquire of Him respecting the grounds and meaning of His commands.

Jonah, also, another among the prophets, gives us another instance of the same. He is very bold, telling the Lord how it was, and how he had known it would be, between God and himself.

And this intimacy is not reduced when we enter the New Testament. I

speaking not, however, of the intercourse disciples had with the Lord in the days of His ministry among them; but of that intercourse and intimacy which faith still held with Him after He was glorified, when He took, in a divine sense, the relationship to them which He had had of old with patriarchs and prophets.

We see samples of this in Ananias, to which I have already referred, in Acts ix., in *Peter* in Acts x., in Paul in Acts xxii. Now these three reasoned certain points with the Lord, the glorified Jesus, as Abraham or Jeremiah and others had reasoned points with the Lord God in their earlier days. Ananias, Peter, and Paul may all be in error, more or less, and have to be rebuked, and get their judgments corrected; but still they enjoy an intimacy which it is blessed to think of. They are dealing with one well known by them, and on a title fully approved and justified. Surely again I may say, it is blessed to think of it. And I ask, Is this still to be so? Is the soul to know it, in this day of

the Holy Ghost and of an absent Jesus?

The posture of Lazarus at the table with his Lord, and at the side of his Lord, expresses this character of communion. It is found in company with the worshipping Mary and the serving Martha—all beautiful in their place and season. (John xii.)

And so the soul knows its present title to the same, though it as well knows how poorly it enjoys it, and how nature and the enemy will hinder it in that, its right and joy. But so it is. We are straitened in our *bowels*, not in our *calling*; in our *experience*, not in our condition. Through the Scriptures, and taking occasion by reason of our daily circumstances, we may use this place which has been open to the elect from the beginning. It is surely ours in this day of the Spirit, if it were theirs who walked with God in the infant-day of patriarchs, or in the advancing times of prophets, who had not, however, reached the dispensation of the Spirit, given on the ascension to glory of the Son of man, as we have done.

And I still ask, Is this still to be so? Is this *eternal* in its character? Is this to be the same in the coming days of the glory, as it has already been in days of patriarchs, of prophets, and of apostles, and as it is now? The holy hill, where we see the glorified, answers this. Speaking of Jesus there transfigured, the evangelist says, "And behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Here was intimacy of just the same character as at the tent in the plain of Mamre, or within the cloudy tabernacle in the wilderness, or in the court of the prison at Jerusalem, or outside the gate of the city of Nineveh, or on the roof of the house of Simon the tanner, or in the temple with Paul. All is unchanged. Scenes change as much as they well can, in all this vast variety—tent-doors, wildernesses, prisons, house-tops, temples, and the like; but the realms of glory, where the translated saints have joined their ascended Lord, claims to be

another of the same places, and to witness and exhibit that intimacy which began at the beginning, and has been continued throughout.

All ages, then, give us samples of this intimacy, this divine intercourse. Patriarchal, Mosaic, prophetic, evangelic ages, all illustrate it, and the days of the glory will do the same. This intercourse is something of its own kind. It is not grace giving a gift and faith accepting it. It is not the soul exercised in prayer, or intercession, or thanksgiving, or praise. These things are so, I need not say; but it is none of these. It is of its own generation, and bespeaks the title which the believer consciously enjoys of coming near to God, not as a suppliant, or as a worshipper, but as one that has been let into His confidence.

And I believe till we take this place, till "we thus walk and talk with Jesus," we have not fully obeyed that form of doctrine which God, in the riches of the grace of His gospel, has delivered to us.

Wonderful! save that God is God. He laid Himself out for this enjoyment

of His creature, when His creature was untainted and in innocency. The entrance of sin did not hinder this, but this intercourse continued among the fruits of that grace which put sin away, and if the entrance of sin has not hindered it, neither shall the display of glory. The garden, the ruined world, the kingdom in its glories are alike the scenes of it; each and all maintains and witnesses the divine intercourse, this companionship of God with man.

HOW THE UNDERSTANDING IS ENLIGHTENED.

It must be a matter of enquiry to every thoughtful soul why it is that, whatever be the measure of our faith, we so continually betray ignorance of God's mind, and as much inability to judge as if no light gleamed from our faith to help us.

Faith is the credence which God gives us by the Holy Ghost in any revelation

of His mind; and this belief is the acceptance of its positive reality. So that in faith the soul possesses, so to speak, the substantiation of the truth presented and assured of. *Ordinarily*, I might give full credence to a person's assertion of things either present or future; but with God it is different. When I believe His truth, I have in me a conviction of the realities of things in which I myself am to be a sharer. And as I am in the world among uncertainties and shadows, so am I in faith apart from all natural influences here. And more than this, I am imbued and engrossed with the realities of which I have, through faith, the substance in my soul.

When I walk in the power of this faith, I must necessarily introduce the idea of the realities on which it rests in contrast to the pretensions and oppositions to God here. And this truly supplies the means for judgment, and practically is light; for "light is that which doth make manifest."

Now, I think I may have faith, and yet I may so little *realize the circum-*

stances into which that faith introduces me, that I may not be able to contrast the divine scenes which are opened to faith with the earthly ones where my nature roams. And if I am more engaged with the latter or inferior scene, I shall not be able to judge between the two, for the difference will be very imperceptible to me; and to be able to distinguish between two things where there is the smallest apparent difference, is the great proof of judgment.

It is said, "If thy whole body be luminous, having no part dark, the whole shall be luminous, as when the bright shining of a candle gives light;" that is, if you are under the control of the light yourself; if it has mastered every dark part in you, then you will be luminous, as a candle is luminous; you will not only shed light, but you will judge darkness.

Now here lies the entire obstruction to the action of light on us, that light which we derive from our faith, and which would act on us fully, only there is some "*dark part*;" and just as in a

dark deep dungeon, until a lamp *masters* the darkness on *all* sides it cannot be a light therein; so, until I am swayed by the faith which I have received, I do not and cannot bring its ideas to bear on all things around me, and therefore I cannot compare them. Practically, the dark spot comes in to warp my judgment. How easily would Paul have accepted the warning of the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem, had there not been in his heart a *natural* desire to go there, yet unrebuked by the light of that faith which dwelt in him, and which afterwards so controlled him when writing the Epistle to the Ephesians. The hindrance is always from the natural man; hence the apostle says, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the *renewing* of your mind, that ye may be able to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

If there remains conformity to the world, there will be a dark spot which the light has not penetrated, and *so far* there will be inability to prove what is

the will of God. It simplifies our enquiry very much if we see that it is not the fault of the *faith*, so to speak; that is to say, it is not any lack either as to the order or the amount of our faith, but that there is a dark spot in us—we do not add “virtue,” (2 Peter i. 5;)—there remains some natural clinging to the world which has not been overcome by our faith, which obstructs the light and leaves us unguided ourselves and useless for others.

We have a striking illustration of both points of the enquiry which we have been pursuing, in the case of Isaac and Jacob, and the faith which actuated each in the close of their history. That of Isaac is thus commented on by the Spirit in Hebrews xi. 20, “By faith Isaac blessed Esau and Jacob concerning things to come.” Thus we see his *faith* was not at fault; but was his whole body luminous,—was there no part dark? Genesis xxvii. gives the answer, and reveals to us the condition of Isaac’s soul at the time when he had this faith thus acknowledged by the Holy Ghost.

We find, that while intent on blessing his son in accordance with it, that he betrayed a lusting for this evil world, which we shall see warped his judgment. In forgetfulness of the word of God at the birth of Esau and Jacob, he had so allowed himself to be attracted by Esau, because of his *present* attentions to him, that he, now at the point of death, instructs Esau to "make some savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it me that I may eat, and my soul may bless thee before I die." We might think that this was too small a liking to operate so disastrously as to warp the judgment of Isaac, and to induce him to apply the disclosures made to faith, in direct contravention to God's words! But so it is. If so small a thing can warp one so much, what would not a greater one do? It teaches us that if the soul allows itself enjoyment in a scene outside this faith, that in the attempt to apply the truth, we shall always find it directed to a wrong quarter, for the mere fact of possessing faith does *not ensure* the right application. *No*; if your

soul is occupied with the *present*, which cannot be of the faith, for "that which is seen is not faith," the natural engrossment will pervert your judgment, and lead you to misapply any truth which you hold by faith.* You will see people continually, who believe simply in a truth, quite misapplying it, or unable to reduce it to its proper application, simply for this reason, that some present engrossment, like the dark part in the body, hinders the true luminous expression of the truth. Alas! how much we all suffer from this! But it is well to know *why* we suffer. Now when Isaac is, through mercy, awakened to the mind of God, we see what an earthquake his soul passes through: "he trembled with a great trembling." This describes, I believe, the commotion which takes place in the soul, when the mind and word of God assume their mastery, and when the faith in a truth engages a soul com-

* If I believe in the Lord's coming, and act contrary to this belief, will not the act balk the light? or if I act contrary to my faith, do I not therein baffle and impede the light from faith?

prehensively with itself. It is when the non-conformity to the world is avouched by the "renewing of the mind," and the consequent proving of the "good and perfect will of God." Hence, *after it*, Isaac exclaims of Jacob, "*he is blessed and shall be blessed.*" God always maintains His truth and graciousness to His servants; but the servant is greatly humbled when he tries to connect things of faith with things of sense. May we watch, and so seek to have our souls in the REGION of our faith, that we may know ourselves to be under the government of our Lord's mind, of which we shall then be the exponents.

Thus was it with Jacob in Genesis xl. 8, 9, and great is the contrast between him and Isaac in the two corresponding epochs in their history. When Joseph brings his two sons to him to bless them, Jacob's eyes were dim for age that he could not see, but instead of being occupied or engrossed with anything here, his whole soul is a luminous expression of the mind of God; and his words to Joseph imply, whatever might be the

prospects of others, that he *now* had none. "As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachael died by me in the land of Canaan," &c. As another has said, "those words, '*as for me,*' unfold a tale of a heart which has emerged from the crucible of suffering; which has been brought in spirit to the tomb, and has left there all most dear to its natural affections and instincts, but which is content to leave them there, and seeks no more for an outlet for them below." How different this state was to that of Isaac! Jacob had no link or attraction to earth, and he was a *worshipper*, too, because his soul was undistractedly engaged with the truth which his faith grasped; consequently he is in the judgment of God, and therefore guides his hands "*wittingly*" to correct the arrangements of Joseph. In God's presence, into which faith leads us, when engrossed by the truth which it has seized, we are not only worshippers, but we fall into communion with God's mind, practically proving it, because we are "renewed in the spirit of our mind," being delivered

from the pre-occupation which would cloud or hinder it.

In conclusion, I would only remark, that the true and simple way of obtaining or deriving light from any truth which we believe, is by so connecting the truth with *the Lord*, that we are consequently in the region of it, and, therefore, worshippers before Him in *connexion with it*; the effect then will be, that we shall be divinely influenced by it, our feelings swayed, and our desires formed according to it. We shall know how to compare the pretensions of man with it, and be able to judge when we do compare, because we have light to see wherein they differ. We must always make ourselves the subject of the experiment *first*; the little world in ourselves must be first judged in the principles which we desire or require to judge in the wide world; for we may rest assured, that we shall not be able to judge the *mass* if we have not judged the unit, *self*, which is but a type and miniature of the whole world. We may often seek to judge and pass sentence on

the world as a whole, but it will be found by every true disciple, that his power of doing so (divinely) on the whole, is only in proportion to his attainment and subjection to divine judgment in *himself*. The Lord so lead us to live in the realization of the truth which we believe, that we may prove its power to guide us in the circumstances, and to preserve us from the influences of this evil world. Amen.

INTIMACY WITH THE LORD.

Notes on Genesis xviii.

The position in which Abraham is presented in this chapter gives a very descriptive display of the ground of intimacy with Himself on which the Lord has set His people. In many respects it is a positive blessing to be brought into association with the Lord, as we find in the case of Abraham; but he is here presented not as the depository of promises or the object of

covenanted blessings, but as enjoying the *intimacy* which his position brought him into with the Lord.

The condition of the revelation, which separated him from natural associations and earthly ties and made him a stranger and pilgrim in the world, put him into this place of intimacy; as God had said to him, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." But the testimony to us is that in virtue of God's dealings with us in Christ we also are brought into this place of confidence and intimacy, though in a much higher sense. Abraham stood on the earth, the place of judgment, but God's call in grace puts us in direct association with the blessing, and as risen with Christ, altogether apart from the place of judgment. Ephesians i. 9 presents this intimacy as resulting from the place in which we are set in Christ: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself," &c. This revelation to us of the thoughts of God does not relate

to our own direct blessing, but is the token of confidence toward us whom He has set in such intimacy of relationship with Himself. As Christ said to His disciples, "I call you not servants: for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

Abraham's position with the Lord was one of perfect peace and unquestioning confidence. He has no question to settle with the Lord, but is on that ground where he can enjoy without any hindrance communion with Him. Neither the scene that was passing before him nor the thoughts of the judgment that the Lord tells him he is about to execute have any power to disturb the quiet with which he maintains his intercourse with the Lord.

In the sixteenth verse it is said, "The men rose up from thence and looked towards Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on their way." The Lord directed them in judgment, and

Abraham went with them to show them the way. He is here the companion of the Lord, and confidant of His thoughts. And to us the Lord is not only the eternal spring of blessing to our souls, but He makes His saints His companions; not invariably, it is true, but still He does so. And it is in the communications which the Lord makes to us that He thus makes us His companions; for certainly there is not a more happy or certain way in which any one can show his love to another, than by communicating to him his thoughts and feelings. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord!" "But we have the mind of Christ." "Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him." So we are called to walk with Christ until he comes and takes us up to Himself. The exercises and the path of faith are all in this world, but the issues of the trial and the bright "hope of righteousness by faith" are above. "Abraham went with the men to bring them on their way." That was all. He was entirely apart from the judgment that

was about to be executed upon Sodom; as the Church is also above the world's judgment, though not above the Lord's discipline for its good. Lot, in his desires after the good of this world, had looked toward Sodom, and found himself ensnared by it; but Abraham was so entirely out of it, as to be talking to the Lord about its fate, when Lot had to be roused by the startling words of the angels: "Hast thou here any besides? Sons-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place." But the Lord said to Abraham, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him," &c.

The Lord God put Abraham into the place of covenant blessing, and on this ground He communicates to him His thoughts. He had, in a sense, bound Himself to be Abraham's companion by the very terms of the revelation He had made to him; for He had said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,

unto a land that *I will show thee.*" And the result is, this introduction into confidence and intimacy of intercourse with the Lord, who speaks to him "of his house for a great while to come." And the ground of the Lord's communication of His thoughts to us is, that having centered His love in us, He lets us into His confidence. He has united the Church to Christ, and associated it with Christ, and hence He makes known to us "the mystery of his will." It is the consequence and result of the place in which He has set us.

The Lord says of Abraham, "*I know him,*" &c. There is the greatest blessing in this; it is so entirely the language of friendship, and so opposite to the way in which He speaks about judgment. He does not talk about "*knowing*" those He is going to judge, but says, "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." Until He has fully investigated, He will not strike even in judgment. But it is not thus with the

saints; He has no need to go down to see about them, for he fully knows and owns them, as He said to Abraham, "I know him."

"The men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but *Abraham stood yet before the Lord.*" It is a blessed thing to so know our place and blessing with the Lord as to be able to do this. For if the Lord thus "knows Abraham," so as to secure to him the blessings he had promised, it is answered by Abraham's staying with the Lord Himself.

He is going to bring judgment on the world; but He will not smite until He cannot help it: as He said, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet *full.*" But no judgment that was coming on the cities of the plain could separate Abraham from the Lord. The Lord's eye so rests on him that he is able to rest quietly in the Lord. And so it is with us; whatever trial, or sorrow, or judgment is coming upon the world, our place is to abide with the Lord Himself; and then, like Abraham, the

effect of having drunk into His grace will be, that we shall be calm, quiet, and happy. There will, alas! be Lots many in the well-watered gardens of the plain; but let us be in the mountain with the Lord, abiding in perfect peace; not alone in security from the judgment, but, in that which is far higher, with the Lord Himself.

Abraham being thus with the Lord in perfect peace, has nothing, as we see, to ask for for himself; but becomes the earnest intercessor for others. And even subsequently, in the case of Abimelech, the Lord says, "Restore the man his wife, for he is *a prophet*, and he shall pray for thee and thou shalt live." The force of this is, if he be a prophet, if he has this intimacy with the mind of the Lord, let him pray for thee, and I will hear him. So it is with us: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." The possession of the Lord's mind gives us the power of intercession for others. This is not like wrestling Jacob, who had to get the

blessing for himself, though it is possible we may have to wrestle for ourselves in order to get individual blessing, for we must not be untrue to our actual state; but Abraham's prayer for Sodom is communion, and the knowledge of this communion produces peace and joy. It is not that reverence will be absent from the soul, for Abraham says, "I am but dust and ashes," in the profoundest sense of his own nothingness in the presence of God; still there is the most perfect intimacy, as we witness in his advancing from point to point in his pleadings with the Lord for the sparing of Sodom; while this whole wondrous scene closes with the simple words, "And the Lord went his way as soon as he had done communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place."

No one can be in the presence of God without holy fear. And he who cannot reconcile this with confidence and joy, does not know what the presence of God is.

OUR HOPE.

The man who bears one living hope,
Deep hidden in his breast,
Is eager with life's storms to cope,
And seems already blest.

When other faces lose their smiles,
His overflows with joy ;
He sinks not with the crowd that toils,
But soars above annoy.

An earthly hope is his—some dream,
May be, that fills his soul ;
And yet, triumphant down life's stream,
It wafts him to his goal.

Then what should hopes divine achieve
For them who such possess ?
Surely the victory they should give
O'er pain, toil, and distress ;

Should bear them with a holy joy
From day to day through time,
Above life's stormiest billows buoy
Towards heaven's blessed clime.

Ah, never more let us repine,
Whatever be our lot ;
Nor ever let our hearts decline
In any dreary spot.

Our hopes are heavenly and eterne,
And ere another day,
May be, the hour for which we yearn
Its glories will display.

Yes, ere another day is past
Our absent Lord may come;
Fast will our bosoms beat—how fast!
With gladness overcome.

Then we shall quit the struggle here,
Forsake life's moan and woe,
And that blest hand will wipe each tear
And we no grief shall know.

FRAGMENT.

Satan has no power over the new man in us; but if we walk in the flesh we lay ourselves open to his devices. It is the secret of our strength against him to know that he has no power over the Spirit, but only over the flesh: and that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

THE PATH OF LIFE.

1 John v.

Life has two distinct actions in its path down here; one is victory over the world, and the other the realization of the soul's confidence in God; and if we are defective in either of these, there must be an unevenness about our manners and ways, which plainly indicates constitutional derangement.

The eternal life necessarily asserts its own qualities. It is *from* the Father, made known and given to us *in* the Son, and *against* all that is of the world, for "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" and still further, it can only find rest and solution for the Being whom it owns, by conferring with the Father about everything down here. "And this is the confidence we have in Him," &c., &c. Overcoming the world is the first victory of life. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Little children" know the Father, but

“young men” overcome the wicked one, in whose power the world lieth, and as soon as ever life is in energy, it declares itself by contending against the order and notions of things which are antagonistic to its own origin and tastes.

But though this is the *first* victory of life, it is not the *only* one, though from want of intelligence it often appears to be one's only aim and success; but if we stop short here, we shall not know simple gladness and rest of spirit, for though truly the energy of life, it does not comprise its rest and satisfaction, which can only be assured by confidence in God—by knowing Him, and we can only know Him intimately in relation to ourselves according as “we know that he heareth us.” The Lord (John, xvi. 33) no sooner said, “I have overcome the world,” than He lifted up His eyes to heaven and says, “*Father.*” The full action of life not only overcomes the opposing forces here, but reaches up to the Father, who is its proper source and region. It first leads to victory through faith in the Son of God who has over-

come, and then finds its home and rest in God, learning His mind and His love respecting every interest pertaining to the human vessel down here.

Now anything which is easily seen, and its results palpably felt, we naturally estimate as paramount to that which has little or no external evidence. Victory over the world is seen and recognized at once, and he who is in the power of it is conscious of the power by which he overcomes: he is acknowledged by his fellows, and is pleased himself with the strength he is gifted with; and this may be without any assumption or self-sufficiency. A "young man" illustrates one in whom is the energy of life. He is commended for his energy and enjoys it, not that he can feel himself (if conscientious) entirely victorious; but he feels in that condition which is properly an overcoming one, and the more he does, the more he desires to progress therein, and so far he is *right*: but the tendency and danger is that his mind and spirit may become so engaged with this primary action of life that he may

overlook the full range of it, even that which leads him into confidence and knowledge of God as He would be known privately and peculiarly to *himself*. The love of *doing* or *seeing* oneself the agent may betray itself in the spiritual as well as the natural man; but when it does, the life is checked and hindered, and the very point so coveted is for the time-being forfeited; for however the energy of that life may declare itself in overcoming the world, the rest and support known in communion with God Himself, who is the source of life and victory, are needed not only for guidance, but for the soul's onward progress. Samson may slay a thousand men with the jaw bone of an ass, but will that sustain him personally? No; he would have sunk from exhaustion if God had not attended to and relieved him, and thus cemented the personal link between Samson's soul and Himself.

But if victory, real victory, is insufficient without the heart conferring with God in confidence, we may with equal truth say, that mere prayer will not do

without the energy of warfare. Life must be unfettered and embrace the full range of its activities; for it is hindered if either action engages to the exclusion of the other. Joshua lying on the ground crying to God, (Josh. vi.,) when he ought to have searched for evil and overcome it, illustrates to us how we may spend our time in prayer and seeking the Lord, when we ought first to have overcome the wicked one in his devices in our immediate circumstances. Check life on one side, and you cannot promote it on the other. It declares itself in victory over the world, but it is invigorated and directed in conference with God. The more we confide in God, the more we SHALL confide. The more we overcome the world, the more shall we enjoy the refreshments of His presence; and like Abram), the blessing of Melchizedec *after* our victory will so enrich us that the offers of the King of Sodom will have no attraction for us. If I am much with God, I become gentle, considerate, and serene; whereas when I am more occupied with mere

strength, I am severe and impatient, like Jonah; I want to see my work prosper, and my sayings fulfilled, regardless of the sympathies of God. The man who knows God's mind from conference with Himself, can alone use the strength with which he is gifted skilfully and surely. Gift is often misapplied, and, in the present state of the Church, nothing is more apparent than a lack of apprehension of God's mind as to the nature and use of the gift possessed.

Let us now examine a little how we may cultivate and realize this action of life in our souls. By faith in the Son of God we overcome the world; and as we do, we have the consciousness of strength and the exultation of victory; but unless we know the mind of God, and His intention for us in our circumstances down here, we are conquering without the sense of peace or nearness to God; hence the Lord says, not only "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," but, "In ME ye shall have peace."

We want to be not only eager for

overcoming what is against us, but also to walk in the holy, solemn, happy sense that "God is for us;" and that He is working every thing for us after the counsel of His own will. As a babe in Christ I know the Father. Faith in the Son leads me to victory; and then successfully combating the world which is against Him, resting in the Son, I not only feel myself gaining by dependence, but also that I have learned to have confidence in Him. I know that if I ask anything according to His will He heareth me. I could not expect Him to do aught for me contrary to His will: but if I seek anything from Him according to His will, who has manifested His love by sending His Son to take away my sins, He will hear me. "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, will he not with him freely give us all things?" There can be no doubt that if He gave the greatest He would give the lesser, and, therefore, here is my rest; I know that if I ask anything according to His will, He heareth me. I feel and see the world, and everything

in it, against Him; I feel and know that faith in Him whom He has sent, bears me above it; and, as *above it*, I am seeking nothing but what is of the nature and sentiments of Him by whom I am overcoming; even the spiritual blessing wherewith I am blessed in Christ Jesus—skill and ability to maintain a victorious path through this evil world: in a word, the assured sense of holding the path of life. If I am careless or indifferent about the certainty of the Father hearing me, I may make great pretensions of serving God, (like David bringing up the ark in a cart,) but in the end there will be confusion; there is the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbals, but none of that happy self-possession and dignified action which flow from a soul able, in some little measure, to express the assurance—“I know that thou hearest me always.” No one who knows the love of God by learning “Him who is from the beginning,” after overcoming the wicked one through faith in Him, in a word, who is advancing to be a “father,” but *must*

feel that the one great point in all his references to God is, "Does He hear me?" I know that I have learned this much—"If I ask anything according to his will he heareth me." And now, if I know that He hears me, I have the petitions that I desired of Him. The idea here is not importunity, as in Luke xi., though it be quite true that importunity is required of God in *order to establish our faith* in Him alone. If I have any other resource, I should not persist in asking even one who *could* help me, if I saw there was no indication of it; but if I have *no other* resource, then the more urgent my wants, the more shall I persist in preferring my suit. But that is not the point *here*. It is rather that I have *confidence*—that if I ask according to His will He heareth me; and the point for me to determine, and to seek, and to be unsatisfied if not known, is *whether He has heard me or not*; to pause and wait till I have the sense of being heard.

Oh! if we walked even occasionally in this happy conference—in this blessed

sense of His hearing us, and of receiving the petitions we desired of Him—how calmly, how solemnly, should we move on! Victorious indeed down here, as “young men” in the fresh energy of life, but also as knowing Him “that is from the beginning.” Waiting always on God, knowing that he is attentive to all our desires if according to His will, and therefore unsatisfied unless we knew that He had heard us. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand pleasures for evermore.”

SANCTIFICATION.

To a mind that has become accustomed to draw all its conclusions directly from the inestimable word of God, and to do homage to the authority of that word alone, there is something unspeakably empty and unsatisfactory in the dogmas of systematic theology—those systematic reasonings of learned men by which the wondrous truths of revelation are

attempted to be arranged and limited, defined, and stereotyped. For personal edification and advancement it might be enough simply to pass them by as mere cisterns, not always pure, in order to drink at the fountain. But if the thoughts are directed toward others for their good, it cannot be concealed that the minds of multitudes of believers and their habits of thought on divine truth are almost entirely formed and governed by these systems, as they form the groundwork and staple of those sermons which from week to week they are accustomed to hear. Hence it is that their conclusions on the most important doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truths of revelation, only so far as these truths have been recast in these cramped and imperfect moulds of human thought and expression.

Now if it might be conceded that truth, and not error, was always so far taught, still, to say nothing of the direct authority of the word over the soul being lost, the difference to the mind between this systematic teaching and the

direct appeal to the living word is as great as would be experienced by the natural affections, between being presented with a cold but correctly chiselled statue, and the living, breathing object of the heart's warmest love. But the cold correctness of abstract truth can hardly be conceded to these exemplars of heavenly doctrine, as a very slight examination of Scripture would be enough to show. And on no point, perhaps, are they farther from giving the plain and simple declarations of Scripture, than on that which it is the object of this paper to present.

Sanctification in Scripture *always*, I believe, means *separation*. This may be *absolute*, by the grace of God through the sacrifice of Christ; or it may be *relative* or *practical*, through the application of the truth by the Holy Spirit. Still it never deserts the idea of *separation*. Thus believers are "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus." (Jude 1.) That is, they are *separated* unto glory by Him, as they are "chosen in Christ before the founda-

tion of the world;" "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Ephes. i.) As in Hebrews x., it is said, "By the which will we are *sanctified*, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are *sanctified*." And in Hebrews xiii., "Jesus, that he might *sanctify* the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate; let us therefore *go forth* unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." This shows the true meaning of sanctification. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus lays the ground on which the Father can carry out the purpose of His love; while the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, has power to bring us into fellowship with Himself, and to make us, as He was, *in* the world, but not *of* it; and the Holy Spirit, who dwells in them that believe, makes them know their place of separation, and produces in them *practical sanctification*. For every truth of God applied to the soul by the Holy

Spirit, has a separating tendency; as the Lord Jesus said, "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth." (John xvii.)

In the Old Testament, the term always denotes separation: ordinarily, separation to the Lord and to His service.

Under the law, sanctification *by blood* is abundantly presented. Aaron and his sons were *set apart* by blood; and the tabernacle, and the vessels of the ministry, and the altar, &c., were sanctified by blood. Thus also the believer is separated to God by the blood of Christ; and the very name by which believers are most commonly addressed in the epistles, marks them out as separated persons; those who have *gone forth* without the camp to Jesus. The simple meaning of the term "saint," is a separated person; as the Epistle to the Ephesians begins thus, "To the *separate* and faithful (or believing) in Christ Jesus who are in Ephesus;" and that to the Colossians, "To the *separate* and believing brethren in Christ, who are in Colosse."

This view of sanctification, which will be confirmed by a fuller reference to Scripture as we proceed, presents no contradiction to an ever-growing attachment to Christ; to a more simple obedience to His will; to a deepening piety; or to an advancing conformity to His example. But it is the emphatic denial that anything gives the ground of our fitness for heaven but the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is the denial, too, that our title to heaven is a *growing title*; as is abundantly proved by the words of the apostle, "Giving thanks unto the Father who hath *made us meet* to be partakers (see Greek) of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath *delivered us* from the power of darkness, and *hath translated us* into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have *redemption* through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. i.) And it is the denial further, that *sanctification* is ever in Scripture presented as the ground of assurance and peace; though assurance may be *weakened* by unholiness, because it grieves the Holy Spirit, and thus ob-

scures the brightness of His witness to the soul concerning the finished work of Christ. If one fails to *add to his* "faith, virtue," &c., he may go on until he becomes "barren and unfruitful," and so "forget that he was purged from his old sins." (See 2 Peter i.)

Sanctification is indeed connected with the work of the Spirit, but then the work of the Spirit is never presented as the ground of peace. It is in Christ Jesus "we have redemption *through his blood*, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his (God's) grace." (Eph. i.) The ground of peace and assurance is found alone in the once, and for ever, perfected work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, as has been often said with truth, Christ's work, *for* the believer, which is eternally perfect before God, that gives him peace; while the Spirit's work, *in* the believer, leads him into conflict and self-judgment and the mortifying of the flesh; and so to advancing holiness, or practical separation of life and walk.

If then the current phrase, "*progressive*

sanctification,” were intended to express no more than is presented in the exhortation, “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” however inaccurate, one would take no exception to the thought. But the popular idea connected with it is that of a progressive fitness for heaven, based on the notion of a gradual change and improvement of the old nature, and that is not a harmless thought. For in the first place, this notion involves a contradiction of Scripture as to the entire corruption of our nature, or, as Scripture calls it, our “*old man.*” And in the next place, it involves the most inadequate conceptions of the character of redemption, and of its results in the believer, as “a man in Christ;” or, as it is expressed in Eph. ii., “*created in Christ Jesus.*” “We are *His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*”

It might be well asked of some people—Christians too—“Is there such a thing as “the old man?” and how is it characterized? or, Is there such a thing as

“the new man?” and how is it distinguished? or *what* in us is it that the Spirit sanctifies?’ I read in 1 Thess. v., “The very God of peace *sanctify* you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is, the apostle looks to the power of God to be so applied that there might be wrought in the Thessalonians a practical separation according to that power, and according to the place in which they were set by the reception of the gospel and the action of divine grace. And mark, it is “spirit, soul, and body,” that he desires may be preserved blameless. These are the integral parts of man as man—the constituents of his being as such. But there is something more than these in every fallen child of Adam, *in every Christian*, renewed man though he be. There is alas! “*the flesh*,” in which, the apostle says, “there dwells no good thing;” which “lusts against the Spirit,” and is contrary to it, and which, it is affirmed, is “not subject to the law of

God, neither indeed can be." There is, it will be observed, not a word about *sanctifying the flesh*, though believers are to mortify it, and are not to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. As a principle, the apostle says, "They that are after the flesh cannot please God;" and with regard to believers, he speaks of it as a past condition of life out of which they had been brought by grace: as he says, "When ye *were* in the flesh," &c.

There is plainly in Scripture the thought of practical sanctification, i.e., of *separation unto God*, in heart and affections, and in walk, that may be more or less perfect; and that may be, and ought to be, advancing. With this thought there is no dispute. But if this be made the hinge of a soul's peace, or the ground of confidence, it is affirmed that *this* is not a scriptural thought. The Scripture tells us that "Christ himself *made peace* by the blood of his cross"—and that "*he is our peace.*" "Having been *justified by faith*, we have *peace with God.*" "In Christ Jesus, ye

who sometime were far off are made nigh *by the blood of Christ.*" So that if the thought of growing sanctification be made in any sense the ground of peace and assurance, it is in effect the dimming of the bright perfectness of the work of Christ, and the fostering of the spirit of self-righteousness, than which nothing can be more alien from true scriptural sanctification.

But I turn to some passages of Scripture in farther confirmation of the truth. In Matt. vi. 9, where the term first occurs in the New Testament, its meaning is to recognize as holy or separate from all that is contrary to it, the name of the Lord, or that which is expressed by that name: "Hallowed be thy name." So in Matt. xxiii. 17, 19, the temple is said to sanctify the gold that was upon it, and the altar the gift which was offered on it. That is, it gave to that which was connected with it the specific character of separation which belonged to the temple, as the house of God, or was presented on the altar dedicated to Him. And this principle, in its moral bearing,

is insisted on by the apostle in 1 Cor. x., where he says, "Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" That is, are they not by this act involved in all that is abominable in idol-worship? As the opposite asserts association with God in all the responsibility connected with the holiness of His nature, His character, and claims. In John xvii. 17, 19, our Lord says, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth;*" and again, "For their sakes I *sanctify myself*, that they also may be sanctified through the truth"—or truly sanctified. That is, our Lord *set Himself apart* for the perfect accomplishment of the Father's will, that by means of this we might be truly set apart to God. But it is expressed, *in terms*, in Heb. x., "By the which will *we are sanctified* by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." And again in ver. 14, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever *them that are sanctified.*" Add to this also the declaration of Heb. ii. 11, "*Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for*

which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Moreover, in John xv. 3 the Lord had said, "Now are ye clean (*καθαροί*) through the word which I have spoken to you;" and in xiii. 10 He had expressly marked the condition of His disciples, to the exclusion of Judas, when He said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is *clean every whit*: and *ye are clean*, but not all." In Eph. v. 26 also it is said, "Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word;" or as I think more exactly giving the force, "Gave himself for it that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word." Both terms, "sanctify" and "cleanse," are here used. So in Acts xv. 9, when Peter was showing the ground of the reception of the Gentiles, he says, "God hath put no difference between them and us; *purifying* their hearts by faith." Again, in Titus ii. 14 it is said, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all ini-

quity, and *purify unto himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In Heb. i. 3, the literal expression is, "when he had through himself made a purification, or cleansing, of our sins, sat down," &c. And in 1 Peter i. 22, it is said, "Seeing ye have *purified your souls* in obeying the truth through the Spirit," &c.

So that, whether our separation be expressed by sanctification or purification, the ground of it is declared to be the work of Christ, while its effect in us is received by faith, through the word, as God's instrument, and by the energy of the Holy Spirit.

But there are other passages. In Acts xx. 32 we read, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." Here the term marks the definite characteristic or condition of believers, as distinguished from others, whether now or hereafter, and is declared to be accomplished by God and the word of

His grace. In Acts xxvi. the same thought is repeated, only it is there added that the position is practically gained *by faith*: "That they might receive the forgiveness of sins and inheritance amongst them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me."

There are few Christians, perhaps, that have not at some time or other felt the crushing weight of that passage, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," (Heb. xii. 14,) when looking within for something to correspond to the requisitions of the holiness of God. It is not that practical holiness is not desired and sought after; nor that when the soul has learnt the liberty of grace and the gospel, it does not delight in the command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy:" but apart from the clear apprehension of the power of the work of Christ, there is, where there is nothing perhaps to stain the walk, a sense of the "law in the members warring against the law of the mind;" and the question painfully returns, How am I to become possessed of this absolute holiness? For it is felt

that nothing but *absolute holiness* can meet the requisitions of God's presence. Let anyone see the bearing of verse 10 of this chapter, taken in connexion with x. 10—14 and xiii. 12, 13, already quoted, and the difficulty will at once vanish. If it be holiness that *fits for heaven*, we have abundantly seen its ground and source. But if it be *practical holiness*, that we may as children be in accordance with the character of our Father, we find that God's fatherly chastenings are administered to this end. But then it is that we may be "partakers of His holiness." That is, God uses these chastenings to separate our hearts from that which is of nature or of the flesh, that we may be partakers of the holiness that characterizes His nature, and of which He is both the standard and the source. For in this epistle we shall see it is *God's salvation* that we have part in—*God's rest* that we are called to enter; and it is *God's holiness* we are made partakers of.

Believers are declared to be "Sanctified in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. i. 2.)

“ Sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” (Rom. xv. 16.) And in 1 Cor. vi. 11 it will be seen that their *cleansing*, and *sanctification*, and *justification* are viewed as having been accomplished by the reception of the gospel, and are presented in contrast with their former condition. The words are, “ Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” While 1 Cor. i. 30 declares, “ Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” It is quite true that the leading idea in this passage is that God has introduced in Christ an entirely new standard, which sets aside all the lofty pretensions of man’s intellect by a wisdom that is divine; and shows to be nugatory the false righteousness of man, by bringing in a righteousness which is of God; and sets aside the lustral purifications of the Gentiles and the mere ritual cleansing of the law, by a sanctification that is absolute; and finally, which discovers

and sets aside man's weakness, by the introduction of a power that redeems him out of the corruption and death of which he is the helpless victim. Still it presents Christ as the example, and depository, and ground of it all; and it will be seen that sanctification is as absolute, and of God, as the wisdom, and the righteousness, and the redemption. To which we may add 2 Thess. ii. 13, "God hath from the beginning chosen you through *sanctification of the Spirit*, and belief of the truth;" and 1 Peter i. 2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." These passages need no comment: the latter presents a condensed summary of truth, such as nothing but the word of God can afford. In 2 Cor. vii. 1 we have the exhortation, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This is practical, and we see how it is that this separation in the fear of God

is perfected. It is by cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. In 1 John iii. we read, "Every man that hath this hope in him"—i. e., of seeing Jesus and being made like him—"purifieth himself even as he is pure." But the accuracy of Scripture uses another term for this, as also in 1 Peter i. 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," &c.

In the consideration of this subject I do not think I have omitted any material passage bearing on it; and I do not think that there can remain on the mind of the attentive reader any doubt as to the definiteness of Scripture testimony concerning it. Even practical sanctification never leaves the idea of *separation*. For example, if I am advancing in holiness, what is it but that I am more and more separated from the world, its spirit, and aims, and pursuits; more separate from the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Practical sanctification is a growing separation from all that is not like Christ and that does not

spring from the life which I have *in* Him and *from* Him. Sanctification is never spoken of in Scripture as the attenuation of the old nature or the flesh, which is declared to be corrupt, "The old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts," "The flesh in which dwells no good thing." We *put off* the old man, and *put on* the new. The old man is not sanctified, it is *put off*. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." For "as is *the earthy*, such also are they that are earthy; and as is *the heavenly*, such are they that are heavenly." The principle of *identity in nature* is first established, and then the final result is declared—"we *shall* bear *the image* of the *heavenly*."

Whoever is accustomed to observe the workings of his own mind and to measure them by the perfect holiness of God, or to compare his thoughts with what is revealed of the perfectness of the Lord Jesus Christ, will acknowledge how far his condition is from that which will bear the inspection of the light.

Nay more, he will find that there is not in practice that progressive advancement in sanctification which he may perhaps hold as an unexamined doctrine. Hence there will be felt in proportion to the seriousness of the mind's habit, a dark and distressful feeling as to what possible change can take place *in death*, which will fit a heart for the purity of heaven, which up to the moment of departure has been felt, as to its secret movements and tendencies, to be entirely contrary to all that is pure and holy. And nothing can solve this difficulty but the blessed testimony of the divine word, which makes us know that "flesh and blood *does not* inherit the kingdom of God;" and that the change which is wrought in the believer by the power of God's Spirit is not the change of that which is *essentially evil* into that which is absolutely good; but is the impartation of a nature that is in accordance with all that characterizes the heaven for which it is destined. "Born of God," "born of the Spirit," "created anew in Christ Jesus," taken together with the declared con-

trariety of the two natures, present the divine solution of the difficulty. "That which is born of God sinneth not;" and the Saviour's declaration, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit *is spirit.*" It is not "flesh and blood that inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption." It is the new man, and not the old that inherits glory. Blessed be God, as "the flesh" knows *no change*, however subdued, so it knows *no resurrection*.

I CORINTHIANS XIII. 12.

Clothed with this tabernacle still,
 We dimly, darkly gaze,
 As through a window dim we view
 Eternal glory's blaze.

Our knowledge now is but in part:
 Our highest knowledge here
 Is all imperfect as our sight
 Of yon celestial sphere.

But this imperfect sight must pass,
 This partial knowledge flee;
 And "face to face," "knowing as known,"
 For evermore 'twill be.

Yes; and the soul tastes deepest joy
While dwelling on the Word,
Since that which shall be seen and known
Is her own worshipped Lord.

FAREWELL TO LIFE.

There is a weary head, an eye
Whose light is ready now to die:
There is a heart whose movement grows
More languid, drawing to a close:
There is a spirit sighing sore
To be released for evermore.

But o'er this scene a light has spread,
For Jesus holds the weary head,
And on the vacant, fading eye
Beams glory from the world on high—
And to the heart that beats so slow
Eternal love's own waters flow.
The sighing spirit views its home,
And whispers faintly, "Jesus, come."

Thus death is vanquished, Lord, by thee,
And pain, and fear, and sorrow flee.

THE SUCCESS OF FAITH.

“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”—Hosea xiv. 9.

Faith is the only power which the believer has over the world, and the moment he acts in faith he is in opposition to the world, and the world to him. The world in the hand of Satan will always be arrayed against him in various ways, but as long as there is faith there will be victory. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (1 John v. 4.) Now faith is maintained in power in my soul if I am acting in reliance on God’s word. I then walk in faith, and the greater the apparent difficulties, the more they are made to conduce to my benefit and to the world’s discomfiture.

The children of Israel, (see Ex. xiv.) saved from the judgment of God on Egypt, and having fed on the paschal lamb, are called to leave Egypt, and

while they acted in obedience to this word of the Lord, which told them to depart therefrom, they walked in faith. But in so doing they must encounter the enemy, and the whole power of the world and of the devil is brought against them. The Red Sea typifies the "strong man armed, until the stronger than he had come upon him, and taken away the armour in which he trusted and divided the spoils." Until Christ came no *man* could assert mastery over Satan; but to Him Satan had to bow, and acknowledge, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." The Lord Jesus entered into death "that he might destroy him that had the power of death," and He is now raised far above all principality and power, as supreme over every shade of hostile agency. When a soul is quickened with the life of Christ, its first consciousness, after assurance of its safety, is, "I am not of the world, even as he is not of the world." *Then* begins the walk of faith, and this being the aim and evidence of the life that produces the walk,

its first action is to lead out of the world, or, as here typified, out of Egypt; and *then* also begins the trying to the soul, which is caused by the array of forces which beset and embarrass it. And this is necessary. I must feel the terribleness of the difficulties in order that I may enjoy the greatness of the victory which will be vouchsafed to me. If I were of the world, the world would love its own; but because I am not of the world, but He has chosen me out of the world; therefore the world hateth me. Israel had hitherto proceeded with a high hand, as many a young believer does; but ere long the world, in some shape or other, presses on him; and the more so as he persists in leaving it.

Amid the various ways in which the world acts against us, there is none more dangerous than its indirect imitation of us. Pharaoh and the Egyptian did not professedly imitate Israel, but they follow in Israel's track with a deadly purpose and evil intention. In this they typify the world in its most insidious form of attack. The tares among the

wheat are the most direful oppression; the "vessels to dishonour" in the great house the most effectual corruption; the "spots in your feasts of charity" the most unescapable persecution. No suffering which the Lord endured from the world was equal to that of Judas's treachery. If the world follows me, it is undoubtedly with a purpose to detain me in Egypt; and if it avows it openly, like Pharaoh, so much the better for *me*. The children of Israel do not appear to have apprehended the pursuit of Pharaoh till they were hemmed in by the waters of the Red Sea. The soul does not realize the terrific power of the world, until *circumstances* combine with the violence of man to convince it that there is no escape except in the power of faith. In this trying and excruciating moment the weakness of our flesh loudly betrays itself; but faith on the other hand asserts its reliance on God. The children of Israel in their murmurings represent the *one*; Moses the *other*. *They* say, "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians. *Moses*

says, "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." The soul that has never entered into this strait, painful as it is, has never truly essayed to leave the world, and take the place of victory over it by faith; and therefore it has never known the mighty power of God in vouchsafing to it full and marked deliverance over all the power of the enemy. It has not realized what it is to "sit together with Christ in heavenly places," which is the Christian's calling. I may be a believer and know myself sheltered from judgment through the blood of Christ; and still more, I may have fed on Him as my life; but unless I overcome the wicked one, in whose power the world lieth, I am not strong; and I am depriving myself of the consciousness of strength, which is my portion, if I am not marching onward to leave the world behind. A "babe" I may be, but I shall never be a "young man," unless I overcome; and that which overcomes is faith; and faith is not in full exercise until I am so pressed that none but God can extricate me. The

very experience of this strait is an evidence that I am in the path of faith, overcoming what is not of the Father down here. The combined forces of the world; (men and circumstances;) in another place "giants and cities walled up to heaven" so hedge me round that in order to escape from them I must be cast simply and entirely on God. *Until* I am thus cast on Him, I am not in active faith; and *when* I am, I shall know what is "that victory that overcometh the world." When I simply trust in God He always helps me in a way quite unexpected and unthought of, and also supremely above my utmost calculations.

In this moment of agony Moses's faith waxed strong; it felt that God was equal to the difficulty; and God's first word is, "Bid the people that they go *forward*." The only movement of any value at such a moment is a more decided advance; for it proves the existence and energy of faith, and the dauntless advance wins the position. Daniel's move into the lion's den places

him in the end above his enemies. Oh that our souls knew better that the way to rise superior to the power of the world is to be more active and determined in abandoning it! God, whose "way is in the sea," now opens therein a path of deliverance; and the believer realizes His mighty power.

The Egyptians follow, and as yet there is no obstacle to hinder their advance; for imitators of Christianity can readily follow the people of God up to a certain point, but no further. And from thence arises a fresh disclosure to faith; for however wondrous the opening that had already been made to the people of God through this great difficulty, it by no means *ends* here: on the contrary, the soul is led still more deeply into the sense of God's interest for it *after* the resolution of the difficulty, given in answer to faith. The first engagement of faith is with the *distress*, but God having opened a clear, safe, and wondrous way for me out of it, He then unfolds to me *how* He cares for me. This blessed disclosure the chil-

dren of Israel are given in the following way. "The angel of the Lord which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud went from before their face and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these, so that the one came not near the other all night." Here is *another* great evidence of being in the path of faith! God does not *guide* His children by circumstances; for such guidance would be below faith; but He often corrects us and forces us back into the path of faith *by* circumstances. I ought to know my Lord's will for me in everything, independently of circumstances. He could not indicate His will to me in any other channel except the Holy Ghost, who dwelling in me and helping my infirmities, maketh intercession for me. I cannot therefore estimate any of God's orderings for me according to their true value until I am in the path of faith; but the moment I *am* in

that path, He makes an abundant display to me of His lovingkindness and tender mercy. The soul is then made sensible of special acts on God's part intercepting and checking the power of the world which threatens it, and this is a most blessed and cheering experience, but only known in the Red Sea; i.e., *after* the soul has entered the opening vouchsafed to faith. *It could not be known outside.* Paul at Philippi encountered a terrible "sea" in the violence of the world and Satan; but he walked in faith, and God opened the prison doors. And not only so, but his *jailer* is changed into his *host*, and he receives the utmost care and attention, where a little before all must have been, to human vision, darkness and misery.

There is no truly loyal soul that has not a history of its own in its struggles to get detached from this evil world, with a bright page here and there marking every successful step. The world is always in antagonism, whether avowedly or not; and, withal, so reckless and presumptuous, that it will venture

to imitate the path of faith, in order to detain the people of God in their onward advance. This is Satan's aim in provoking the imitation, though the instruments that he makes use of to attain it may not be always conscious of so defined a purpose. All the religious forms and services which are continually adopted by people of the world without faith are, doubtless, urged upon them by Satan in bitter hate of the people of God. And as "Jannes and Jambres (imitators to a point) withstood Moses," so do imitators now-a-days withstand the truth; and they are as destructive in their secret intentions as were the Egyptians who pursued the children of Israel through the Red Sea. But their folly will sooner or later be made manifest: the further they proceed, the greater will be their difficulties. "In the morning watch the Lord looked into the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." As with the five *foolish* virgins, the discomfiture increases as the hour of deliverance for the *wise* ones

approaches. They may *enter* the path without difficulty; but as they advance, troubles increase: "Their chariot-wheels are taken off, and they drave heavily." Terrible is the moment for the persecuting, imitating world!

The believer finds the path of faith, at first, one of fear and risk; but as he advances, difficulties disappear, and he is triumphant *just before* the world is overwhelmed.

This triumph is another great evidence of being in the path of faith. Faith always leads to triumph; and as it advances, imparts an increasingly clear consciousness of fulness of victory.

God always makes a way of escape; and after we have suffered awhile, makes us perfect — stabilishes, strengthens, and settles us. If we faint not, we may surely reckon on deliverance; for the "end of the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." But we must endure, and we must *advance*; and if we do, we shall surmount every difficulty in this world, be it great or small. And not only so, but we shall have the

cheering and triumphant assurance, "~~The Egyptians~~ whom ye have seen to-day, ~~ye shall see them again no more for ever.~~"

There is no resuscitation of a conquered foe. Many others may arise, but one thoroughly conquered—overwhelmed in the sea of death—can never present itself again. May the Lord in His mercy and love lead us on in the power of that faith through which we shall be more than conquerors, in the practical realization of the wonders of His own victory for us!

THE RESURRECTION.

1 Cor. xv.

Familiar as we are all obliged to be with death, and in nature shrinking from it, still feeling it inevitable, it is strange that the heart is no more impressed and the thoughts and feelings no more moulded by the wonderful revelation of God, which presents the only possible remedy for death, and alone sheds a ray of brightness on the gloom of the grave.

Nothing in the universe is more solemn than death. It is justly styled "the king of terrors;" and it is not by banishing thoughts of it from our minds, nor by thinking lightly of it, that we shall gain the victory over its terrors.

If Christians thought more deeply of what death is, as the quenching and dying down of all earthly associations and hopes—the perishing in a day of all human thoughts—the dissolving of every tie which affection has ever woven to bind our hearts to those we love—the breaking up of every interest in which, since life began, we have taken a part—the removal from all that, as to this world, has ever awakened a joy or caused a sorrow—to say nothing of the mournful circumstances that so often wait on the hour of dissolution, it would assuredly throw them, as a necessary resource, more on the consideration of the resurrection—that truth and victory of Christ in which alone the remedy for death is seen. It would not then be held lazily and inconsequentially—a doctrine amongst other doctrines, and

nothing more; but in its living power, as alone buoying the heart over the vastness of the ruin; and with unfailing thankfulness to God, for having given the brightest light of revelation where nature is most at fault, and thus throwing a ray of the brightest glory on nature's darkest hour!

In the marvellous unfolding of the blessed subject presented in this chapter, it is important to notice how the apostle links all that is revealed to him of the certainty and order and power of the resurrection with the gospel which he preached; and also how simply he presents the elements of that gospel in which alone man's deliverance from sin and all its consequences is found.

This gospel he sums up in the briefest terms, namely, that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." This he says was the subject of common testimony by himself and by the other apostles and witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. "Whether

it were I or they, so we preach and so ye believed." It presents thus the death of Christ as the result of God's counsels and the fruit of His infinite grace, according to the testimony of mercy, from the time sin entered into the world until its guilt was met, not by the blood of the typical sacrifices which had been enjoined, but by the death of Christ, who "now once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." "He died for *our* sins, according to the Scriptures." The cause and object of His death is thus presented; for it is not in a living Christ that the gospel is found for dying men. It is true that He *lived* before He died; but, simple as the distinction may appear, however much Christ may be the subject of preaching or testimony, there is no gospel for sinners but in His *death*. Man, in death, is reduced to the impotence which belongs to his condition as a sinner; and in it he is obliged to bear witness, however unwillingly, to the solemn judgment of God against sin. Men may deceive themselves about

death coming "in the course of nature," and may talk about dying as "paying the debt of nature," or "laying the head to rest on the bosom of mother earth;" but in it there is no "course of nature," nor anything else but the just judgment of God—a judgment irreversible if met apart from faith in the death of Christ. "It is APPOINTED unto *men* once to die, but after this the judgment."

It is important to notice (for many Christians are deceived by it) how much the life of Christ is dwelt upon—not, it is true, to the exclusion of His death as a historic fact—in the preaching and writings of those who, on the one hand, present Him as restoring *man, in his nature*, to association with God; and on the other, by those who would present the efficacy and grace which dwelt in him as incarnate as *continued now* by means of ordinances and a priesthood. But we must learn from Christ Himself, that whatever excellency or perfection dwelt in Him (perfection on which the renewed heart delights evermore to

dwell) is a perfection apart from man and dissociated from man, and can only be participated in by His death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It is only in death that even Christ Himself becomes fruitful in life and blessing to others. In life He is *alone* in His infinite perfectness and worth: in death that worth and excellence become the portion of those that believe on Him in His atoning death. It is this which stamps such importance on the death of Christ, and gives its emphasis to the apostle's declaration, "Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures."

But the other part of the gospel is, "that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." In the doctrinal statement of Christ's death and resurrection, it is, "he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Here it is the certainty of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, as the fundamental truths on which the whole of

Christianity rests. He was not only raised from death, but from the grave. Death and the grave are conquered by the resurrection of Christ; as the apostle speaks at the close, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Thus he recalls to their minds what was the gospel he preached, and which they received, and by which they were saved—unless, which he does not for a moment allow, all had been in vain. That which he had received by direct revelation from the Lord he had declared to them; for this was the special characteristic of Paul's testimony. He was a stranger to Christ when he was on the earth, and the other apostles were called; and the resurrection of Christ, as His death also, was a mere nullity to him until convinced of it by the appearance of the Lord Jesus Himself on the journey to Damascus. This enabled the apostle, in a special manner, to join the array of witnesses which he here enumerates in their testimony to those fundamental truths on which the possibility of salva-

tion alone rests, and on which the whole of Christianity is built: and he adds, "last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

It is the mention of this appearance of Christ to himself that throws his mind back on the state of things with him when thus met by the Lord. He thinks of his having been a persecutor of the Church of God, and his heart is bowed by the sense of that grace which saved him and made him an apostle and a witness for that Christ whose name he had so madly attempted to destroy. He ascribes all the energy of his service to the grace which he had received; and his labours, which were so abundant, he renounces as *his*, and declares that they were due only to the grace of God which was with him.

He then assumes as the foundation of his argument that Christ had been preached, that "he rose from the dead," and asks how it should be that some amongst them said that "there was no resurrection of the dead." Because if it were once allowed that there is no

such thing as a resurrection from the dead, it is plain that Christ, who was both dead and buried, could not be risen. And if this were so, all the consequences immediately followed, that the apostle's preaching was vain, and vain was their faith; and those who had preached a dead and risen Christ were found to be false witnesses in regard to God, because they testified that God had raised up Christ, which could not be, *if the dead do not rise*. But, then, if Christ were not raised, their faith was vain—they were yet in their sins. If the resurrection of Christ was gone, all was gone. His death was no atonement for sins, and, consequently, those who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished, and the apostles were of all men the most to be pitied for trusting implicitly to a mere fable, and for suffering such miseries in the world on account of it. It is likely that the Corinthians had no thought of consequences like these being connected with their denial of the resurrection of the dead: for certainly they had no thought of making a formal surrender

of Christianity; but the Spirit of God by the apostle shows that, if this point of christian truth were sacrificed, Christianity in its whole essence was gone, and man was left in the hopelessness of sin and despair, notwithstanding all that the gospel might have promised. The resurrection in the apostle's mind connects itself alike with the foundation of his faith and his final hope beyond the grave: without it his only standing in the presence of God is gone, and every hope perished.

Having proceeded thus far in proof of the testimony that had been borne amongst them, and shown that the denial of a resurrection of the body from the dead,* whatever they might think

* It does not appear that the Corinthians denied the immortality of the soul, or the life of the spirit in another world after this; but they said there was no *resurrection of the body* after death. It is against this notion that the whole reasoning of the chapter is directed; and it may well teach us the importance of the doctrine that was at stake, and the place which the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection from the dead of those that are His should hold in our minds.

of it, was the utter subversion of the whole of Christianity; and assuming the position as incontrovertible that, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept," the ground is cleared for his advancing argument. But from verse 20 down to verse 29, the revelation is confined to the resurrection of Christ, and to the position of power to which, in the counsels of God, he was advanced by it. For it is as man that Christ is contemplated here, and "raised up from the dead *by the glory of the Father.*" Christ in His resurrection is presented first as "the wave-sheaf," or "first-fruits of them that slept," in reference to the gathering in of that harvest which will take place at his coming. His resurrection is the pledge and power of the resurrection from the dead of all that are of Him; as it is stated, in verse 23, where the order of the resurrection is given, "Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." Then it is shown that, as it was by *man* that death was brought in, so it is by

man that the resurrection of the dead, the only possible remedy for death, is also introduced. This is shown by the contrast between Adam and Christ: death is by the one, and life out of death by the other. Death is the consequence of association with Adam—it is nature's doom; life is the fruit of association with Christ—it is faith's triumph.

The universality of the terms, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," is limited to the association with the respective heads of death and life. "In Adam all die" is so far universal as a consequence of relationship with him by natural descent, as it is unmet by association with Christ through faith. "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive" does not regard the exercise of His power, when "all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth," some to "a resurrection of life," but others to "a resurrection of judgment." Not that this universal power of Christ over the dead to call them forth is questioned; but in this passage it is limited to

association with Himself, as the head of redemption to all those that are in Him by faith, and whose resurrection is the consequence of another principle than the exercise of divine power which all must obey. This is seen in Rom. viii. 11: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The next thing that is presented is the *order* of the resurrection: "Every man in his own order."

"Christ the first-fruits"—which, as we know, has been accomplished more than 1800 years—"afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." It is not until His coming that those who are His will be brought into the enjoyment of the actual resurrection, which is necessary in order to their entrance into glory with Christ, however they may have known "the power of his resurrection" in many of its blessed fruits before. This is fully presented in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17: "For the Lord himself shall

descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

It is not the intermediate state, or the happiness of the spirit apart from the body that is here dwelt upon, however it is declared that "to depart and be with Christ is far better," and "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." It is the resurrection of the body from among the dead; the intervention of Christ's power to deliver the bodies of his saints from the corruption in which they have been sleeping, and thus to rescue them from the last trace of the power of sin, and to present them "faultless before the presence of his glory," as the trophies of his power and love.

Next in order after the display of Christ's power in the resurrection of those that are His, at His coming, is

“the end.” This *τελος*, or end, is shown to be at the close of Christ’s mediatorial kingdom which he will then deliver up. But this will not be until His power and reign have resulted in the putting down of “all rule and all authority and power,” and the subjugation of all enemies. Even “*death*” itself is to be destroyed by the power of Christ, inasmuch as those who are left under its power, as not having a part in the “first resurrection,” will at the end be raised, as presented in Rev. xx. 11-15. “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man ac-

ording to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

The only notice of what is termed the "general resurrection," or the resurrection of those that are *not* Christ's, is found in the expression, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," which answers to the passage just quoted from Rev. xx.

That which follows upon this is the final state, beyond all dispensation, "when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father;" and when "the Son also himself shall be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." It is this state that is presented in Rev. xxi. 1—5, following in order of time the judgment of the dead, already referred to, at the close of Christ's millennial reign. Its characteristics are "a new heaven and a new earth," and the declaration that "the tabernacle of God is with men," "for the former things are

passed away." It is at Christ's *coming* that He receives the kingdom; but "the end," refers to the period of His giving it up, after the full exercise of power in putting down all opposing rule, and the subjugation of every enemy.

Nothing is more wonderful or calculated to impress the soul than this breadth of Scripture, which, in a few simple sentences, lays open the destinies of man and of the universe; and, while outstripping the flight of time, directs the eye through the long vista of God's dispensations, until the view is lost in the eternity of God Himself! And what calmness does it give the soul, what superiority to all the interests of time, to be thus occupied with the thoughts of God, and to find that our true inheritance, our eternal portion, is thus bound up with His eternal counsels in Christ Jesus! And what dignity does it throw around "the man of sorrows," whom we have learned to love, to find Him thus the centre and the end of all these counsels.

But it may be asked, how is it that

events like these, of which there is no foreshadowing in the annals of time, should be spread out before us thus with all the definiteness of a map? The answer is, it is *God's programme*. His outline of the vast drama of the universe, which runs on till eternity shall meet and engulf the flood of time! That which *man* knows fully he can declare simply; and God, whose wisdom has foreordained all things, and whose power accomplishes all, can reveal with perfect ease and simplicity the order and sequence of the purposes of His eternal mind! Happy he who finds his interest and his joy knit up with all that is thus revealed!

From verse 20 to 29 of this chapter we have a subject of itself—a divine episode concerning the power and glory of Christ as the Risen Man, and His reign until “the end.” The direct argument concerning the resurrection of the dead was broken off at verse 19, and is resumed again at verse 29, with the words, “Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?” And the questions are

asked, "Why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" In verse 18 the apostle had shown, as a consequence of the denial of the resurrection of the dead, that "they which had fallen asleep in Christ had perished," and now he reasons on the folly of their being baptized for the dead apart from the hope of the resurrection. To be baptized into Christ's name, *then*, whatever it be now, was equivalent to being baptized *for death*. If the martyrs were struck down and others rushed into the ranks to fill their place, it was with the prospect of sharing their fate. But what inducement could there be to encounter this, except in the certainty of the resurrection? They were thus baptized "in regard to the dead;" for that appears to be the force of the passage. Not that there was any such custom, in apostolic days, whatever there may have been in the progress of superstition since, of persons being baptized in the place of others who had died without baptism that they might have the benefit of it. This

seems to have been a custom fabled to meet the difficulties of the passage, which in its connexions is simple enough, and the explanation above is confirmed by the next point to which the apostle adverts, viz., his own experience. He had said, (ver. 19,) "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most miserable:" and he now adds an illustration of this in the question, "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" His life, for Christ's sake, was but a succession of perils. He had *daily* to meet death as the consequence of the hopes he cherished. He had to encounter an infuriated populace at Ephesus, which he compares to the contest with wild beasts in the amphitheatre. But what advantage was there in all this, if the dead rise not? Take away the resurrection and there is no motive left for *the encountering of persecutions and evils* in this life. It is of no use to say that other motives might still have impelled to such a course. That is exactly the point in question; and the apostle declares that *christianity*, such

as it is, furnishes no motive apart from *the resurrection*. And it is exactly here that we learn the importance of the doctrine and the place it held in the apostle's system. We have already seen the bearing of its denial on the gospel and on the apostle's testimony and the faith of believers; and now we see it as cutting the sinews of the apostle's energy, and as the utter extinction of his hopes. The resurrection gone, he sees no alternative but to "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And he more than intimates that this effect had already resulted from the denial of the doctrine, at least on the part of some. "Evil communications had corrupted good manners." The philosophic notions of the heathens around them and their corrupt and sensual practices were producing their fruits amongst the Corinthians. Their intercourse with those who were far from God had, it is likely, first corrupted their doctrines, and as a consequence was now corrupting their morals.

(To be continued.)

THE RESURRECTION.

1 Cor. xv.

(Concluded from page 256.)

It was this corruption from heathen intercourse which led to the stern rebuke of the apostle, "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." This does not imply that there was direct ignorance of the being of God or a denial of His existence, but such an absence of the sense of the holiness of His character and claims as could only result from neglect of the truth and the absence of that communion to which the grace of the gospel introduces. For we must remember that the grace which the gospel presents comes to us through the unfolding of the character of God in the truth and righteousness and holiness which characterize His being. This amongst the Corinthians was lost, as it is in every case where error becomes dominant in the soul. This knowledge of God, which gives activity and brightness to conscience, being absent, the

safeguard of the soul is gone, and we are exposed to Satan's wiles: for these can only be detected as we are walking in the light.

As to the doctrine itself, it is plain that no philosophic speculations about a future life, nor reasoned conclusions about the immortality of the soul, nor imaginative sickly sentimentalizings as to the enjoyments of disembodied spirits, the "*philosophy of a future state!*" can ever take the place of the plain Scripture doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; that doctrine which brings in God in the supremacy of His power to complete the redemption which His grace began, and which leaves to *man* no place but that of a helpless sinner, the just victim of death and corruption. It was in the resurrection from the dead that Christ's victory over death was accomplished and proclaimed; and it is in the resurrection of His people that their participation in His victory is shown. The knowledge that "to depart and to be with Christ is far better," is not denied. The truth, as regards the believer, that to be "ab-

sent from the body is to be present with the Lord," has its own rightful place. Nay, we owe to the same apostle the revelation of these truths; but how much do they appear in the reasonings of this chapter? Are they for a moment allowed to weaken the importance of the fundamental truth he is establishing? The reason of this is plain. The certainty of the soul's being in the presence of Christ at death gives present light and cheerfulness to the passage—is an instalment of heavenly hope; but it is only in the resurrection that Christ's full power over death is declared. Corruption has still a hold on that which Christ has redeemed while the body is sleeping in the grave. The victory is not complete while any part of that which constitutes the integrity of our being is still under the power of death. We know, indeed, that our Lord, when the resurrection of the dead was in question, (Luke xx.,) declares that "God is not a God of the dead but of the living; for all live unto him." Still we are taught that "the earnest expect-

tation of the creature waiteth *for the manifestation of the sons of God* ;” and this manifestation will be when they are raised from the dead by Christ at His coming. “When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall we also appear (be manifested) with him in glory.” Glory for the believer is not reached through death, but through resurrection, or that which is tantamount. “He shall change our vile bodies and fashion them like to his own glorious body.” What believers are declared to be waiting for is, “the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

It is not, then, in consonance with Christ’s glory, nor is it for the interest of holiness, as producing separation from the world’s spirit of self-indulgence, nor does it tend to energetic, hopeful service that the eye and the heart of the Christian should be so little set upon that which is beyond death, even upon that resurrection which is the peculiar and distinctive privilege *of those that are Christ’s* ; however much it may be merged and lost sight of in the notion

of a common and *distant* and simultaneous resurrection of all men, from which, in scripture, it is most carefully distinguished, both in point of time and principle of accomplishment. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

Here (verse 35) the argument takes another form, as to *how* the resurrection is accomplished and with *what body*. This we shall briefly pursue.

In the first place, the difficulty or objection which is supposed in the questions, is declared to be the offspring of *folly*, and consequently is not *directly* answered, and perhaps could not be. It is a question simply of the power of God, which is not to be limited by man's capacity to conceive of its exercise. Still, there are certain analogies which cast their light upon the question. First, there is the example of the seed sown. This does not spring up apart from the decomposition, the death, of the grain; nor does it come up the same body that was cast into the ground, but with a body given to it according to God's good

pleasure. Still, every seed has its own appropriate body, whether it happen to be of wheat or any other kind of grain. Next, there is the analogy of animal organised life. In this, though flesh is a common characteristic of all, there is the difference which adapts each kind to its peculiar habits and to the element in which it is designed to exist. It is marvellous, but for its familiarity, that flesh should exist in such different circumstances, and in such opposite elements, as we find to be the case in men, and beasts, and birds, and fishes! Next, there is the difference between the heavenly bodies and the earthly; and their distinctive glory. "The glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another." But between the celestial bodies also there is a difference in splendour or glory. The glory of the sun is distinct from the glory of the moon; and star also differs from star in glory. In all these there is the bright witness of the power and wisdom of Him on whose fiat the resurrection of the dead depends. So that any question

of "*how*," or "with what body," only resolves itself into the folly and ignorance of one who is blind to the displays of divine power around him, or unobservant of His works of might and wisdom that the wide creation presents.

"Almighty God has done much more: and what He can He will: His own omnipotence stands bound to see it done."

This closes the analogies; for "so also is the resurrection of the dead" (ver. 42) does not refer to the differences of the heavenly bodies and their various glories, but returns to the example of the seed sown. (ver. 38.) This is pursued through all the characteristics of the resurrection-body, in its incorruption, glory, power, spiritual nature—the bright contrasts of the corruption, dishonour, weakness, in which the natural body is sown. "*It is sown in corruption,*" &c. The very term, when so applied by the Spirit of God, awakens hope at the moment the eye is most disposed to be fixed on the gloom of the grave, and paints a bright rainbow on our cloud of

sorrow. For what Christian that has ever stood by the grave, and seen the cold sod fall heavily on the bosom of the objects of affection, but has felt relief in the thought, "It is but a sowing?" The grave is but receiving the seed in order to render it back again in all the triumph of christian hope expressed in the words, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

This last characteristic of the resurrection-body, which expresses its differential character, gives occasion to a declaration, the force of which is sometimes overlooked. The apostle says, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This is not the trite assertion that man is composed of a natural body and a spirit, which we all know; but that "there is a *spiritual body*"—a body known and existing in the wondrous economy of God, bearing

this distinctive character after the type of which the saint will be invested at the resurrection, as he is now possessed of "a natural body," suited to the exigences of his existence in the present state. It is with regard to these expressions that reference is made to the first Adam being a living soul, and the last Adam a quickening spirit. It marks the condition of Adam's being in his creation, and what Christ is in His divine person. It is introduced as giving the basis of the natural body and of the spiritual body, of which it is shown that in the order of time the natural comes first, and afterwards the spiritual. Adam being made of the dust of the ground is said to be "of the earth earthy." This is the character of the first man. But the second man is not said to be of the heaven heavenly, but "the Lord from heaven." What He is in His nature and divine relationship of necessity enters into and characterizes what he accomplishes, and what He is as the head of redemption. The next point in prominence is the par-

ticipation of this nature. It is said that, "as *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy; and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly." Our participation in Adam's nature associates us with him in like condition of being, and places us in all the circumstances connected with his state as of "the earth earthy," having no spring of life beyond that which is natural, and which is forfeited by sin, and having by the very condition of his nature, "of the *earth earthy*," no association with *heaven*. But participation in the nature of the second Adam, "the Lord from *heaven*," places us in the condition in which He is as the risen head of a redeemed and heavenly family, and in all the circumstances and connexion with heaven in which the resurrection has placed Him. "As *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also which are heavenly." Mere natural circumstances of earth may remain, as resulting from our connexion with the first man, but our life, our nature, is derived from heaven, and belongs to heaven, and can only have its

home in heaven, as it is allied to "the second man, who is the Lord from heaven."

Hence the next point that is presented is our sharing *the likeness* of Him whose *nature* we share. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the *image* of the heavenly." This is what will be: it is connected with our hope. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be *like him*." But even now, amidst all the misery by which we are surrounded, amidst sorrow and corruption and death, and all the dreadful consequences and issues of sin, we know that, "as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly." "We are more than conquerors through him who hath loved us."

But "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit incorruption." There is the necessity, the absolute necessity, for a change as to our present condition of being, tantamount to that which the apostle had already taught takes place

in the resurrection, when it is "raised a spiritual body," &c., from the impossibility of man's nature being associated with the glory of the kingdom of God. This brings out another point of revelation, exactly as we see it when the believer's hope concerning the departed is presented in the Thessalonians. "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord"—answering exactly to verse 51 of our chapter: "Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," &c. The assertion of the absolute necessity of this change, in order to inherit the kingdom of God, necessitates the disclosure of the power of Christ in another form than that which takes place in the resurrection. It seemed up to this point as if the kingdom of God, and the change that fitted for it, could only be reached through death. But we are taught that, though the necessity for the change is universal, the necessity for death on the part of believers is not universal. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." A change will pass upon the

living saints when Christ comes, without their passing through death. A single moment of time, a period marked by the twinkling of an eye, will be sufficient to invest them with the garments of light, and to introduce them into the kingdom of glory. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and *we shall be changed.*" This will take place, we are told, "at the last trump"—a military phrase, in reference to the sounding of the trumpet for a general advance, when the various divisions are formed; which corresponds with Thess. iv.: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the *trump of God;*" the effect of which is the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the catching up of the living all together "in clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

How wonderful is Christ's power! And how absolute the position in which He has placed His people. Death to them is no longer a necessity. They only wait for the word of Him who is

risen and in glory to say, "Come up hither;" and in a moment the world and all the interests of time will be left behind, and they in bodies like His glorious body will join the Lord in the blessedness of the eternal kingdom of God!

It is true that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality;" but we have seen that a moment of time, when the hour comes, will be sufficient in the hands of the Lord Jesus to accomplish this! And "when this corruptible"—the body that has been subject to death and the grave—"shall have put on incorruption," and "this mortal"—referring to the dying nature of the body—"shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying, Death is swallowed up in victory!" Death that has conquered all besides, himself receding and lost in the entire and glorious victory of Christ! "Life and incorruption are brought to light by the gospel;" but here death with all his hold on those that are Christ's, disappears—"swallowed up in victory!"

The apostle's spirit kindling with the contemplation of the entireness of this victory and power of Christ, exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" For apart from redemption, death is armed with a terrible sting, and the grave has a cruel victory. But in Christ the sting of death is entirely taken away. His power to wound is absolutely gone. For "the sting of death is sin;" not the pains of dissolution, or the natural fears that may accompany it. So that sin being gone, the sting of death is of necessity gone, for sin was its sting. It is the judgment of God against sin that arms death with its sting; and it is the law which gives sin its terrible strength, its power to bind conviction on the conscience, from which there is no escape, but through the knowledge of Him who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and "who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus

Christ!" Little thought is there of this victory, or of the sorrows and sufferings through which it was won, on the part of Christ, or even of the terribleness of the consequences of having no part in his conquest of sin and death, where the world and present things possess the thoughts and heart! But where the dreadful character of sin is known, and the groaning of creation is entered into, and all the sorrows of the saint in passing through this world are present to the soul, the victory will be felt to be great indeed; and the heart will advance with a firm and unshaken step towards *death*—if we are called to die—or wait with earnest hope the hour of Christ's return. This wondrous truth established, all besides that concerns us is summed up in the closing exhortation, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord!" Every changing circumstance of life is but a step onward to the hour of final

victory; and every occupation for which we are left free by Christ, may be made "the work of the Lord," a work which will not be in vain or have no fruitful issue; but which He will own and honour when He comes. Amen.

THE
PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST.

"That in all *things* he might have the pre-eminence." (Col. i. 18.) Such is the statement of the inspired word concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. It may not be without interest briefly to see how this is carried out.

God has revealed Himself as a jealous God, as one who will not give His glory to another. The very idea of one God implies none other of equal authority. He, and He alone, must be the object of all worship. How constantly do we see this in the history of Israel! Did Israel go after idols? God's honour must be vindicated. Did the heathen nations exalt themselves and their

idols above the Lord's people and Jehovah Himself? Then judgment must go forth on them, that men may know that He whose name alone is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth. (Psalm lxxxiii. 18.)

But when the Lord Jesus is presented to our view, when He came to Israel, what do we see? One in "the likeness of sinful flesh" is pointed out to the believing, expectant remnant as the object of their heart's desire. "Behold the Lamb of God," says the messenger of the Lord Jehovah, as he points to the Virgin's son. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And when the multitude of His disciples surround Him at Jordan's brink, He exclaims, "There standeth one among you whom ye know not: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (Matt. iii.; John i.) Scarcely had the echo of this announcement died away ere Jesus Himself appears to be baptized of John. "And when he was baptized he went up straightway out of the water, and lo,

the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 16.) The attention of all is then directed to the Lord Jesus, the object of the Father's delight, and the one on whom the Holy Spirit rested. He is the one to whom prominence is now given. To Israel it had been, "Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. vi. 4.) To us it is, "Hear ye him," the Lord Jesus, the Son of the Father, God over all, blessed for evermore.

We may trace this same prominence in the name of Jesus. Several people had names given them from God, as Abraham, Jacob, Solomon, in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist in the New. But while in this they resembled the Lord Jesus, having in common with Him a name given them by God, in this they differed, that their names, though referring to the blessings bestowed on them, or the favour with which God regarded them, had reference also to Him.

who gave it. With the Lord Jesus it was different. Thus when God changed Abram's name to Abraham, it was done, we are told, because "a father of many nations have *I* made thee." (Gen. xvii. 5.) Jacob received the name of Israel, "for as a prince hast thou power with *God* and with men, and hast prevailed." (Gen. xxxii. 28.) Nathan was commissioned by God to call David's newborn son Solomon, Jedediah, beloved of the Lord. (2 Sam. xii. 25.) And John speaks to us of the grace of *Jehovah* so soon to be manifested. But of Jesus we read, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) Here there is no thought of the bestower along with the recipient, as is the case with the others. When we read of Abraham, Jacob, or Solomon receiving a name from God, we may think how blessed they were to enjoy the favour of the Lord God Almighty, and to be called by another name. But whilst thinking of the favours shown them, their very name brings to remembrance the One from

whom they received it. Not so with Jesus. It would seem as if on Him all eyes were to be concentrated, and nothing was to be presented with Him that might draw away attention from His person. "He shall save his people." Not a word here about Him who gave the name. The only thought is about Christ. He who was the desire of all nations had come. To Him men were to look, God manifest in the flesh. Not that in beholding the Lord they would forget God, for He was God. Not that in taking the place of prominence the person of the Father is overlooked, for He was the Son. But it was the Father's good pleasure that the Son, in whom was His delight, should be the one object for the eyes of the whole world to rest upon.

Again, at the transfiguration do we not see the same prominence given to the Lord Jesus? Moses² and Elias appear with Him on the mount, and speak "of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The astonished and bewildered disciples witness

these two in glory holding converse with Him. They saw three enter the cloud with themselves. But when they emerged "they saw no man, save Jesus only;" whilst a voice had been heard from heaven bearing witness to the Lord, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased: hear ye him." (Matt. xvii. 5.)

If we search the word of God to find out the origin of all created things, in that also we see the prominence given to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we enquire who made the heavens and the earth in the day that they were created, was it not God? Yes; but the word answers that it was by the Son "he made the worlds;" (Heb. i. 2;) "All things were made by him." (John i. 3.)

If the mind, when contemplating the different orders of angelic beings which surround the throne of God—those ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation—enquire, Who called them into life? the word of God again supplies the answer: "By him were all things created, that are in hea-

ven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. i. 16, 17.) Is it the new creation which occupies us, the glories of the Church, its high position, its firm foundation? In all this we find Christ. Of the new creation He is the head. What gives stability and strength to the Church? Christ, the "precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." (Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Peter ii. 6.) What gives it position and dignity? Christ the Head and the Bridegroom. (Col. i. 18; Rev. xxi. 9.) Is the Church a body? It is the body of Christ. (Eph. i. 23.) Is it in heavenly places now? It is there in Christ. (Eph. ii. 6.) In whom are we presented perfect before God? In Christ.

What is the object presented to the sinner? Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.) "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name

whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43.) What is the subject of apostolic preaching but "Jesus Christ and him crucified?" (1 Cor. ii. 2.) Are all things to be gathered together in one? It is in Christ. (Eph. i. 10.) What is the antidote to all spiritual poison but Christ in some one or more of the varied aspects in which He is revealed. Is it the assumption of superior wisdom and depth of knowledge to be found in human philosophy, which leads the mind astray, where shall we find the fulness of wisdom and the unfathomable depths of knowledge but in Him, in whom they are hid; (Col. ii. 3;) and in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily? (Col. ii. 9.) Is the heart endeavouring by assiduous attention to legal ordinances and ritual observances to attain to that standard of righteousness, which can abide the searching scrutiny of an holy God? "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x. 4.) "We are made the righteousness of God in

him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) Are we seeking for an example? He has left "us an example that we should follow his steps." (1 Peter ii. 21; John xiii. 15.) Do we want to know something of the invisible God? We see Him in the Lord Jesus—"The brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." (Heb. i. 3.) "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John xiv. 9.)

Again, what cheers the dying saint like the prospect of being with Christ? "Absent from the body present with the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 8.) What encourages the struggling believer as he journeys through the wilderness, so much as the hope of the Lord's coming? If down-cast at the want of spiritual progress, and the wide difference between the example and the copy, what consoles him like the remembrance "That when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is?" (1 John iii. 2) And when sin comes in and clouds his view, how precious the remembrance that "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

and he is the propitiation for our sins;" (1 John ii. 1, 2;) and that, "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) What, too, was the wish of the apostle as he drew near the close of his earthly pilgrimage? He had gone where no mortal had been before or since. Caught up into the third heaven, he had heard words which no mortal dare repeat. He had seen the Lord in glory, and had drank deep of the wells of knowledge and fountain of truth. Yet still we find he had a want unsatisfied, a desire not fully gratified—"That I may know him." (Phil. iii. 10.)

Once more, if we look through the door opened in heaven, surveying the scene as presented in Revelation iv., v., and catch the sound of praise as it rises from the lips of the redeemed, what is the subject of it?—the Lamb! It is Him they worship, in the very presence of the One who sat on the throne. And as they sing, "Thou art worthy," the multitude of the heavenly host—ten thousand times ten thousand and thou-

sands of thousands—take up the strain; and, just as when the First-begotten came into the world, the command went forth, “Let all the angels of God worship him,” (Heb. i. 6,) so now the whole angelic choir joins to cry, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” And if He is thus the object of angelic worship, and the subject of saints’ praises, what are His titles as given in the word? Do not they point Him out as having the pre-eminence? “First-born of every creature,” (Col. i. 15,) in connexion with creation; “Prince of the kings of the earth;” (Rev. i. 5;) “King of kings and Lord of lords,” (Rev. xix. 16,) in connexion with the government of the world; “First-begotten of the dead;” (Rev. i. 5;) “Captain of our salvation;” (Heb. ii. 10;) “Author and finisher of the faith,” (Heb. xii. 2,) in connexion with redemption. How truly, then, do we see that in all things He has the pre-eminence. He is the object of the Father’s

love, and the subject of the Spirit's testimony. To Him the Father bore witness when on earth; to Him the Spirit now bears witness as He reveals Jesus to our souls. How marvellous to find One suiting the need of all; at once the refuge of the sinner and the stay of the believer; our strength in weakness, our wisdom in ignorance, our solace in sorrow; the One who meets all the desires of our souls, and the One whom all in heaven combine to worship. In all things He has the pre-eminence. And whilst saving as God can shew sympathy as man. No mere mortal could take such a place. None but the Son of God could fill it. But if He occupies such a place in creation, revelation, and glory, what place has He in our hearts? He is the Father's delight; is He ours? It is the Father's will that in all things He should have the pre-eminence; do we respond to this? It is God's decree that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue

should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;" (Phil. ii. 10, 11;) do our hearts now bow to Him? What an object have we presented as the One to whom all shall bow! But marvellous as all this is, and whilst with all intelligent creation we are to give Him the pre-eminence, which is rightfully His, we have a position, a relationship with Him which none other of God's creatures can enjoy. He who is the head over all, God blessed for evermore, is not ashamed to call us brethren. (Heb. ii. 12.) Nor is this all; we are one with Him, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. v. 30.) "One spirit with the Lord." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) Our security is bound up with Him. Our life is linked with His. He is our life. (Col. iii. 4.) "Because I live ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19.) But we do not stop even here, for "we are in him;" (1 John v. 20;) and yet, more wonderful still, He dwells in us. (John vi. 56.)

NOTES ON PSALM I.

The name of the Book of Psalms means *praise* in Hebrew. Had we more of the secrets of wisdom to see each psalm in its proper light, we might find each to be *praise*. It is a great secret to put things as God puts them. That which, viewed in one aspect, might be as a firebrand to the conscience, in another would be blessed light. Many of the Psalms begin with the word "blessed." It may be said of many of them, as of the beatitudes in Matt. v., that if they are used as the probe of our soul, there will be anguish; but if we see that they express what CHRIST IS, there will be blessing. Thus, "Blessed are the merciful:" if we see *Jesus* in this, I find just what I need, as a poor, ruined prodigal.

It is well to remark that these are called *Asher* psalms in the Hebrew—the name of one of Jacob's sons. The mother was so thoroughly delighted with her child, that she named him "Asher"—saying, "Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed."

These "Asher" psalms are of three distinct kinds—turning, as it were, on three distinct pivots. First, in Ps. i. there is not the slightest allowance made for any evil. Secondly, in Psalm xxxii. it is the blessing of the poor sinner, who has not one shred of righteousness of his own. Thirdly, as in Ps. cxix., we have the blessedness of the person, whose sins having been pardoned, he, as grafted into Christ, knows what it is to walk in His ways.

It is easy to see how entirely distinct are these grounds. In the first, it is one who can claim a right to his reward. But who can say it? None of us, doubtless, would take such ground; but still there may be the thought of getting better. But in this 1st Psalm it is *Christ*: not what *He* says of Himself, but what God says of Him. Here is the delight of God in that perfect One, that God-man, who never did anything amiss; so that He has given all things into His hands, and set Him upon His throne.

Though we may not be in danger of

taking the ground of this *first* blessing, I do think there is danger of the saints confounding the second and third species of "blessedness," i.e., the blessedness of the poor prodigal, utterly lost and freely saved by Christ, with that of Him who has the joy of the Spirit in the sense of obedience.

DESIRE.

Jesus, my soul would nearer be
Than it has ever been to thee;
For it has searched this desert drear,
And found that nothing good dwells here.
Its wants are many, only thou
Canst satisfy its cravings now.
More of thy love it longs to know,
To prove its depth and fulness too:
It finds no love in things below.

The empty thou dost gladly fill;
The tossed and troubled thou dost still.
There is no pillow, save thy breast,
Whereon the weary head can rest.
Empty am I, and troubled sore;
Oh could I reach some tranquil shore:
Then draw me, Jesus, nearer thee,
That I divinely blest may be.

A SERIES.

No 1.

THE CONDITION OF MAN BY NATURE.

If we do not understand the nature of man we cannot adequately comprehend the aim and meaning of God's process in leading us unto Himself; therefore is it a subject of the highest importance. For many there are who know and acknowledge that Christ can alone be their sufficiency before God, who, nevertheless, are by no means convinced of the practical and utter ruin of their nature.

The normal state of man, as first created, was that of innocence—he had done no unrighteousness; and this consisted in his doing God's will, and not his own; therefore, he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for if he did, he would substitute his own will for God's. Satan, in his enmity to God, assails man, and beguiles the woman by representing the great benefits that would flow from the act—

i. e., from disobeying God and following his own will. Satan engendered in the woman the thought, that God would not do for her as well as she could do for herself, and Adam, listening to his wife, fell into the snare. What God had refused, the serpent assured them, would greatly serve them; and what God would not give, to that they could help themselves. Thus God was disbelieved and Satan listened to; and *herein* was sin instilled into man's nature, which thence underwent a change, not only in intelligence but in feeling. It was poisoned with an untrue idea of God, and imbued with self-dependence. It now trusted itself and its own powers more than God's, and implied in its line of action, that God would refuse what would benefit, though abundantly in His power to give! What a delusion! What an estrangement from happy trust in God and full obedience, delighting in the mercies of His hand, to be now so filled with distrust that not only is His word disbelieved, but He is accused of limiting man's blessing, who must there-

fore secure for himself what God has denied! What more painful feeling could be entertained towards a once esteemed benefactor, than that he has power to advance me but interdicts it, and that I can help myself to it in defiance of him! *Satan gained his point*, and instilled the poison into man's nature, which must henceforth rankle with distrust of God and self-dependence, which was only increased and helped on by an enlarged intelligence or power of judging between good and evil, though the standard of such intelligence must be a low one, for it must be with relation to man, and not with relation to God, of whom man had now no right idea.

What then, we may next inquire, was man's course in this fallen condition? Having been made upright he was not without some knowledge of God, though he had sought out and pursued his many inventions; he had conscience, too, which, while it had no power to debar him from his inventions, could always tell him that he was not up to the mark. No man, however hardened, could say

that he had entirely answered to his conscience. He might not listen to it, but if he consulted it at all, he must allow that he could not do everything, even according to his *own* standard. But the more man's nature, thus poisoned, developed itself, the further it got from God; and not liking to retain God in his knowledge, God gave him over to a reprobate mind, and the result was, all the immorality of Paganism—an immorality which as we see in heathen mythology was sought to be excused by assigning a special divinity to each class of it, which profane doing evinced, that the conscience, degraded as it was, sought some relief from the evil by assuming that it was divinely sanctioned, and therefore all that system elucidates most clearly the religious corruption which fallen nature is in itself capable of; for we need to study nature as a whole in order to understand its tendencies and fruits.

The system of heathenism, showing what fallen nature following its corruptions will do in order to satisfy its

conscience and at the same time follow its own will and lust, gives us a great clue to its spirit and will. It illustrates man trying to combine the lust of his corruption with conscience and to satisfy conscience, while acting according to his own will and lust; so that in the end it became too monstrous and absurd even for man's reprobate mind. Then a new system sprung up, a reformation which was introduced and promoted by men called philosophers, which system in principle proposed that man should attain to divine favour, not through any intervention of God or divine instrumentality, but by discipline of himself. This doctrine, supported by two opposite schools, became attractive to any one who felt the degradation into which mere Paganism had plunged him; and the more so as it was addressed to him as having in himself an inherent power to improve and advance himself, which to man, in any degree conscious of his demoralization, was the most pleasing and delusive idea. The spirit and aim of all this philosophy was that

man by his own unaided efforts could attain to virtue, and that such attainment would be bliss. This being a mere human reformation, and having to encounter the licentious system of Paganism, could not stand its ground, and in the end had to succumb; so that we find at Athens (Acts xvii.) an altar, in addition to all other altars, inscribed "to the unknown God;" thus distinctly intimating that their knowledge had only reached this point—even to know their ignorance—to *know that they knew nothing*, and to verify the word of God that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Thus if in the system of Paganism we get *one* principle in man's nature, even the endeavour to combine the satisfaction of his natural conscience with his own will and lust, we find in that of philosophy *another*, equally leading and distinct, and no doubt allowed of God to be tested and developed to the utmost by the Greeks and their followers, even that man's effort to repair himself eventuates in the acknowledgment that his greatest at-

tainment is only to disclose to him his ignorance of God.

Thus we have seen what man's nature is as left to itself, in the development of its own mind and will; but there is another phase and circumstance in which we must consider it, even that as placed in the light of revelation from God. And what does *that* reveal? We have only to read the Old Testament in order to ascertain how man in his own nature responds to the revealed will of God.

Early enough Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord; the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. He would enjoy himself independently of God, just as the tower of Babel was conceived and erected in sheer independence of God.

Then, what a commentary on man's nature in the most favoured circumstances is Israel's history: exhibiting to us the antagonism and enmity of its will toward God in so many varied and painful forms, that any one who knows anything of his own heart must be convicted and humbled by the resemblance to it which he reads in that

history of weakness and sin. To Israel were committed the oracles of God, and yet they caused His name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles, and wandered into even greater excesses than the nations, and, as we learn by the parable of the vineyard, they increased in bitterness and opposition to God as times grew on—and were only the more aggravated in antagonism by the presence of the Son of God among them. In the gospel narrative man's nature is distinctly and painfully exposed, and finally condemned, too, as irretrievably incompetent in every respect, proved as such by its reception, converse with, and treatment of "God manifest in the flesh." It was found to be either so wicked and abandoned as to contemplate and contrive His death; or so weak, that in the most desired moment it cannot maintain the semblance of allegiance to Him—but so grossly the contrary, that it can deny Him. It is impossible for any one to read the history of man's reception of the Lord from heaven—He who, as born of a woman, was one of the human family

on earth—and not be struck with the utter depravity of man as regarded God, though he had all the light of God's revelation to assist him. The secrets of many hearts were revealed by the manner and measure of the rejection which each levelled against the only one who ever appeared on earth in human perfection—the one Man who came up to the perfect standard of God's mind and will. The scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests, and all the teachers, while boasting of being the repositories of God's mind, were the loudest and fiercest in demanding the death of the Son of God! Where was the goodness of nature or the gain from revelation *there*? They instigated the multitude to cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" If nature had a single particle of true power, ought it not to have had some apprehension of the sacredness of the person of the Son of God on earth and the divinity of His mission, especially when educated and assisted by the revelation of God? Was it not tried then, and found—oh how sadly!—wanting?

What greater or better opportunity could it ever have again of expressing its ability to understand the ways and manner of God, than when God's only-begotten Son was in all the nearness and intimacy of flesh among men ?

But if the teachers and guides under the law of God could be so led away by their natural mind, as not only to refuse and reject the Son of God, but to hate Him so much that nothing but His death would satisfy them: if, I repeat, the natural mind were proved so utterly insensible to the divine mind, and at issue with it, notwithstanding all the opportunities offered to it, how could any one again assume, much less maintain, that there was power, or principle, or perceptiveness in it to desire or attain to what was divinely perfect? As the Lord said, "Now they have no cloak for their sin." He had "done among them the works which none other man did." The perfection of humanity often lauded, and by the Pharisees grossly imitated, was displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet the chosen people of God,

educated in His law, disowned, rejected, and consigned Him to an ignominious death. He that cannot appreciate a superior proves himself an inferior. To what a depth of degradation, then, did man's nature sink in the crucifixion of Christ!

But this was not all. Not only do we find its irretrievable wickedness, as evinced in the Jews' treatment of Christ, but in His very disciples, in those who loved Him in the secret depths of their hearts, we find that the nature of man is so feeble and inconstant, that it cannot support and vindicate impressions and feelings of which it has been assured. Nay, in its pitiable weakness, it does violence to the approved sentiments of the soul. They all forsook Him in the hour of His distress, not from want of love or faith, but from the simple infirmity of a nature which could not support the good emotions working in it and approved of.

The beloved disciple slept when asked to watch; and Peter, who had hardihood enough to smite off the high priest's

servant's ear, when unsupported, cursed and swore that he did not know his own loved Lord and Master.

Thus the gospel narrative details to us how man's nature has been subjected to the last trial, when, if it had a particle of goodness or power, it must have appeared; but instead of this, it exposed itself at EVERY point, both in wickedness and weakness.

I have thus endeavoured briefly to set forth the history of man's nature, and how it has been proved, step by step, to be utterly profitless, and its enormity so sealed, that God's fiat—now pronounced by the Holy Ghost, who is at once the witness of man's sin and of God's righteousness—is, "the natural mind is at enmity against God;" and, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

PHILIPPIANS II., III.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

If it suit your little publication, I send you some brief thoughts on the second and third chapters of Philip-

pians. The whole epistle is a very remarkable one, and raises the Christian to his highest condition of matured experience; but on this I will say a few words before I close.

I turn now to the above chapters. The former gives us christian character, as men speak,—christian grace; the latter, the energy which carries the Christian above present things. The former speaks of Christ coming down and humbling Himself; the latter, of His being on high, and of the prize of our calling above.

A little careful attention will show that the second chapter presents throughout the gracious fruits connected with the heart's study of the blessed Lord's humiliation, and of its imbibing the spirit of it; and that the third gives the picture of that blessed energy which counts the world as dross, overcomes on the way, and looks forward to the time when the Lord's power shall have subdued even the power of death in us and all its effects, and change us into glory. We need both these principles and the

motives connected with them: We may see much of the energy of Christianity in a believer, and rejoice in it; while another displays much graciousness of character but no energy that overcomes the world. Where the flesh, or mere natural energy, mixes itself in our path with the divine energy, the way of the sincere and devoted Christian requires to be corrected by the former; more inward communion and gracious likeness to Christ; more feeding on the bread which came down from heaven. Besides displaying Christ, it would give weight and seriousness to his activity; make it more real and divine. On the other hand, one who maintains a gracious deportment and judges, perhaps, what he sees to be fleshly in the energy of another, fails himself in that energy, and casts a slur on that which is really of God in his brother.

Oh that we knew how to be a little self-judging and complete in our christian path; that we had nearness enough to Christ to draw from Him all grace and all devotedness, and correct in our-

selves whatever tends to mar the one or the other! Not that I expect that all Christians will ever have alike all qualities. I do not think it is the mind of God they should have. They have to keep humbly in their place. The eye cannot—it is not meant it should—say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the hand to the foot. Completeness is in Christ alone. Mutual dependence and completing one another under His grace, is the order of His body. It is hard for some active minds to think so; but it is true humility and contentedness to be nothing and to serve, and to esteem others more excellent than ourselves—an easy practical way to arrive at it. They have the thing which we, are deficient in. Our part is to do what the Lord has set us to do, to serve and count *Him all*, for in truth *He does it*; and to be glad to be nothing when we have quietly done His will, that *He may be all*.

But to return to my chapters. That the second gives us the humiliation of Christ is evident. We are to pursue its

application. But the way it is introduced is very beautiful. The Philippians, who had already early in the gospel history shown grace in this respect, had thought of Paul in his distant prison; and Epaphroditus, giving effect to their love, and full of gracious zeal, had not regarded his life to accomplish this service, and minister to the apostle's wants. The apostle makes a touching use of this love of the Philippians, while owning it as the refreshings of Christ. He had found "consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, bowels and mercies," in the renewed testimony of the affection of the Philippians. His heart was drawn out also toward them. If they would make him perfectly happy, they must be thoroughly united and happy among themselves. How graciously, with what delicate feeling, he turns to note their faults and dangers here in association with their expressions of love to him! How calculated to win and to make any "Euodias and Syntyches" ashamed of disputes where grace is thus at work! Then he speaks of

the means of walking in this spirit. Every one should think of the spiritual gifts and advantages of his brother as well as of his own. To do this he must have the mind that was in Christ. This leads us to the great principle of the chapter.

Christ is set forth in full contrast with the first Adam. The first when in the form of man set up by robbery to be equal with God: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And he became disobedient unto death. But the blessed One, being in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, and in the form of a servant was obedient unto death. He was really God, as Adam was really man; but the point here is to note the condition and status each was in respectively, and out of which, in ambition or grace, he came. For Christ was truly God still, when He had taken the form of a man; but He had taken the form of a servant, and was, too, really a man and a servant in grace. Christ in love humbled Himself: Adam in selfishness sought to be exalted and

was abased. Christ humbled Himself, and was as man exalted. It was not merely that He bore patiently the insults of men, but He humbled *Himself*. This was love. There were two great steps in it. Being in the form of God, He took the form of man; and as man He humbled Himself, and was obedient unto death, and that, the death of the cross. This is the mind which is to be in us—love making itself nothing to serve others. Love delights to serve—self likes to be served. Thus the true glory of a divine character is in lowliness—human pride in selfishness. In the former, in us, both gracious affections and devotedness and counting on gracious affections in others are developed: a source of genuine joy and blessing to the Church.

In following the chapter, we shall see this taught in general, and produced unconsciously, as it were, in details. First, after stating the exaltation and glory of Christ as Lord, he presses obedience, (perfectly shown in Christ,) than which nothing is more lowly, for

we have no will in it; and having directly to do with the power of the enemy, without the shelter of the apostle's energy, they were to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. For if Paul, who had so laboured for them, was now in prison, and could not, it was, after all, "*God* (not Paul) who worked in them, to will and to do of his own blessed good pleasure."

Salvation is always in the Philippians the great result of final deliverance from evil and entrance into glory. Everything is looked at at the end, though the blessing shines down on the way. See, then, the result: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Is there a word in this that could not be said of Christ? Only He was the model, and we are to follow His steps as partakers of life in Him. It is just what Christ was, and so it is christian character. We study it with delight

and adoration in Him. It is formed in us.

Now see the gracious affections which flow out from this lowliness, in which self disappears by love. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." He makes the faith of the Philippians the principal thing. *It* was the offering to God. His part was only supplementary towards it, though it went to death. For the Philippians were Christ's, the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul, Christ's crown and joy as Redeemer. So the apostle saw them and rejoiced in them. His service had ministered to this. If it went on to give up his life for it, he rejoiced in the service, so much the more evidently self-sacrificing love, for love delights in this. And they, for this reason, were to rejoice with him, for it was really his glory thus to give himself up for Christ.

But more. He was thinking of their happiness, and would send Timotheus and learn how they were getting on. But he counted on their love, and he

would not send him till he would be able to say to them how his affairs were going on at Rome, where he had to appear before the Emperor, perhaps so to close his life. All this is very sweet. There is the confidence of love, the reckoning on it in others, which produces its free flow, mutually felt and known to be so. Nor was it in the apostle alone, as we shall see. Moreover, it was in the midst of the coldness of the saints, which trial, and for the flesh the discrediting opposition of the world, had produced, to which the apostle alludes in this epistle. But the apostle's love did not grow cold nor distrustful by it, and God had given him the comforting testimony of love in the distant Philippians, as he notices in the beginning of the chapter; and love was springing up into courage in others, too, by a little patience, as we see in chap. i. 14. But these same fruits of love are found in Epaphroditus and his relations with the Philippians. Paul sends him back with affectionate witness of what he was; for Epaphroditus was longing

after them all. He had undertaken his commission heartily. Came probably along the great Egnatian high road nearly a thousand miles, and, in his refusal of relaxation, had been sick, nigh unto death. But it was the work of Christ. Did Paul appreciate it the less as to himself because it was for Christ? In no way. Had Epaphroditus fallen a victim to his service for him, it would have been to the apostle a deep blow and sorrow, and that he had his cup full of, though sustained of God. God had mercy on Epaphroditus, and on Paul in him. See here how the heart, free in grace, can estimate present mercies! It was not natural affection in relationship, just and fitting as that may be in its place, but divine affections. Epaphroditus would have gone to heaven surely. But the spirit of the apostle would taste present goodness—God's goodness in circumstances; would know a "God who comforts those that are cast down." And he blesses God that the beloved Epaphroditus did not fall a sacrifice to his zeal in accomplishing his mission.

Nor was this all. What made Epaphroditus anxious was, that the Philippians had heard he had been sick, and he knew this. He reckoned on their love. They will be anxious, he thought, and will not be at rest until they know how I am; I must set off to them. How a son, who knew a mother's love, who had heard he was ill, would reckon on her uneasiness and her desire for news, and would be anxious she should know he was well. Such was the affection among Christians, and among Christians where devotedness and love had, alas! already sadly waned—where all sought their own, as a general state, such were “the consolations in Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, the bowels and mercies.” How refreshing it is! Nor is the blessed source ever wanting in Christ, however low all may be; for faith knows no difficulties—nothing between us and Christ. There is no lack in Him to produce fruits of grace.

If we look at ourselves we could never speak of humbling ourselves: for

we are nothing. But practically in Christ, the mind which was in Him is to be in us, and in grace we have to humble ourselves, to have the mind that was in Him, to have done with ourselves and serve. Then these lovely fruits of grace will flow out unhindered, whatever be the state even of Christendom around us. Working out lowly our own salvation with fear and trembling in the midst of the spiritual dangers of the christian life, and of pretensions to greatness and spiritual distinction, because true greatness has disappeared as it had when the apostle was put in prison; not with the fear of uncertainty, but *because* God works in us, and that gives the sense of the seriousness and reality of the conflict in which we are engaged; obedience, the humblest thing of all, for there is no will in it, characterizing our path, we shall seek the mind of Christ and be clothed with His character. Blessed privilege! Be more jealous to keep it than our human rights and importance, and the blessed graces of heavenly love will flow forth and

bind together in a love, which has primarily Christ for its object, the hearts of the saints. In such a state it is easy to count others better than themselves, as Paul saw the value of the Philippians to Christ; he was but offered on their faith; easy because when we are near Christ we see the value of others to and in Christ, and we see our own nothingness, perhaps, our actual short-comings in love too.

I have lengthened out my communication on this chapter so much that I reserve what I have to say on the third chapter, and the character of the whole epistle for another opportunity. I think, on the whole, that this gives the higher, though not the most readily striking and energetic, side of christian life. But, as I said at the beginning, both have fully their place. If it suit your publication, I may afterwards, if the Lord will, take up some practical subjects which have connected themselves with these in my mind.

May the Lord bless your various communications to the edification of His

saints, and make that blessing flow in those, too, who contribute them.

Affectionately yours in the Lord,
J. N. D.

NOTES ON REVELATION IV.

There are two points I desire to notice in this chapter—the perfect peace of soul which belongs to the redeemed, and the consequent spirit and character of their worship. We evidently see that the character of this book is that of judgment, for with the exception of the Church in bliss, the whole action of the book is judgment. God is sitting on a throne and that throne is not in the character of grace, but in the Sinai character. Not that the throne will be on earth, but the terrible judgments, the thunderings, the lightnings, which are coming on the earth, all issue from this throne. In this introductory chapter, and the throne with the thunderings, &c., issuing from it, we have God in the character of “Lord God Almighty,” and not in the character of Father. Jehovah,

“Lord God Almighty” is the Old-Testament name of God in connexion with the power which will be put forth in coming judgment. Now what shews out the perfect peace into which we as believers are brought is the seeing the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones round about the throne, whence these judgments are issuing in perfect peace. They are not at all alarmed; there is no movement from their seats, no disturbance, no trembling because they are associated with the very throne from which these judgments flow. Then mark another thing: *they are sitting*. They are not even here seen *standing*, but sitting in perfect peace, in undisturbed grace, like David, “who went in and sat before the Lord.” They worship, it is true, and fall down, a much higher thing than sitting. But how thoroughly this scene shows into what a place of perfect peace we are brought, that even when the judgments break forth we are unmoved, having nothing to alarm us. The elders are sitting in perfect peace, and that is our place, realized now by

faith; so that however we may be tried down here in the world, when we come before God we can sit down in perfect peace and rest there. But now mark another thing: it is not only the thunders and lightnings, the pouring forth of the terrible judgments during which they are in perfect peace; but when the character of God is opened out in the threefold ascription of "Holy, Holy, Holy," does this disturb them? Not in the least; so it is with us, when the full character of God's holiness is seen, in His justice making good His Holiness. If, in the presence of His holiness I thought there was a spot upon me, I could not be at peace before Him. What a comfort to have our home and place of rest where the thrice Holy God is! When they hear, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," their affections move them, and they fall down immediately in worship, while all the terrible judgments do not move them at all. This is the result of being in perfect peace in the presence of this Holy, Holy, Holy God. Their affections

are brought out in praise. They rejoice to lay their crowns at His feet, attributing all to Him and worship Him. "Thou art worthy." It is intelligent worship too, for they know why He is worthy. He is worthy; but they know it for themselves, for He has redeemed them unto God by His blood. There were no terrors awakened in their soul when the thunderings and lightnings were going on, no nor yet when the character of a thrice holy God was opened out. But when He is spoken of and glory given to Him, their affections flow out and they *worship*. If there is any *fear*, there can be no *worship*. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." But grace has set us in this place of *worship* in the power of the Holy Ghost. Having been made kings and priests unto God and His Father, we can *worship* Him. We are not in this glory yet, but may we grow in the sense of what He is, and worship Him who is worthy to be glorified.

FRAGMENTS.

“ We are sanctified unto obedience.”—1 Peter i. 2.

The spirit of obedience is the great secret of all the present and practical blessings of the believer; for the Spirit is not grieved, and so becomes the minister of the grace and knowledge both of the Father and of the Son, and the simplest believer walking thus, enjoys the blessings of the covenant-faithfulness both of the Father, and the Lord, and the Spirit to the purposes of love in which we stand, and of divine glory.

The very blessings of the Church bring us into a kind of conflict that we should know nothing of apart from such a position, and privileges, and blessings. So the Church is subject to more failure and evil than either Jews or Gentiles were, because they were not set in the same blessings. A Jew might do many things which would be monstrous in a Christian, and find no defilement in his conscience. The veil

that was over the knowledge of God being rent, the light shines out, and the consequence is, that this light which has come out of the holy place cannot tolerate evil. Christians are in a more dangerous position, if not walking in the light, than a Jew. Satan may draw and entice me with many things which would have no power against me, if I were not so favoured. Hence the need of the exhortation, "Be strong *in* the Lord, and the power of his might."

ONE THING I DO.

Morn, noon, and night,
Through days o'er cast and bright,
 My purpose still is one;
I have one end in view,
Only one thing I do
 Until my object's won.

Behind my back I fling,
Like an unvalued thing,
 My former self and ways;
And stretching forward far
I seek the things that are
 Beyond time's lagging days.

I have the prize in view,
Whose worth no words can shew;
 This prize I seek alone:
All things are dung and dross,
All things I count but loss,
 For Jesus fully known.

The day declineth fast,
Almost its hours are past,
 Its lustre waneth now:
That other heavenly day,
With its enduring ray,
 Will soon light up my brow.

O may I follow still,
Faith's pilgrimage fulfil,
 With steps both sure and fleet:
The longed-for goal I see:
Jesus is there for me:
 Haste, haste, my weary feet.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iii. 13, 14.)

PETER.

Great variety of natural character, and of moral temperament, we see in the apostles who were gathered round the Lord. There was the reasoning Thomas and the uncalculating Peter, and the John who had his resources rather alone or in communion, and the same Peter again, who was active and social, letting himself out on every occasion.

And beside such variety as this, there were some of them who are never prominent, like Simon Zelotes; others partially noticed; others always in the foreground.

It is good and comforting to observe these things; they are the anticipations, so far, of things around ourselves at this moment. What we read of then we see now. And it is happy thus to find the Lord Himself in the scene, with all its elements and working, before us; so that we may know that the very materials and circumstances which now address us and draw us forth, in His day addressed themselves to Him.

Among the Apostles, Peter is a special person from the beginning, and so continues throughout. His quickening, as we see it in Luke v., was marked and emphatic. It is signalized among the stories of those who, one after another, joined themselves to the Lord. And so, from that hour, we see him a marked, emphatic character.

He is peculiar in making mistakes, and consequently in suffering rebukes. An ardent nature, that was ready to act, would expose itself to this. But such a nature would likewise be quick to express affection, and would meet answering affection. And in all this we find Peter. But with all, he was specially dear to his Master. Specially I mean in one sense—because, in the great evangelic, gracious sense, in the thought of sovereign mercy and of the salvation of God, all are in a common love. But Peter was signalized by his Master. He did not spare him a single stroke of the rod; neither did He deny him a single ray of the glory. It is a *rebuked* Peter, for instance, that is taken to the *holy*

hill; and again, it is a *rebuked* Peter that is *taken as after the Lord to heaven*. (Matt. xvi., xvii.; John xxi.) With John and James, (erring Peter as He was,) he is separated by the Lord to a very distinguished place again and again. And thus, the emphatic way in which he had been apprehended at the very beginning, is pursued all through; and so at the very end, For, after the last supper, the Lord says to him, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

This was a very distinguishing notice of Peter. It set him eminently in the midst of his brethren. The poor, erring, rebuked Peter, the one who was on all occasions letting himself out only to expose himself, is the one thus dealt with by that love which has its own methods, excellent and wondrous and divine as they are. But there is something so peculiar in this last case, that I must dwell on it further.

The Lord does not pray for Peter that he might not fail *in the process of sifting*, nor be found to be but chaff; but He prays for him, that if found to be but chaff, his *faith* might not fail. This is much to be observed.

There were two stages in this part of Peter's journey. He went from Gethsemane to the hall of the High Priest's palace; and on that journey he denied his Master. He went out from thence, from the hall of the palace, alone and in tears; and afterwards we find him going with John to the sepulchre. This second stage of his journey, however, shews us that his faith had not failed, though the first stage of it, as we saw, had proved him to be but chaff. The Lord's intercession had kept him. His weeping at the first, just as he left the palace, and then his casting himself into the sea to reach the Lord, at the last, let us know, in the mouth of very persuasive witnesses, that his faith had not failed, according to the prayer of his Lord for him. He is restored. He is converted, brought from a condition of weak, igno-

rant, self-confidence, (not, however, the self-confidence of a proud, imperious, nature, but of an earnest, uncalculating affection,) to a better understanding of himself, and a closer, more dependent walk with his Saviour.

Being such an one as this in the *Evangelists*, we see him in character in the *Acts*. He is chief in action again. He is the stirring, leading one still. He instructs the rest in the mystery of Judas' lost apostleship and the taking of his office by another. He preaches on the day of Pentecost; and again on the occasion of the healing of the lame beggar at the gate of the Temple. He answers the challenges of the rulers. He is put into prison. Again he stands the spokesman for the rest, in the presence of the powers. He maintains the purity of the house of God by the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira. He goes through all quarters; and in the distant parts of Lydda and Saron he comforts the saints by the raising of Tabitha. He is then at Joppa, with the brethren there; and from thence goes to

Cæsarea, to gather the first-fruits of the Gentiles. He establishes the hearts of his brethren, after this, at Jerusalem, by rehearsing the way of the hand of God by his ministry. And at last, he is cast into prison a second time, but brought forth from thence through the sovereign interference of God, and made the signal expression of that great deliverance which awaits his nation in the last days of their history, when their captivity is to end, and their great enemy is to fall; when Israel, the delivered, shall be like men that dream, as Peter's friends and brethren here were, when they heard of his being out of prison, and when his enemy withered under the rebuke of the Lord.

All this of Peter in the course of the first twelve chapters of the Acts was surely "the strengthening of his brethren," according to the commission which he had received. His was now an unbroken rest. "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs," was realized in his ministry now. He was the pastor, the self-sacrificing pastor of the flock of God in the land of

Israel in this day. And we know that he sealed his testimony, and ended his service, by dying for the name of his Lord. But we lose him, I may say, after the twelfth chapter. Another apostleship is called forth, another thing besides a Jewish remnant becomes the husbandry of the Spirit of God, and Peter retires. He is not the prominent one at the end of the book of the Acts, as he had been at the first; nor is he the chief one in the epistles, as I may say, as he had been in the gospels. In his epistles, surely, he still "feeds the sheep," and still "strengthens his brethren;" but they are not of the heavenly elevation of those of the Apostle of the Gentiles. They still, characteristically, address themselves to a remnant gathered to Christ from the people of Israel.

Thus I have gone with Peter, very briefly and rapidly, as from first to last. There are some points, in the review of this, over which I would tarry for a while somewhat longer.

The soul has its history as well as the

body; and takes its journeys at times, as well as the body: a serious history, and important journies full of the weightiest business. This we know and have experienced.

The soul of Peter took a wondrous journey in Luke v. We see him there, at first, in the place of *nature*; an easy, friendly, kind-hearted man as ever lived; earnest to love and to serve. Being such an one, he readily lent his boat to the wondrous stranger who was at that time addressing the multitude on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. And when the words of this stranger were ended, at His bidding he as readily put out his boat further into the lake, and let down his net for a draught.

All this, however, was but nature. Peter had not yet left his native place, the place where he was born, as I may say, the place where his natural friendliness and easiness of temper had put him all his life hitherto. "Master," said he to Jesus, "we have toiled all the night, and have caught nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net."

And now the journey of his soul begins: a wondrous, distant journey, but performed as in a whirlwind. The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, in their way, were waiting for him.

The draught of fishes which came at the word of the stranger surprised the soul of Peter, and at once bore him to an unknown land, a place untrodden by him up to that moment. It carried him into the presence of God. The stranger was transfigured before him—as really under the eye of his soul then, as afterwards the same stranger was to the eye of his body on the holy hill. This stranger was the Lord of the fulness of the sea, who could command the depths; and Peter stood in the presence of God. The Lord was in that place, and Peter knew it not. The sight overwhelms him. He learns himself, and he is confounded. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” It is no more “Master,” but “Lord.” It is no longer the *fisherman* Peter, who had been toiling all the night at his nets, but the *sinner* Peter. He is in a new world, the

brightness of which is intolerable. He is in the presence of God, and there (for there only is this done) he learns himself. We have all "sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and that is discovered when first we really reach that glory.

Now this was a journey indeed, a journey which the soul of Peter had now taken. But he must go still further into this new world. He must still travel; and the word of the Lord shall show him the way, and lead him along it. "Fear not," says Jesus to him. The very presence which had overwhelmed him speaks comfortably to him. The glory itself addresses him, inviting him very near—and following, his path ends. He has now finally and for ever left his native land for the presence of the glory, and his spirit has found a home there.

Many a journey I am sure the soul of Peter took in days after this. He had to pass through the rebukes of the Lord, and they ever give the soul a chapter in its history, or take it some stage of its

living way. But I will notice particularly that other journey which this loved and earnest man performed under the hand of the Lord, in John xxi. 1—14.

There we find him again at his fishing. Sweet, natural scene it is indeed. He and some companions are again on the Lake of Galilee. He had said to them, "I go a-fishing;" and they had said to him, "We also go with thee"—and again a stranger addresses him. In like natural friendliness and easiness as before, he does as the stranger bids him; and he is, in like grace and power as before, rewarded by a heavy draught of fishes.

This was a token. This was symptomatic of who this stranger was. The finger may not be duly sensitive to feel the pulse, or the eye keen enough to discern the mark. Peter fails in this faculty, and John has to feel and to see for him. "It is the Lord," says he to him. The eye had seen for the body, and then the foot begins its service. Peter is in the water at once to reach his Lord. He now knew Him as he did not in Luke v. His presence does not

overwhelm him. He can stand before the glory now—it had already given his conscience a home. And though that conscience had every reason at that moment to be a coward, it is bold as a lion. The *fisherman* Peter, when first brought into the presence of God, becomes, as we saw, the *sinner* Peter; but here this same fisherman knows himself a saved, accepted, loved man; and he courts that presence with all speed.

Right indeed it was, only needful, that at the first, in that presence or before that glory, he should be convicted, and discover his sin; but right it is now that he should be at ease in that place, for the glory had already spoken good words and comfortable words to him.

What two draughts of fishes these were! What two journies for the spirit of this dear man to take! O the secrets of that land where Peter now dwelt!

But further.

These scenes in Luke v. and in John xxi. suggest John xiii. to me in a way that I would now for a moment longer consider.

At his quickening, Peter's *nature* is detected. He discovers himself to be "a sinful man." For the first time, he is brought to the presence of God; and, as we have seen, after being convicted and confounded there, he is left in peace and in the service of the Lord. He hears the words, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

At his restoration this process is not repeated. His nature is not again exposed to him. He has not to discover *himself* a second time, but to be made mindful of a *particular transgression*. The three challenges of Christ carry on this process. They suit Peter's three denials of his Lord; and under conviction of that sin he cries out, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

This has great moral beauty in it. The act of restoration distinguishes itself from the act of quickening. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet only." That word in John xiii. is illustrated in these dealings with the soul of Peter. The Lord's actings set

forth His teachings. Peter himself had been washed in Luke v.; his *nature* had been detected then, and as a sinner he had been in the presence of God, and there found peace and reconciliation. Afterwards he had been defiled as a saint, and he must get his soiled feet washed. His particular offence is discovered to him, and he passes through that process which restores his soul, and fits him for service again—fits him to “feed the sheep,” as before he had been commissioned to “catch men.”

Restoration is not to deny the previous quickening. The washing of the feet assumes the washing of the body. And very happy it is, and very edifying, to see the Master thus illustrating His own lessons, causing the doings of His hand or Spirit to be in company with the holy wisdom of His lips.

Peter's is a very fruitful piece of inspired biography, as we get it in the course of the four Evangelists. But I would now leave these scenes, and look at another and a different occasion in his history.

Having made confession to the person of the Lord, and the truth thus confessed being recognized by the Lord as the Rock of the Church, the Lord confers certain dignities on Peter. He gives him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and tells him that his binding and loosing shall be sealed and ratified. (Matt. xvi.)

Accordingly, we see Peter using these keys in the Book of the Acts: for in the second chapter he opens the door of faith, or introduces the present dispensation, to the Jew; and then in the tenth chapter he does the same to the Gentile. And beside, His word to both Jew and Gentile gets the seal of heaven upon it at once. He tells the Jew to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and that he should then receive remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit. And so we find it; for there were then added to the Church three thousand of that nation. He tells the Gentile that through the name of Jesus every one that believes should receive remission of sins, like the believing Jew. And so we find it again;

for the Spirit falls on all them that heard the word. (See Acts ii. and x.)

Thus was the promise and pledge of the Lord to this confessor of His name and person made sure and redeemed. He used the keys which had been given him, and his word of loosing and binding was sealed and ratified in heaven. And this Peter himself in the council at Jerusalem afterwards recognizes. For there he says, "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe: and God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us."* (Acts xv. 7, 8.)

Others, too, I may say, in like boldness with Peter, testified and asserted the gospel; and, in like manner, their testimony was sealed in heaven. Philip's

* Apart from the testimony of the Gospel, Peter's word may be his own word; and in the stead of its being sealed in heaven, may have to be rebuked and set aside—as we know took place at Antioch. (Gal. ii.)

word to the Eunuch, and Paul's word to the Philippian Jailor, were thus sealed and ratified. And surely we may still further say, that like boldness in the faith, and in declaring the Gospel of the grace of God and the blood of Jesus, is to be exercised still. Are we not still to assure sinners that salvation waits upon faith in Christ? Are we not still to declare it, that life waits on the acceptance of the Son? The spies at Jericho used this kind of boldness. They pledged deliverance and life to the woman and to all who were with her, under the shelter of the scarlet line. And are *we* not to tell of the virtue of the same Christ of God, the same eternal life, and the full shelter of the cross? Peter, Philip, Paul, and others like them, who tell of the Rock, are only persons in the train of the great embassy, the witnesses and heralds of that divine Lord, Son of man as he was, who could say, and did say, that He had "power on earth to forgive sins." A present, a sure, a perfect salvation is the secret and

the gift of the grace of God. This is published in the gospel, and this will be sealed and ratified and made good for eternity.

Other incidents mark the special place which this dear man held among the apostles. Each of them might well afford a distinct meditation for the profit of our souls—his walking for a little moment on the water; his word to the collector of the tribute-money; his cutting off the ear of Malchus, and others; but I will go no further. It was in our own very world all these things happened, and happened under the eyes of the Lord Jesus. Men like ourselves He conversed with, and had to expose again and again; and what He Himself was then, such is He now. Knowing Him in the narratives of the Evangelists, we know Him for ever to the full comfort and confirmation of our hearts.

A SERIES.

No. 2.

REGENERATION AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS.

The terms regeneration, quickening, and being born again, are used in Scripture to express that change or new existence, which is originated in a child of Adam when he is vitally, or from the heart, turned to God. We have seen in the paper on "Man's Condition by Nature," that man in the spirit of his mind is alienated from God—at enmity with Him; and still more, that he is unable in the most convincing circumstances, to recognize or appreciate what is divinely good. All this being proved and admitted, it now becomes us to enquire and note, what is that change commonly called conversion, and which the Scriptures designate as regeneration; how it occurs, and by what is it characterized?

The new birth must be the introduction of a new principle into the soul of

man, at once so distinct and so effective, that it maintains for itself not only its unique existence, but also its supremacy in spirit and intent over the old nature; often influencing it silently, where it does not control. The influence being a silent one simply for this reason, (which I hope on a future occasion to shew more fully,) that the new, on account of man's wilfulness and self-satisfaction, does not assert its superiority until the old is convinced of its necessity. But notwithstanding, the new is there all the time, a positive reality, and a positive rein and awe to the conscience, though often for the moment there may be little or no evidence of it in the walk. If the change be not of this distinct and effective order, how could it be termed regeneration, or, as the Lord Himself said to Nicodemus, "being born again?" We all know that in order to dislodge or master any power in actual possession, it requires a power greater than that by which the possession is maintained. Consequently, if man by nature, alienated from God, and at enmity with Him, be vitally turned

to Him, it must be by a power not only greater than the will of man, but also one proportionate to the service required; which service is nothing less than to establish happy relations with God in a soul hitherto in the terrible distance of ignorance and enmity. This is accomplished in the new birth by the first principle of its existence, even faith; a principle which is always propagated by the Spirit of God blowing where He listeth. Called into being by the Holy Ghost, the way in which it reaches man, is (as we read) "by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The word of God is deposited in the soul. The intelligence of that word is not so much the question as the effect of it; which effect is to convince the soul, in the first place, that God *is*; and next, as to what His *nature* is according as it has been revealed; though often a long period may intervene between these two, which *should* not be disunited; and in the end, and for peace and happiness of soul, *are* not.

The first principle, then, of this new

existence, and its first utterance, is *faith*. Faith is the first characteristic of regeneration. The old man is an unbeliever in every degree; the new is a believer in every degree. Adam's fall was in consequence of disobedience of God's word, the offspring of unbelief and distrust of God Himself. His nature thus became a prey to this adverse sentiment, which, acting and re-acting on his fellow-men, have produced all the contumacy toward God of which man is guilty. The grace of God in every age has been above man's guilt, and therefore He has *compelled* many to come in; in one way or another awakening the soul to the sense of the existence of God, either as a relief or a correction to its ignorance; in a word, giving it faith in God, through the word of God. The Spirit of God has always been the propagator of this new principle, so that where the smallest germ of it exists, there, blessed be God, the Holy Ghost has worked. The old man is utterly incapable of faith in God; therefore, wherever faith works, however feebly, regeneration has taken place.

And mark ! it has been thus in *all* dispensations. The difference between the Old-Testament times and the New, or the present,* consists not in the principle of existence, for that is the same in both; and, moreover, it is begotten by the same Holy Spirit; but the distinction lies in the strength and scope of the *sense* of the existence. *Now*, the sense of eternal life is *assured* to us as God's gift through our Lord Jesus Christ; *then*, though the activity of that life existed, it was as yet *unassured*, because Christ had not died and risen.

Regeneration, then, is a new existence, ("if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,") of which faith in God is its very principle—its first and simplest characteristic, and eternal life its portion. How evident, then, is it that they who judge of or describe it as an improvement in morals and tastes, wholly misappre-

* In noticing this distinguishing feature of the two dispensations, I would add that I here confine myself to the subject before us, regeneration, without trenching on other distinctions, most important, but beyond our present subject.

hend the simple quality and radical nature of the new birth. Man in the old nature was characterized by unbelief; the new man is characterized by exactly the opposite, which it declares as just and compensatory: and thus faith is its peculiar mark, and the proof of its existence. New birth exists wherever faith exists, and *vice versa*. If I be ever so changed or improved and have no faith in God, there can be no conscious new birth, for the first utterance of the newly-born soul is that of faith. It knows that God is to be trusted, and let its trust be ever so feeble, the response returned to it from God is *eternal life*—he that believes hath eternal life. And this eternal life is the second characteristic, the inalienable possession, of new birth. In all times, as I have remarked, faith in God was the first expression and utterance of the quickened soul: and this simple fact clears away much of the confusion and uncertainty with which the subject has been surrounded. Both teachers and souls have been diverted from the plain and true ground by looking for an

improvement in feelings and manners, instead of first insisting on the necessity of the existence of faith, from which in true power the other would follow. A remarkable change and improvement may be wrought in me from many other causes; but faith in God in my soul is proof positive that it is newly born; for nothing but His Spirit could have produced it, and this entitles me to nothing less than eternal life.

Now I may find many a newly-born soul, who, though he believes in God, does not apprehend that, as born of God, he has received eternal life. I do not question his regeneration because he is not sensibly enjoying the highest privilege of it; but it is evident that such an one is inadvertently ignoring the legitimate portion of his new existence, without which his regeneration must be unsatisfactory to himself, and defective in expression toward God.

In all dispensations there has been an enlightenment corresponding to the revelation made of God to the soul. That which is conferred *now* is eternal life;

and if I am not assured of that which God has assured *to me*, I am not apprehending His revelation in its range and scope—nay, in its very essence.

Life, the sense of living by Christ and with Him, belongs *now* to regeneration. Christ died for our sins; but having risen from among the dead, and the power of death being destroyed, He is Head of the new creation in everlasting life; and we who were dead in trespasses and sins are quickened together with Him, being by grace, through faith, made partakers of His life; and that on the ground of righteousness, inasmuch as He has borne death for us, and made us thereby the righteousness of God in Him. It is most important that we should see that eternal life is *now* co-existent with regeneration. However, God in past ages accepted the sinner, and linked his soul to Himself by faith in a new existence, eternal life was not manifested until Christ came. "The life was manifested," says the Apostle John, "and we have seen it, and show unto you that eternal life which was

with the Father, and was manifested unto us." The Son was the manifestation of the eternal life that was with the Father, and "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." He came here to do the will of God in a body prepared for Him, and in that body to bear our sins on the accursed tree, God laying on Him the iniquity of us all: made sin for us who knew no sin, in order that God might be just and the justifier of every one who believeth in Jesus. What would any gift be to me from God if I did not believe in the source of it, even in His Son? God can now do what He never could do before—He can give His love full scope; and therefore the moment faith in Him is engendered in any soul, (the action of which faith is to look at God's revelation of His grace in Christ,) the blessing—the portion—the gift of God to that soul is, eternal life. Nothing less would answer to the love of God, now at liberty to indulge itself (if I may so say) through the righteousness established for the sinner by His own Son,

and to express the full range and purpose of itself. Therefore it meets the sinner at the very start and threshold with this wondrous truth: (see John iii.): "He that believeth hath everlasting life." Other blessings and great glories follow, but God meets the condemned, lost sinner at the point at which He had met the serpent-bitten Israelite aforetime; and He says to him, "I have so loved you, that I gave my Son to bear the judgment of sin; and as in Him is manifested the eternal life which He has with me, so every one that believes in Him shall share it with Him."

In fine, I would lay stress on this important point of our subject, that the essence of the old nature being unbelief, the soul that has a particle of faith in God has entered on a new existence. That existence is "regeneration;" the characteristics and essential properties of which are, faith and eternal life.

APHORISMS.

ON BEING KEPT FROM FALLING.

We do not by any means sufficiently realize the power of God to keep us from falling. There is so much levity of heart in Christians, (for I am not speaking of the unholy levity of the world but,) so much lightness of thought even in our best intercourse with one another, and lightness of speech even about good things, that it keeps us from realizing what the holy power of God could and would do in us in keeping us from falling. People excuse themselves by saying, "The flesh will be in us to the end." This is true; but we are nowhere told that the flesh must *work* in us to the end. The flesh ought never to be allowed so to work in a saint as to get into his conscience, or to show itself before others. We ought not to have the pain of learning the nature of the flesh by its own workings, but by the workings of the Holy Ghost in us. And when we detect the flesh, because we are in communion with God, it never

either troubles our conscience before God, or dishonours our Master before men. God is able to keep us from falling both inwardly and outwardly. A saint feels that an unholy thought is a fall, for it takes him out of God's presence, as really a fall as an open transgression, though not so manifest to others. Indeed, where there is much spirituality, an inward fall will be perceived by others. If a brother comes in when an unholy thought has weakened my spirituality, if he is in communion with God, he will feel the deficiency in me. We should bear in mind that even these inward falls are not necessary. He is able to keep us from falling altogether; and if the flesh were always judged, and thoroughly judged, by us in the presence of God, we should find that He would thus keep us.

“PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST.”

We do this when in praying we are conscious of His presence, and conscious, too, that we are asking according to His will. Even if our understandings can-

not fully unfold to us what we need, we may be thus conscious of desires according to His mind, according to Rom. viii. 26. Nothing short of this is "praying in the Holy Ghost." But I do not say this to weaken the liberty we have to bring *all* our desires to God in prayer: it may be true prayer still. However foolish our requests may be, still let us in childlike confidence bring them to God. He will grant them if it would be good for us, and will teach us better if they are foolish and wrong. He bids us make *all* our requests known to Him; and we should ourselves like our children to come and tell us *all* their wishes, leaving us to act as we thought right about them. But prayer in the Holy Ghost is our privilege; and I need not say the most blessed when in full understanding.

PRAYER.

Prayer is nothing else than a fervent mind settled upon God.

TRUST IN GOD.

God tested Abraham, to see whether he was trusting in Isaac, or resting

wholly on *Himself*. The path of faith is not one of ease, but the path of trial. Nothing is done for God without a struggle.

THE JOY OF HEAVEN.

How blessed to get into the *sounds* of the heavenly kingdom ! It made them wonderfully happy, in the Father's house, when the prodigal was received. *We*, poor lost ones that we were, are necessary for the display of His grace—jewels from the darkest depths—pearls from the most unsightly shells. We shall have a burning love to Christ the angels will know nothing about.

THE OBJECT OF FAITH.

The non-apprehension of Christ's glory is positive loss of blessing. A wrong apprehension of Christ places people out of the reach of blessing. A right apprehension of Him is life eternal. The carpenter's Son was the secret source of all power ; but the Jews failed to apprehend this.

A SERIES.

No. 3.

ADOPTION OR SONSHIP.

In the previous numbers of this series I have sought to present what is man's condition by nature and by regeneration. I would now seek to shew what are the position and the privileges accorded to him as regenerate or born of God. The first of these is assuredly Adoption or Sonship, and it will be well worth our while to inquire, first, how we are entitled to this high privilege; secondly, what it confers; and thirdly, how a soul not in the conscious enjoyment of it may attain thereto.

In Galatians iv. it is said, "*Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.*" Now it is evident from this passage, and from many others, that the ability to call the blessed God "Father," is not what entitles any one to be a child of God, but is conferred on him after he is made one by new birth, which does not by any means depend on

this ability, but on a work previous to it. "Ye are all (says the apostle—Gal. iii. 26) the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And it is to the *children* that is granted the Spirit of the Son whereby they say, "Abba Father." The new birth, wonderful as is the grace of it, does not comprise or embrace the position and privileges given to us of God, though it gives full title to all. It is one thing to know myself as regenerate by faith engendered in my soul, and another to take my place before God in the relationship which my new birth confers on me, and in the intelligence belonging to it. Now all this the Spirit of adoption ensures. The newly-born soul has, or at least ought to have, the sense of life; but he knows nothing as yet of the nature of its action, nor of the intelligence of the relationship; and it is because souls do not enter into this, the purpose and blessing of the adoption, that they are, though born again, so defective in both peace and vigour of life. To enter into and

appropriate it is the portion of the regenerate, but no one receives grace from God except as he appreciates it. A soul must be awakened to its *need* of the blessing, before it can be awakened to the *nature* of the blessing which God is offering him and has provided for him. I desire most distinctly to state that there is nothing to be provided afresh—all things are ready: the only question is, are souls prepared for each special blessing; or are they ready to receive it, knowing their need of it, and thus appreciating the grace which offers it?

In John iii., where regeneration is detailed, it is said, "he that believeth hath everlasting life." That is positive and conclusive as to right. The soul has the sense of its right as God's gift; but if no more than this, it would neither know how to use the right or comprehend what the position such a right entitled it to. Hence in chap. iv. we are told more of this gift, even that it is a "well of water springing up into everlasting life." This is a very important and immense addition to the right con-

ferred in chapter iii. I now come to understand what my title to this great gift embraces—even that I am to have a sense, not only of its actual existence, but of its range of action which is no less than “springing up into everlasting life.” The ground of my title is not one whit added to by the development of the blessings to which it has entitled me; though I appreciate the ground, and revert to it with deeper praise as I become acquainted with all the blessings which it assures to me.

Still further, in John vii. the Lord teaches that the Holy Ghost was to communicate this gift in such a manner that out of the believer’s belly should flow “rivers of living water;” i. e., that the Spirit of God would not only furnish him with full nourishment and invigoration, but that it should flow over; in a word, the fulness of the gift is described in chapter vii., while the action of it is detailed in chapter iv.

I have touched on these chapters in order to show more clearly what I have already stated, even that the enjoyment

of the great privileges connected with the gift of eternal life is distinct, and in addition to the mere sense of the gift; but if we lose sight of these privileges, we must circumscribe the greatness of the gift. In one sense you might as well deprive natural life of the various senses by which its vigour is known, and be content to be thus deprived, as to expect to enjoy eternal life without the privileges belonging to it and by which it expresses its vigour and value.

Every regenerate soul then *ought* to have the spirit of adoption. And this being conceded, we may inquire what does this adoption accord? Conferred on me by the Holy Ghost, it enables me to say, "Abba Father." It assures me not that I am rescued from judgment—that I know in virtue of my new birth; but far more, even that I am in the relationship of a son through Christ to God; and because of His Spirit in me (See Rom. viii. 2—4) I am consciously set free from the law of sin and death, out of the reach of condemnation, for "the Spirit is life because of righteous-

ness." Having received eternal life at the new birth, the Spirit now establishes our new relationship, proclaiming that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba Father." The Spirit does not make me any more a child, but He teaches me what is the proper portion and intelligence of a child. The woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment was healed before she had any conference with Him. It was not the conference that healed her; it was His virtue appropriated by her through faith; but the conference established to her soul the healing—and how? By her learning the heart of Him whose virtue had so served her. Thus it is the Spirit who unfolds and establishes to the soul of the regenerate the extent and security of the blessing received. The Spirit unites me to the heart of Christ, and here I learn not only my Sonship, but with it all the privileges and portion secured to me by Him. The Spirit is the promise of the Father and was sent as the Comforter

during the Lord's absence. He is the Unction, that which, as the name implies, connects us with the Anointed, and therefore it is said, "Who hath established us in Christ and anointed us is God," and still more, "Who hath sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." It is the distinct and full operation of the Spirit which it is so important for us to understand and enjoy. If I have not the Spirit of adoption, I am not consciously set free from condemnation, even though I may feel myself a rightful owner of eternal life and have occasional gleams of happiness. I have no sense of being "in the Spirit and not in the flesh." I still have the spirit of bondage again to fear. I am not able in the Spirit of the Son to call God my Father or enjoy the sweet relationship of which such an utterance is the exponent. If I have the spirit of adoption, God's gift of eternal life is not only the sense of life but the power of life; not only owned, like that of a newly-born babe without any of the consciousness which makes life enjoyable,

but the Spirit is in me a "well of water springing up into everlasting life;" and still more, the well not only furnishes me with all I can use, but out of my belly flow rivers of living water. I am a witness of that which I personally enjoy.

And now let us inquire how a soul, not in the enjoyment of this, its rightful privilege, may obtain it. We have seen that every believer is *entitled* to it. The Holy Ghost is given—He has quickened, and He is down here as the Comforter to abide for ever. (John xiv. 26; xv. 26.) Why then is He not received or enjoyed more fully? It is clear that to enjoy Him is not only a privilege, but I might also say a necessity, if the gift of eternal life is to be known in any measure according to its value. The answer is because He is neither comprehended nor appreciated. As the renewed soul learns to comprehend the ministry and use of the Spirit, so does it appreciate Him, and as it appreciates it enjoys. "If any man thirst, let him come unto *me* and drink." If a soul is

seeking the Lord, desiring to know Him, it is sure to find Him in all the fulness of the heart's desire. The Spirit is the known minister of it all, because He has come down here to reveal to us our absent Lord. The woman who was healed by touching was led on until she heard from His own lips the love and purpose of the heart of Him who had healed her; and this assured her, not in the work of healing, but in the love of Him who did it, as well as in the reality of her link to Him.

And so it is now. If any soul has tasted of the healing power of Christ's work, and has not yet entered into the assurance of heart which flows from knowing His feelings towards it, and the close relationship into which it is brought, all it needs is to come to Him and confer with Him, tell Him all that He has done for it, and that soul will be made to rejoice in an unerring consciousness through the Holy Ghost, not only of its adoption but of the glorious privileges which are its portion through God's gift of eternal life through Jesus

Christ our Lord, to whom, let us say in the joy of our hearts, be glory both now and for ever.

THE ASSEMBLY AT CORINTH AND THE APOSTLE PAUL— A CONTRAST.

When reading the Epistles to the Corinthians one cannot fail to remark the great contrast between the Corinthian converts and their spiritual father, the Apostle Paul, showing clearly that the possession of *gifts* is no safeguard against error, and that those who most abound in them may be those who fall into the greatest evils.

The Corinthians "came behind in no gift, being enriched by the Lord in all utterance and all knowledge," as certainly they came behind no Christian assembly of that day in disorder and scandalous proceedings. Divisions had come in—dissensions had arisen—not caused by the entrance of doctrinal evil or immorality of walk, leading the

spiritually minded to purge out the evil or separate themselves from it; but arising from the undue exalting of certain teachers among them. It was not faithfulness to the Lord which caused these divisions. Moral evil there was of the grossest kind, but *that* formed in their minds no ground for separation. A crime, such as the very heathen would blush to think of, had been committed among them, yet the offender had not been put out, and the apostle has to reprove them for their laxity, and to urge the exercise of discipline ere the assembly is moved to action. It was not that the assembly had shared in the deed. The apostle, in the Second Epistle, chap. vii. 11, writes, "in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." But their state of soul was so bad, they had not judged the evil. It was the indulgence of party spirit which had induced this state of things, had blunted the edge of their conscience, and dulled the sensibility of their soul.

Following human teachers, not the Lord, how much trouble had it occa-

sioned! Enriched with all gifts, they were intoxicated at the thought of such wealth, and they began to value a teacher for his eloquence or his display of human wisdom. (1 Cor. i. 17; ii. 1.) It was not so much *what* he taught, as *how* he could speak; not whether he spoke in the Spirit, but whether he displayed the wisdom of words. Their eyes were diverted from the Giver to the gift. They were occupied with man, the recipient and channel through whom blessing was to flow, instead of with the source of all gift and fountain of all blessing. Looking thus at man, they were in danger of forgetting they were Christ's. Calling themselves by this or that teacher's name, they remembered not they were God's husbandry, God's building. They were glorying in men when they should have been glorying in the Lord. They were dazzled with a display of eloquence and wisdom, satisfied with the mere natural gifts, without reflecting whether there was "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." The natural result soon manifested

itself. Unmindful on whom they were dependent, "they were full, reigning as kings," says the apostle, "without us." (1 Cor. iv. 8.) And he who had planted the Church at Corinth, and could point to them as a proof of his apostleship, found his claim to be an apostle called in question. The father is well nigh disowned by his children, the teacher is repudiated by his pupils, so much so that the apostle is forced to convince them that he has the qualifications of an apostle. They indeed were proofs of it. Did they doubt whether Christ spake in him? They had only to examine themselves to find out. (2 Cor. xiii. 3—5.) Nor was this all. He could point to labours and services which showed him to be an apostle indeed. Did labour and trial constitute a proof of apostleship, who had encountered more perils, or laboured more abundantly than he had? Was sympathy with others a needful quality for an apostle? "Who," says he, "is offended and I burn not?" (2 Cor. xi. 29.) Were the teachers Israelites? Which of them could boast of a purer descent than he,

“a Hebrew of the Hebrews?” Was his bodily infirmity a ground for refusing him that respect and obedience due to an apostle? That infirmity was the result of his ascending to the third heaven, and hearing words which it is not lawful for man to utter, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation given him.” (2 Cor. xii. 7.) They might complain of his bodily appearance, and his speech, but they were forced to confess his words were weighty.” (2 Cor. x. 10.) They might compare him, to his disadvantage, with other teachers possessing greater natural gifts and no infirmity; but his infirmity was the proof of a near intercourse with God, such as no other man could boast of.

But the evil did not rest here. Disorderly proceedings were tolerated, such as no other Christian assembly had admitted. Women, it would appear, spoke in the assembly, and dressed in unseemly attire. (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35; xi.) Whatever any one might say about it, or

however any one might defend it, the apostle cuts all argument short with the simple sentence: "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." (1 Cor. xi. 16.) But graver cause for scandal there was. The Lord's Supper had been made an occasion for carnal feasting. One would come to satisfy his hunger; another would be there drunk—yet we have not fathomed the depth into which they had fallen. "Envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," had crept in. (2 Cor. xii. 20.) Having turned from God to man, and magnified the human instrument, their eyes had been diverted from the only object which could keep them straight, that centre round which, when acknowledged as such, everything would range itself in its proper order, and all assume their due proportion. It was not difficult to descend from man to self. Selfishness, in all its forms, was prevalent, evidenced, as noticed above, in strifes, &c.; and in that litigious spirit which received a rebuke and correction in 1 Cor. vi. Another form of it, the

grossest form, was the licentious indulgence of carnal desires. (1 Cor. vi.; 2 Cor. xii. 21.)

But it had yet to be demonstrated in two other ways, showing how far the assembly had fallen. Their liberty must be asserted and maintained even at the expense of a weak brother's faith. They had liberty, they affirmed, to eat meats offered to idols. Why should they be restrained in this their christian liberty? Their spiritual discernment allowed them to sit at meat in the idol's temple without joining in the idol worship. Why should they be denied this pleasure? Was a weak brother thereby stumbled? Why should they be in bondage to any one? Hence self (for after all it was self) must be gratified, even though a weak brother's conscience receive damage. Thus their position as freemen in Christ was made the ground of the gratification of their appetites, and indulgence of their natural desires. But self had yet another aspect, viz., the longing after those *spiritual* gifts which would bring most glory to the possessor. What

gift so suited for that as speaking with tongues? Their aim was the exaltation of self, rather than the edification of the assembly. What a picture have we in Corinth of the depth to which saints could fall! For saints they were, but placed in circumstances widely differing from any in which a christian assembly in Christendom, at least in these days, could be found, being surrounded with vices, openly and unblushingly practised by the heathen, which the influence of Christianity has driven into the shade.

Let us now turn to the apostle, and see how high a sinner saved by grace could rise. Were the Corinthians glorying in their teacher, glorying in men, he gloried only in the Lord. They were captivated with the natural gifts of their teachers. He had learnt the lesson, that all human teachers, to whom were entrusted the gifts of ministry, were but "earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man." (2 Cor. iv. 7.) He came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, and was determined to know nothing among

them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. (1 Cor. ii.) They were self-sufficient—"full." (1 Cor. iv. 8.) He was "not sufficient of himself to think anything as of himself, but his sufficiency was of God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) They were reigning without him. He would only connect himself with them. "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ;" "helpers of your joy;" (2 Cor. i. 21, 24;) "ourselves your servants for Jesus sake;" (2 Cor. iv. 5;) "shall present us with you." (2 Cor. iv. 14.) Not a word here of his superiority. He classes himself with them, and makes himself their servant. They stood up for their liberty, so did he. But how different the case with him! Would he indulge his palate at the expense of a weaker brother's faith? Nay, "I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Cor. viii. 13.) What, then, was the liberty he claimed for himself? Simply this, that he might preach the gospel to them without

charge! What could prompt him to such labour without a temporal reward? Was it the hope that they would value such disinterestedness? He had already felt that, after all, his labours on them, and affection for them, they had not valued the one or requited the other. How, then, did this affect him? We see in 2 Cor. xii. 14, 15: "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours but you and I will gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." What grace was here. The divine nature in him showing itself; love working for its own sake, loving objects unworthy of its love. And who was this who thus wrote? Was it one who felt his deficiency in gifts when in such an assembly as that of Corinth, and wished to make up for that deficiency by an assiduous attention to their wants? Far from it. He was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostle. He might indeed be rude in speech, but not in knowledge.

He had a power, the apostolic power, which he could have used, but he did not. What a contrast then between the apostle and the Corinthians !

What caused it ? Whence came it ? Both he and they were children of Adam, descended from the same corrupt stock. Both he and they were subjects of the same divine mercy, and objects of divine grace. But he had learnt a lesson which they had not. He had learnt the death of the old man, hence he was not looking at the outward appearance ; he looked far higher. He lived as it were on the other side of death ; they on this side. All that was nature he estimated at its true value. For him, self was nothing : Christ and God were everything. That was the secret of the difference between them. What teaching there is in all this. " He had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God who raiseth the dead." (2 Cor. i. 9.) Throughout the first five chapters of the Second Epistle we see this brought out. Did he triumph, it was in Christ, and moreover

it was God who made him triumph; (ii. 14;) his sufficiency was of God; (iii. ;) if the light of the gospel had shone into his heart, it was God who had commanded it; (iv. ;) and the excellency of the power of ministry was of God; and all he suffered was for the glory of God. With him, God in Christ was everything; and now as risen in Christ he knew no man after the flesh. All this the Corinthians had forgotten or never learnt. Accordingly, in the first three chapters of the First Epistle, we have a continual contrast between man and God, to recall them to their true position as Christians. God had called them to the fellowship of His Son, not man. It was God's Church he addressed. God was pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe; and the object preached was Christ the power and wisdom of God. Was he chosen for this work, God had done it; and God had made Christ unto us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." It was God's testimony he declared, that their

“faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Yet he spoke wisdom, but it was the wisdom of God; and he spoke of things which the natural man could not receive, but God had revealed them by His Spirit; and the Corinthians were God’s husbandry, God’s building. He recognized these things, as the Second Epistle shows. They had forgotten them, as the First Epistle teaches. Hence the difference.

What a lesson then to us. If the eye looks away from God to man, into what may we not fall—what evils may not come in! But, on the other hand, the true remedy for decline of spirituality in the assembly, when man is exalted and self reigns, is to recall it to a right sense about God. It is God’s work. The instruments are God’s. The increase is God’s. The building and temple are God’s. This truth, brought out in 1 Cor. i.—iv., forms the groundwork of the apostle’s direction. Christian liberty is to be permitted, but only to the glory of God. (1 Cor. x. 31.) Spiritual gifts

are to be exercised, but in an orderly manner: "For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace." (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) Man may be followed but only as he follows Christ. (1 Cor. xi. 1.)

When God gets his place in the assembly and hearts of His children, all will go well. But if not, the capacity to judge moral evil may be weakened; meetings for worship be made opportunities for the display of gifts, as the vanity of the possessor may dictate, and even the Lord's table become a scene of shameful confusion. How needful then, to watch against the first departure from the simplicity that is in Christ. But as evil in the assembly is generally the result of evil unchecked in individuals, what need of individual watchfulness to keep the eye fixed on the true centre. When looking at God, and living as dead and risen with Christ, the Lord will have *His* place and man *his*; conscience will be alive; evil, if it comes in, will be judged, and the assembly be in truth the temple of the Holy Ghost.

NOTES ON PSALM I.

It is needful to have the foot firmly grounded on the Rock Christ, free grace being the ground on which we are saved. Then there will be the going on to walk "in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." The saints begin in free grace. Then they try, and they ought to try, *to walk*. But they are apt to forget that it is still the Rock on which the foot is planted.

It is common to many of the Psalms to see one righteous one and one unrighteous one. This wicked one is always either Satan or antichrist. Again, in other psalms, there is one righteous and there are many wicked.

There is a contrast between Christ as presented in psalm i. and in Eph. and John xvii. Here it is simply Christ as man. This is not like the praise and the glory which God now gives to Christ at His right hand. It is true that God does still give Him this praise, as the One who was perfect here; but He is on much higher ground: for He was not only put into the furnace, and tried here where the wicked were—He was truly

put into the furnace, and no evil was found in Him. He saw the path of the wicked, and the seat of the scornful, and still He remained the perfect pilgrim and stranger, "separate from sinners." But God had thoughts higher than these when He pointed out to His Son, from His eternal throne, that if He would take the cup of sorrow, receiving thus the penalty of sin, He would highly exalt Him, giving Him a name above every name. Here was all the largeness of the divine counsels as to Christ. As man, Jesus is seen in a narrow field, bounded off. God points to what His Son was there.

I do not think that the sinner finds true *rest* of heart, unless he sees what sort of person Christ was down here. God did not at first present His Son in all His exaltation; but showed Him as He walked on earth, saying, as it were, "Read my character by what you find in Him. Just as He is upon earth, you may suppose me to be as God." I suppose the very spring of our first comfortable thought about God, is the

being brought to see God's thoughts about CHRIST. When wearied with all that is in self, has it not been brought *vividly before the mind, that God delights in Christ*, having found in Him all that He can admire? There are two things: first, God has found one in whom He can fully rest; secondly, He is so occupied with Christ, that I can draw near as accepted in the Beloved. I am sure that our near approach to God is inseparable from God's delighting in Christ. God is occupied with His Son, this perfect one; and I know it. This measuring of what Christ is to God is very different from being occupied about that of which *I* am the centre—and it is the only ground of stable peace.

Ver. 1. No provision being made in the first psalm for the slightest failure, it must present *Christ*. Of course it gives our moral characteristics, if we are saints; but none could take such ground for a moment but Christ. Could Paul, could Peter, have taken up such language as this in psalm i.? No. It is the character of the way in which we try to

walk, but no saint can say, "Here is that which abstractedly marks me." What was that which characterized Paul? That he had been a blasphemer, but had obtained mercy. How careful was he even to take this ground! But God came in, in spite of all. This first verse tells our hearts, that we are indeed "blessed"—not on the ground of what we are, but altogether on the ground of what *He* is. We have the threefold character of man's evil here: first, without God, as the poor Gentiles; secondly, sinnership, every man wandering on in his own way, as the Jews; thirdly, antichrist in the seat of the scornful.

Ver. 2. This enters more deeply into what the blessed Lord Jesus was. I do believe there is a word of comfort for us here. There is a deep mine of comfort suited to meet our mind as *down here*, in looking at the Lord Jesus as man. (It is a subordinate position, lower than the glory, by which He sustains Himself in these positions.) Christ looks up to God, and says, "I love thee, and what is dear to thee." Look at the Lord Jesus as loving His neighbour—

the poor Jew, or more generally man; the Gentiles, or the Church—as Elder Brother, firstborn from the dead. Thus it is that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities—sympathizing with us down here. Let me ask you, Do you know what it is to be in Christ's presence, and to find your heart burdened?

The Jews, the Gentiles, the brethren, are all dear to Christ's heart. I am as sure of this as that He is in the heavens: and I cannot say otherwise to God than that "the one at thy right hand loves thee and the things which thou lovest." This is not merely a fact, but it is that which we should do well to lay *to heart*. Has not Christ's heart been occupied about you during the past night, and up to when? When did He *begin* to think about you? Ah! *He* begins where He was found—with His Father. Dark man turns to darkness, and thinks of Christ as beginning with us in our darkness: but it is not so with Christ; He begins with God, His brethren are God's. He loves His own, because God loves them. How should He but love them?
